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Independent Study & Mentorship

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Assessment #2 ISM: Sensory Architecture

Lawrence, Amanda. "An Urban Architecture to Nurture People Affected by Alzheimer's Disease." *Carleton University Institutional Repository*, 2012, repository.library.carleton.ca/concern/etds/s4655h124.

In reading Amanda Lawrence's "An Urban Architecture to Nurture People Affected by Alzheimer's Disease" (2012), I learned how urban design can support individuals with Alzheimer's in ways I hadn't thought about before. The article focuses on how cities and public spaces can be designed to help people with dementia stay connected to their community and navigate their surroundings safely. This was a new idea I learned as I've always thought of dementia care as something that happens indoors, like in specialized care homes. Lawrence's work showed me how outdoor spaces, like parks and streets, can also be designed to benefit people with Alzheimer's by providing safe, familiar, and calming environments. This reminds me when my Great-grandparents would use to sit outside in the garden for hours and soaking up the sun. They would just sit in silence and would stare out at the trees, birds, and the flowers. Now, I understand it was calming for them, the sun blistering on your face; the sound of the wind; and the smell of lavender in the air. One thing I found really interesting was how Lawrence highlights the importance of creating clearly marked paths and using landmarks to help people with memory loss find their way. This connects to what I already know about architecture's role in helping people feel comfortable and less stressed. I've learned in previous research that things like lighting and room layouts can improve well-being, especially for seniors. This article

helped me expand my understanding of how those same principles can be applied to larger public spaces, not just buildings. The article also introduced me to the idea of biophilic design, which is about bringing natural elements, like plants and green spaces, into urban areas to improve people's health. I've heard of how being in nature can help reduce stress, but I hadn't considered how important this might be for people with dementia. Lawrence suggests that green spaces can provide calming sensory experiences for people with Alzheimer's like certain colors, fabrics, and smells in indoor dementia care. One thing I hadn't thought about before reading this article was how urban design must also focus on safety and accessibility for individuals with Alzheimer's. For example, cities need to make sure that public spaces have clear signs and safe pathways to prevent people with dementia from getting lost or confused. This expands my current understanding of dementia care because it shows that care doesn't stop at the doors of a facility—it extends into the community. Overall, this article helped me realize that urban design can play a much larger role in dementia care than I originally thought. Going forward, I'm inspired to think about how I can incorporate dementia-friendly design elements into not just buildings but also outdoor spaces in my future projects. I also want to explore the challenges of balancing community engagement with the specific needs of people with dementia, especially when it comes to safety and comfort in urban areas.