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HIPPODROME COMMUNITY PARK

*Reintroducing the Hippodrome & Horsh Beirut as one integrated
green open space in the city.*

YASMINA MAAMARI

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INTRODUCTION



//Existing Problems

In Beirut, as an overpopulated city of an increasing 1,250,000 inhabitants. A city of extreme urban settlement of around 0,8 m² of green space per capita.

One of the rare green patches are composed of the Horsh Al- Sanawbar, Hippodrome & Residence Des Pins.

The Hippodrome, officially called "Hippodrome Du Parc De Beirut" is located in front of the Horsh and adjacent to Badaro district. It has an area of approximately 200,000 m², which once measured at an astonishing 4848484 m²

The green patch also known as the Green Line is a place free of religion, where it once separated Christians & Muslim neighborhoods during the Lebanese Civil War. Today, it is considered as a potential meeting point for the Lebanese people.

The Hippodrome was heavily used by people all over Lebanon before the Israeli invasion in 1982. It then became inaccessible to the public.

In 1990, it was partially rebuilt and it stands

as it does today. Architects and engineers proposed plans to renovate it but the Municipality Of Beirut was not able to fund the projects.

The Stone Pine trees in the center of the hippodrome have remained there since the Ottoman Occupation.

SPARCA, Society Of Protection And Improvement Of Arabian Horses, is now in charge of keeping the hippodrome functional.

Is one of the only places in the Middle East where it is legal to gamble. Before the civil war, gamblers used to circulate half a million dollars. Today, post-war, not more than 150,000 Dollars are brought in.

The citizens of Beirut currently know the Hippodrome, Horsh Beirut, & Residence Des Pins as three different and distinct spaces.



//Design and Research Questions

The hippodrome is currently not open to the public on a daily basis. Every Sunday, Horse races take place around noon time. Occasionally, some events take place such as The Garden Show or Vintage Bazar.

After my site visit on a Sunday, I came to notice that the majority of people who attended to race were older men.

Back in the day, the hippodrome was known for family outings and not just a casino.

So what is stopping this area from becoming the rich place it once was?

As we have mentioned before, the hippodrome was never renovated due to lack of funds. Gambling was and still is a big part of why a big crowd is attracted to visit the site. Moreover, gambling is still considered a taboo in Lebanon.

Less men attend the race due to the introduction of gambling online, so nowadays, you do not have to attend the race in order

to win money. In conclusion, there is lack of funding for renovation and less excitement as not a lot of people go anymore. Also, we can note that the entrance is sort of hidden so it is not inviting for the public. There is a visual barrier between the hippodrome and the outside world.



The site will be studied from a larger scale to a more zoomed in view. The hippodrome and Horsh Beirut were considered areas of the Green Line also known as "Khat El Tames".

Omar Beyhum is the highway that separates both lands, leading to Tayyouneh Roudabout.

It is located truly in the heart of Beirut. Unfortunately, it is surrounded by a highly urbanized context.

Our city does not have any big open spaces and especially green ones.

All highways that are at the perimeter of The Hippodrome and Horsh Beirut lead to these spaces. It is an easily accessible site.

The national museum is on the edge of the hippodrome, three schools and a military hospital as well. Making this isolated park a potential new hub for the city of Beirut and more.

notes/sources:

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METHODOLOGY

The first time I visited the hippodrome was rather an interesting tour.
It was on a sunday, when the horses raced.
It was packed with hundreds of men yelling and hoping the horse they gamble on would win.
The moment one enters the hippodrome, it is like another world.

I went on site and took many pictures of the important elements.
I spoke to a few people to be able to understand more about why this is a hidden gem in the heart of Beirut.
Only the track is used for racing but the whole hippodrome is totally abandoned and mostly used as a free play by horses.

I also attend a wine market to have a different perspective of the hippodrome. This time it was inside the ring of tracks and between the beautiful pine trees.

Talking to many people around the area., I soon realized it was a place simply for gambling and many considered it a lot piece of land.

Moreover, I visited Horsh Beirut for further investigation. I quickly noticed that Horsh Beirut, although was beautiful, lacked diversity in spaces and programming.

Information was difficult to find for hippodrome especially and the only way I could have done that was through surveys with people who know the site very well, such as horse owners and trainers.

My first step was to look at the hippodrome and horsh beirut in a city scale. The bigger picture.
Then, I can slowly zoom in on the differently elements present on each site.
By doing the SWOT Analysis, the pros and cons are much easier to understand and study.
Finally with the site inventory and site analysis done, we can move on to the concept design.

A SUNDAY SPENT AT THE HIPPODROME



REVIEW

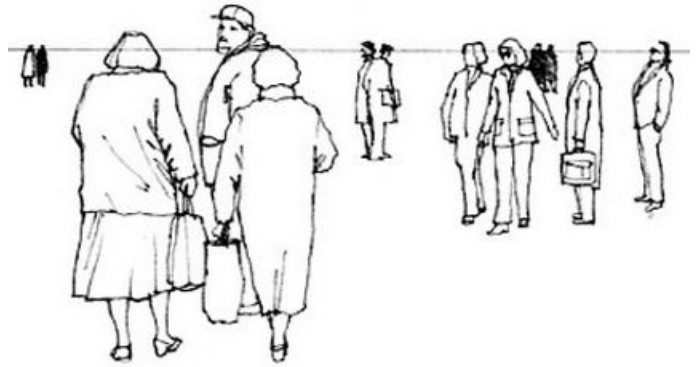
//Literature

-//SCALE

Re- Placing Process

By Anita Berrizbeitia | Large Parks 2007
[The strategies explored Unbound landscape and the body] (From Pages 196-197)

"The introduction of new spaces, experiences & aesthetic qualities scale different kinds of recreational & social activities all contribute to the recognition that within one place that are many scales that simultanestly collide."



-//PARK ACCESSIBILT Y

Review by Charles Weldheim

By Rod Barnett | The Landscape Urbanism Reader 6
[Having spent some decades the spaces between infrastructures and along the fringes of the metropolitan field.]
(From Pages 119-121)

"In an urban realm in which process is king, form is seen, not as a more or less permanent organising element, providing predictable and efficient channels of communication and exchange."

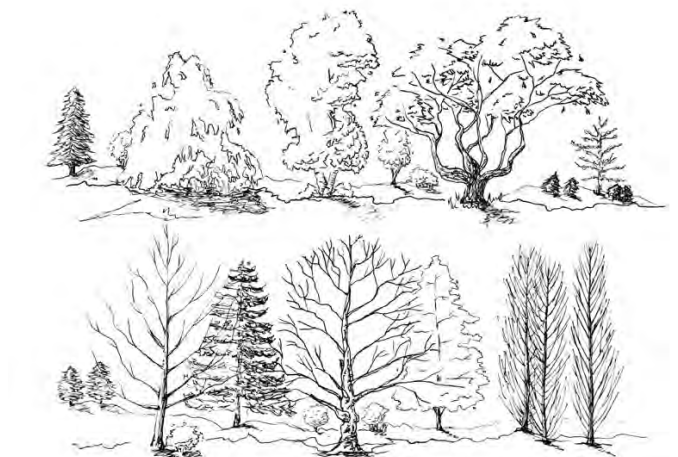


// URBAN ECOLOGY

Landscape structure indices for assessing urban ecological networks

By Edward Cook | School of Planning and Landscape Architecture, Arizona State University 205
(From Pages 270-274)

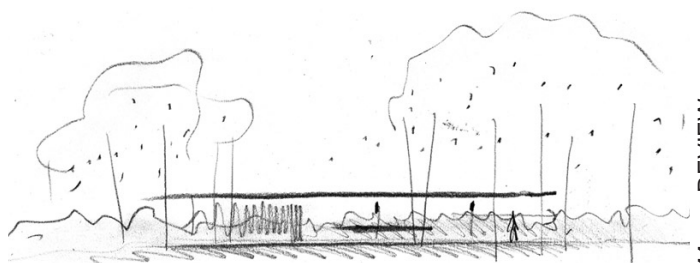
"Network structure analysis considers the overall effect of the interrelationship of patches and corridors within the context of the urban matrix."

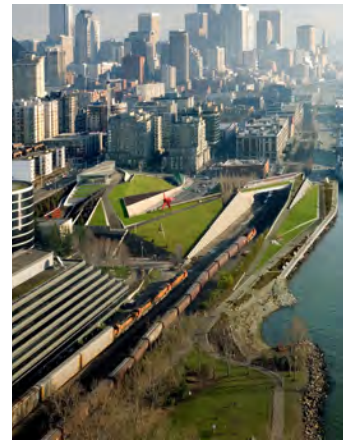


//ISOLATION OF A SPACE

Possibility & Diversity in Urban Life

By Karen A. Frank & Quentin Steven | Loose space 1973





//Case Studies

CENTRAL PARK

Central Park is located in Manhattan, New York. Created by Frederick Law Olmsted & Calvert Vaux, this urban park is truly in the heart of the city.

The planning of the park began as a space to get away from the noise of the city and traffic. There were a few cemeteries there, and overtime expanded to a regional scale park.

It is a geometric park, shaped like a rectangle. Although it seems that it is very isolated from the city it is actually very much inclusive.

Central Park has many entrances and roads that lead to different paths and exits. Many streets overlap and sometimes are crossed over by bridges.

Different spaces and programs are found along this urban park as it creates a diversity in the area.

It provides a green space for the citizens of New York, who are constantly moving in a highly urbanized city.

SEATTLE ART MUSEUM-OLYMPIC SCULPTURE PARK

This unique land is built in Seattle, USA. It is the winning design of Weiss Manfredi.

Envisioned as a new model for an urban sculpture park, the project is located on an industrial site at the water's edge. The design creates a continuous constructed landscape for art, forms an uninterrupted Z-shaped «green» platform, and descends around 15 feet from the city to the water, capitalizing on views of the skyline and Elliot Bay and rising over the existing infrastructure to reconnect the urban core to the revitalized waterfront.

An exhibition pavilion provides space for art, performances and educational programming. From this pavilion, the pedestrian route descends to the water, linking three new archetypal landscapes of the northwest: a dense temperate evergreen forest, a deciduous forest and a shoreline garden.



THE BIG U

The rebuilt of the city is by Bjarke Ingels.

The low-lying topography of Lower Manhattan from West 57th St down to The Battery, and up to East 42nd St is home to approximately 220,000 residents and is the core of a \$500 billion business sector that influences the world's economy. Hurricane Sandy devastated not only the Financial District, but 95,000 low-income, elderly, and disabled city residents. Infrastructure within the 10-mile perimeter was damaged or destroyed, transportation and communication were cut off, and thousands sat without power or running water.

BIG's proposal, The BIG U, is rooted in the firm's signature concepts of social infrastructure and hedonistic sustainability. It envisions a 10-mile protective system that encircles Manhattan, protecting the city from floods and storm water while simultaneously providing public realms specific to the needs of the city's diverse communities.

PRESEDIO PARKLAND

Located In San Francisco, James Corner creates Followed an international design competition in 2014, Field Operations was selected to develop a 13-acre "tunnel top" parkland bridging the Presidio with Crissy Field, the Marsh and the larger bay.

The proposed "Presidio Point" would maximize the panoramic and connective assets of the surroundings, choreographing the best vantage points with dramatic new pathways, overlooks, lawns, gardens and social spaces.

Presidio Point would be San Francisco's new destination and shared living room; a place to meet and learn, to experience, to enjoy and to forge new forms of community and events.

"This is an extremely significant opportunity for the people of San Francisco to create a dramatic new legacy for future generations – a place where the Presidio meets the Bay,

CONTEXT

//Site Selection & Background

The site of intervention is the lower part of the hippodrome, the Omar Beyhum Highway & Horsh Beirut. The reason behind this choice was the intent of designing not just a park, but a unique community park.

The reason I chose this site is because of the lack of parks we have in Beirut. And surprisingly not many people are aware that there is a functioning hippodrome.

First of all, we will start by looking at the different factors of the surrounding areas, site analysis then SWOT Analysis and finally the design strategy as a conclusion to all the findings.

The hippodrome and Horsh Beirut are both patches that are not frequently used (Once or twice a week) nor are they open to the public (except for special events).

The aim of this project would be to bring back these two green places as one unique space for the city and the residents of Beirut.



1696



The Pine Woods measured a total of 1,250,000 m². Also known as Horsh Al Sanawbar



1912



First pathway is carved inside the Pine Forest, later to be prolonged into different routes.



1916



Alfred Sursock builds a casino named after the Ottoman Walll Of Beirut. This expropriation in 1921 by the French Mandate to become Residence Des Pins.



*Based on At The Edge Of The City & Other Historical Maps

1921



The horse racecourse is near the French High Commissioner's Residence. International Horse racing takes place regularly.



1936



Introduction of Streets that isolate the Residence Des Pins and the Hippodrome from the Pine Forest. Marty Cemetery / Other



1950's- Today



Lebanese State planning introduces new roads that isolate the woods within a triangle. In 1960 it is officially declared a park.





//Site Inventory

My site is surrounded by three main highways and a great number of smaller streets. What is interesting is that all roads are connected and that they are not drawn in a perfectly symmetrical matter.

The buildings surrounding Hippodrome and Horsh Beirut are mostly residential. Moreover we find different landuses such as governmental related uses, restaurants, shops and commercial areas.

Most importantly, there is an abundance of schools and universities. At the edge of the hippodrome there are three schools and a military hospital.

This would provides a direct connection with the hippodrome later on.

It is important to bring people together when designing a park, however there are three distinct communities around the site : Sunnies, Shiites & Maronites. The Hippodrome and Horsh Beirut are a part of the Green Line, which are basically religious free.

So how do we bring different communities and cultures together?



Residential	Bakeries
Gas Station	Bank
Schools/	Governmental
Restaurants	Touristic
Hospital	Commercial

This is the only potential park in Beirut. It is a place of escape and peace that our city doesn't provide for us. Also unfortunately we live in a very polluted area and with the highly forested area it creates a cleaner and fresher environment for the users.

The hippodrome's main user is the horses. There are around 380 horses living in the stables there. They use all of the site but at different times of the week.

Even though Horsh Beirut and the Hippodrome used to be one patch, they have very different landscape characters. Each composed of different plants, minimal topography and scale.

Hippodrome has a red/orange soil that is unique and covers almost half of the area with.



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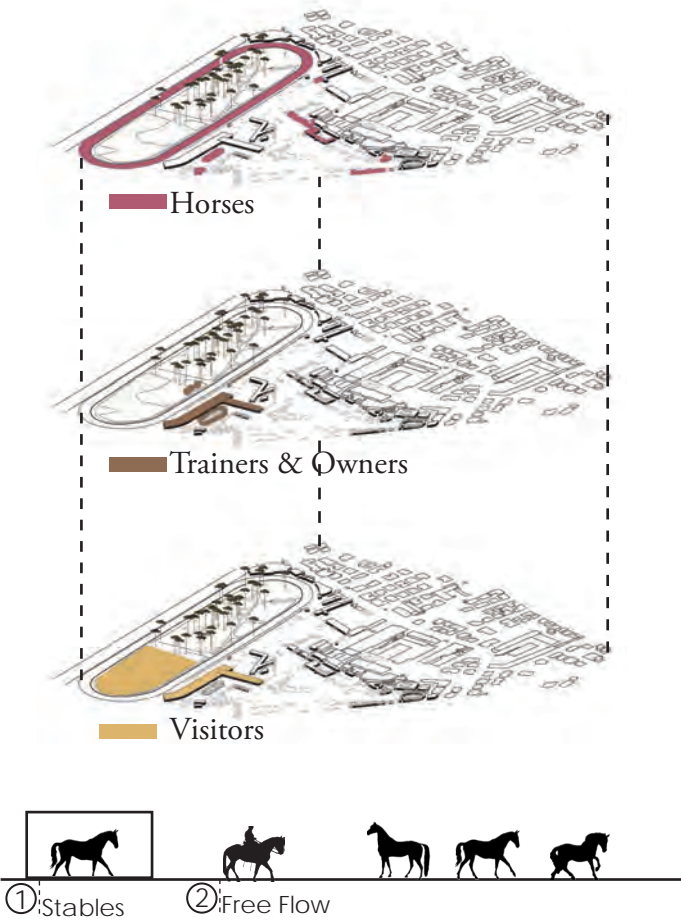
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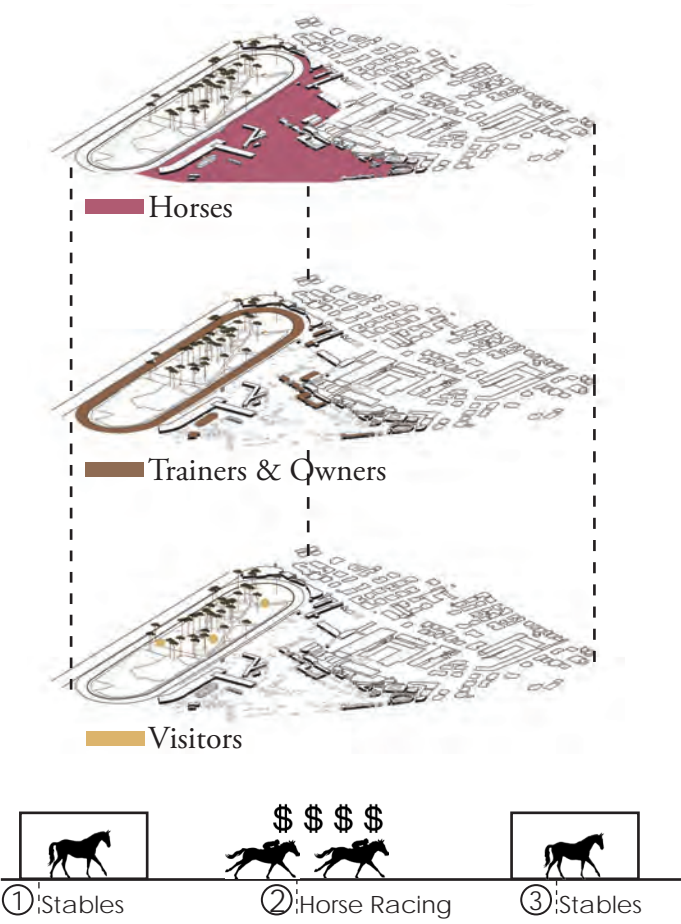


HIHIHIHIHIHI

WEEKENDS



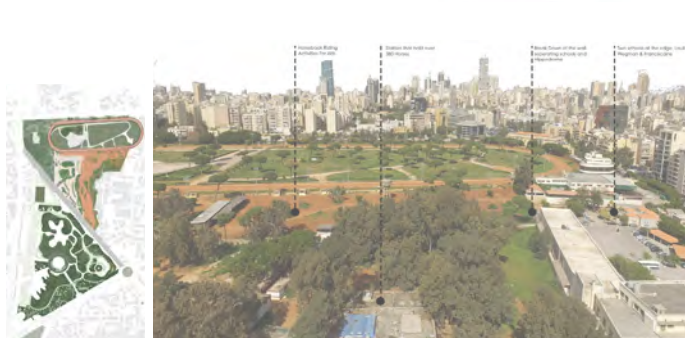
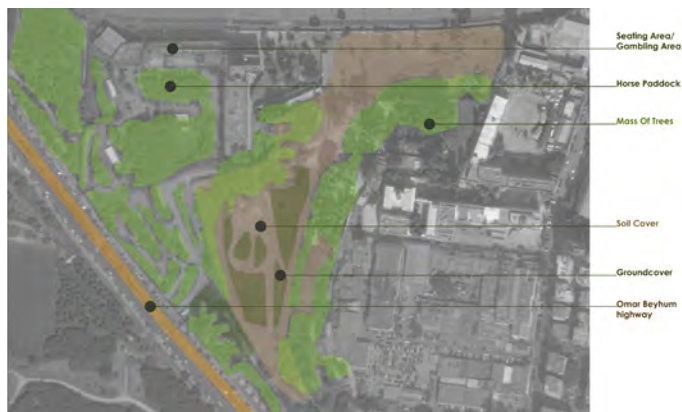
WEEKDAYS



THREATS

LAYERS

SURFACES OF THE HIPPODROME



PROPOSAL



//Project Statement

The aim of this project is to reintroduce the Horsh Beirut and Hippodrome as one green open space in the city. That being said, the goal is to have a community park.

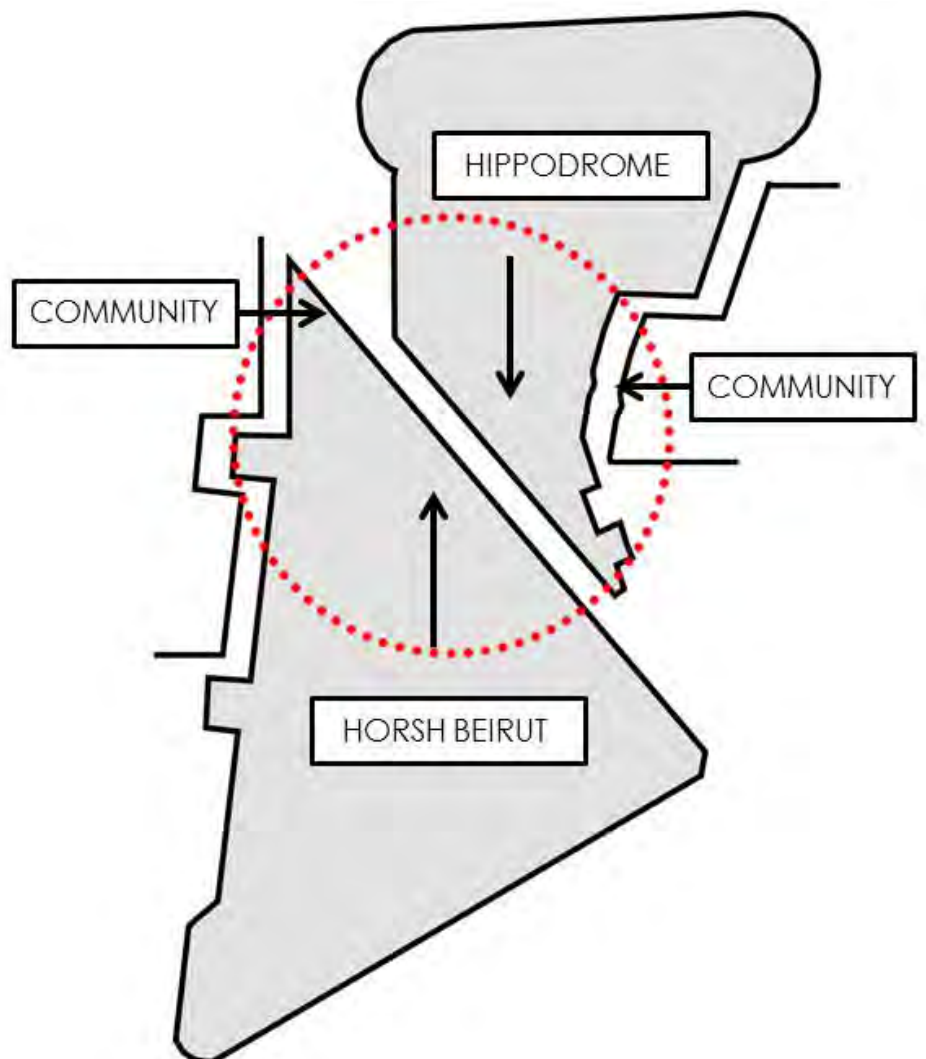
I am using the three schools as a tool to bring kids in this urban park.

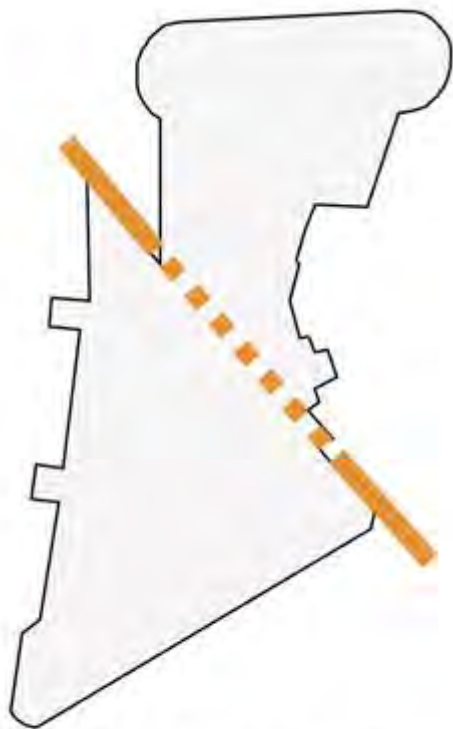
By opening up the park and bringing down the walls, it becomes accessible to the public not only physically but visually.

Different activities will be taking place as well as a organized divisions of spaces.

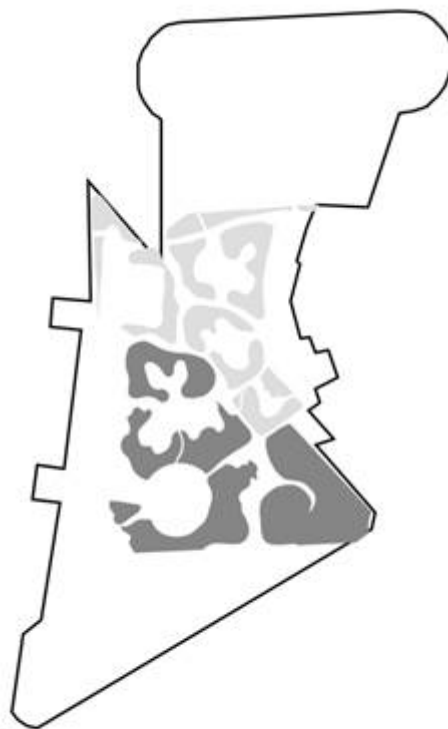
The introduction of sports like Horse back riding is unique to Beirut and just the thought of the horses crossing to Horsh Beirut is a beautiful scene to look at.

This project is about creating a new green hub in the city and helping the community experience a new journey.



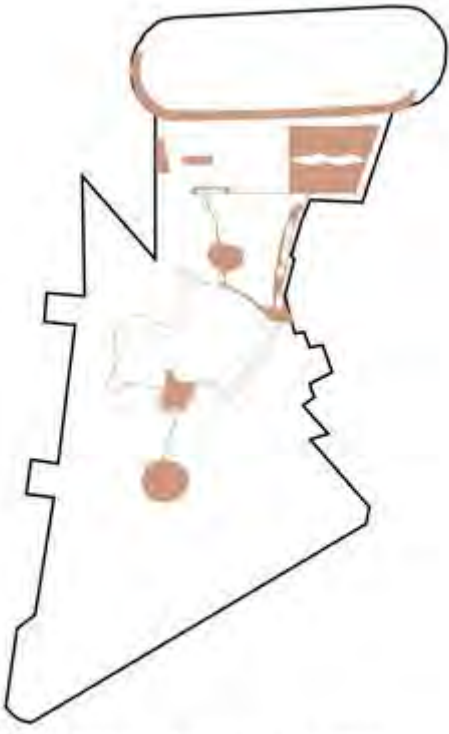


① Roofing The Highway

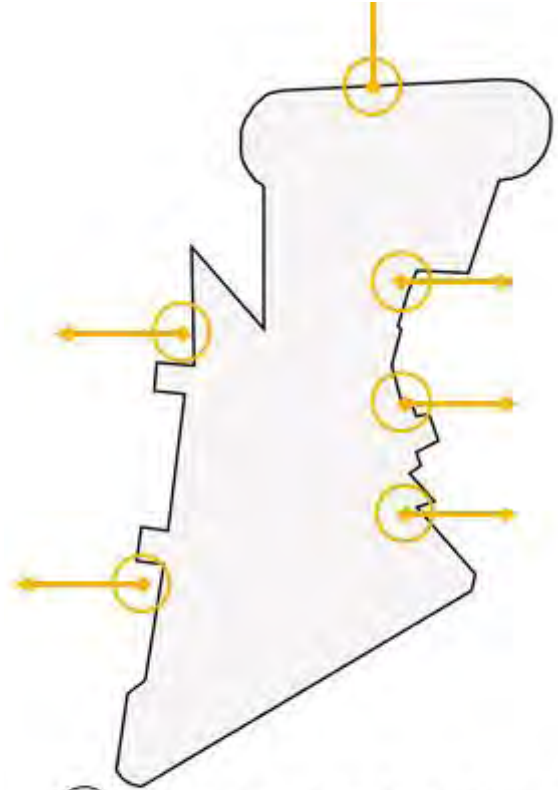


② Extending the Forest





③ Interaction of Horses Through The Park



④ Stitching the Park to the City





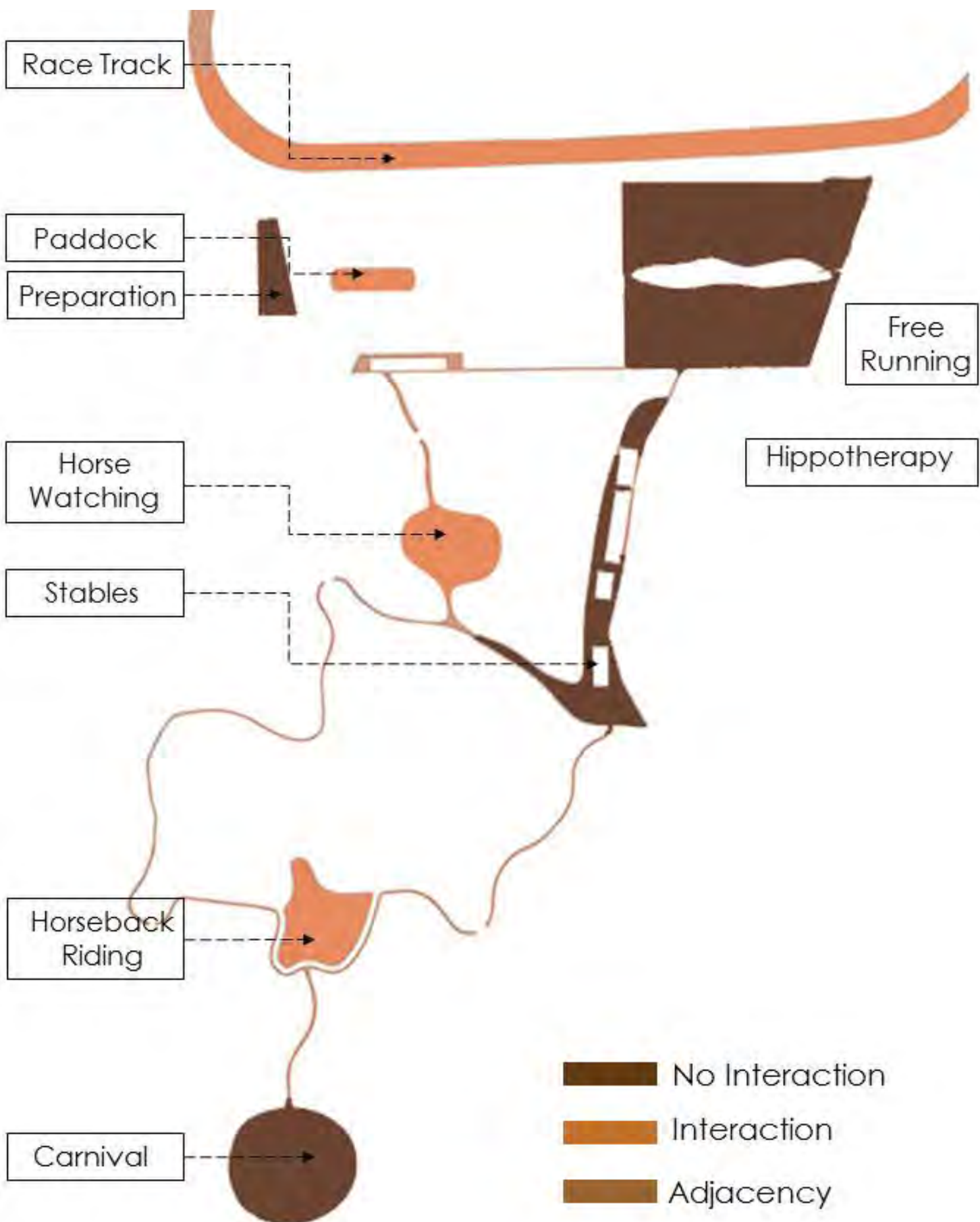


Summer



Winter







What to grow?



Tomatoes
Solanum lycopersicum



Sweet Peppers
Capsicum annum Group



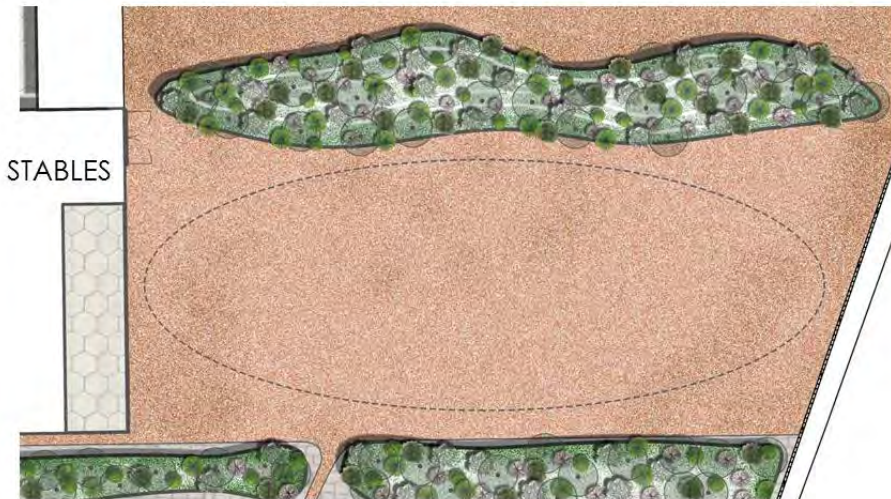
Zucchini
Curcubita pepo var. *cylindrica*



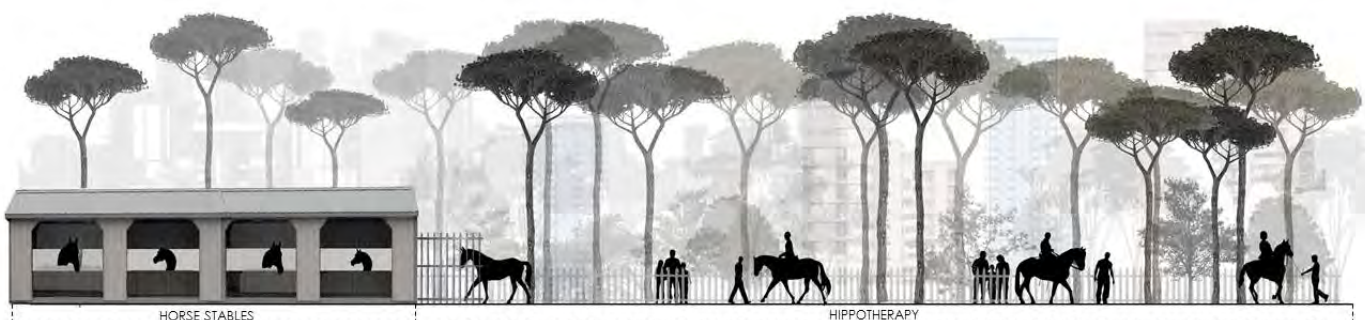
Cucumber
Cucumis sativus

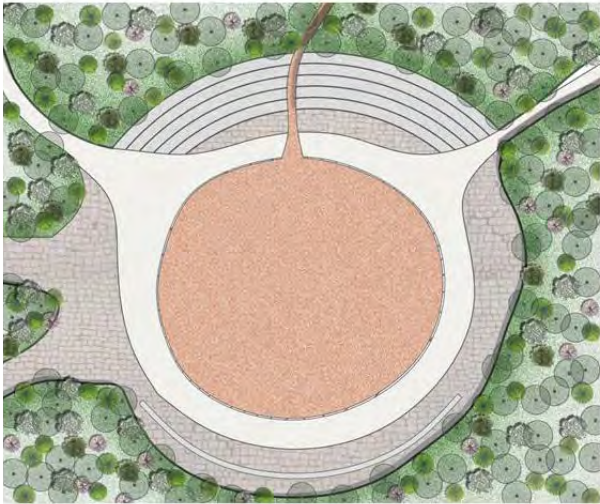
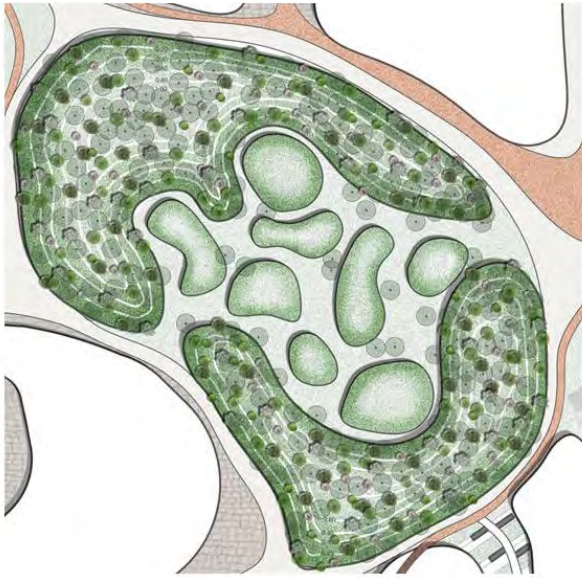


Watermelon
Citrullus lanatus



Cerebral Palsy
Spinal Cord Problems
Body Coordination Problems
ADHD
Depression







ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

After an intense year, it is with great pleasure that I end my project on May 10th 2017. It has been a period of intense learning for me, not only in the academic arena, but also on a personal level.

I would like to reflect on the people who have supported and helped me so much throughout this period.

I would first like to thank my advisor Sandra Frem for her constant help and support. She always steered me in the right direction.

I would also like to thank Nayla Al Akl and Beata Dreksler for always keeping a positive energy in our classroom.

Finally, I must express my very profound gratitude to my parents and to my friends (Nour Hajjar, Mazen Dimashkieh and Tala Aridi) for providing me with unfailing support and continuous encouragement throughout my years of study and through the process of researching and working on this project.

This accomplishment would not have been possible without them.

Thank you.