Creative Enterprises, Inc. is a non-profit that focuses on employment assistance for people with disabilities.

The organization also provides a number of services to its clients, including classes in basic skills like money management and cooking. Job training opportunities are also onsite, including a thrift store, animal shelter, greenhouse, and workshop. These activities were housed in a number of disconnected buildings.

The organization contacted CED looking for design help for its growing facility, which includes several adjacent buildings and properties. Assistant Professor Katherine Melcher took the project on in her “Community and Place” graduate studio, providing a master plan to Creative Enterprises in 2011, and following up with ideas for site improvements in 2013.

Before developing their design recommendations, Melcher’s students met with Creative Enterprise’s clients to learn about their unique needs and perspective. The clients that Creative Enterprises serves represent a range of abilities, as well as mobilities. Accommodating this spectrum of users is a difficult design challenge. To gain a better understanding of the clients’ needs, pairs—comprised of one graduate student and one client—toured the State Botanical Gardens of Georgia, providing a chance for one on one interaction. The class also conducted a design workshop with the organization’s clients and staff between designer and client. These experiences gave the students personal insights into the unique needs of those who would use and inhabit the spaces students designed.
Erosion Control + Connecting Walkways

Mitigate bank erosion through concrete pavers, coir matting, and plant material. Increase accessibility in swamp area by constructing a raised deck walkway.

Estimate of Project Costs: Not available. (materials only, labor and tools not included)

Level of Expertise: Professional

In addition to the interactions and interviews with Creative Enterprises' clients and staff, the students studied the design of number of similar facilities, and researched healing gardens and accessibility standards to determine appropriate design strategies for disabled users. The final master plan incorporated this knowledge and addressed a number of onsite issues, including circulation between buildings, lack of outdoor activity space, and quality of the outdoor environment. The 2013 studio proposed several site amenities to flesh out this master plan, with a focus on creating simple and legible concepts that could be easily built by volunteers or staff members using readily available materials. These recommendations included raised planters and garden structures, seating and exercise spaces, and environmentally friendly site features to address stormwater and erosion onsite.

Since the project began, a number of improvements have been built by students, volunteers, and the organization. A new sidewalk now connects two of the buildings, passing by a recently constructed amphitheatre in a small valley recently cleared of invasives. New benches line the walkway. Other improvements to the site include a bocce ball court, and an attractive trellis made of reclaimed materials that screens a service area. Behind one of the buildings, an outdoor art wall has been created, showcasing the work of the program's clients.

Updates are available here: http://tinyurl.com/CEDOutreach

More information: Jennifer Lewis, Public Service Projects Coordinator, jmlewis@uga.edu, 706-369-5885.

Partner: Creative Enterprises, Inc.