

St. Croix People and Place





we were around here on top of the hill

- * ZPA wants the views from the landscape to look at
- * connections to LEED A. hotel, archaeological boundary # criteria - building of 50th fl. LEED Platinum sustainable, earthquake resistant.
- * Single story, w/ pump utilize wind and solar energy
- * How to combine modern with ancient cultural landscape by - facades... and hiding unattractive features like powerlines.
- dealing with invasive plants like grass

Bandy Hills - Hill - representative tentative presentation of park's intentions. No mention of including people's involvement at this point

trip @ 5:30pm
 experiencing St. Croix from the water.
 Kidi's shabby attachment to St. C
 tiny but still visible

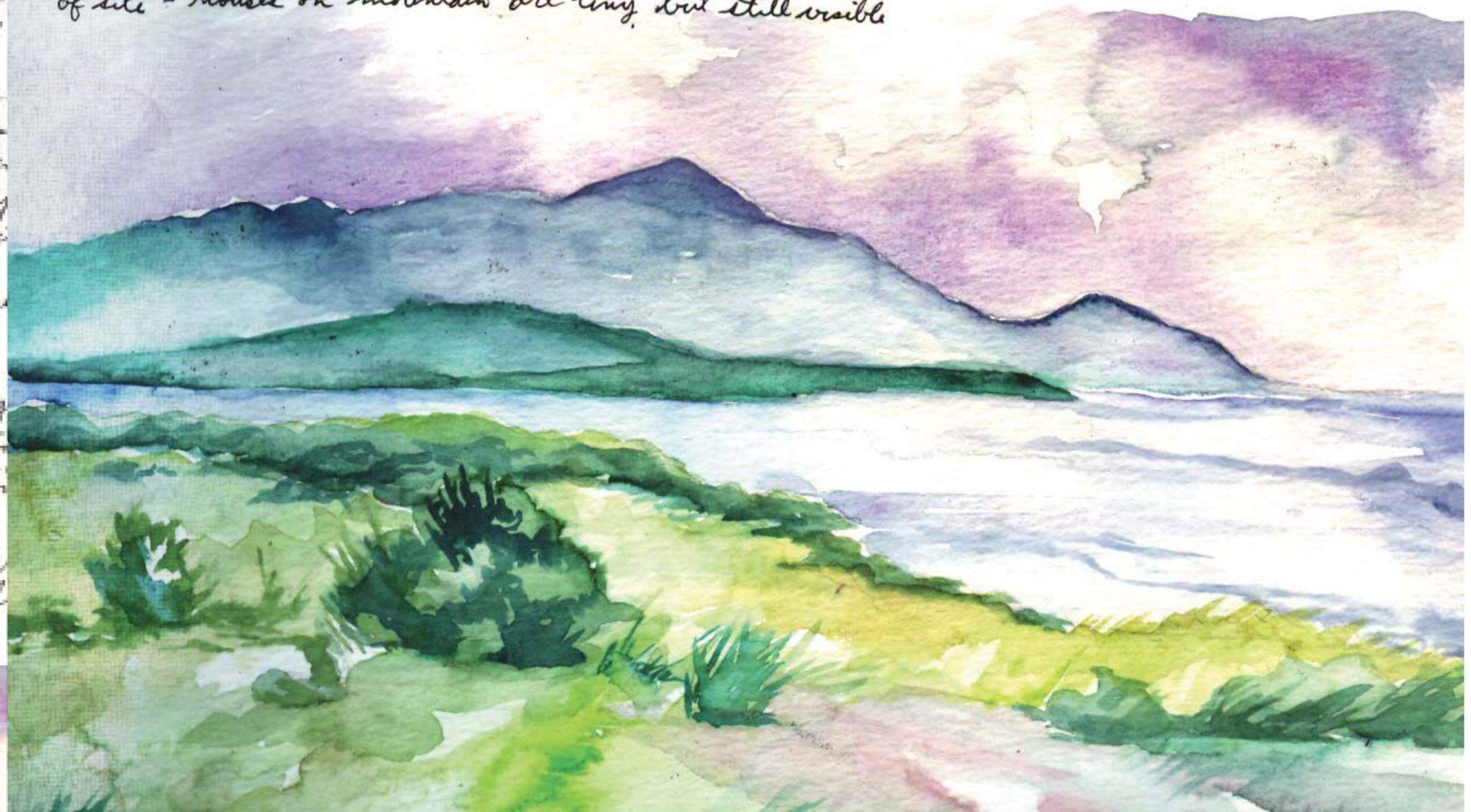


no mention of including St. Croix people's involvement at this point.

kayak trip @ 5:30pm

experiencing St. Croix from the water.
 Kidi's shabby attachment to St. Croix

View from east to west side of site - houses on mountain are tiny but still visible



As landscape architecture students, history and ecology both factor into how we perceive spaces. Writings such as Rogozinski's *A Brief History of the Caribbean*, Bastian's *Owning Memory* and Charles Mann's 1491, conditioned our minds to look for attributes that weren't readily visible in this tropical paradise.

While we were on the island, we encountered no shortage of history or ecological processes. All the people we spoke with were willing to illustrate their interpretation of St. Croix's history for us, as well as their knowledge of the local wildlife. By the time we were ready to leave the island, the significance of St. Croix as a valuable cultural and ecological resource became very clear to us.

These experiences will highly contribute towards our designs for a research campus on Salt River Bay, a National Historic Park and Ecological Preserve located on the northern central end of Saint Croix.

slaves would hide in... sea within in the maroon ridge coast.

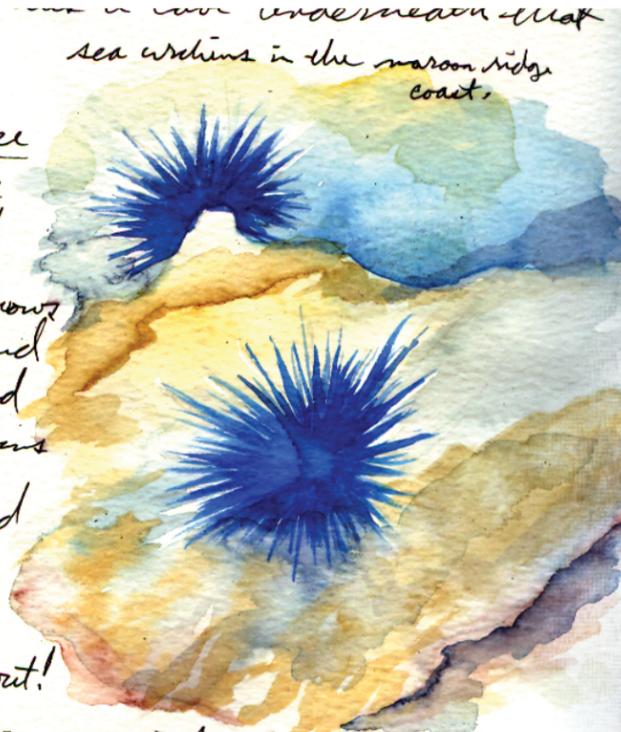
Meeting about NPA headed by Edgar Lake & Dr. Wanda Mills. St. Croix's landscape is flexible towards many countries and has a lot to offer. Jens Beck's map shows coexistence of many groups on the island in 1750. Indians → Stewardship of land Land informs tradition → tradition informs community

St. Croix influenced many European and American artists, thinkers and writers (Alexander Hamilton)

After emancipation, plantation crops die out!

Current Perceptions of St. Croix by US parties → mainland US sees the island as a military station. Should be a reminder of moral & historical

Various Notes and Sketches. Source: Drawing by Author



the sides of the road.

Roadside Ornamental

→ U

→ NPA gives us a brief history of =
* Continental A.I. 11 0 + 1 . 1 +



SARI Visitor Center. Source: Drawing by Author

to burned forest around the area to prevent
fires, U.S. plugged up the rest of the river
to prevent mosquito breeding

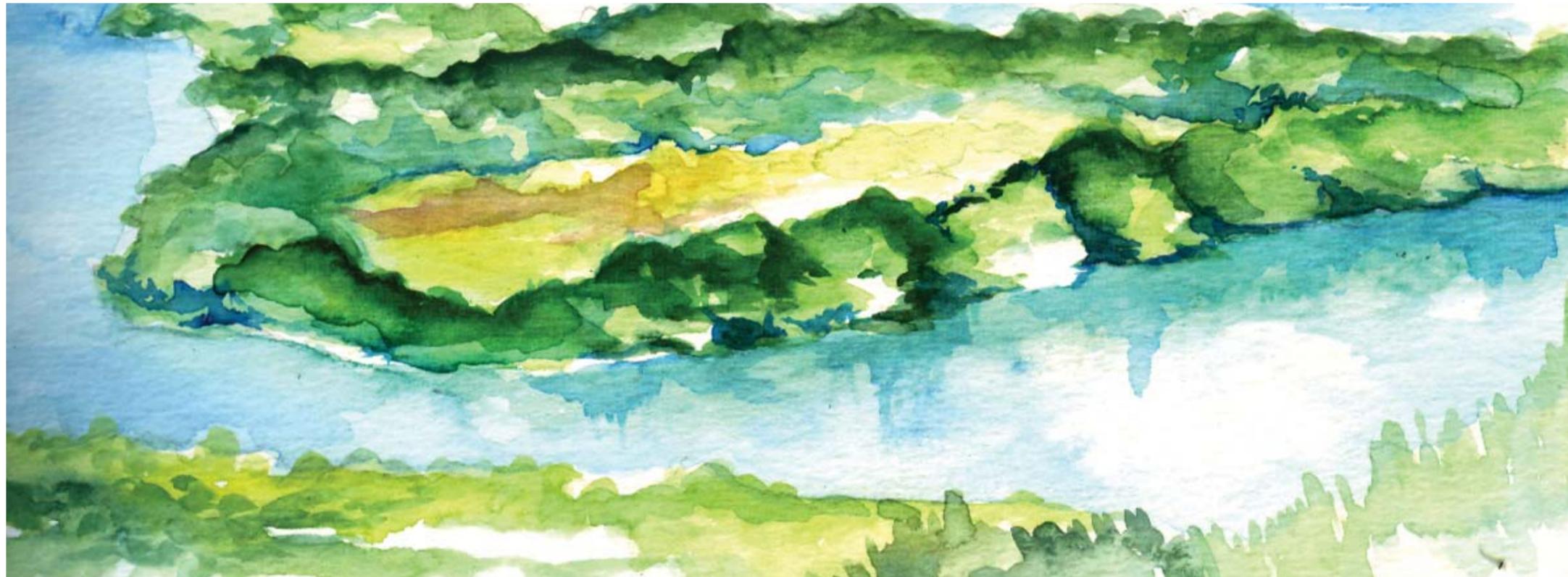
see on → Some are imbedded in the middens
river
in



where we had lunch)
at our bar constructed of wood. Though we
opening time (11:30) it was already crowded



East side of Salt River National Historic Park. Source: Drawing by Author



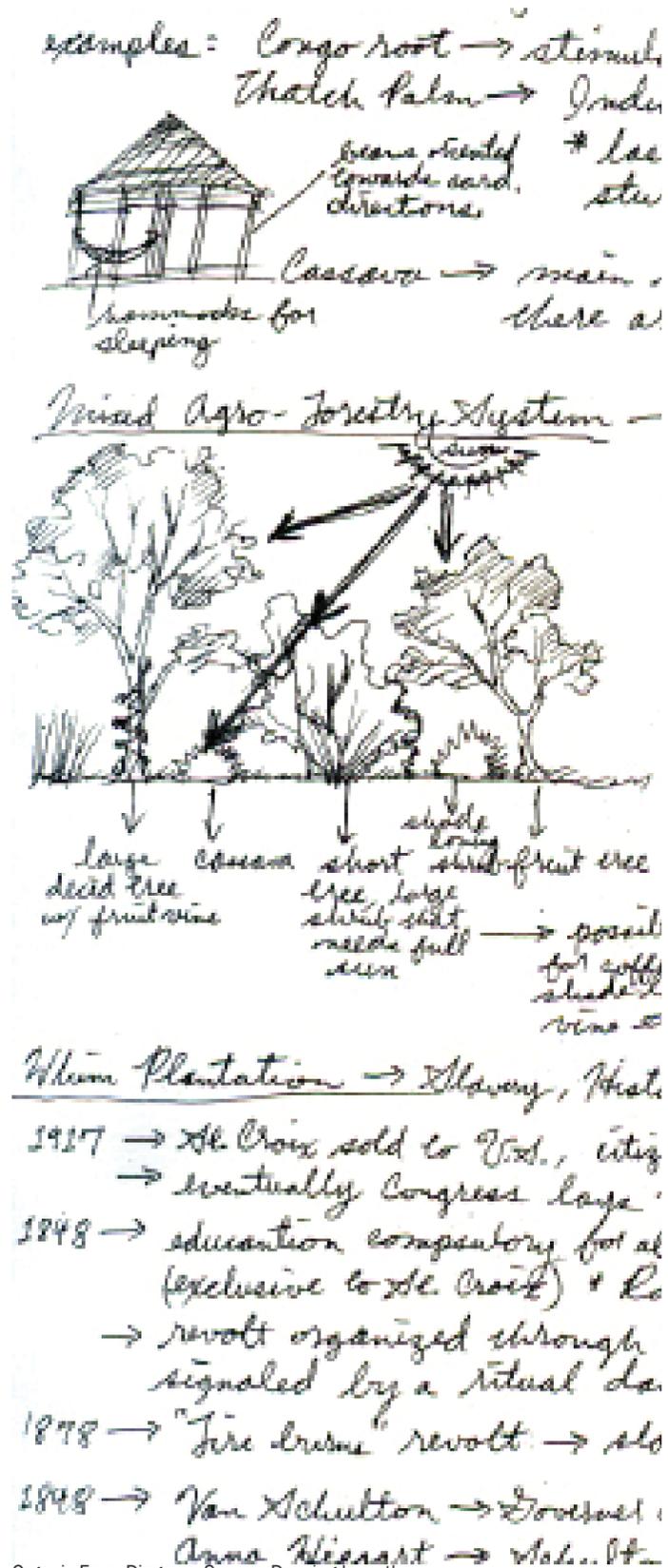
View from East side to West side of Salt River National Park . Source: Drawing by Author

Meredith Hardy and Zandy Hills-Starr, representatives of the National Park Service showed that Salt River Bay used to contain a freshwater river that reached the bay. This resource was what enabled humans to settle in the Salt River Bay region. A continental shelf lays approximately 300 feet off shore, accounting for the high variety of marine life found around St. Croix as well as the strong ocean currents. Thus, the area is deemed significant by the National Park Service for its biodiversity as well as significance as the setting for St. Croix's first human settlement.

The entire island of St. Croix is filled with remnants of history, some areas visibly revealing an earlier layer than others. At Salt River Bay, the remains of the Dutch Fortress Fort Sale are neatly tucked within the landscape, having been reclaimed by vegetation. However, its earthwork-like appearance and compacted dirt walkways alert us to its unnatural presence. Another major historic place that was on the site was a ball court, a significant ritual space for the Taino Indians. This was the specific Indian tribe that Columbus encountered when he first landed on Salt River.

One of the interesting highlights about Saint Croix that was not prevalent in the readings was the prevalence of ethnobotany. During a hike through the tropical dry forests on the west of Saint Croix, our guide Olasee Davis enlightened us on the uses and folklore surrounding some of the wild vegetation growing along the trails.

Permaculture was another design methodology that we were introduced to at an organic farm, also located in the tropical dry forests. The idea of this process aims to create a productive landscape by mimicking regional ecological or natural systems. Differences in climate, terrain and vegetation all factor into this design process, so each place will have a different vocabulary to work with. According to Rogozinski, the soils on the island were relatively poor so there were an abundance of forests rather than grasslands before European settlement occurred.



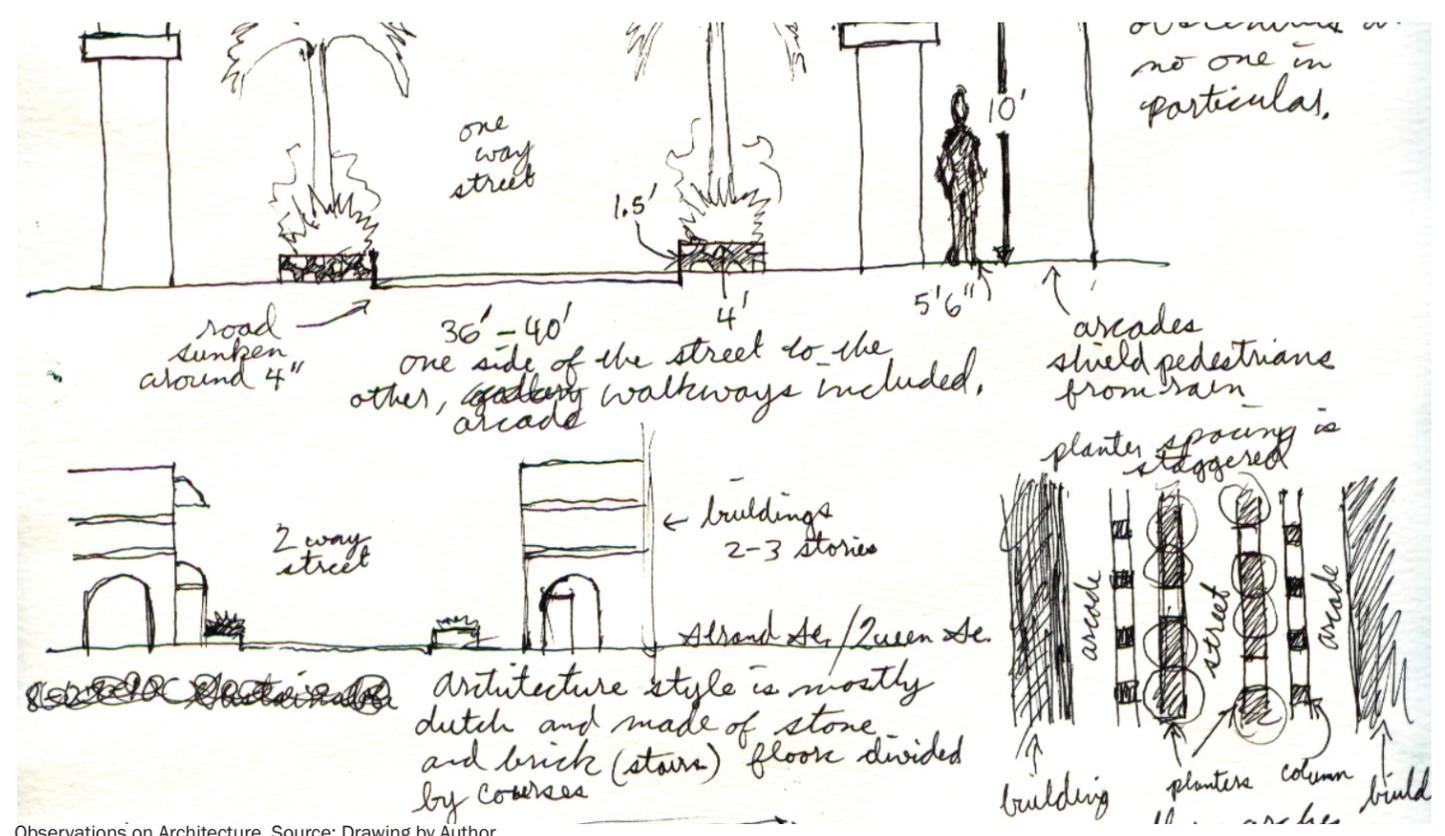
Organic Farm Diagram. Source: Drawing by author



Working on the Organic Farm. Source: Photo by Holly Nelson



View from Maroon Ridge towards the Ocean. Source: Photo by Holly Nelson



Observations on Architecture. Source: Drawing by Author

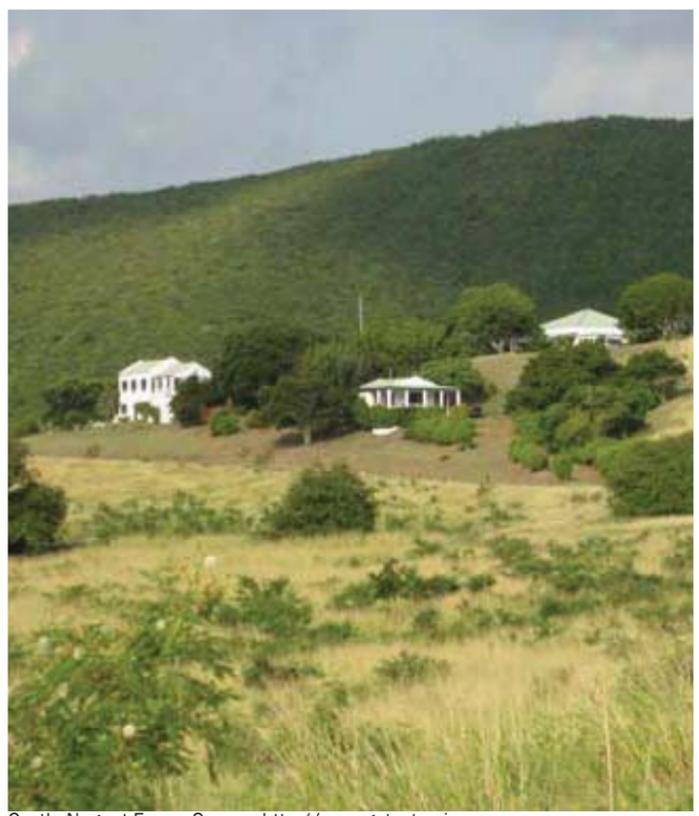


Local Architecture. Source: Photo by Holly Nelson

Not all historical elements have been abandoned to nature on Saint Croix. Pre-Columbian artifacts, tools, ritual objects, and monuments were dug up by archaeologists from various countries and encased in museums all over the world. Larger historic landscapes like the Castle Nugent Plantation will be managed to allow for controlled and predictable growth. Formerly a large plantation, the site is also on its way to becoming part of nature again as evident by the presence of small trees. Currently, the National Park Service plans to designate 11500 acres of the area as a National Historic Site due to its significant role in Saint Croix's agricultural history. Approximately 2900 acres are terrestrial while 8600 acres are submerged. Plans for a recreational component in the form of hiking and biking trails in order to bring people to the park.



Streetscape. Source: Photo by Holly Nelson



Castle Nugent Farm. Source: <http://www.gotostcroix.com>

The major cities on the island, Christiansted and Frederiksted are also places with historic significance. The architecture was built in Renaissance and Baroque styles as interpreted by the European Low Countries. A typical streetscape included attached two story buildings complete with an arcade walkway. For the larger streets, raised planters with palm trees provided an extra source of shade and protection from heavy rains.

There is an abundance of history at every corner, that much consideration and effort is given by the National Park Service and the Government of the Virgin Islands into preserving and managing St. Croix's historical and cultural resources. However, these efforts do not seem to pay off. Tourists, specifically those coming in from cruise lines engaging in heritage tourism on the Caribbean islands amounts to as little as 1 out of 40. While the local youth do participate in some of these heritage tours, their role within the context of St. Croix's entire park system is limited due to the exclusive nature of these parks. Buck Island Reef off the coast of St. Croix serves as a prime example. In addition most of the local youth, surprisingly enough, do not know how to swim. Paradoxically, Buck Island serves as the most popular park in Saint Croix to outsiders and Crucians alike. However its location as a separate island makes it difficult for most locals to access since they do not own boats, and tourist boats are expensive to use.



Buck Island Reef National Park. Source: Photo by Chris Simmons



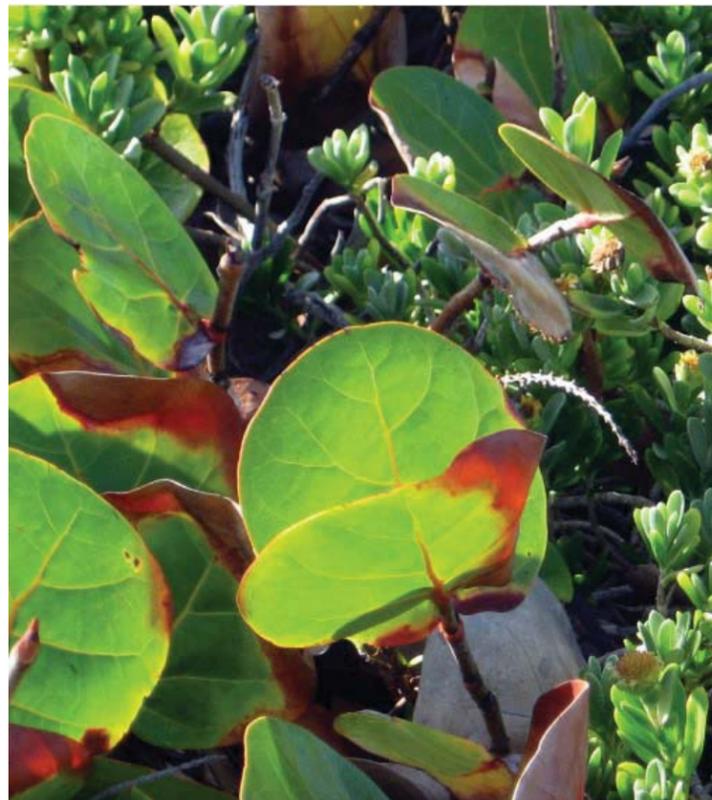
Buck Island Underwater. Source: Photo by Clark Anderson



Kayaking on Salt River. Source: <http://www.stcroixkayak.com>



Boats. Source: Photo by Holly Nelson



Seagrapes. Source: <http://quilterinstcroix.blogspot.com>



Site of the Old Hotel. Source: <http://quilterinstcroix.blogspot.com>



Observations on Architecture. Source: Drawing by Author



Cape of the Arrows. Source: <http://quilterinstcroix.blogspot.com>

Another adverse effect of having an increase in the number of significant cultural landscapes calls to attention the decreasing available land for the locals. In preserving the integrity of these cultural and ecologically sensitive landscapes, certain activities such as building, hunting, or fishing are deemed off limits. Thus, islanders who depend on fishing for income are displaced without any form of compensation. These policies end up further driving a wedge between the locals and their land. The failures of such local economies also demonstrate to local youth that following in these footsteps will not lead to economically viable lifestyle. When asked what they would like to see at Salt River Bay, several Crucian teenagers jokingly suggested putting an IHOP on the site. In overhearing this conversation, I speculated that the youth wanted to be consumers, as being a producer on the island is not viewed as empowering. From the colonial era on the island, the European countries in power, continuously consumed St. Croix's resources, while the slaves were forced to produce crops and goods for them. Frandelle Gerard of CHANT (Crucian Heritage and Nature Tourism), reaffirms this by stating that even today, working in the service industry is not seen as desirable by locals.

Despite the alienation between the people and the land, the presence of Afro-Caribbean tradition is strong. Every Easter, locals drive to Salt River beach for a week long camp. Local cuisine and dance are actually blends of both African and European origin. The opportunity to find identity and reconcile with the past exists because of these traditions. Whether or not the islanders are conscious of it, the blended tradition reveals the accommodating nature of the islanders, and calls to attention the overlapping histories have taken place on the island. Despite slavery being a dark part of St. Croix's past, the traditions that were formulated from those times still live on today. According to Edgar Lake of Saint Croix's Department of Education, this is a sign of triumph against the short sighted colonial visions that the Europeans forced upon the island.



View from Udall Point. Source: Drawing by Author



Maroon Ridge Cliffs. Source: Drawing by Author

“The reflective, reinforcing, and remembrancing roles that historical records play in the construction of community memory support the evidential, authenticating, and factual roles. Vital to all such roles must be ability of the community to access the records to build and defend on that memory.” Jeanette Allis Bastian, *Owning Memory*.

Even after we left Saint Croix, our experiences continued to weigh heavily on my mind. Saint Croix is a unique island with vast ecological and cultural resources, so it was not surprising that all of the experts we encountered had different visions for the direction of Saint Croix and its future growth. With so many strong perspectives, one of the main issues for the design of the Salt River research facilities will focus on balance. In incorporating multiple perspectives in the project, I am hoping that Salt River will be a place that does justice to Saint Croix, both the people and the places.

PROGRAMMATIC BOARDWALKS

HISTORY & ECOLOGY

Salt River Bay is an area filled with biodiversity due to vast number of different marine habitats. Coral Reefs and Mangroves communities are some of the key species that contribute to the sustenance of Salt River's habitats. Currently, these species are both at risk due to runoff and coastal development. The bay also one of the many locations in the Caribbean where Columbus set foot when he thought he had reached India. As the site used to contain fresh water, Arawak and Ta'ino Indian villages were located not too far off the coast. They lived off the land as well as the water. Later, colonists also settled nearby, establishing plantations. As St. Croix switched flags, some of these plantations and settlements were abandoned while some were reused.

Spatially, most of historic points of interest are distributed close to the Salt River Bay coastline. In most of these places, vegetation has started to reclaim the area and as result formed new habitats.

REORGANIZING

The solution is to use a boardwalk to provide access to the historic places, the marine education center, and the Salt River Bay Park visitor center. In addition, the boardwalk will provide a clear connection between these points as to organize the experience. Vegetation will be used to frame views, support the boardwalk and assist in filtering runoff. Depending on proximity to historically significant areas or special ecosystems, the boardwalk will change form in order to reflect it. Some historic places will be redesigned as public spaces but in a way that keeps its integrity.

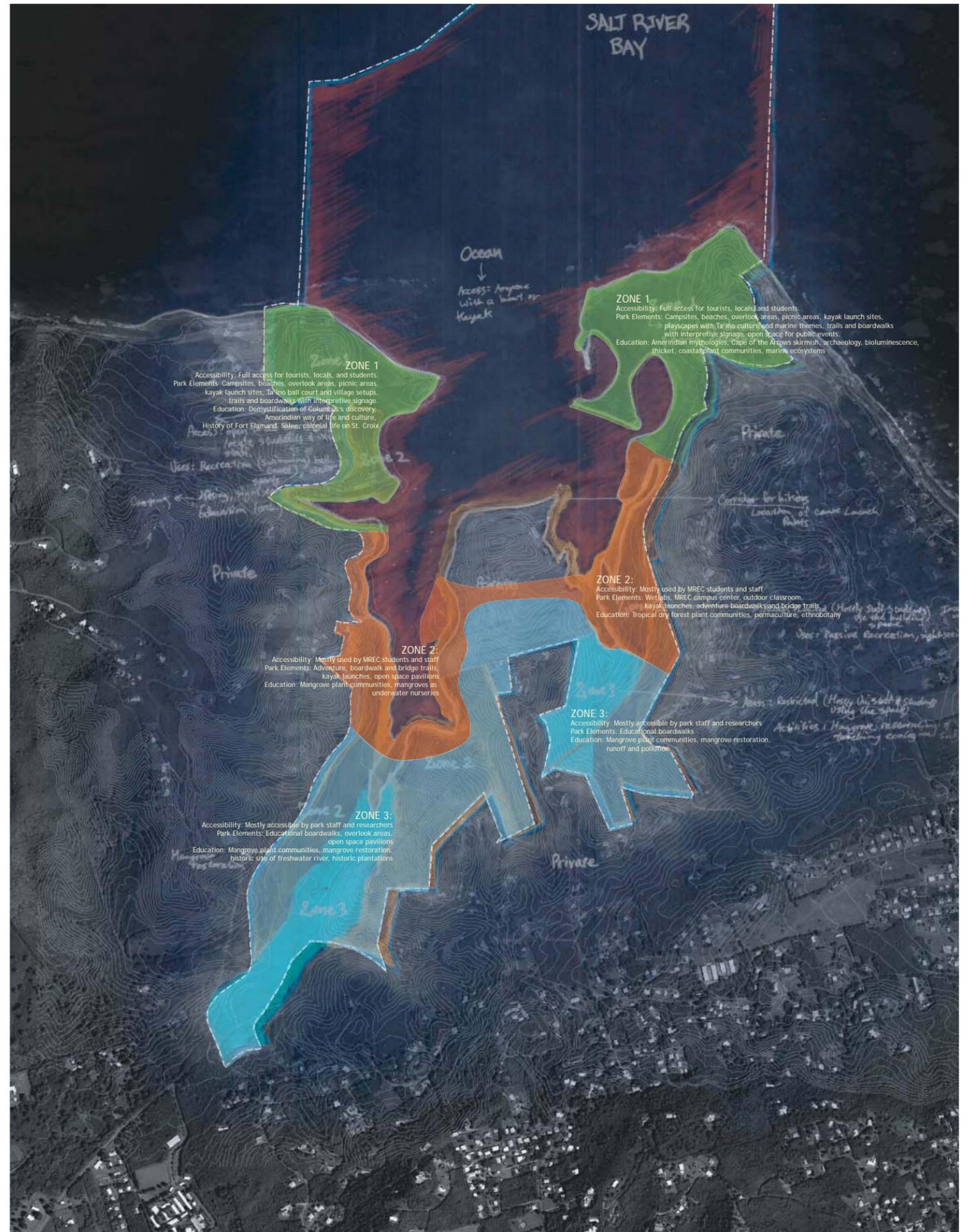
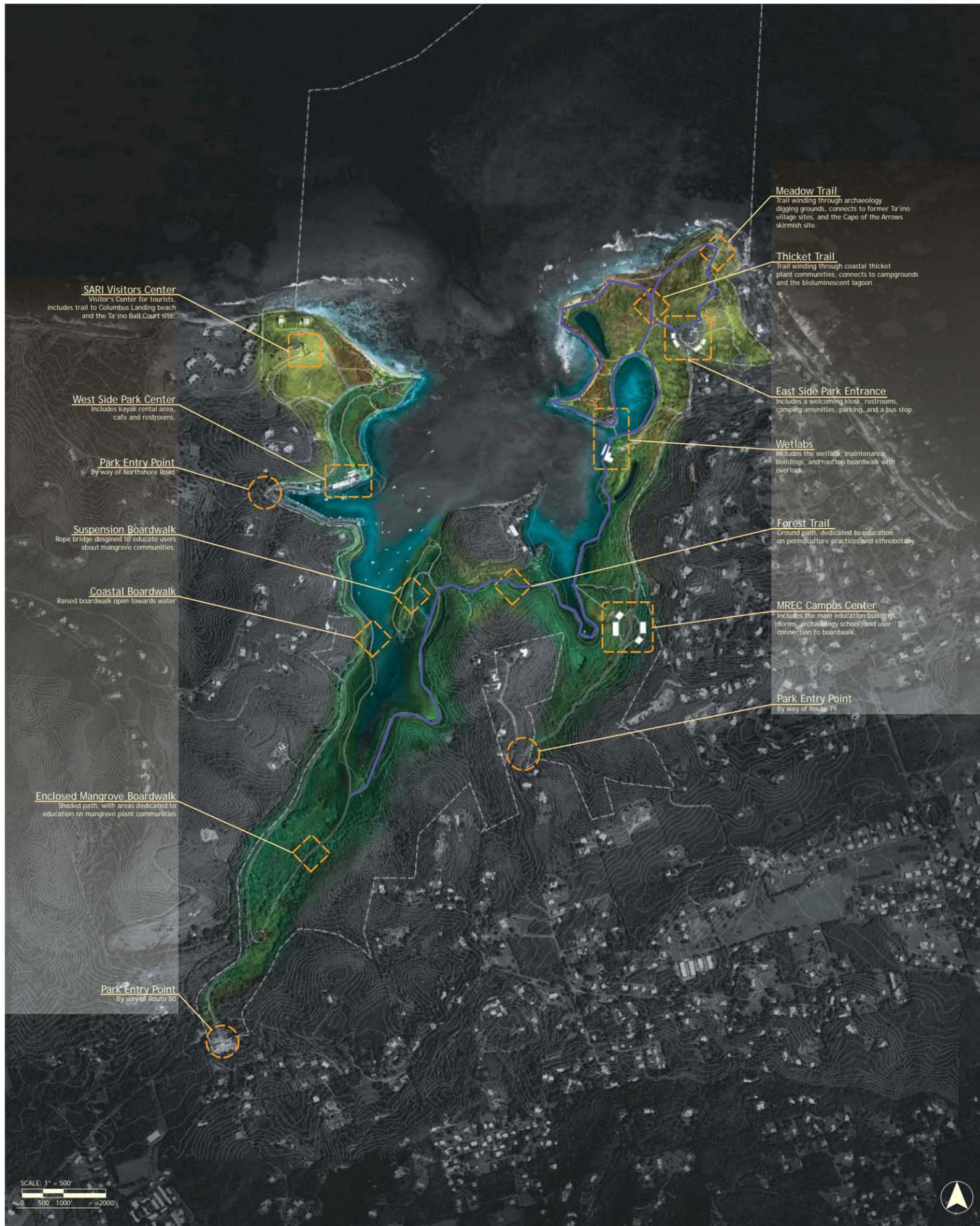
PROCESS

Determining the placement of the trails and boardwalks depended on proximity to historical points of interest, ecological points of interest, and main access roads. Proximity away from private lands adjacent and within the park was also taken into consideration. The main spine of the boardwalk was then derived after overlaying with topography to find the lowest slopes. This process was also repeated to create secondary paths.

PROGRAMMATIC ZONES:

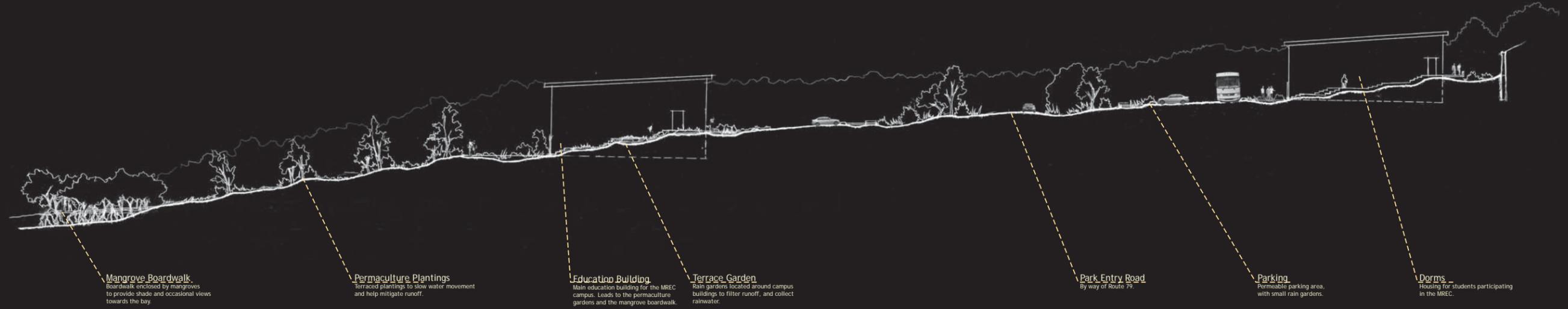
Although the boardwalk is intended to bridge both sides of the park, a planning strategy is still needed in order to protect the park's cultural and ecological resources. A high priority of this objective is to mitigate environmental impact, so that the bay's coral reefs can remain unharmed. However, at the same time, closing significant regions of the park may negatively impact the outreach component of the park.

Using ecologically sensitive areas and historical landmarks as a base, a series of programmatic zones were derived. Zones that are fully accessible to the public tend to contain places with a higher cultural and historic value while zones that allowed limited access had the highest ecological value.





SECTION A: MREC CAMPUS



Mangrove Boardwalk
Boardwalk enclosed by mangroves to provide shade and occasional views towards the bay.

Permaculture Plantings
Terraced plantings to slow water movement and help mitigate runoff.

Education Building
Main education building for the MREC campus. Leads to the permaculture gardens and the mangrove boardwalk.

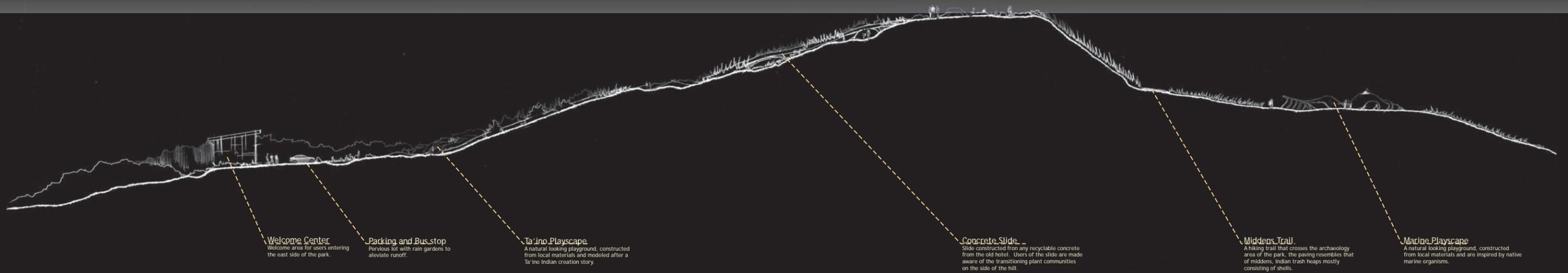
Terrace Garden
Rain gardens located around campus buildings to filter runoff, and collect rainwater.

Park Entry Road
By way of Route 79.

Parking
Permeable parking area, with small rain gardens.

Dorms
Housing for students participating in the MREC.

SECTION B: EAST SIDE OF SALT RIVER BAY PARK



Welcome Center
Welcome area for users entering the east side of the park.

Parking and Bus stop
Paved lot with rain gardens to alleviate runoff.

Ta'ino Playscape
A natural looking playground, constructed from local materials and modeled after a Ta'ino Indian creation story.

Concrete Slide
Slide constructed from any recyclable concrete from the old hotel. Users of the slide are made aware of the transitioning plant communities on the side of the hill.

Middens Trail
A hiking trail that crosses the archaeology area of the park, the paving resembles that of middens, Indian trash heaps mostly consisting of shells.

Marine Playscape
A natural looking playground, constructed from local materials and are inspired by native marine organisms.

SCALE: 1" = 12.5'
0 12.5' 25' 50'