



By Vicki Salemi Published: March 3, 2014

## Campus quads get fun design makeover



When you walk across the quad at Wake Forest University, it's completely normal to spot students playing Monopoly while sipping java from nearby coffee carts.

Outdoor amenities like Ping-Pong tables, a foosball table, reading rooms and a black and gold piano are among the recent additions at the North Carolina campus courtesy of the brain trust of Dan Biederman's firm, Biederman Redevelopment Ventures Corporation. He's behind the restoration of New York's Bryant Park and the creator of private urban redevelopment projects.

George Roberts, BRV project manager, began the campus initiative two years ago by asking, "What can we learn from the successes of urban parks that can de-stress students?"

By talking extensively to faculty and staff to crack open their concerns about busy schedules, it became clear. The goal was, Roberts said, to make the campus “a more engaging, more comfortable space to relax” and to break up the routine from “a class to library to bed mentality.”

Outdoor tables and chairs emerged like the ones in New York’s Bryant Park, the Boston Common and the Porch at 30th Street Station in Philadelphia. Plus, a chalkboard made it a no-brainer for professors to hold class outside. Roberts recalls students saying they spend time with small groups of friends and stick to their clusters.

Hence, the birth of the games and fitness equipment cart on Hearn Plaza, with games including checkers and Wiffle ball. He says that students may not know one another in the sea of 4,000 students, “but they might stop to play a game of Ping-Pong.”

This is particularly important considering students rock out to headphones and remain fixated on smart phones. Thomas Ray, 2013 Wake Forest graduate and its coordinator of outdoor programming initiatives, has noticed a significant shift now that amenities have been implemented.

“Whether foosball, chess, Jenga or bocce, our students are finding the time to socialize.” When he was a freshman, only a few students could be seen tossing a Frisbee but now more students are playing. In fact, Ray refers to amenities as “day breakers” to escape from the hustle and bustle. As for another non-digital day breaker, students can also check out the outdoor reading room to pick up a magazine or newspaper.

Witnessing a more connected community is mission accomplished for Roberts. “Now that we’ve done this,” he says, “whenever I see a college campus I think of the ways this could really work.”

Roberts adds, “Even some of the city schools that have parks like Washington Square for NYU, they could do things to become even more of a hot bed of a campus community.”

**Quoted:**

“Before this initiative, the outdoor space was simply that — space. By strategically adding movable furniture, magazine and newspaper racks and a game cart, we create a robust, vibrant hub of activity. This addition is beginning to change the ‘tone’ of campus.” – student Thomas Ray

- See more at: <http://www.metro.us/newyork/uncategorized/2014/03/03/campus-quads-get-fun-design-makeover/#sthash.wQY3k9bz.dpuf>