



## **Adult Day Care Center Garden**

### **Jewish Community Center**

St. Louis, Missouri

#### **An Outdoor Environment for Dementia Patients**

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Dementia affects many people as they age. Creating an outdoor space that is a positive force in the lives of those with Alzheimer's and other forms of dementia requires special attention to how these people perceive the world and what visual cues mean to them.

For example, in a paving pattern of light and dark squares, the dark squares may be perceived as deep holes. The garden at the JCC is designed to avoid these patterns. It may appear a bit simple to those without dementia. However, to those with the condition it is intended to be a comfortable place so that no matter where they are on the path, they can see the door at the center.



People with dementia tend to become concerned about new experiences and changes in their environment. An important goal of this project was to encourage outside activity with a comfortable and welcoming environment.

There are no dead ends and not many choices that the walker needs to make. The joints in the concrete path are minimized in the project so that walkers do not see them as steps or voids. Along the loop path are benches, low walls and hand rails that provide support and resting places. The six foot wide walk can be used together by caregivers and participants, including those in wheelchairs and with walkers.



Above all, this place is safe and secure. The garden is attractively fenced to keep walkers from wandering off. The wide variety of plant materials have no toxicity. The earth mound and trees in the center of the walk divide the space but allow views back to the door. The overall space has a pleasant sense of enclosure and a residential feel. It includes plants that provide a calming sense of nature and gradually change color and foliage with the seasons.

The garden enhances the interior of the center since it can be viewed through large windows along the building's north side.

The guidelines for our design work were arrived at in discussions with Benjamin Schwarz, Ph. D., of the University of Missouri, the JCC's consultant in the field of physical environments for the elderly. Randy Mardis of Landscape Technologies prepared the planting design.

TeamFour/Saur depends heavily on the advice from our consultants, not just in the engineering fields, but also, as in this case, from experts who can focus on specific design goals. This makes our design work effective and meaningful to a group of people for whom design really matters.

