Chapter 5

- Needs of the youth
- The proposition
- Youth centers

This chapter concentrates on highlighting the needs of the youths. It projects the proposition of the thesis to intervene in the crisis through erecting a Youth Centre called 'Social Hot Spot'. It starts with introducing the needs of the youths in Hillbrow to justify the proposed intervention. This is followed by the implications of meeting their needs by the society.

Youths' needs

The needs of the youths project into the future and affect not only the families and youths but also the nations' all round development. It ranges from self identification to acceptance within the society and goes towards the physical environment to mould and shape the youths. Acknowledging these, Hertzberger (1991) says that everyone wants to be accepted, wants to belong, to have a place of his or her own. He further suggests that architecture has the potential to create such feelings of belonging and acceptance. He concludes that the design of 'human spaces' can encourage feelings of acceptance and enhanced social interaction.

www.4hgroup.org reports that even when they are not assisted, all Youth will find ways to meet their basic needs, build skills and values, and use their skills, talents, energies and time in ways that make them feel good and powerful. According to this reports, these needs are identified as follows;

> To know they are cared about by others
> (Attachment & Belonging)
> To feel and believe they are capable and successful
> (Achievement/Mastery)
> To know they are able to influence people and events
> (Autonomy/Power)
> To practice helping others through their own generosity
> (Altruism/Purpose)
> Fun and Stimulation

Why is Meeting Youths' Needs so Important?

If youths' needs are met adequately, they develop characteristics that most of us would relate to character:

- Youth who experience 'belonging', tend to be trusting and friendly people.
- Youths with productive opportunities to experience 'mastery', tend to become problem-solvers who are motivated and achievement-oriented.
- Youths who experience opportunities to be Independent become confident and self-disciplined leaders, and youth who experience Generosity become caring and empathic people.

- If otherwise, unmet needs can become negatively defining factors in the lives of these youths as follows:

- Youths will seek to 'belong' through promiscuous or clinging behaviours.
- Youths attempt to feel 'mastery' by cheating or developing delinquent skills.
- Youths try to establish Independence by being bullies or through defiant behaviour.
- Youths are unable to establish their identity and lose themselves in constantly giving.

If youths needs consistently go unmet, some youths retreat or give up on getting needs met:

- Youths who have not bonded to adults do not bond to institutions. NOT broken families that cause youth violence and other problems but rather broken bonds between youth and adults.
- Youths with no productive opportunities for Mastery often give up easily and avoid risks because it's easier to not try than to try and fail.
- To be respected is to have power. Winning respect through aggressive techniques is immensely important when there is so little to be had.
- Youths with no opportunities to connect meaningfully with others become isolated in their own experience and often become selfish and even antisocial.

What happens to the youth?

If needs are met in positive ways	If needs are met in negative ways	If needs are unmet

If needs are met in positive ways

Belonging	**Power**
Attached	Autonomous
Loving	Confident
Friendly	Assertive
Intimate	Responsible
Social	Inner control
Co-operative	Self discipline
Trusting	leadership

Mastery	**Generosity**
Achieving	Caring
Creative	Sharing
Successful	Loyal
Problem solver	Empathic
Motivated	Pro-social
Persistent	supportive
competent	

If needs are met in negative ways

Belonging	**Power**
Gang loyalty	Dictatorial
Cravings	Reckless
Affections and acceptance	Bully
Promiscuous	Manipulative
Clinging	Rebellious
Overly dependent	Sexual prowess

Mastery	**Generosity**
Over achiever	Over involved
Arrogant	Co-dependent
Risk seeker	
Cheater	
Workaholic	
Delinquent	

If needs are unmet

Belonging	**Power**
Unattached	Submissive
Guarded	Lacks confidence
Rejecting	Irresponsible
Lonely	Helplessness
Aloof	Easily influenced
Isolated	Lacks discipline
Distrustful	

Mastery	**Generosity**
Non achiever	Selfish
Avoids risk	Anti social
Fears	Exploitative
Challenges	
Unmotivated	
Gives up easily	

Courtesy the 4 H youth development scheme
[www.4hgroup.org]

Having established the evident needs of the youths with the concern that the youths in Hillbrow are regularly exposed to 'shebeens' (an open unrestricted drinking place), drugs, gambling, prostitution, rape, domestic violence, robbery, shootings as also documented by (Legget T 2003), the author proposes a comprehensive project for meeting these needs by providing a social youth centre. A centre will be a welcomed prospect, offering the youths a safe place in which they can not only take ownership but also interact. This way, they will be able to identify their talents and have a sense of belonging and freedom within the society they call theirs.

A centre that will not only provide a sense of identity and a spirit of self help, but also develop abilities that will allow for tackling community problems. This centre will primarily be a social hot spot, providing a place where interest and activity may arise spontaneously from the corporate life of the group.

The Youth Centre is a social and recreational hub intended primarily for use by people ages 15 to 25 years. In some cases, children as young as eleven years old will find Youth Centre useful, but usually when there are special programs that will accommodate them. The Centre supports opportunities for youths to develop their physical, social, emotional, and cognitive abilities and to experience achievement, leadership, enjoyment, friendship, and recognition (Sternberg 1971). Youth Centre offers organised instructional programs for physical activities such as dance, yoga, and martial arts and for academic and arts programs such as science, crafts, and theatre. It also offers opportunities for unstructured activities such as game playing, socialising, club meetings, and outdoor play.

While unstructured activities are an essential part of a Youth Centre, Sternberg proposes that they should be well staffed facilities. Controlled and supervision are very critical elements in sustaining its goals. These elements impact facility design as considerations for youth-friendly and youth-appealing design. Safety is also of paramount importance. A Youth Centre serves the dual purposes of accommodating unstructured social interaction among different age groups and providing instructional classes all in a safe, supervised environment. This drives the facility layout and functional space adjacencies (ibid).

Sample adjacency diagram for a youth center
Developed by DMJM design
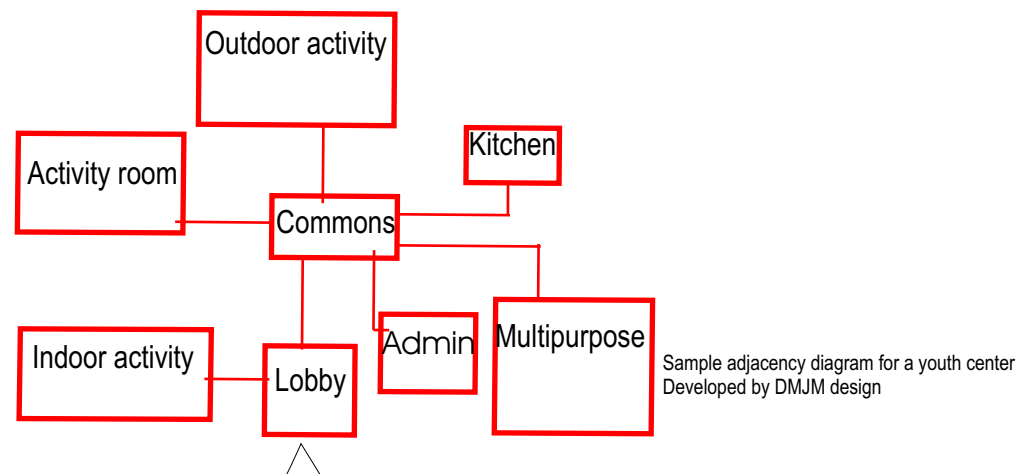
According to Sternberg (1971), typical Youth Centre activity spaces include the following:

- Control desk/check-in
- Commons/game room
- Snack bar
- Activity rooms/classrooms
- Multi-purpose room/gymnasium
- Computer room
- Outdoor activity areas

Typical Youth Centre support spaces include the following:

- Administrative office space
- Toilets and janitor facilities
- Kitchen and
- Mechanical/electrical/communications space

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Sternberg (1971) stresses that it is particularly effective to organise the activity spaces around the 'Commons' making it the heart of the programme area around which the other programme spaces revolve. The 'Commons' is the principal social gathering point and fulfils many of the social interaction goals of the facility. It usually includes sub-areas such as a game area, an eating area (adjacent to the snack bar), a television (TV) viewing area, and general gathering/conversation spaces. The activity rooms can range from small classroom spaces to a full-sized gymnasium, depending on facility mission, programs offered, and available budget. Typically at least two activity rooms should be provided: one configured for more academic or arts and crafts instruction and one configured for physical activities.