**DESIGN CONCEPT**

The design concept goal, and subsequently challenges, were to retrofit the existing building to multiple new uses while creating a seamless composition between building and the naturalized site. This interaction of building and site became the directive in formulating a design concept.

**The Constructed & Natural Realms**  
The Marywood site has a history of human injunctions from rail lines, to logging, to farming to a school and convent. It is this relationship of the human injunctions into the site and the natural environment, river, prairie, and woodlands, that creates a rich and varied experience. The design of the Marywood is an expression of one injunction. Through design, the building represents a place for human habitation while expressing the forms of the prairie landscape. It is through this contrast that harmony is created between Constructed and Natural Realms.

**The Natural Realm**  
It is hardly a stretch to consider this site as not constructed or in a natural state. It is currently being used for contract farming and has a long history of change. But, despite the history and continuing change, it is of the Northern Prairie and it is still a river dominated landscape. Through a restoration project we hope to return the site to a natural state where it once again will interact and change as a natural entity.

**The Constructed Realm: The “Module”**  
As the inspiration to form, the Marywood building is the main directive in shaping constructed spaces and design elements. It’s design was used to develop a vocabulary that integrates new with existing structures while composing itself with the site. The impression of the building is that of horizontal lines and square volumes. These volumes are composed as a series of modules. The concept uses the contrast between form and landscape to compose a seamless union through the integration of built and naturalized areas. Each place of rest, or habitation, the use of the “module” to accentuate the constructed, and consequently, the natural realm.
COMPOSING THE NORTHERN PRAIRIE VISITOR’S CENTER
Program Elements

The following program elements were developed with the nature center focus group. Through studies of other visitor/nature centers, the city’s needs, market research, program meetings, and focus group input this list was identified as the main project scope goals.

Provide nature interpretation opportunities close to the Center. This could include nature trails, viewing areas, and habitat developments.

Provide visitor information services for the Crookston community and/or for regional nature-based recreation and eco-tourism sites. Accommodate easy access to visitors and have appropriate visibility.

Provide a nature store/gift shop/refreshment store to generate income and accommodate nature education.

Provide opportunities to partner with other entities; citizen groups, agencies, private organizations, and Crookston organizations.

Provide office space for agencies and businesses that work in the nature/tourism/history interface such as USFWS, DNR, TNC.

Demonstrate best practices for prairie landscape design and management.

The Center would serve a regional eco-tourism function.

The design of the Center would be a model of sustainable construction methods to educate visitors, not only to nature appreciation but to sustainable living as well.

The Center and its programs would be an asset to other business and recreation entities in Crookston.

Provide meeting space for community gatherings, regional meetings of natural resource professionals, etc.

Combining the functions of a visitor center and the office of the Crookston Chamber of Commerce would be complementary.

The Center should Highlight & Protect Natural Resources.

The Center should act as a launching point to other regional nature preserves.
Project Programming:
The following lists were developed and presented in public meetings with the involvement and input from the mentioned groups:

PARTICIPATING GROUPS &
POTENTIAL PARTNERS:
-City of Crookston
-Crookston Chamber of Commerce
-University of Minnesota
-Minnesota Department of Natural Resources (DNR)
-United States Fish & Wildlife Service (USFWS)
-Polk County Historical Society
-Nature Conservancy
-Natural Resources Conservation Service
-Minnesota Conservation Corps
-Possibilities for other partners are open

RIVER USE:
-Canoe Carry-In Points
-Fishing
-Canoe Storage
-Connections to Visitor’s Center
-Connections to Crookston
-Restoration
-Bird Observatory/Interpretation
-Signage
-Historical Connection/Interpretation

OUTDOOR EDUCATION USE:
-Building Signage
-Native Plants Gardens
-Native Plants Seed Farm
-Restoration Techniques
-Parking
-Bus Drop-Off
-Interpretive Trails
-Demonstration Gardens
-Teaching Gardens
-Interpretive Signage
-Natural History
-Cultural History
-Learning Habitats
-Observation Blinds

INDOOR EDUCATION USE:
-Welcome Area
-Information Desk
-Senior Citizen’s Programs
-Family Programs
-Children’s Programs
-Gallery
-Exhibit Space
-Classrooms
-Teaching Resource Room
-Prep Room
-Computer Room
-Reading Room
-Library
-Storage
-Hands-On Greenhouse

OFFICE USE:
-Entry/Information Desk
-Parking
-Restrooms
-Individual Offices
-Multiple Organizations
-Handicap Accessibly
-Education
-Nature Based Activities
-Chamber of Commerce
-Business
-Conference Rooms
-Storage

VISITOR’S/NATURE CENTER USE:
-Entry/Information Area
-Interpretive Exhibits
-Senior Citizen’s Center
-Seed Farm
-Gallery
-Bird Observatory
-Handicap Accessible
-Gift Shop
-Office Space
-Restrooms
-Storage
-Library/Resource Room
-Meeting Room
-Swing Space