

# Design ideas for community centers

Architects often aren't involved in the design of small-town community centers.

"I think it's a matter of just building real economical, simple structures in many instances, that aren't required by law or code to be designed by an architect or an engineer," said Tom Hurlbert, principal architect at CO-OP Architecture in Aberdeen and Sioux Falls.

For communities doing their own design work, here are some basic guidelines to follow to create a space that will be used and valued, according to Hurlbert. "It doesn't have to be extravagant, nor should it be, but it does need to be nice and clean and appropriate."

**Dakotafire**

Find more design ideas in the March/April 2016 issue of Dakotafire magazine, featuring rural housing: "10 design principles for livable rural communities."

<http://tinyurl.com/10ruraldesign>

## A community center should be ...

- **low maintenance.** Fundraising to build a community center can be a challenge—but finding funds to maintain a building can be even more difficult, as it's less likely to get people excited. Designing for less maintenance on the front end can help to lessen this problem later.
- **well designed.** "If you're going to create the kitchen to your community, you should have natural daylight and comfortable, healthy cooling and heating," he said. Also think through how the building could be used, and don't box the space in to any one use—by affixing chairs in place, for example. One sometimes overlooked consideration is how sound will carry. A room that echoes won't be a great place for conversations.
- **well built.** "It's got to be something that will last and won't fall apart, because who wants to hang out in a dumpy kitchen?" Hurlbert said. A community center should last for decades and should be built with that idea in mind.
- **inviting.** A community center should feel welcoming to all members of the community. This means thinking about Americans with Disabilities Act compliance as well as keeping things safe and interesting for children (lower windows so children can see out, for example, or play spaces both inside and outside).

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