Finding Beauty in the Commonplace

The wonderment and beauty of hidden ecological systems are revealed in non-traditional ways by providing access above, below, and on the ground level.
Visiting the site during different times of the day to study light conditions, during storm events to see where water collected, and sometimes sitting very patiently to observe the fauna. Photographs and drawings recorded the beauty I had experienced on site.
Overbrook Community Meeting
The community is the expert of their neighborhood and as such, I respected the wisdom of their voices. The goal was to prompt discussion about their vision for the site. Overwhelmingly, the community wanted access to green space.

Hear: • Silence • Wildlife
Smell: • Fragrant flowers, herbs
Touch: • Diverse textures of plants
Taste: • Fresh, organic produce
See: • Green spaces • Built areas to accommodate wildlife
The concept focuses on something I heard from the community—more access to green space. The design introduces landscape typologies that emulate the landscapes the Mill Creek would traverse from the headwaters to where it connects with the Schuylkill River.
The OEEC becomes an oasis of green space in a dense urban environment, providing opportunities for community and wildlife to co-exist.
"I want to hear sounds of water."

Community Member

Water Wall Entrance

The water wall serves as an entry point to the OEEC, drawing people off Lancaster Avenue. Water is collected from the roof and falls down the side of the building allowing people to interact with water in a unique way.
“I want to feel sunshine and warm breezes.”
Community Member

Community Rooftop Terrace
The rooftop terrace serves as a multipurpose space where people could meet before experiencing the site, an area for an outdoor classroom, and serves as a starting point for the elevated tree walk.
“I want to hear birds chirping and bee’s buzzing.”

Community Member

Bird’s Nest
The bird’s nest is a space that provides visitors with a unique view of the landscape. The visitor becomes part of the tree canopy, experiencing life above the forest floor.
Adventure Path
A less formal way of experiencing the landscape, visitors can experience the lush forest floor teeming with native flora and fauna.

“I want to smell scents of flora and fauna.”
Community Member
Wetland Step

The meadow is filled with life, changing throughout the seasons providing year-round beauty. The wetland steps allows for visitors to study the large varieties of plants and wildlife inhabiting it.
The section highlights the three different landscape typologies that are found on site. The elevated walk is shown weaving throughout the site connecting the different areas.
Aquatic Learning Lab
The Aquatic Learning Lab is a sunken area that highlights how plants can improve water quality, becoming a hands-on educational tool.

“I want to touch different texture’s and see integrated community.”
Community Member
View from Interior Classroom
The window on the side of the building bridges the interior experience with the outside. Classes can observe processes occurring under water while simultaneously looking above.

“I want to touch water”
Community Member
FINDING BEAUTY IN THE COMMONPLACE PLANTINGS

Upland Forest Plantings

Cercis Canadensis - Eastern Redbud
Mertensia virginica - Virginia Bluebell
Thalictrum thalictroides - Rue-anemone
Phlox divaricata - Woodland Phlox
Polystichum acrostichoides - Christmas Fern
Dennstaedtia punctilobula - Hayscented Fern
Podophyllum peltatum - Mayapple
Robinia pseudoacacia - Black Locust

Meadow Plantings

Schizachyrium scoparium - Little Bluestem
Sorghastrum nutans - Indian Grass
Lupinus perennis - Wild Lupine
Rudbeckia hirta - Black Eyed Susan
Echinacea purpurea - Purple Coneflower
Lobelia cardinalis - Cardinal Flower
Eutrochium purpureum - Joe Pye Weed
Asclepias incarnata - Swamp Milkweed
Monarda didyma - Scarlet Beebalm
Solidago canadensis - Canada Goldenrod
Liatris spicata - Blazing Star