



VIA

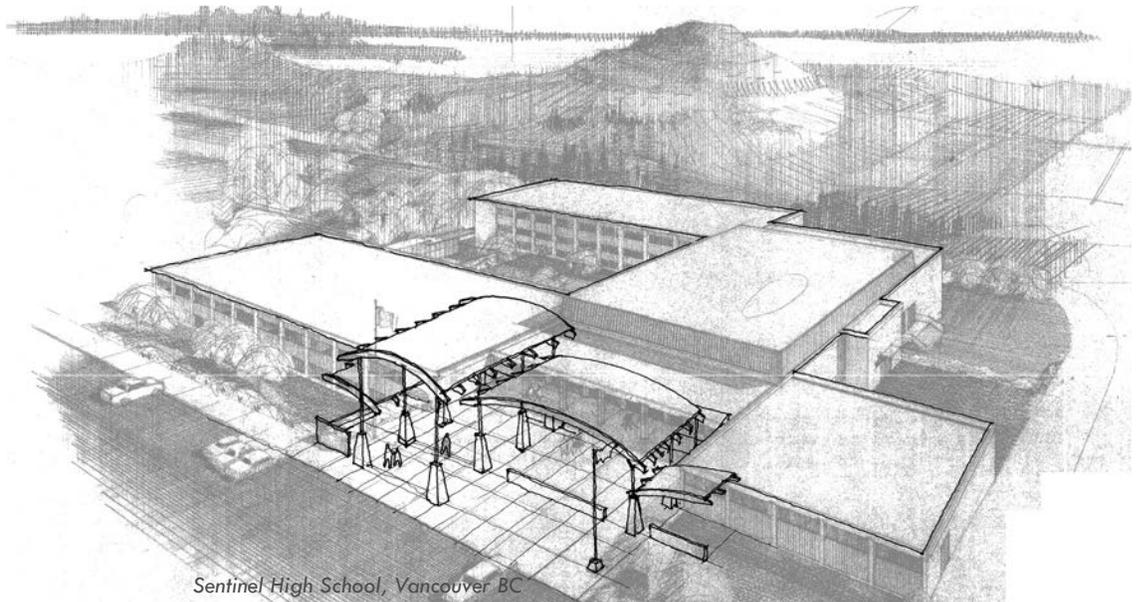
COMMUNITY  
DESIGN  
STUDIO

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# THE VIA COMMUNITY DESIGN STUDIO

VIA Architecture offers a unique service model through our Community Design Studio (CDS). The CDS is designed to serve small-scale, community-focused projects that may not fall under the traditional definition of Architectural practice. We perform projects at all scales for community benefit.

VIA has built its reputation on integrated architectural design and community planning for over 30 years. We are perhaps best known for our large-scale transit and infrastructure projects, our residential high-rises, and our community master planning. Perhaps lesser known is our long-time dedication to serving community groups, non-profits, and other smaller clients with thoughtful, crafted responses to much more humble needs. These projects are vital to the well-being of our communities.



*Sentinel High School, Vancouver BC*

# OUR APPROACH

The Community Design Studio continues VIA's legacy of community service with a new generation of projects. We are inspired by local and global interest in urban agriculture and community-shared resources, the revival of practical skills, the creation of great spaces for gathering, and the ways in which the built environment can support health equity.

Simultaneously, we are aware of communities across the country that are, in some measure, fragmented or even broken due to social, economic, and environmental factors such as missing infrastructure, unequal access to food and resources, and outdated regulations.

We recognize the potential to address these issues in profound ways through small-scale, hands-on design approaches that can have a powerful cumulative effect.



# ABOUT US

We provide design services that restore and reinvigorate communities through thoughtful, practical, and cooperative solutions around:



## DESIGN FOR FOOD PRODUCTION

Strengthen local resiliency and reconnect ourselves with our land.



## INCLUSIONARY DESIGN

Recognize diversity of people + places and the continuum of the aging process and human ability.



## REDISCOVERING THE COMMONS

Focus on the greater good, the civic, and the places that we all share.

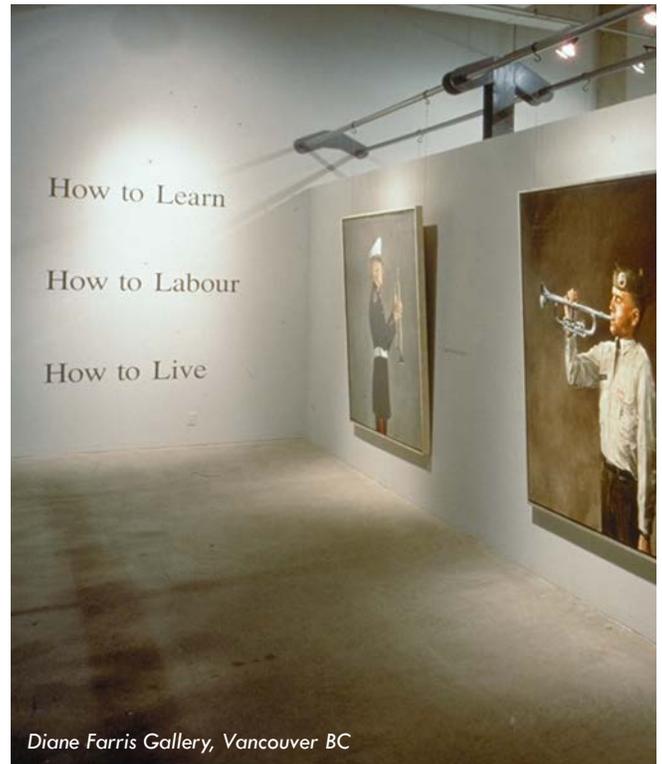


## DESIGN FOR HEALTH EQUITY

Designing the built environment to support equal opportunity for health.

The CDS team is passionate about creating places that people cherish and consider home; places that offer a sense of importance within a community and that foster multi-generational inclusion. We care about building social capital and about supporting emerging innovation districts and community-based industry.

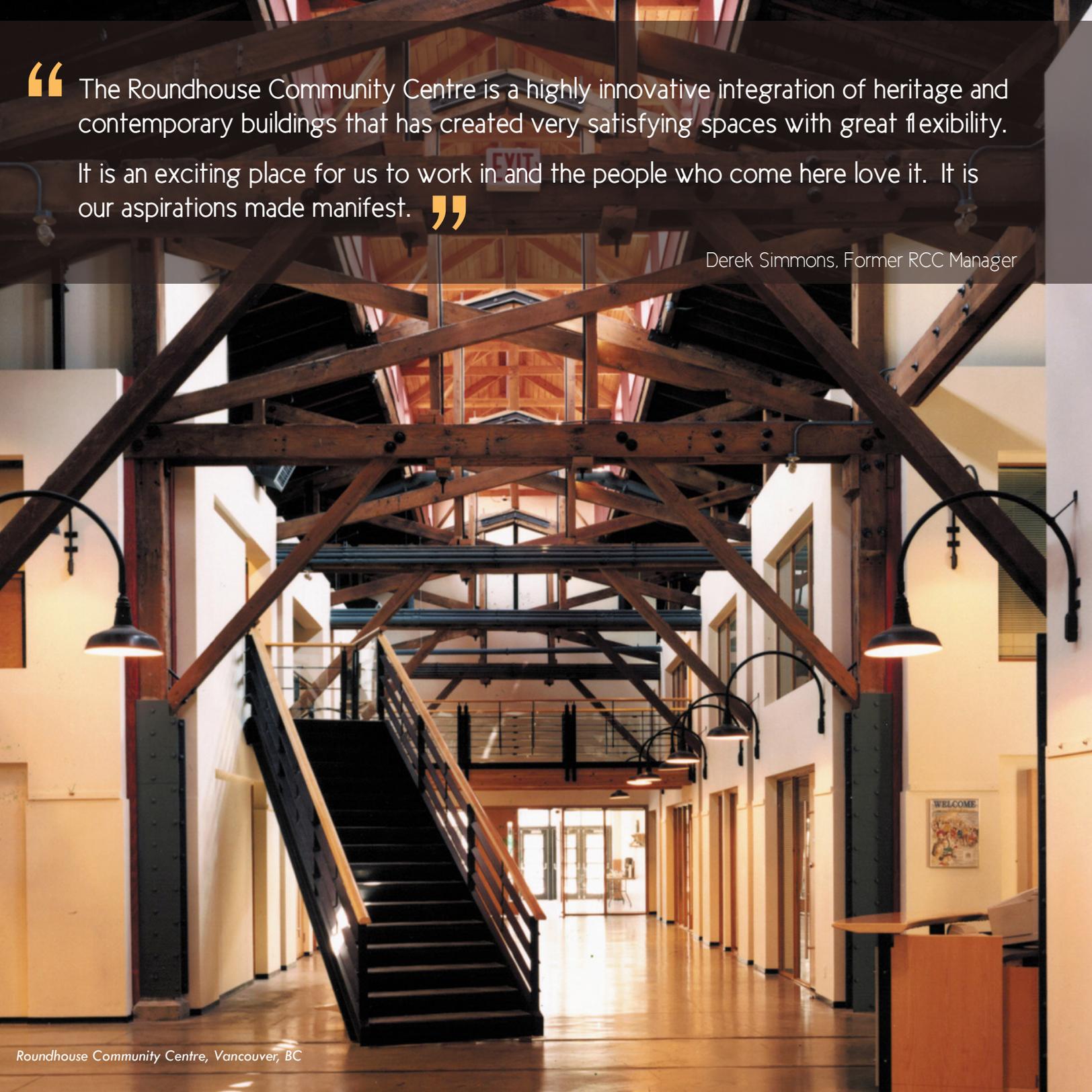
The Community Design Studio focuses on projects that ignite stewardship and strengthen our communities.



*Diane Farris Gallery, Vancouver BC*

“ The Roundhouse Community Centre is a highly innovative integration of heritage and contemporary buildings that has created very satisfying spaces with great flexibility. It is an exciting place for us to work in and the people who come here love it. It is our aspirations made manifest. ”

Derek Simmons, Former RCC Manager



# ABOUT US

## Why was the CDS formed?

Motivated by a growing awareness of the need for symbiotic urban and rural resilience as a way for people to thrive in an uncertain future, VIA discovered a shared vision within the firm. The CDS was formed by our resolve to restore the viability of rural and urban communities through beautiful design, place-making, and connecting people and places within a community in a meaningful way.

## What services does the CDS provide?

- Integrated design and planning for small-scale residential, commercial, and institutional community improvement projects
- Visualization and early design services for site planning and building projects
- Resolution of regulatory barriers to community-based projects
- Facilitation of community discussions or workshops

## What value does the Community Design Studio provide to its clients?

- We provide highly personalized and hands-on professional services
- We create places out of the “in-between” spaces, finding opportunity where it seems most unlikely
- We bring creativity, beauty, and delight to small projects that may not traditionally use the services of an architect
- We support the development of local food system and healthy community infrastructure by assessing, envisioning, and resolving design-related challenges



# DESIGN FOR FOOD PRODUCTION

Food is a universal need that supports our very survival as a species, but also a cultural touchstone that unite us across borders and circumstance. As Wendell Berry has said, "Eating is an agricultural act." As we all eat, agriculture impacts each of us.

As planners and designers, we recognize the essential need to plan for agricultural uses close to and within our urban boundaries. From a regional perspective, cities and farmland have a symbiotic relationship and must co-exist within the same general area for food to remain accessible to urban citizens, and for markets to remain viable for agricultural producers. Equally, urban farms, P-patches, and neighborhood gardens are vital for access to healthy food, growing communities, and bridging cultural gaps.

The CDS seeks to re-establish the value of design for food-related projects. Our skills include early visualization of sites and buildings, facilitation of community discussion around agricultural projects, and design and construction support for agricultural buildings.



*Rainier Vista Urban Farm Shelter, Seattle WA*

As award-winning designers, our services support all types of agriculture projects:

#### Community Planning

- Agriculture-supportive planning and zoning analysis
- Agricultural-focused neighborhood development planning

#### Public Farms + Gardens

- School garden planning and design
- Community farm site planning
- Building design
- Existing building evaluation

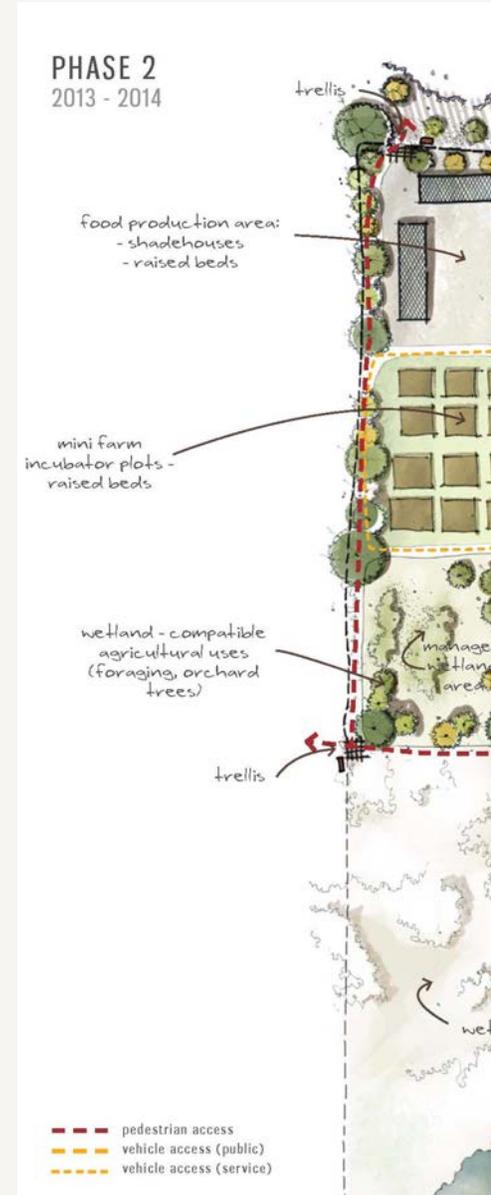
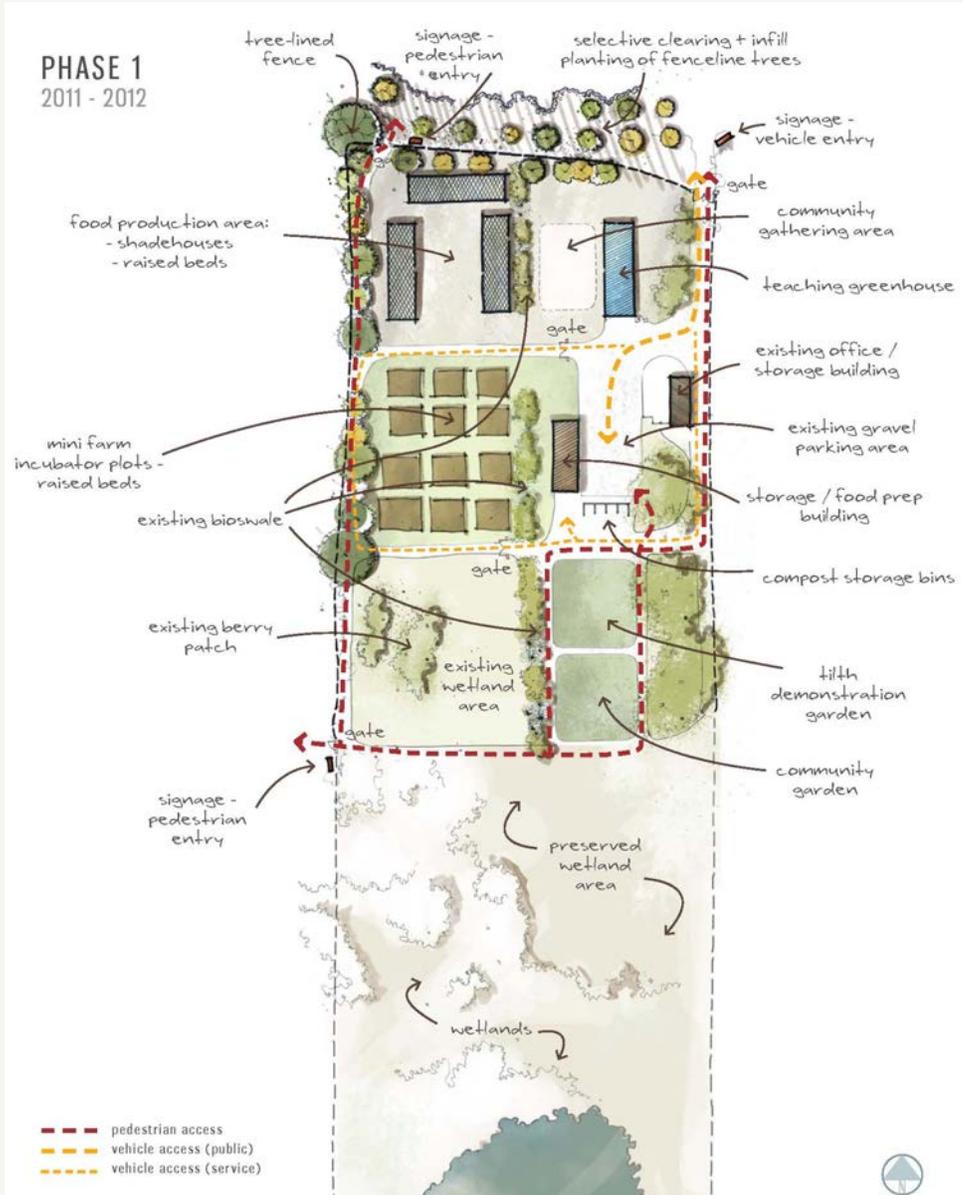
#### Other Projects

- Restaurant design
- Farmer's market design
- Retail store design
- Community kitchen design
- Instructional and educational facilities



# RAINIER BEACH URBAN FARM

Seattle, WA

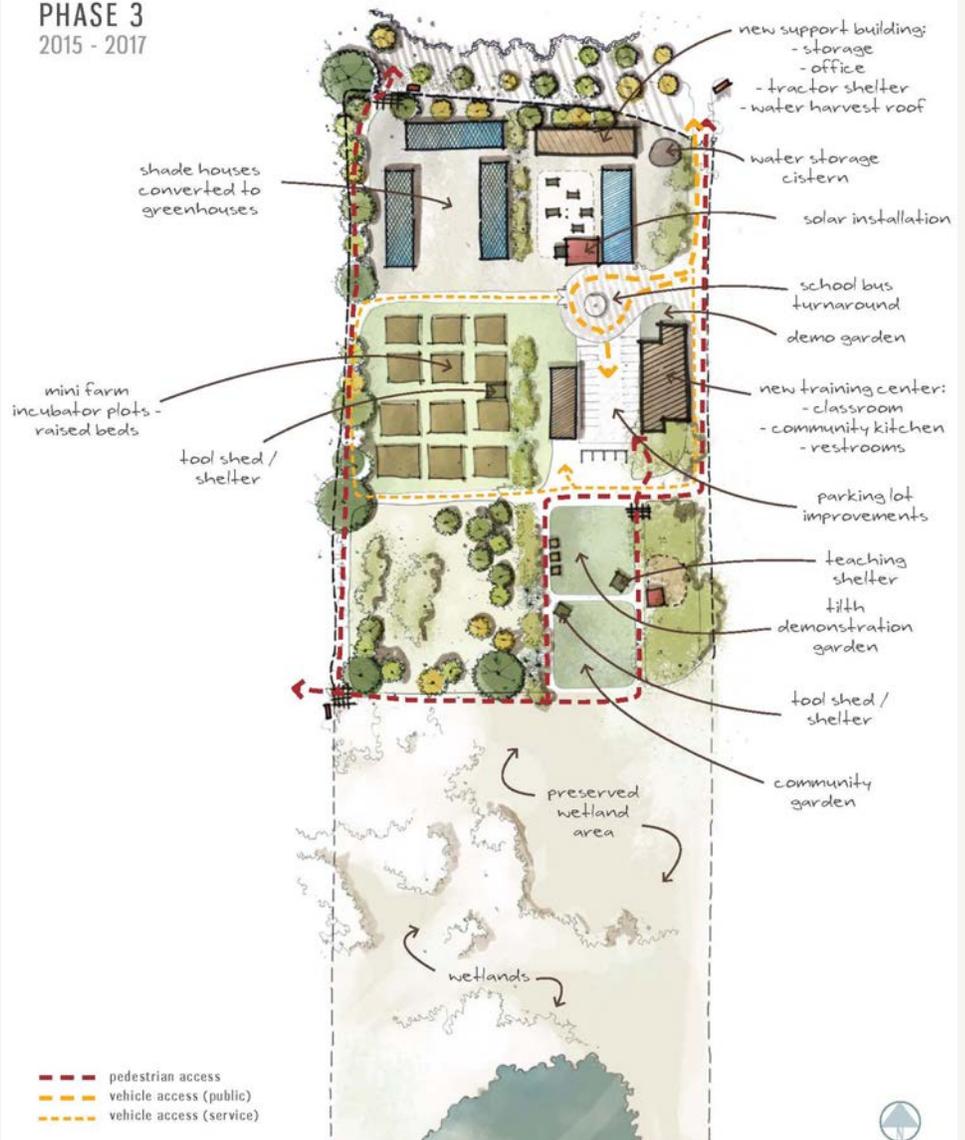


“ VIA has been part of great community outreach meetings, and I’m so appreciative of all they are doing to help move this project forward. ”

Harry Hoffman, Friends of the Atlantic City Nursery



### PHASE 3 2015 - 2017



# INCLUSIONARY DESIGN

VIA believes that design supports the connection of our communities by responding to the diversity of people and places and the continuum of the aging process and of human ability.

Our passion at VIA is to create *connective communities* via architecture. We believe that by designing places worthy of affection that we will make the world a better place. One size does not fit all in connective communities. To conduct the most responsible architectural practice, we must work over a full range of project environments and client needs, fully considering and resolving all of these diverse elements into a harmonious whole. Community-building is what the CDS is all about, and designing for all members of all types of communities is an integral part of this central aspect of our firm.

Our approach is focused on fostering interactions that create opportunities for continuing to contribute to and engage in community.

Our key strategies for inclusionary design are:

- Embracing community voices
- Managing limited resources
- Integrating landscape and architecture
- Creating memorable places
- Honoring memory and history
- Recognizing and supporting a variety of abilities and needs

Our design work focuses on places for people across a continuum of age and ability:



## Seniors

- Assisted living communities
- Independent living communities
- Senior day centers



## Design for Children

- Play structures and spaces
- School and daycare centers



## Non-profit Housing

- Neighborhood planning
- Housing design
- Co-housing



## Accessible Design

- ADA evaluations and retrofit design
- Special needs housing



*Kiwanis Manor Seniors Housing, West Vancouver BC*

# REDISCOVERING THE COMMONS

There are fascinating movements afoot in the way in which our communities are responding to imminent changes in the supply of oil, the availability of food, the consumption of goods, and our habits of mobility. Transition advocates use the term “energy descent” or “powering down” to describe how we can collectively move away from peak oil consumption toward a locally-based sustainable future, designing our withdrawal from oil addiction rather than having this occur as a series of crises or disasters. Solutions to this dilemma can only be found through the process of relocalization, whereby we return to a more collective approach to our resources on the town or neighborhood scale and learn to meet our needs without large inputs of external energy or materials.

The skills of the Community Design Studio’s architects and planners are essential in assisting our communities in envisioning alternative forms of development and lifestyle that support the rediscovery of the commons, and the recognition that we’re all in this together. As communities become more local in focus, their expression as places with specific and distinct identities will take on increasing depth and importance. Our community-building experience has focused on:

## Public Spaces

- Public plazas
- Markets
- Public art integration
- Wayfinding

## Demonstration Projects

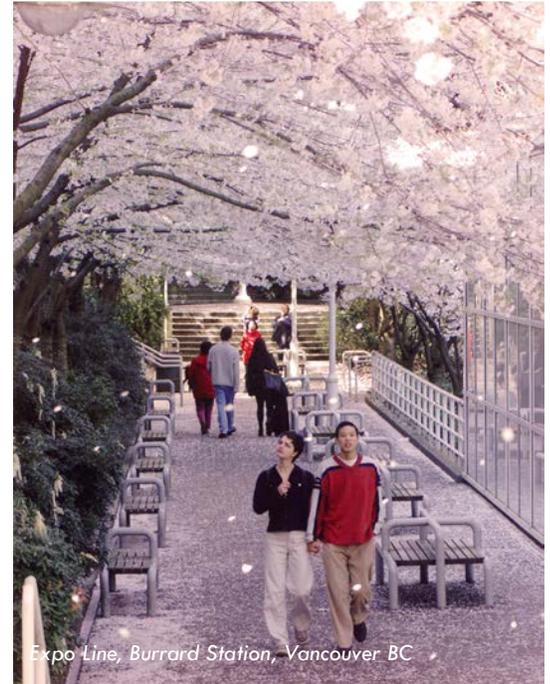
- Urban gardens
- Bicycle facilities
- Energy projects

## Planning for Resilience

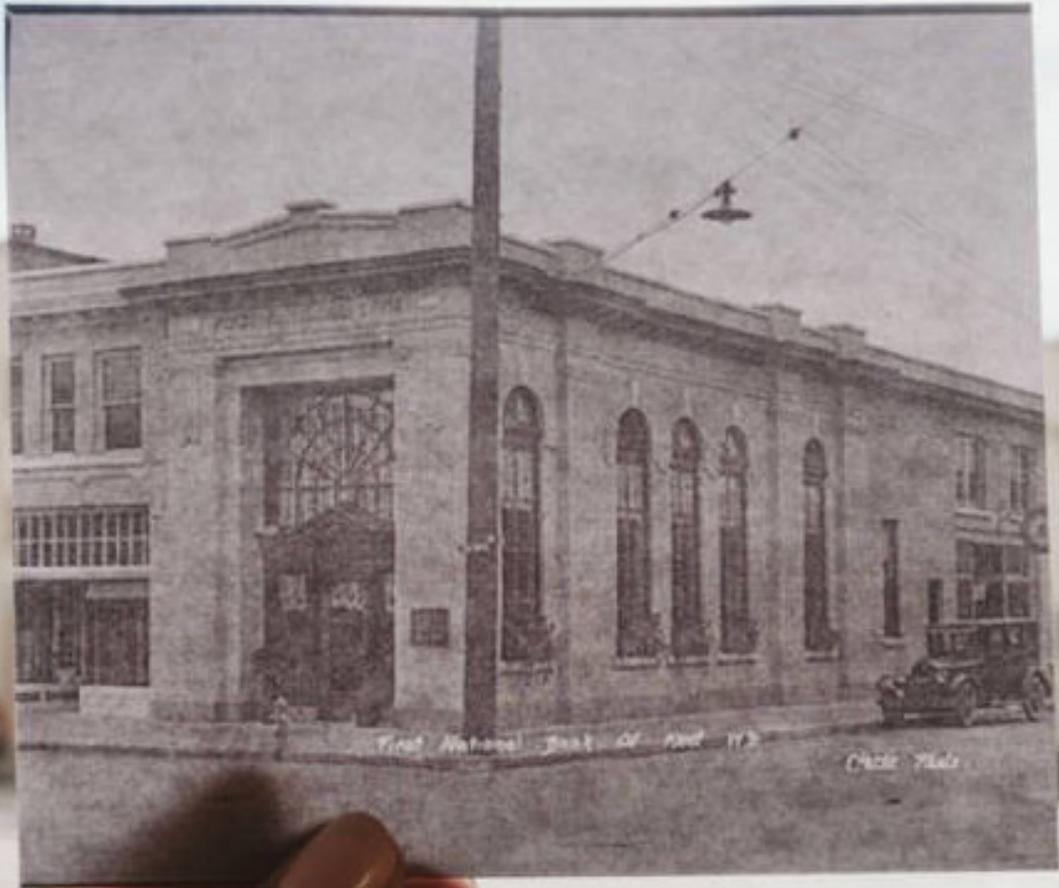
- Creative mobility solutions
- Walkable communities
- Energy retrofits
- Create use of salvage materials

## Community Facilities

- Community centers
- Schools
- Places of worship
- Performance spaces



Expo Line, Burrard Station, Vancouver BC



Morrill Bank Building Adaptive Re-Use, Kent WA

# DESIGN FOR HEALTH EQUITY

Urban living is the new reality for the majority of the world's population. Urban change is taking place in a context of many other global challenges -- economic globalization, climate change, financial crises, and energy and food insecurity. Urban planning and design and urban social conditions can be either supportive or detrimental for human health and health equity depending on how they are conceived and implemented. Healthy and sustainable cities can be achieved via governance and planning processes that use a conceptual framework that positions health, equity, and sustainability as central policy goals for urban management.

VIA and the CDS are dedicated to creating cities where people want to live. Through our policy planning, master planning, urban design, and landscape design services, we solve problems in a way that supports health and access to healthy places and lifestyles. Our projects support mobility, pedestrian and bike access, access to employment, the creation of parks and open space, and the preservation of the natural environment.



## SELECTED PROJECTS

### **Kiwanis Manor** West Vancouver BC

The Kiwanis Manor seniors housing project was completed for the non-profit Kiwanis Housing Society of West Vancouver.

The increasing need for affordable seniors housing in the West Vancouver community is evident as the aging demographic increases. Since 2003, VIA has partnered with Kiwanis to facilitate a strategy for implementing a phasing and design rational in parallel with their mission of establishing and maintaining housing for low-income seniors. We conducted focus groups and workshops with existing residents and surrounding community to determine needs for the success of future development. With careful stewardship of limited financial resources, the team provided a community of care through architecture that symbolically and functionally evoked a bringing together of low-income seniors to share and celebrate their aging in place. This project raises the standard of low-income affordable housing, providing seniors the opportunity to live with dignity within their own community.

Designed and built in two phases, the buildings total 215 units. Residents have access to community gardens, common amenity spaces, as well as the West Vancouver community, transportation, and amenities at large. The four and five storey wood frame buildings have been designed to Level 2 Accessible Design with some units at full Level 3 Accessible Design. Residents are offered a combination of independent living and assisted living. Additional amenity spaces, a library, workshop, bathing rooms, guest rooms, and community shared gardens complete the program.



## SELECTED PROJECTS

### The Uptown Parklet Seattle WA

The CDS partnered with Slater Construction and Seattle's Uptown Alliance on the design and construction of this parklet in Seattle's Uptown Urban Center. The parklet is one of Seattle's first – part of the SDOT's Pilot Parklet Program that was made permanent in 2015.

The project was designed in collaboration with the Uptown Alliance and through a series of extensive community input sessions and design charrettes. The parklet was designed to reflect the arts & culture identity of its neighborhood.

Features include bike parking, community seating, the neighborhood's first Free Little Library, decorative repurposed film reels from SIFF Cinema, a donor "Walk of Fame," and great views of the Space Needle from all seating.

The entire project team donated their time for the parklet's construction and all materials were donated or funded by neighborhood businesses or through a crowdfunding campaign.



## SELECTED PROJECTS

### Holocaust Center for Humanity Seattle WA

The CDS developed design concepts for the Holocaust Center for Humanity's new space at 2nd and Lenora in downtown Seattle.

The Center includes library space, an educational area, administrative offices, archive rooms, and provision for a future museum display.

The design utilizes the height of the existing space to create a dramatic room for educational displays while creating mezzanine offices that overlook the public area. The Center's program calls for maximum flexibility in the new space, as accommodations must consider both large and small groups with a variety of needs for enclosure, acoustic control, and daylight control.

Addressing the emotional challenges inherently associated with Holocaust information, the design makes use of the existing building entry rotunda as a contemplative transition space from the busy public street into the Center's space.



## SELECTED PROJECTS

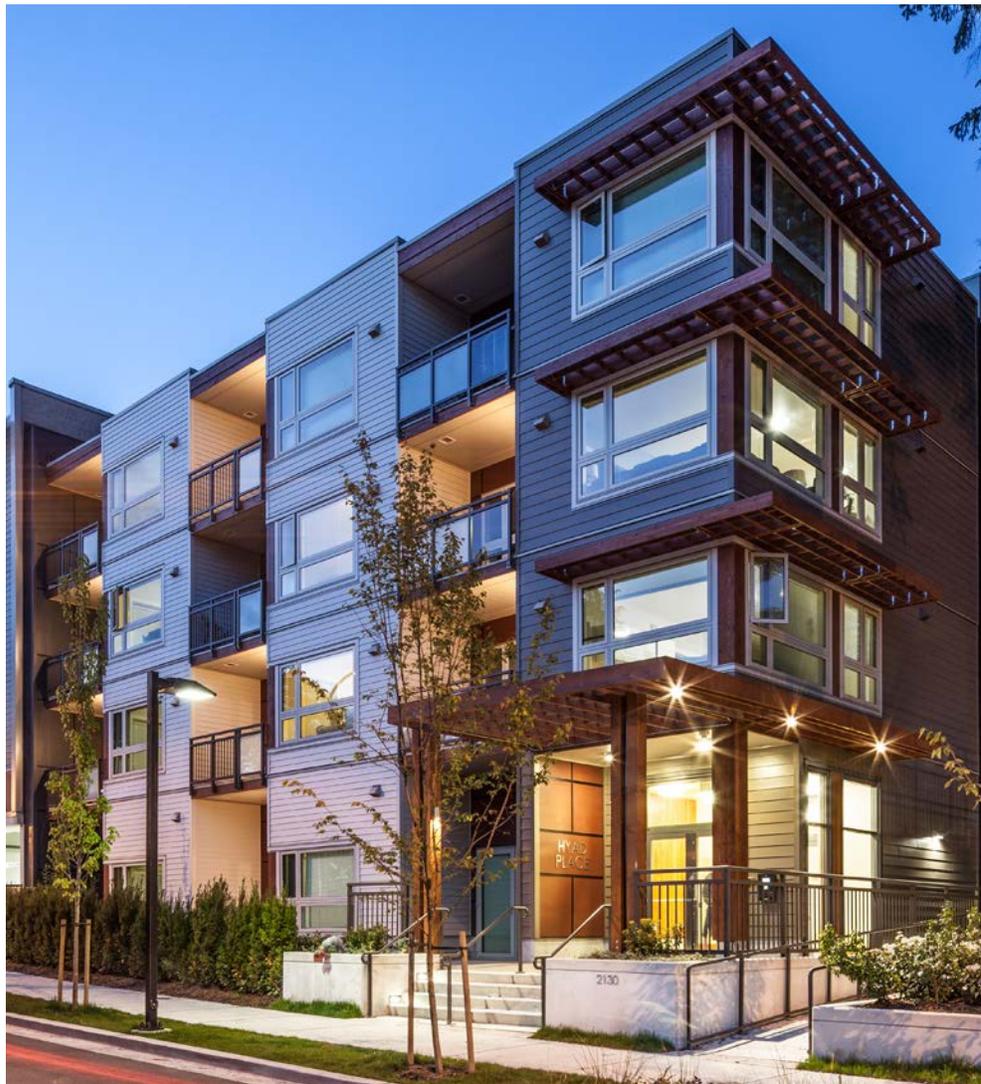
### Housing for Young Adults with Disabilities (HYAD) North Vancouver BC

HYAD is a non-profit society formed by families to provide sustainable housing for their young adults with developmental disabilities. In the early stages of strategic planning, VIA partnered with HYAD to secure financial assistance from the Government of B.C. by raising public awareness through fundraising events, public open houses, and informational presentations. Our team created the momentum necessary to bring this prototypical project to the forefront of the community and Municipality agenda.

Through facilitating client workshops and meeting each HYAD resident, we were able to identify the everyday living needs of these young adults. Within the four storey wood frame building there are 16 Level 3 Adaptable Design units and two manager suites. Also accommodated are a lobby/reception office and a communal room with kitchen, mud room, storage, and laundry, providing opportunity for gatherings to foster the feeling of one big family home.

A high level of sustainability was achieved by the reuse of wood from the existing school, solar overhangs, double glazed low-e windows, dual flush toilets, natural corridor ventilation, and connection to the Lonsdale Energy Corporation.

Large windows and glass balconies express an indoor/outdoor quality, and outdoor main floor decking defines living areas off the kitchen and communal rooms. VIA volunteered time to plant the landscaping and was part of a team effort to teach the new residents how to care for their communal gardens.



## SELECTED PROJECTS

### Neah Bay Makah Tribe Beach House

Neah Bay WA

In collaboration with the Pomegranate Center, a Seattle-based organization that builds gathering places through a process of creative collaboration, the CDS provided design services for a free-standing beach house pavilion for the Makah Tribe in Neah Bay, WA.

Situated on the dramatic Pacific Ocean-facing shore known as Hobuck Beach, the pavilion— named Beʔis, which means “Beach House” in the traditional Makah language— is located near the northwest tip of the contiguous United States.

The pavilion’s covered space provides the Makah Tribe with a gathering place for community events and dance rehearsals. The design also features a separate artist’s studio with room to accommodate carving and weaving activities.

The structure’s heavy timber columns are designed as totems, ornately carved and finished by local artists. After the majority of the structure had been completed, CDS staff donated their time to take part in the finishing touches of construction, hands-on, with Pomegranate team members and members of the Tribe.



*All photos courtesy of the Pomegranate Center*

## SELECTED PROJECTS

### Forterra Community Garden

Kent WA

The CDS supported Forterra, the International Rescue Committee and Global to Local to build a new community garden in Kent's West Hill neighborhood to serve local refugee, immigrant, and low-incomes families.

What started as a thicket of blackberry is now a three-quarter acre garden and orchard to serve thirty-five families. The project is part of an overall plan to improve regional livability and equity by strengthening the local food system. These projects demonstrate the possibilities for urban agriculture to address critical local needs like food security, while creating opportunities for microenterprise.



## SELECTED PROJECTS

### Jude's Old Town Streatery, Seattle WA

The CDS completed the design for a new streatery – an SDOT-sponsored parklet prototype intended for serving food – along the bike trail in Seattle's Rainier Valley. The parklet represented a project with a high level of community support, in a neighborhood in need of public amenity and community investment. Since its opening in 2017, the small outdoor space has hosted a variety of neighborhood gatherings and community events, in addition to extending the serving space of its adjacent restaurant host, Jude's Old Town Pub. Metal art on the streatery was created by artist Anna Sher, from spare bike parts.

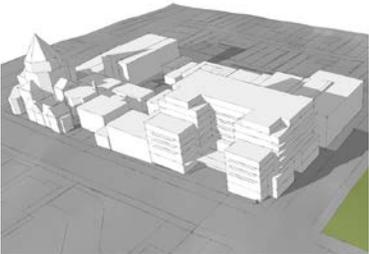


# CHURCH PROJECTS



## **St. Andrew's Lutheran Church Renovations** Bellevue WA

Working in partnership with a St. Andrew's church task force, the CDS is assisting in evaluation of design options that explore various levels of improvement to the existing building. Originally constructed in 1960, the church has undergone many additions over the years. Part of the plan is to re-establish clarity of sequence and wayfinding, expand existing facilities, and create a graceful sense of entry and welcome. Other parts of the program include areas devoted to sanctuary, fellowship, education, outreach, and operations.



## **Cordova Street Church Redevelopment** Vancouver BC

In collaboration with the Cordova Street Church congregation, VIA is working on a redevelopment planning study of a 21,300 square foot site in the Downtown Eastside neighborhood of Vancouver. The outreach mission of the congregation was inclusive of a new church sanctuary, convent residences, a safe haven women's shelter, soup kitchen, educational facilities, and social rental housing. The study includes several options for increasing density of up to eight storeys as part of a new Functional Official City Development Plan, offering strong internal and external community connectivity.



## **Green Lake Presbyterian Church** Seattle WA

The CDS is designing a new facility for Seattle's Green Lake Presbyterian Church. The challenge for the growing congregation is to combine additional parking with new educational spaces and a sanctuary on a limited footprint and with a limited budget. A contemporary and inviting community facility, the church will become a valuable asset to the Green Lake neighborhood in which it is located.

# URBAN AGRICULTURAL PROJECTS



## **Finn River Cidery** Chimacum WA

The CDS has been design offering support to the Finn River Cidery since 2010. The 33-acre organic farm has been actively involved in the restoration of a salmon-bearing stream that passes through its property and, at the time of this project, was looking to obtain grant funding for construction of the “Chum Hut” in collaboration with the North Olympic Salmon Coalition. VIA provided design services for the hut, offering an attractive sheltered gathering place for groups visiting the site that was also able to house interpretive displays.



## **Seattle Urban Farm** Seattle WA

In partnership with Solid Ground’s Lettuce Link program, the CDS designed two shelters at the Rainier Vista/Seattle Urban Farm in Seattle’s growing Columbia City neighborhood. Creatively reusing salvaged wood shipping pallets and old light standards, the public shelters offer refuge from both rain and sun for a series of gabion and concrete countertops, which were designed by a local artist. The shelters create a welcoming, protected space that can used for food preparation, educational presentations and demonstration events, and cooking for social gatherings.



## **Spectrum School Farm** Kingston WA

This project for the North Kitsap School District sought to develop a one-acre site for the Spectrum Community School, an alternative high school located in Kingston. The goal was to create a working farm that would support the school’s science program as well as provide food for the school’s meals. The program also included development of community garden patches that were otherwise not available in the North Kitsap area. Our work also included site planning and evaluation for two donated greenhouses that were meant for relocation to the new farm site.

# URBAN INTERVENTIONS



## **Morrill Bank Building Historic Adaptive Re-Use** Kent WA

VIA Architecture led the ‘Re-imagine the Morrill Bank Building’ design charrette to engage local stakeholder as the ‘brain trust’ of the community to discuss how to bring ideas to fruition for the adaptive reuse of the 1906 Morrill Bank Building. On behalf of the City of Kent, WA, the Kent Downtown Partnership and tenants of the building, our team designed a full-day charrette to focus efforts on new uses and synergies, work together to prioritize ideas, and discuss how to bring ideas to fruition. The project included these relevant components: Urban design; Planning for public, public-private and community uses; Development feasibility and financing analysis/approaches; and Historic preservation and reuse.



## **PARK(ing) Day** Seattle WA + Vancouver BC

PARK(ing) Day is a nationwide annual celebration of guerilla urban design. During the festivities, street parking stalls are taken over in cities across the country— by artists, activists, designers, every day people wanting to take back their public spaces— and turned into temporary public parks. These little parks help mitigate the automobile-focused environment of urban areas, creating urban oases of seating, bicycle parking, and human-scale space. Each year, VIA’s offices participate in their local festivities by designing temporary parklets in front of our offices. Each parklet has offered public seating, games, activities, and more designed to demonstrate the value of these little public spaces.



## **Rainier Beach Food Innovation District** Seattle WA

Seattle’s Rainier Beach neighborhood has a unique opportunity to combine its urban farms and light industrial zone to become a hub of food and agricultural production. VIA is creating a development strategy that builds upon the area’s unique assets. A key piece of this strategy is creation of a district zoning classification that will incentivize industrial and flexible incubator uses while promoting a vibrant, sustainable and walkable urban environment. In addition, we facilitated a coalition of community members, not-for-profits, educational institutions and city agencies on a test fit for a food innovation facility and educational opportunity center to catalyze transformation of the area into a center for employment, education and entrepreneurship for the community.

# OTHER ACTIVITIES



## **Raise the Roost Competition** Seattle WA

The Raise the Roost Competition was Seattle's very first chicken coop design and build competition. Seattle Tilth, Architecture for Humanity and Architects Without Borders teamed up for this event held at the Rainier Beach Urban Farm. The design competition aimed to inspire people interested in raising urban chickens. All the proceeds went to Seattle Youth Garden Works, who help introduce homeless and under served youth to urban agriculture.



## **Flight Path Exhibit** SeaTac WA

Flight Path is a project by the non-profit Common Acre that aims to raise awareness of threats to pollinator health through a restoration ecology project at Sea-Tac airport. Since 2014, the group has introduced native planting and honey bee hives to land surrounding airport runways, which is not safe or useful for other purposes. Their goal is to create integrated ecological solutions that support local food in our increasingly urbanized society. In 2014-2015, the group organized an art exhibit featuring a pollinator theme, originally intended for display in Terminal 'B' at the airport. VIA's Community Design Studio provided 3-d envisioning support, to illustrate how the exhibit would be displayed in an unused airport gate, using donated and custom-fabricated display modules. The exhibit was seen by an estimated 2 million viewers, introducing this important project to travelers from around the globe. The project received a Port of Seattle Environmental Excellence Award in 2017.



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