

Improving the Armourdale Levee Hike/Bike Trail



View of levee trail from Kansas Avenue bridge.

COMMUNITY NEEDS

In 2014, the Unified Government of Wyandotte County (UG) secured an agreement with the Kaw Valley Drainage District to open a portion of the Kansas River Levee, in the Armourdale Neighborhood, for public access as a hike and bike trail. The first year was treated as a pilot to determine if public access would prove to be detrimental to the Drainage District’s interests. Going into the second year, it was decided that some amenities to support the trail would be desirable. Nils Gore’s arch509 studio at KU was engaged to develop ideas for enhancing the trial through development of identity, signage and other supporting elements.

DESIGN PROCESS

Community engagement, through public events and a communications campaign via social media and monthly newsletters of the Armourdale Renewal Association, was begun in Fall 2015. The purpose was twofold: 1) to promote the trail as a community asset, for members of the Armourdale Neighborhood, and 2) to solicit feedback regarding potential users’ attitudes about the trail in general: hopes, fears, wants, wishes and needs. A community engagement event with the KU Mobile Collaboratory was held in September at the site of the trailhead under the Kansas Avenue bridge. In that meeting we learned that people would use the trail for numerous reasons:

recreation, daily commuting, exposure to nature, exercise, education. Obstacles to use included: safety concerns, lack of knowledge about its existence, extent and connectedness to other, similar trails. The studio generated many ideas for elements along the trail: nature outlooks for the eagle habitat on the island in the river; recreational exercise stations along the trail; entry signage; mile markers; bike racks; benches; informational messaging regarding history and facts about the watershed.



Presentation in the spiral.



Citizens marking maps



Students learning from javin Martin, Director of Free Wheels for Kids.

OUTCOMES

The studio ended up developing physical prototypes for 4 elements to be installed when the necessary permission and approvals are received from the governing authorities: 1) Entry signage to identify the start of the trail, located at the intersection of Kansas Avenue and 18th St. The trailhead is tucked under the bridge and is not seen from that close primary intersection. The sign is made of individual metal letters and designed to be installed on the fence of a supportive neighboring landowner; 2) A bike rack prototype consisting of steel tubes fabricated into pure geometric shapes—circles and triangles. Seemingly arranged

at random on the ground plane, their perspectival relationship is revealed when one adopts the right viewpoint and sees that they form a bike when viewed together; 3) An informational message board to illustrate the extent pf the trail and educate users about its extent and relationship to the rest of the city. 4) Concrete bench prototypes that are arranged concentrically within the “spiral,” the sidewalk accessing the site from up on the Kansas Avenue bridge.

The prototypes will be installed in Spring 2016 following receipt of necessary approvals from the city and neighboring landowner.

PROJECT FACTS

Timeline: August 2015-Present

PROJECT PARTICIPANTS

- Moe Alsinan
- Austin Boesecker
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- Claire Ryan
- Alex Tackes
- Perry Weber
- Nils Gore, Professor
- Matt Kleinmann, Graduate Teaching Assistant

COMMUNITY PARTNERS

- Healthy Communities Wyandotte (HCW)
- Community Health Council Wyandotte County
- KU Work Group for Community Health
- Armourdale Renewal Association (ARA)
- Kaw Valley Drainage District (KVDD)
- KU Mobile Collaboratory

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- Wesley McKain, UG Health Department
- Rick Behrens, HCW Levee Trail Coordinator
- Linda Pendleton, ARA Director
- Bundy Jenkins, KVDD Director

