

ABSTRACT

PROJECT NAME: Tri-Faith Commons

LOCATION: Omaha, NE

ENTRY CATEGORY: General

100 WORD DESCRIPTION: The Tri-Faith Commons is a 35-acre campus in Omaha, Nebraska that is home to the Tri-Faith Initiative (TFI). TFI consists of three Abrahamic faith groups (Judaism, Christianity, and Islam) who have chosen to establish a faith-based campus together that is committed a model for peaceful co-existence that builds on America's promise of religious freedom and our desire for understanding through practicing respect, acceptance, and trust. The campus design is rooted in Abrahamic values shared across the three faiths such as the sacred role of water, the belief in God, the role of prayer, worship, and the importance of fellowship.

NARRATIVE

THE SITE

The campus is situated in western Omaha within the Papillion Creek watershed at the intersection of two established residential neighborhoods and a new commercial and residential development. The site sits within land ceded by the Omaha peoples to the US government in 1854. The commons occupy the previous site of Omaha's only Jewish golf course, Ironwood Country Club. The club was established in the 1924 after the Jewish community was not allowed to golf or join other clubs in Omaha. Following the close of the country club in 2010, the land was sold to a developer and planned into a mixed-use development. As part of the redevelopment, the Commons underwent a huge site restoration by the Army Corps of Engineers. The existing Hell Creek and adjacent flood plain was re-established transforming the manicured golf course into a wild native landscape.

THE FORMATION

Temple Israel (TI) was the first to build on the Commons on the Northeast corner of the site in 2013 initiating the Tri-Faith community. American Muslim Institute (AMI) followed in 2015 on the southwest corner, Countryside Community Church (CCC) on the southeast and Abraham's bridge in the center were complete in 2019 and finally the Tri-Faith Center on the south and additional campus improvements were complete in 2020.

THE PROCESS

In 2015 the landscape architect led campus design team was invited to co-create a visionary comprehensive plan for the community on the heels of prior planning and engineering work that laid the infrastructure for the Commons. The design team worked closely with the faith groups and stakeholders, facilitating a series of visioning workshops to ground the campus planning in the organizational mission of both the TFI and the individual faiths. The biggest opportunity for the design team was to draw from values of the organization and translate the TFI mission into a legible, physical, and powerful place-based experience. The design team committed significant time on site documenting existing conditions through photography, video and site mapping with the goal of revealing places on site that were sacred and immersive, providing a framework around these elements already present on site.

SHARED SPACES

The site is divided into a series of Faith Precincts occupied each by a house of worship and a set of commons spaces that are shared by the whole community. Included in the shared spaces is the Tri Faith Center which is the public face and community center for the campus. The secondary walks, faith-based gardens, range of gathering spaces and plantings are grounded in ambitions of stewardship of the land, ecological restoration, and filtration of water. The site is connected through a new campus drive and iconic gateways and shared parking to support everyday activities and large gatherings. Additional program includes productive gardens, playgrounds, sacred art, and a large outdoor amphitheater oriented east. Each feature embedded in the landscape has been considered as part of the larger whole - as sacred, animated through orientation (qibla direction, rising sun, and the ancient Near East) and able to register changes over time. Now completed, the Tri-Faith Campus is the first destination in the world to unite Christian, Jewish, and Muslim faiths on a collective campus.

NARRATIVE (CONTINUED)

ABRAHAM'S BRIDGE

The signature feature of the commons is Abraham's Bridge which facilitates both the inward and outward connection of the site to Hell Creek and the broader community. Each faith building and the Tri-Faith Center are brought together in the landscape by a large circular path and series of bridges that cross over Hell Creek. The buildings are connected to one another and to the site in an equal, all-encompassing, and singular way through the circle from that also signifies unity and wholeness. The bridge anchors and connects the campus through a ¼ mile long circular walk and a series of connecting pathways that connect to the adjacent neighborhoods.

CONCLUSION

The landscape architect led design team created a place that is at once a home for the three faiths and residents of Omaha while anticipating millions of national and international pilgrims drawn by this landscape for learning, fellowship, and beauty. The campus is fulfilling its promise with the recent completion in 2020 and connecting local, national and international community through a campus that allows for the formation and growth of aspirational communities near and far.



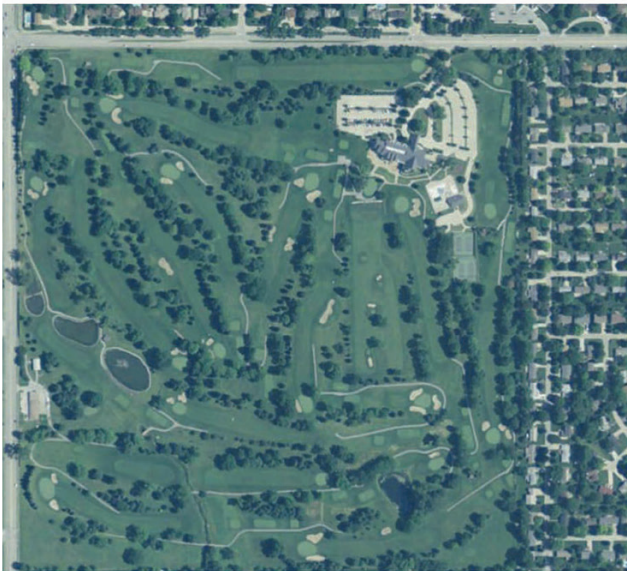
TRI-FAITH CAMPUS

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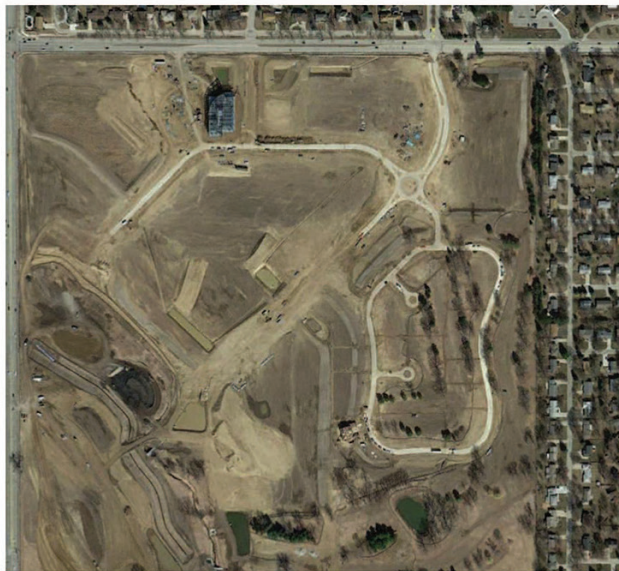


COMMUNITY

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2010



2012

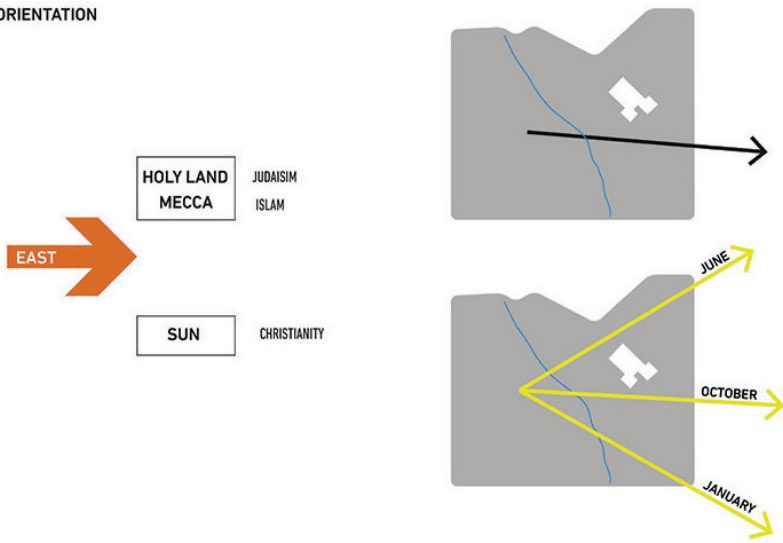


2014

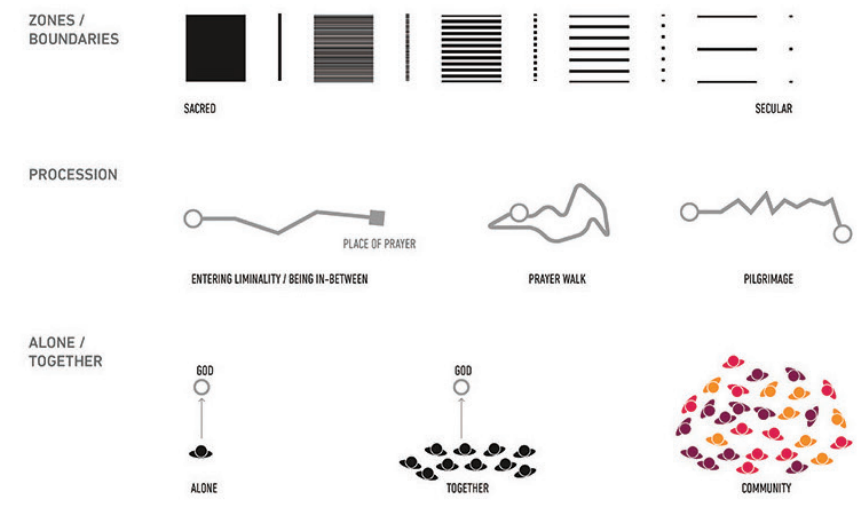
SITE PROGRESSION

The commons occupy the previous site of Omaha's only Jewish golf course, Ironwood Country Club. Following the close of the country club in 2010, the land was sold to a developer and planned into a mixed-use development. As part of the redevelopment, the Commons underwent a huge site restoration by the Army Corps of Engineers.

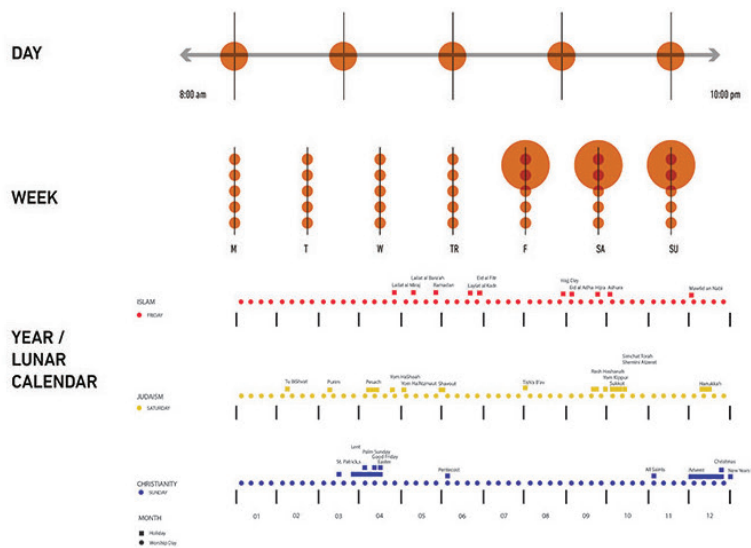
ORIENTATION



CREATE A SACRED LANDSCAPE



TIME



CONTROL / FILTER



FLOW



BODY

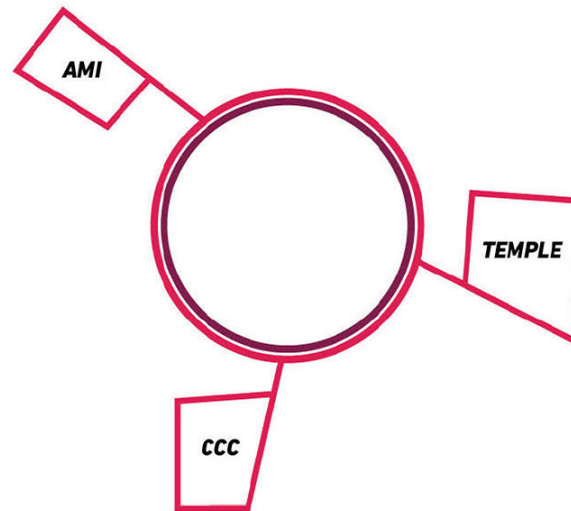


SITE DRIVERS

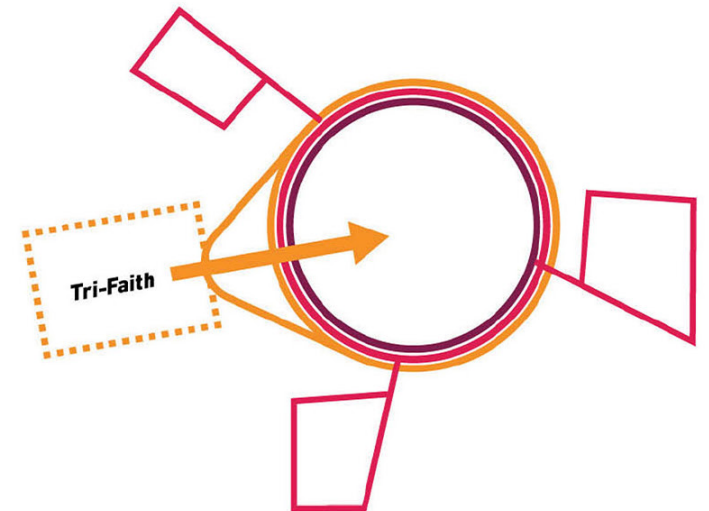
Four key design influences were diagrammed early in the design process for their relationship to the three faiths and the role they played physically and spiritually on the commons. These influences include time, orientation, sacred space and water.



ALL FAITHS



EACH FAITH



EXTERNAL

ABRAHAM'S CIRCLE CONCEPT

The central unifying idea in the design is Abraham's circular bridge, which unifies the three faiths with a singular boardwalk. Each faith branches out allowing room for their own faith expressions. External Tri-Faith connection shares with the world the idea that unity and individual beliefs do not separate us but instead unite us.

PLAN KEY

- 01 *Tri-Faith Building*
- 02 *AMI*
- 03 *CCC*
- 04 *Temple*
- 05 *Tri-Faith Event Lawn*
- 06 *Amphitheater*
- 07 *Abraham's Circle*
- 08 *West Meadow*
- 09 *East Meadow*
- 10 *Amphitheater*
- 11 *Precinct Paths*
- 12 *Orchard*
- 13 *Faith Backyards*
- 14 *Small Gathering Space*
- 15 *Tri-Faith Welcome Plaza*



TRI-FAITH CAMPUS VISION PLAN

The design team worked closely with the faith groups and stakeholders, facilitating a series of visioning workshops to ground the campus planning in the organizational mission of both the TFI and the individual faiths. The biggest opportunity for the design team was to draw from values of the organization and translate the TFI mission into a legible, physical, and powerful place-based experience.



ZONES

KEY

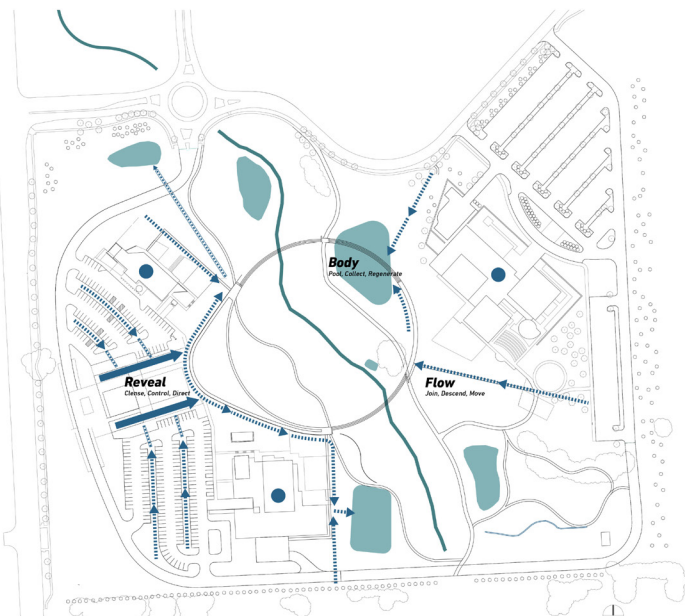
- 01 Meditation Path Woodlands
- 02 Campus Edge
- 03 TFI Pathways
- 04 Program Nodes and Plantings
- 05 Abraham's Circle
- 06 TFC Lawn



CIRCULATION

KEY

- 01 Abraham's Circle
 - 02 Precinct Path
 - 03 Primary Connection
 - 04 World Path
 - 05 Meditation Path
- FAITH BUILDINGS



STORMWATER AND INFRASTRUCTURE



VEGETATION

KEY

- 01 Pine/Grassland
- 02 Stormwater Planting
- 03 Lawn
- 04 Woodland (dense)
- 05 Savanna
- 06 Wildflower Prairie
- 07 Garden
- 08 Entry Road

SYSTEMS DIAGRAMS

A series of diagrams that illustrate the layers of the site that together comprise the underpinnings of the vision. The faith precincts, circulation, stormwater and planting all embed and express values of the Tri Faith Initiative.



BRIDGE SECTION ABOVE

Much care was taken to set the elevations of the bridge that would minimize disruption of the site and creek and to provide a sense that the bridge was set onto the site. The bridge was constructed in the winter to minimize disruption of Hell Creek and its adjacent flood plain.



BRIDGE SECTION

Each zone of the bridge allows for a new experience of the landscape and campus. With Temple Israel in the background, the circle transitions to a bridge over Hell Creek with the wildness of the flood plain emerging.



PRAIRIE BOARDWALK SECTION

With the Christ Community Church in the background, Abraham's Circle offers a series of diverse vegetative experiences, from an immersive prairie to wetland with additional manicured landscape emerging from the faith precincts.



WETLAND BOARDWALK SECTION

The mown prairie edge transitions to a series of bridge crossings with the adjacent development in the background. The wood deck is made of ipe, or ironwood, as requested by the client as the memory of the Ironwood gold course is still very much present here.



WETLAND AND BRIDGE SECTION

The bridge moves toward the American Muslim Institute, with the Tri Faith Center to the left. The bridge invites the whole community to visit, and acts as social infrastructure as well as spiritual.



ABRAHAM'S CIRCLE

Abraham's Circle is a metaphor for the Tri-Faith Initiative be lived out in real time. Three faiths and the community connect with nature to make the circle whole.