

“[It was] ugly, concrete, uncomfortable seating, no windows, [an] old building, [and] hard to find.”

— U of T Student

The Big Idea . . .

Based on the needs identified by the Whole Student Development Domain team, Chill Spots was proposed as a way to redesign already existing spaces to better meet student needs.

The Need . . .

A space, or spaces, that allow students to relax, reduce stress, take a break from work, and engage in productive activities that support their mental wellbeing.

Design Principles

These design principles suggest key space elements that help meet student needs.



- **Permission:** Students said they feel unwelcome going into spaces that don't have indicators of permission. They associated a lack of indication with restricted spaces meant only for those with specific affiliations (e.g., belonging to a particular college or faculty).

“...felt like it was exclusively for [specific college name] students” — U of T Student

“I also like [cafe on campus] because it is a warm and welcoming environment.” — U of T Student

“All the times I got lost at [building name]—they seriously need to print a map. There just need to be maps as you enter [building name]. Surprisingly there are many signs inside, but they're not right at the entrance so you have to wander around. It's just a really hard place to navigate.” — U of T Student



- **Purpose:** Students said they liked spaces that are near food, services, classes, or areas they need to be (it gives them a purpose to be there) and rarely go to spaces that are out of their way or 'inconvenient' or don't give them a purpose to be there.

“[Building name] study rooms are that one place on campus where all of our group members have been to, because it is very close to food trucks, Second Cup, and so much more....” — U of T Student

“It was very relaxing and close to the food court, [which] made it a good place to grab food and chill.”

— U of T Student

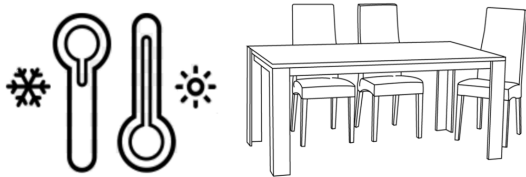


- **Bring the outside in:** When students talked about the places on campus that they loved, the recurring theme was open spaces with visible windows and plants. Students said that these spaces allowed them to ‘take a break’ and gave them the opportunity to reconnect with nature.

“They have that aesthetic that I like to look for: they have big windows [and] lots of natural light which is important to me.”
— U of T Student

“Big windows, feels very open... I can take a quick break to look out the window [before] check[ing] back in class.”
— U of T Student

“I prefer the atmosphere, because there’s a lot of light, and it’s an open space, so it feels more relaxed, not like you’re in jail trying to study.” — U of T Student



- **Comfort:** Students touched on a number of aspects that make a space comfortable: the most recurring were lighting, temperature, the presence of comfortable chairs, and enough tables.

“I was in [space] and I brought a sweater and had to put it over my face, because it was so cold.... It’s always the little ones that have weird temperatures because they don’t regulate.” — U of T Student

“There’s one library in [building name]. It’s so sunny—I always feel more free in a building that has a very high ceiling. It’s not a library that I go to very often because it’s closer to Spadina.” — U of T Student

Design Checklist...

The following checklist can be used to design or redesign spaces to ensure they meet the design principles:

- There are clear indicators that the space is for all students.
- There are welcoming signs to reassure students that they have permission to enter the space.
- There is no restriction signage (e.g., ‘No food allowed,’ ‘Students may be asked to leave’).
- The space gives students a purpose to be there.
- It is near food, services, or classes.
- It allows students to engage in a number of activities, like eating, studying, and socializing.
- There are opportunities to connect with the outside.
- There are open windows or bright natural lighting.
- There are plants.
- It is an open and breathable space.
- The space is a comfortable and appropriate temperature for the season.
- There are comfortable chairs and enough tables for students to do work.
- The space is open and not cramped.