

# CAPSTONE SUMMARY

## **DETAILS** “Community Building & Environmental Education in a Permaculture Context.”

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### **Summary:**

My project was to design a permaculture display for an area called “The Back 40” located just south of the Washington Park Arboretum’s Visitors’ Center. This permaculture display garden would serve as an outdoor classroom and event site, and would host the Greenhouse Café. This is a historic site set within a rich environmental context. The area has large potential, but it is presently under-utilized, with most of its activity run by volunteers. My capstone deliverables included a design plan for site optimization, a written design proposal for implementation, and requests for funding (to be used at a later date).

### **Why I did it:**

Permaculture is a science rooted in a deep observation of the interactions within our natural ecosystems. These observations demonstrate how we can design ways of living that offer the same stability and resiliency found in interdependent ecosystems. Elements of a system are seen in relation to other elements, so that outputs of one element become inputs to another. In permaculture systems, maintenance is minimized, waste serves as a resource that increases productivity, and interdependence restores functionality of environments. Permaculture principles can be applied to any environment and at any scale—from your backyard to dense urban settlements, from individual farms to entire regions. With permaculture design, we can develop positive solutions for abundant food supply, healthy and diverse ecosystems, natural building materials, water management strategies, and waste treatment.

### **How I did it:**

I began with a two-week Permaculture Design intensive in Bolinas, California, at the Regenerative Design Institute. I connected with Patrick Mulligan through a mutual friend,

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### **The Big Picture**

Permaculture combines cutting edge design with ancient, human-scale technology. These vernacular methods were hard won over thousands of generations, and they have been lost in just the last few. UW can become a national example of best practices by raising the bar in this realm of sustainable development and environmental education.

and I learned about the opportunity to develop a site plan for the “Back 40” at the Washington Park Arboretum’s Visitors’ Center. I spent the rest of the summer immersed in on-site analysis and researching best design practices. This resulted in a physical site map plan and a written proposal for the Campus Sustainability Fund to implement, making the design a reality.

### **What I discovered:**

Our current food system is largely dependent on cheap fuel. As petroleum becomes less available and more expensive, this will greatly impede the agricultural system currently in place. Communities will need access to reliable food sources closer to home to remain resilient. Working together for an unbiased, non-denominational common good will rectify our uncommon levels of social isolation. Through site repurposing—and not only growing food but teaching others to grow with us—we increase our local sustainability and resilience, encourage stewardship of the land and of each other, and offer future generations knowledge of their place in the world. Site repurposing also instills responsibility on community members for the collective health, well-being, and vibrancy of the community and land to which they belong.

### **What I learned:**

- To participate in community building;
- To better understand permaculture principles in action;
- To create spaces for outdoor environmental education;
- To understand the importance of local leadership;
- To work with volunteers and community partners; and
- To appreciate a commitment to renewable resources.