The Prairie Acre Learning Center is an outdoor educational space for students to connect with nature, learn more about native Kansas prairies, and study with classmates in an open and inviting space. The native stone paths bring unique character to the area that enhances the natural beauty of the prairie and allows people to touch, admire, and walk within it.

With Sunnyside Ave closed south of the existing prairie, there is opportunity to put a native limestone gateway sign where the road used to be.

The sidewalks should be a minimum of 3 feet wide in order to be accessible. Pathways that meander through the Learning Center will be made from native limestone.

9 planter boxes will be located at the South end of the triangle. They will serve as a community garden and a space for students to learn more about horticulture.

The outdoor learning area should look like an organic addition to the whole learning center. Natural materials should be used but the area must be paved in order to be accessible.

A look out deck will be placed at the highest point in the Northeast overlooking the Prairie. It will have stunning views of both Lawrence and the learning center.
Providing a buffer for residences to the east and an opportunity to run one’s fingers through the prairie grass as they walk up the hill, this extension will create a stunning river-like pattern down the hill.

A circular brick patio, nearly surrounded by prairie, offers lounge seating, square tables, and a large picnic table to create an area for relaxation or socialization.

An outdoor amphitheater-style classroom offers stunning views of the prairie and an overlook of Lawrence. Students have access to Prairie Acre through an intentional gap in the stone wall that surrounds the prairie.

A switchback-style pathway will allow wheelchairs to ascend the hill at an acceptable slope.

Covered bicycle parking and bicycle lockers provide safe and secure options for people who want to bike to campus, but choose not to bike up the hill.

Curb cuts in parking lot medians allow for water to flow into rain gardens as the water runs down the hill. With no storm sewer in the area, capturing runoff is especially important.

This site is a celebration of the prairie and all it offers. It is beautiful, functional, and educational. It accommodates multiple uses, protects the natural environment, and creates memorable spaces.

Curved pathways and stands of prairie leave one curious to discover what is around the next corner. Brick, stone, and native vegetation combine to create a soothing atmosphere, encouraging one to walk a little more slowly.

The American Planning Association (APA) recognizes Great Places that:
- Create interesting visual experiences
- Accommodate multiple uses and users
- Use, protect, and enhance the natural environment
- Foster social interaction
- Provide spaces for inspiration or contemplation
- Make the space memorable

Population Performance Patterns Elements of a Great Place

Adam Weigel
KU Urban Planning
Site Planning SP2017
PRAIRIE ACRE GATEWAY
Grace Bridges - UPBL 735, Spring 2017

Prairie Acre has long been an historic destination on KU's campus. Located in the KU Historic District in an area with a legacy of tall-grass prairie, its soil is ideal for the reintroduction of native plantings. The location of the site is within a 10-minute walking radius to the center of campus with great views to the west and south. These plantings will help naturally regulate stormwater runoff over the steep grade of the site, a problem currently affecting this area of campus and the surrounding residential neighborhoods.

A primary system of paths (6ft. wide) will be fully paved and accessible, while a secondary system of paths will be less formal to encourage people to interact with prairie.

The outdoor classroom space (80ft. x 50ft.) will be accessible year-round and can be utilized as a space for classroom activities, meetings, ceremonies, workshops, and community events.

A gateway element (20ft. diameter) will match the style of existing campus gateways and increase their recognizability on campus. Incorporating a roundabout as part of the gateway will also slow traffic through the area and improve pedestrian safety conditions.

This proposal meets five of the characteristics of an APA Great Public Space:
• It promotes human contact and social activities on campus.
• Is safe, welcoming, and accommodating for all users and increases accessibility through the area.
• Has design and architectural features that are visually interesting.
• Promotes community involvement by providing a venue for educational programming and a space that could be studied and maintained by volunteers.
• The native plantings preserve this historical area of campus and reflects the homestead history of Kansas.

PROGRAMMING ADDITIONS
- Informational signage to be placed along trails.
- Campus gateway and roundabout.
- Outdoor classroom and pavilion.
- Prairie restoration.

MATERIALITY
- Building materials, like limestone and brick, should be cohesive with surrounding campus buildings.
- Paving materials, like gravel and mulch, should be informal to promote interaction with the prairie and to encourage visitors to leave the paths.

SITE DESIGN
The unique characteristics of this location lend themselves to become a habitat for pollinators. This location will welcome The University of Kansas Students and facility as well as a calm and relaxing location for Lawrence Residents. This area will play host to a natural prairie, educational classroom and parking facilities for the main area of campus. This area will promote the history and culture of life on the prairie.

The site will have an outdoor classroom that can seat 25 to 30 students.
It will be connected to the prairie by a stone path.
This classroom will be placed on the hill to overlook the new prairie.

The site will have four formal entrances into the newly created prairie.
Bike lanes will be added to Sunflower Rd and the west potion of Sunnyside Ave.
Sunnyside Ave, east of Sunflower Rd, will be removed to create a brick paver walking and bike path.

The intersection of Sunnyside Drive and Sunflower Road will be replaced with a roundabout that has a fountain in the center. This will create a gateway into campus.
The path through the prairie will be an informal path with mulch.
New signage will label the different prairie species.

The parking lot will be reconstructed to have bioswales in the islands with curb cuts.
The new parking lot will be eco-friendly with brick pavers that allow for better drainage.
The parking lot will be regraded to allow for less drainage into the neighborhood to the south.

Five foot wide bike lanes on one side of the road.
About 1,500 sq ft fountain in the roundabout.

About 4,000 sq ft roundabout at the intersection of Sunnyside and Sunflower.
About 5,000 sq ft of red brick pavers for bike and walking path.

About 30,000 sq ft of bioswale ditch lined with local vegetation.
About 50,000 sq ft of bricks for eco-friendly parking lot.
About 8 cubic yards of mulch for informal path through prairie.
About 3,500 sq ft of flowers for bee and hummingbird habitat.

About 6,000 sq ft of milkweed and other flowers for monarch butterfly habitat.

12, two person benches throughout the prairie.
On Campus Student Farm & Prairie Homestead

Site Components

1. Multi-part compost system that accepts food scraps from KU Dining.

2. Pergola to offer shade for eating, classes, workshops or lectures.

3. Educational signs about homesteading on the Kansas prairie & farming.

4. Individual plots for 1–2 students to farm or use as research beds.

5. Community garden for up to 20 people.

6. Prairie acre restoration planted organically.

7. Garden tool shed for all prairie & farm equipment.

8. Paved pathway through the farm and prairie area for all to enjoy.

Site Constraint | top soil erosion potential due to slope of triangle park

Site Opportunity | collaboration with architecture & engineering students for pergola design & construction

Programming

- University students, faculty, staff & visitors; community members; tourists; native plants & animals

Package

- Individual garden plots | Eleven, 4 x 16 ft.
- Community garden | 60 x 60 ft.
- Native prairie acre | 26,375 sq. ft.
- Compost system | Three, 10 x 5 ft. bins
- Pergola shade structure | 40 x 40 ft.
- Tool shed | 15 x 5 ft.
- Garden Pathway | 10 ft. wide paved path @ a 5% slope
- Prairie & Farm Education Signs | Three, 5 x 5 ft.

Performance

- Theme | sustainable gardening & prairie homesteading
- Accessible & inviting to all

Patterns

- On campus student farm & native prairie restoration
- Earthy, natural tones | brown, green, pale yellow
- Sustainable land use, habitat restoration, organic farming, academic research, homesteading education, lectures & classes

American Planning Association Great Public Spaces Characteristics

- Promotes interaction of KU community & surrounding neighborhoods
- Pergola is visually interesting
- Reflects local KU culture of sustainability
- Well maintained garden spaces
- Unique characteristics that add value to community aesthetics
Prairie Acre

Alessandra Brown | UBPL 735 | Spring 2017

Concept Design

Prairie Acre is known for the natural prairie that exists, but there is plenty of space that has gone unused that could benefit the community. With the idea of an outdoor gathering space, we can create a connection between students and local residents that live in the area. Incorporating a cafe will entice more pedestrians to come by the area therefore creating a high demand of an outdoor space. Creating a water feature that will sit just north of the cafe will add to the visual appeal of the area and help maintain a calmness to the rest of the area. Another aspect that will help with the serenity is that of the gardens. The community gardens will help in creating a sustainable landscape as well as having a purpose for the locals. As every aspect has its own qualities, they will benefit from each other in order to fully make use of Prairie Acre and its entirety.

What Makes A Great Place

1. Promotes human contact and social activities.
2. Is safe, welcoming, and accommodating for all users.
3. Has design and architectural features that are visually interesting.
4. Promotes community involvement.
5. Reflects the local culture or history.
6. Relates well to bordering uses.
7. Is well maintained.
8. Has a unique or special character.

Outdoor Classroom/Gathering Space:
- Place of community gathering
- Space for teaching
- Outdoor theater style seating
- Central stage/ focal point
- 22,000 sqft
- Located between college community and residents
- Students and teachers can use the site for studying or having class outside
- Site used for residential HOA meetings
- Accommodates 40 people

Outdoor Cafe:
- Walk-up coffee shop with outdoor seating
- Locally owned vendor opportunity
- Allows for table seating
- Healthy food choices
- 6,500 sqft
- Residents can use the space as a place to gather or hold activities.
- Kids can use the space as an outdoor play area or gathering space.
- Provides food and drink for the pedestrians utilizing nearby facilities.
- Seats 20 people

Community Gardens:
- Local garden area for nearby residents and students
- Program of renting out personal space
- Provides useful space of greenery
- 32,000 sqft
- Creates a link between everyone to restore a more unified environment
- Provides for environmental education
- Provides an organic herb garden
- Family friendly environment
- Accommodates 20 people

Water Feature:
- Sustainable water fountain along the walkway up the hill.
- Provides a unique landmark for the KU campus
- Gateway
- 150 linear feet
- Serene area that represents POSITIVE energy to all who become evolved.
- Colorful area, free from drugs and violence.
- Provides area for meditation and tranquility

New Parking Landscaping:
- Updated landscaping around current parking
- Sustainable planting systems
- Use of pervious pavement and rainwater systems
- 100,000 sqft

Population Package
- Located between college community and residents
- Students and teachers can use the site for studying or having class outside
- Site used for residential HOA meetings
- Accommodates 40 people
- Existing parking for students and teachers
- Aproximatly 250 spots