of graduate architecture students at the Illinois Institute of Technology. For our thesis project we have chosen to design and build an affordable and environmentally conscious building for a local community based nature center named Eden Place. We are the first graduate design-build studio at IIT.

We Are A Team

The Project

is a small multi-use building roughly 750 SqFt. The building will provide a much needed classroom and community gathering space for Eden Place’s expanding educational programs. The planning, design, and construction of the building is being conducted entirely by our team.

Our Mission

is to design a learning center that embodies the values of Eden Place:

“To cultivate a passion for the environment within the youth of Chicago.”
Eden Place Nature Center

began as an ambitious and impassioned vision of Fuller Park resident, Michael Howard. Already one of Chicago’s most neglected neighborhoods, in 1997 Fuller Park was reported to have the highest levels of lead contamination in the city.

The main culprit was an abandoned and vacant city block adjacent to an industrial train yard that had been an illegal dump site for 35 years. Michael organized a three-year clean-up effort, mobilizing area residents and public and private partnerships to transform and reclaim this space for area residents and visitors.

Ultimately, over 200 tons of debris was removed. Establishing Eden Place was a labor of love for those who saw the vision over a decade ago and believed it was possible to create the first and only nature center on Chicago’s south side.

Eden Place Today

is an award-winning, internationally acclaimed, beautiful and productive space which serves as an education and conservation center to teach families and children about their environment. It now has the distinction as the first urban nature preserve providing a bio-diversified environment to educate people on the mechanics of a wetland, prairie and woodland.

Eden Place hosts field trips from local schools, educational workshops, community events, and summer youth programs. In May 2004, Eden Place was honored by the Environmental Protection Agency with the Conservation and Native Landscaping Award; recognizing creative use of native plants and animals that contribute to the region’s biodiversity.

To date, over 10,000 youth have been exposed to skills ranging from urban agriculture to small business development.
Despite their continued success, Eden Place is in urgent need of a multi-use building that will serve both as a classroom and community gathering center for the Fuller Park neighborhood. Currently they have no permanent buildings and operate solely out of trailers and temporary shelters. That’s where we come in.

**It Is Our Goal**

to give Eden Place a permanent classroom space that will enhance the educational experience and can be used year-round.

**The Building**

will be able to accommodate a class of 25 students. A 16 foot long ‘kitchenette’ wall – incorporating functional custom cabinetry, a large sliding table, extended counter space and a sink - will act as the backdrop of the room and provide ample space for biology demonstrations, hands-on labs, or even entertainment for community functions. The building will also include the first bathroom with running water on site.

**Nature Studio**

is designed to sit within a natural prairie habitat, adjacent to a shaded gathering space frequently used for picnics and campfires. With floor-to-ceiling glass doors, the southern façade will open to the prairie just outside, allowing nature to permeate the classroom. The building is also intended to act as a learning tool; the design will expose visitors to progressive ideas in energy efficient building and sustainable strategies.
The Fuller Park Neighborhood

in south Chicago is the immediate community which Eden Place serves. Two miles long but only three blocks wide, Fuller Park is bound by the Dan Ryan expressway to the east and the Norfolk Southern Switching Yard to the west. Fuller Park is located at the center of a socially and economically disadvantaged area of Chicago. The community is subject to many urban challenges including a lack of access to quality food, education, and green space.

Eden Place

has aggressively sought to mitigate the numerous health issues facing its constituents, including lead poisoning, poor nutrition, asthma and childhood obesity. The impact Eden Place has had is significant.

- Outreach activities resulted in 50% reduction in lead levels in Fuller Park residents
- Advocacy efforts netted $150 Million capital improvement project to replace aging lead pipes
- Provides healthy outdoor activities for thousands of youth and visitors annually
- Trained local residents to create and maintain 20 Chicago-area community gardens
- Provides 90 seasonal jobs and entrepreneurial training for 300 youth in green jobs growing produce to market and sell to area residents and businesses
Nature Studio

will be the first permanent building on site and will help Eden Place reinforce its role as a positive and influential force that seeks to improve the lives of South Chicago citizens.

To ensure that Nature Studio continues to serve the community for years to come, we have designed the building to achieve Passive House certification. If successful, this will be the first passive house in Chicago and will use approximately 85% less energy than a typical building.

With Your Support

we will be able to give Eden Place the learning facility that it deserves. We are partnering with like-minded individuals and businesses who see the potential this project has to permanently transform the community and promote innovative and sustainable design.

We hope you will join our team!

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