

Understanding Your Community

I frequently speak around the country to pastors and laity alike about a passion of architectural and construction trends affecting the 21st Century church.

Everywhere I seem to go, whether in Houston or Harrisburg, churches want to find that fine balance of new design that will culturally connect yet maintain the reverence of their current worship style.

My encouragement, and sometimes admonishment, to most is ensure that you fully understand your community first. Many ministries relocate or expand without taking advantage of a wealth of information available to them about the community they are trying to evangelize.

At my company **GL Barron**, before we ever put pencil to paper, we engage *The Percept Group* to define the demographics of the community from a spiritual perspective. It is amazing and sometimes humbling to discover just who comprises the geographic neighborhood. Many times, the planning of functional space can be altered after determining the demographic make-up. For example, one ministry in particular determined that their community was heavily weighted with single mothers. From this, their functional weekday space was expanded to consider Mother's-Day-Out programs.

Demographic profiles won't make a church, but understanding the community will enable the leadership to design with the unchurched as well as churched in mind.

For more information on *The Percept Group* visit www.percept1.com/pacific/start.asp or call 800.442.6277