Norman Borlaug Heritage Farm

SITE OVERVIEW

The Norman Borlaug Heritage Foundation farm offers a glimpse into the life and ingenuity of its namesake. The site is rich in both historical and natural elements that make it an asset to its surrounding communities and the state.

The rolling landscape provides opportunities for visitors to wander through wetlands, prairie and woodlands, and explore agricultural amenities. A tributary of the Little Turkey River cuts through the site, influencing the shape of the landscape and the vegetation that grows throughout the landscape. The tributary provides a unique edge that physically divides the homestead from the fields beyond, but enhances the visual connection as it snakes along out to distant reaches of the property.
The masterplan capitalizes on the site’s historical and natural assets, enhancing elements and creating more opportunities to explore. The plan utilizes the division established by the Little Turkey River tributary to define areas dominated by the built environment versus the natural environment.
Based on soil types identified by the United States Department of Agriculture’s Natural Resources Conservation Service, general ideas about plant communities have been assessed for per-settlement vegetation on the site. Currently approximately 45 acres are in Iowa’s Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) as prairie. Though prairie vegetation would have spread across most of the landscape, much of it would have been a savanna, dotted with oaks and hickories.

People have an inherent connection with the savanna landscape. Historically the savanna provided a safe landscape with shelter and clear views simultaneously, allowing for just enough mystery with its tree cover to ensnare curiosity and promote exploration. Establishing some savanna landscape on site through the addition of oaks into the current CRP prairie would expand the variety of the farm’s plant communities and offer areas of shade to visitors exploring the site.
Topography and landscape features were used to identify zones that center on program concepts and plant communities. Each zone is loosely defined and freely flows from one to the next, interweaving historic experience, new agricultural practices, alternative energy, land stewardship and the rolling prairie. The journey begins at the Education Center zone and from there guests are free to choose their own direction and adventure.
LEVELS OF EXPERIENCE

Each visitor to the site will have different interests and physical abilities. The goal of the “levels of experience” is to address this diversity and provide each visitor with the key principles and stories about Norman Borlaug and offer points of engagement with the various plant communities and agricultural practices showcased, no matter how far they choose to venture into the landscape. With each expansion there is a change in depth of the stories and personal engagement with Norman’s life and the landscape. The physical experience is heightened, with longer paths, greater elevation change and more rugged terrain.

Motorized vehicles (i.e. golf cart, 4-wheeler) may be necessary for some visitors to make connections between the boyhood farm and the Innovation Farm and to tour zones such as the arboretum.

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The circulation plan for the Norman Borlaug Heritage Foundation winds throughout the site connecting points of interest and prime locations for views out across the landscape. Suggested material choices for the paths are intended to have a minimal impact on the natural landscape and preserve the integrity of the historic experience. Crushed gravel paths surrounding the education center and through the boyhood farm will provide universal access within these zones.
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- 7000 sf building featuring green technologies and alternative energy models
- Exhibition space highlighting Norman Borlaug’s legacy and showcasing new technologies in indoor farming
- Parking for 30 cars, utilizing permeable paving and stormwater BMPs
- Overflow parking for 30 cars or buses parked linearly on a vegetated surface
- Test plots showcasing new growing methods
- Mown prairie walk

Integration of exhibition and event spaces

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Omega Center for Sustainable Living; Rhinebeck, NY

EDUCATION CENTER

- Overflow / Bus Parking
- Garden
- Parking (30 cars)
- Education Center (apx 7000 sf)
- Test Plots
- Boardwalk and Point of Engagement with Fen
- Prairie Walk

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Neal Smith Prairie Center; Prairie City, IA

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Omega Center for Sustainable Living; Rhinebeck, NY
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HISTORIC FARM / SCHOOL

- Farmhouse garden featuring vegetables in a kitchen garden; similar to those grown by the Borlaug family
- Grove showcasing fruit trees grown by the Borlaug family; the grove would be created as an allee that would provide the transition from the farmhouse to the schoolhouse
- Ornamental edible garden utilizing corn and wheat to tell the story of the importance of these two crops for the Borlaug’s
- Boardwalks over wetland areas to allow for up-close interactions with these ecosystems
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ARBORETUM

- Fruit tree collection showcasing fruit trees grown by the Borlaug family and other species common to the region
- Signage to identify tree species and communities interwoven with the Norman Borlaug story
- Specimen tree collection featuring trees with unique characteristics
- Enhancement of the tree communities already established
- Overlooks the savanna zone, Little Turkey River valley and out over the rest of the site
- Mown trails throughout the arboretum
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INNOVATION FARM

- Research farm plots ranging in scale from 10 acres, 5 acre sub-plots, and smaller linear research plots
- Signage to identify research and experiments for specific areas
- Specimen areas for the public and research apprentices
- Borlaug’s birthplace offers a housing space for apprenticeships and researchers
- Access paths that allow for individuals to explore and learn about various agriculture elements

Discovery Grove artful elements
10 acre innovative research area
Apprenticeship Housing
Large Research Plots: vegetable based
Individual Linear Research Plots: grain based
Agriculture Overlook

IOWA STATE RESEARCH FARM;
BOONE, IA
Bio-mass research plots

CORNELL UNIVERSITY AGRICULTURE STATION;
HOMER C. THOMPSON VEGETABLE RESEARCH FARM
Certified organic wheat and field corn variety trials

GOLDSWORTHY “PRAIRIE CAIRN”;
C.E.R.A. GRINNELL, IA