

The Sacred Grounds Initiative encompasses a long list of ideas, both to enhance the grounds for people and to create a sanctuary for native plants and animals. Phase 1 was largely focused on the human needs, and Phase 2 will include projects for both aspects.

Native Plantings

The Garden of Hope vision is a garden featuring native species for butterflies and native pollinators. In addition to the existing rush milkweed we can add native nectar sources, including annuals and perennials. For example, removing some non-native bushes and repairing irrigation can create space for Desert Lavender, a huge favorite of pollinators.

The Celebration Garden vision is to be soothing and contemplative. A goal might be to provide year-round bloom, which would also be lovely from the patio.

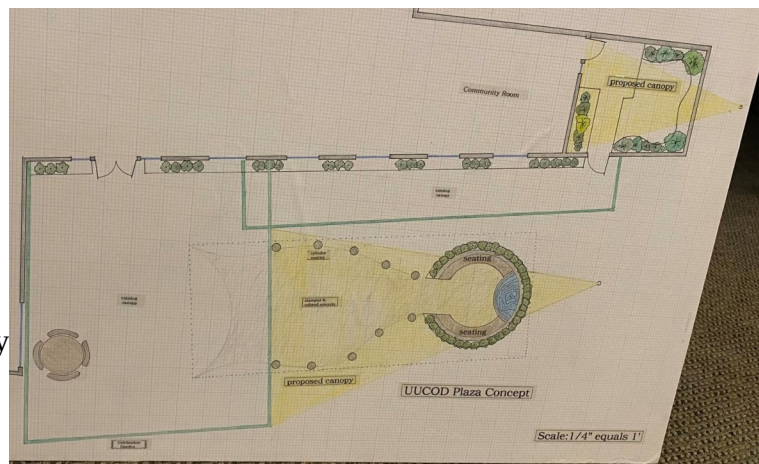
Around the perimeter of the patio is currently just a rock garden. It would be lovely with blooms of some kind. Perhaps seed with Desert Verbena, or maybe something that provides blooms during the peak winter season.

Elsewhere on the grounds we can remove dead plantings, repair the irrigation system and create beds by expanding the natives already present (encelia, dyebush, creosote, ...) or adding new natives (Desert lavender, mesquite, chuparosa, ...)

In areas of high visibility we can add native wildflowers for spectacular March-April bloom. With a little irrigation we can have our own super-bloom every year. Potentials include Desert Gold, Desert Verbena, Desert Dandelion, Arizona Lupine, ...

Plaza Water Feature

The original building design included a water feature on the entrance plaza, but that was dropped for budgetary reasons. As part of Phase 2, we can now fulfill that vision with a lovely water feature area surrounded by circular seating that can even serve as a tiny outdoor chapel for ceremonies. Hiroshi created an exciting conceptual drawing.



Shade wall

The southwest wall of the Sanctuary (the long wall behind the stage) gets very hot from afternoon sun. It has recorded interior surface temperatures in the high 90s. We can

significantly reduce our electrical air conditioning use by shading that wall. Phase 2 might include a proposal for some green wall, perhaps a hedge, an arbor, small trees, or some such. This can also be habitat for species that prefer more isolation from humans. The green wall is open for ideas!

Peace Garden

The tables by the labyrinth and Peace Pole get considerable use by the general public as a nice picnic spot, lunch break, or family area. We can expand that with walking paths and seating. We could also join the Peace Pole and the Peace labyrinth with a foot bridge, and we can add plantings to the stream bed and walking paths. There is quite a bit of area available and this could become a major garden.

Perhaps it also has an educational area with a labeled nature trail. Perhaps we incorporate small water sources for the critters. Perhaps we sprinkle short verses for contemplation along the walking paths. Perhaps we add subtle lighting along the walking paths and labyrinth or to highlight the Peace Pole, taking care to be appropriate for the native plants and animals.

The Peace Garden awaits design ideas!

New Diverse Habitat Gardens

As the climate changes we can provide refuge for different ecological communities. Some critters like active sand fields, some like stabilized sand, some like sandy wash, some like rocky slopes. We can create a sanctuary for many different species. For example twelve different species of lizard have been observed within a half mile of our grounds. If we invite them with the proper habitat, they will move in and thrive.

First is to preserve or enhance the two niches currently are flourishing on our grounds. Then we can add additional habitat to create a refuge for more species.

Blow sand

- Behind the sanctuary and to the east is an area of blow sand. Once dominant in the Coachella Valley, this important habitat has been reduced to just 5% of its original size. Despite the tiny size of our little patch, the endangered Coachella Valley milkvetch is thriving.

Stabilized sand fields

- Our stabilized sand fields, typified by creosote bush, support our desert iguanas and pocket gophers as well as song birds and pollinators.
- For color we can add beavertail prickly pear and annual native wildflowers.

Sandy wash

- Another important habitat is sandy wash, typified by Smoke tree, Desert Willow, and bladderpod. This overlaps our current grounds as irrigation supports dyebush and Palo Verde, which are also typical sandy wash species.

Honey Mesquite

- Historically there were vast stands of mesquite along the edge of the valley, full of birds, but most of those stands are gone. Year round, songbirds, verdin and quail are drawn to mesquite. Honey mesquite has also been shown to be the most favored tree for migratory birds as the flowers are timed perfectly to provide insects as the birds pass through (<https://pubs.usgs.gov/fs/2009/3038/fs2009-3038.pdf>).
- We have room in the far upper corner of the grounds for a mesquite garden.

Rocky Slopes

- With some rocky cover, beds of desert lavender and chuparosa are both lovely and provide another niche for critters.
- If we were to build a major boulder pile against our back wall we could create habitat for the chuckwalla lizards.