

DRAFT



Ve'et Tu'un Xavi

The House of Wise Words

A Comprehensive Plan for a
Bilingual School in Tijuana

A Report of The Loeb Fellowship Alumni Council September 2022

Acknowledgments

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Executive Summary

Principles

House of Wise Words has the potential to be both a model facility and a model demonstration planning process, because the challenges here are characteristic of public schools elsewhere in Tijuana and indeed, the city as a whole. The House of Wise Words should be a replicable model that demonstrates:

1. Thoughtful landscape restoration and erosion management through native planting and rainwater harvesting, as well as opportunities for nutrition and eco-education.
2. Civic spaces and educational areas that engage communities and enable revenue-generating entrepreneurial uses for the school and surrounding community.
3. Creative strategies for both active security and passive security through landscape and a residential presence on site.
4. A proactive and multi-faceted process that creatively engages communities and helps schools think holistically about their sites.

A key outcome of this process is that The House of Wise Words will become more deeply networked with organizations that can support the school and community.

The planning and design team believes that the short-, medium- and long-term recommendations outlined here are ambitious but realistic. Nevertheless, in the face of an ever-evolving future, the team suggests that the principles outlined below should guide future actions, regardless of the specific design and planning interventions that are made:

Meaningful Participation and Feedback: Design with, not for, the school and its students and their families.

Phasing: Use an incremental strategy to demonstrate early wins and build momentum for the project.

Low Cost/ Low Tech/ Low Maintenance: Ensure that the design is cost sensitive, replicable and engages the many construction skills of the school community.

Sustainable Practices: Make the school a model of sustainability. In terms of landscape, this means passive stormwater management and harvesting, greywater irrigation, native plantings, and modeling on-site food production. In terms of buildings, this means passive heating and cooling, solar energy use, and using inexpensive, durable and locally-sourced materials, including recycled materials whenever possible.

Entrepreneurship/ Revenue Opportunities: Incorporate spaces that can bring economic opportunity both to the school and the families of students.

Community and Culture: Connect the rich culture of the families and surrounding neighborhood to civic spaces at the school.

Experiential Learning and Play: Consider how the return to school after the COVID remote learning period can expand the way teachers teach. Consider ways in which the landscape can help foster safer experiential learning.



House of Wise Words

Aerial photo plan view of the existing campus

Source: Google Earth

Ve'et Tu'un Xavi

The House of Wise Words

The House of Wise Words is a public bi-lingual elementary school in the Loma Bonita (Beautiful Hill) neighborhood, a hilly area about 2-1/2 miles south of central downtown Tijuana and close to the Periferico y o Libramiento Sur, a major north-south highway.

The school was built in the 1990s. It sits on a triangular site of about 2 acres that fronts on a paved neighborhood road, Via Monte Elbrus, with partially paved and dirt roads on the other two sides. The sparsely vegetated, steeply sloping site is on a highpoint with commanding views to the northeast.

The school consists of a kind of loose campus of eight single-story structures, most of them organized around a central paved area that is about 60' by 100'. This is the main recreational space.

There are actually two elementary schools that use this facility: the first, with about 270 students, meets in the morning from 7:30 to 12:30. In the afternoon, the second school, with about 180 students, meets from 1:00 to 5:30. The population has been relatively stable although it has been on the rise and is expected to continue to grow.

The school is a special bi-lingual school that in addition to the regular majority Tijuana population, teaches a minority of Mixteco students, one of the many indigenous populations in Mexico that are represented at the school. in Tijuana. There are about 40% Mixteco



students at the school who are taught in both Spanish and their Mixtec language. There are some special needs students who are taught only in Spanish. For the most part, the students come from the surrounding neighborhoods, dropped off by their parents. Some come from neighborhoods farther away, all of them impoverished.

As with schools everywhere, the profile of activities at the school post-Covid looks quite different. In addition to having to cope with remote learning, most of the group and family-oriented activities have been curtailed. For a time, breakfast was provided by social services of the government, generally consisting of snacks complementary to their real meals.

House of Wise Words - existing campus

Aerial photo from the northwest

Source: Escuela Libre de Arquitectura



Summary List of Recommendations

1. A Safe and Secure Place

- Create a secure perimeter by adding to or repairing the walls and fencing, especially along the eastern edge of the property.
- Create new secure storage space by adding onto the existing storage and administration buildings at the northwest corner of the site.
- Create two new caretaker units: one above the replacement classroom structure at the southeast end of the main space and one near the redesigned car access gate off of Pensador Mexicano.
- As part of the long term passive security strategy, plant cactus and agave at the base of the low walls. (This condition already exists at the southeast corner of the site.)
- Stabilize the existing facility in the immediate term (painting, leaky roofs, broken windows). Use inexpensive but durable materials such as masonry to reduce the costs of on-going maintenance.
- Replace the three wooden classrooms at the southeast end of the main space with more durable buildings. (As discussed below, one of the new buildings should be designed to include a caretaker apartment.)
- Rebuild the Special Needs Classroom on the lower level and connect this to an appropriately-designed open space adjacent.
- Remove the two abandoned “storage” buildings on the lower area of the campus. As much as possible, save the construction materials for re-use.



2. New Buildings for New Activities

- Build a new kitchen facility on the level below the Main Space and adjacent to a new terrace (described below). The kitchen should be partially open-air and should double as a community teaching kitchen. The kitchen-related activities should be linked to the nutrition curriculum and community gardening. As with the bathrooms described above, the grey water from the facilities should be connected to a larger grey water reuse system for the entire campus.
- Build a new Library, Lab, and Adult Education Building adjacent to the main entrance for cultural and arts activities, as well as for adult education and to serve general needs of the community.
- Convert the existing library into a hands-on math lab.
- Add additional commercial spaces adjacent to the redesigned main entry and next to the new mixed-program building described above.
- Build a new lavatory structure adjacent to the administration building and behind the classrooms on the northwest side of the site. Connect these new bathrooms, as well as the existing bathrooms, to a grey water reuse system for the entire campus.



Existing campus: aerial view from southwest

Summary List of Recommendations

3. City of Learning: A Connected Campus

- Use site plan improvements such as new plantings, lighting, and paving materials and create new amenity structures, such as the proposed trellis, to reinforce connections between destinations on the campus.
- Create shaded places across the campus to sit and eat or to play table-top games.
- Make spaces more suitable for the community-supporting activities identified, such as markets and cultural events.
- In the landscape outside of the main campus, build well-defined pathways that follow the natural topography as much as possible and create accessible routes between destinations.
- For increased access, consider a new gate along the eastern edge of the property, which could be open and closed at the beginning and the end of the school sessions for ease of the students entering from those neighborhoods.
- Redesign the car access and parking areas along the north side of the site. (This is also the location for a proposed caretaker's residence.)
- Build a new trellis along the northeast edge of the Central Plaza using durable materials such as concrete and metal. In addition to providing shade, the trellis space should have seating, tables for games, and other amenities.
- Create a substantial shade structure in the Central Plaza to provide shelter from sun and rain and to support outdoor gatherings and activities.
- Build a canopy structure at the Main Entry space to both celebrate this front door to the campus and provide shade. Plant a large shade tree in the northwest corner of this space.



Accessible pathways

Paths can be permeable, natural materials and still be accessible

Source:



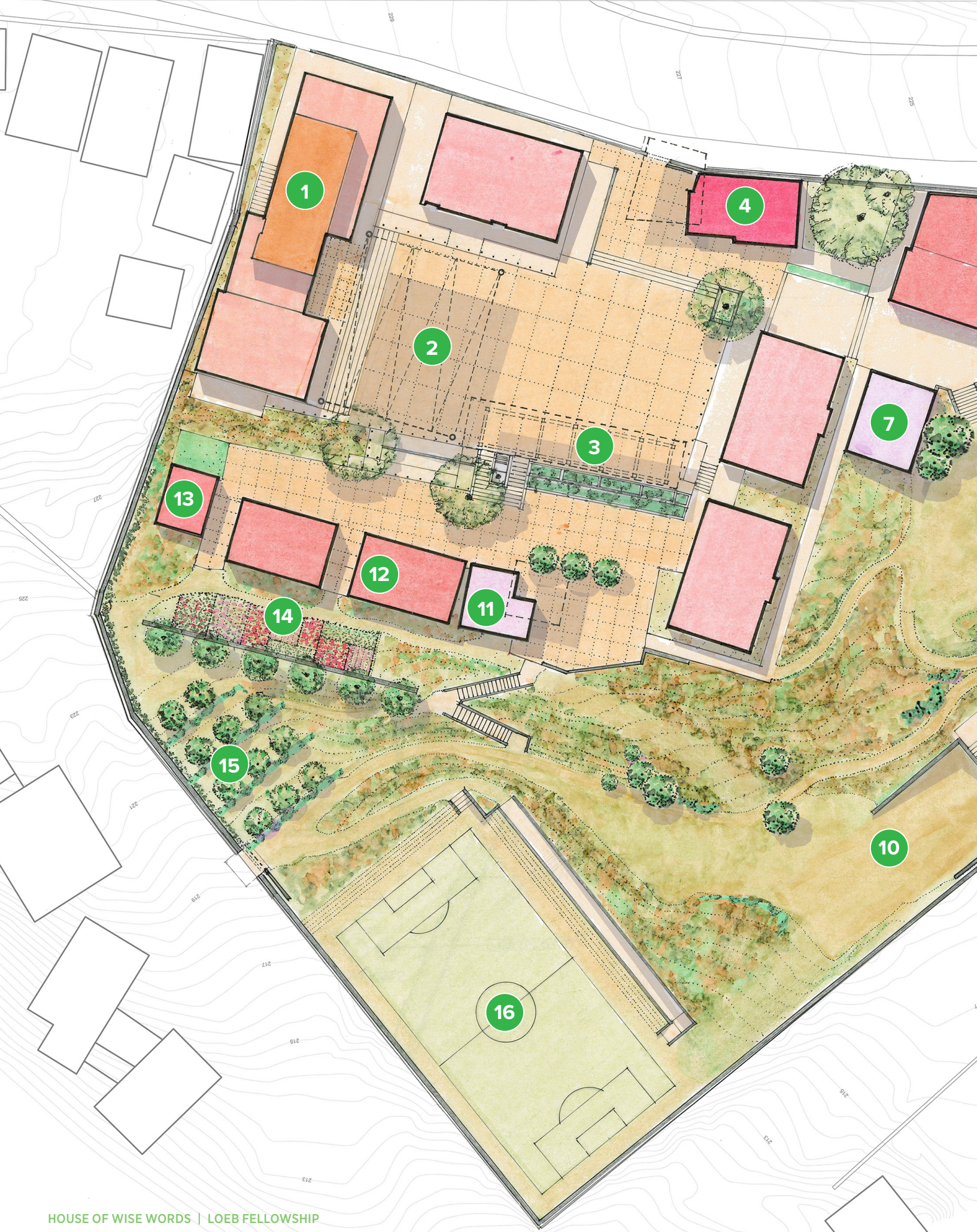
Accessible planters

All facilities should work for the disabled

Source:

4. Landscapes of Learning

- Make the school a model for sustainable landscape practices including erosion control and landscape restoration using native plants and simple landscape interventions. Create a greywater reuse system for the campus. Harvest rainwater.
- Build more structured places for different kinds of outdoor activities such as recreation, places to eat, places to play table-top games such as chess, and to support cultural and community events.
- Use trees to provide shade across the campus. Plant trees along the edge of the upper walkway and the existing retaining wall.
- Regrade the northeast corner of the site to create an indoor-scale football field (futbol rapido). Use this area for faculty parking when not in use. Consider leasing this space during non-school hours.
- Regrade the “well” at the northwest corner of the site to provide access and make safe.
- Create gardens and orchards with fruit trees. Link these to the nutrition- and ecology-oriented curriculum. Terraced gardens can also be available for families.
- Create opportunities for outdoor instruction

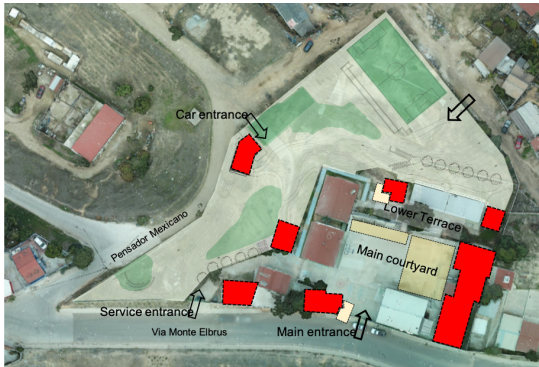




1. Classrooms/caretaker unit above
2. Shade structure
3. Shade pergola
4. Entry/sdult education/learning lab
5. Secure storage
6. Amphitheater
7. Lavatories
8. Level play area
9. New gate/caretaker unit above
10. Level play area/parking
11. Teaching kitchen/dining terrace
12. Offices
13. Special needs classroom and open space
14. Community garden
15. Orchard
16. Futbol rapido

Illustrative Plan

Overview: Aerial Views



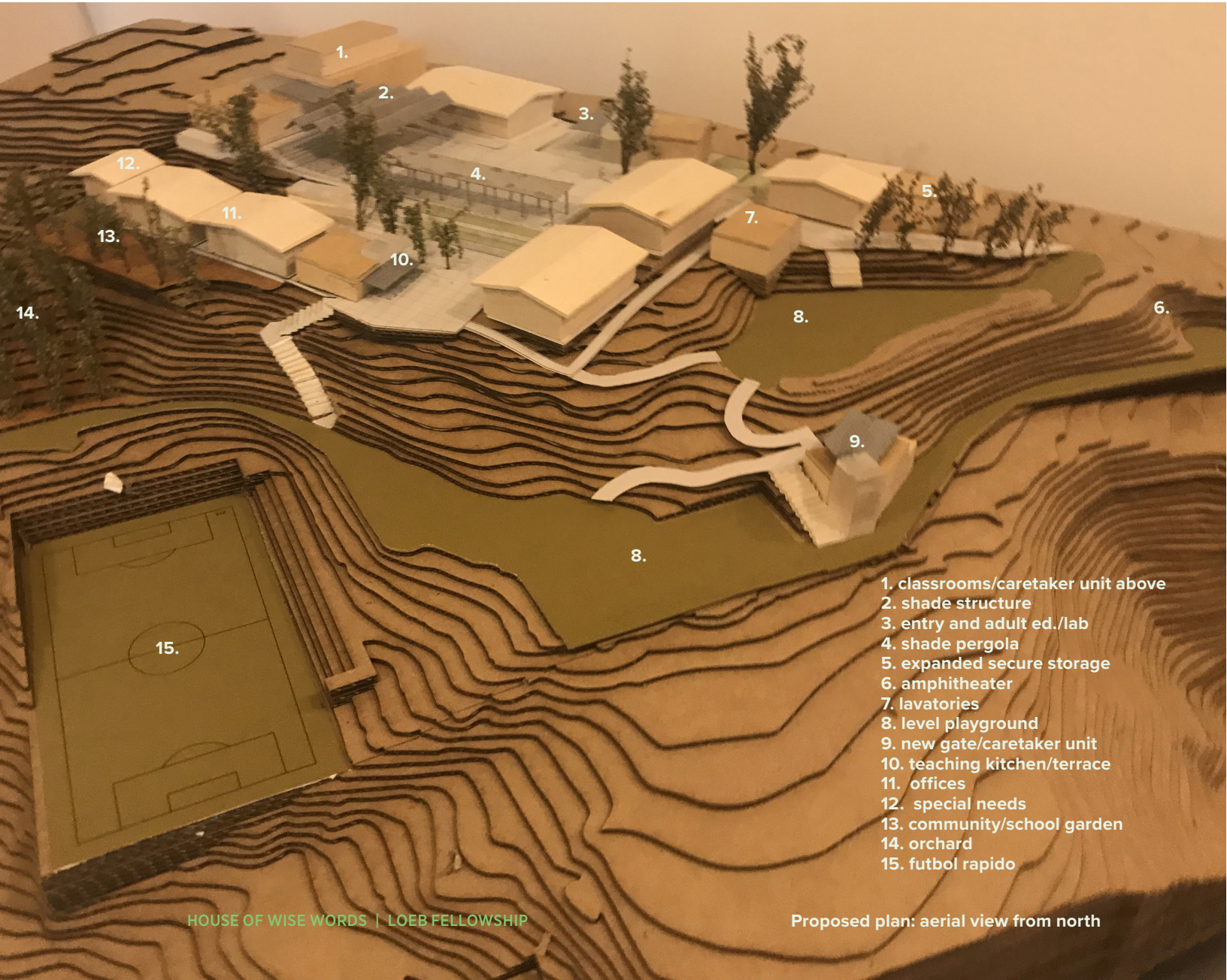
Proposed interventions:
aerial photo
Source: Google Earth



Existing campus:
aerial photo
Source: Google Earth



Existing campus: aerial view from northeast



- 1. classrooms/caretaker unit above
- 2. shade structure
- 3. entry and adult ed./lab
- 4. shade pergola
- 5. expanded secure storage
- 6. amphitheater
- 7. lavatories
- 8. level playground
- 9. new gate/caretaker unit
- 10. teaching kitchen/terrace
- 11. offices
- 12. special needs
- 13. community/school garden
- 14. orchard
- 15. futbol rapido

HOUSE OF WISE WORDS | LOEB FELLOWSHIP

Proposed plan: aerial view from north

4.
5.
6.

Action Items

1. Immediate Term

- Review Secretary of Education template/ checklist to make sure that master plan conforms.
- Complete a planting plan for the campus to take advantage of the city's plant nursery program. Note: As of this writing, donated trees were planted in the locations recommended by this working group, as well as other locations.
- Develop a timeline, fundraising plan, and budget for above items.
- Develop an engagement plan and timeline with the school. Note: As of this writing, the plan has been presented to the school and has been enthusiastically endorsed.
- Ensure that Wifi is campus-wide (as security measure?) and replace computer equipment.

2. Intermediate Term

- Review the proposal for Design Capital 2024 and see if there can be an integration for House of Wise Words to be a model project. Create a design competition or another high-profile way of highlighting the school.
- The Director can contact Angela Serrano to move forward as a priority school and provide Angela with the Comprehensive Plan for the school. It might help prioritize this school in all the funding requests across the country.
- Secretary of Education: Align the Comprehensive Plan with the schools standard template to get approval. (Project list, break down with budget, prioritize.)
- Schedule meeting with Michelle or VP at Medtronics. Show them the comprehensive plan, talk to them about being a model school. Leverage the public relations value of this for Medtronic.
- The Health Cluster: Reach out to other manufacturers, present the plan and see if there are other CSR priorities they have,
- Western Trade Maquiladora Association: Arrange a presentation. See if there are other CSR priorities they have.

Phase 3

1. Build teaching kitchen and dining terrace. Build shade structure as part of kitchen/dining area. Connect to campus-wide greywater system.
2. Build new adult education/lab at entry space. Include shade structure as part of new entry.
3. Build second caretaker unit at north edge of campus near car gate.
4. Build futbol rapido field.



Phase 2

1. Rebuild special education classrooms and associated open space.
2. Build new toilet facilities. Kink to campus-wide greywater strategy.
3. Replace classroom buildings at south edge of campus with caretaker apartment above.
4. Relocate Directors' offices.
5. Finish regrading to create level playing areas. Build "amphitheater."
6. Finish accessible pathways.
7. Plant community garden and orchard.



Phase 1

1. Complete perimeter wall. At north corner, rebuild wall to anticipate regrading for future futbol rapido field.
2. Begin selective regrading and plantings to stabilize landscape and make playgrounds.
3. Reorganize parking area.
4. Build secure storage area.
5. Build shade structure and trellis in main space.



Project Overview

From a Day of Service to a Weekend of Planning and Design

At the end of the 2019 Loeb Fall Study trip to San Diego and Tijuana, hosted by Jim Brown (LF '09), ten Loeb Fellows participated in a “Day of Service” at the school. It was facilitated by Via International, a trans-border service organization that, over the course of two decades of involvement, has built a deep and lasting relationship with the school. This day of service was all hands-on work: scraping and painting walls and fences and painting two murals on the ground for the children to play on.

As satisfying and as immediately impactful as this work was, it was clear that the school could benefit from a much deeper effort to produce a long-term

plan and design strategy. In 2020, the Loeb Alumni Council provided a grant for this effort (the grant implementation was delayed for a year during the Covid outbreak). Once again, Via International was the essential local partner organization, facilitating and actively participating in this initiative.

The workshop took place over three days, from February 11th through the 13th. Thursday evening before the workshop, the Loeb team assembled for a kick-off dinner at Via International.

In keeping with the Fellowship’s stated goal of engaging with the GSD, the Loeb team was joined by an MDES graduate student, Elsa Mendez, who is herself Mexican and was able to offer valuable insights (as well as language support).



Jim Brown LF 09 discusses our process

The end of the first workshop day coincided with a major opening at Bread & Salt.



The design workshop

The LF Team faced the perennial planners’ dilemma of being outsiders, and even more so in the TJ context. Recognizing this, Jim Brown recruited TJ-based colleague, Jorge Gracia, who has both an innovative architecture practice and is the founder of the Escuela Libre de Arquitectura (Free School for Architecture). Jorge Gracia, in turn, was able to recruit important agency representatives and design professionals, including the Director of City Planning. In a way, an important first impact of this initiative is the attention that the Loeb Fellowship garnered with these influential people in Tijuana who will be needed to move this forward.

Friday was spent at the school. Although the school is still in remote learning mode, the energetic and creative Director of the school, Adela Sanchez Sanchez, was able to recruit some thirty parents, teachers, and students to join the tour of the school and answer questions from the LF team. The LF team was met at the school by (among others) Nora Marquez, Director of City Planning, along with several members of her staff; Yara Lopez from the Department of Education; Angela Serrano, Director of the Fundacion Internacional de la Comunidad; as well as Tijuana-based landscape

1. classrooms/caretaker above
2. entry and adult ed./lab
3. shade pergola
4. expanded secure storage
5. regraded hill and swale at playground
6. lavatories
7. level playground
8. new gate/caretaker unit
9. teaching kitchen/terrace
10. community/school garden
11. orchard
12. futbol rapido



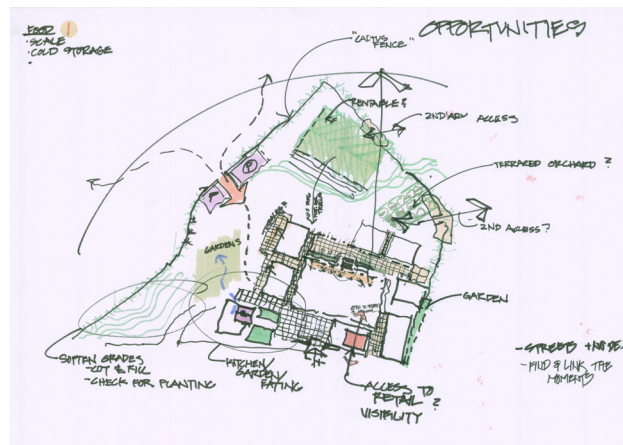
Workshop Illustrative Plan

This plan reflects the preferred layout for the school campus

architects Martin Acosta and Alejandra Cuentes. Alejandra Cuentes and Jorge Gracia also joined the workshop on Saturday.

Saturday and Sunday were working days at Bread & Salt, with the Loeb Fellows working in various constellations, designing, writing and model-building. The Loeb Fellows were joined by architect Jorge Gracia and landscape architect Alejandra Cuentes for the Saturday working session. Small team work was syncopated with “plenary sessions” to share thoughts as a group and to critique the work in process.

The entire weekend was filmed by Jake Lane. This video documentation will be used to raise the profile of the school and help with fundraising efforts,



Workshop Issues and Opportunities sketch

This plan diagram summarized the findings from the first day of the working session

Next Steps and Community Engagement

Repeating a core principal from above, it is essential that we design with, not for, the school and its students and their families.

Building on the relationships created during the workshop, and leveraging Via International's history with the school, we intend to continue to move the project forward with the full support of the Director, teachers, and parents. We will try to fundraise to support our on-going participation, which up to this point has been pro-bono.

The first step was to present back to the Director, teachers, and parents, the Plan that was developed during the Saturday and Sunday working sessions – the material summarized in this draft report which was submitted in advance of the presentations. These initial presentations will be a hybrid format with in-person representation by Via International, Jim Brown, and Jorge Gracia combined with remote participation by Rob Lane and other members of the Loeb team. There is now a physical model of the proposal which will be used for the in-person meeting in September. After these meetings, we will make the necessary revisions and clarifications so that we are confident we have a report that has the enthusiastic support of the school stakeholders.

With the consensus plan in hand, there will be presentations to government agencies – City Planning, the Department of Education, and others. These meetings will help identify the specific initiatives that the City and DOE are willing to fund.

Simultaneous to this, we are starting to reach out to potential funders listed in the Resources section at the end of this report.





Challenges

Because the workshop was necessarily time compressed, it was important to develop a draft design brief ahead of time. To do this, numerous interviews with local experts were conducted ahead of the in-person workshop – landscape design, the public school system, the Tijuana city planning context and Mixtec culture – as well as interviews with members of the parents' group. This research was summarized in a series of Briefing Papers (in Spanish as well as English) which were distributed to the workshop participants ahead of time. In addition, an advance tour of the school was made in mid-December where Rob Lane, Jim Brown, Elisa Sabatini, and Jorge Gracia toured the school and met with the Director, Adela Sanchez. At the end of the tour, this same group met via Zoom with several of the Loeb Fellows so that they could ask questions directly.

Building on the Draft Design Brief, the Challenges and Opportunities listed below reflect the discoveries made by the workshop participants during the tour and the workshop:

Security

The school is plagued by on-going break-ins involving the theft of both equipment, such as computers, and of wire and other materials. This has been particularly challenging since COVID started, because the school system switched to remote learning and has not returned, leaving the school entirely empty. The school does not have a place where these things can be properly secured. The school is surrounded for much of its perimeter by walls and fencing. The school Director feels that the greatest insecurity is due to the deterioration of a concrete wall on the north side of the school site. But the topography is such that the low portions of the retaining wall are easily surmounted. Addressing the lack of security is a top priority expressed by the school leader and other school system staff. Without such security, improvements will be in danger.



The "pit" at the northeast corner of the campus

The sides of this pit are so steep, it is dangerous for the children.

Degraded Landscape

The site mirrors much of the steep topography of the city of Tijuana and suffers from problems with erosion that are common city-wide. There are almost no trees or ground cover on the site. What is left behind is coarse and gravelly hardpan with small gullies cut in by runoff. There are many unsafe areas such as the steep drop-off at the northwest "well", as well as many rocks throughout the site. Despite this the students have the run of the entire site. The school currently lacks any type of greywater and rain catchment system.

Inadequate Dining Facilities

The school currently lacks a kitchen, so all food is prepared off-site by parents who volunteer their time but have ingredients paid for by the school. Currently, students receive hot breakfast before the morning school starts. Kids all eat sitting on the ground. Adding some table seating for students is a priority for the school Director.



Unusable structures at the edge of the main space
Several structures are beyond repair.
Some materials may be reusable.



Unstructured open space
Much of the open space is unsuitable for children to play on.

Overall Facility Conditions

The school has not been able to keep up with maintenance for which funding is totally inadequate. This is evidenced by peeling paint, some cracked windows, leaky roofs, and the condition of the floors. There are several substandard structures on the site, including two portable classrooms on the north side of the site, currently being used for storage, and three classrooms that are located on the east side of the current basketball court. These classrooms are made partially of wood, which is deteriorating, leading to leaks and other issues. The special needs classroom is also deteriorating and needs to be replaced and the program potentially moved to a more accessible site. At the moment, the “library” (where computers were located) is in a temporary space that had been a classroom.

Poorly Designed Open Spaces

The central paved area effectively organizes the campus. But the space is not designed for the kinds of cultural activities that took place before Covid, such as the celebration of seasonal traditions and community markets where parents would sell goods they produced or donated. This central space is without shade or shelter from the rain, and this is a priority concern for the Director. There are no dedicated spaces for things like arts activities or performance. There is one store for selling school supplies. Across the campus there is a lot of unused and poorly defined residual open space that is generally not suitable for recreation, without shade except for a few scattered shade trees, and uncomfortable to occupy. Except for a few low walls and wide steps, there are few places to sit. The parking area is also poorly organized.

Opportunities

#1: A Safe and Secure Place

Overall, there is an opportunity for the school to become more of a resource for the surrounding community - a place for community-centered and family-centered programs. As outlined in the school systems briefing paper, the biggest way this school can support the community is to provide a safe space for families. "Safety" is open to interpretation, as it is not just about physical safety, although that is necessarily part of it. In this context, "safety" is more broadly conceived as the sense of security that enables family members to support each other emotionally and strengthen their community.

Despite the many challenges, the Director, staff and parents are deeply committed to the school. Through site visits and interviews with them, both before and during the workshop, several ideas have emerged:

Security remains a paramount concern. There are some immediate actions which the school would like to see taken. The school needs a secure place to store equipment, especially computers and related electronic devices. New secure storage space should be created by adding onto the existing buildings, including the administration building at the northwest corner of the site. The school also wants a secure perimeter and wants to complete the fencing along the eastern edge of the property. The retaining wall along this edge of the property is failing and needs to be rebuilt. Because this wall needs to be rebuilt in any case, the Proposed Comprehensive Plan suggests a new, higher retaining wall to create a new recreation area large enough to accommodate "futbol rapido", a smaller indoor-scale version of soccer. (See discussion of new Open Space Plan below).



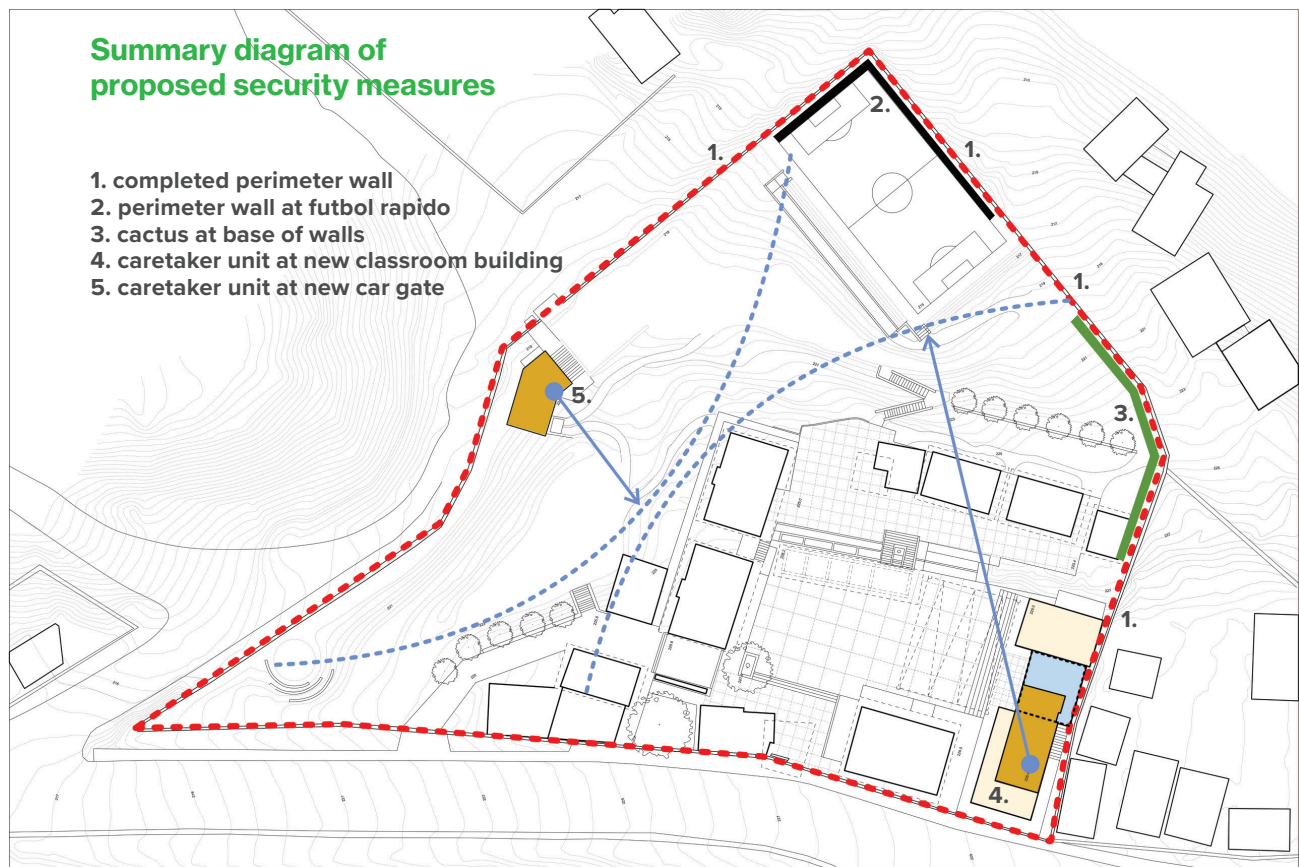
Collapsing perimeter wall
Portions of the perimeter wall are redesigned in the proposed plan.



Cactus
Native cactus are beautiful and drought-tolerant
Source:



Cactus wall
Cactus at the base of walls can be used effectively for security
Source:



Passive Security: Landscape

As part of the landscape strategy, cactus plants and agave can be planted at the base of the low walls. This condition already exists at the southeast corner of the site, but new planting will take some time to propagate.

Passive Security: Caretaker Housing

While more fencing and securable spaces are needed, this is probably not the best long-term solution for security. One way to create continuous passive security is through mixed-use development adjacent to – or even on – the school property. Per our discussions with the city planning department, it is unlikely that private development would be possible on the campus. But it is worth discussing programs that are ancillary to the school, such as housing for faculty, staff, or caretakers. Because the school has requested some new facilities, a mixed-use structure could be developed that has some school functions on the lower floors and housing above.

This is not unprecedented and has been tried at other schools. It has proven difficult to administer with regards to length of tenure of occupants – turnover happens too frequently. Ensuring a commitment of occupancy would have to be made at the start of tenancy, and then this will need to be enforced.

In the Proposed Comprehensive Plan, two new caretaker units are suggested. One would be above the replacement classroom structure at the southeast end of the main space. It is posited that this person’s responsibilities would be primarily building maintenance. The other caretaker unit would be near the redesigned car access gate off of Pensador Mexicano, the road along on the north side of the site. Because this is the open part of the campus, this person’s responsibilities would be primarily landscape maintenance.

As part of the landscape strategy, cactus plants and agave can be planted at the base of the low walls. This condition already exists at the southeast corner of the site, but new planting will take some time to propagate.



Boarded-up structures on the campus
These delapidated structures need to be rebuilt

A Facility to be Proud Of

When parents are asked what they would like to see happen at the school – even if money was not a constraint – maintenance issues rise to the fore: peeling paint, the conditions of the floors, and leaking roofs. Stabilizing the existing facility is a clear, short-term priority. Inexpensive but durable materials such as masonry should be used to reduce the costs of on-going maintenance. This is one of the many areas where community talent can be tapped, as the school parents are able and willing to provide their time and talent for the benefit of the school.

At the moment, there is a need for ten classrooms in total. Three of the wooden classrooms at the southeast end of the main space are deteriorated and need to be replaced with more durable buildings. (As discussed above, one of the new buildings should be designed to include a caretaker apartment.) The Special Needs Classroom on the lower level was broken into and should also be rebuilt with more durable materials.

The outdoor space adjacent to the Special Needs classroom should be redesigned to support the specific needs of these students. (See discussion of outdoor spaces). These interventions are shown in the Proposed Illustrative Plan.

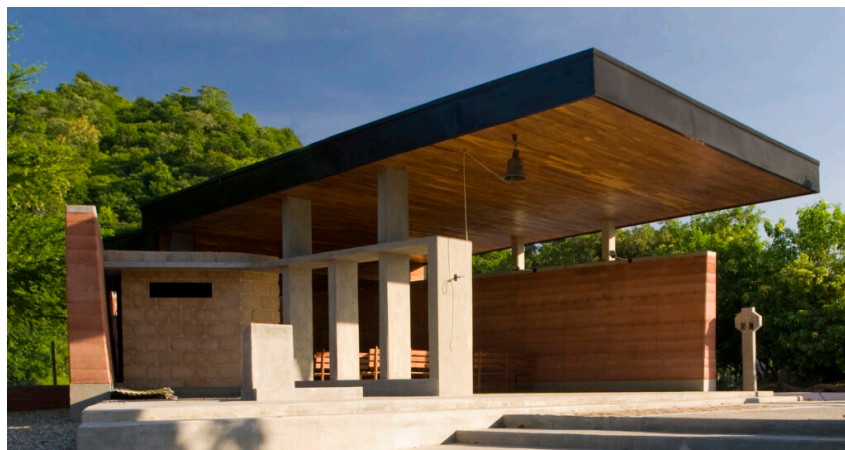




A model classroom

A clean, healthy environment is more conducive to learning

Source:



The Copalita School

One of the structures at this model school.

Source:

#2: New Buildings for New Activities

Activities

As for schools everywhere, the profile of activities pre- and post-Covid is very different. Before Covid, the school did sponsor different kinds of complementary activities, including activities that would bring parents and children together. Some cultural activities were brought in, such as having an art teacher provide some classes. They have also done bake sales as fundraisers, using this money to do some of the repair projects.

But, as with the unstructured landscape, the school would like to have spaces that are dedicated to these other kinds of curriculum and activities: places for theater and dance; a place for art classes; and places for the kinds of cultural and commercial activities that bring the community together.

Lavatories

The existing bathroom facilities are inadequate. In the Proposed Comprehensive Plan, a new lavatory structure is proposed adjacent to the administration building and behind the classrooms on the northwest side of the site. These new bathrooms, as well as the existing bathrooms, would be connected to a greywater reuse system for the entire campus (see Landscape discussion).

Stores

Neighborhood-based commercial activities can be supported by rebuilding and expanding the existing store as well as building another store, which the school is permitted to have. In the Proposed Comprehensive Plan, additional commercial spaces are shown adjacent to the new mixed-program building described above. These commercial spaces can be located and designed in such a way that they can communicate directly with the street as well as the campus. When these buildings are completed, the entry area will become more of a community-oriented civic space. Expanded opportunities for market sales and rent could provide revenue to the school as well as parents. A space close to the main entrance could function as a library, arts and community center, highlighting Mixtec traditions and crafts and offering enterprise opportunities.



Mixtec crafts

Mixtec culture should be an important source of pride and revenue

Source:

Library, Lab, and Adult Education

The school lacks a proper library and could use additional space for other kinds of community-supporting activities. In the Proposed Comprehensive Plan, the existing library would become a hands-on math lab and a new multi-purpose building would be built near the entry to the campus that would be used for cultural and art activities, as well as adult education and to serve the general needs of the community.



Continuing education class
This is another opportunity for community-building
Source:



Kitchen and Dining Facilities

In the Proposed Comprehensive Plan, new kitchen facilities will be able to not only prepare school meals, but to function also as a commercial kitchen. These new facilities could be developed with the support of a micro-grant from Los Niños, as part of their initiative to create economic opportunities for families. The proposed location for the kitchen and dining facilities is the lower level at the end of the row of classroom buildings, opposite the wide stairs that connect to the upper level. This location has several advantages: It is well connected to the upper level and has good visual access from above. The kitchen would have direct access onto a terrace which is proposed for this location - a space that opens out to the rest of the campus with views to the neighborhoods beyond and San Diego north over the ocean. Concrete bancos and tables would be built along the edges of the terrace for children's dining. The kitchen-related activities should be linked to the nutrition curriculum and community gardening.



Existing administrative offices

Sometimes this is space needs to be used for food service

As with the bathrooms, the grey water from the facilities should be connected to a larger greywater reuse system for the entire campus. In terms of the design of the kitchen, there are several strategic questions that need to be answered:

What kind of kitchens are the parents currently using to cook the food for students? What kind of equipment do they have in them? What kind of equipment do they wish they had in them?

Where are the ingredients for the meals currently stored before they are used?

What meals are currently being prepared for the students?

What is the usual menu for school meals? What would the school Director like to see in addition to what is already being prepared?

What are the meals served on and with? (Plateware and flatware)

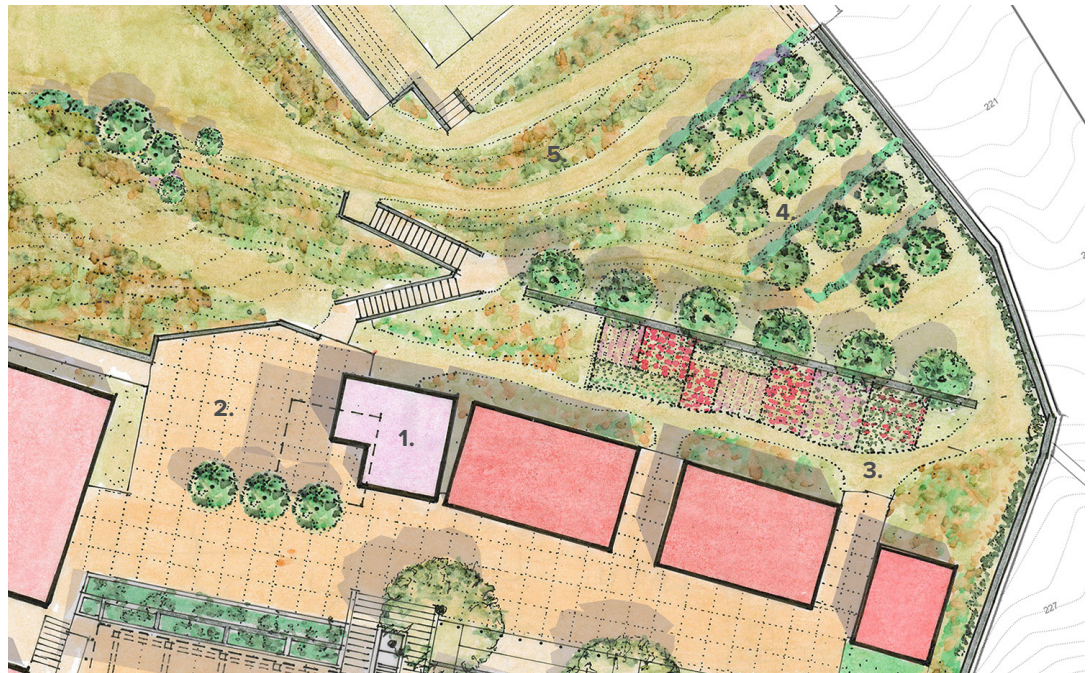
Are there families that would be interested in using the kitchen for food businesses that they may already have?



Parents help prepare food

Food preparation is part of Mistec and Mexican culture
Source:

- 1. teaching kitchen
- 2. dining terrace
- 3. garden
- 4. orchard



Nutrition and Food Prep

Dining, gardening, and nutrition curriculum are linked



Children helping with food preparation

Source:

A kitchen that is designed for preparing a large amount of food is generally not also a good space for cooking education. It seems that the primary goal of the kitchen is to allow parent volunteers to cook food at the school for school breakfasts and lunches rather than have to cook off-site and bring over. This would indicate that the kitchen would need to be the right size and have the right equipment to produce up to 250 meals at a time. In the immediate term, it would be good to explore the idea of replacing that with reusable plates and flatware, although this would create a significant amount of cleaning for the parents after the meal.

It would be good to further explore the idea of the kitchen doubling as a space for families to launch small food businesses outside of the school hours.

#3: City of Learning: A Connected Campus

The overall organization of the campus is clear and its relationship to the topography is very dramatic. There are diverse outdoor spaces of varying sizes that are defined and have the potential to be comfortable spaces, with the kinds of amenities the parents and teachers have been asking for, such as shaded places to sit and eat or to play table-top games. With a few improvements, these spaces can be made even more suitable for the community-supporting activities identified, such as markets and cultural events.

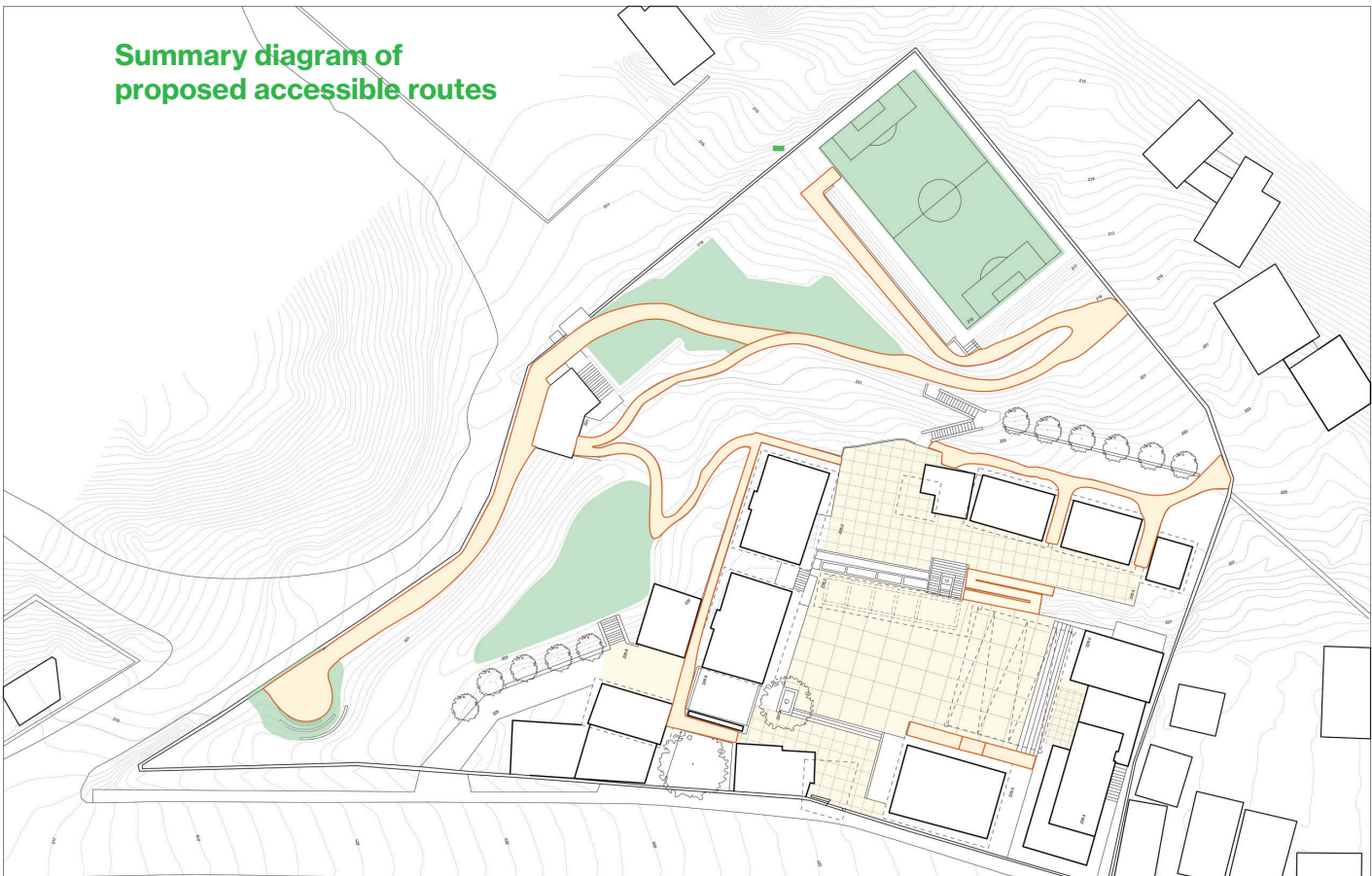
One way of thinking about the campus is that it is a kind of “city of learning” – that the Central Space is the Plaza Major and the lower corridor area the Via Principal, and that the campus is made up of a series of nodes or destinations. In that spirit, we have identified several important “routes” and visual corridors. One of these sequences leads from the Main Entrance Space, then across the Central Plaza to the stairs and flagpole location, and then to the Lower Terrace and Corridor described below. Another of these sequences is from the north end of the Main Entrance Space, then along the corridor in front of the western classroom buildings, and then to the Lower Terrace. Site plan improvements such as new plantings, lighting, and paving materials, as well as new amenity structures, such as the proposed trellis, should reinforce these sequences of spaces to

make them feel linked. The result will be a campus of clearly-defined spaces with equally clearly-defined links, giving the school a firm sense of place and identity.

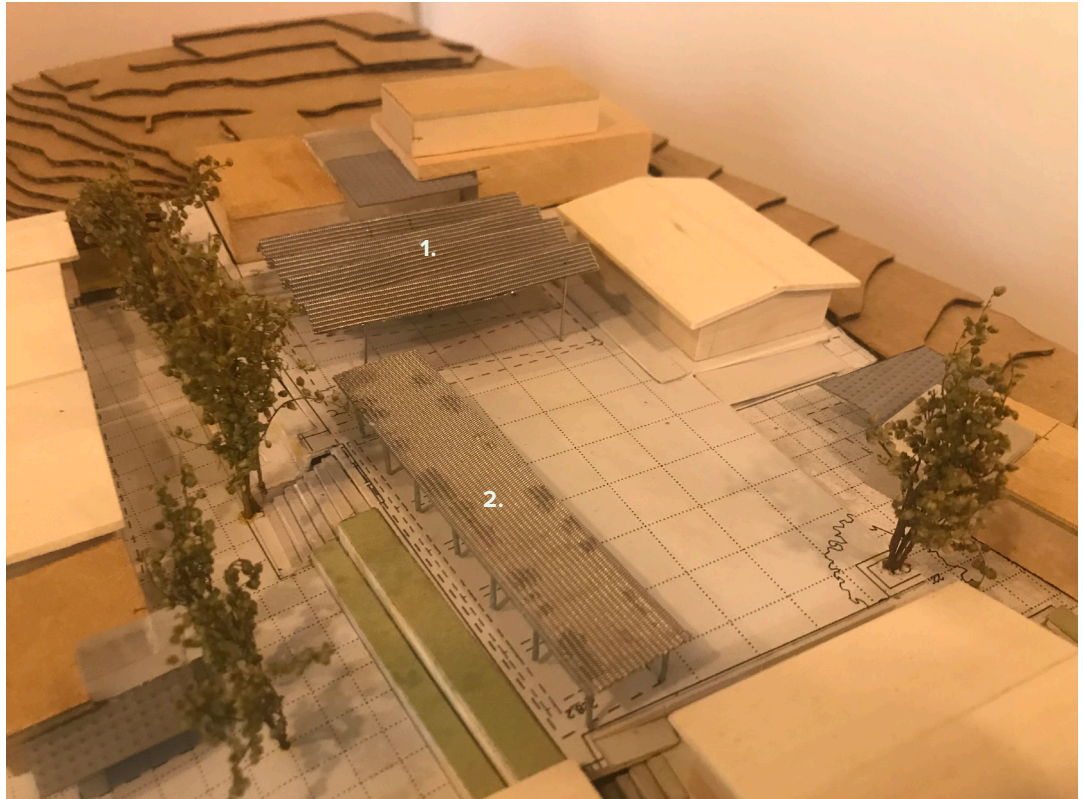
In the landscape, outside of the main campus, the design team proposes well-defined pathways that follow the natural topography as much as possible and create accessible routes between destinations. Except in selected locations, or at stairs or ramps, the pathways do not need to be paved but can be fine-crushed stone which is permeable and naturalistic.

In terms of other opportunities for improved access, the school should consider a new gate along the eastern edge of the property which could be opened and closed at the beginning and the end of the school sessions for ease of the students entering from those neighborhoods. This shortens the steep walk for many of the children and their parents, but it would be another place that would have to be carefully policed. In the Proposed Comprehensive Plan, the car access point on the north side of the site, along Pensador Mexicano, is being redesigned to work better with the reconfigured parking areas and to facilitate access to the proposed “futbol rapido” playing field in the northeast corner of the site. This is also the location for a proposed caretaker’s residence.

Summary diagram of proposed accessible routes



- 1. shade structure
- 2. shade trellis



Proposed plan model: view of main space from northeast



Existing campus: aerial view of main space from northeast



Proposed plan of entry space



The Copalita School
Entry canopy structure
Source:

Main Entry Space

This space, which has good visibility from the street, can be more than just the front door to the campus. By locating the new Library, Lab, and Adult Education Building here, this space can become one of the important civic spaces that supports community and neighborhood activities. New shade trees are proposed, as well as a canopy structure, projecting outside of the street wall, that will both celebrate this front door to the campus and provide shade.

- 1. adult education/lab
- 2. entry canopy/shade
- 3. accessible ramp
- 4. extend stairs for seating



Proposed entry space
Model view from south



Aerial photo of existing campus

View from northeast matches model photo below
 Source: Escuela Libre de Arquitectura



Proposed plan of kitchen and dining terrace

Lower Terrace and “Street”

This area has a pleasing scale and a strong sense of place because it is well defined by the classrooms on the northern side and the edge of the Central Plaza to the south. As described above, this “street”, which links the new Special Needs Classroom to the proposed terrace and kitchen facilities, will be reinforced with new plantings, lighting, paving materials and new amenity structures such as seats, bancos and table tops so that it has its own identity as a place.



- 1. teaching kitchen
- 2. dining terrace

Proposed lower terrace and “street”
 Model view from northeast



Shade structure

This is an example of what could be built in the central space
Source:



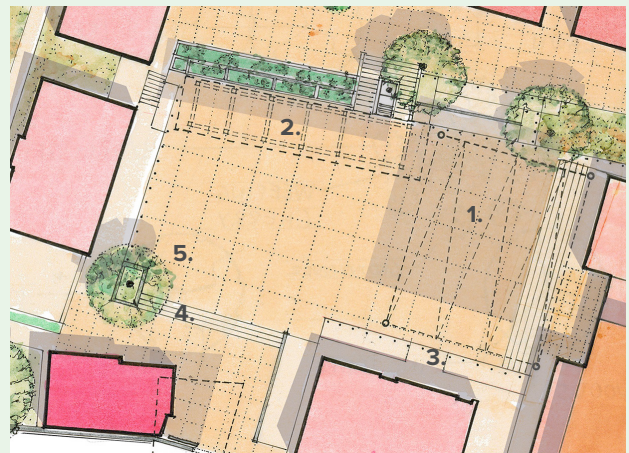
Existing central “plaza”

This large space is without shade or differentiation.

Central “Plaza”

This space effectively organizes the campus, and it provides the only large and safe open space for the students to run around in. But it is without shade or other amenities and does not provide for alternative activities at different times of the day or outside of school hours. The Comprehensive Plan provides a new trellis along the northeast edge of this space, which in addition to providing shade, would have below it seating, tables for games, and other amenities. We also propose a substantial shade structure, at the southeast end of the Central Plaza space, to provide shelter from sun and rain and to support outdoor gatherings and activities. Some changes in paving materials – or even durable traffic paint – could be used to differentiate places on the Plaza, including the route described above from the Entry Space to the stairs. In terms of landscape design, the same edge where the trellis is proposed, has built-in planters which should be replanted. A large shade tree is proposed for the western corner to help define this space and provide a signature shade element close to the entry.

1. shade structure
2. shade trellis
3. accessible ramp
4. stairs extended for seating
5. corner planter and tree



Proposed plan of central “plaza”



Traditional dancing

The central space should accommodate community events

Source:



Proposal for central “plaza”

Model view from west

#4: Landscapes of Learning

A Sustainable Landscape

This site is representative of the problems that plague all of the canyon landscapes: erosion due to loss of vegetation, loss of habitat, and unmanaged run-off into the Tijuana River watershed. A new approach to the landscape is essential - one that goes beyond just stopping the erosion and embraces other sustainability and “green infrastructure” strategies. The site offers a great opportunity to model erosion control and landscape restoration using native plants and simple landscape interventions, and perhaps another demonstration project, similar to those currently underway in nearby Los Laureles Canyon. As described above, we are proposing that all existing and proposed plumbing be incorporated into a greywater waste system throughout the campus, except for where vegetable and fruit trees are being planted. In addition to stabilizing the landscape, shade trees can be used to better define the edges of spaces and changes grade such as along existing retaining walls and paths.



Rain Garden
Part of a sustainable, teaching landscape
Source:



Level play areas
Drought-tolerant but soft surfaces
Source:



Outdoor Learning
Source: Edible Schoolyard

An Active Landscape

As large as the property is, it is largely unsuitable for the active and passive uses the faculty would like to see: more structured places for different kinds of recreation, places to eat, and places to play table-top games such as chess. These do not have to be concentrated in one place and should be distributed cross the campus. In the Proposed Comprehensive Plan, the more gently sloped areas in the northwest portions of the site are landscaped as playground area.

During the recent site visit, the Director offered an ambitious idea: in the northwest corner of the site, the landscape forms a distinct bowl-shaped area. The Director wondered whether a kind of landscape amphitheater could be created here. The LF team feels this is challenging, but the cut-and-fill regrading plan

provides for something along these lines. It may still be necessary to provide fencing at the highest edge of this area to address safety concerns.

The northeast corner of the site can be re-graded at the elevation of the temporary classrooms which need to be removed. This will create a level area large enough to provide a 50'x100' graded space for an indoor style football field (futbol rapido). This area can be used for faculty parking when not in use. This could potentially be earned income opportunity if any clubs are interested in renting the space. Because the retaining wall along the eastern edge is failing, it can be rebuilt to retain the new fill at the higher elevation. Providing a new access point (or enhancing the existing parking entrance) would make this part of the site more usable for the community



Summary diagram of proposed open spaces



Amphitheater at re-graded "pit" at northwest corner

Source:



Futbol Rapido field Proposed for the re-graded northeast corner

Source:

A Learning Landscape

The proposed approach to the landscape can be linked to the school curriculum: students can learn about ecology and gardening. Terraced areas for gardens can be part of the eco-nutrition program. Parents and students could cook with the food they grow. In the illustrative plan drawing, an orchard with fruit trees at the eastern area of the property is shown below the library and special needs classroom. It seems that the orchard is a fairly straightforward component of the landscape plan. But there are questions to be answered: Terracing may or may not be needed to control how much traffic they suffer from the children. Fruit trees can cause messes if not harvested in a timely fashion, though this would likely not be an issue with parents and/or garden staff managing them. Integrating seating areas into the orchard is a great opportunity given the nice shade they will eventually create in that space.

This new approach to the landscape can also be linked to the on-going nutrition programs that Via International partners on with Los Ninos de Baja California. One of their programs is devoted to Food Security and Ecology, focusing on community-based organic agriculture, nutrition, and ecology classes and “family health outreach.”



School garden program

A school garden is both a teaching and nutrition opportunity
Source:

As with the kitchen design, future discussions with the school are needed to answer several strategic questions:

What is the school Director's highest priority for the garden—educational, food production, or visual appeal?

Are there families that would be interested in maintaining garden spaces at the school?

Is there any time or desire for teachers to use the garden as a teaching tool?

What are ingredients are there that would be easy to grow and that food providers are currently buying for school meals?

How much of the limited level space ought to be dedicated to gardening?



Community garden

A community garden could be used by both students and families

Source:

Depending on the answers to these questions, the designs of the kitchen and garden will be very different. For example, a garden structured primarily for education would not likely produce a lot of any single type of produce in order to create diverse learning opportunities.

If, on the other hand, the primary goal of the garden is for food production, the garden should be designed for row planting that allows for crops to be planted by row, and directly in the ground rather than in raised beds, and the garden will require daily maintenance; thus there will need to be someone who is on site very regularly to provide such activities.

A third approach would be to create a community garden at the school that could be used by parents of students. It is likely that parents would be motivated to grow food for their own family's consumption. Therefore, larger growing spaces are more likely to meet the need of gardeners. This may be the most visually appealing solution, but may not be as appropriate for the educational objectives.

Resources and Partnerships

Government

Yara Lopez, Department of Education. Charged with 47k students that are foreign students, 97% of whom are North American. Follow protocols of Secretary of Education: Gave a sample project / template of how different project pieces.

Nora Marquez, Emplan. She visited the school with Hernan, Natalie, Rafael, staff of City Planning.

Academic Institutions

San Diego State University. Emeritus Director of Latin American Studies, James Gerber, is on the VIA International board. They have a dual degree program with the CETYS in Tijuana. Students can do half here / half in Mexico. Get degrees from both institutions.

University of San Diego, local Catholic university. VIA is an anchor institution for their work in the region. VIA used to run their cross border programs before they took it in-house. They are developing a hub in Tijuana for relationships with different organizations there.

University of California San Diego. The Mexico Center is there, a large research institution.

Escuela Libra Arquitectura, Tijuana. Jorge Gracia.

Foundations and Fundraising

It makes the most sense to go through Via International and Via channels for tax deductions for US foundations. If Mexican, go through Los Niños Hispanics in Philanthropy should be approached.

Non-profit Organizations

Via International, Elisa Sabatini

Experiential education programs bring people to the school to work on various projects, low skill. They pay for the materials. Dan Watman, dan@viainternational.org, will support the garden planting plan. (Does the Friendship Park garden.)

Los Niños de Baja California A.C., Elisa Sabatini.

They turn nutritional education programs into microfinance, creating community solidarity. For example, twenty women might take a nutrition education program with their children. After sixteen weeks of education they can do another level program, making food at home or they can create a solidarity group to secure a loan to do this as a micro-business. Over 50% of the businesses created this way are food-based businesses. The primary contact for this is Teresa Franco, Director of Community Development in Tijuana. Tefra85@hotmail.com

Adriana Martin del Campo, Edupam. This organization works out of Guadalajara. They are looking specifically at bi-national children. If this can be a model beyond Tijuana she will be interested. adriana@edupam.org

Angela Serrano, Fundación Internacional de la Comunidad, They have a campaign they are starting right now. Schools can enter and can be funded up to \$20,000 to help recover from COVID. aserrano@ficbaja.org, +52 (664) 1231849

Tijuana River National Estuarine Research Reserve (TRNERR). TRNERR is part of the federally funded National Estuarine Research Reserve System (NERRS), a network of protected areas established for long-term research, education, and stewardship. They are actively engaged in demonstration projects in the nearby Los Loreles Canyon. Like Via International, they see community-based education and training as a key component of all of their initiatives.

Tijuana Calidad de Vida.

Design Professionals

Martin del Campo, arborist. Will work with Adela to be in touch regarding the terraced area. They will come back together and talk about arborist plan.

Alejandra Cuentes, landscape architect.

Jorge Gracia, architect and started the Escuela Libra Arquitectura, Tijuana. Very experienced in construction, could present the master plan to the corporations and talk about opportunities for materials to be donated.

Other Opportunities/Resources

San Diego Tijuana World Design Capital 2024. Home2024.com “Transborder by Design” Design Capital of the World 2024. San Diego/ Tijuana pitched their application together. Jim Brown was a part of that because he proposed that Friendship Park would be a highlight of that. The nature of bi-national design and engagement on both sides.