

Market Pavilion Community Build: Growing a Garden . . . Growing a Community

PAMELA HARWOOD

Ball State University

How can participatory design strategies and community-engaged construction support creative and critical collaboration? How can we ensure that the project's scope and objectives are appropriately aligned with the community, especially when students' short-lived, limited roots and commitment can be vulnerable in the semester timeframe of a project? These are questions this design build studio, a collaboration between students, faculty, stakeholders, and community volunteers contemplates. The Maring-Hunt Library Community Garden Master Plan, its improvement and expansion, and a series of Garden Pavilions and Nature Play Pockets were designed and developed as useful spaces to address food insecurity in a USDA-designated food desert, cultivate community interaction and social activity, and provide learning opportunities for elementary school students, library patrons, and neighborhood families. The Community Garden is in a food desert, located on the Southside of our small city, isolated and removed from the economic prosperity of the collegiate campus. As cities face the environmental, economic, and social challenges of the 21st century, including hunger, diabetes, and dependence on global industrial food systems, local food production will be more and more important for building food security.

The master plan includes a trio of pavilions developed around a large community garden overseen by the neighborhood organization and public library. 1. The Gateway to Growing Gardeners' Pavilion, which provides shade, seating, tool storage, and accessible garden beds, and a sand and water Nature Play Pocket was designed and built by students and community in an immersive learning studio. 2. A Market/Education Pavilion to house a community market for the garden growers and an outdoor learning space for the afterschool program for elementary children, is currently under construction by students this fall. A small outdoor kitchen and food preparation demonstration area for nutritional education and programming is part of this project. 3. A fenced-in Educational

Pavilion and Children's Garden for Southview Elementary student is the third layer. This project is funded through a LOWES Neighborhood Revitalization Grant, a collaboration with four local partners including Habitat for Humanity, Ross Community Center, Boys and Girls Club, and Muncie Mission, an emergency shelter for homeless men.

Growing food connects people to their environment and to their neighbors, nurturing trust and relationships that tie together social, economic, and ecological systems. Many non-profit organizations garden as a deliberate strategy to feed people who lack regular access to fresh, nutritious food. There is a much larger informal side of food security in this community garden, as the subsidized senior living apartment dwellers in the adaptive reuse of an inner city High School bordering the site exemplify. The people in this community are a repository of vast knowledge and our effort to harness the energies of citizens and community organizations is a solution based on understanding the creative and productive people. In the design studio, a student's most substantial gains are not achieved through the final product's construction, but in the process and the journey to envision and create an intervention that is impactful for the community. The Maring-Hunt Library Community Garden greenspace with its pavilions, gardens, paths, bio-swale, and nature play pockets is being developed as an anchor in the neighborhood with the potential to turn a food desert into a food oasis, providing an asset motivating children and families to get outdoors, grow and learn and engage in healthy activity together.



MARKET PAVILION

*growing a garden . . .
growing a community . . .*

