

# Hygge House

Cultivating calm and community through space and design

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*Hygge: Danish/Norwegian / n. / hhhoo-guh. A deep sense of place, warmth, friendship, and contentment<sup>1</sup>.*

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*Hygge House common space*

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<sup>1</sup>Lomas, Tim. (2016). Towards a positive cross-cultural lexicography: Enriching our emotional landscape through 216 'untranslatable' words pertaining to well-being. *The Journal of Positive Psychology*. 11. 546-558. 10.1080/17439760.2015.1127993.

# The basics

**What:**

Pre-assigned, 4-class dorm

**Whom:**

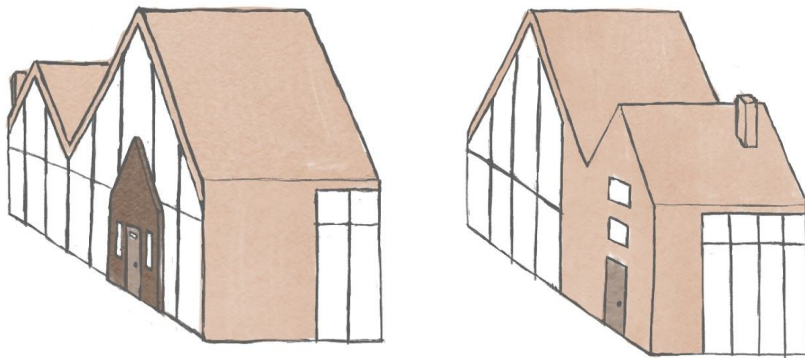
For Stanford students who value peace, quiet, from frosh transitioning to college life to upperclassmen looking for close-knit community

**Where:**

Off the Lower Row in a quiet location tucked away from other Row houses, yet also close to Tressider and other dorms on east and west campus

**Why:**

To promote a lifestyle balancing self-care and self-reflection with connection and community



*Top: dorm front and right view. Bottom: dorm back and left view.*

## The story behind Hygge House

Hygge House offers a calm, tranquil space for students seeking community and companionship who may otherwise have difficulty doing so in more extroverted social settings. We humans are social animals, and we all look for a community of friends and mentors where we can belong and can be ourselves. While Stanford's high energy and fun-loving vibe creates a warm, welcoming atmosphere conducive to meeting new friends, it can also be draining and overwhelming for more introverted students.

Perhaps no place on campus captures college social life better than student residences, where students eat, sleep, study, and socialize. At Stanford, dorms tend to swing across extreme sides of the social spectrum. All-frosh dorms are known for their intense, extroverted communities, but after frosh year, for students not living in smaller dorm communities like Row houses or suites, upperclassmen dorms tend to be quieter, more isolating, and lack community. Hygge House aims to smooth out these two sides by blending an open, community-oriented living space with a quieter, more relaxed setting.

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*“We shape our buildings, thereafter they shape us.”*

— Winston Churchill

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## Space as medium

We spend 90%<sup>2</sup> of our lives indoors. Architectural and interior design mold the spaces where we live, work, and play. Each subtle detail, from the building material to the color of the walls, subliminally impacts how we feel and act.

Personal flourishing and eudaimonia stem from a foundation of well-being. This foundation starts when we're in spaces that we feel comfortable and happy in, with the people we feel comfortable and happy around. Design has the power to shape those spaces that evoke comfort, security, and familiarity. These spaces can also encourage us to open up and connect to those around us. In college, that space centers around student dorms, where many students call home away from home.

## A *hygge* lifestyle

*Hygge* is a Danish word describing a way, a philosophy, of life. It's about slowing down and pausing to enjoy the simple things. College life can be stressful, and it's easy to get overwhelmed by the non-stop flow of midterms, p-sets, and social gatherings, and to miss out on the other parts of life, such as health, relationships, and adulthood. Hygge House aims to encourage personal and intellectual growth by cultivating a strong foundation for self-reflection and human connection. Its architectural and interior design utilizes environmental psychology and *hygge* concepts to establish a space balancing self and community. Following Scandinavian design principles, Hygge House draws inspiration from the local Bay Area nature. Its aesthetic focuses on beauty, simplicity, and functionality, intertwining form and function.

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*“Architecture is really about well-being. I think that people want to feel good in a space.”*

— Zaha Hadid

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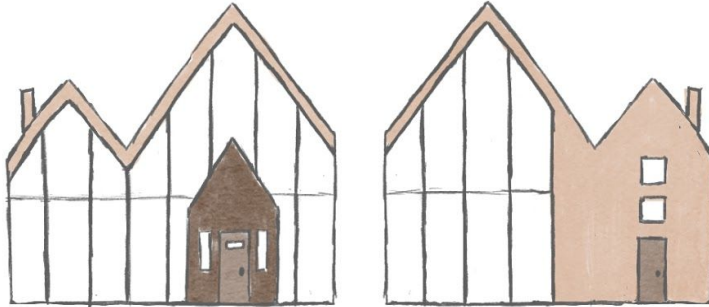
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<sup>2</sup>Klepeis, Neil & Nelson, William & Ott, Wayne & Robinson, John. (2001). The National Human Activity Pattern Survey (NHAPS): A Resource for Assessing Exposure to Environmental Pollutants.

# Design blueprint

## Facade

Built from locally sourced wood, Hygge House's facade has a silhouette that mimics the shape of a classic house, matching the house's mission to be a space where inhabitants feel at home.



*Left: dorm facade front. Right: dorm facade back.*

## Interior

Inside the house, all dorms are located on the second floor, which wraps around a single common space. On a campus heavily ingrained with Silicon Valley's tech culture, nature-themed interior design reconnects us to our organic surroundings, creating a natural environment for us to thrive in. Furnishing is based on the local Stanford Dish area scenery, centering around neutral beige hues and locally sourced wood furniture. There's also a heavy emphasis on round edges. Round edges are easier on the eyes because they're easier for our brains to process than hard edges<sup>3</sup>. Many of Hygge House's common spaces are filled with round furniture with ample carpets, blankets, and pillows.



*Above: common space is filled with round edges and neutral hues.*

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<sup>3</sup> Why Rounded Corners Are Easier on the Eyes. (2011, August 17). Retrieved from <https://uxmovement.com/thinking/why-rounded-corners-are-easier-on-the-eyes/>

## Natural lighting

In the daytime, tall glass windows let in plenty of sunlight, taking full advantage of the Northern California sunshine and reducing energy costs. At night, warm lighting from chandeliers, candles, and the fireplace create a cozy, calming mood that's perfect for releasing stress after a long day of lectures. Numerous research papers have shown the benefits of natural light on physical and mental health, sleep, and mood. A Harvard study found that after increasing natural light levels in the office, 78% of employees said they felt improvements in wellbeing, and 70% saw better work performance<sup>4</sup>.



Left: warm light chandelier. Right: fireplace.

## Biophilic elements

*Biophilia* means “love of life.” Hygge House is home to plenty of local flora, including Western sword ferns and Marina strawberry trees, inspired from the prevalence of Stanford’s fruit trees. Presence of greenery reduces stress, and studies have also demonstrated plants’ positive effects on reducing stress, improving focus, and even increasing immunity. A study by the University of Technology Sydney found major improvements among workers when plants were introduced to the office, including a 37% decrease in anxiety and 58% drop in depression<sup>5</sup>. Plants also clean the air, and their lush green hues relax the mind.



Left and right: trees and ferns.

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<sup>4</sup>Allen, Joseph & Macnaughton, Piers & Satish, Usha & Santanam, Suresh & Vallarino, Jose & Spengler, John. (2015). Associations of Cognitive Function Scores with Carbon Dioxide, Ventilation, and Volatile Organic Compound Exposures in Office Workers: A Controlled Exposure Study of Green and Conventional Office Environments. *Environmental Health Perspectives*. 124. 10.1289/ehp.1510037.

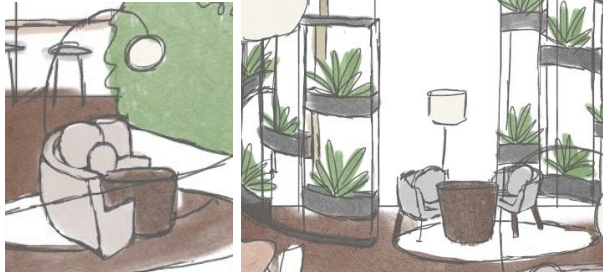
<sup>5</sup> Chignell, B. (2019, July 9). Seven benefits of having plants in your office. Retrieved from <https://www.ciphr.com/advice/plants-in-the-office/>.

# Manual for inhabitants

## For the individual

### Partitioned spaces

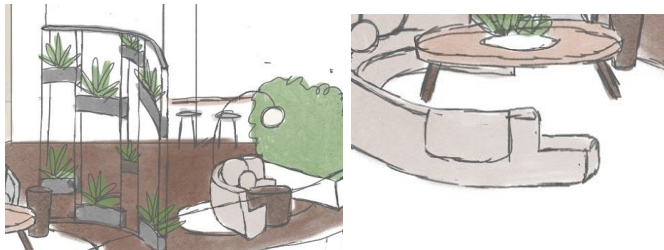
Hygge House has spaces for individuals seeking quiet and solitude. Hanging wall partitions with plants create quiet, comfortable nooks and crannies for residents to focus on coursework or hold more intimate, one-on-one interactions for small groups.



*Left and right: partitions create nooks and crannies.*

### Quiet acoustics

Peace and quiet in dorms are important to health and sleep. Ample plants, curved edges, and carpets absorb background noise 24/7. Textured acoustic panels in the second floor walls also help maintain low noise levels in dorms.



*Left: plants. Right: carpet and blanket.*

## For the community

### Sitting areas

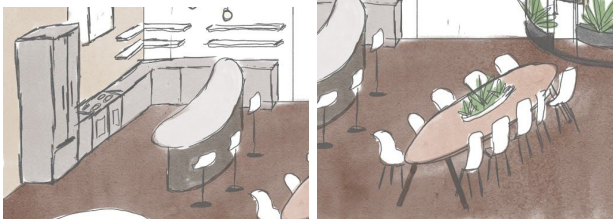
At Hygge House, common spaces are central to building community. They foster closeness and togetherness, and they invite neighbors to sit down and bond, whether it be a spontaneous, casual gathering or a midterm study session. The main sitting area lies in front of the fireplace, the hearth and heart of the house, and there's a second sitting area upstairs. Large, semi-circular couches foster inclusion. This way, each person is seen and heard, and is included in the conversation.



*Left: main sitting area. Right: second floor sitting area.*

## Dining space

Food is also an integral part to building community. An open kitchen and large dining space bring people together during mealtimes. Meals are opportunities for students to take a respite from busy schedules, and to sit down, relax, and unwind with good food in the company of other students.



*Left: kitchen with counter for students to relax and chat. Right: a long dining table for meals together.*