

2015 Exhibition of School Planning and Architecture

Wetlands Education Center

Category: New Construction

Clark County Wetlands Park

Las Vegas, NV

Wetlands Education Center



Wetlands Education Center



Celebrating Las Vegas's wildlife and ecology

Community Environment:

Clark County Wetlands Park provides lush habitats for over 300 species of plants and animals while improving the quality of the local water supply, and providing an unexpected connection to nature on the edge of Las Vegas. Trails wind through 210 acres of varied habitat, including tall trees, ponds and streams, mesquite woodland, and desert scrub.

Award-winning Education programs teach students and adults about wildlife and the ecology of the Las Vegas Wash through engaging, interactive programs that promote a sense of place and a connection to nature. The entire indoor and outdoor learning environment celebrates a unique part of the local ecosystem, and brings the community together for educational events and stewardship.



Celebrating Las Vegas's wildlife and ecology

Community Environment:

The community was actively involved throughout the lengthy planning and design process. Planning began in the 1990s on the Park Masterplan, intended to revitalize 3,000 acres of existing wetlands and incorporate education and interpretation opportunities. Public meetings were held to gather input. As the program and conceptual design were established, the design team met regularly with community leaders.

As Commissioner Giunchigliani stated, "This facility was only a dream back in 1990s when Wetlands Park was first envisioned and it's a tribute to how far we've come as a community to embrace the desert environment we live in and celebrate it." The Park and Center have become a destination for local school children, local residents, and visitors.



Interactive, indoor-outdoor, all ages learning

Learning Environment:

“The Nature Center... was designed with a strong emphasis on creating a learning environment where learners of all ages would be engaged and successful in discovering concepts meaningful to them,” said Allison Brody, recreation program supervisor at Clark County Wetlands Park.

The Center serves local K-12 schools with interactive field trips that include small group work, the Wild Science program that focuses on hands-on math and science lessons, the Kids Gone Wild program for 3-6yo, the Nature Tales program that combines stories and art, summer programs, and weekly watercolor classes. Non-traditional learning environments include interactive exhibits and discovery stations, as well as outdoor teaching, activity, and viewing deck areas.



Interactive, indoor-outdoor, all ages learning

The Education wing of the center also includes more traditional teaching spaces that can be used to gather a class together for a large group activity or lesson, including classrooms, viewing rooms, and a 200-seat auditorium. In reality, nearly every inch of the center is used for active learning, with art and messy activities regularly held in the café, and hands-on exploration and educational activities taking place inside and outside.



Creating Connections

Physical Environment

The Center is designed to draw people into this unique ecosystem by creating physical and visual connections to the outdoors. The Center floats within the wetland reeds on concrete piers, serving as both education center and viewing platform. In addition to earning LEED Gold certification, the Center 's design takes into account the animal residents of the park. The buildings' under-structure encourages bat habitat by providing slots and surface texture for roosting, and a camera system allows visitors to view wildlife and water creatures from within the center. Large expanses of glass that provide daylighting and strategic views of the park are angled outward to reduce reflections that tend to attract birds. Birds see the reflection of the ground rather than the sky, reducing bird collisions.



Creating Connections

Physical Environment

Landscape design focuses on encouraging indigenous species and eradicating invasive species; no potable water is used for landscape. Indoor water use and sewage conveyance was reduced by 50%, building energy use was reduced by 27%, and robotic exhibits are powered by a dedicated PV system.

Education about sustainable features is also woven into the exhibits, field trip lessons, and guided tours. Many visible recycled and renewable materials are used throughout the building, and comprehensive educational signage teaches visitors about the Center's sustainable features.

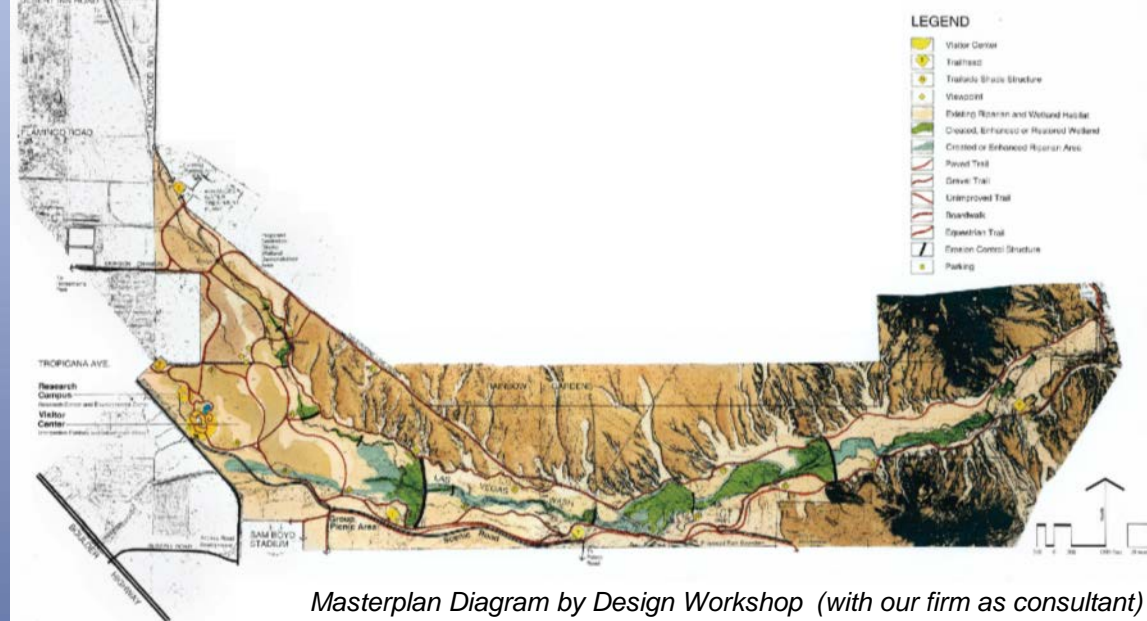


20+ years of planning, input, and design

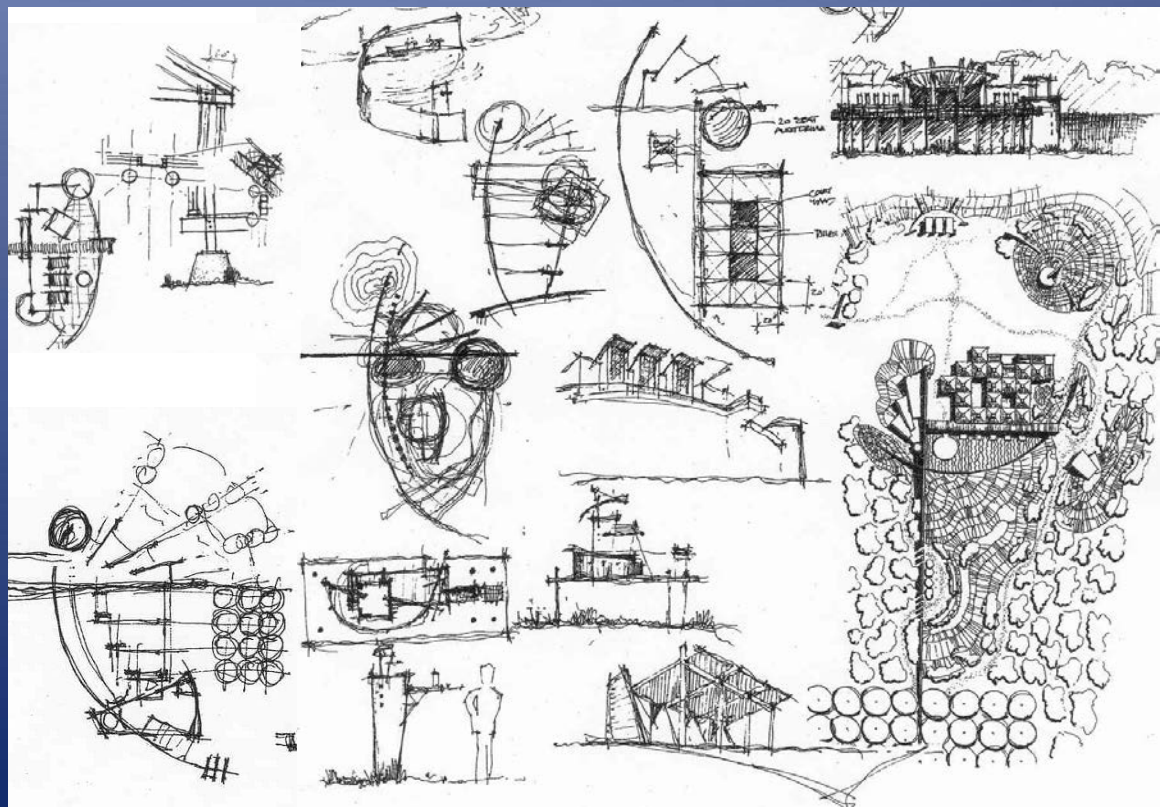
Planning Process:

This Center was the end result of over 20 years of planning, beginning with the Park Masterplan effort that started in the 1990s. The Masterplan incorporated expertise and feedback from several county agencies and the community to define goals and strategies for creating indoor and outdoor exploration and learning and improving this important ecosystem.

After the initial revitalization of the Park and many years of seeking funding for the Center, the program was refined in 2006 based on input from Clark County Parks and Recreation, the National Park Service, County Commissioners, and community members. Design was completed in 2008 based on the final space program and conceptual design.



Masterplan Diagram by Design Workshop (with our firm as consultant)

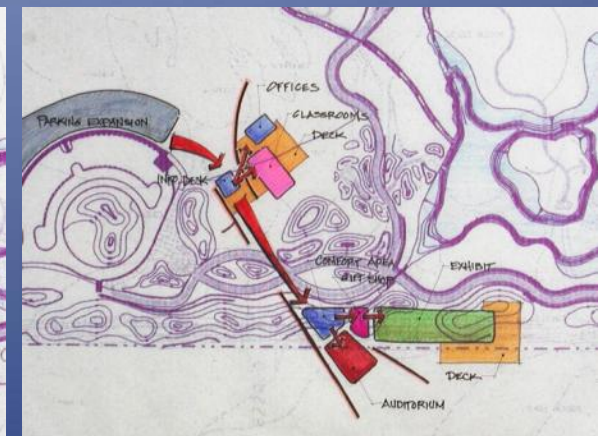
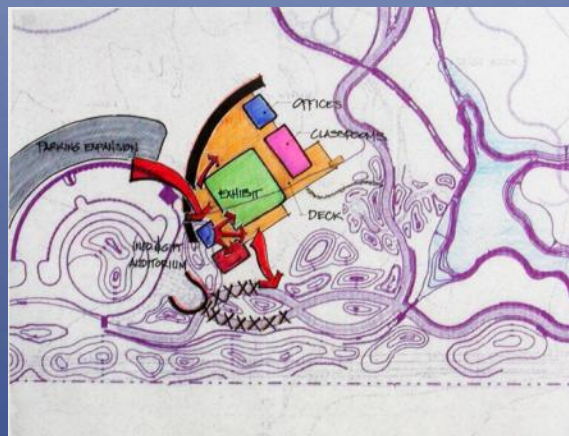
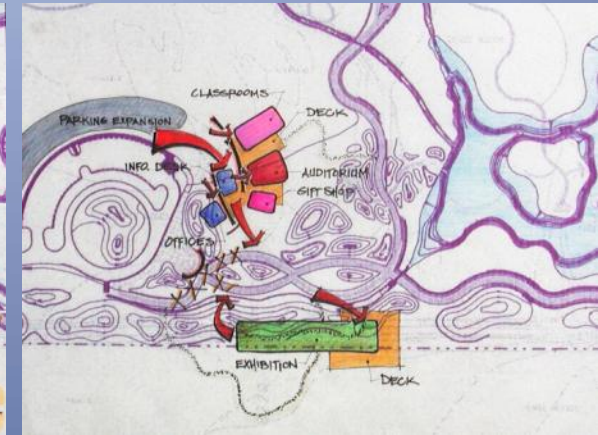
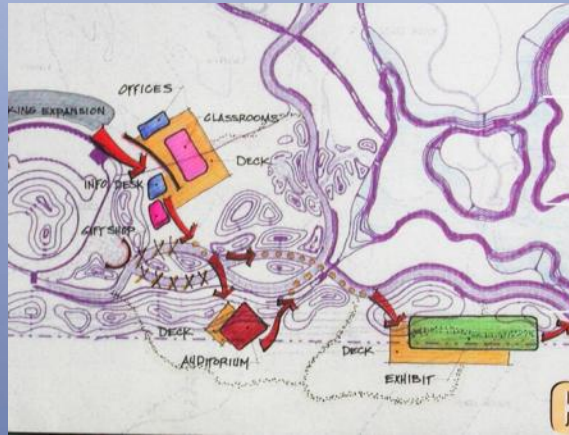


20+ years of planning, input, and design

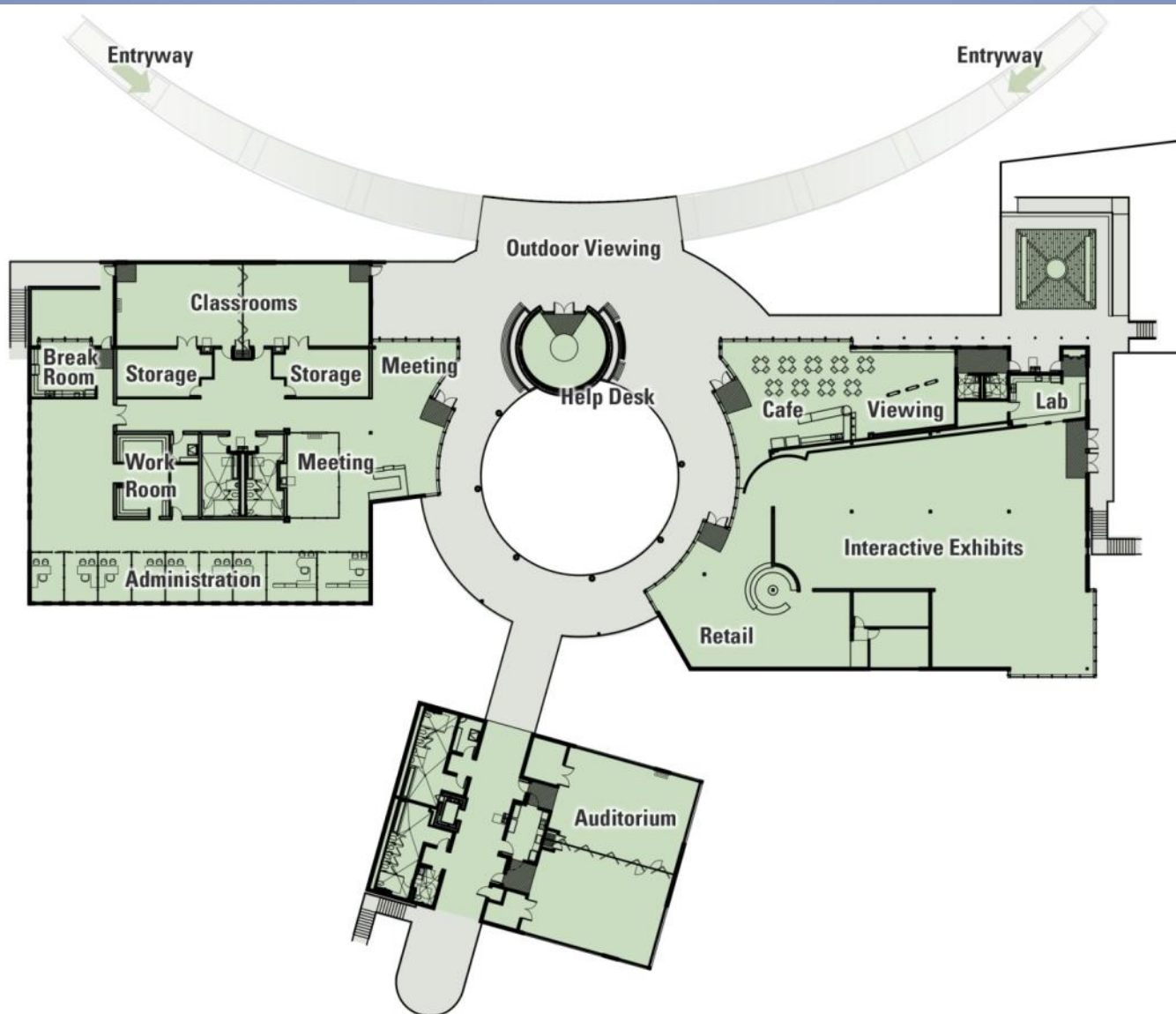
Planning Process:

Multiple agency and community stakeholders were involved throughout masterplanning, building programming, and building design.

The final design concept was developed primarily with the Clark County Parks and Recreation Department with major input by the Friends of the Wetlands community group. The Friends group included community leaders from all sectors of the Las Vegas area, including local industry, business leaders, educators, and community activists.



Floor plan



Exhibition of School Planning and Architecture

Project Data

Submitting Firm :	Dekker/Perich/Sabatini
Project Role	Architect
Project Contact	Julie Walleisa, AIA, LEED AP, CEFPP
Title	Principal/Architect
Address	7601 Jefferson NE, Suite 100
City, State or Province, Country	Albuquerque, NM 87109
Phone	505-761-9700

Joint Partner Firm:	
Project Role	
Project Contact	
Title	
Address	
City, State or Province, Country	
Phone	

Other Firm:	
Project Role	
Project Contact	
Title	
Address	
City, State or Province, Country	
Phone	

Construction Firm:	B&H Construction Inc.
Project Role	General Contractor
Project Contact	Ray Hoffman
Title	President/Project Manager
Address	240 E. Horizon Ridge Dr. Suite A
City, State or Province, Country	Henderson, NV
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Project Details

Project Name	Wetlands Education Center
City	Las Vegas,
State	NV
District Name	Clark County Wetlands Park
Supt/President	Kety Allred
Occupancy Date	April 2012
Grades Housed	K-12
Capacity(Students)	varies
Site Size (acres)	immediate building site = 6 acres Overlooks 210-acre Nature Preserve and 112-acre mitigation pond
Gross Area (sq. ft.)	30,000sf
Per Occupant(pupil)	varies
gross/net please indicate	gross
Design and Build?	yes
If yes, Total Cost:	\$16,289,413
Includes:	Site development, building, and equipment
If no,	
Site Development:	
Building Construction:	
Fixed Equipment:	
Other:	
Total:	

Supporting/Supplemental files/Images



The Center has interactive exhibits suitable for all ages that children can discover on their own, and teachers can incorporate into lessons. Learning takes place throughout the building and site.



Supporting/Supplemental files/Images



Supporting/Supplemental files/Images



Supporting/Supplemental files/Images



Supporting/Supplemental files/Images



The image to the left was submitted by a student to illustrate what she learned while at the Center.

