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Landscape design for Bear Creek Prairie in Columbia, Missouri

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Bear Creek Prairie is a proposed conservation development in Columbia, Missouri whose vision statement is "to develop a residential community that is environmentally responsible, pedestrian friendly, encourages community interaction and is a model for sustainable land use development". The well-accepted definition of sustainability is meeting the needs of the present without compromising the ability of the future generations to meet their own. The fact that there are countless contributions people can make towards sustainability is very exciting to me and finding my place within the movement landed in design. I have been researching how to design the common area in Phase One of the development plan. There are an infinite number of contributions that can be made to design a site that manages storm water well, is beautiful for people so that they enjoy the space, is nourishing for wildlife, and is a place for children to play. The three areas of contribution I chose to focus on are techniques to manage storm water, landscaping with conservation and nurturing in mind, and a play structure for the children of the neighborhood. The discerning quality of the Bear Creek Prairie site was the discovery of a prairie and the diversity it possessed. At the time of European settlement 15,000,000 acres of Missouri was prairie. Today, fewer than 90,000 acres remain. For the Bear Creek Prairie developers, the preservation of the prairie found on the site is the most important consideration towards the development of the property. Further study of prairie plants shows that their deep root systems are also very valuable as a tool for managing storm water. Wet mesic prairie plants are necessary components of raingardens, because of their ability to absorb and cleanse storm water before it percolates to the water table. Including a play structure, into the design of my landscape, was necessary for the children of the neighborhood. I also studied the use of native plants and all vegetation, identified to be used in my design, is native to Missouri and in some cases have already been identified at the site. Overall, I believe my design addresses the variety of concerns one has to deal with when designing for an urban environment. In an urban environment we must not only seek to meet the diversity of needs for human beings, in all stages of life and culture, but also the needs of the environment within which we choose to inhabit.