

# SWITZER NEIGHBORHOOD FARM

Switzer Neighborhood Farm (aka Westside Community Garden) is a 1/2 acre vacant lot that is owned jointly by two neighborhood not-for-profit organizations.

The Westside was first platted in 1869; however people had been living here long before. When Kansas City was moving south from the river, they blasted out the bluffs and that rubble was deposited in West Kansas City. Our neighborhood was then a construction landfill.

At one time there was a stable on the premises to house the horses and carriages of the people who lived at the top of the hill. More recently, the structure was enlarged and eventually housed a company called EdCor which packed and sold first aid kits. Westside Housing Organization bought the building for a nominal sum in the mid 1990's. However, they were unable to obtain financing to repurpose the old structures. The buildings, including the old stables, were demolished. An environmental cleanup, including removal of several inches of soil, was completed. The land has remained vacant and dollars to develop the site have remained elusive.

In 2010, the Westside CAN Center obtained permission to create a community garden on the site. The site was chosen as one of the projects for the Skills USA conference. Over 80 students converged on the site on June 25, 2011 to construct 26 raised beds, 2 benches and a pergola. The beds were filled with composted soil donated by Kansas City Community Gardens. DST, at the bequest of neighbor Howell Construction, donated the tool shed along with lumber for the farm stand. In addition to the garden we raise chickens.

The site has been studied by Kansas State University as part of a Brownfield site in partnership with Region VII EPA. The site has been tested for hazardous materials such as lead, mercury, chromium and other harmful chemicals. The site has also been used by Kansas State's College of Landscape Architecture for a design project.

Team MY SMART PLANS



Currently, the most challenging component is the need for water. To install water pipes and a meter to the property would cost at least \$8,000. To be able to use the water from the fire hydrant would mean paying as much as \$5,000 to properly water the garden throughout the growing season. Therefore, we are trying to harvest as much rainwater as possible. We have two tanks that hold 2,350 gallons of water, and we have almost 20 rain barrels, but this will not be enough as we head into the dryer weather of July and August.

To harvest water from the street would mean the need to have some sort of filtration and purification system to remove petroleum and other chemicals in order to use the water for consumable produce.

The 'farmers' are residents of the Westside neighborhood or are day laborers from the WCAN Center's day laborer program. Marcella Gaona and Cosme Pantoja have taken on management of the farm/garden. Marcella works with the gardeners and Cosme manages the chickens, grounds maintenance, construction and security. Ezekiel Amador III is our bee keeper.

The garden replaces a vacant blighted lot that housed homeless people and drug dealers who nested in the tall weeds. The lot sits on a signature intersection and on a scenic boulevard on West Penway. Within the last 10 years, significant investment has been made; Ruiz Branch Library (\$1.2 million), Tony Aguirre Community Center (\$2.4 million), Villa del Sol Apartment Home Complex and the installation of the Riverfront Heritage Trail along the Westside of West Penway (\$1.1+million), which included new sidewalks, artistic pedestrian lighting and public art 'el pequena promenade'. The site is the path taken by children on their way to Garcia School or Alta Vista Charter School. We think that this could serve as a community garden as well as a learning habitat for the children in the neighborhood. The school to the north and the east are both currently empty and we believe these sites could be utilized to positively improve the neighborhood.

Team BURNS & MCDONNELL



CONTEXT PLAN



NEIGHBORHOOD PLAN



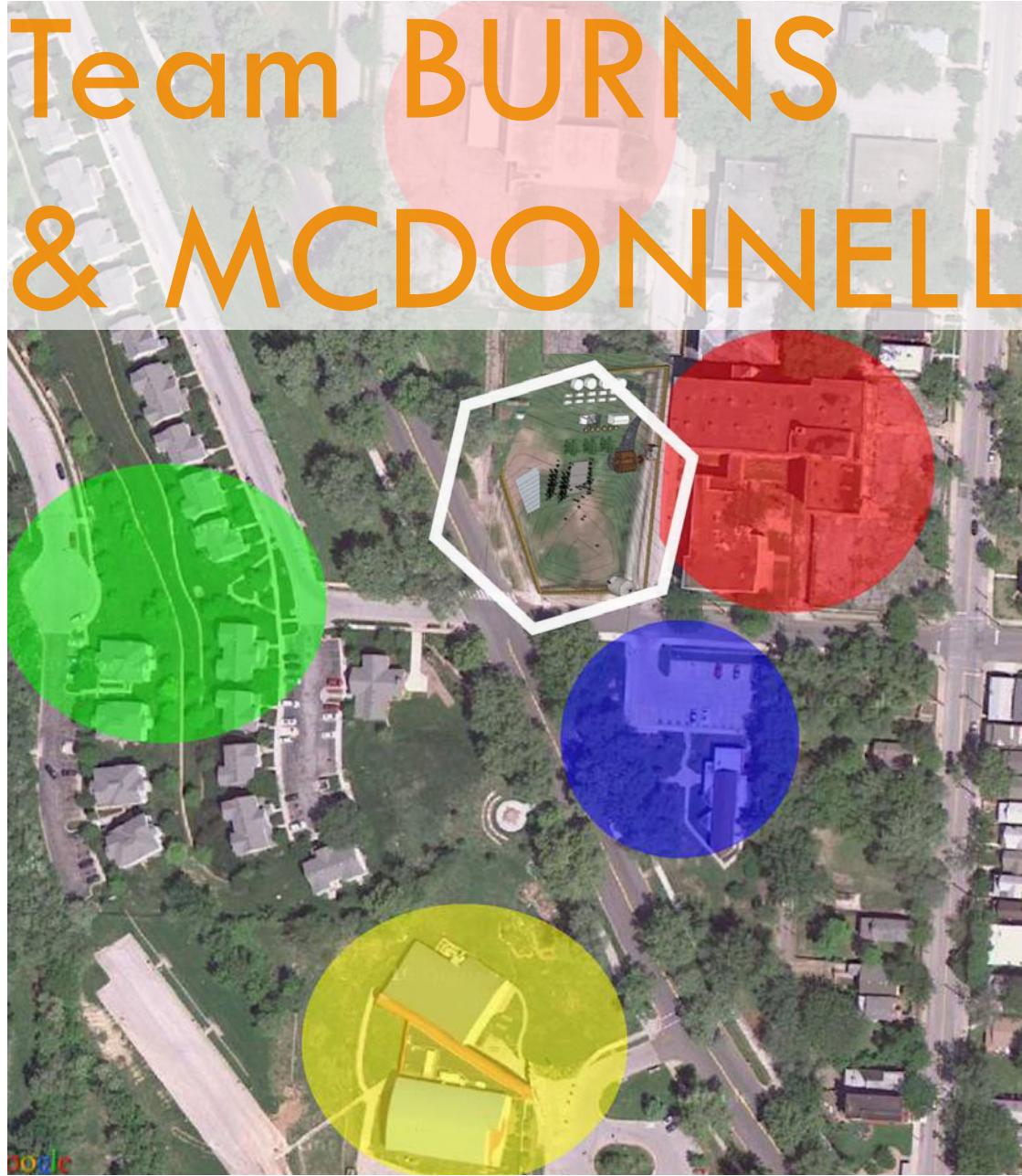
SITE PLAN



# Team BURNS & MCDONNELL

## Orientation:

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SITE



## Methodology:

Team Burns & McDonald began their design process through an interactive design workshop. Everyone was asked "What is in your ideal Switzer Community Farm"? After completing their designs, each participant took a turn to explain what they envisioned for the project.

Since no one on the team knew each other or the client directly, the workshop, which allows participants to use their imaginations freely and otherwise open up about their ideas, allowed the group to quickly form a basic design concept.

## Concept:

Following the lead of the client, every design intervention was approached as a tool for learning. Using color, introducing a vertical component to the site, and focusing on developing the garden as a long-term community asset were crucial.

Seeking to evoke the whimsical nature of a farm in the City, the team choose to use the rainwater collection system to irrigate the crops and power the light for the existing chicken coop (diagram pg. 97). A phased approach was developed for long-term implementation.



housing

dilapidated buildings

public library

community center



DIAGRAM



IDENTITY PHASE

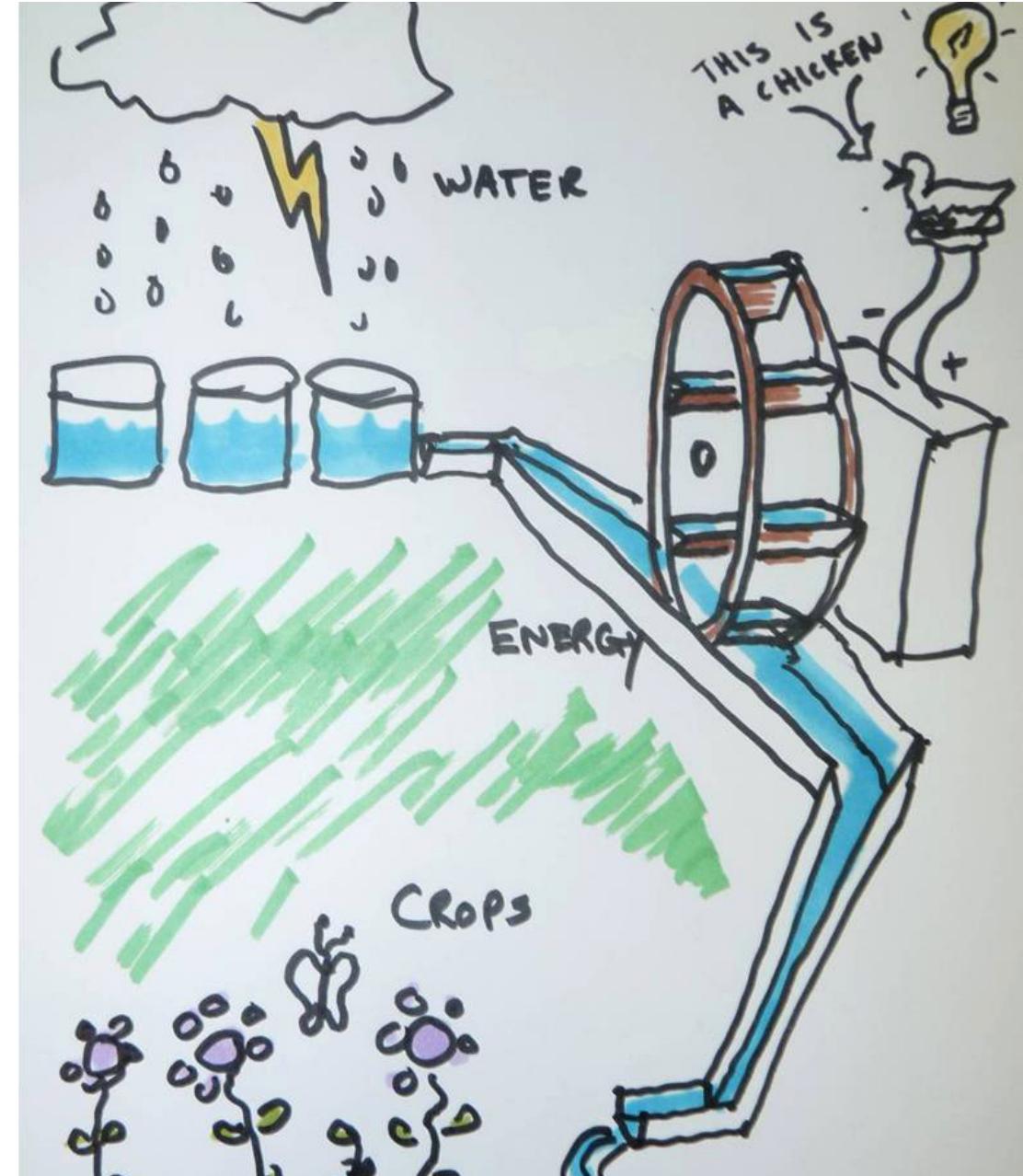
Optimize existing water run-off capture  
Create identity for switzer garden- website, logo  
Focus efforts on exterior appearance  
Identify community partners- library, parks, community center

OUTREACH PHASE

Construct new entry buildings  
Create interior community terrace  
Develop community partners- outdoor reading space  
Monthly community events- KC event calender

EDUCATION PHASE

Construct bee silo  
Construct water collection and waterwheel system  
Re-build chicken-run and coop as an educational entity



Gateways:

The front entryway consolidates the existing farm stand and shed into a trellised plaza. A new entry is created at the southeast corner to draw in the community with a bee silo that doubles as signage.

Screening:

A new masonry fence, constructed by local workers sets the foundation for the new fence that secures the farm, creates unique views into the space, and grows community crops

Community Space:

Terracing the center of the garden creates additional planting beds and outdoor classrooms where in the first years sunflowers work to bio-remediate the soil. A new staged access way along the west edge of the property functions as an outdoor auditorium. Switzer Neighborhood Farm provides economic, social, and educational opportunities for the Westside.



DIAGRAM



DIAGRAM

# neighborhood farm

contributes to the on-going investments being made within the westside community



# windows with a view.....

a trellis surrounds the site with view boxes built in openings stimulate curiosity and create a first impression for people passing by



# fresh produce

views into the farm are framed by the produce stand and an overhead trellis



# bee silo

entrance into the farm is through the bee silo

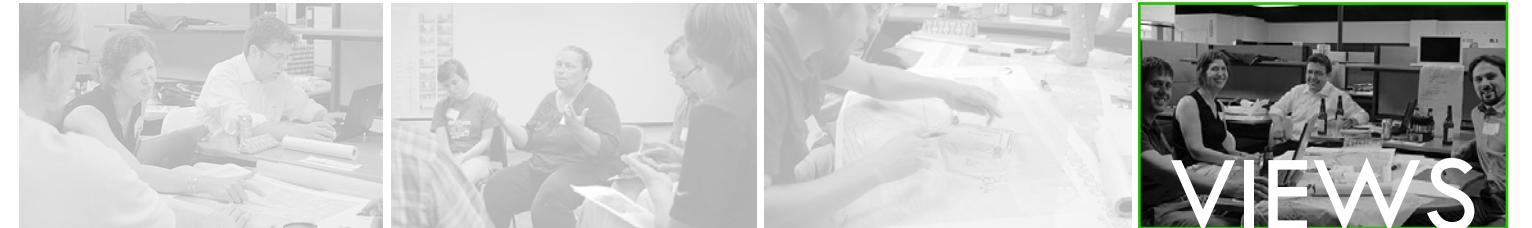
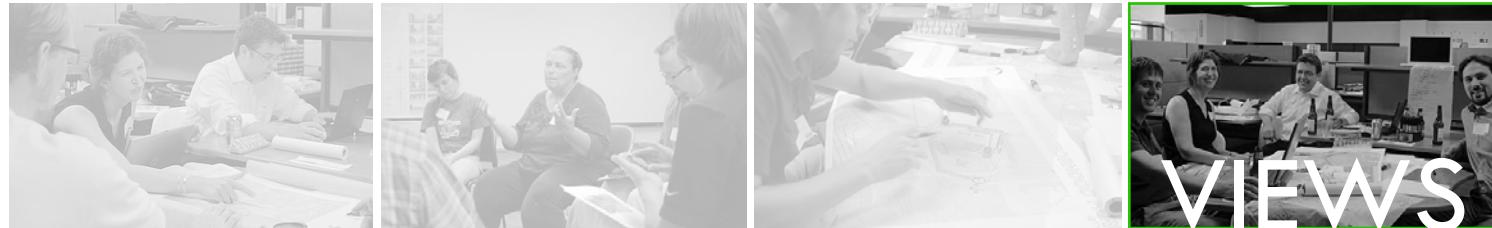


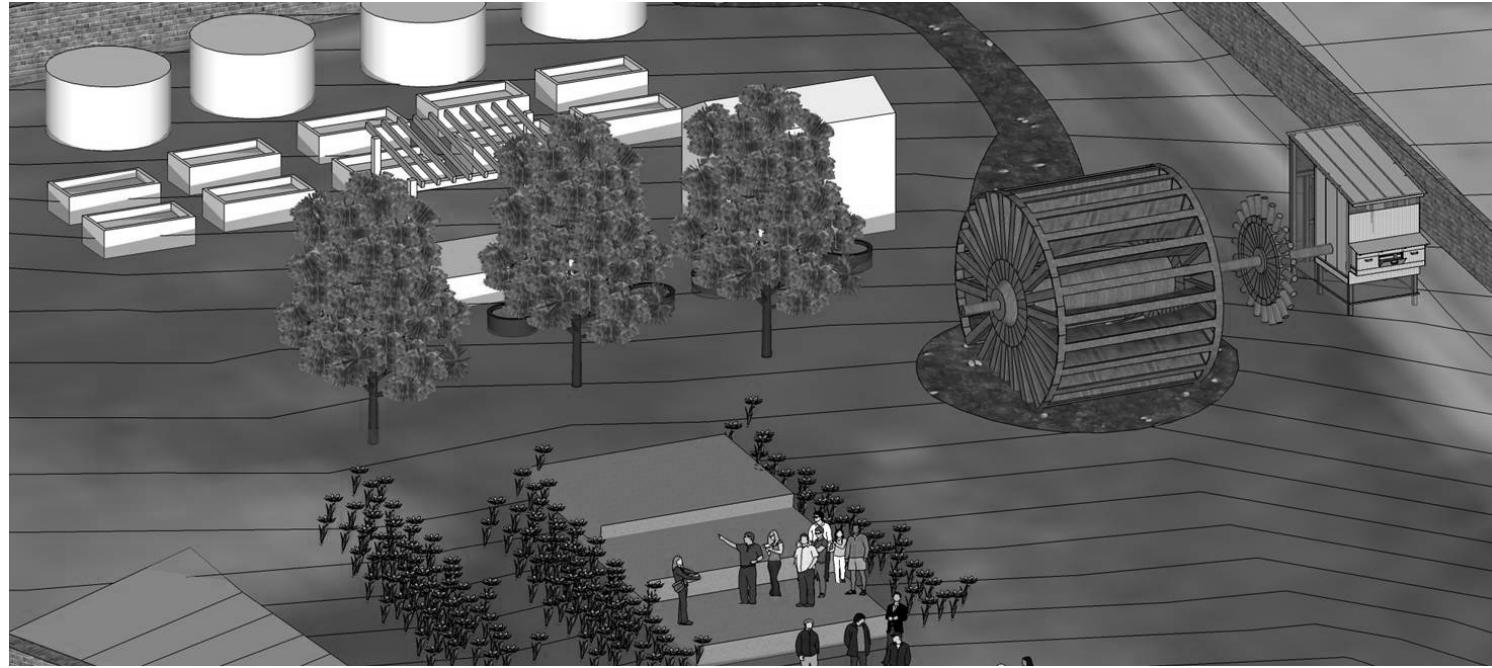
## Trellis View from Inside the Farm



## Terrace Multi-purpose Gathering Area







**Perspective:**

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WESTSIDE COMMUNITY GARDEN



[www.burnsmcd.com](http://www.burnsmcd.com)

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Summer Intern

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