

“There’s nothing like the comforting sight of one’s own home after a long, difficult day.”

Unhappyhipsters.com | Sep 7, 2011

**ARCHITECTURAL FORUM** | Are architects out of touch?

December 7, 2011

David Huang



**PAYETTE**

**Are architects out of touch with what the general public likes or dislikes about buildings?**

## 2 CASE STUDIES | Korean Church of Boston

Brookline, MA  
Brian Healy Architects



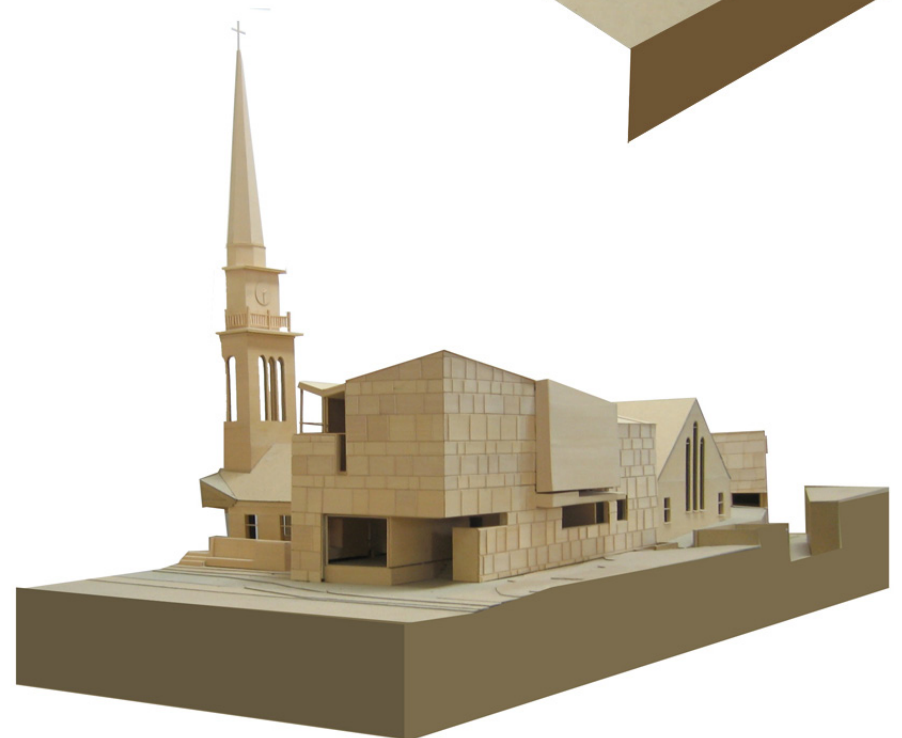
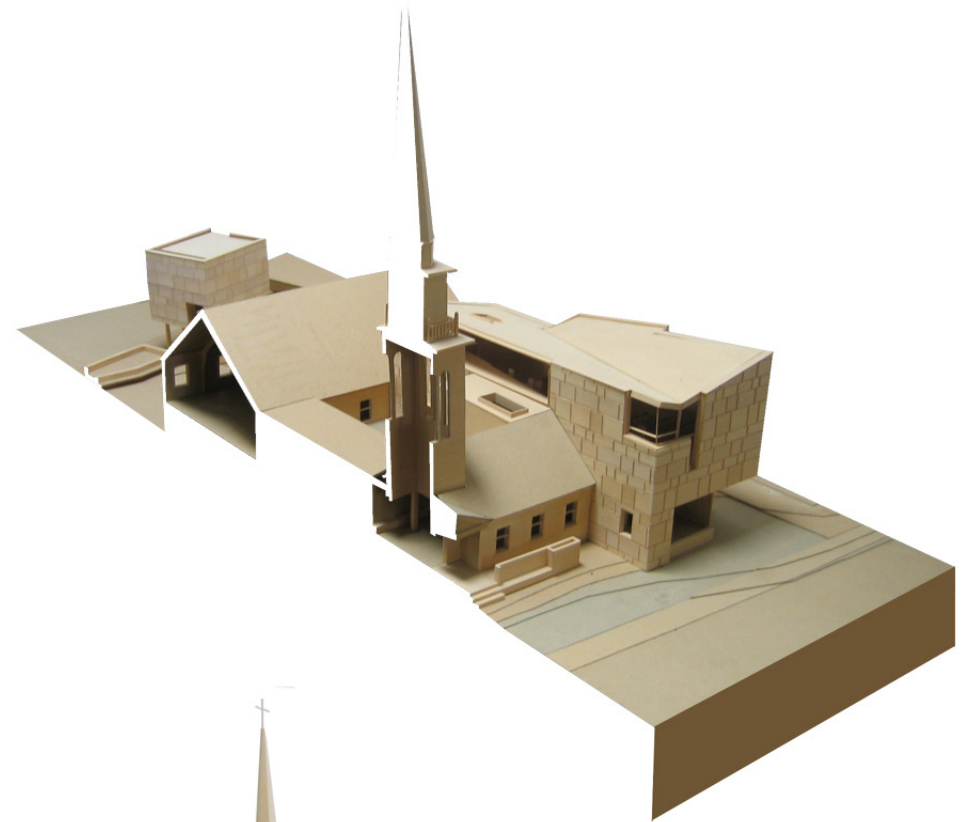
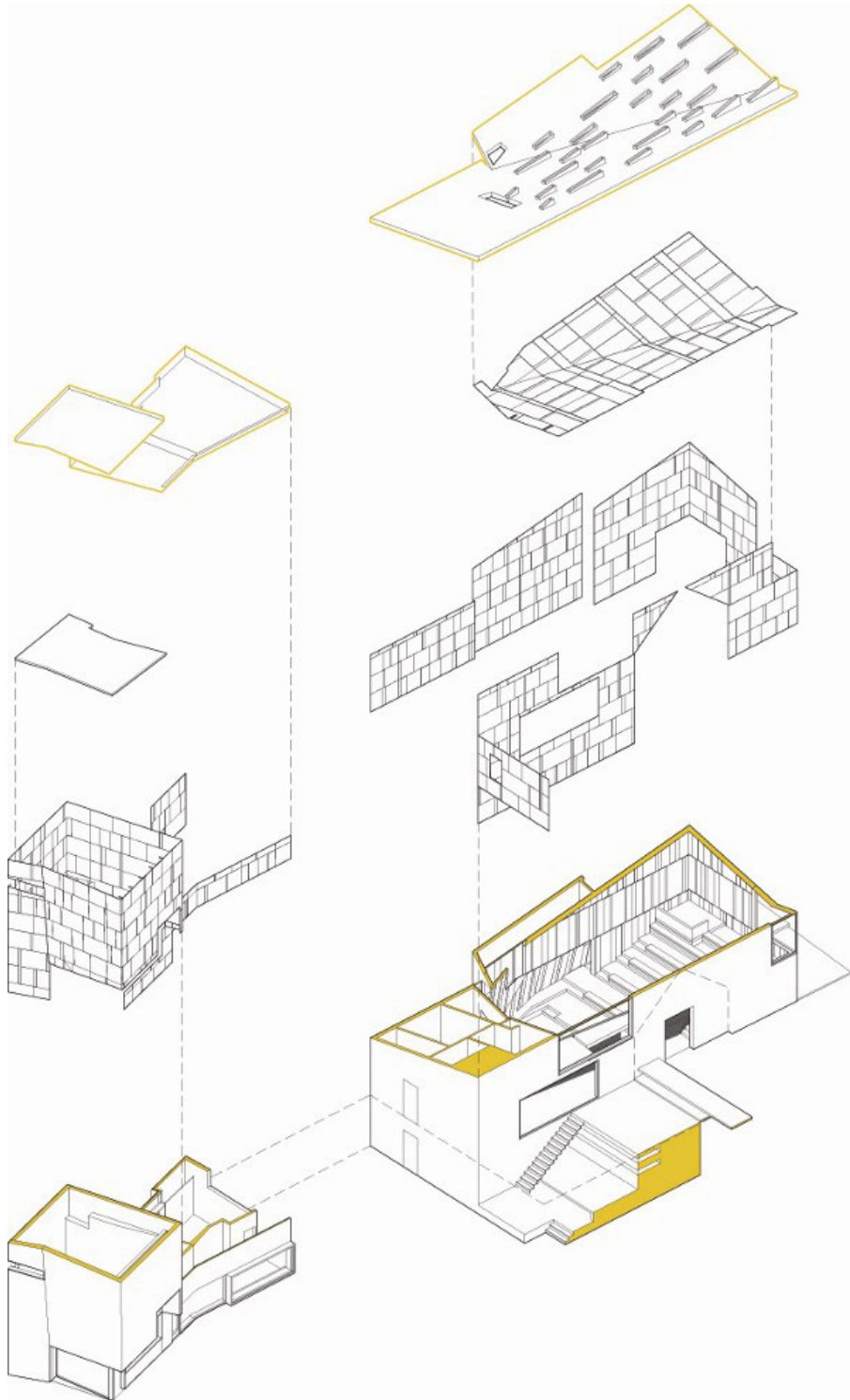


## KOREAN CHURCH OF BOSTON | Existing Building

Existing condition: A growing Korean congregation needs space to expand, a children's chapel and more classrooms. The front of the church is on a side street, Holden Street facing City Hall. The back of the church faces busy Harvard Ave in Brookline Village, separated from the street by a 9' grade difference, a raised lawn and a 5' retaining wall.



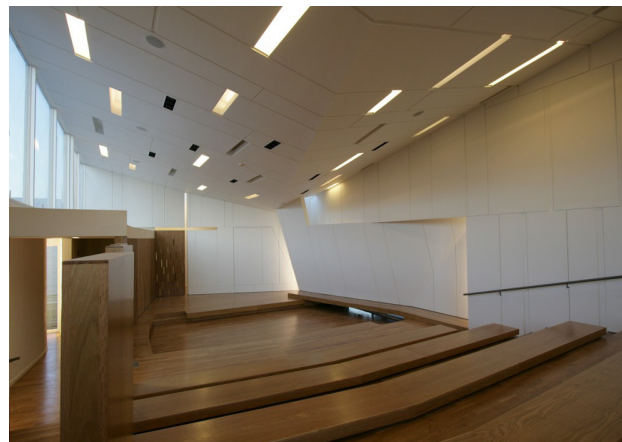














News	Business	Products	Building	Culture	Awards
------	----------	----------	----------	---------	--------

hanley wood

# ARCHITECT

THE MAGAZINE OF THE AMERICAN INSTITUTE OF ARCHITECTS

## 2008 PA Awards

### 55th Annual P/A Awards

#### 55th Annual P/A Awards

Introducing eight projects that are breaking new ground around the globe. A jury of architects and experts weighs in on what defines "progressive architecture" today.



#### Anmahian Winton Architects

The Community Rowing Boathouse offers access to the waters of the Charles River in more ways than one: It serves as the first riverside home for a largely volunteer-run nonprofit (which has been operating seasonally out of a nearby hockey rink for the past



#### Brian Healy Architects

The result of an open architectural competition celebrating the 50th anniversary of the Korean Church of Boston, the Children's Chapel and Community Center not only provides space for the next generation of parishioners but also acts as an entry point for



#### Himma Architecture Studio/Office dA

It is fitting that the new headquarters for Obzee, a company that owns several fashion labels, is so influenced by the clothes designed within. Located on an urban infill site in Seoul, Korea, the building is an eight-story tower wrapped in its own piece

The result of an open architectural competition celebrating the 50th anniversary of the Korean Church of Boston, the Children's Chapel and Community Center not only provides space for the next generation of parishioners but also acts as an entry point for the rest of the community.

Instead of creating a building distinct from the 1950s-era brick church, Brian Healy Architects decided to weave old and new together, intersecting the long and narrow contemporary structure with the existing church.

Juror Thomas Phifer found this strategy compelling: "I think the thing that you would think about doing in the beginning [of a project like this] is completely divorcing the addition—a modest addition away from a very traditional church. Here, they weave the buildings together and let the architectures come together. From a certain perspective, that was really the brave thing to do."

The new building features CMU and steel-frame construction, and it is clad in glass, zinc, and cementitious panels, creating a textured surface that relates to the surrounding brick but does not sacrifice the new structure's simple modernity.

The community center boasts a sunken courtyard, a clever solution to a potentially difficult site. When the original church was constructed, land was built up into a plinth as a solution to the 9-foot differential between the flanking streets. The plinth will be excavated to create a courtyard and throughway across the church campus, with the added benefit of creating a welcoming façade as opposed to a forbidding retaining wall.



## Brookline's big gray box

2009 AUGUST 7

by Neal Simpson



Linda Pehlke is not a fan of the new addition at the Korean Church of Boston in Brookline Village.

*The cube itself is a monolithic presence, kind of like a big stereo speaker in a room of antique furniture, as we look across the street to the fine historic red brick buildings, with their inviting doors and windows, fine detailing and timeless simplicity.*

The town had little say in the design of the the church addition because religious institutions have some protection from zoning regulations under the Dover Amdendment.

Linda Olson Pehlke makes no secret of her disdain for the addition to the Korean Church, which she calls a “monolithic, cold structure.”

“I think it simply doesn’t fit in the context of the Village,” the Browne Street resident said. “I think design should start from the perspective of a person on a sidewalk, because this is how we experience it, not in the abstract from a bird’s-eye view or from some architect’s model on his drawing board.”

Pehlke doesn’t like the slate-colored tiles that cover the building, its lack of windows or the way it looms over adjacent buildings on Harvard Street. She doesn’t like that construction workers have taken out plantings around the front of the church and replaced them with high concrete walls.

...officials at the Korean Church of Boston did not hold community meetings to discuss the design, beyond the courtesy presentation before the Planning Board. Because of the Dover Amendment, the plans did not go through the design review process as most buildings on Harvard Street would.

Pehlke, for one, wishes they had.

“If I had had a chance to even be present, I would have said to these people, ‘Would you really want to build something that people are going to be upset with in your community?’”



Wicked Local Brookline  
Posted Oct 30, 2009 @ 10:53 AM  
Brookline —

## Church design 'forbidding'

I am a long-time resident of Brookline and, for a significant period, I was interim pastor of the First Presbyterian Church of Brookline...

I have been greatly distressed and saddened by the appearance of the as-yet incomplete black-swathed structure, which now virtually surrounds the attractive church, which I served so happily.

The architect seems to have had no regard for the style of the present buildings (c. 1963), and for the appearance of this complex in the center of Brookline Village. Its dark exterior and lack of ground-level windows creates a most forbidding climate, which seems to say nothing about community accessibility, in spite of the claims of an exterior poster describing the project.

Considering the shape of the site, I am sure a competent architect could have come up with buildings more inviting and congruent with the structures already there...

The Rev. Dr. Horace T. Allen Jr.  
Ivy Street





Wicked Local Brookline  
Posted Nov 05, 2009 @ 09:20 AM  
Brookline —

It has been said that war is too important to be left to the generals. Perhaps the same can be said about architecture and architects.

The black towers that expanded the Korean Presbyterian Church may have seemed an ingenious solution to the challenge posed by a small lot. But I wonder if the architect ever stepped across the street to view his design proposal in a larger context: Brookline Village...a village...a collection of late-19th and early 20th-century buildings (mainly)...human scale...cozy.

The black towers are cold and impersonal, their blankness attenuated by only a few angular cuts. The tower facing Harvard Street is particularly objectionable, because its façade is unrelieved by much glass. Just a black wall.

The larger question is whether the architect and the Planning Board really considered what most [residents] like about living in the Village, about its friendly feeling and ambiance. This issue has to be pondered with any future construction projects in our town center.

Meanwhile, the immediate question is whether the architect and church would be willing to festoon that tower wall with some colorful banners, or perhaps allow nature to turn it green with some ivy.

Bill Schechter  
Brook Street



“The project is one of the most visionary since modernism and beyond. It pushes the limits of architecture, not just formally but, more importantly, socially, culturally, and technologically through the reinvention of the tall building. The various functions of buildings, their spatial articulation and organization, have been completely rethought to provoke a new kind of collective construct with the potential for social and urban change.”

– Tina di Carlo, assistant curator of architecture and design at the Museum for Modern Art (MoMA)

## The New Yorker

December 17, 2008

Paul Goldberger: Architecture's Ten Best of 2008

“...the headquarters of CCTV, the Chinese television network, by Rem Koolhaas and Ole Scheeren, of the Office for Metropolitan Architecture – a building which I had thought was going to be a pretentious piece of structural exhibitionism – turned out to be a compelling and exciting piece of structural exhibitionism.”





## The big boxer shorts

China Digital Space

大裤衩 (dà kùchǎ): the big boxer shorts

This is the slang term given to the CCTV building designed by Dutch architect Rem Koolhaas. The building has been accused variously of resembling a pair of walking legs, a person squatting over a toilet, and a woman's genitals. The architect has denied any impure motives.

After the term "big boxer shorts" began spreading, CCTV became concerned and launched a massive PR effort to try to get people to use a more respectful nickname for the odd shaped building. The PR effort was a failure--the more CCTV tried to get people to avoid using the term, the more it stuck.

## CCTV tower under fire once again

Source: Global Times [01:47 August 26 2009]

Dutch architect Rem Koolhaas published a statement on oma.nl, the website of his company, the Office for Metropolitan Architecture (OMA), saying, "The glorious CCTV building stands as the shining symbol for the ever-changing world order, and that's the exact intent of our design."

An online poll conducted by huanqiu.com yesterday revealed that 47 percent of participants believe there were pornographic incentives in the design of the CCTV building, and "felt very angry," while 35 percent believe the incentive "might be true but they couldn't care less. The other 18 percent didn't believe the rumor.

Some reports circulated with headlines such as "Designer fools 1.3 billion Chinese," and "the building should be pulled down as a national disgrace."

Another expert published an article called "Doubting the new CCTV, kill the designer," using the pen name He Qing, and pointing out that the design has a sexual symbol that humiliates the Chinese.

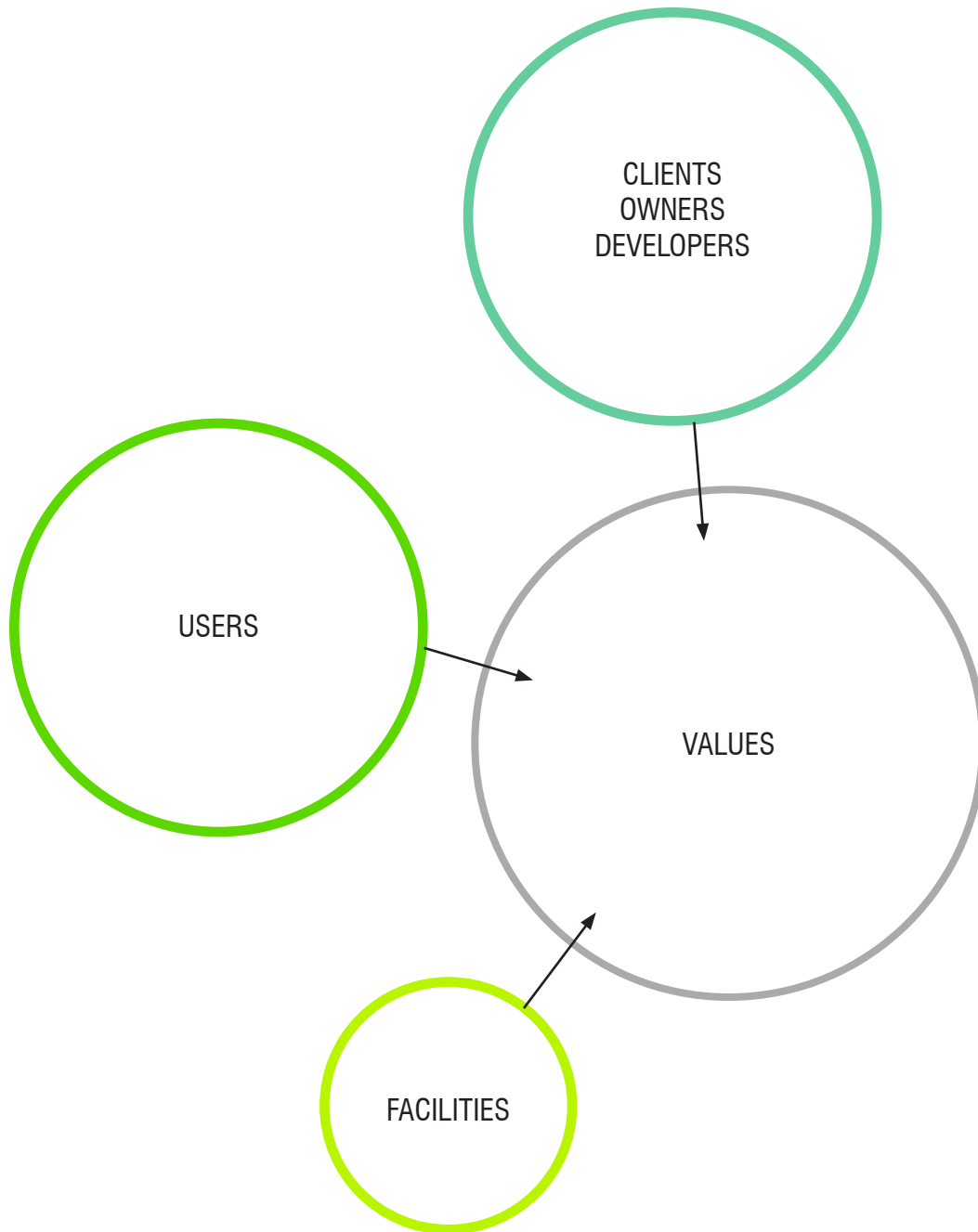
Zhu Zixuan, an architecture professor at Tsinghua University, insisted that buildings should be practical, economic and aesthetically pleasing.

"I found none of these with the CCTV headquarters building," Zhu said, adding that the building looks shaky, horrifying and is a waste of a lot of money, since a great deal of steel was used in order to keep it stable.

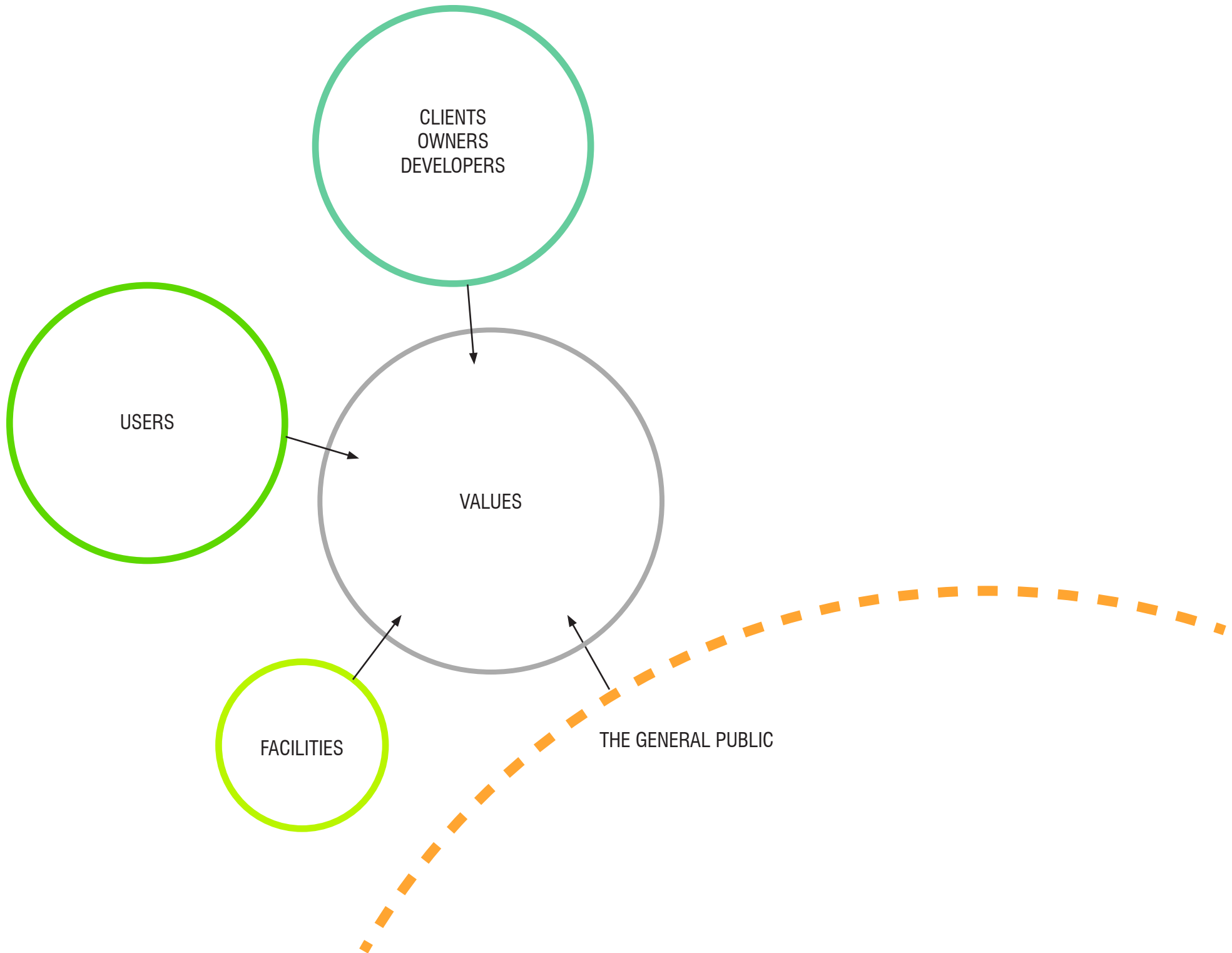


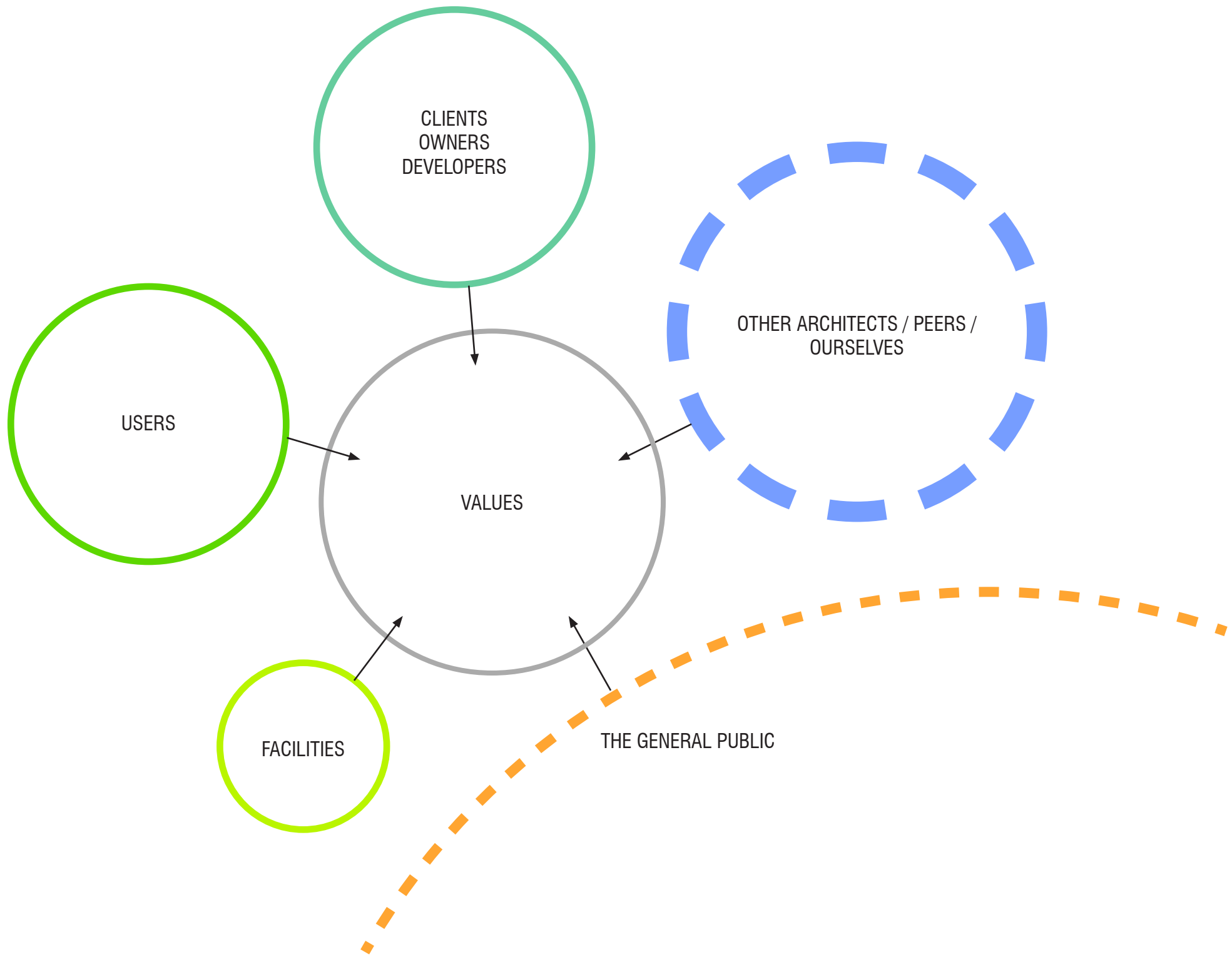


Who are we designing for?

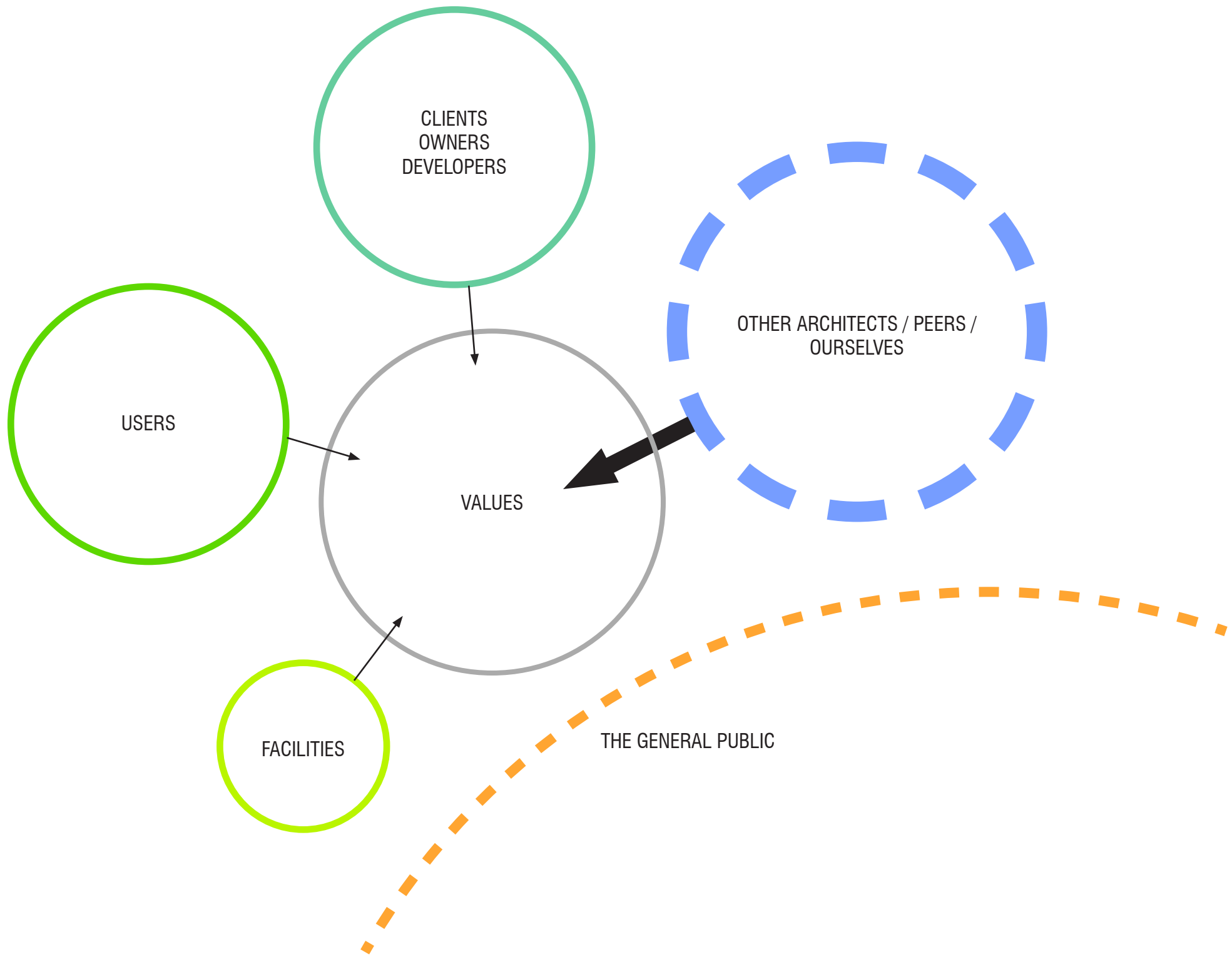


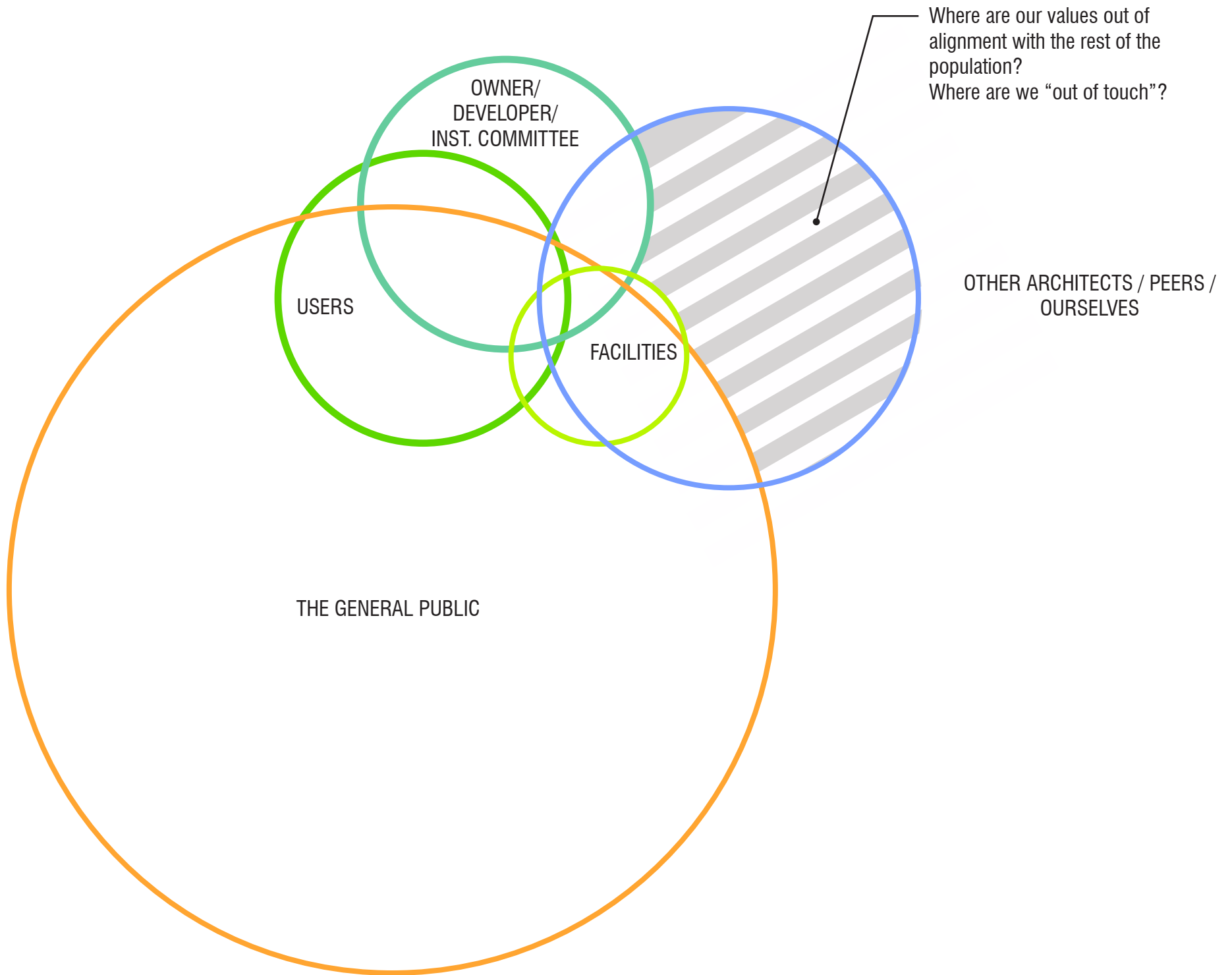












Possibly the most dangerous weakness in the architectural profession today, is the failure of the profession to have a legitimate, shared, canon of value, one which resides in the deep feelings of ordinary people, and which resonates with their experience. . . . or to grasp publicly experienced judgments of value as issues of fact, or to respect the values which “ordinary” members of the public have. Instead, the profession has erred, in the past, by looking down on the public, by holding up a highly idiosyncratic and specialized view of value, carried by “the few,” viewing the common man as ignorant, and treating architects as people who believe they have the right and authority and political power, to keep on ignoring public opinion about architectural values, and pushing their own special brand of postmodern image architecture, that is largely out of touch with every man and every woman.

The nature of Order: Christopher Alexander responds to William Saunter’s review of his latest book | Arch Record Dec 2002  
<http://archrecord.construction.com/inthecause/1202Alexander/response1.asp>



**SURVEY** | Results





## The Architect Interviews you

By Jody Brown— July 11, 2011

Lately, I've come to believe that Architects, and the very profession of Architecture have become detached from the day to day realities of the culture and people we serve. So, as a small step to begin to bridge this gap, I have decided to reach out with a few simple questions and interview, you! ( the casual reader of this blog ).

Granted, this is not a definitive set of questions. Clearly, some important topics have been overlooked; There is no mention of Sustainable design, no mention of the French, no mention of free range chickens, etc. But, we need to start the conversation somewhere. So, why not begin here? Please feel free to answer all or part (or even none of these). You can email me your answers, or put them in the comment section below. Or simply close this window, and move on with the rest of your day. Completely your choice. But, I do hope you take the time to consider these questions and share your thoughts. The profession will be better for it.

So, what do you say, are you ready for a few questions?

1. Please describe the saddest part of your suburban home while using the word "laminated".
2. What does American Architecture mean to you and how does this differ from American Idol?
3. Has Modern Architecture ever made you feel uncomfortable? If so, how did it touch you?
4. Does standing in line at the Apple Store in the mall bring to mind thoughts of the inevitable death of the American dream? If so, how does that make you feel about your new iPad?
5. Please discuss the Architecture of Thomas Jefferson as it relates to slavery and/or western expansion, in the form of a limerick.

Thanks in advance for taking the time to answer. I really appreciate it!

## Part 1:

What is your favorite building in greater Boston, and what do you appreciate about it?

Are there any buildings in greater Boston you particularly dislike? What do you dislike about it/them?

## Part 2:

Please rate the building in the photo above (Survey showed nine buildings from the greater Boston area)

- Rating scale: Love it / Not bad / Wouldn't notice it / Eyesore / Hate it

Optional: Why did you choose this rating?

Have you visited this building in person?

- Yes - been inside / Yes - seen from the outside / No

## Part 3:

Think of a building (other than your home) in which you regularly spend time, and/or of which you have a deep experience, such as your workplace, school, or place of worship.

- What is the building name (if any), location, and function?
- What features / aspects of this building do you find **most memorable**?
- What features / aspects of this building do you **most appreciate**?
- What features / aspects of this building do you **most dislike**?
- If you had to design this building, what three items would you pay most attention to?

## Demographics:

What is your profession / employment / field of study?

Are you related to an architect in your immediate family?

Please provide your name and e-mail (optional).

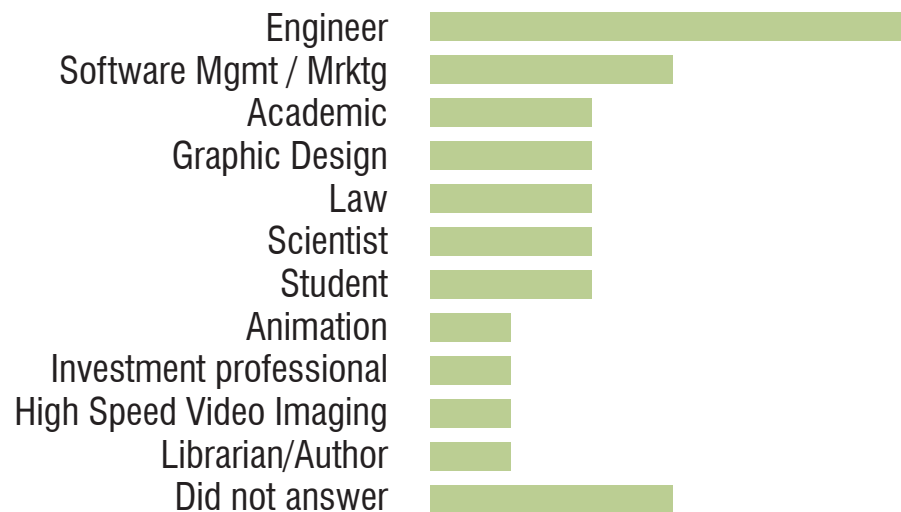


## 26 people responded. Who were they?

Survey was sent to my church group mailing list and some friends and neighbors by personal e-mail.  
Names optional - therefore unable to tell who exactly responded.

College educated young adults, married couples with children, age range from 20s to 50s, caucasian and asian-american, all living or working in Greater Boston area.

### Occupations:



### Related to an architect in immediate family:



## Methodology:

- Used only open ended questions, wanted to get people's unvarnished opinions, avoid architectural jargon biases
- Asked respondents to only consider buildings in Greater Boston - higher chance that both I and the respondents would actually be familiar with them
- Survey mentions that "All answers are valid and appreciated (even "I don't notice/care/have an answer")"
- Survey intentionally kept short as incentive to complete

## Biases:

- Too few respondents therefore survey is primarily anecdotal
- Demographically skewed by education level, race, and age
- High number of people in engineering

Question 1: What is your favorite building in greater Boston, and what do you appreciate about it?



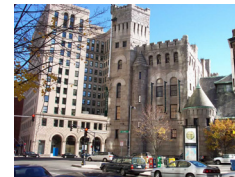
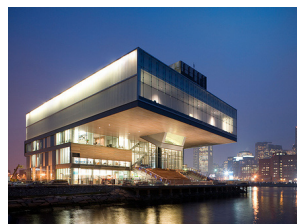
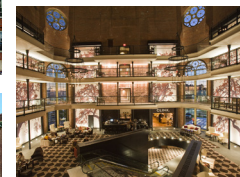
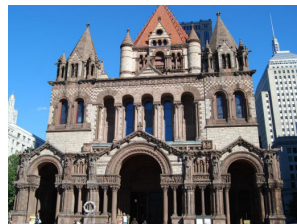
2



1



3





## Question 1: What is your favorite building in greater Boston, and what do you appreciate about it?



Stata Center, MIT (3)

... I personally like the curves. In general boxes and squares are not of particular interest to me  
... it just rises out of nowhere in this schizophrenic mess. I love the colors, too



Christian Science Building (3)

... It tells the story of how they see the world  
... churchy and gothic



Boston Childrens Museum (2)

...beautiful inside but also very functional - the lunch room for the kids, you don't have to go through the gift store unless you want to (this minimizes tantrums!) and the space somehow is open but keeps kids from running. It think it's terrific.  
...functional, entertaining, full of natural light



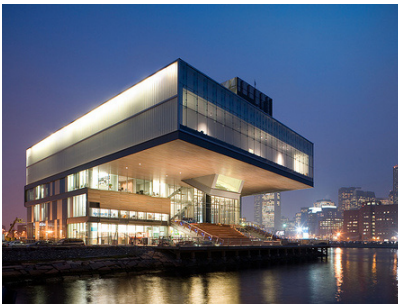
Rowe's Wharf (2)

... love the arch and how you can see the water through it  
... The size of it is very impressive and beautiful, and the shape of the arch looks cool. It's a unique feature in a string of rectangular buildings.



Museum of Fine Arts (2)

... it is a great representative of the history and feeling of Boston



Institute of Contemporary Art (2)

... modern styling, cantilever structure, the computer center that has the window to the water, the elevators are cool and spacious. The theatre is really cool. Huge windows with cool huge curtains that shut electronically during screenings



Trinity Church (2)



John Hancock Building (2)

... looks 2D from some angles, and has reflecting walls up the entire sides. I especially like it around sunset, when the sun reflects off of it, and the Trinity Church that provides the great contrast right next to it.



Old State House (2)

... It's classic and iconic. Never been inside, but the color of the dome really sets it apart.  
... classic, elegant, defined



Boston Public Library (2)

... because of the reading room  
... classic architecture with quality materials and craftsmanship, common space in which one encounters the public, places and resources for all ages and stages in the community, peaceful, graceful, etc.



Allston Public Library (1)

... I love the elegant, modern design, but especially the use of earth-tone materials and colors that made it seem very warm, unlike many modern buildings that use primarily steel and glass. Also, the colors and materials made it fit better into a primarily residential neighborhood so that it didn't stick out like a sore thumb.



Smith and Wollensky Building (1)

... I like that it looks like a castle and has some nice wooden and stone interior features.





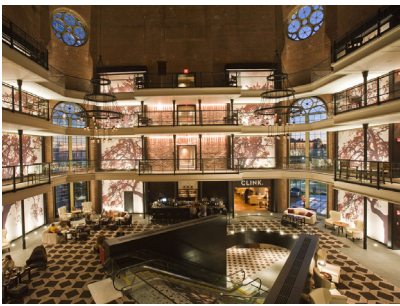
Custom House Tower (1)

... Lots of detail, but it still soars



Ritz Carlton Towers (1)

... Sleek. Elegant. Location



Liberty Hotel (1)

... for it's history and interesting (open) space.



Atrium Mall (1)

... It's open and there's a feeling of lots of natural light, even inside it's got a high ceiling so the light doesn't feel really unnatural.



Shire Building on Lexington Campus (1)

... I love the glass facade and the greenscaping around the building. They also put a courtyard with seating



Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum (1)

... history, garden, and open feel



Eliot House, Harvard (1)

... The dome, the archways, brick walls facing JFK seem very elegant.



Newbury Street (1)

... I think it represents Boston's energy well. Also that building with the clock that they show on nightly news intros.



Genzyme Headquarters (1)



Federal Courthouse (1)



BANQ restaurant (1)



Simmons Hall, MIT (1)



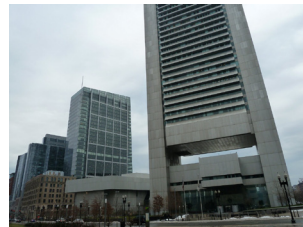
Question 2: Are there any buildings in greater Boston you particularly dislike? What do you dislike about it/them?

9



2

1





## Question 2: Are there any buildings in greater Boston you particularly dislike? What do you dislike about it/them?



Boston City Hall (9)

- ... plain ugly cement, and though it's kind of a neat overall upside-down pyramid shape, the heavy cement protruding around the windows makes it look like a barracks. Reminds me of a government office from the book "1984".
- ... Brutalism at its stunning best. Class I ugly, and meant to stay that way. No human dimension at all. Looks like something a Transformer would build.
- ... The only revealing quality of Boston city hall is that when you are inside City Hall looking out, you can't see City hall.
- ... Heavy and thick exterior makes it like a fortress rather than a place folks work. It has an extreme or one sided design for a city hall which represents all Bostonians.
- ... It's so ugly and imposing, and you can see trolls in its features. It looks top-heavy, like it's going to fall on you.
- ... because it's fugly
- ... ugly, cement-like, cold...doesn't make me trust the government who works there.
- ... very sterile and institutional looking



Simmons Hall, MIT (2)

- ... looks like a big Borg Cube. It is massive and doesn't have character.
- ... the MIT Borg cube (student dorm) is particularly ugly



Stata Center, MIT (2)

- ... ugly on the outside and confusing and gothic on the inside.
- ... Leave modern art to the galleries INSIDE museums.



One Boston Place (1)

... aka the "Death Star"



New England Aquarium (1)

... it is true that fish needs dark spaces, but there could be more areas with natural light.



Federal Reserve Building (1)

... It makes me think someone built a flimsy skyscraper and then had to put two big pillars on the sides to hold it up. It also makes me think I need to kick a field goal.



One Western Ave, Harvard Graduate School Housing (1)

... in fact this building makes the Genzyme Factory look good!.. This build has NO good angles - it is just ugly...and really detracts from everything around it.



International Village, Northeastern (1)



Korean Church of Boston (1)

... particularly the portion on Harvard St. Harsh discontinuity with surrounding structures, and quite apart from this fact, rather box- or bunker-like and ugly.



Stratton Student Center, MIT (1)



HOME / A&E / THEATER/ARTS

The Boston Globe

## Ugly is in the eye of the beholder

Readers vote for Boston buildings they'd rather not see



Among the nominees for Greater Boston's ugliest building, according to Globe readers, are the Government Center Parking Garage (above left), the twin white towers of Symphony Plaza East (above right) and West, and 111 Huntington, with its crown-like top. (David L. Ryan/Globe Staff/File 2009 (Above Left); Sarah Brezinsky Gilbert/File 2005 (Above Right))

By Robert Campbell

Globe Correspondent / March 21, 2010

1. Boston City Hall

2 (tied). Government Center Parking Garage and Symphony Plaza East and West towers (corner of Mass Ave and Huntington)

- Fiedler Foot Bridge across Storrow Drive
- The Institute of Contemporary Art
- 111 Huntington (tower with the "tiara")
- 53 State St ("The black glass tower mashed onto the old Stock Exchange façade")
- 100 Federal Street ("the pregnant building")
- Korean Church in Brookline
- Malden City Hall
- BU Law Tower
- Middlesex County Courthouse
- Federal Reserve Building

"It's interesting that... no reader listed an old building. All are relatively modern. Older buildings, which often seemed ugly when they were new, have a way of weathering into acceptability over time."



## Reader Comments:

**BostonCharles wrote:**

“Cambell says that only modern buildings are considered ugly, but old buildings age out of it. Another, more likely theory is that old ugly buildings were long ago torn down, leaving only the nice ones... And I’ve definitely noticed that any building loved by academic architects and critics is going to fail the emperors new clothes test.”

3/21/2010 1:31 PM EDT

**heroicmodernismstudentmt wrote:**

“A lot of Bostonian’s are hating the concrete structures mentioned because it is what they cannot or CHOOSE not to understand. These buildings, born from a brutalistic style, are in response to the terrible post-war era, one of cultural uncertainty, with cities begging for expansion and urban renewal. Concrete does not age well in Boston, but I doubt that is the reason for all of the comments that call these structures “ugly” without explanation. These buildings all have incredible concrete structures and depth that plays with light and shadow (on a sunny day). I’d much rather work in one of these bold buildings than some predictable and boring aluminum clad skyscraper.

Long live concrete. I hope Harvard never touches the Yamasaki Gem over in Cambridge.

3/23/2010 3:41 PM EDT”

**oldisold wrote:**

“A lot of you seem to be missing out on something important. Truth.

I would much rather see something that represents something real, no matter how stark and even brash it is. What you see is what you get, the structure is displayed right for the viewer (interior or exterior) and they are designed around there uses. Beyond all this, these building brought boston from its once sad state to were it is now. These buildings represent a time in architecture, there is not one architecture, it is always changing, and will not just go back to classical design. Classical architecture is not right for this time in our world, while once it was, these “brutal” buildings, are a response to truth that had been missing in most architecture for a long time.

Some of you seem to recommend a new “face”, I think the term “mask” would be more appropriate.

It widely known that many of these buildings go completely misunderstood, but it seems to due to lack of thought and an open mind. I am not saying these designs are the in all end all, but that’s because we are in a different time now. I would suggest some day when you are rushing to work you take a different path, slow down and give some of these buildings a chance. I also understand that most people never will, so for them I say there are plenty of fake columns and arches around Boston around for you to enjoy, or maybe your happy with your McMansions?

“old architecture is old architecture, new architecture is new architecture.”

3/23/2010 10:07 PM EDT

# Cambridge Community Television

The Voice and Vision of Cambridge, MA

home

watch

make

connect

about

Username:

Password:



Log in

[Create new account](#)

[Request new password](#)

Search

## CAMBRIDGE EYESORES: An Update

February 13, 2009 - 3:49pm — [kmklinger](#)



### Posted by kmklinger



[Karen Klinger](#) I'm a career journalist who has worked at the San Jose Mercury News, United Press International and Agence France Presse and as a freelance writer for magazines and newspapers. I came to... [more](#)

### Recent posts by kmklinger

[Sounds of Musical Sculpture Return at Last to...](#)



Jun 22 2011 - 6:44pm To mark the opening of the rebuilt Kendall/MIT station in 1987, the MBTA installed a three-piece musical sculpture by Groton artist Paul...

[MIT 'Science Reporter' Looks Back on...](#)



Jun 16 2011 - 1:43pm By Karen Klinger Long before celebrities such as actor Alan Alda and astrophysicist Neil deGrasse Tyson became hosts of science programs on...





Author lists a number of derelict buildings. Two functional buildings are also mentioned:

“in Porter Square, passersby can enjoy the stunning confluence of one of the city’s most disliked buildings—the stark, modernist apartment complex at the corner of Beech Street and Massachusetts Avenue—and the almost equally odious glass building across the street at 1972 Mass Ave. housing the Anglo Continental School of English.”

Readers wished to add to the list:

- Edward J. Sullivan (Middlesex County) Courthouse in East Cambridge
- Cambridge High School (exposed cement pillars)
- MIT Green Building
- MIT Simmons Hall
- Harvard Holyoke Center
- Stata Center

“I like the modern apt building in porter. It uses part of the old facade in an interesting way. I get a little tired of the “if it’s not brick and Georgian it doesn’t belong” whining from neighborhood committees and the “Boring is better” set. It keeps the whole area from progressing architecturally, culturally, and economically. If people want to live in a museum, move to Sturbridge Village.”

February 19th, 2009 by central squared



# Building Ratings

## Methodology:

- Nine buildings, all architectural award winners and/or quite well known in Boston, with a wide range of program types
- Four images of each building, with some exterior and some interior to give a better “feel” of each building
- All photos came from the architect’s own websites except for well known public landmarks.





**"Big Dig" House**  
by Single Speed Design

Function: Single Family House  
Location: Cambridge, MA



Please rate the building in the photo above

Love it

Not bad

Wouldn't notice it

Eyesore

Hate it

Rating scale:



Optional: Why did you choose this rating?

Have you visited this building in person?

- ☐ Yes - been inside
- ☐ Yes - seen from the outside
- ☐ No

## Scoring:

Love it	5 points
Not bad	2 points
Wouldn't notice it	0 points
Eyesore	-2 points
Hate it	-5 points

- Scoring method emphasizes extreme ratings
- Range of possible points = 130 to negative 130, score then re-weighted to be out of 100 to -100.
- Additional analysis: is there a correlation between how much people like a building if they have been there?

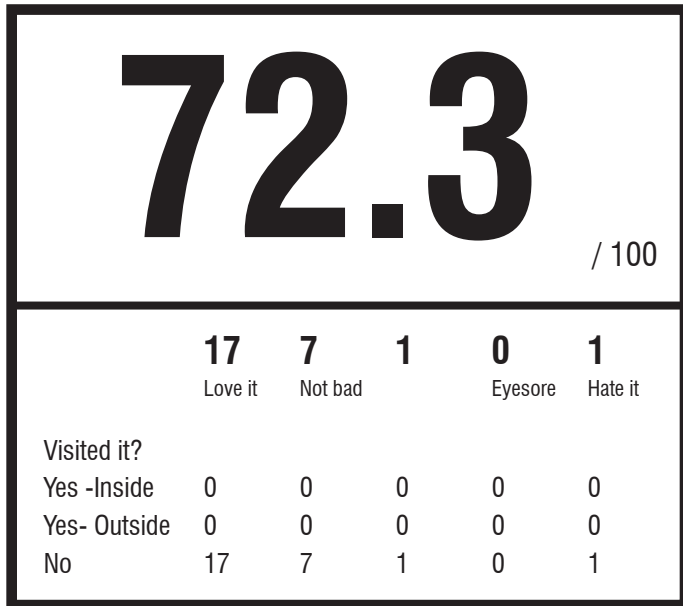
## Example:

<b>45.4</b>					
/ 100					
	<b>13</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>2</b>
	Love it	Not bad		Eyesore	Hate it
Visited it?					
Yes -Inside	1	0	0	4	2
Yes- Outside	1	1	1	0	0
No	11	5	0	0	0

**"Big Dig" House**  
by Single Speed Design

Function: Single Family House  
Location: Cambridge, MA





All respondents have not seen this house in person.

### Postive comments:

“Look at those windows! it’s beautiful. and the outdoor spaces, and the trees, need i go on? how much does something like this cost?”

- nice lines, colors
- spacious, elegant
- open spaces with different levels intersecting with each other.
- wood / glass / metal exterior is very nice
- not a traditional boring sihouette.
- nice landscaping
- good natural light, large windows
- dark floors
- optimizing use of small space
- modern look often clashes with its surroundings but the wood detailing helps to relate

### Negative comments:

“Typical ultramodern nonfunctional house for magazine display. It is a show house, not real.”

“There is no unity that I can see. It’s novel, and makes me think mad scientists do crazed experiments there. I’d want to shoot my neighbors for not making a house that looks like a house.”

- high heating bill?
- functional layout concerns, inefficient?
- high ceiling - difficult to change light bulbs, difficult to maintain / clean
- may look dated (in a bad way) 20, 30 years down the road
- flat roof
- might lack privacy
- interior is a bit sparse, too open

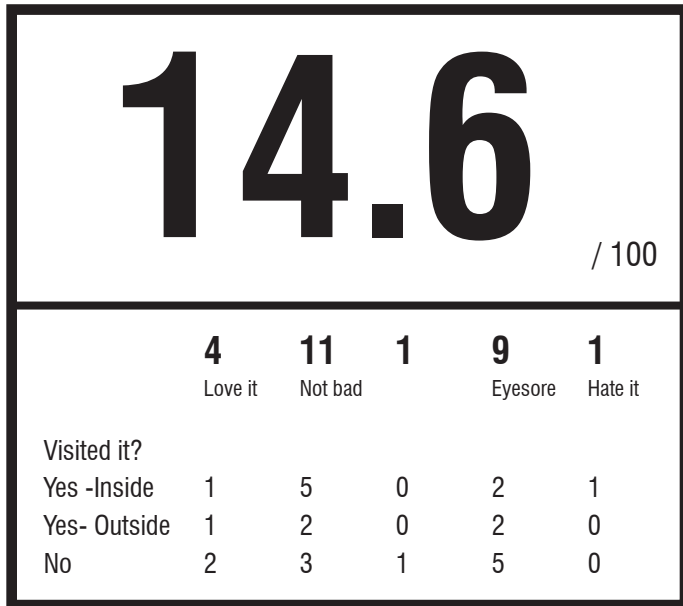


**Korean Church of Boston Childrens' Chapel**  
by Brian Healy

Function: Church

Location: Brookline, MA





11 out of 26 respondents have visited this building in person, both from within and outside. Those who have visited tended to like it more, while those who have not visited it are approx. equally divided between like and dislike. However, almost all who rated it highly also qualified their comments by criticizing the exterior for its contemporary style, poor juxtaposition with existing, and black color.

### Postive Comments:

“i think the addition is a good one overall, and the interior is awesome/really cool, has useful space, and great light, but i don’t “love it” because i wish they chose a different color for the exterior.”

“Love the two buildings separately. But they are strangely juxtaposed as traditional and contemporary.”

- wood siding
- warm, comfortable, inviting, beautiful interior space to pray and worship
- asymmetry, geometrical shapes
- clean interior lines, swooping lines, high ceiling
- seating arrangement and acoustics
- amount of natural light, varied window placements, interesting skylights

### Negative comments:

“its right next to a traditional building that is also beautiful and they don’t look good together at all. Also, why is it black? It’s a well-lit modern building with a soring roof and spacious ceilings, and it’s black? It looks like a piece of the Death Star.”

“it takes no consideration in the building it is attached to.”

“I’m not sure why a contemporary style was chosen as an add on for a beautiful classic church.”

“...doesn’t tie in height, massing, colors, with the existing building”

“...sharp, black wart is just ugly.”

“The new part looks like the old part threw up.”

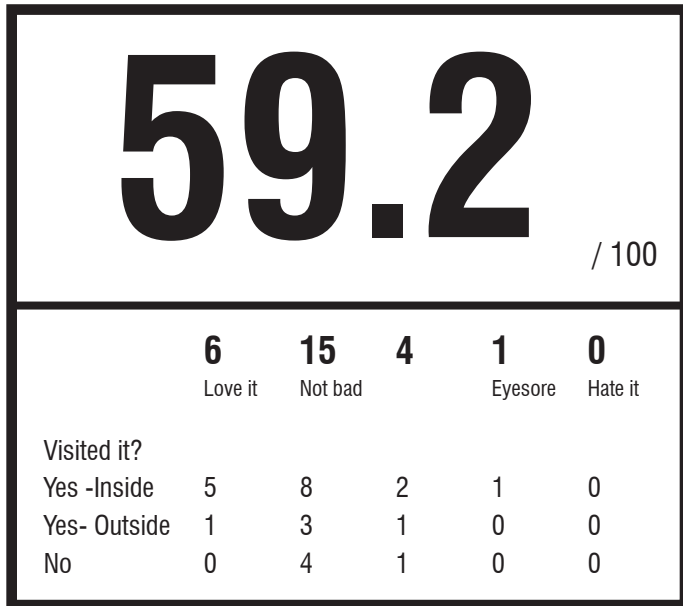
“...looks like a cancer that’s been fused into an old church building. On it’s own, I’d love it, fused to an old church? No thanks.”

**Institute of Contemporary Art**  
by Diller & Scofidio

Function: Art Museum

Location: South Boston, MA





Most respondents have been inside or seen this building. Those who had been inside tended to rate the building higher.

### Postive Comments:

“Very daring, contemporary design.”

“This was my first thought for my favorite building in Boston. It is so beautiful. All the glass, and the cool shape that extends the galleries to overhang the water make it seem weightless and futuristic. I love it!”

- futuristic, modern, cool
- dramatic impressive cantilever
- fits with the waterfront location, no neighbors to compete or clash with
- love the room with the computers facing the water
- lots of glass and clean lines
- matches the concept of contemporary art

### Negative comments:

“Modernism revisited? No human dimension. Big ice cube with a section cut out.”

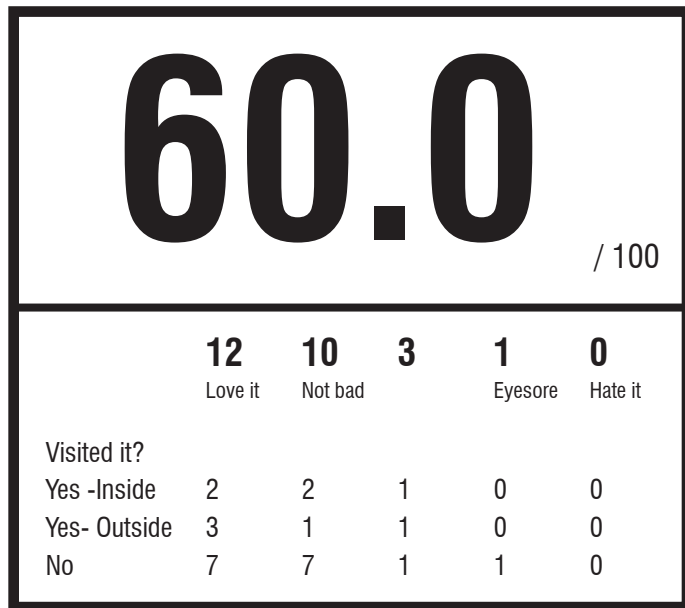
- poor choice of location
- interior boring but functional
- lack of elevator, poor circulation between floors
- feels cold, impersonal
- seems expensive
- looks great from some angles but not as great from others
- hate flat roofs, feels unbalanced and almost bland
- execution feels forced, feels like a copy of something great, rather than something great itself



**Honan Allston Public Library**  
by Machado & Silvetti

Function: Library  
Location: Allston, MA





Most respondents have not been inside or seen this building.  
However, visting did not appear to significantly affect the rating.

### Postive Comments:

“I always loved this building, though I’ve never been inside. That courtyard in the back looks great. I like the way that the rows are aligned with the windows with some open space. It looks like a lot could be illuminated just with natural light.”

“My favorite building - functional and still gorgeous. Warm and inviting.”

“Can’t believe I haven’t been here yet. Really like the material used. Space looks elegant. Love the natural light and all the windows.”

- nice lines, roof line, fits very well with its surroundings.
- materials and colors on the exterior
- spacious, airy interior
- wood interior feels warm, welcoming
- clean, functional, lots of seating areas, lounge areas
- lots of glass, natural light

### Negative Comments:

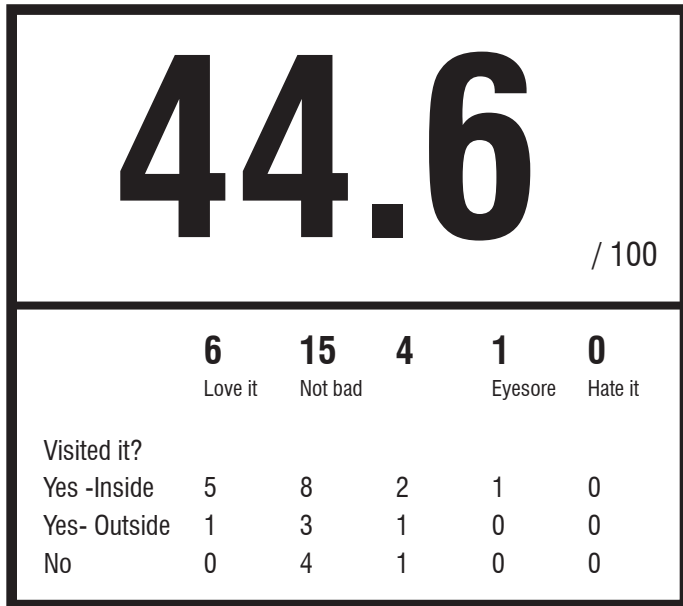
“Who put the roof on backward? Why on earth are the sides so splotchy? The interior is sort of blah, and the outside makes me cry for some right angles. That breezeway or whatever it’s called looks inviting, though, and that’s why I don’t hate it.”

- strange roof angle
- looks too costly for public building
- stone looks heavy on top of glass
- poor selection of exterior finishes - looks shabby soon after construction
- hard to maintain wood, not durable

**Boston Childrens' Museum**  
by Cambridge Seven

Function: Childrens' Museum  
Location: South Boston, MA





Most respondents have been inside or seen this building. Those who had been inside tended to rate the building higher.

### Postive Comments:

“I love going here. I think it works with the old warehouse building and the contemporary fun front-age.”

“The flow of this design is open, airy but oh so functional! It is supposed to accommodate kids and their harried parents and it does so very well!”

- fun, creative design for kids on the inside and outside
- lots of natural light
- modern steel/glass is well integrated and appropriate for historical brick surroundings
- stonework patio that surrounds the building
- Looks great but really clashes with the surrounding buildings.

### Negative Comments:

“Clunky and too industrial, to the point that it feels cold, which seems incongruent with its purpose.”

- too industrial for a kids place
- over crowding inside
- windows are mostly on one side, dark at the back
- visually too busy
- looks unfinished from the outside



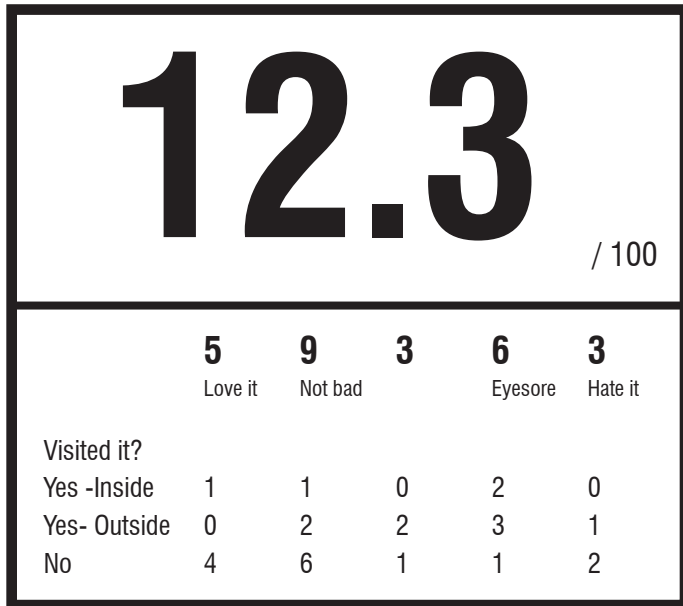
## Simmons Hall, MIT

by Steven Holl

Function: Dorm

Location: Cambridge, MA





Respondents were approx. equally divided between those who have and have not visited this building. Those who have seen only the outside tended to rate the building lower, while those who have not ever visited tended to rate the building higher.

### Postive Comments:

“Looks more interesting / intriguing than a “normal” dorm.”

“The sheer number of windows is a neat optical illusion from the outside.”

- nice silhouette at different angles
- like random colors on the outside
- inside and layout is quite nice

### Negative Comments:

“looks like a lego with leprosy”

“we’ve always called this building the “borg cube”... that isn’t a compliment. It’s boxy and robotic.”

- too geometrical, icecube
- not functional, too many little windows, poor natural lighting
- interior furniture is cheesy
- flamboyant, disruptive
- extremely expensive and over budget
- cutouts feel like a huge waste of space

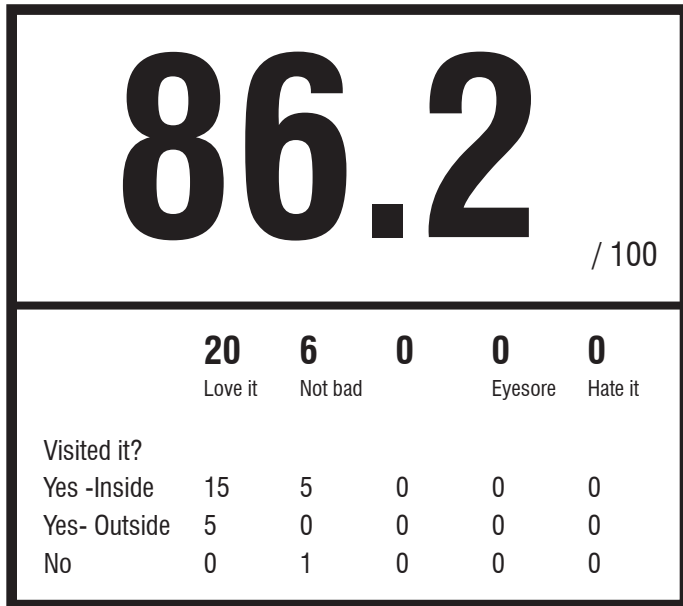
## Boston Public Library

by McKim, Mead and White (1892), extension by Philip Johnson (1972)

Function: Library

Location: Copley Square, Boston, MA





Almost all respondents have been inside this building, and the response was wildly enthusiastic. Very few negative comments here.

### Postive Comments:

“Classic and regal.”

“The “secret” garden inside is so wonderful! We feel like we get to step into Europe for a couple hours when we go.”

“An island of serenity in downtown Boston. Would not change a bit of it.”

“this is one of my favorite places in the city. it’s beautiful, embodies the boston charm, well maintained, beautiful work spaces, function halls, gorgeous on the outside and in - many rooms nicely lit. grandeous and inviting.”

- classical style, ornate
- sits nicely on the huge open space at Copley
- human scale
- modern expansion doesn’t overpower the old building
- high and ornate ceilings
- almost like a spiritual space, awe-inspiring and scholarly
- well preserved

### Negative Comments:

“I’ve never liked the the concrete “cubicle walls” that sit in front of the first floor windows of the main entrance to the new building”

“Reading is an intimate activity, and the space could be smaller. It seems like if you whispered or rustled, the sound would carry--the opposite of what you want in a library.”

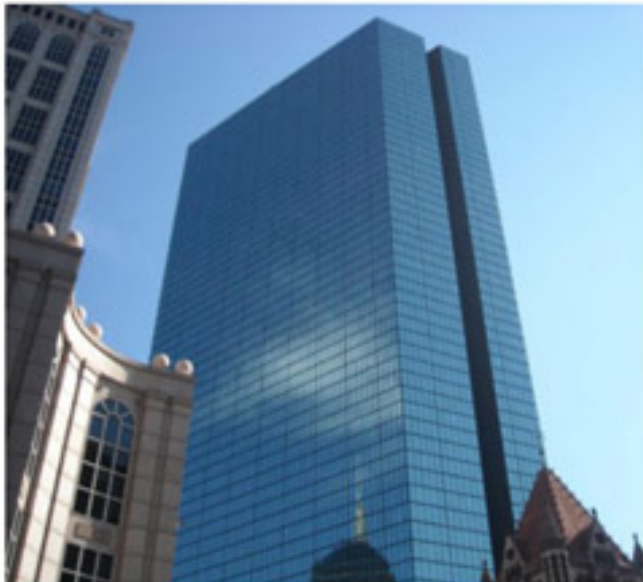
“the modern side [is] old and smelly”

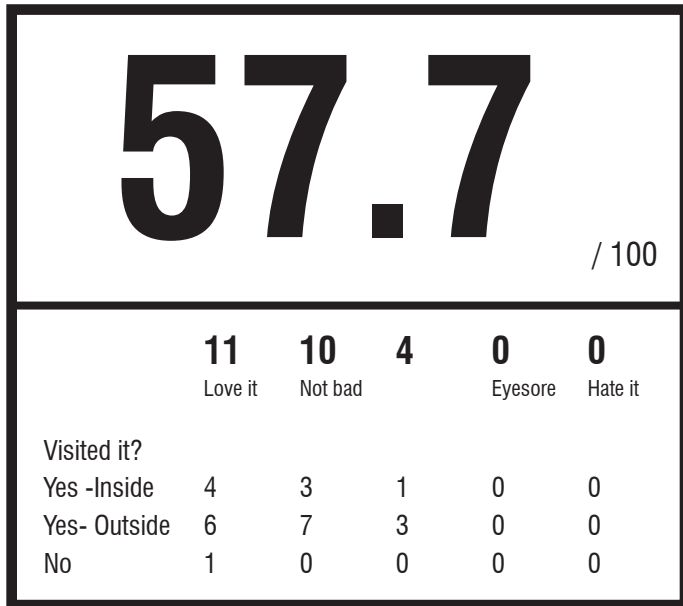


**John Hancock Tower**  
by I.M. Pei

Function: Office

Location: Copley Square, Boston, MA





All but one respondent has seen this building (the surprise is that there is someone who has NOT seen it). The overall response was a measured enthusiasm, and at worst a resignation to what some considered its banality.

### Postive Comments:

“The effect of the reflective surface is otherwordly and makes it look deceptively light and ethereal. It definitely adds a certain je ne sais quoi to the skyline. And while it stands out, it does not look out of place. “

“nice but not exceptional. simple and clean but not really a statement other than the height”

- original and unobtrusive for such a large building
- simple, clean and futuristic
- reflecting the sky / horizon, blends in with sky
- iconic, part of Boston skyline, good landmark
- projects power
- perfect shape

### Negative Comments:

“every city needs a skyscraper and i guess this one is “not bad” but it’s not the most amazing skyscraper in the world. it’s almost like all it has to offer is that it is tall and shiny.. that’s kinda boring... but that might be more representative of boston being boring.. ?”

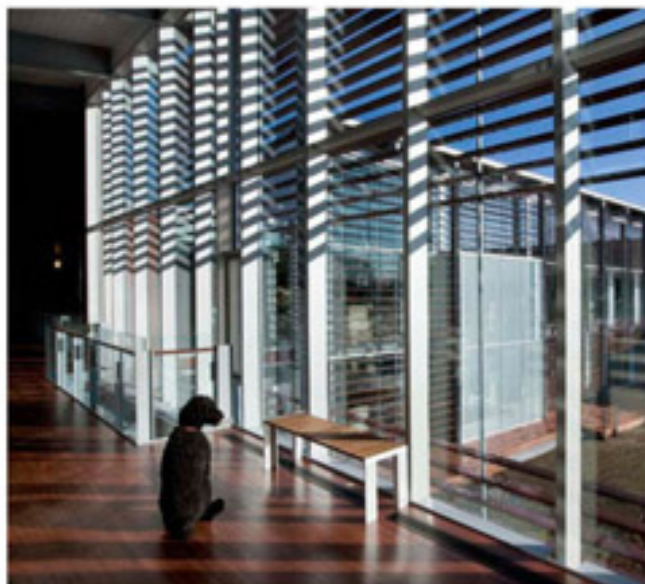
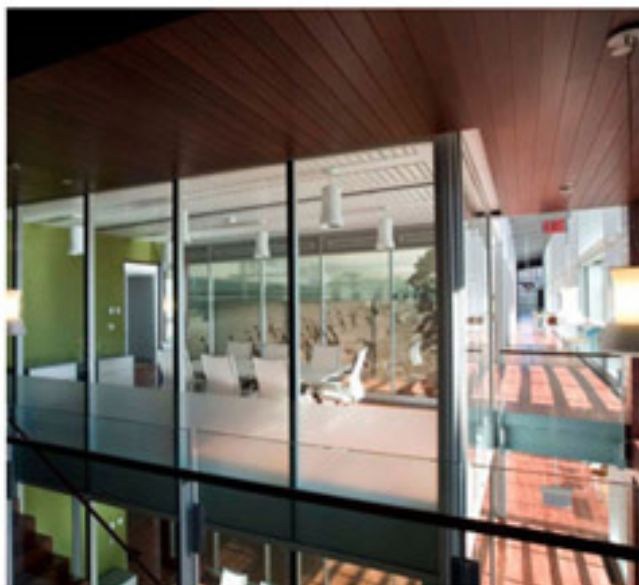
“IM Pei? Let’s put a featureless chunk of glass in the middle of the city If you look long enough you get used to the ugly.”

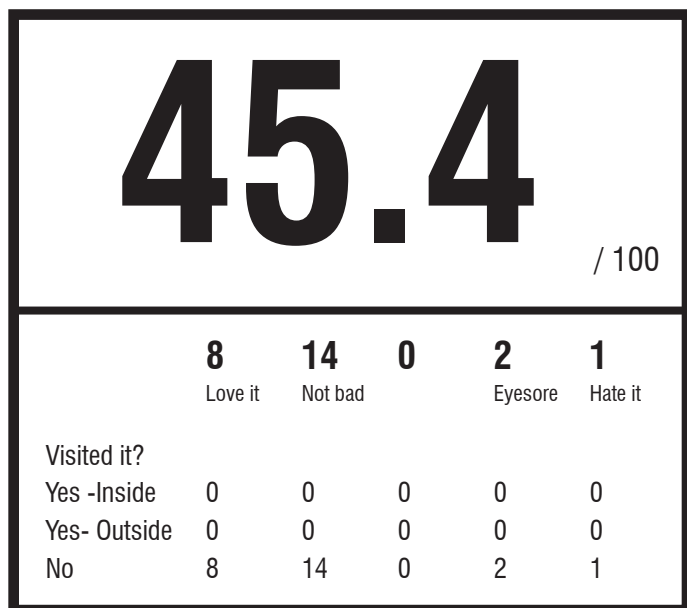
- poor glazing engineering
- generic looking

**International Fund for Animal Welfare HQ**  
by designLab

Function: Office

Location: Yarmouthport, Cape Cod, MA





No respondents have seen this building in person, which is to be expected since it is fairly new, far away in Cape Cod, and a private office building. Overall people liked it but many commented that the photos were insufficient to give them a good sense of the building and its relationship to the context.

### Postive Comments:

“i like the looks of buildings like these.. and from the pictures it feels like it executes the vision well.”

“A place to work with all that light is perfect!”

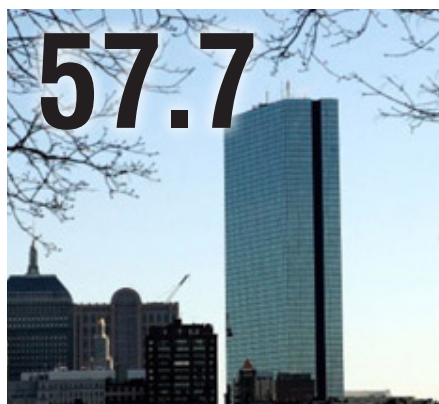
- natural light, big windows
- country modernism
- angles and clean lines
- materials used
- simple and elegant but still new and interesting

### Negative Comments:

“if the photos were better there’s a good chance i’d love this building too. my issue with these ultra modern buildings in historical areas known for their charm is if they dominate and become the majority of building types.. too many is too cold.”

- seems too expensive for a non-profit
- seems too generic
- connection to animal welfare is not obvious
- Looks a little overgrown.





## Part 3:

Think of a building (other than your home) in which you regularly spend time, and/or of which you have a deep experience, such as your workplace, school, or place of worship.

- What is the building name (if any), location, and function?
- What features / aspects of this building do you find **most memorable**?
- What features / aspects of this building do you **most appreciate**?
- What features / aspects of this building do you **most dislike**?
- If you had to design this building, what three items would you pay most attention to?

## Buildings:

	high rise office	midrise office	lowrise office	public library	higher education K-12	courthouse	church
One Beacon Street	●						
Prudential Building	●						
12 Farnsworth Street		●					
Shire, 700 Main Street, Cambridge		●					
Building 40, GE Aviation, Lynn, MA			●				
1515 Hancock street in Quincy			●				
Morrill Memorial Library in Norwood MA				●			
Boston Public Library				●			
Wheatley Hall, UMB					●		
William James Hall @ Harvard					●		
Media Lab (old) at MIT					●		
MIT main campus					●		
Lawrence Elementary School in Brookline						●	
Moakley Courthouse						●	
Memorial Chapel in Harvard							●
Park St. Church							●
Westgate Church							●
Korean church of boston							●

## Memorable:

### Office space:

- looks like a new building despite being old
- cozy and small
- interior renovation looks hip, color makes a big difference
- poor choice of carpet color
- square white tiles that clad both the outside and inside of the building
- big atrium in the middle with skylight that brings light into the middle of the building
- simplicity

### Institutional:

- large walkways with the large plate glass windows looking over the harbor
- high ceilings and the preservation of the architecture, concrete walls and stone lion sculptures in the front
- classic architecture on the outside but renovated on the inside
- big fountain in the front
- claustrophobic basement level and lobby
- brick, columns, substantial vertical space in auditorium, MLK painting in auditorium
- concrete
- view from the 15th floor
- domes
- red brick exterior

### Religious space:

- windows in the sanctuary capture sunlight
- stained glass window in the main sanctuary
- modern lobby in the back, and the stone staircase outside leading to the curved wooden staircase inside
- hand carvings, woodwork, simplicity



## Appreciated:

### Office space:

- sky lights and open windows
- views of Boston
- conveniently located bathrooms
- nice interior renovations
- close to public transportation and the waterfront
- well connected to other buildings
- connected to main street and parking garage by glass bridge
- open and long space allows access to coworkers in other depts, comfortable meeting rooms

### Institutional:

- open, airy but each space feels private, insulated from the greater cacophony surrounding you
- looks warm and inviting on the inside, with lots of nooks and crannies
- spacious plaza in front, warm, light-filled entry, comfortable and well-lit auditorium
- traditional and large lobbies and lecture halls
- modern classrooms with AV equipment
- comfortable libraries
- green courtyard space

### Religious space:

- well designed and well built sanctuary
- convenient location, playground and field closeby
- open floor plans with regular-height ceilings., inviting and warm yet quiet and cozy/private from the inside.
- central location on campus
- building is quiet, reverant, nicely maintained, respectful.

## Disliked:

### Office space:

- top of the building undistinctive
- crumbling and/ or cracking parts, rodents
- insufficient or poorly designed bathrooms
- boxy shaped metal clad building
- lack of natural light, limited ability to expand areas, no “respectable” conference rooms
- location next to meth clinic
- poor wayfinding

### Institutional:

- poor acoustics
- lack of effort to update
- lack of natural light, insufficient / dirty windows
- cramped
- lecture halls with uncomfortable chairs
- entrance doorways and exterior dreary and dirty
- small offices, walls are cinder blocks
- cold
- low ceilings

### Religious space:

- lacks of nice common room
- building run down
- foyer too small for congregating, use of building spans too many floors
- poor lighting in sanctuary, mundane appearance

## Areas to focus on:

- natural light
- functionality, sufficient space (not cramped), ceiling height
- large open spaces, social spaces
- integration of the landscape and nature
- accessibility within the building, better connection between departments, elevator system, signage
- acoustics, noise reduction, access to quiet space
- aesthetics outside that reflects quality of the work performed on the inside, less strictly utilitarian design, more interesting
- integration between modern and classic areas
- colors and nicer finishes
- HVAC/humidity control - dry and uncomfortable in winter.
- bathroom location, electrical placement
- cleanability and sanitation

## Summary:

### Memorable:

- natural light, windows and views
- colors, materials (metal panels, brick, concrete)
- simplicity
- spaces (high ceiling, cozy, claustrophobic)
- historical detailing, high craftsmanship - classical style, fountain, stained glass, woodwork, murals, staircases

### Liked/Disliked/Focus on:

- natural light, windows and views
- functionality, sufficient space (not cramped), ceiling height
- open and social spaces / private and quiet spaces
- integration of the landscape and nature
- location and connectivity within and to other buildings
- aesthetics, colors and finishes
- occupant comfort - heat and humidity
- proper maintenance, new spaces



PHRASE	COUNT	PHRASE	COUNT	PHRASE	COUNT	PHRASE	COUNT	PHRASE	COUNT	PHRASE	COUNT	PHRASE	COUNT
building	107	of the building	14	the exterior	9	and inviting	6	facade	5	don't know	4	real	4
looks	66	room	14	the new	9	boston city	6	favorite	5	door	4	reflects	4
space	50	see	14	the water	9	boston city hall	6	features	5	entrance	4	rest	4
love	46	house	13	water	9	cambridge	6	fit	5	existing	4	say	4
windows	38	i love the	13	wood	9	close	6	for kids	5	eyesore	4	school	4
light	37	interesting	13	a great	8	cold	6	garden	5	fact	4	seen	4
boston	36	looks like a	13	building is	8	fan	6	give	5	fan of the	4	simple	4
nice	36	lots	13	color	8	fan of	6	here	5	feel like	4	size	4
outside	33	lots of	13	cube	8	fun	6	history	5	finishes	4	skyline	4
the building	31	pretty	13	dark	8	government	6	ica	5	first	4	skyscraper	4
think	30	better	12	designed	8	harvard	6	in boston	5	from the outside	4	space and	4
buildings	29	church	12	floors	8	in the building	6	inside looks	5	function	4	square	4
design	29	city hall	12	kids	8	it look	6	interior is	5	general	4	stata	4
look	29	classic	12	love it	8	it looks like	6	living	5	government center	4	tall	4
modern	29	lot	12	museum	8	it looks like a	6	lobby	5	ground	4	the architecture	4
great	27	sure	12	of natural light	8	kind	6	makes it	5	halls	4	the back	4
old	27	this building	12	people	8	kind of	6	makes me	5	hate	4	the front	4
natural	26	work	12	spacious	8	live	6	money	5	heavy	4	the inside looks	4
open	26	a lot	11	the boston	8	look like	6	not sure	5	high ceilings	4	the middle	4
love the	25	center	11	walls	8	lot of	6	on the outside	5	home	4	the photos	4
out	24	large	11	a big	7	open space	6	open spaces	5	human	4	the rest	4
natural light	22	lines	11	a bit	7	public library	6	overall	5	is nice	4	the roof	4
the outside	22	looking	11	angles	7	rather	6	part of	5	is pretty	4	the sides	4
good	21	office	11	back	7	shape	6	put	5	layout	4	the surrounding	4
interior	21	part	11	bit	7	sides	6	quality	5	lights	4	the view from	4
well	21	public	11	built	7	single	6	reading	5	long	4	the windows are	4
city	20	right	11	colors	7	stone	6	surroundings	5	look at	4	thumb	4
i love	20	the interior	11	dorm	7	style	6	the buildings	5	look like a	4	to live	4
make	20	the windows	11	elegant	7	the city	6	the glass	5	lots of natural	4	to see	4
big	19	ugly	11	feels	7	the modern	6	the main	5	lots of natural light	4	very open	4
how	19	area	10	front	7	time	6	the mit	5	made	4	view from	4
it looks	19	contemporary	10	go	7	top	6	the view	5	make it look	4	warm and	4
mit	19	inviting	10	guess	7	a good	5	the wood	5	making	4	warm and inviting	4
library	18	know	10	high	7	addition	5	traditional	5	materials	4	windows are	4
looks like	18	main	10	how it	7	always	5	view	5	me think	4		
new	18	roof	10	huge	7	art	5	will	5	metal	4		
cool	17	the space	10	i guess	7	at mit	5	window	5	middle	4		
feel	17	warm	10	looks great	7	auditorium	5	a certain	4	my favorite	4		
floor	17	architecture	9	old and	7	being	5	a different	4	needed	4		
glass	17	place	9	place	7	black	5	animal	4	neighborhood	4		
i think	17	ceilings	9	rooms	7	borg	5	basement	4	of building	4		
makes	17	functional	9	sanctuary	7	borg cube	5	big windows	4	open and	4		
beautiful	16	lighting	9	side	7	boring	5	building in	4	ordinary	4		
exterior	16	location	9	surrounding	7	brick	5	building with	4	outdoor	4		
hall	16	make it	9	the old	7	build	5	campus	4	own	4		
areas	15	of boston	9	to make	7	buildings in	5	certain	4	photo	4		
clean	15	of natural	9	very well	7	change	5	classic and	4	photos	4		
spaces	15	small	9	years	7	clean lines	5	common	4	pictures	4		
different	14	street	9	a lot of	6	concrete	5	dirty	4	places	4		

LEGEND
adjectives
nouns
nouns, materials
verb



## Are architects out of touch?

\*The use of “we” in the points below is simply the author’s opinion and does not speak for all architects

No:

- We\* prioritize designing spaces with natural light, access to views, connectivity inside and out, a balance of open and private spaces, integration of outdoor landscaping, feeling of spaciousness, interesting aesthetics, colors and finishes.
- Good news: a significant proportion of people in this survey DO notice and appreciate contemporary design.

Maybe:

- Spaces perceived by the public as “warm and inviting” may not necessarily be perceived by us\* the same way and vice versa.
- Ease of maintenance, durability, occupant comfort are also shared concerns for us but not always top priority.
- The public values the appearance of maximizing cost-efficiency and functionality. We\* may “waste space” in the pursuit of spaciousness and shared open spaces.
- We\* need to be aware that the public could view municipal buildings as overly “expensive” due to being unconventional in form or materials.
- The public is divided on flamboyant design that calls a lot of attention to itself (ala ICA, Stata, Simmons Hall) - some love it, others hate it.

Yes:

The data suggests that some members of the public hold certain views that we\* as architects do not share:

- a widespread revulsion towards mid-century modernism, particularly any exposed concrete which is seen as “cold”.
- wary of the industrial aesthetic or minimalism and overly pure geometric forms. This is reflected in use of terms such as “death star” or “borg cube” which evoke science-fiction images of industrial totalitarianism.
- a deep love and connection to historical architecture, especially in the neo-classical style.
- the juxtaposition of contemporary architecture with a historical context may be considered visually jarring.
- wary of some typically modern forms - eg. butterfly roofs, solid upper volumes floating on glass, and daring structural moves.

# “But I Still Think It’s Ugly”: Explaining Architecture to Non-Architects

February 1, 2011 By Tim Culvahouse, FAIA

## Part 1:

...it’s perhaps worth asking, “What is the difference, really, between ‘architects’ and ‘non-architects’?” Why should there be, as there so often is, such a great divergence in our likes and dislikes? We might suppose that our likes are shaped by our understanding—that architects like certain things because we understand their value, while other people don’t... Yet, a litany of valuable features, however well explained, is unlikely to overcome objections of the sort, “Yeah, but I still think it’s ugly.” ... What we do need is a sober appreciation of how people come to have the preferences they have and—as importantly—how we architects have come to have the ones we have.

So, we might begin by adopting an attitude of humility or—if we’re feeling too damned humble already—of critical self-reflection. Rather than start with the assumption that our task is to remedy the deficits in non-architects’ understanding of design, we might ask how our own understanding has been shaped and perhaps skewed by professional education and training—more broadly, by professional acculturation.

Often, the attitude of de-familiarization is reinforced throughout the professional design studio sequence, programmatically, as in assignments that invoke uses like “a house for an acrobat”; and critically, in the insistence that normative responses be rigorously questioned and, by implication, avoided. While a powerful goad to thinking, this attitude has at least two dangers. The first is that it tends to **instill a distrust of, even a disdain for, the familiar**. Rather than merely thinking, “Avoiding the familiar is a useful way to learn about the properties of architecture,” we think, “Avoiding the familiar is a necessity for designing good buildings.” We transform a pedagogical tool into a design standard.

The second danger is that we may fail to realize that, at the same time we are questioning the average person’s experiences of buildings, **we are ourselves becoming attached to a set of experiences that we will cherish as much for their own newfound familiarity as for their objective qualities**. While we might like to think that our appreciation of the Villa Savoie or the Thermal Baths at Vals is purely the product of reasoned inquiry, it is in fact as much a product of our familiarity with these buildings as is our non-architect friends’ preferences for whatever buildings they enjoy.

## Part 2:

A second thing to consider, (if we are to grasp how far our mindset may differ from that of our non-architect fellows), is the way that **architecture school redirects our mode of comprehending buildings from experience to reason**...architecture studio instruction comes to depend less on the estimation of effect and more on the coherence of the design process itself. The student establishes an intention—verbally, through sketches and sketch models, or otherwise—and subsequent critique focuses on how well the student develops that intention. Rarely will that intention be to achieve a particular external effect; instead, it will focus on the internal relationship among architectural concepts and elements.

It is this disjunction between logic and effect that forms the greatest barrier to a meeting of the architectural and non-architectural minds.



“It’s not the consumers’ job to know what they want.”

-Steve Jobs



“Her parents decided she needed space to grow up as a healthy little girl.”

Unhappyhipsters.com | Nov 16, 2011

Did any of the results today surprise you?

Who are we designing for? Are we being self-serving? If so how?

Would knowing how the general public thinks make a difference to how you design?