

LA CROSSE COMMUNITY FOREST OUTDOOR CLASSROOM & MEDITATION ZONE

Through the La Crosse Community Forest project, the Outdoor Recreation Alliance of the 7 Rivers Region (ORA) and its partners aim to improve community health in the area between State Road School and Chad Erickson Park through conservation, recreation, and education. ORA is coordinating with the land managers, including the City of La Crosse, La Crosse County, and the School District of La Crosse, to develop forest improvements, recreational infrastructure, and educational zones and programming to help students, residents, and employees improve mental and physical health by making green spaces easier to access and use.

As humanity's connection to nature is fleeting, the importance of time in nature is moving to the forefront of the minds of many across America, especially parents and educators. Time spent in nature provides exercise opportunities as well as reduces anxiety and increases focus; qualities that are essential in learning and work environments. This community has the unique opportunity to bring nature to State Road Elementary students and staff, and Hillview Healthcare Center residents and staff, other local businesses and the surrounding community.

THE PROJECT

The area of focus for this project lies between State Road School, Chad Erickson Memorial Park and Trane Company Headquarters.

Amenities:

- ADA Accessible Exploration Trail
- Meditation Zones
- Constructive Play Areas
- Observation Areas
- Outdoor Classroom
- Physical Fitness Circuit

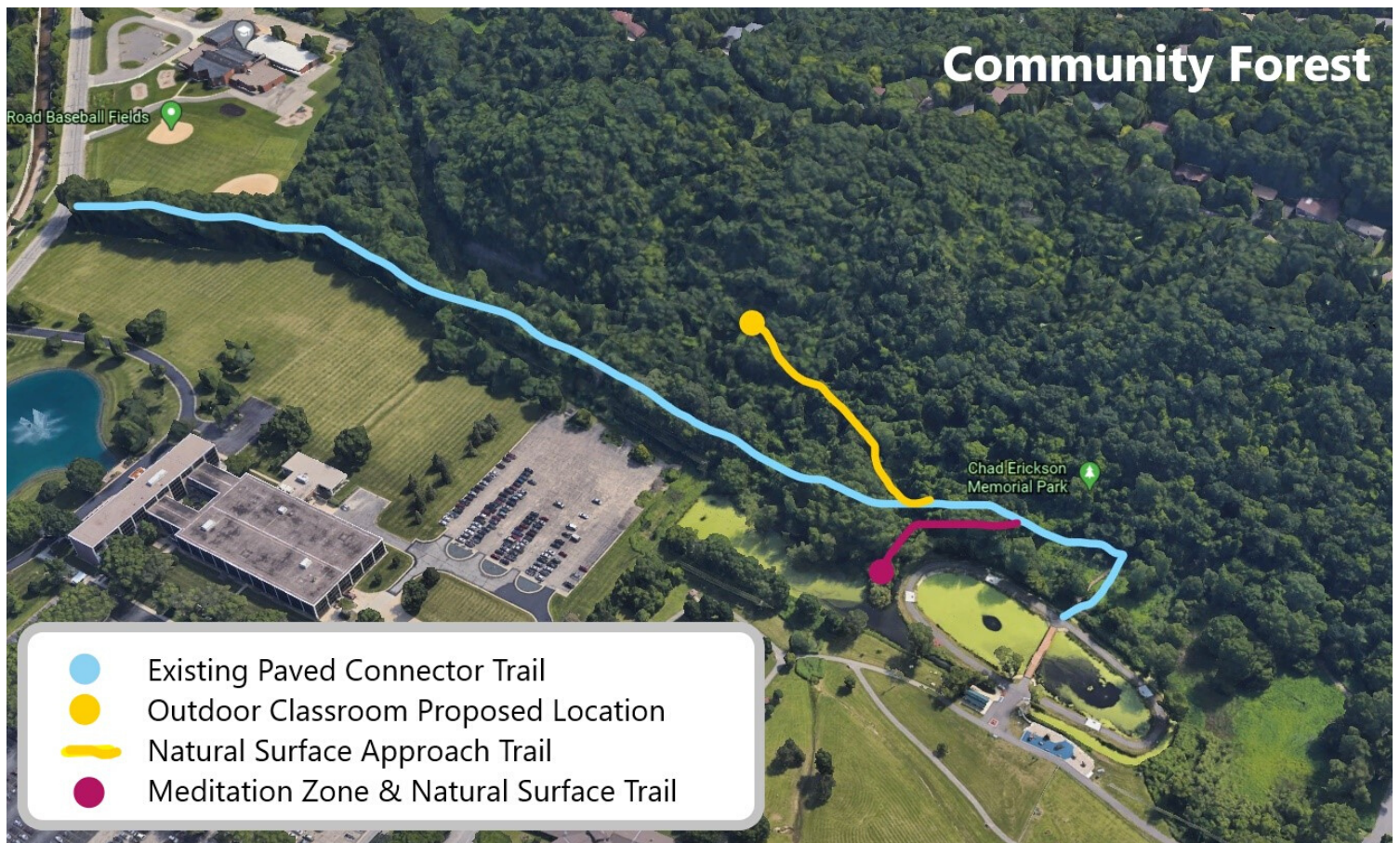
THE PARTNERS



PROJECT GOALS

- Enhance & restore this space into a safe outdoor playscape, accessible to people of all ages & abilities.
- Create an environment that's user-friendly while preserving it's integrity as a natural area by protecting and adding local organic landscapes and foliage.
- Increase the value and attraction to the neighborhoods and businesses surrounding the area.
- Provide an area that families of all shapes & sizes can utilize in their own 'backyard', keeping recreation in our city and preventing the need for travel to find safe play areas.
- Safe, outdoor recreation spaces that provide room for active movement and creativity.
- Continuing the amount of green space that's accessible to all bodies is a top priority for this project. All zones will be evaluated with increased accessibility in mind.
- By creating an inviting user-friendly space, this neighborhood and those immediately surrounding will see an increase in foot traffic.
- Natural Materials will be used throughout this project whenever possible.

THE PROJECT AREA



MEDITATION ZONE BENEFITS & EXAMPLES

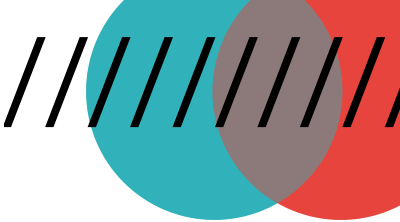


The Meditation Zones aims to provide a quiet spot in nature for all community members to reflect and take a deep breath of fresh air only minutes from home. Even the wheelchair accessible approach trail will be semi-private and creates a calming entrance to this quiet space. Both of these locations are accessed via the paved Connector Trail.

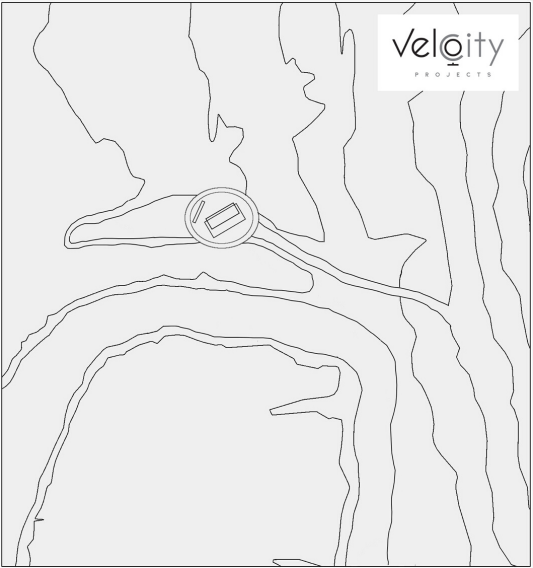
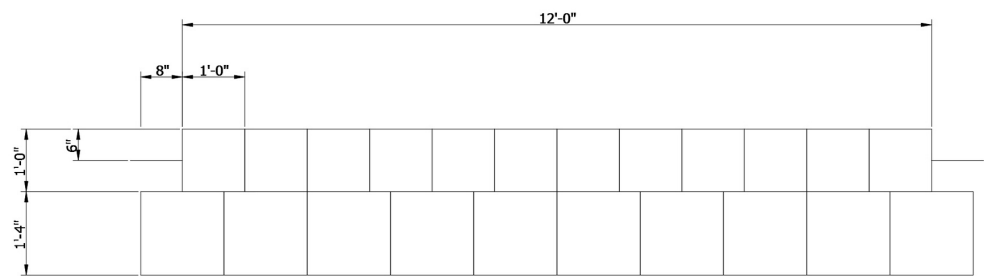
People of all ages need opportunities where they can take time out each day "unplugged" to relax and focus. Meditation offers this break and helps us function more effectively and clearly. Children today also have reportedly high stress levels. To help them take a break, the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) encourages parents and teachers to incorporate mindfulness training into their daily routines and lesson plans. The simple act of teaching children how to stop, focus, and just breathe could be one of the greatest gifts you give them.

Meditation is a calming, healthful practice and can be done anywhere by anyone. Through guidance and direction at a specific location, more people will take the opportunity to slow down and reflect for a few moments. Meditation areas can support passive or active meditation and can include features like benches, labyrinths, tactile stimulant, and suggestive prompts.

OUR MEDITATION ZONE



Meditation Zone Base (Front View)



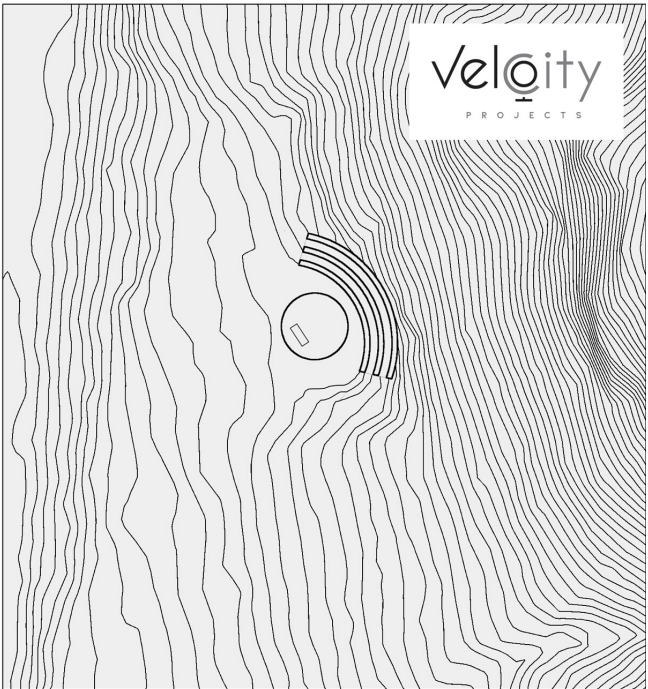
OUTDOOR CLASSROOM BENEFITS & EXAMPLES



The Outdoor Classroom will provide an alternative space to be use by schools, community groups or individuals looking to expand learning opportunities. Being wheelchair accessible allows all members of the area to enjoy the Community Forest. The location for the classroom is slightly elevated above the existing Chad Erickson Park Connector Trail, location to it's East. The approach trail to the Classroom would be a wheelchair accessible Natural Surface path that runs parallel to the Connector trail.

Educators and students benefit from the multi-sensory and inter-disciplinary atmosphere of an outdoor classroom where students can learn through experiential practices. By moving beyond the walls of the school, projects and lessons take on new life as part of the greater world and the line between learning and play is blurred. Curiosity is piqued and the motivation to learn becomes an intrinsic trait.

Unfortunately, students who don't have the chance to learn outdoors may be missing out on opportunities to excel both academically and socially. In outdoor settings, children are more motivated to work together in groups, which can improve their social skills. They learn to manage conflicts, communicate, and cooperate with peers in a more effective manner.



Outdoor Classroom (Side View)

