

The Habitat world is made from three ingredients that are combined to meet our ultimate goal, which is to provide entertaining things for the players to do. The three ingredients are:

- 1) People -- The players, the operators, and us.
- 2) Places -- Towns, residential areas, business districts, wilderness, forests, deserts, dungeons, and other more specialized regions.
- 3) Things -- Treasure, magic items, tools, documents, and scenery of all sorts.

These ingredients must be combined to form an effective whole that results in a good time for the players in the world. If the combination is not effective, what we have is a dead universe, a museum at best.

An important consideration, however, is always that we incur a cost for providing any of these things. With the exception of providing the players themselves, who pay for the privilege, all world creation activity consumes time, effort and therefore money. The fundamental problem that faces us is how to get the most "bang for the buck".

Another cost consideration is the amount of ongoing support that any given feature of the world will require. Best are things which can run themselves. Second best are things that can be run by volunteer labor. Worst are things that require our own time and attention. Our strategy for coping with this is to try to build a community. If we succeed, then many of the support issues will be taken care of automatically by the players themselves. Part of our objective is to establish an environment in which much of the support infrastructure will emerge spontaneously.

Since we are trying to form a community, it may be useful to take the idea of community as our starting point for design, instead of trying to just create regions willy-nilly. A community consists of citizens and institutions, together with the physical plant that allows the institutions to have places to operate and the citizens places to live.

The institutions of a community serve to fill the needs of the members of the community. In order to design institutions for Habitat, we need to consider what the "needs" of Avatars are. As simulated creatures, Avatars have few if any true needs per se. However, the players behind the Avatars do have psychological needs and wants which they are trying to fill by playing Habitat -- it's the reason they're here in the first place. Thus, our design problem comes down to considering what we think the players' needs and wants are and then building the environment to satisfy them.

As I see it, these are the things that people are seeking:

- Social contact: companionship, friendship, group acceptance, and romance
- Identity: establishing a personal identity in terms of Avatar appearance, personality, and place
- Entertainment: adventure, puzzles, shows, games, literature
- Communications: both point-to-point and broadcast; both real-time and time-delayed
- Information: news about the people and events of Habitat, past, present and future
- Support: items, services and information that help people cope with the situations and problems they are confronted with in both Habitat and the real world as they try to fill the above needs

The above categories are not exclusive; the boundary lines between them are admittedly fuzzy. No item stands by itself, but is interpreted in the context of the whole system. For example, a newspaper provides both entertainment and news, while a club-house supports both social contact and the sense of personal identity.

Here is a list of real-world institutions that might be applicable to Habitat. This list is not intended to be exhaustive, nor do we necessarily intend to include ALL of these things. It is simply a starting point from which to figure out our plan.

Advertising agencies	Credit card companies	Matchmaking services
Amusement parks	Customs Bureaus	Military services
Appliance stores	Dancehalls	Movers
Arcades	Employment agencies	Night clubs
Architects	Equipment rental agencies	Parks
Art galleries and museums	Farms	Pawnshops
Banks	Fraternal organizations	Pharmacies
Bars	Furniture stores	Police
Beaches	Governments	Political parties
Better Business Bureau	Grocery stores	Printing companies
Bookstores	Hardware stores	Publishers
Building contractors and repair services	Highway Departments	Real estate brokers
Business and trade associations	Historical societies	Resorts
Chambers of Commerce	History museums	Restaurants
Churches and religious organizations	Hospitals and Clinics	Schools
Cleaning services	Hotels	Security services
Clubs	Information booths	Stock, Mercantile and Commodities Exchanges
Co-ops	Insurance companies	Tax collectors
Consumer organizations	Intelligence agencies	Theaters
Convention centers	Interior decorators	Tour guides
Copying services	Jails	Transportation services
Couriers	Labor unions	Travel agencies
	Lawyers	Urban planners
	Legislatures	Warehouses
	Libraries	
	Magazines and newspapers	
	Manufacturers	

Of course, in addition to the above list there will likely be a number of institutions that are unique to Habitat, with few analogs in the real world.

While each of these institutions raises some unique issues of its own, there are some common questions that are applicable to all of them:

Is it needed? What purpose does it serve in Habitat? How does it fit in with the other institutions, existing or planned? How many people are needed to run it? Can it be automated or do actual people have to manage it? Who (if people are needed) will run it? How are those running it to be chosen? Do the people running it need to be system insiders or can anyone do it? How will it work in the Habitat universe? Can we make it fun or is it unavoidable drudgery? Are any special regions needed? Any new classes of objects? New types of magic? Special database filters or other support tools? How many institutions of this type are required or allowed? Who makes global decisions about this class of institutions? Who is subject to this institution? What are its powers, privileges and responsibilities? Are there any special rules we must impose to regulate it?