

The processes that sustain life should shape the spaces we inhabit.

PORTFOLIO OF XINYU THEA ZHANG

selected work from 2024 to 2026



I approach landscape and urban design through the relationships between ecological processes and everyday life. Soil repair, water, food, shade and movement inform how I organize parks, schools and settlements. Across these projects, I explore how spatial design can support daily use, accommodate change and create opportunities for people to take part in caring for the places they depend on. This inquiry extends from the workings of a site to the collective decisions that shape a region.



What allows a neighborhood landscape to endure?

Industrial decline and population loss have left Moxham with vacant properties and weakened social connections. Flood risk and limited access to green space and healthy food add to the pressures on residents' health.

Moxham, Healthy Together proposes a network of underused properties along Sam's Run to support a livable, healthy neighborhood by addressing the social determinants of health. Water remediation and walking routes connect these sites with community gardens, food access and local services. A phased strategy begins with a local alliance and temporary programs, followed by more permanent landscape and building improvements.

I see enduring landscapes as places that support daily life and that communities can continue to shape. Design should help people care for shared environments and adapt them as their needs change.

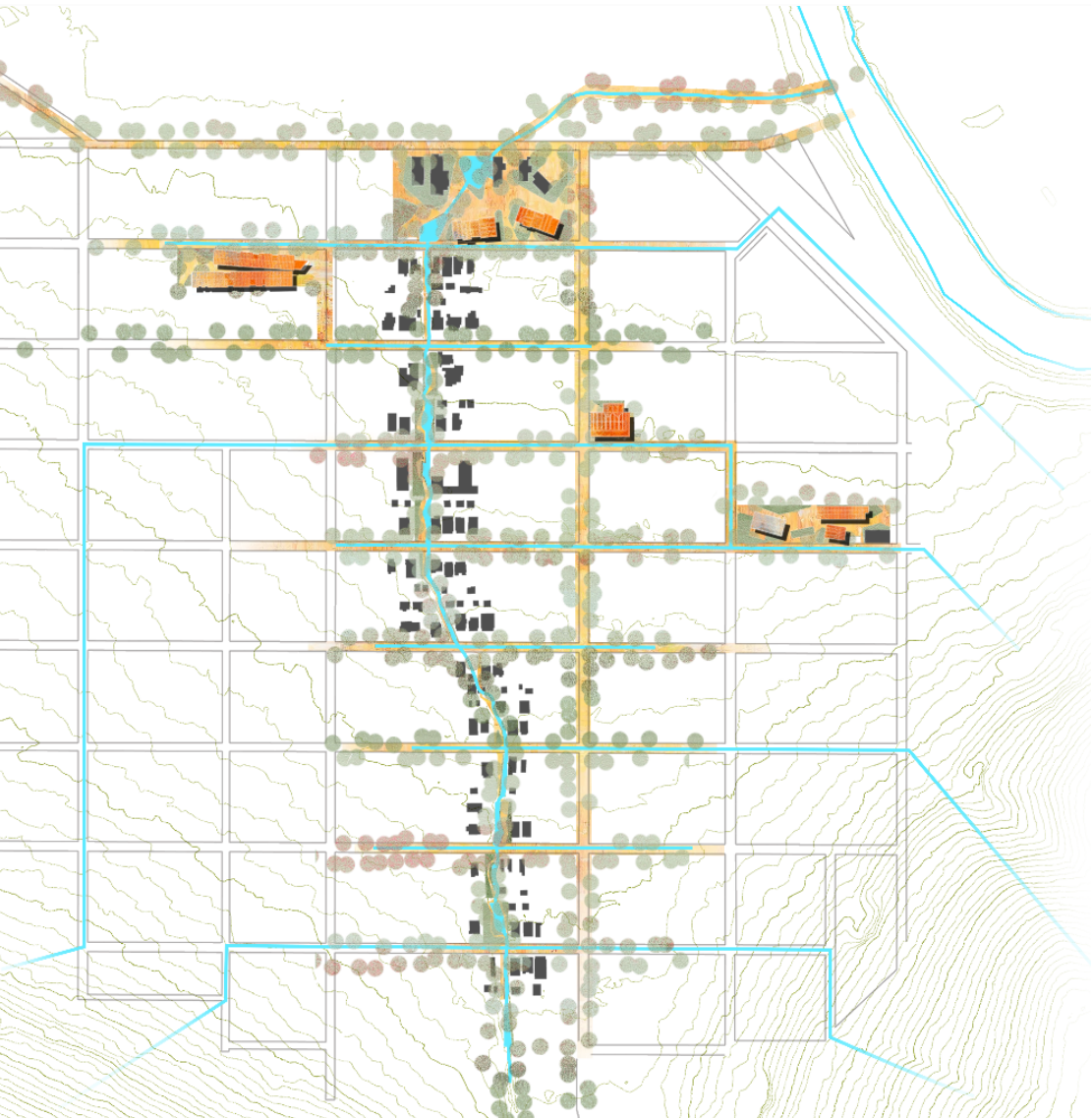


Tools: Hand-built physical model

Making room for water and everyday life

How can Sam's Run become part of everyday neighborhood life? The proposal connects the water corridor with streets, public spaces and community programs.

NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN



A connected landscape within the existing neighborhood grid.

Tools: QGIS, Google Earth Pro, Rhino, Adobe Photoshop, Adobe Illustrator

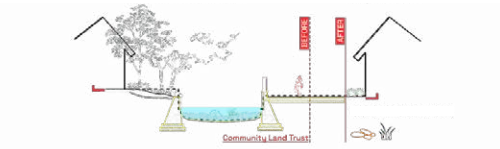
LIFE ALONG SAM'S RUN



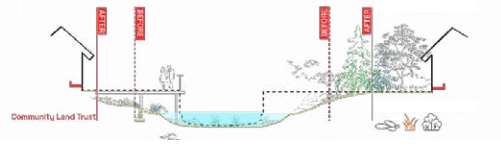
A shared pedestrian landscape beside homes, planting and water.

Tools: Rhino, Lumion, Adobe Photoshop

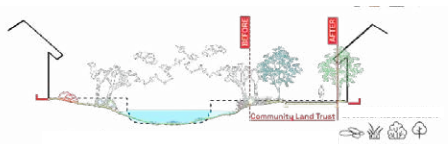
FIVE PROPOSED SECTIONS ALONG SAM'S RUN



01 Sedimentation Pond



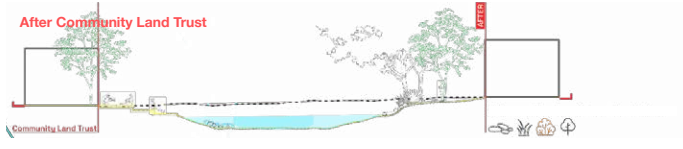
02 Vegetative Filtration



03 Water Recirculation



04 Floating Treatment Wetlands



05 Recreational Platform

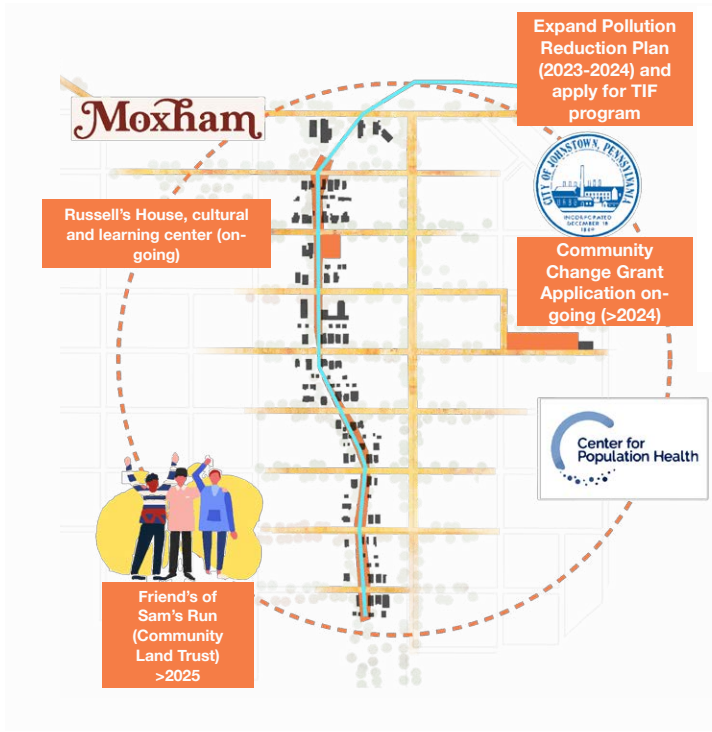
Tools: Adobe Photoshop, Adobe Illustrator

A neighborhood built over time

Community organization comes first. Temporary programs help test the proposal before long-term changes to streets and the water corridor.

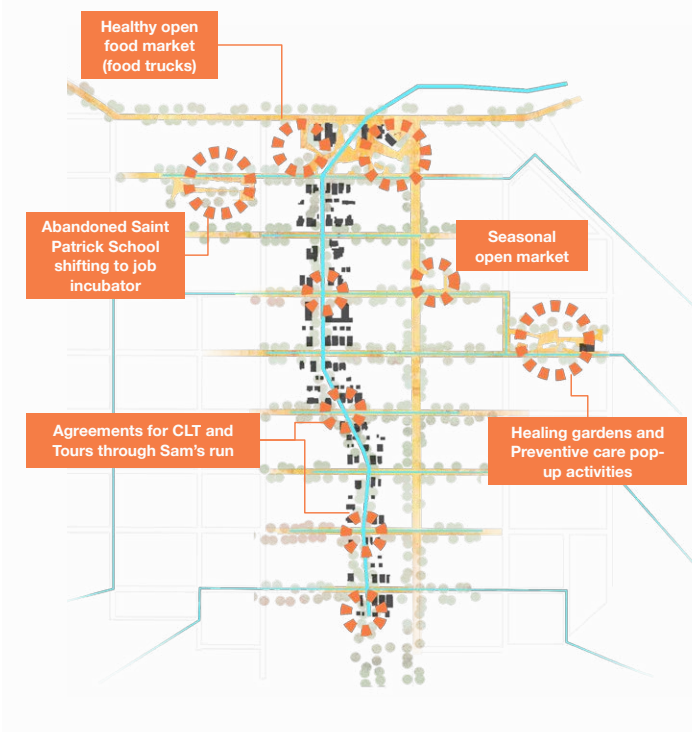
PHASE 1 YEAR 1 PHASE 2 YEAR 1-3 PHASE 3 YEAR 3-10 PHASE 4 YEAR 10+

Working Together as the seed of change!



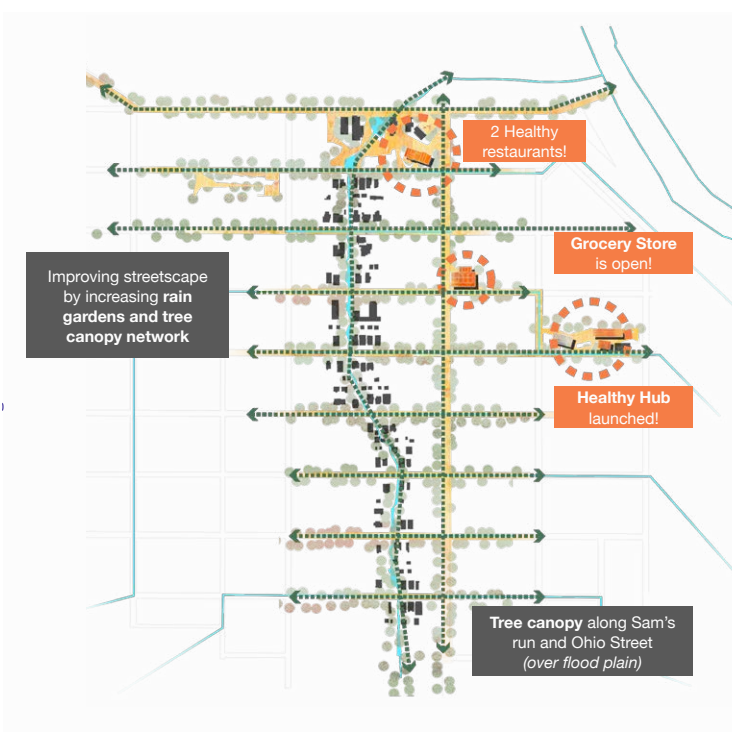
Empowering communities and key stakeholders by establishing a local volunteer based Alliance, a Tax incremental finance (TIF) program for Sam's run at the same time leveraging a Community Land trust (CLT)

Piloting community change



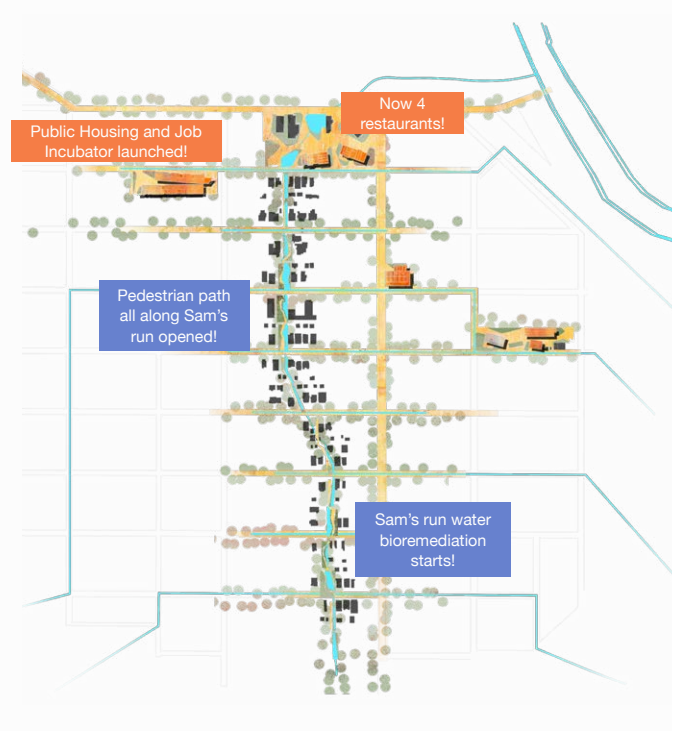
Piloting the proposed program with temporary pop-up activities, Health Festival, for assessment and plan development

Reconnect with nature



Shaping safe environment to relieve the fear of flood and bring people closer to nature

Re-knitting social fabric



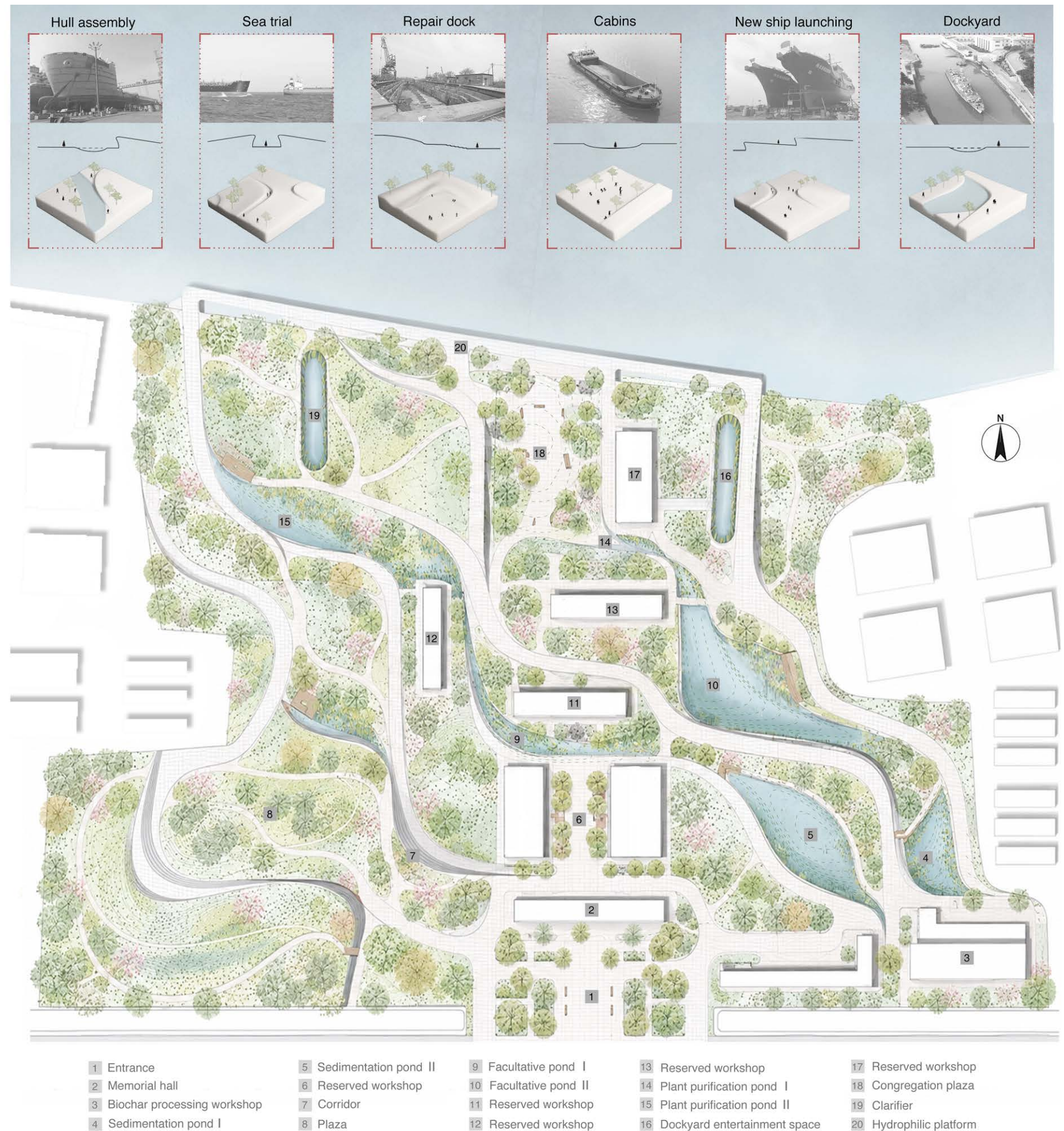
All of the Healthy together operate, reconnect community life, thriving and hoping for a change

How can historic places become anchors for community renewal?

Dagu Dockyard holds an important place in Tianjin's industrial and shipbuilding history. Its abandoned structures and polluted soil and water present a challenge of restoring both environmental quality and a culturally significant site's role in surrounding community life.

Green Renaissance proposes an ecological park that links heritage reuse with environmental repair. Biochar production from sorted local waste forms part of the proposed soil and water remediation system, while treatment ponds, planted terrain and public routes organize new gathering spaces around retained workshops.

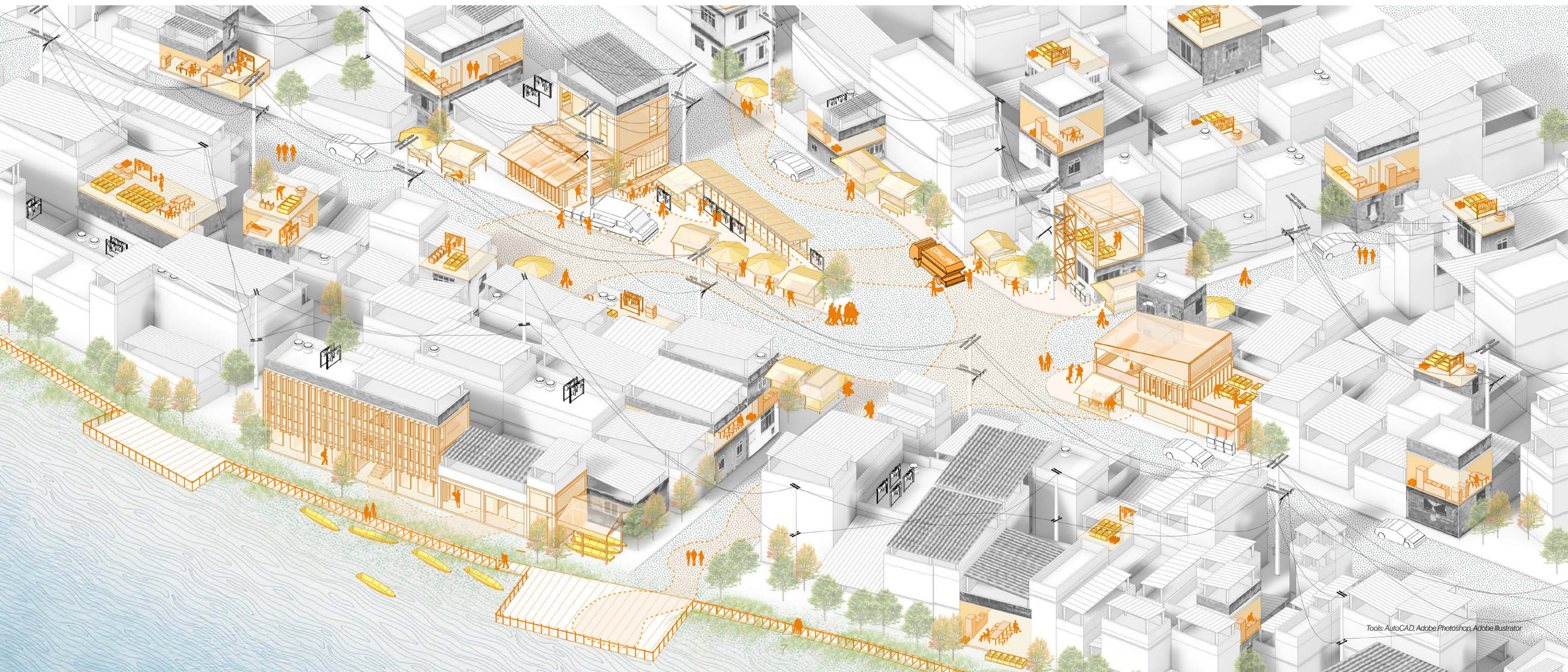
Renewal should give historic places a continuing role in community life. Environmental repair and accessible public space can encourage daily activity and strengthen a sense of local identity, allowing people to experience their shared history through places they can use and shape.



Who gets to shape the systems a neighborhood depends on?



In Rio de Janeiro, access to essential services is tied to territorial power and residents' ability to act collectively. **Waste to Value** proposes neighborhood-based waste infrastructure along the Sarapuí River, adapting its visibility and physical presence to different conditions of local control. Collection, processing and shared facilities are distributed through everyday urban spaces. What matters here is the possibility of residents organizing and managing a system they depend on. Environmental improvement could then become a way for people to act collectively and gain more influence over how their neighborhood develops.



How can climate adaptation strengthen the public systems that support everyday life?

Climate change puts pressure on the spaces and services that support daily life, with uneven consequences for different communities. **Sweltering Schools** approaches adaptation through public education, examining how schools can connect building improvements, outdoor learning and treats cooling as part of the school's relationship with its neighborhood. Our proposal brings passive cooling, shaded spaces, and green and water systems into a connected spatial strategy. The school is considered as one node in a wider public network, where climate adaptation can support learning, health and community life together.

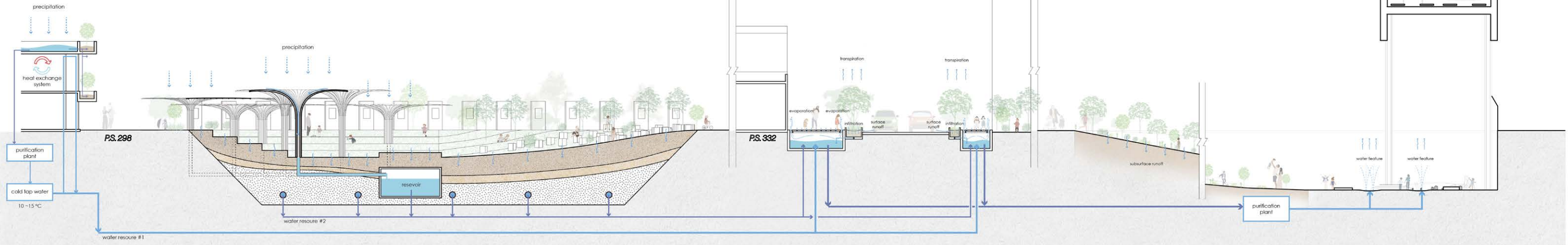


#01 Rooftop Collection & Heat Exchange

#02 Canopy Collection & Underground Storage

#03 Planted Streets & Water Infiltration

#04 Water Treatment & Play



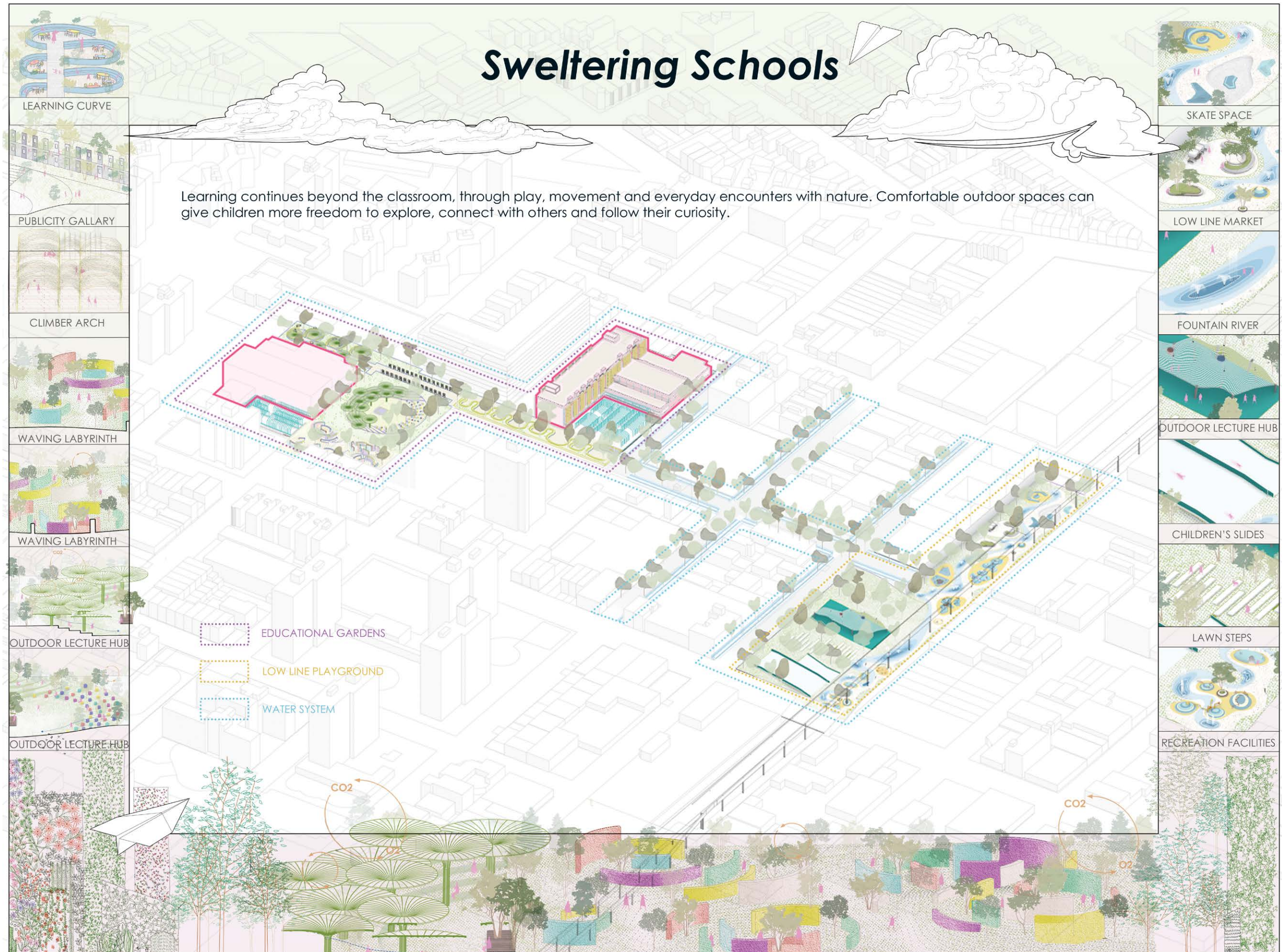
WATER COLLECTION, STORAGE AND REUSE

The network connects rainwater collection, underground storage and treatment across school grounds, planted streets and the Lowline playground. Water infrastructure supports the landscape's environmental functions while creating opportunities for outdoor learning and play.

Tools: Adobe Illustrator, Adobe Photoshop

Sweltering Schools

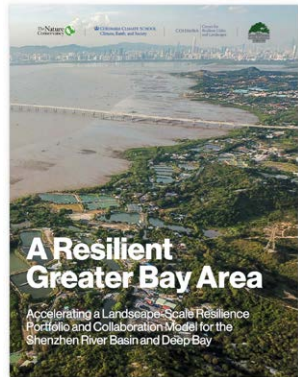
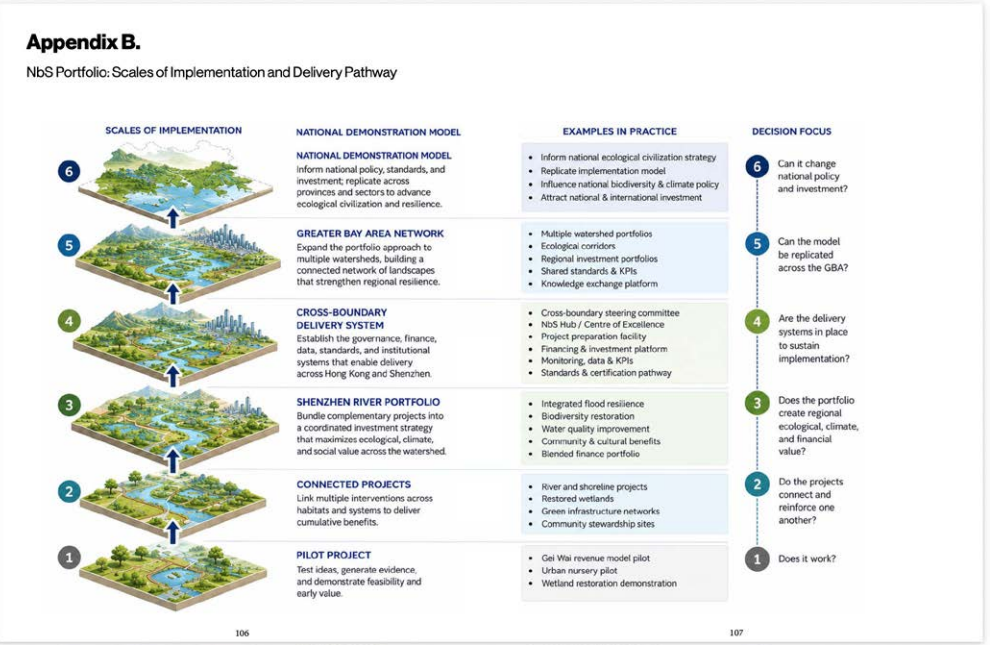
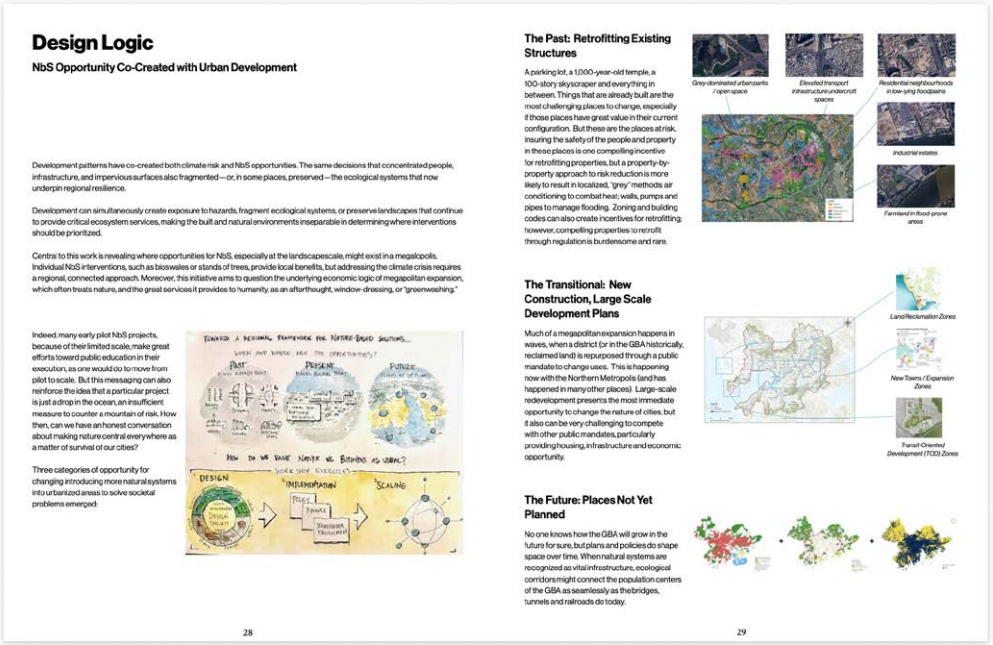
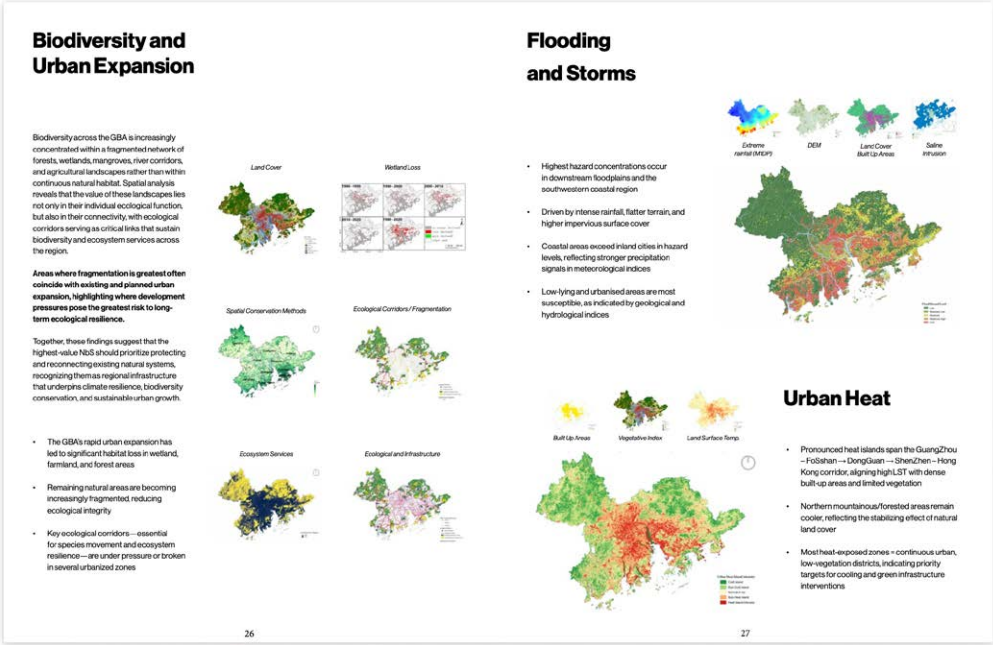
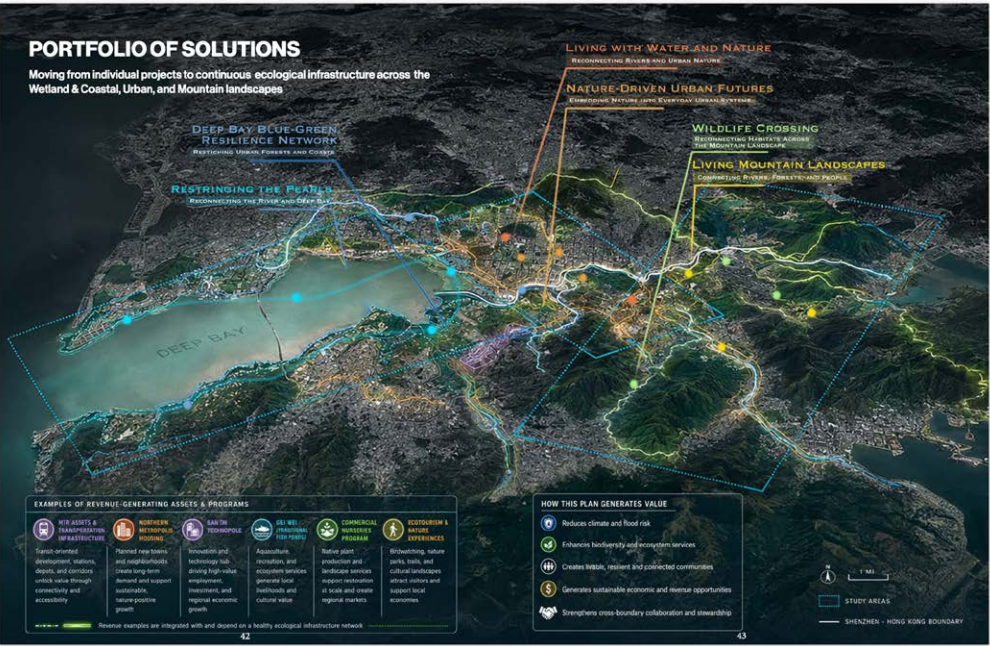
Learning continues beyond the classroom, through play, movement and everyday encounters with nature. Comfortable outdoor spaces can give children more freedom to explore, connect with others and follow their curiosity.



What does it take to build climate resilience at landscape scale?

Across the Greater Bay Area, flooding, heat and coastal exposure intersect with rapid urbanization and fragmented ecosystems. **A Resilient Greater Bay Area** examines these pressures through the Shenzhen River Basin and Deep Bay, exploring how nature-based solutions can shape development around the watershed's ecological systems.

Proposals for wetland, urban and mountain landscapes respond to distinct local conditions while contributing to a connected resilience portfolio. The inquiry extends into governance, engagement and finance, examining the policy support, funding, delivery capacity and long-term stewardship needed to move from spatial concepts toward implementation.



[Read more here!](#)

Tools: QGIS, Adobe Illustrator, Adobe Photoshop, AI-assisted image editing