

# SIDI

SOCIAL IMPACT DESIGN INITIATIVE  
REPORT

INTENTIONS

**swa**  
VOLUME II

OUTCOMES



**SIDI**

SOCIAL IMPACT DESIGN INITIATIVE

2015



Photo Credit: Jill Johnson



# Volume 02

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## WHEN GOOD INTENTIONS AREN'T ENOUGH

*Linking Intentions to Impact*

“Design for equity” means holding ourselves more accountable to the things that we create. To do that, it’s not enough for the output of our work to have good intentions and hopes for impact. It’s just as critical that we also evaluate the outcomes, or assessed impacts of the project, to see if those hopes were fulfilled. Many of us entered this space with a desire to make a positive impact in communities in need, and while this desire fuels our passion, how often do we take stock of the impacts of our work after the ribbon has been cut and the iconic photos have been taken? The unfortunate thing about many of our projects is not that they don’t often hit the mark, but that we don’t often know whether or not they have.

Why do outcomes matter?

Outcomes-based frameworks have been mentioned in a variety of disciplines, particularly health. Rupal Sanghvi, a public health expert and founder of HealthxDesign, says that while an outcomes-based framework is now part of the health lexicon, it wasn’t always so, particularly in medicine. Not long ago many doctors believed their primary role was at the patient-level and to provide treatment if needed, be it drugs or medical procedures. How their patients fared (compared to patients served by other doctors), and how their approach affected outcomes were not questions that were asked, even in such a scientific field. Over time, it became clear that drugs and procedures are merely tools. It is

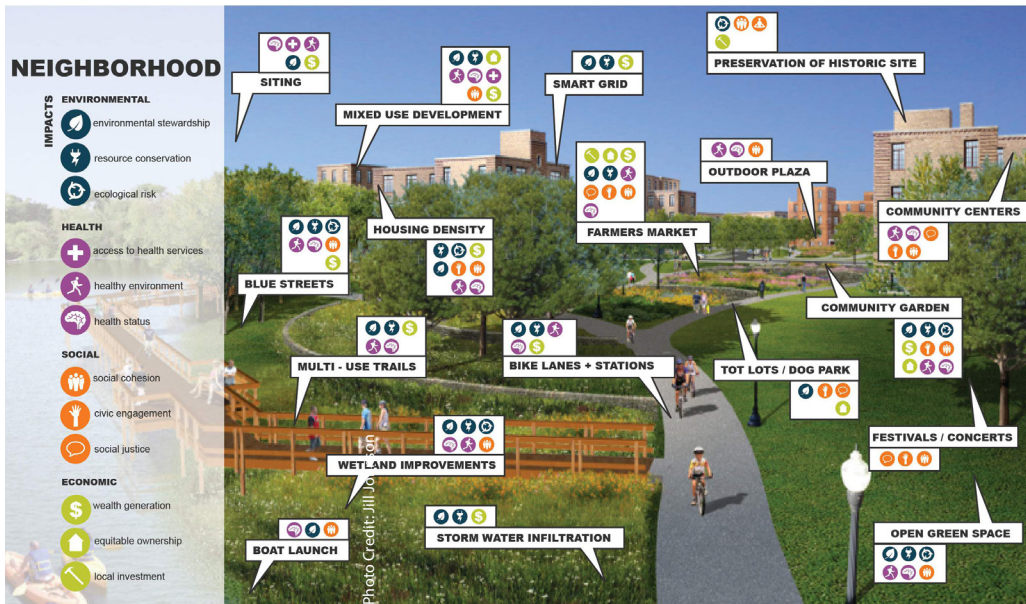


Image Credit: Enterprise Community Partners, ISA, and HealthxDesign

now increasingly common in medicine to not only consider the tool of intervention, but to also understand how those strategies affect the patient during and after treatment, how they intersect with the other realities of the patient’s life, and how these factors should influence future interventions and practices.

For designers, our tools for intervention can be the buildings, environments, and objects that we create. But like the doctors, many of us think of those tools in a limited fashion. All too often we only think about the outputs rather than outcomes. Designing a grocery store to be built in a food desert has the potential to make an impact; but what happens if it’s too difficult for local residents to walk there because of the lack

of sidewalks? Or if many of them can’t afford the produce because of their income level? We often think of societal issues such as health and poverty in terms of the access or services that our design must enable delivery of, rather than the human conditions that our work can help transform.

To fully embrace outcomes in our work, we must also acknowledge that it can’t just be tacked on at the end of the design process. We know we shouldn’t wait until the end of the design process to start thinking about how a building can be energy efficient or made of sustainable materials. Thinking about and planning for equity outcomes is no different and needs to be incorporated. Now let’s look at how to weave

an outcomes-based framework into the design process.

It starts with specificity

Specificity is important when talking about outcomes, particularly since equity is a dynamic concept. Kiley Arroyo, executive director of the Cultural Strategies Council, believes that even figuring out what you're going to measure requires an equitable process embedded with specifics. Identifying outcomes assumes you are trying to arrive at someplace better than where you start; yet we seldom ask whose voice is embedded in that vision of the future. This a critical point for outcome goals to be effective—they must be intentional and specific.

Kiley tells a story of visiting with a few design groups in Marseille, France, who work with several different disenfranchised populations. Because there is no French word for "community" in the broad way we employ it, she couldn't get away with generally defining the project or its goals as being "community-serving." Instead, she had to be very specific about the groups the project was seeking to impact. Once she was specific that the project was to promote culture-driven economic development in a neighborhood populated by North African, Armenian, and Khmer families that had been historically ignored by national (or "legitimate") cultural agencies, she could become more intentional as to how she engaged those groups, framed the project, and developed



Photo Credit: Jill Johnson

outcome goals to which she and the design groups could be held accountable. Once it's clear which group or groups a project is intended to impact, the next step in developing outcomes goals includes assessing two important, but often overlooked, factors: community capabilities and systemic inequities. By taking the time to understand a population's existing capacities, partner institutions can be more responsive in designing an intervention that builds upon those assets in ways that can be leveraged by the community in the future. This can enable partner institutions to more meaningful engagement with the systems of inequity on more equal footing.

#### Strategic Partnerships

Forming partnerships with place-based or issue-focused groups can help use existing community actors to identify their group's own social and environmental capabilities. Once partnerships are in place, a team can employ a developmental evaluation approach, wherein metrics evolve with a project as it is refined. This way the project team is empowered to iterate concepts for impact evaluation from the very beginning instead of being paralyzed by the notion of metrics at the end.

Projects should also aim to impact the root causes of inequities, not just slightly alter the environment in which systemic inequities are allowed to persist. For community-engaged design projects, this means that unless we've intentionally created a series of metrics linked to these more systemic outcomes, the major public benefit many projects can have on underserved communities will be limited at best. To develop a

salient and authentically impactful intervention, the process requires forming strategic partnerships early on to bring in other disciplinary perspectives on how to identify and address systemic injustices.

Once outcomes are integrated into the design process, it's easier to think about evaluating success against those outcomes. Evaluation can validate whether assumptions about how the project's impact on these communities were correct. This method is about providing a mechanism by which to learn and provide accountability to communities. It allows everyone involved to refine and scale the successful elements, and to learn from and adapt the unsuccessful ones. And whatever the outcome, knowing what worked and what didn't is critical to strengthening future practice.

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*This article first appeared on Impact Design Hub on April 15, 2015.*



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**Cinda Gilliland**

Principal

## FINDING OUR WAY

*SIDI@SWA*

It's interesting to try to organize a grassroots effort within an established organization, to lead, but not lead, the group to a destination as yet unknown. I am learning all the time through our collaborations. For instance, the contributions of each individual are so crucial; I have seen how the presence or absence of any one person can tip our group's conversations and directions dramatically. Some are not comfortable expressing opinions, so I seek ways to empower them, or to let them find their voices, but wonder if it's just ultimately easier to not step up: If you step up you might become responsible.

How do you take a mood, a latent desire, and create a movement from it? How do you let/help that movement become self-sustaining, or even identify the point when it has outlived its usefulness? How do you tell the difference between a lack of energy and, by extension, meaning, or natural inertia?

I have learned that to make change or influence a direction that is well chosen, small but

concentrated input can mean the difference between an idea whose time seems to have come and one that is lost. On the other hand, there is also the importance of tenacity and the sensible path of subtly refining the concept and honing the communication concerning it until the idea is unavoidable or unlikely to be misunderstood.

As designers we are in the business turning ideas into built form. We can typically draw some version of what we are imagining. It's a different story with social change, a change in culture. It's much harder to measure that type of change or to ascribe an effect to a particular action or set of actions. Social impact design can be practiced from within an established organization with years of doing things the same way, just as it can be practiced in our larger communities. But how do we institute the new working methods, or measure some nearly invisible outcomes?

Of course, before outcomes, though, come



intentions. My first intention for SIDI is to create positive change within SWA. I want to change the way we approach our work so that the social impacts of what we do are valued and accounted for and the opportunities for creating positive change with every one of our projects intensified. But, truth be told, I am a subversive: I also think that we can help evolve the culture of the firm in this manner. Specifically, by welcoming and including those thoughtful people who want to more than just successfully accomplish their work (nothing wrong with that). In addition to being great landscape architects and designers, they want to make a difference in the world. SWA is good at training form-givers and creating great landscapes, but by welcoming the change-making thinking and the people who care about it, our culture too will evolve.

Because of the nature of socially impact work, SWA has the opportunity to become more inclusive, not only in an obvious minority vs. majority sense, but in the sense of being more collaborative, having different voices be heard, listening to their words and using the power of the group. To me, this sounds like a movement toward health and progress. SWA is a group practice, but I worry that the meaning of that structure has become lost. We have not evolved with the culture around us. Firm-wide, top down, efforts are being made to rectify that with Hyperlink, etc. SIDI, by contrast, is a bottom up opportunity to add to practice “becoming the change you want to see.”

Either I am fatally stubborn or hopelessly intrigued with the possibility and mechanism of social change from within. For some reason, I am sticking around to see if I can promote change, if I can use my position to help clear a path for

the younger people who, thank god, have finally arrived!

The way is not clear for SIDI, nor is its destination. This makes for some discomfort. “Is she leading us somewhere, or are we lost, my collaborators in the group may wonder?” My daughter always hated it when I got us lost. Me? Not so much. You never know what you will find if you keep your eyes open and maintain a general sense of direction. But I am aware that not everyone appreciates that kind of ride. I try to listen to others, try and understand the direction or destination they have in mind, and see if or how it can help or refine what I understand to be our mission. Maybe we will learn that our mission needs to change. I’d like to think it includes anyone who has an interest in the work.

As we produce this volume, we struggle with many basic questions: What are, and what are not, good examples of social impact design? What exactly do we mean by it? How and when do we articulate intentions? Clearly, we are experiencing growing pains. My hope is that the making of this volume will be meaningful, not just another task but a tool in our evolution as a group and as individuals, a tool towards the evolution of our work. We need to reach deeper for our intentions, and be bold in articulating them. We have a ways to go before we understand what outcomes would be most meaningful, or even possible, and even farther in order to understand together what and how to measure them. This nearly nascent place that we find ourselves in today is wonderful in its awkwardness in that it is so full of possibilities. And no matter what, I am so happy to be in it together with all of you.

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## 02



# ESSAYS

**"WITH THE RESOURCES AND EXPERIENCE OF SWA  
SUPPORTING US WE FELT CONFIDENT ATTEMPTING TO  
REDEFINE THE WORLD WE EXPERIENCE EVERY DAY."**

Shaun Loomis, Designer





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**Andrew Watkins**

Associate

## SOCIAL ENTREPRENEURSHIP:

### *Business Models for Developing Markets*

More than half the world's population currently lives in urban areas. Of this, 70 percent are located in developing nations and this number is rapidly rising and projected to increase to about 95 percent by 2060. Urban populations in developing nations face severe challenges—socially, economically, and environmentally.

For example, 30 percent of urban populations world-wide live in slums and informal areas. As designers, we have skills that can affect change in these environments, the ability to coordinate programmatic needs with spatial solutions that improve the quality of life.

As the population shifts to cities in the developing world, how can we create a business model that is flexible enough to interact in this exploding market, a market that is 2.5 billion people strong and growing? Developing markets are ripe with obstacles—direct funding capacity, political stability, location, and complex social structures, to name a few. Yet, these areas are also ripe with opportunities—multifaceted funding interests, abilities to leapfrog technology, innovative organizational models, and creative forms of sustainability that are often non-technical. It is easy to understand how the skills we've acquired from working on some of the most innovative projects in the developed world could benefit

projects in the developing world. Could this also work in reverse—can we learn skills from working in the developing world that would give us an advantage on our home turf?

Social entrepreneurship is a business approach that may prove useful in strategizing how to increase our design work in the developing world. Though this concept is nothing new, it has attracted increased attention in the last five to ten years, both as a way for businesses to have a greater and more direct impact on issues they find important, and as an alternative to international aid models that have increasingly come under criticism for their lack of long-term sustainability. Social entrepreneurship efforts attempt to organize business around social issues rather than clients. They are mission-driven. This model may have multiple clients that each support the engagement of a single issue, possibly with different agendas that are organized and aligned by the entrepreneur. It is therefore far more challenging in developing and managing clients or funding sources, yet provides distinct opportunities by virtue of its ability to focus an organization's mission. Social entrepreneurship employs a ground-up rather than top-down strategy.

There are many designers already using social

entrepreneurship as a business model. They range from firms whose sole practice is focused on this approach to firms that incorporate this concept as part of their practice. For example, MASS Design Group and IDEO.org both put social entrepreneurship at the core of their business model while firms like SWA and HOK have developed groups within their practices that seek to bring a focus to social impact through entrepreneurship within the firm as a whole. These two tracks fall on a spectrum between nonprofit firms that have an earned-income strategy to for-profit firms with a mission driven strategy.

Mass Design Group has organized itself as a nonprofit, aligning design skills that are typically found in the for-profit sector with mission-driven strategies that serve foundations, other nonprofits and corporate sponsors. They aim to balance fee-for-service work with donations, allowing them to join other organizations on a common mission as well as drive their own agenda forward. They have collaborated with organizations such as Partners in Health, the Clinton Foundation, and Herman Miller to provide design and research services. These alliances have formed unusual business structures, with the traditional role of the client becoming blurred between those providing funding and those receiving services.

At SWA, we have created an internal Social Impact Design Initiative. Our cross-office consortium works to enable and encourage the firm as a whole to engage in projects that provide a social impact. It also seeks to shape our for-profit work and strategically add value to the firm by highlighting how it can provide more socially impactful services for our clients. For example, this report is a key method of highlighting and communicating the value of the social impact design that the firm is producing. It

features a range of projects, from fee-for-service to pro-bono across all of our services and our offices.

These business models can teach designers some common lessons about what makes social entrepreneurship successful. So what are some of these lessons?

1. Treat those you work for as partners, not clients. Join in on the mission.
2. Set expectations with your partner about resources, schedule and effort. This typically means clearly communicating scope, time and fee. This holds true for all projects but may need to be more clearly communicated with partners that have not had the experience working with designers.
3. Plan on spending time in the field. First-hand interaction with your partner is key, whether they're close to home or far away.
4. Create a flexible team. Projects that have a social impact can often be riskier, and developing a working method that values resourcefulness can ensure the long-term viability of the project.
5. Look for creative funding. Partners may not have all of the resources they need when your involvement begins. Understanding resources available through foundations or government agencies and how to access them is important.
6. When seeking funding, look for ways to align your mission with that of the funding organization. If a nonprofit is not already part of the partnership, joining with a corporate sponsor may provide access to additional funding. Be aware of grant cycles and how these align with project schedules. Though funds may be available, getting access to them usually takes time. Get to know funders and let funders get to know you, especially those who support the mission you are interested in. The earlier you begin a relationship, the stronger it can become.



**Shaun Loomis**

Designer

## DEVELOPING AS A PROFESSIONAL THROUGH PRO-BONO OPPORTUNITIES

### *Lessons Learned*

I joined SWA Sausalito in October of 2013, and after a couple of months of working on a variety of large-scale projects I thought that SWA did just that, “big” projects. So when Associate Bill Hynes mentioned one day that he was getting started on a pro-bono effort for a small community playground in San Francisco, I eagerly threw my name in the hat to help out. I was excited at the opportunity to work on something different, and especially something for my own new community.

Grattan Playground is located in San Francisco’s Cole Valley neighborhood. The site was in disrepair and needed plans as well as funding for a retrofit. The process involved working with parents and other interested design professionals to not only design a new playground, but also to apply for the funding and grants to pay for it. The main funding source we sought was the Community Opportunity Fund (COF) provided by the City of San Francisco’s

Recreation and Parks Department (SFRPD). Given the fact that Grattan Playground had recently received a “D” letter grade and was classified as a “failing playground” by SFRPD, we imagined that our project was a likely candidate for proper funding, given an appropriate design proposal.

The process was engaging, fun, and intensive. Bill Hynes led the effort along with the help of myself and former SWA staff members Junyi Li and Andrea Gaffney. Hundreds of hours were spent over the following year holding meetings with the community, working with our small parent and design professional group, Friends of Grattan Playground, and applying for various grants along with the COF. At the end of a long and tedious process, we had all of our plans drawn and grant applications filled out ready to be submitted. Our feelings were strong that we would receive sufficient funding to get our playground retrofit project started.



A few months later we received word that we would not be receiving the COF grant funding. The primary reason was that other playgrounds were in even worse condition and in poorer areas of San Francisco. Although the reasoning was valid, we were still disheartened by this news; but after reviewing at our plans, we refocused our efforts to renovate a smaller portion of the site and resubmitted to the COF the following year. Hopefully we will receive a portion of the next round of funding and we learned a lesson in the process.

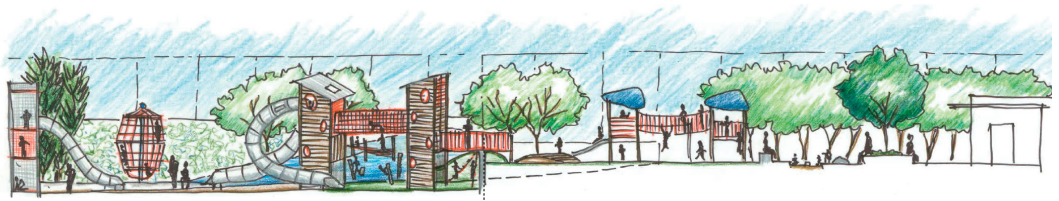
Through the efforts of the Grattan Playground Renovation SWA Sausalito broadened its experience of project scope and types. Even though the project was pro-bono, it was a very real experience. When applying for local schoolyard greening project RFPs, SWA was able to reference our efforts with Grattan Playground and it helped us in part to get the George Peabody and Yick Woo schoolyard greening projects that we are currently working on. This experience will also help SWA to land future projects that focus on playground and city-level recreation projects through the contacts we have developed in SFRPD and local government officials.

In the general workflow of the office, it is often the project managers and principals who initiate the design, conduct the meetings, and interact with the clients. Instead, pro-bono

projects expose young designers and staff to a range of project aspects earlier in their careers. Our Grattan Playground proposal gave me the opportunity to meet with public officials, conduct community meetings, and work on grant writing and applications. Thanks to this type of pro-bono work we have the opportunities to learn invaluable skills and develop leadership skills. Not only was the Sausalito staff exposed to a different type of work, but the local community was exposed to SWA. Through the community meetings and project awareness efforts, SWA helped show the community what landscape architects do and the importance of our profession as a whole. This helps to establish the firm as a leader in the design efforts of the larger community.

Grattan playground gave myself and fellow staff members an opportunity to work on local issues in our own neighborhoods that we are passionate about. With the resources and experience of SWA supporting us we felt confident attempting to redefine the world we experience every day. We knew that if we had any questions and concerns, or needed some advice, we could rely on our principals, mentors, and co-workers.

Although my fingers remain crossed that one day our Grattan Playground project will become a reality, I am also thankful to have been a part of the process and grown as a professional through this pro-bono work.



Site section through proposed playground



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**Amanda Kronk**

Designer

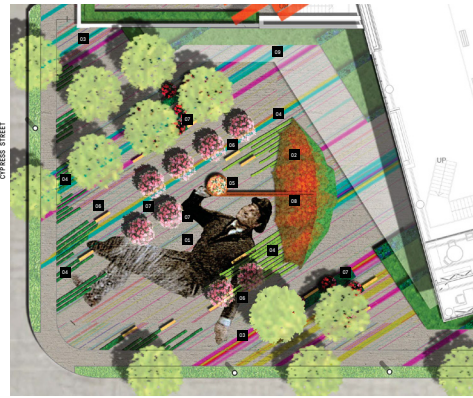
## COUPLED RESOURCES:

### *A Community Strategy for Breaking the Cycle of Homelessness*

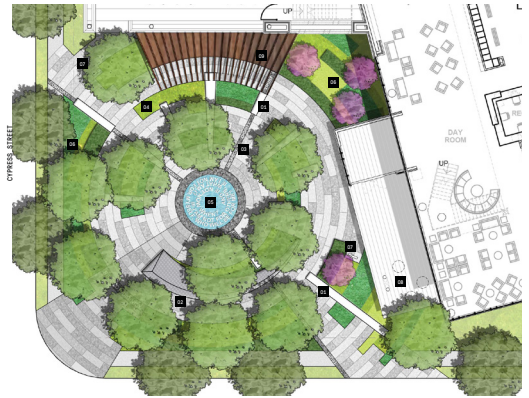
As architects of the public realm, a critical component of our job is to thoroughly understand the needs of our clients in order to generate a successful project on multiple levels. Design realized without the careful study of who will be using the space and in what ways can result in a ghostly landscape absent its full potential. Therefore, it's critical that we become intimately familiar with the ways in which a landscape will be used and pay special attention to how it will serve future inhabitants. SWA project history is rife with public landscapes accommodating everything from posh resorts to regenerated river corridors; from this varied experience, as well as in conducting post-occupancy studies, we can make fairly accurate assumptions about how the general public will use our spaces. However, the specific

requirements of social impact design directed at underserved communities present another facet of the profession that we may not know quite as well.

The Dallas office recently completed design work on the planning and landscape for a Homeless Resource Center in the Near East District of Fort Worth, TX. The facility will serve as a critical cog within the support infrastructure for the homeless population, including community dining accommodations, medical and dental services, personal hygiene facilities, educational resources, and interior and exterior community spaces. Initial design charrettes focused on understanding the needs of the local homeless population in order to better serve them. In addition to having volunteered at centers and shelters serving the homeless, the project



Plaza design concept iterations



team conducted an initial phase of research and academic reading of personal accounts to better comprehend the parameters by which the project would be measured. Marked by genuine social investment, and distinguished by its pro-bono financial structure, the project goals were defined so as to design for a transient population harboring a multitude of ailments. These challenges include mental illness, post-traumatic stress disorder, and physical disability brought on by tragic life occurrences such as the loss of loved ones and jobs, domestic violence, and natural disasters.

Additionally, the Dallas office is designing a park master plan, one block from the Homeless Resource Center, for Feed by Grace, a non-profit ministry with a mission to break the cycle of homelessness through community meals and the implementation of programs and resources. The major design goal of the project aims to facilitate an accessible community space for weekly food service through the construction of a pavilion, walkways, and vegetable gardens for the production of food. The space will also host group gatherings for classes and programs that meet the needs of this diverse population in their pursuit of skillsets necessary for acquiring

employment and productively integrating back into society. Users can also become employed within the organization to work and cultivate the vegetable beds to aid in the model. Currently, outreach initiatives of this type comprise over 52% of all development within the Near East District of Fort Worth. Each of these organizations operate their programs and funding structures (whether through government-funded grants and/or private contributions) independent of one another, but are essentially serving the same population, with a few exceptions. In conceptualizing community strategies to foster a more collaborative effort in breaking this cycle of homelessness, it becomes increasingly important to promote the attendance of community meetings moving forward, ensuring community awareness, participation, and input during the design process. The project team and design partners for both projects have designed the project schedules to allow for all project stakeholders (Board of Directors, Clients, Users, Beneficiaries, Donors, Funders, Supporters, and Volunteers) to be integrated into this process to ensure that as many initiatives as possible are operating in tandem with one another to better serve the community collectively.







**Tarana Hafiz**  
Designer



**James Vick**  
Principal

## INTENTIONS + OUTCOMES:

### *Evaluating Social Impact Performance in Landscape Design + Planning*

*A good intention clothes itself with sudden power.* —Ralph Waldo Emerson

When defining what constitutes socially impactful projects, it is important to understand the particular emphasis on measuring “impact.” As designers concerned with the need for social change in the public realm, we have the responsibility and the opportunity to respond with innovative design and a diverse participatory process. Whether we are providing an affordable learning space for Haitian children or designing an arts institute in one of the largest medical centers to aid in the rehabilitation of ill patients, there is power in incubating meaningful projects to serve communities. But how do we know we are making a difference through design? Each and every project has a set of goals on which a

designer’s response is premised. By identifying the intentions at the beginning of the design process, a set of objectives can be established by which project benchmarks can be tested for certain outcomes.

Intentions are integral in assisting a community or client to address a challenge. We routinely assume a project has social value and that our projects indeed help a group and/or the larger population. Intentions declare WHY we do what we do! Design can play a role in alleviating issues such as social inequity, substandard infrastructure, insufficient or poor water quality, food deserts, lack of public space, voracious energy and poor health. For example, Harvest Green is a master planned community project in the Houston studio that seeks to ameliorate some of the negative conditions of suburban

development. The intent is to address our food culture. Currently, the average meal travels 1200 km from farm to plate. The design integrates community-supported agriculture and linear green systems into resident lifestyles to localize the food economy in the area, increase human wellness, and create awareness between health and food. Intentionality, therefore, ensures a project is purpose-driven. It also provides clarity in narrowing the project scope, one that works towards the mission statement and guiding principles developed by SIDI in 2012. Outcomes exemplify result-oriented improvements that, when tested against intentions, measure the effectiveness of a project. It is important to derive metrics early on and be updated continuously throughout the design process (i.e., in the case of Harvest Green, how many CSA shares/acre, how many miles of trails, and whether it will support local businesses/farmers/schools), thereby creating criteria by which goals can be measured and realized. The Outcomes-based approach also works conjunctively with SWA's Post-Occupancy evaluation, where projects are reviewed with clients in the post construction phase or revisited after a number of years to document development value. Hence, as a project progresses through public input, final design, construction, and occupancy phases, evidence of performance leads to valuable impact assessment. Whether the outcomes are as expected or are modified by variables along the way, these lessons learned can be a resource for the designer on other projects. When we define intentions and assess outcomes

it is essential to have both of these bookends be demarcated by a key community challenge or challenges. There are a couple of design evaluation tools already in place that we may refer to in order to gain a better understanding. The Landscape Performance Series (LPS) by Landscape Architecture Foundation is a great online tool cataloging case studies that demonstrate sustainable landscape solutions. Each project highlights environmental, social, and economic benefits. Another precedent is the SEED Network Evaluator, on which SIDI is grounded. SEED certifies that projects meet four critical steps: 1. That the project follows a step-by-step PROCESS between the designer and community; 2. That it considers multiple stakeholder PARTICIPATION; 3. That there is constant TRANSPARENCY to track goals met; and 4. That there is ACCOUNTABILITY when considering "proof of concept." One key takeaway from these two precedents is that a project does not necessarily have to be all things to all people. We should be thoughtful and strategic about the way in which we define challenges and how we choose to respond to them. For example, a project centered on the need for innovative dwelling design for a city's growing refugee population does not necessarily have to consider carbon sequestration as the primary focus, but instead prioritize space and functionality, local cultural relevance, materiality and programmatic use. That being said, the essentials of sustainability and showcasing supplemental benefits should be a pre-requisite to every good design. In this volume we will be exhibiting SIDI case studies in the framework





of Intentions and Outcomes with an additional section explaining project metrics based on the LPS model (social, economic, environmental). While not all projects are required to demonstrate equal rank in all three categories, it is a good checklist as they represent the fundamentals of social value by which design criteria can be gauged.

In recent discussions within the SIDl team, the method of defining intentions and outcomes has given rise to questions about equity or need, pro-bono or for profit, diversity of clientele, and built vs. non-built work, particularly in selecting Volume Two case studies. As important as it is to work alongside underserved communities, non-profits agencies or advocacy groups, it may be equally important to work with developers

or the private sector to bring about awareness to a key community issue. We believe that it is imperative to work on pro bono projects and also on projects for fee that may have a large impact, and to seek great built work today and explore innovative ideas for the future, so as long as we design for positive change and educate stakeholders and clients about the importance of social impact design. These are all important issues and decisions for the group as we evolve. While the design process may be full of complications and variable factors, the design purpose should be simple, refined, and effectively communicated through our intentions, thereby greatly influencing potential project outcomes.







## 03

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# CASE STUDIES

**“THE HOPE FOR THIS PROJECT IS THAT IT WILL PROVIDE THE HOMELESS POPULATION WITH A PLACE SUITED FOR THEM AS INDIVIDUALS WITH PROMISE AND DETERMINATION; THESE UNDERTONES WOULD SEEK TO REINFORCE NOT ONLY THE GOALS OF THIS LOCALIZED PROJECT, BUT AIM TO ERADICATE A GLOBAL EPIDEMIC AS WELL.”**

Design Team , True Worth Homeless Resource Center



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# HAITI PARTNERS CHILDREN'S ACADEMY

MARIAMAN, HAITI

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## **Designing a setting that facilitates a vision for reshaping education toward a stronger, more democratic Haiti and catalyzes a community**

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Haiti Partners was founded in 2009 by John Engle and Kent Annan to help Haitians change Haiti through education. Since that time, the organization has partnered with numerous organizations to bring schools, churches, training, and education to underserved populations in Haiti. Recently, BAR Architects has donated time to designing the buildings of the Children's Academy Campus. SWA has joined the team to assist in the masterplanning and overall vision for the campus as it begins to take shape in the hills above Port-au-Prince.

### **Challenge**

Only about half of school age children in Haiti get to attend school. Most Haitians live on less than 2\$ a day and can't afford to send their children to local schools.

### **Intent**

The Children's Academy and Learning Center is a project with a big vision: It will be a place that cultivates learning and innovation for children and adults of all ages, a center of activity that brings the whole community together. to provide both education and facilitate social interaction.

### **Design Response**

Create an accessible campus that includes a preschool, primary and secondary school, training and meeting center, and agricultural/environmental/social business hub.

### Haiti Partners Children's Academy Master Plan



#### Social

- Creation of a community gathering place
- Source of pride, motivation, and local identity for the community
- Civic engagement on school grounds
- Preservation of cultural heritage by featuring the skills of local craftsmen
- Empowering families and students through education
- Variety of recreational spaces provided for the community



#### Economic

- Builds the skillset of the local community
- Provides space for entrepreneurship
- Provides immediate jobs for educators
- Empowers families and students through education
- Long term disaster recovery support



#### Environmental

- Rainwater collection and re-use integrated on site
- Environmental education and sustainability training
- Constructed entirely of locally sourced labor and materials





Photo Credit: BAR Architects

Completed in 2012, the first primary school serves as the cornerstone of the community.



Photo Credit: BAR Architects

Wozo Choir performs a song outside the school.



Photo Credit: BAR Architects

Located on a dramatic hillside with expansive valley views, the site requires thoughtful landform manipulation.



Harvest Green Master Plan Illustrative

**Size:**

1,300 Acres

**Owners:**

Johnson Development Corporation

**Partner Organizations:**

Edible Earth Resources, Fort Bend ISD, Farmer D

**Office:**

Houston

**Project Team:**

Tim Peterson, Matt Baumgarten, Jake Salzman, Demera

Ollinger, Evan Peterson, Jacob Galles, Clayton Bruner

**Project Status:**

June 2014 - Current

**Scope/Type:**

Master Planned community



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# HARVEST GREEN MASTER PLANNED COMMUNITY

SUGAR LAND, TEXAS

**Harvest Green introduces food systems back into communities to promote healthy lifestyles, community ownership, education, and social events rooted in sustainable productive landscapes.**

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Harvest Green is a new “Grass Roots” master planning community prototype for the Gulf Coast Region. Based on Healthy Living ideals, the project embeds significant agricultural landscapes, fitness-oriented recreational opportunities, ecological restoration, and a strong open space framework.

## **Challenge**

How we interact with food and its production today has altered our understanding of resources that go into such a process. A few of the critical issues being addressed are where food comes from and how it affects health. The average meal travels 1200km from farm to plate. Food grown closer to home can support local food farmers, allow for fresher products that affects human wellness, decrease emissions from miles traveled, and create jobs.

## **Intent**

Harvest Green intends to integrate food systems into resident lifestyles, reconnect people to a productive landscape and, in turn, create awareness of the relationship between food, health, sustainability, and the local economy.

## **Design Response**

- Utilizes 580 acres of green space to feature a community farm and a labyrinth of waterways and parks; these interconnected systems support healthy lifestyles/human wellness through 15 miles of hike-and-bike trails, local farm-fresh food- and agriculture-based social events.
- Creates a unique sense of place that leads to community pride and stewardship
- Assists in localizing food production by providing incubator farms, CSA programs, and local retail venues.
- Allows the platform to educate community about food-based programs through CSAs, cooking classes, and training.
- Decreases vehicular miles traveled and resources expended to satisfy healthy living ideals.



### Social

#### Harvest Green Benefits

- Education and training classes will promote healthy lifestyles and create a workforce
- Cooking classes will connect and educate people on how to use the locally harvested food
- The community will work closely with local schools to develop education classes
- Community-based research will educate people about sustainable and healthy lifestyles
- A series of "Harvest" festivals will be established for local residents and visitors
- The community supported agriculture program will create enough food to support 20 CSA shares/acre
- 10% of Harvest Green residents will have their own vegetable gardens in their backyards.
- Over 15 miles of trail will promote healthy lifestyles through exercise
- All three schools within the community will participate in farm-to-cafeteria lunch programs
- 50% of residents will recognize major agricultural crops able to be grown in Houston
- Surplus food will be donated to food banks or other charities weekly
- All residents will be within 1/4 mile of an agriculturally productive landscape
- Harvest Green will host annual athletic events with in the agricultural fabric



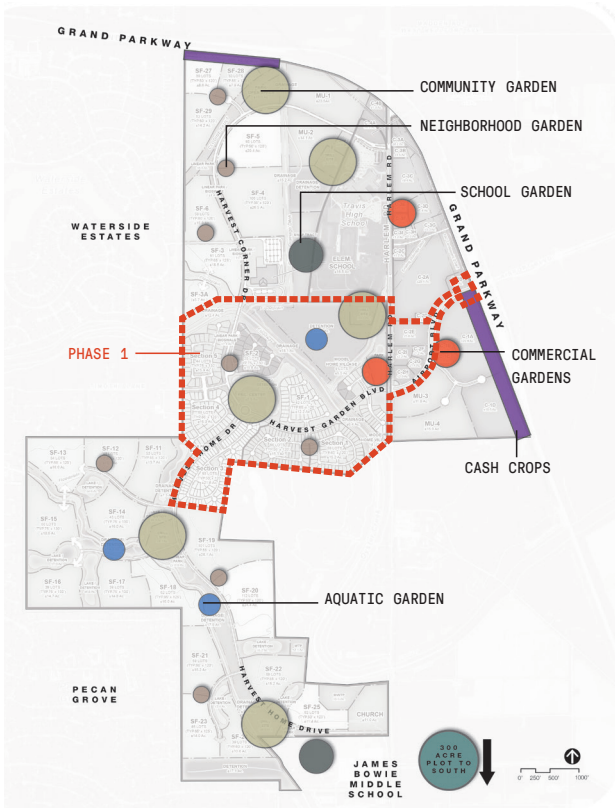
### Economic

- The farm incubator program training creates a minimum of five careers each year
- The farmers market will create retail opportunities for at least 30 local businesses
- The CSA program will create enough revenue to sustain itself within the first three years
- A farm-to-table restaurant will create jobs while supporting local farm efforts
- A marketable "Harvest Green" branded CSA will be created to sell produce
- Artisanal shops will provide business opportunities for local businesses



### Environmental

- 100% of residents will be exposed to low-impact development
- Biofiltration strips line 75% of all lake edges
- Wetland filtration pools will occur at 90% of all outfalls
- 100% of residents will have edible vegetation in their yard
- The soil quality will be increased through natural process to become Certified Organic
- The beneficial microbial biomass within the soil on farm sites will be increased by 300%
- The compost program will divert waste from landfills to create healthy soil
- Localizing food systems will reduce food waste by 30% through minimizing transportation
- Adding three bee hives will increase pollinators within the community
- 300 acres of farm land will be converted to organic vegetable farm land and compost production



Agriculture Systems



Grain bin monuments are one of many art components proposed in the agrarian-based community





Nearby Art Installations Centers and Infrastructure

**Size:**

9.3 Acres

**Owners:**

City of Houston

**Partner Organizations:**

MD Anderson Cancer Center, Texas Children's Hospital, Memorial Hermann TIRR, INPRINT

**Office:**

Houston

**Project Team:**

Kinder Baumgardner, Natalia Beard, Michael Robinson

**Project Status:**

June 2015- Current

**Scope/Type:**

Conceptual Landscape Master Plan

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# ARTS IN MEDICINE INSTITUTE

HOUSTON, TEXAS

**To Impact Health through Art + Design: “MD Anderson recognizes that healing involves more than medicine. This exciting collaboration [...] will showcase the intersection between two of Houston’s greatest assets—medicine and the arts—in one landmark location.” —President, MD Anderson Cancer Center**

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SWA Group had the opportunity to work with the Texas Medical Center to create the first multi-institution center dedicated to the advancement, practice, and study of the arts in service of health and wellness in the nation. The Arts in Medicine Institute will house both an exhibition space and studio modules for visual arts and music, as well as a digital art lab and a resource library.

## **Challenge**

A growing number of studies highlight how art therapy increases perception of quality of life by mediating mood and allowing personal resilience despite physical or psychological challenges.

## **Intent**

This project explores the unique interchange of the arts and medicine where a therapeutic platform is provided for many constituents for whom environmental and personal wellness work hand in hand.

## **Design Response**

- Creates a network of zones within the park (1- North Event Garden, 2-East Entry, 3- South Art Garden, 4- West Parking Court, 5- West Water Garden, 6- Arts Center Building) to allow for a variety of spatial movements and a diverse art community.
- Generates a model for thoughtful human-scale architecture and landscape design.
- Provides a unique opportunity for collaboration between physicians, world-class artists, TMC patients, and veterans to showcase intimate performances, public works projects, and creative exhibits.
- Explores distinct healing methodologies through art classes, music classes, dance halls and reading rooms/ library.
- Seeks to educate the general public through notable lectures and train new generation artists/ care providers to holistically utilize the site and studios for patient-rehabilitation



### Social

#### AIMI Benefits

- Patients of various medical conditions are exposed to creative methodologies as apart of their recovery and process.
- The arts in healing approach improves the emotional health of patients as well as other therapeutic benefits related to vision, physiology, mobility, memory, and social skills.
- Education and training classes will provide artists, caretakers, and participating institutions with the tools to work with patients.
- Patient families from all socio-economic situations of are given the opportunity to cope with bereavement through the institute’s programs and resources.
- Texas Medical Center’s 7.7 million annual visitors will be able to learn about AIMI and its work
- Four major Houston institutions are located within one mile of the facility, including TMC (with its 54 medical institutes), Rice University, Museum of Fine Arts, and Hermann Park Conservancy
- AIMI will partner with Texas Children’s Hospital, Memorial Herman TIRR, Methodist Hospital, Veteran’s Affairs, and INPRINT to provide exhibits, song-recording studios, and dance classes
- The Arts in Medicine program will holds collaborative projects that integrates direct participation of over 1,300 patients, families, and staff (the number is expected to grow)



### Economic

- AIMI programs aspires to increase well-being ultimately accelerating the recovery for patients.
- The institution will help further Houston’s opportunity to be leaders in the industry of art and health, and in doing so, add jobs, students to the classrooms, and residencies in major medical institutions who are training for these jobs



### Environmental

- Low-impact design strategies will be implemented in the design/construction of the site
- Over 40,000 SF of decomposed granite trails will be provided for visitors
- Nearly 5,000 cubic yards will be used to store water for detention with about 26,000+ SF of wetland gardens lining the lake
- Reclaimed materials will be used in the construction of the Institute envelope and interior
- Approximately 40% of the site is designed to provide a meaningful open space network for guests





Arts in Medicine Institute Illustrative Master Plan



Project Site Model (top left and bottom left); Site Circulation Diagram (right)





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# SHAREKITCHEN FOOD INNOVATION HUB

COACHELLA VALLEY, CALIFORNIA

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## **The Food Innovation Hub is a facility that focuses on the incubation of small food production businesses.**

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The facility is strategically located in the City of Coachella as an interface between the local agricultural production and nearby freeways that aid in distribution. ShareKitchen hopes to take advantage of capturing the large amount of food waste that is typically left on nearby fields, turning this food into products that can benefit the local community.

### **Challenge**

Our team's challenge was to analyze the feasibility of building such a facility based upon the chosen place, design considerations and financing opportunities.

### **Intent**

The intent for the Food Innovation Hub is two-fold. First, to expand an industrial business that can help accelerate job recovery in the Inland Empire, particularly in the manufacturing sector. The second was to

empower Coachella to revitalize the downtown area. ShareKitchen's presence would create economic energy and possibly spawn offshoot and ancillary businesses, which would provide opportunities to generate a local employment node within Coachella. Furthermore, the programming is organized with two priorities in mind: incubate + educate.

### **Design Response**

ShareKitchen's proposed project would help facilitate and support the incubation of minority-owned food businesses and stimulate economic development. The local market could specifically benefit from the supply of healthy food alternatives and opportunities to capture food harvest excess, as well as the ability to incorporate shared spaces and key sustainability measures with the design and construction of the proposed food innovation hub in the city.

The team selected 49751 Oates Lane as an example of a viable site and developed a project concept consisting of two phases, estimated at approximately \$21.2M in total.



**Social**

**ShareKitchen Innovation Hub Benefits**

- Promote healthy eating
- Education on food nutrition
- Provide access to healthy food
- Job training
- Public-use food destination and event space
- Pedestrian friendly



**Economic**

- Job creation
- Business incubation
- Ancillary business creation
- Capture food-waste, recovering lost economic generation



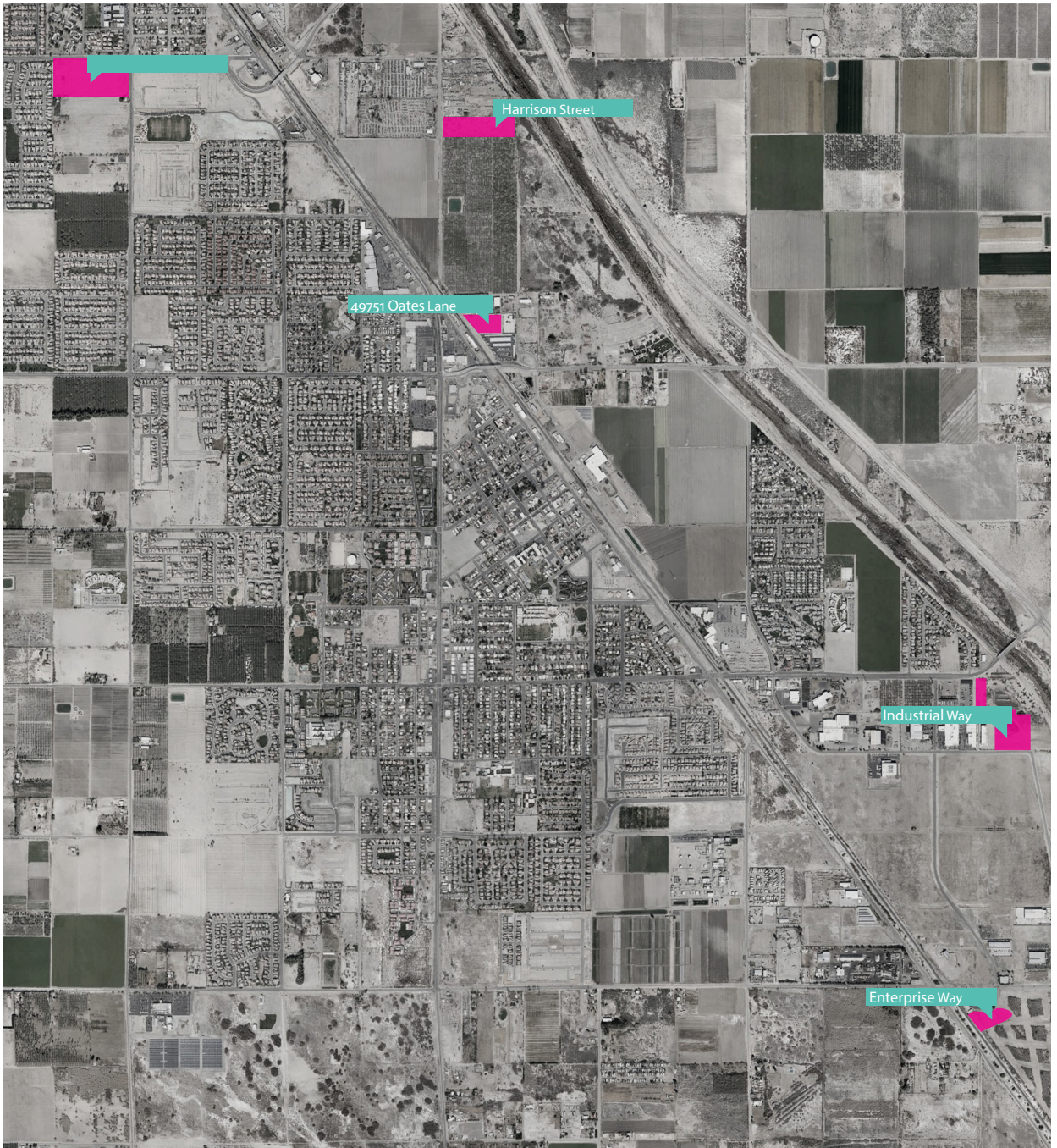
**Environmental**

- Introduce transparency into the food supply process
- Capture food-waste, reducing the waste stream
- Site selection in proximity to downtown Coachella to encourage walkability
- Low water use
- Healthy indoor environment
- Recycled building materials



Site Photo of 49751 Oates Lane





Collection of analyzed sites for project feasibility.





Entry Plaza Plan

**Size:**

74,052 SF (1.7acres)

**Owners:**

True Worth Foundation

**Partner Organizations:**

HKS, Inc., Teague Nall & Perkins, Jaster Quintanilla, DFW Consulting Group Inc.

**Office:**

Dallas

**Project Team:**

Leah Hales, Amanda Kronk, JP Casillas, Lu Gau, Donny Zellefrow, Yuan Ren, Joe Kensel

**Project Status:**

Currently Under Construction

**Scope/Type:**

Landscape Architecture

# TRUE WORTH HOMELESS RESOURCE CENTER

**True Worth proposes a sophisticated, contextually appropriate entry plaza and roof terrace to complement the facility's resources in order to better serve the needs of the community.**

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True Worth serves as a community beacon of hope for the homeless population of Fort Worth, creating a sense of place, community, and belonging.

## **Challenge**

The design had to consider daily uses by the client population and provide a flexible and safe gradient of public and private gathering spaces that create an atmosphere of compassion and support.

## **Intent**

The design employs a combination of sustainable concepts and social resilience, using native planting and conservation efforts to construct a landscape designed to foster a sense of community and belonging for a population currently living in absence of such staples.

## **Design Response**

- The facility will serve as a critical cog within the support infrastructure for the homeless population, including community dining accommodations, medical and dental services, personal hygiene facilities, educational resources, and interior and exterior community spaces.
- The project goals were defined so as to design for a transient population harboring a multitude of ailments. These challenges include mental illness, post-traumatic stress disorder, and physical disability brought on by tragic life occurrences such as the loss of loved ones and jobs, domestic violence, and natural disasters.
- Major design parameters included: varying levels of transparency and exposure to yield a gradient of public and private gathering spaces; flexible spaces for daytime use as well as evening events; contextual and artistic elements designed to stitch the project into the existing urban fabric; material traces of hope, encouragement, and self worth that aim to create an atmosphere of compassion and support.



**Social**

**True Worth Homeless Resource Center:**

- Place-making using a gradient of transparency and exposure: a range of spatial conditions throughout the landscape allows for opportunities to gather in groups as well as in more isolated areas. This provision also caters to security concerns by exposing areas of gathering with lighting, planting, and screening strategies.
- Interjecting a contextual canvas: introducing elements of recognizable urban culture—from artistic expression to interactive opportunities—can help to bridge the gap between a nomadic lifestyle marked by instability and insufficient resources and the regenerative potential of an unfamiliar resource hub.
- Conveying hopeful undertones: the materialization of hope is perhaps the most important of these. Through etched and projected messages in pavers and on iconic structures, the necessity of an encouraging and supportive atmosphere will be evident. The hope for this project is that it will provide the homeless population with a place suited for them as individuals with promise and determination; these undertones would seek to reinforce not only the goals of this localized project, but aim to eradicate a global epidemic as well.



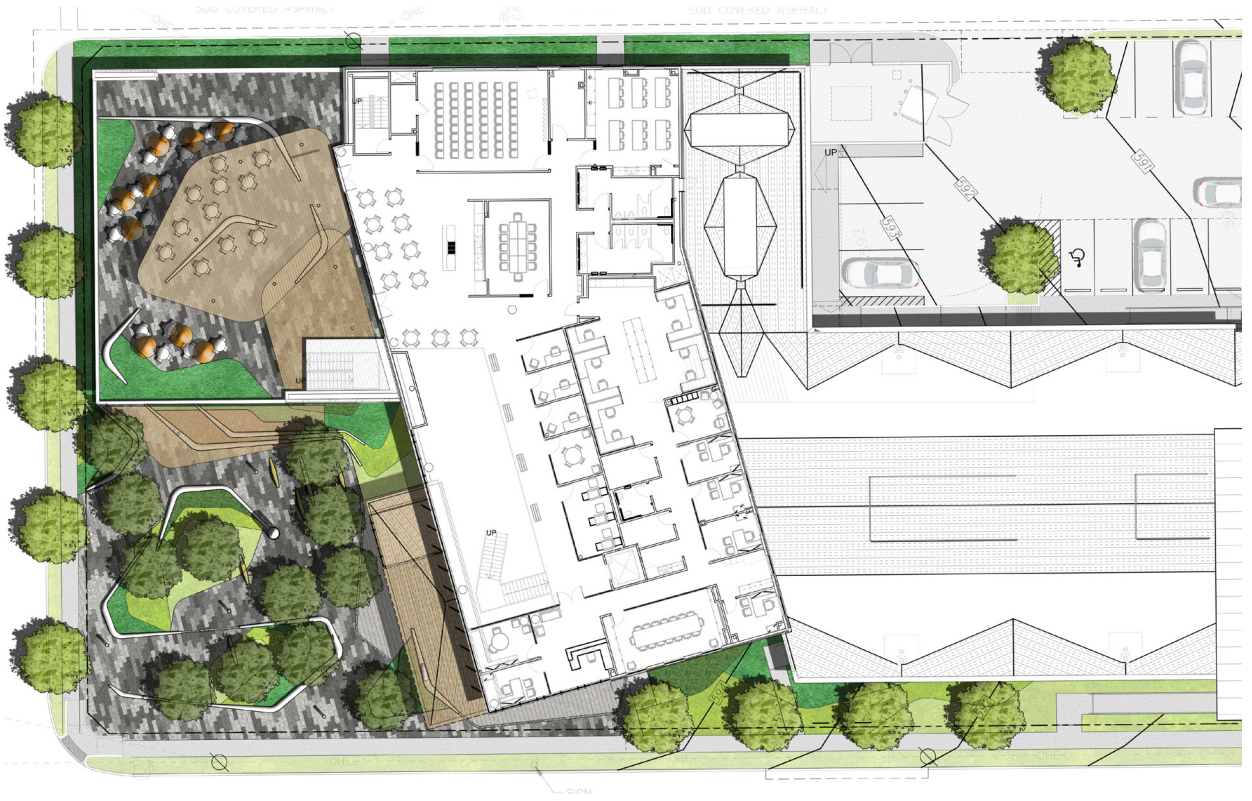
**Economic**

- Supports a program working towards economic empowerment for individuals



**Environmental**

- Native planting strategies offer a reduction in water usage and maintenance costs
- Shade structures aid in creating cooler microclimates and sheltered environments from the elements on both the entry plaza and the roof terrace in order to facilitate gathering
- The project exceeds the urban forestry requirements for the City of Fort Worth in order to provide excess canopy cover for shade and respite for clients and visitors



Site Plan





Design rendering of a green alley focused on commerce and environment.

**Size:**

86 linear miles of alleys

**Owners:**

City of Oxnard Utilities Department

**Partner Organizations:**

Kestrel Consulting, Stantec, Cumming, Oxnard City Corps

**Office:**

Los Angeles

**Project Team:**

Ying-yu Hung, Jana Perser, Shengyi Yue, Chris Hall, George Kutnar, Matthew Sullivan, Paul Wehby, Jessica Reyes, Louie Mojarro, Ksenia Chumakova

**Project Status:**

February - July 2015

**Scope/Type:**

Planning

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# OXNARD GREEN ALLEYS PLAN

OXNARD, CALIFORNIA

**The Oxnard Green Alleys Plan is a guidebook for the City of Oxnard to transform its underutilized alleys into amenities that provide multiple benefits to the community.**

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The Oxnard Green Alleys Plan guides revitalization of Oxnard’s alleys for providing bicycle and pedestrian connections, improving storm water quality, mitigating the urban heat island, creating open space for community recreation, and supporting local businesses.

## **Challenge**

The majority of Oxnard’s 86 linear miles of alleys need to be resurfaced, and the cash-strapped city does not have the funds to maintain them. Many of the alleys are located in the lower income neighborhoods of Oxnard, which are also impacted by sparse street tree coverage and higher crime rates.

## **Intent**

Green alley projects will allow community members to reclaim neglected spaces and

contribute to their revitalization so that the final designs support their needs. The Oxnard Green Alleys Plan provides a template and menu of options so the City and community members can work together to implement unique and relevant green alley projects.

## **Planning Response**

- Integrate shared street principles to improve safety for all users.
- Increase pedestrian and bicycle activity by providing safe connections to destinations.
- Increase access to community space, recreation opportunities, and gardening.
- Reduce undesired activity & make alleys safer for people who live/work beside them.
- Support the local economy & compact community development.
- Improve water quality, reduce landscape use of potable water; reduce the urban heat island & improve air quality.
- Engage community members in green alley planning and projects.
- Provide a layered, phasable, green alley design approach with a base set of guidelines supplemented by objective-oriented “typology” guidelines.

### Oxnard Green Alleys Plan Benefits



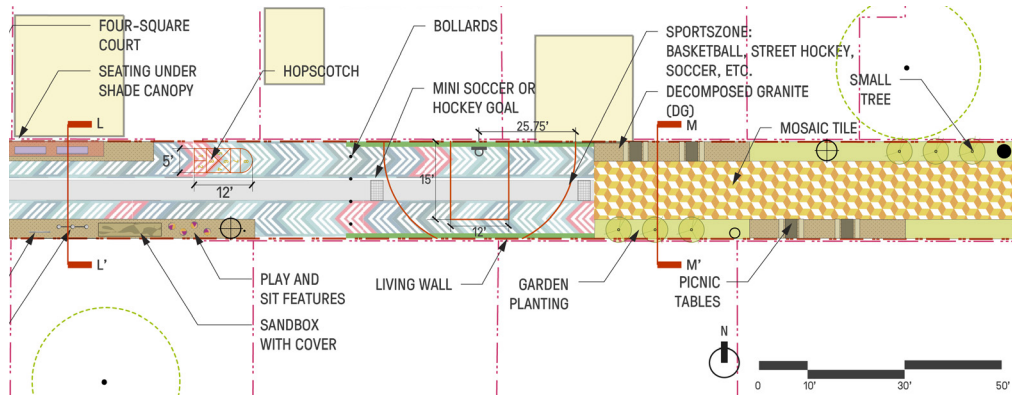
- Engaged 59 members of the community in outreach workshops, which provided the opportunity for neighbors to talk with each other and see their neighborhood in a different way
- Will improve public health through increased opportunities for gardening, and safer environments for recreation, outdoor exercise, and active transportation
- Will provide pedestrian- and bicycle-friendly thoroughfares away from busy street traffic, which is particularly beneficial for safe routes to schools and parks
- Will reduce undesired activity in alleys, making them safer and more pleasant
- Prioritizes underserved neighborhoods that will benefit most from green alley project benefits.



- Will enhance interactions between local businesses and the public by providing outdoor dining, seating and event areas, as well as a more pleasant walking environment in business districts
- Encourages business owners and residents to collaborate and share responsibility with the City on green alley implementation and maintenance
- Will reduce city expenditures on illegal dumping and graffiti clean-up
- Identifies potential sources of local funding, state and federal grant programs, and private foundations to help Oxnard implement green alley projects

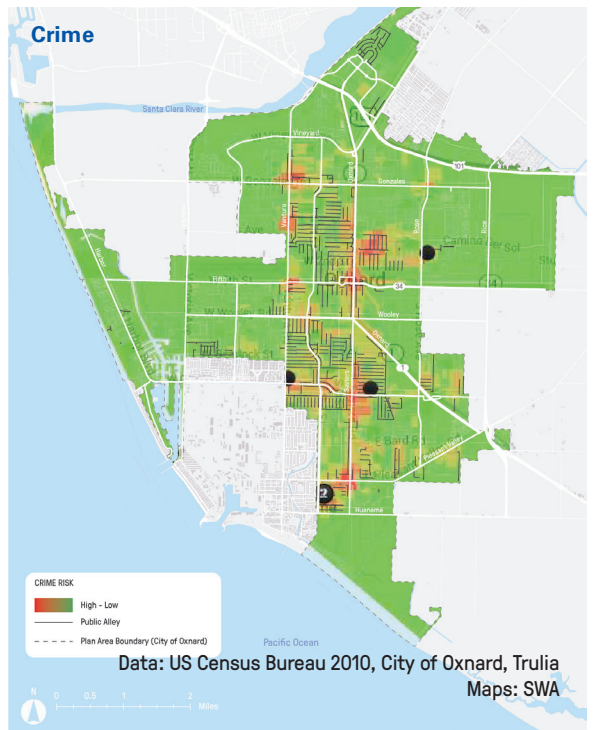
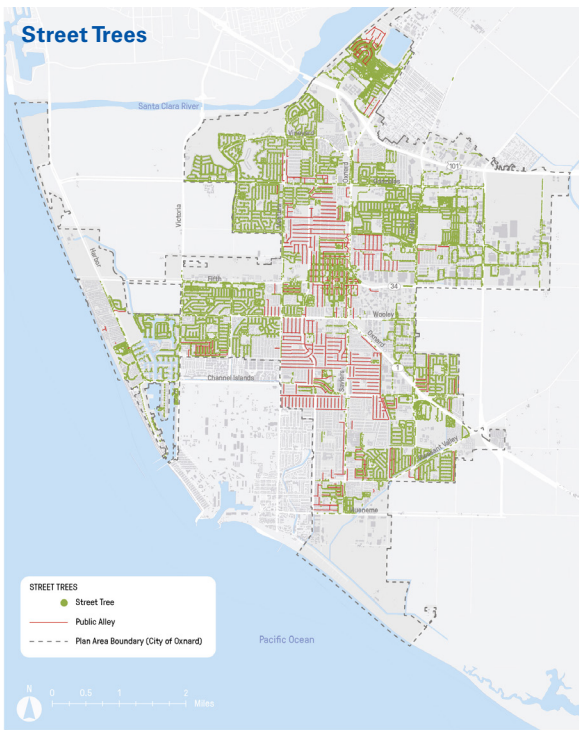
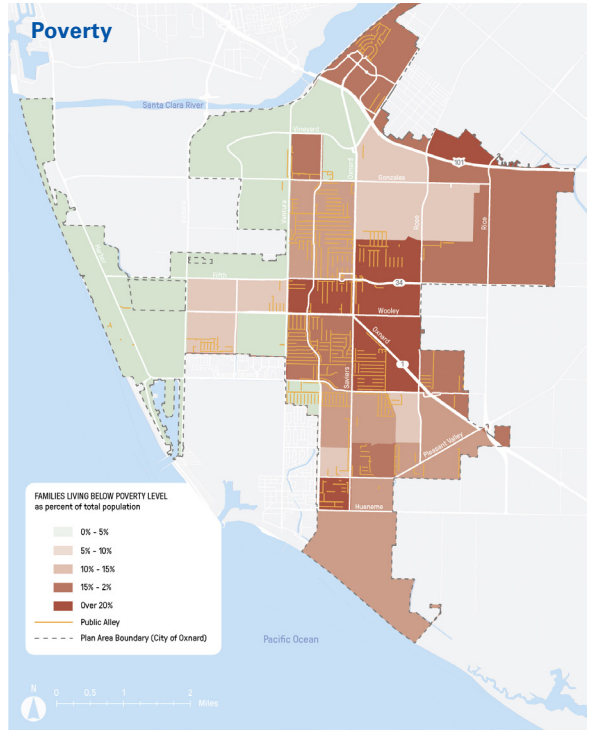
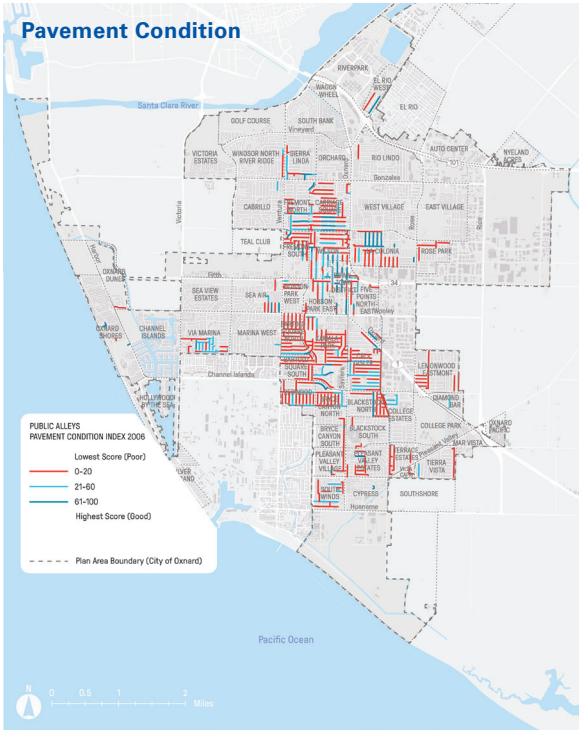


- Encourages walking and bicycling over driving for short trips to destinations within the community, and provides connections to public transit stops
- Provides guidelines for permeable and/or recycled content paving, storm water filtration, living walls, and rainwater harvesting
- Prioritizes neighborhoods with higher levels of impermeable surfaces and less street tree coverage, where green alley projects can make the biggest positive impact
- Provides a drought-tolerant, low-maintenance plant palette



Alley plan graphic excerpt





Data: US Census Bureau 2010, City of Oxnard, Trulia  
Maps: SWA

Many of Oxnard’s alleys are located in neighborhoods with demographics and environmental conditions that could benefit greatly from green alley amenities.





Bicentennial Park Schematic Design Site Plan

**Size:**

1.11 Acres

**Owners:**

City of Hawthorne

**Client & Partner Organizations:**

The Trust for Public Land, From Lot to Spot

**Office:**

Los Angeles

**Project Team:**

Ying-yu Hung, Na Ra Park, Trent Okumura, Jana Perser, Shuang Yu

**Project Status:**

March 2015 - Current

**Scope/Type:**

Landscape renovation of existing city park: Concept Design, SD, DD, CD, and CA

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# BICENTENNIAL PARK RENOVATION

HAWTHORNE, CALIFORNIA

**The renovation of Bicentennial Park reintroduces usable park space to one of Los Angeles County’s high density, low income communities.**

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Currently, Bicentennial Park primarily consists of tennis courts that have been gated and locked by the City of Hawthorne since 2008, due to their lack of use. Through a state grant-funded, community-involved process, the park will be renovated to include amenities that will better support the needs of the community.

## **Challenge**

Hawthorne’s population is five times more dense than the average population density of Los Angeles County, and the median household income within a half-mile radius of the park is 36% lower than the County’s median (3,983 people within this half-mile radius are living below the poverty line). Many of the residents live in apartment buildings without outdoor spaces for children to play or for neighbors to

gather. Bicentennial Park, in its current state, has become a hotspot for illegal drug use and other illicit activities. However, through a series of workshops and meetings facilitated by two non-profit organizations, the residents have re-imagined the park and expressed their desire for amenities that will enhance their community.

## **Intent**

The Bicentennial Park Renovation project intends to interpret the community’s input while developing a design that maximizes the park’s use by the surrounding community, increases safety, and incorporates low impact development BMPs to manage stormwater.

## **Design Response**

- The design concept celebrates Hawthorne’s past and on-going contributions to the aerospace industry.
- Play features include custom cloud-shaped play structures and an historic aircraft modified for safe play.
- Shady seating areas, artful mosaic installations, and exercise equipment will engage users of all ages.



### Social

#### Bicentennial Park Benefits

- Renovating and reopening the park will increase usable park space within a half-mile of the project site from 0.96 acres per 1,000 residents to 1.01 acres per 1,000 residents
- Recreational amenities will serve multiple age groups with separate play areas for ages 2-5 and 5-12, as well as exercise equipment for adults and seniors
- The exercise equipment and walking path provide free opportunities for adults to improve their physical fitness, in a community where many cannot afford gym memberships, and the diabetes death rate is 24.6%
- The park's design includes flexible spaces, both hardscape and softscape, to support community gatherings and events
- Over 200 community participants contributed to the establishment of the park's program and core design elements during a series of nine community workshops hosted by local non-profits
- Involvement of the community will continue through artist-lead workshops to create art installations for the park
- Reactivation of the park space, increased community stewardship, and physical measures such as night-time closure, lighting, and security cameras will reduce criminal activity at the park site



### Economic

- The park will provide a new location for placement of park rangers in the City of Hawthorne's job training program



### Environmental

- Removal of the concrete tennis courts and asphalt parking lot will reduce the area of impermeable surfaces, and subsequently reduce the volume of storm water run-off from the site
- Planting groundcover, shrubs, and trees will reduce storm water run-off, mitigate the urban heat island effect, sequester carbon, and attract birds and insects
- A primarily drought-tolerant and native plant palette helps keep water demands lower
- Water from the community-desired splash pad feature will be captured, stored, and reused for on-site irrigation
- Vegetated bioswales and detention areas will infiltrate and cleanse storm water run-off





Design vision of custom play elements in the renovated park.



The existing park conditions, with parking lot, picnic table, and permanently locked tennis courts.





## 04



# OUTCOMES

**“WITHOUT THE PHYSICAL SPACE THAT ENCOURAGED US TO REACH HIGHER, TO LIFT UP THE STRENGTHS AND ASSETS OF OUR PROGRAM PARTICIPANTS, IT WOULD BE SO MUCH HARDER TO PUSH OURSELVES TO BE BOLD AND TO DEEPEN OUR IMPACT. ”**

Jane Fischberg  
President and Executive Director, Rubicon Programs



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**Jane Fischberg**

President and Executive Director, Rubicon Programs

## RUBICON COURTYARD

*One Transformation Begets Another*

In the 42 years Rubicon has served low-income East Bay residents, we have had success helping thousands of people become employed and housed. Yet, too many East Bay families remain in poverty. In 2014, we set out on an ambitious journey to design a program that truly equips them to break this cycle. Fidelity to our theory of change led us to divest of our services to people living with serious mental illness. This shift in funding will be completed during fiscal 2016 and will result in releasing \$3M in contracts. We are not aware of other community-based organizations that have made similarly bold decisions.

It would have been much harder to take bold steps in reimagining what we do if we had not lifted our aspirations—which we were inspired

to do by our renovated facility and the courtyard designed by SWA.

In 2013, Rubicon undertook the transformation of our site near the Civic Center in Richmond, California. Formerly a community health center, and then a site for multiple public and private public service agencies, we asked our architect, NBBJ, to re-design the facility so that it would be welcoming, warm, open, aspirational, and able to support our participants in undertaking their own personal growth. After we began the renovation, we realized that we did not have a plan for the central courtyard. Fortunately, NBBJ asked SWA to partner with them—and with us—to transform the courtyard using the same design principles used for the facility.



Today, the courtyard is the jewel of our flagship site. Employees, visitors, and participants alike find peace, friendship, support, and individual reflection, as needed, at different spaces in the courtyard. It is a refuge for many of us who spend far too much time in buildings and spaces that evoke welfare offices. One employee spoke for us all when she said, “Thank you for the beauty!”

Incarceration, homelessness, addiction, trauma, and mild to moderate mental illness are frequently occurring challenges in our target population. No one service is sufficient to address the many challenges people living in poverty face. We believe that guided participation and achievement across all four components of Income, Assets, Wellness, and Social Connections will equip our participants to climb their unique ladder of prosperity.

Without the physical space that encouraged us to reach higher, to lift up the strengths and assets of our program participants, it would be so much harder to push ourselves to be bold and to deepen our impact. We are so grateful to NBBJ and to SWA for creating a space that is worthy of our talented employees, and also worthy of our participants, who are dedicated to transforming their lives and those of their families and their communities.

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**Trent Matthias**

Designer

## WHERE DO WE GO FROM HERE?

*sidi@swa*

### Design Thinking

SIDI at SWA has evolved into a platform for developing new ideas and collaborating across studios. The collective conscience of the group encourages critical thinking about intentions and outcomes in our projects. It offers a platform for exchanging ideas between like-minded peers and reinforces the importance of socially responsible thinking in the design process.

As we continue to grow and evolve, new opportunities and untapped potential begin to surface. Developing SIDI as an active, firm-wide practice component that facilitates project involvement at all levels for interested staff is a priority. Aside from documenting and sharing the social impact design projects we engage, we are discussing opportunities for collaborating and creating large impact through our combined energy and resources.

Social impact design is characterized by a wide range of innovative project types. The SIDI group at SWA embraces the explorative nature of this work, engaging diverse communities with varying needs. This past spring we conducted an in-house survey to better understand the trends and opportunities we are cultivating and to help determine directions to pursue while working as a group collaboratively. Here are some of the results.

## Weekly Commitment

On average, the majority of SIDI contributors spend roughly 10 hours per week working on social impact design and pro-bono projects. Of the respondents, the data clearly shows a desire to spend more time on these types of projects.

## The Themes

An introspective look at SIDI revealed both common topics and exciting new threads. After a group-wide Web-Ex meeting to determine interests, survey respondents were asked to rate the following project theme possibilities according to their top priorities: City Resiliency, Homelessness, Income Disparity, Eco-Justice, Food Deserts, Schoolyard Greening, Pedestrian infrastructure, Pop-up Design Build, and Community Charette. Of these, City Resiliency and Pedestrian Infrastructure garnered the most interest. City resiliency is a broad subject but is a particularly relevant way of framing the challenges our communities face in the 21st century. With new technology, climate change, and growing urban populations, continuing to seek out ways for our cities to adapt to uncertain futures is vital. Pedestrian infrastructure plays a large role in this equation, providing equitable, environmentally sensitive transportation for all. Additional categories of interest include Low-Income Housing, Wildlife Habitat Creation, and Drought Response and Resilience. Each of these are ongoing issues currently being addressed via various SWA projects and studies.

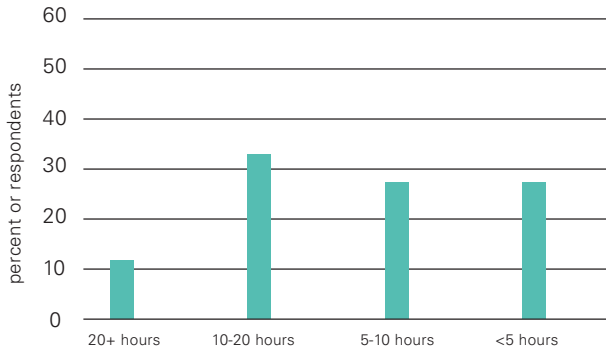
## Future

As SIDI continues to evolve, it is vital to take a critical look at the opportunities at hand. There is consensus that raising awareness both within SWA and the general public of the relevance and importance of SIDI projects is a top priority. This can be achieved through various efforts, including a firm-wide project of significant magnitude, deeper integration of the organization into SWA culture, and continuing to share our work and engage in creative dialogue.

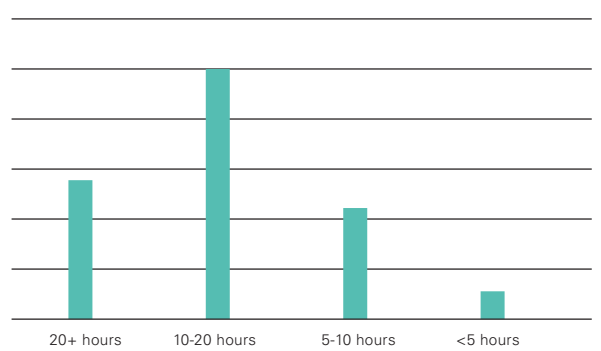
Continuing to integrate the foundation of SIDI into the overall design practice at SWA will fortify our contribution to society and the places we live and help to keep the firm relevant.



How much time *do you currently* spend per month on social impact design or pro-bono work?

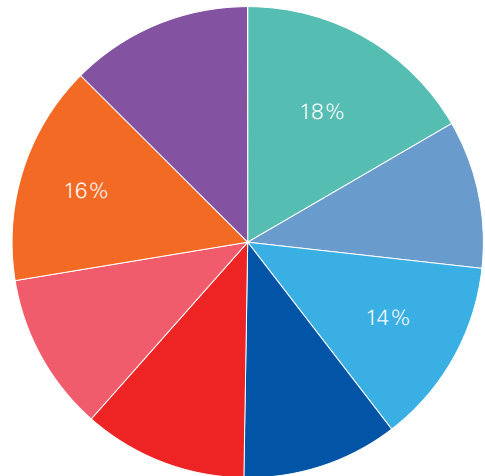


How much time *would you like to* spend per month on social impact design or pro-bono work?



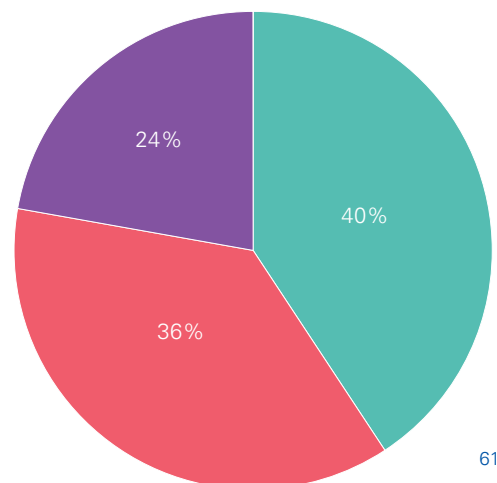
Which of the themes below is most appealing to you?  
Please rank in order of interest:

- pedestrian infrastructure
- pop-up design build
- city resiliency
- homelessness
- income disparity
- eco-justice
- food deserts
- schoolyard greening



A potential collaborative social impact design project could take on various themes or typologies. Please rank these in order of interest:

- a fellowship application
- a thematic, collaborative project across all offices
- a local, hands-on one-day project





# SAN JOSE ENVIRONMENTAL INNOVATION CENTER

*Environmental Education in San Jose, California*

## **The San Jose Environmental Innovation Center is introducing an industrial working class neighborhood to clean energy solutions through sustainable demonstration.**

The SJEIC is San Jose's new hub for green technology and education. With the help of SWA, a former industrial site was transformed into a community asset that brings economic and environmental benefits to a working class neighborhood within an industrial area. The site is an example of what it means to be truly sustainable, and intends on helping the local community to be so too.

The challenge was to create a space that effectively acts as a showcase for clean energy solutions while involving the local

neighborhood as the everyday user and attracting leaders in green technologies to continue to drive interest, participation, and education in the community. To achieve these goals, SWA involved the local community in a series of charettes and design meetings to find out what was missing from the area and what mattered most to the future users.

SJEIC is a resource for the entire San Jose area, connecting residents of the local community to real solutions for everyday clean and green living. The project exemplifies the incorporation of clean energy and best management practices into the local ecosystem. Being a center for green technology education, resources are also available on site for local entrepreneurs to develop their ideas and exhibit them to potential investors and collaborators.

### **Project Team:**

Larry Reed, Bill Hynes, Travis Theobald, Shaun Loomis



Main entrance showcasing sustainable site features



Users learning about history of local agriculture at a public art feature

## Next Steps

This project will be serving as a pilot project for investigating intended outcomes through a series of outreach interviews and questionnaires. Metrics will be developed evaluating the performance of the site based on the below design intentions.



### Social

#### San Jose Environmental Innovation Center Intentions

- Cultural Heritage - Public art piece and old-growth olive trees educate visiting community members about the cultural and agricultural history of the Santa Clara Valley
- Local Identity - Showcasing of iconic sustainable features
- Political Policy and Planning - A mix of city offices are often used for public engagement, allowing the opportunity for local residents to take part in political and planning efforts
- Gathering Space - Allows for community strengthening efforts such as neighborhood meetings
- Equality - Proceeds from socially minded retail fund local affordable housing opportunities
- Accessibility - ADA compliant plan



### Economic

- Green Jobs - Provided by hazardous waste facility, socially minded retail, and green technology incubator space
- Access to Services - A hazardous waste facility allows local residents to drop off and properly dispose of hazardous materials
- Economic Education - Sustainable features are showcased to educate the local community about how to take economic advantage of sustainable technologies
- Access to Products - Reused home improvement store gives working class families local access to inexpensive and necessary home improvement products and appliances
- Green technology incubator space attracts investors, customers, talent, grants, and funding opportunities by providing space and equipment to test and exhibit emerging energy, building, and transportation technologies



### Environmental

- Programmed Functional Ecosystems - Pervious pavements, bioswales, and modular wetlands reduce overall site runoff and pollutants into the local waterways and ecosystem
- Biodiversity - Lawn alternatives and native planting foster a greater range of plant types; local residents to explore alternative options for their own homes
- Alternative Modes of Transportation - Electric vehicle charging stations, bike racks, and carpool parking stalls reduce local air pollution
- The potential for residents improperly disposing of harmful materials into the ecosystem is reduced by having a hazardous waste facility in the neighborhood
- Landfill construction materials and waste into the surrounding environment is reduced by retail stores selling and promoting appliances and material reuse





The community of Lynwood celebrates the opening of Ricardo Lara Linear Park. Top: Kids enjoy the colorful playground; Middle: Senator Ricardo Lara cuts the ribbon, and local

cheerleaders give a performance; Bottom: Community planting on opening day, and community-inspired mosaics in the park.

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**Trent Okumura**

Associate

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**Jana Perser**

Designer



## RICARDO LARA LINEAR PARK

*Grand Opening in Lynwood, California*

The City of Lynwood celebrated the opening of Ricardo Lara Linear Park on October 10, 2015. The park, previously highlighted in the 2014 SIDI Report as Lynwood Linear Park, represents the transformation of vacant land along a freeway embankment into a neighborhood park. In the short time since its opening, the park is already bringing people together and encouraging active recreation.

Located in the southern portion of Los Angeles, between Compton and South Gate, Lynwood has a Latino majority population, over 50% of households have children under the age of 18, and over a quarter of the population lives below the federal poverty line. This community can now enjoy the benefits provided by the addition of over five acres of public recreation space located in a residential neighborhood.

An extensive community outreach process during the park's development, facilitated by the non-profit From Lot to Spot and SWA, resulted in a park that contains a variety of program opportunities desired by the local community. At one of the workshops, the park's mosaic artist interacted with residents to develop the theme and inspiration for the animal mosaics now featured in the park. On opening day, community members helped with the final shrub planting.

The City dedicated the park to Senator Ricardo Lara, who was born in the nearby community of Commerce. As the son of Mexican immigrants, Lara's story of success, leadership, and giving back to his community is an inspiration to Lynwood's residents who can relate to his background.





# SIDI

SOCIAL IMPACT DESIGN INITIATIVE

2015

"35.1% of American adults are obese. 69% of American adults are overweight. Poor communities have rates that are much higher than the average. I would like to work on creating places that encourage healthy diets and active lifestyles."

– Patrick Sunbury

"Establishing more miles of pedestrian trails for low-income communities to help improve their quality of life."

– Fangyi Lu

"Urban Public Space. The urban public realm is the physical venue of public life, hence presents a tremendous opportunity to infuse life with the sensual and sensory pleasures we're looking to experience. As a space of social encounters and interaction with others, it has huge potential in shaping a more positive and strong relationship between individuals."

– Peiwen Yu

"Integrating sustainable infrastructure and creating safe outdoor play and gathering spaces within informal communities in developing countries."

– Jana Perser

## If I could bring about social impact through landscape design, I would like to work on...

"Creating places that serve, inspire, and rehabilitate Houston's homeless population."

– Cheryl Huffman

"Cultivating access to greenspaces with opportunities for interpretive learning, active recreation, and social engagement for underfunded schools."

– Nelly Fuentes

"Public open space projects on indigenous reservations in the United States."

– Gabe Mason

"Establishing comprehensive food systems within the urban fabric to reduce waste and to create healthy communities."

– Jake Salzman

how?

swa  
sidi

what?

where?