Cover Design: Charlotte Greenberg

Contents

Letter From the Editors

Dear Reader,

Welcome to this year's Georgia Landscape Magazine!

This issue highlights an eclectic collection of selected articles pertaining to landscape architecture as a profession, as well as related subjects and interests.

Inside, you'll find features ranging from exploring beneficial insects and Australian ecolodges, to the influence and significance of commercial landscapes.

We're so proud of the amazing team behind this magazine, and so thankful for all their hard work in the midst of a busy year. We'd also like to thank our cover artist Charlotte Greenberg for her wonderful work, as well as our faculty sponsor Prof. James Schulte for his support in the making of this year's issue.

Thank you for giving our student-run publication a read; we hope you love it as much as we do!

All the best,

Andrea & Paige

Andrea & Paige

Letter From the Dean

To the Friends, Alumni, and Students of CED,

As the 2025–2026 academic year comes to a close, I am thrilled to report remarkable growth and innovation at the CED. This year, our landscape architecture programs remained among the largest and most prestigious nationwide at both the graduate and undergraduate levels. We had yet another 10% enrollment increase in our Bachelor of Landscape Architecture program, bringing energy and fresh perspectives to our studios. This year, we were excited to expand our offerings to students in new, engaging ways.

In the fall, we launched a standout new certificate program, the Undergraduate Certificate in Construction Management. Thirty-eight students enrolled in the first semester offered, and fifty students enrolled in the introductory course. Following on the heels of this success, our Spring 2026 Firm of the Day program brought employers directly to the Jackson Street Building, giving our students unparalleled access to industry opportunities. Our fall and spring Critique Weeks– the CED's signature exhibits and critiques of student work by faculty and accomplished regional professionals– showcased excellent products across a range of urban, community, campus, state and international design levels, strengthening professional readiness and engagement.

As we look toward meaningful change and growth in the coming academic year, I am excited to announce the launch of two new certificate programs: the Undergraduate Certificate in Land Design and Development and the Undergraduate Certificate in Cultural Landscape Conservation. We also look forward to welcoming several new faculty members to support enrollment growth, curricular innovation and student mentoring.

Reflecting on this year, I am encouraged by the progress made and community strengthened at the College of Environment and Design. Together, we are building a brighter future for the world we help shape.

Sonia Hirt

Sonia Hirt

Rolling to a Stop?

UGA's Electric Scooter Ban and the Future of Micromobility on Campus

In Fall 2025, the University of Georgia implemented a new policy restricting electric scooters – not by banning them from campus entirely, but by prohibiting them inside all UGA buildings, including academic buildings, residence halls, and university-operated facilities. While framed as a safety and fire-prevention measure, the policy has had broader ripple effects on how students navigate campus. What does it mean for mobility, accessibility, and sustainability when a policy limits where scooters can be stored, charged, or secured?

A Campus That Was Already Rolling

Before the restriction, electric scooters had become a hallmark of the student commute.

With UGA's hilly terrain and sprawling distances, scooters offered students an affordable, quick, zero-emission transit option that filled gaps between bus routes and walkable areas across campus. For many students without cars – or those trying to avoid the cost and stress of parking – scooters provided a reliable, flexible alternative.

Other students echoed similar concerns, even those who do not regularly ride scooters themselves. Rishi, a third-year student living in campus housing, said he has experienced several near-collisions with scooters on campus – encounters that initially made him wary of micro-mobility rather than opposed to it outright. He emphasized that these conflicts stem from infrastructure gaps, not the devices themselves. "Scooters feel unsafe here because there's nowhere for them to go," he said, noting that riders are often forced to share crowded sidewalks with pedestrians. Through a close friend studying landscape architecture, Rishi said he has become more aware of how design choices shape behavior. He pointed to visits to Georgia Tech's campus, where dedicated bike and scooter lanes clearly separate modes of travel, as an example of how thoughtful infrastructure can reduce conflict and improve safety for everyone.

In the absence of designated outdoor infrastructure, many students turned to bringing scooters indoors for safety, convenience, and protection from theft or rain. The new prohibition removes that option without introducing alternative facilities, leaving riders with few practical choices.

Inside the Ban: The Case for Safety

The Office of Public Safety cites fire hazard concerns related to lithium-ion batteries, along with issues of clutter, accessibility, and emergency egress associated with storing scooters inside campus buildings.

The argument is straightforward: docking scooters indoors creates risks the university is not currently equipped to mitigate. Yet, critics note that the restriction highlights a deeper challenge – UGA lacks robust micromobility infrastructure. Instead of investing in secure, weatherproof, and well-designed scooter accommodations, the current approach places the burden on riders to adapt.

> *"Unfortunately, there have been fires linked to electric micromobility devices in buildings across the country..."*
>
> *-UGA TPS*

The Enforcement Problem: A Campus Game of Whack-a-Mole

Perhaps the most overlooked consequence of the ban is the significant increase in enforcement responsibility placed on University Housing staff, particularly Resident Assistants and Desk Assistants.

With scooters no longer permitted indoors, staff must now issue conduct referrals or fines whenever scooters are spotted in hallways, lobbies, stairwells, or dorm rooms.

Because the campus still lacks micromobility storage, many residents feel they have no realistic alternative. This "whack-a-mole" dynamic, as some staff describe it, creates tension between University Housing personnel and residents, often placing student staff in uncomfortable disciplinary roles.

At its core, the issue is rooted in infrastructure rather than behavior: designers create spaces to support intended behaviors, anticipating

how people will move, park, or interact within them.

When infrastructure fails to provide safe, convenient, and secure options, such as dedicated scooter storage, students adapt in ways that seem "rule-breaking," not because they are careless, but because the built environment does not accommodate their needs.

In other words, behavior is often a reflection of design: people will follow the logic of the spaces they occupy, and when those spaces lack thoughtful provisions, even well-meaning policies can unintentionally punish normal, practical choices.

Ramifications: When Storage Is Banned but Infrastructure Doesn't Exist

The decision to prohibit scooters inside buildings has had wide-reaching impacts, revealing how dependent students were on indoor access and how underdeveloped the outdoor mobility network remains.

Increased Risk of Theft and Damage

Without indoor storage or designated secure parking areas, students must leave scooters exposed to the elements or at risk of theft. Those living in residence halls with limited private storage experience this challenge most. One student, Gabe, expressed deep frustration over the issue, saying, "UGA's scooter ban benefits nobody. Those who have lived with scooters in previous years now can't due to hypothetical scenarios that have never happened. They have nowhere to charge them, and, when asked about how to circumvent this issue, UGA simply shrugs its shoulders. To make matters worse, the enforcers do not know how to enforce this ban. It feels like UGA and its students are at an utterly pointless stalemate." This quote underscores not only practical concerns about theft and damage but also the strong emotional impact of feeling unsupported and ignored by university policies.

"UGA Transportation and Parking Services is 'committed to finding and implementing innovative solutions for sustainable transportation.'"

Reduced Adoption of Sustainable Transportation

Some students are now choosing to leave their scooters at home – or stop using them altogether – because they can't store or charge them safely. Research consistently shows that increased use of bikes and scooters reduces vehicle emissions and improves local air quality by replacing short car trips. When barriers are introduced to micromobility, students may turn instead to cars, rideshares, or gas-powered alternatives, increasing congestion and emissions on and around campus. Some students argue that the policy undermines UGA's stated commitments to sustainability while shifting new financial burdens onto individuals. "UGA emphasizes campus safety and green energy, yet scooters have become one of the most effective low-carbon transportation options for students," said Pirnam, a UGA student living on-campus. "Most electric scooters recharge at around 36 to 80 volts – often less than common household electronics. Since the ban, it has cost students like me more to invest in weather protection and replacement batteries. Without accommodations to match the new restrictions, it feels as if the university is contradicting its own values." The comment reflects a broader concern that, rather than discouraging unsafe behavior, the policy may be quietly disincentivizing sustainable transportation by making it more expensive and less practical to maintain.

Equity Concerns Grow

Scooters served as a mobility equalizer for students without cars or those living in off-campus areas underserved by bus routes. The policy disproportionately impacts these students, who now face longer travel times, higher transportation costs, and fewer reliable options for navigating campus efficiently.

A Missed Chance for Design Innovation

A complete indoor prohibition, without offering functional alternatives, signals a reactive rather than proactive approach. Other universities are charting a path that pairs safety with accessibility. At nearby Georgia Tech, a newly completed cycle track creates a dedicated, protected route for bicycles and electric scooters across campus, backed by secure parking, educational programs, and strong planning partnerships. What began as a student-led study evolved into campuswide infrastructure that improves safety and connectivity while encouraging sustainable transportation – a contrast to UGA's current indoor restriction without alternate facilities.

What Supporting Infrastructure Could Look Like

If UGA hopes to maintain a future-forward mobility ecosystem, next steps might include:

**** Weatherproof scooter lockers or storage racks near major academic buildings***

**** Secure outdoor charging stations with battery-safety monitoring***

**** Covered parking areas outside residence halls***

**** Designated micromobility lanes to reduce pedestrian–scooter conflicts***

**** Partnerships with scooter manufacturers or sustainability grants to fund pilot programs***

Funding for these improvements could come from a combination of student sustainability fees, transportation or parking revenues, external sustainability grants, or partnerships with micromobility companies, many of which already collaborate with universities nationwide.

Together, these steps reduce risks, from fire to theft, while supporting safe, sustainable micromobility on campus.

What Comes Next?

The building-access ban underscores a crossroads for campus transportation.

Students, faculty, and sustainability advocates are increasingly asking whether restrictions alone can solve safety concerns – or whether UGA should invest in design solutions that support a modern, multimodal campus.

Student advocacy groups and individuals have raised concerns through housing feedback channels, sustainability committees, and informal outreach to administrators.

Yet progress remains slow, even as scooter use has grown steadily over the past several years. Without clear data collection on micromobility usage, such as estimates of how many students rely on scooters, policy decisions risk overlooking how embedded these devices have become in daily campus life.

For now, scooters remain outdoors, but the debate about their place in UGA's transportation landscape is far from settled. The hope among many is that this restriction sparks conversation, and that the future includes infrastructure built to meet the evolving mobility needs of a changing student body.

"E-bikes, e-scooters, and shared micromobility are rapidly reshaping how people move across campuses."

Author: Aaron So
Layout Design: Annie Barker
Photography: Charlotte Greenberg

Pest or Predator?

A Guide to Georgia's Beneficial Insects

Many of Georgia's insects have a reputation they don't deserve. When people think about insects, they imagine tiny pests eating their plants' leaves and opening their crops up to disease. However, many don't know about their tiny allies among the grass. These beneficial insects (and arachnids!) help regulate pest populations, support pollination, and contribute to landscape health. Maintaining appropriate conditions to help these insects thrive reduces overall landscape costs in damaged plants and insecticide treatments. Here's a closer look at Georgia's most useful "pests" and how to keep them in your gardens.

Rove Beetle

Tiger Beetles

Ground Beetles

Patrolling the soil after dark, beetles keep all ground pests at bay, as well as break down decaying soil matter. Important species include:

Rove Beetles (family *Staphylinidae*) - Target armyworms and cutworms, controlling pest populations.
Tiger Beetles (subfamily *Cicindelinae*) - Break down decaying soil matter, contributing to soil health.

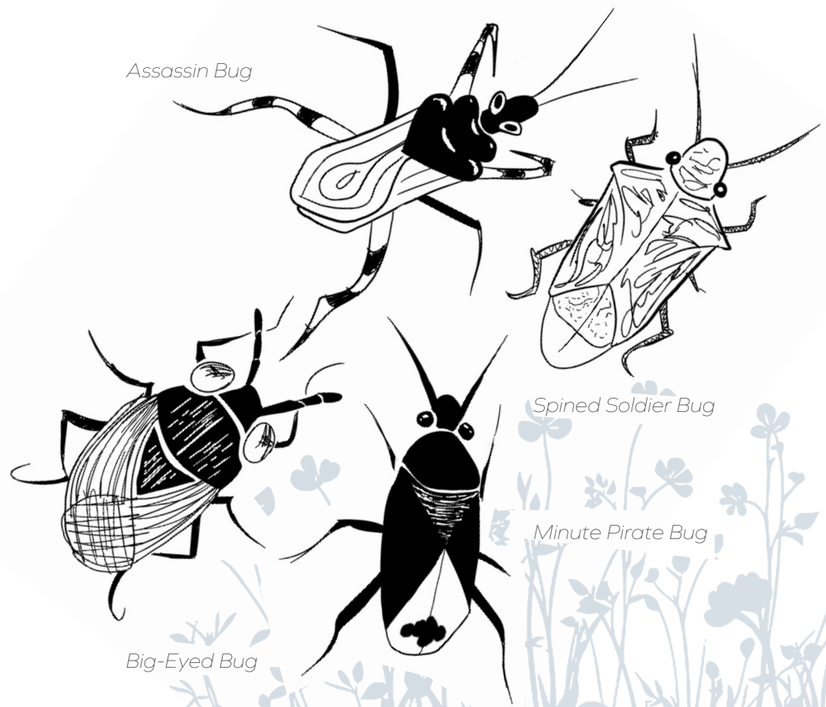
Lacewings & Lady Beetles

From aphids to mites, these delicate insects tackle soft-bodied pests with important species like:

The Green Lacewing (*Chrysoperla carnea*) - Actively feeds as larvae on mites, other larvae, and aphids, even being referred to as "aphid lions."
The Seven-Spotted Lady Beetle (*Coccinella septumpunctata*) - Adults and larvae consume aphids and other pests.

Seven-Spotted Lady Beetle

Green Lacewing



Assassin Bug

Spined Soldier Bug

Minute Pirate Bug

Big-Eyed Bug

Soldiers, Assassins, & Pirates

Georgia's predatory "true bugs" (in the order *Hemiptera* with piercing-sucking mouthparts) include:

The Spined Soldier Bug (*Podisus maculiventris*) - A light brown, shield shaped predator controlling over 100 pest species' populations, including caterpillar and beetle larvae.
The Minute Pirate Bug (*Orius insidiosus*) - A tiny black and white predator who feeds mostly on thrips and mite eggs.
Predator groups such as Assassin Bugs (family *Reduviidae*) and Big-Eyed Bugs (genus *Geocoris*) target pest eggs, larvae, and immature insects.

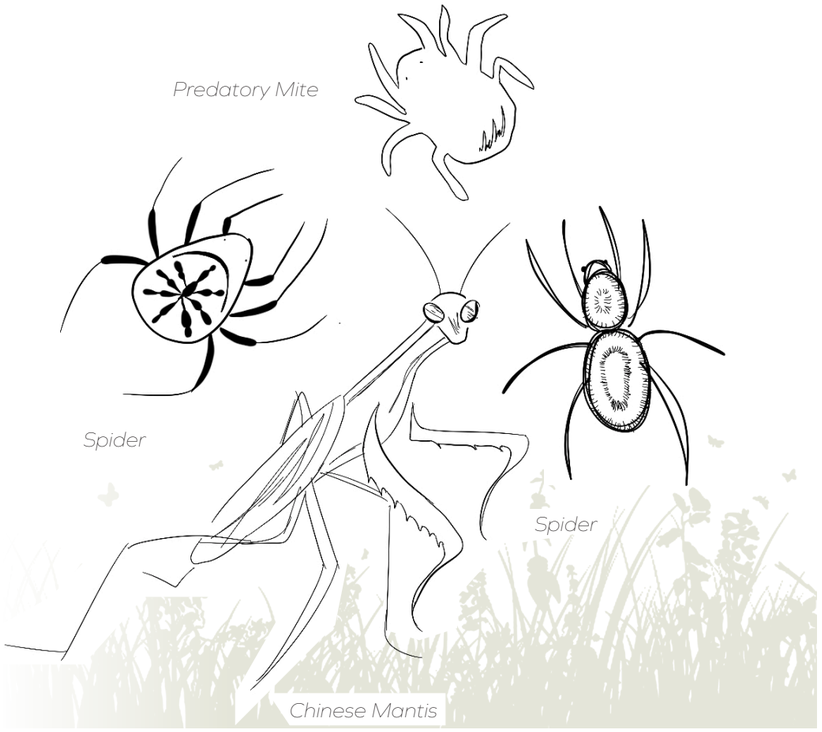
Wasps

Despite their mean looks, wasps generally keep to themselves around humans-- but not around pests.

Paper Wasps (subfamily *Polistinae*) - Prey on caterpillars to feed their young.
Parasitic wasps (families *Braconidae, Ichneumonidae,* etc.) - Lay eggs in or on pests such as aphids to colonize their bodies.

Paper Wasp

Parasitic Wasp



Spiders, Mites, and Other Generalists

Also referred to as "background predators," these organisms act like a strainer for the landscape's ecosystem, catching the finer pests. Additionally, generalists control populations of both predator and prey, ensuring balance from the top of the trophic chain.

Predatory Mites (family *Phytoseiidae*) - Tiny, pear-shaped, and fast moving, they help control pest mites while leaving plants alone.
Spiders (order *Araneae*) - Build webs or hunt on vegetation to catch a variety of pests (as well as beneficial insects).
Chinese Mantis (*Tenodera sinensis*) - Among other mantids, these generalists often feed on good and bad insects while contributing to diversity.

Creating Habitat

Inviting biodiversity into your landscapes invites intrigue, beauty, and resilience to stabilize the ecosystems you create. In practice, this looks like:

Diverse Plantings - A wealth of plantings attracts predators and pollinators to protect ornamentals. Additionally, ensuring a diversity of plant shapes, bloom times, and groundcovers supports a broader range of insects across seasons in the landscape. Suitable garden plans for Georgia include Yarrow, Zinnias, Rudbeckia, Butterfly Weed, Parsley, Coneflower, Cosmos, and Sunflowers.

Leave Leaf Litter - Especially applicable in home landscapes, insects often hibernate or lay eggs in leaves and their stems, including lacewings, spiders, and ground beetles.

Structural Habitat - Many predators prefer thicket- or brush-like conditions, including rotting logs and flower stalks for beetles, native bees, and hoverflies. This environment can be obtained by raking fallen leaves, sticks, logs, and other backyard debris into a tidy pile.

Keep Pesticides Low - Restricting pesticide application to specialized formulas and spraying only when necessary can prevent harmful runoff, helping both you and your neighbors.

Beneficial insects provide invaluable protection to landscapes, supporting balance and resilience. Prioritizing these organisms in planting plans and landscape management helps to create landscapes with lasting beauty at a lower cost. Next time you get the urge to spray, take a closer look to make sure you aren't on the same team.

Author: Jo Robinson
Layout Design: Jo Robinson
Illustration: Jo Robinson

Commercial Landscapes Matter More Than We Think

When most people imagine influential landscape design, they picture iconic parks, intricate plazas, or the elegant green spaces surrounding luxury residences.

These are the projects discussed in classrooms, celebrated in award programs, and published in glossy design magazines.

Yet for most people, these are not the landscapes they experience on a daily basis. Instead, everyday nature is found in the parking lot medians of a grocery store, the planting strips outside a strip mall nail salon, the shaded walkways of a shopping center, or the courtyard between an apartment complex and a big-box retailer.

Commercial landscapes are ubiquitous in everyday life and shape how millions of people encounter designed outdoor space yet are too often overlooked.

The Most Common Landscapes We Touch

Shopping centers, big-box retailers, and mixed-use developments make up an enormous portion

of the built world around us.

In car-dependent suburbs, these types of commercial corridors provide the only reliable access to intentional landscape design many people interact with in a typical week.

People regularly pass through these spaces because they are necessary nodes in daily life: groceries, dining, or shopping. Through these “functional” trips, commercial landscapes quietly perform a significant cultural and ecological function.

A major shopping center in the Athens area that can serve as an example of a thoughtfully designed commercial node is the Alps Village shopping center located on the corner of Alps Road and Baxter Street. Interestingly, the parking lot of this shopping center has a collection of islands that are connected by crosswalks to create a safer solution for pedestrian travel. There are two main walkways created within the parking lot that go towards the Kroger and Burlington Coat Factory, businesses that are frequently visited in the strip mall. The central walkways are lined with canopy trees that shade the walkways during warmer months. These small, but intentional, design choices make this parking lot different from most other shopping centers in the Athens area and serve as an encounter with intentional landscape design for the average Athens resident.

Plants and Their Use in Commercial Landscapes

Because they are frequently visited, more often than parks, commercial landscapes have enormous potential to impact public perception of plants, whether through simple aesthetic beauty, ecological function, or seasonal change.

Small considerations can be made to integrate these functions into the commercial landscape.

For example, additional plant boxes and beds can turn a concrete plaza into an interaction with different plant species. Adding curb cuts into a parking island can transform it into a bioretention area designed to catch stormwater runoff. Even something as simple as diversifying a plant palette can turn an everyday space into a landscape experience.

A thoughtfully planted strip mall median becomes a small lesson in drought-tolerant design. A shopping center bioswale introduces passers-by to native grasses and pollinator habitats. Shaded pedestrian routes in outlet malls show how trees provide comfort outside of recreational spaces.

Commercial landscapes may be the only places where some people see a pink muhly blooming in the fall; where they notice a monarch butterfly; where they move through a cooling microclimate created by canopy trees. In communities that lack robust public green space, these landscapes essentially become public gardens.

However, commercial planting design can be misused in ways that negatively impact the experience of the users and their perception of landscape design in these applications.

The Epps Bridge Centre is a large shopping center located just outside of Athens. The parking islands in this development are poorly designed in that the plant heights create a visibility issue when driving. This puts planting design in the forefront of a patron’s mind, but in the wrong way.

This situation creates the need for more careful consideration for plant selection and further development of planning and design city ordinances.

What Can We Do as Landscape Designers?

Of course, commercial landscapes exist inside a difficult set of constraints.
They are often developer driven and the design can be lacking in order to prioritize cost efficiency over ecological processes and aesthetic quality. They are often

low maintenance by necessity, utilizing minimal irrigation and a simplified plant palette in protection of the bottom line and cost efficiency. They're often inserted late in the construction process, or value-engineered down to the cheapest option.

Due to these pressures, many commercial sites are dominated by turf, mulch, and a limited variety of widely available shrubs.

Yet landscape architects continue to create meaningful spaces within these constraints. Through smart plant selection and simple but intentional spatial design, they can elevate spaces that might otherwise be purely asphalt and concrete.

Innovative commercial landscapes show that impactful design doesn't require complexity or a premium budget. Landscape architects employ techniques that we already know to reinforce the value of landscape design. They bring in strategies like using native and adapted plants that thrive with minimal maintenance. They integrate green infrastructure like rain gardens, bioswales, and stormwater planters that double as aesthetic amenities.

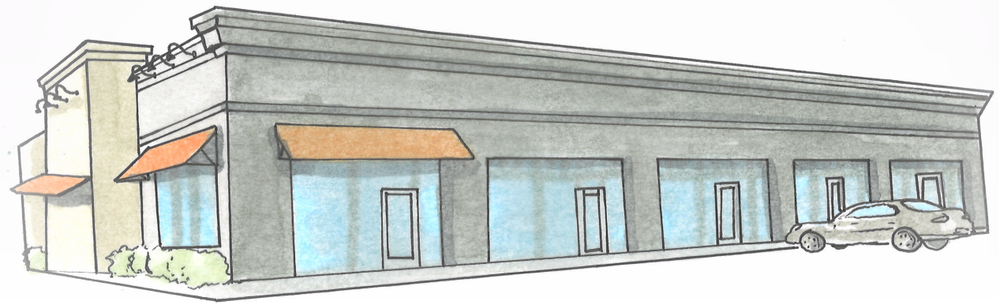
We already learn things like the impact of adding shade trees and purposeful pedestrian circulation throughout parking lots to reduce the effect of heat on people and the surrounding environment. And aiding in the pursuit of the bottom line, we can guide developers toward long-term cost savings through thoughtful planting that decreases maintenance over time.

Moving Toward the Future

With the rise of mixed-use developments, suburban town centers, and ever encroaching over-development, the line between commercial landscapes and public spaces is blurring.

Landscape architects have a rare opportunity: design that reaches everyone, not just people who live next to a flagship park or high-end residence.

In a consumer-driven world, grocery store parking lots, strip mall sidewalks, and outlet mall promenades may be the places where people interact with nature most consistently. Recognizing the importance of these "ordinary" landscapes forces us to rethink what spaces are truly most important for landscape design.



Author: Jordan Knight
Layout Design: Charlotte Greenberg
Illustration: Paige Garvin
Images: public domain

Living Lightly

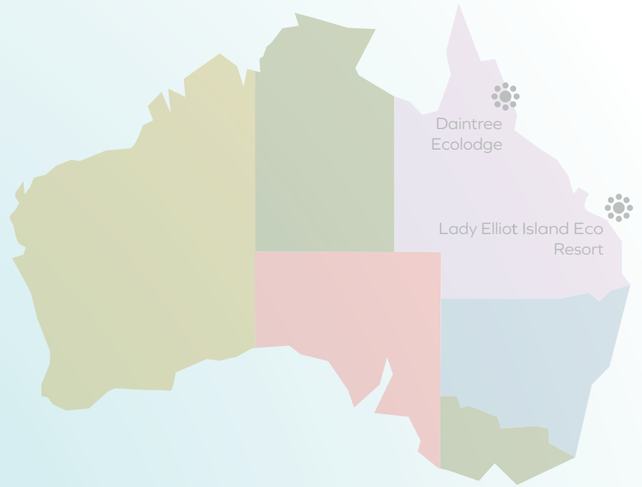
How Australia's Ecolodges Are Shaping a More Sustainable Future

During my recent study abroad trip along Australia's east coast, I experienced firsthand how ecolodges are reimagining what hospitality can look like in a climate-conscious world. From off-grid rainforest retreats built from recycled timbers to reefside cabins that filter their own water and produce their own power, these places go far beyond the label of "eco-friendly." They are living systems; breathing, adapting, and giving back to the landscapes that sustain them.

The first thing I noticed on Lady Elliot Island wasn't the turquoise water or the coral beneath my feet; it was the quiet hum of solar panels, glinting under the morning sun. There, 50 miles off the coast of Queensland, I discovered what it truly means to live lightly. The island's eco resort, powered almost entirely by renewable energy, serves as both a sanctuary for travelers and a model for sustainable marine tourism.

Australia's Ecotourism Ethos

Australia has long been a pioneer in ecotourism, thanks to its vast biodiversity and deep cultural connections to land and water. The country's Eco Certification Program sets global standards for sustainability in tourism, rewarding businesses that protect natural habitats, reduce carbon footprints, and educate visitors. What sets Australia apart is its holistic approach. Ecotourism here isn't just about minimizing harm; it's about creating net-positive outcomes for both people and planet.



This ethos is embedded in every aspect of ecolodge design. Architects and landscape designers collaborate closely with local communities and Traditional Owners to ensure that developments respect the local environment and preserve biodiversity.

Case Study I: Lady Elliot Island Eco Resort

Known as the "home of the manta ray," Lady Elliot Island is more than a tropical escape; it's a self-sufficient microcosm of sustainability. The resort operates 100% renewable energy, utilizing an array of solar panels and battery systems.

Its desalination plant converts seawater into drinking water, and its zero-waste initiatives divert nearly all refuse from landfills.

Even more inspiring is its role in coral restoration. Guests don't just snorkel over the Great Barrier Reef—they learn about marine ecosystems and can participate in reef monitoring programs. It's tourism that combines education and conservation.

Standing on the coral shore, I realized how resilient design can be when it aligns with ecology rather than overpowering it. Here, luxury isn't about excess; it's about harmony.

Case Study II: Daintree Ecolodge

Farther north, in Queensland's Wet Tropics, ecolodges like the Daintree EcoLodge blur the line between built and natural environments. Each structure seems to dissolve into the surrounding canopy, elevated on stilts to allow for natural water flow and wildlife movement. Rooms open to the rainforest, cooled by shade and ventilation instead of air conditioning.

Although I did not personally visit this site, the Daintree EcoLodge stands out as a strong precedent for forest-based ecolodges, illustrating how architecture can coexist with, rather than compete against, dense tropical ecosystems.

Beyond "Green": Toward Regenerative Design

Many of these ecolodges are pushing beyond traditional sustainability toward regenerative design, a philosophy that seeks to heal and restore ecosystems rather than simply sustain them. Water recycling systems, composting toilets, and locally sourced materials create closed-loop systems that give back more than they take.

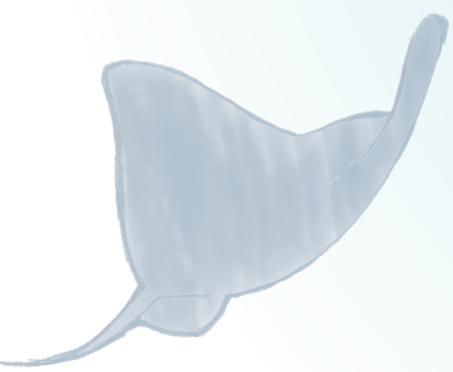
In Daintree, some lodges partner with Indigenous rangers to replant native vegetation, while others reinvest a portion of their profits into conservation programs. Initiatives like these highlight how thoughtfully managed tourism can play a meaningful role in restoring ecosystems rather than exploiting them.

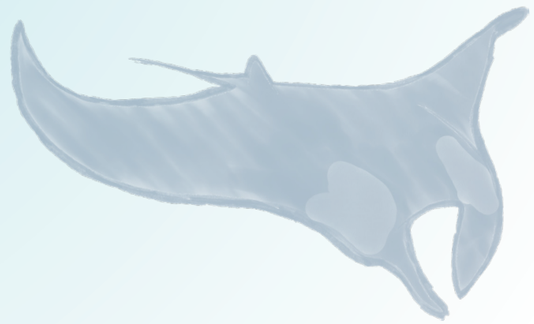
Community and Connection

Perhaps the most inspiring aspect of Australia's ecolodges is their connection to the local community.

Many lodges are built and operated in collaboration with Traditional Owners, offering visitors opportunities to learn about Indigenous ecological knowledge and cultural heritage. Others source food, art, and materials from local producers, keeping economic benefits rooted in the region.

In conversations with my fellow students, one idea kept resurfacing: sustainability isn't just about technology—it's about relationships. Whether between traveler and guide, designer and setting, or community and environment, connection lies at the heart of every successful ecolodge.





Lessons to "Take Home"

As a landscape architecture student, I left Australia inspired by how these ecolodges serve as blueprints for designs that nurture both people and the planet.

They remind us that sustainable design doesn't need to feel restrictive; it can be immersive, sensory, and deeply restorative.

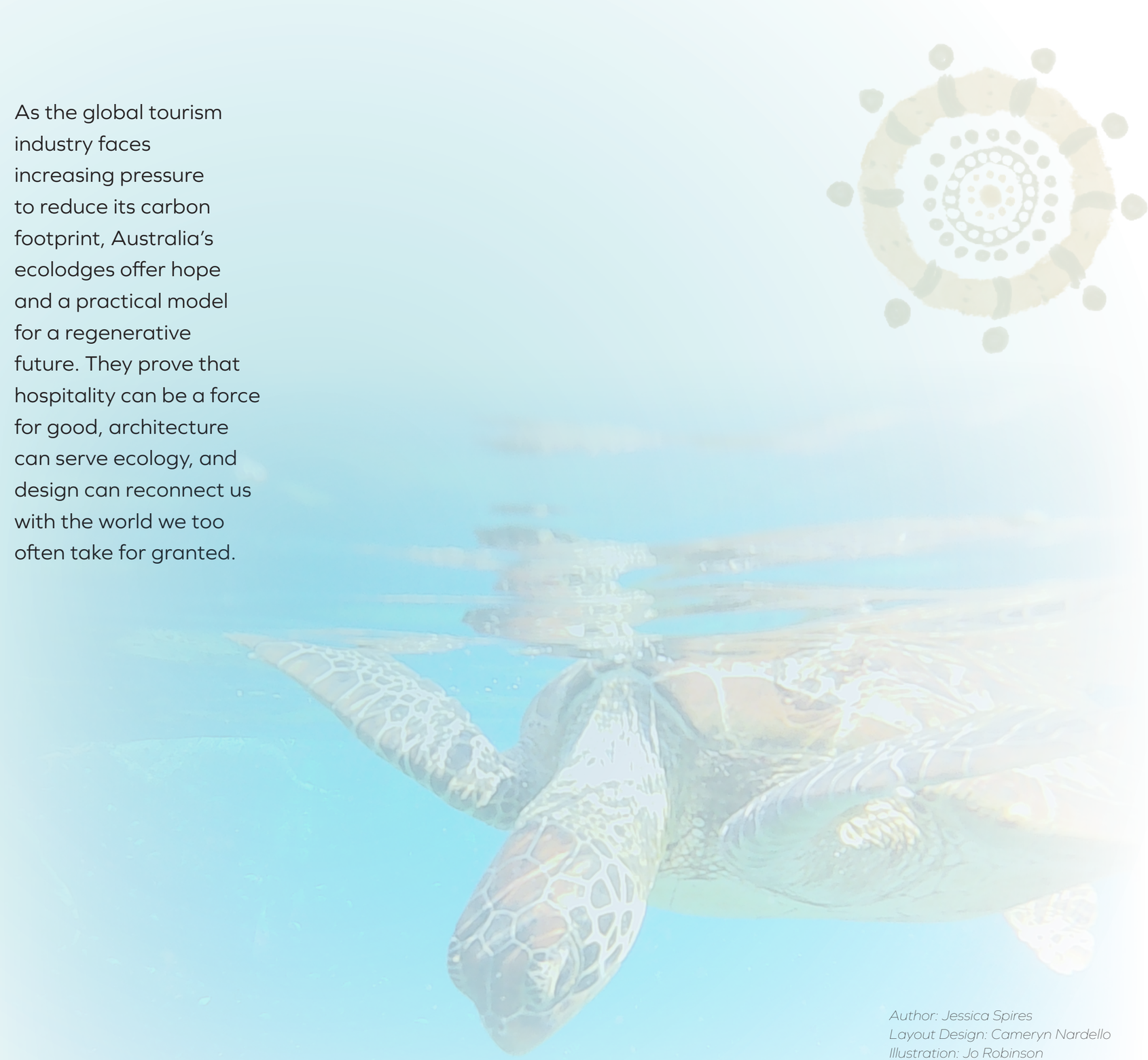
The principles guiding ecolodge design, like working with natural systems, prioritizing local materials, and embracing adaptability, extend far beyond remote destinations.

They can inform us how we shape cities, parks, and campuses back home. Whether in rural Australia or urban America, the goal remains the same: to create places that give back more than they take.

Final Thoughts

When I think back to that quiet island morning, the memory stays with me: sunlight glinting off solar panels, coral shimmering just below the surface, and the feeling that, for once, humanity and nature were perfectly in sync.

As the global tourism industry faces increasing pressure to reduce its carbon footprint, Australia's ecolodges offer hope and a practical model for a regenerative future. They prove that hospitality can be a force for good, architecture can serve ecology, and design can reconnect us with the world we too often take for granted.



Author: Jessica Spires
Layout Design: Cameryn Nardello
Illustration: Jo Robinson
Images: Jessica Spires

Archway Partnership Interview

Universities often play an important role in connecting resources, knowledge, and people to support communities as they grow and adapt. At the University of Georgia, this mission is especially central as a land-grant institution, where service and outreach are key parts of its identity.

One program that embodies this work is the Archway Partnership, which connects communities across Georgia with university resources to address locally identified needs.

Part of UGA's Public Service and Outreach, the Archway Partnership was established in 2005 to help communities access university expertise in ways that support long-term development. Rather than taking a one-size-fits-all approach, the program focuses on building relationships and responding to needs identified by the communities themselves.

Brittany Standifer, former Community Engagement Program Manager for the Archway Partnership, describes this work in straightforward terms:

"We just try to provide great information and resources so that communities can make informed decisions and move forward in what way makes the most sense."

"We just try to provide great information and resources so that communities can make informed decisions and move forward in what way makes the most sense."

In practice, her role is multifaceted. She serves as a liaison between community stakeholders and the university, helping identify priorities and connect them with faculty, students, and programs that can support these goals. At the same time, she works to ensure that these partnerships are reciprocal – benefiting both the communities and the students involved.

This approach is reflected in the Connected Resilient Communities (CRC) program, which expanded Archway's project-based model to reach 20 communities across Georgia in just a few years. CRC focuses on communities designated as Tier 1 and Tier 2 by the Georgia Department of Community Affairs, directing resources toward areas facing higher levels of economic and social challenges.

Another initiative, the Look Ahead Georgia Program, provides students from Archway communities with summer internship opportunities that support professional development while also encouraging long-term workforce retention in those regions.

"It's funny, because in my mind, sometimes I think landscape architecture students can do it all."

A clear example of this collaboration can be seen in Thomaston, Georgia. When the Downtown Development Authority introduced a facade grant program, applicants were required to submit architectural renderings which had to pass the Historic Preservation Committee.

"Those community members who own those small businesses didn't have the resources or access to create a rendering, and if they were able to create a rendering, not one that could face the scrutiny of the Historic Preservation Committee," Standifer explains.

Through a partnership with CED's Center for Community Design & Preservation, Director Jennifer Lewis organized a mini-charrette with Historic Preservation and Urban Planning students to develop renderings that met historic preservation standards. Working alongside a community archivist, the students met with building owners and translated their ideas into designs that could successfully unlock funding. As of Dec 2025, five of the eight properties have made improvements, receiving $43,524.21 in grant funds for a total investment of $139,834.54.

These collaborations not only support communities but also provide meaningful learning experiences for students.

Standifer notes that landscape architecture students, in particular, bring a wide range of skills to these projects – from planning and zoning to signage, trail systems, and community design.
"It's funny, because in my mind, sometimes I think landscape architecture students can do it all," she said.

Projects like these allow students to engage directly with real-world challenges, learning how to communicate across disciplines and design in ways that respond to specific community contexts.
In another collaboration with Professor James Schulte, students addressed declining literacy engagement by designing a "third space" – a community gathering area that improves access to a local arts center and library.

The project required students to think beyond traditional classroom work, considering how design can shape social interaction and accessibility within a community.
The Archway Partnership also works closely with state and regional organizations, including the Georgia Department of Economic Development and the Georgia Department of Community Affairs. These partnerships help identify communities that are ready for collaboration and ensure that projects align with broader regional efforts.

"They have just great knowledge of what's happening in communities out across the state," Standifer said.

Overall, the Archway Partnership demonstrates how universities can work alongside communities in ways that are both practical and mutually beneficial.

By connecting students and faculty with real-world challenges, the program supports community goals while also preparing students to apply their skills beyond the classroom and provides an excellent demonstration of a public-private partnership in action.

In doing so, it highlights the value of collaboration – showing what can happen when local knowledge and university resources come together in meaningful ways.

*Heidi Grogger now serves as the CRC Archway Professional. For more information about the Archway Partnership visit: https://www.archwaypartnership.uga.edu/

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Photos: Courtesy of UGA Archway and UGA Visitors Center

Canal Confluence

Lessons from Yanagawa

A mere 12,000 years ago, humans made a transformative and consequential discovery: agriculture. Indeed, this was a defining feature of the human story on Earth and shifted societal structures from isolated tribalism to unified civilization. The Sumerian culture in Mesopotamia, for example, became one of the first civilizations to utilize agriculture by draining the marshlands and irrigating their fields using water from the Tigris and Euphrates rivers. Hence, their cities thrived and, as they described it, humanity had won a favorable victory in the war against nature. Eventually, saline soils diminished crop productivity, and so nature emerged victorious against the Sumerians who now lie buried under the sands of modern-day Iraq.

The failures of the Mesopotamian civilization mirror the challenges modern landscape architects face when designing water systems under the threat of dwindling fresh water resources. Perhaps even more pertinent to urban and city planning is the threat of cities "sinking" as changing climate patterns and global warming raise sea levels. Man-made canals could be the key to solving both of these challenges, and cities centered around such engineered hydraulic systems may represent the human future. Currently, numerous global cities exemplify this trait, from the titular and extravagant Venice to the industrial and linear Birmingham. Despite all these precedents, the late filmmaker extraordinaire, Isao Takahata, chose not to stroll too far from his native Japan when deciding on a city for a documentary production.
The Story of Yanagawa's Canals, released in 1987, narrates the tale of Yanagawa, Fukuoka and the efforts of its people to preserve their historic canals from water pollution. Naturally, but perhaps

unsurprisingly to those familiar with Takahata's works, the documentary comprehensively covers the history of the canals, their social and cultural impacts, and their engineered characteristics among other things in its almost 3 hour runtime. Takahata also highlights the themes of human-nature relationships and nostalgia which would become recurrent motifs of his future productions. Additionally, while the majority of this documentary is live action, it manages to incorporate animated bits as aids to the voice-over narration, and as healthy disruptions to the visual homogeneity of the film.

The city of Yanagawa, inhabited by 62,000 people, spans 14 square miles with canals running a total of almost 300 miles. The canals are fed by the Okinohata river through the man-made Futatsugawa channel which diverts water to three intake gates. The gates then distribute the water to the large North-South canal which feeds the tributaries that are the smaller channels.

The canals are intertwined with the fabric of the city itself. They spread and crawl throughout the residential neighborhoods, engulfing steps that offer a prosaic entrance to their dense network, and brush elegantly past mossy stone foundations and walls. They feed private backyard gardens, accessible only by boats, and exclusive to those that own residences along the channels. Children play in residential parks, close to the canals, not afraid to submerge themselves to rescue a mishit baseball.

Wider communal parks and walkways take advantage of the waterfront to offer its users a welcome respite from their hectic lives. Springtime causes dense vegetation to grow along the banks, with an array of flowering trees, woody vines, and herbaceous plants overlooking the channel as it flows idyllically and leisurely towards its destination, depositing their leaves in the process. The warm sea breezes bring out the carp, crayfish, ducks, magpies, and other such creatures that enjoy the refreshing bounty the canals offer, bathing in both the renewed morning water and the splendid morning sun that offers their services in tandem. This seamless integration of the sensory with the ecological has made these canals part of the cultural fabric of Yanagawa. Similar solutions in modern cities must utilize designed landscapes on canal banks to offer spaces for residents to recreate and deepen their understanding of ecological water management.

Since Yanagawa was a castle town built 500 years ago in the Edo period, many bridges have been constructed connecting the main city with outlier dwellings. These small and narrow bridges act as weirs that regulate water flow in the canal by breaking faster flow during rain events and speeding up slower currents. They do so by way of their bases which, instead of going straight down to the canal bed, do so in a slanted, v-shaped manner. In effect, this creates a trapezoidal cross-section at these bridges, increasing hydraulic radius which is a measure of the efficient flow of fluids through carrying structures. Another benefit of these bridges is that they encourage the formation of eddies in the current, small whirlpools, that invigorate the water with much-needed oxygen and help to purify it. An additional aspect of water regulation involves sluices, sliding gates, that are raised or lowered by certain amounts to help manage water that feeds the downstream farms. Canal-side pools, used for storing any excess water during heavy rains, also take advantage of these gates. Additionally, two drainage sluices also help intake water overflow and prevent flooding along the banks. Such methods of managing water levels is why the locals refer to the canal network as a precise machine.

To keep the water flowing in the canals clean, several regulations were passed in the early 20th century that prohibited citizens from dumping trash, or wastewater into the canal. Washing items in the canal was disallowed during overnight hours, while constructing buildings over the channel was also banned. Such measures ensured the purity and sanctity of the water passing through the city, and enabled citizens to use the waters of the network for drinking purposes. Residents would therefore dump wastewater in a ditch dug to the side of their houses, or in the plant beds of their gardens. In the age of modern conveniences, such as running water and washing machines, each residence is required to treat its sewage before letting it join the canal. However, in just the 1960s, an era of tumultuous growth and urbanization for Japan, these canals had become dumping grounds for untreated wastewater, garbage and other refuse, and even animal carcasses. These waterways had become sludges, while water, the foundational piece of their identity, had long since stopped flowing. Yanagawa was not unique in this deterioration; other cities in Japan had covered their channels with concrete or piped them up. Though an easy and cheap solution, this denied one of the most significant

services provided by canals which is the storage of rainwater and its continuous flow. Flooding and stagnation was common in communities that had suppressed their canals which, in the long-term, cost more to the city. Additionally, the canals also provided water for farmers which, although could have been obtained via groundwater, would have resulted in the setting of the waterlogged Ariake clay and caused damage to structures and public infrastructure. Tsutae Hiromatsu, a section chief of the city's sewers at the time, was vital in preventing Yanagawa's canals from succumbing to this dire fate. He developed the "Clean River Project", a proposal that relied on local civilian support to clean up the canals and for their continued maintenance. As part of this proposal, he reached out to local neighborhoods and communities, the same ones that had illegally polluted the network, educating them on the benefits of having clean canals and energizing them into action. His plan worked, and through dredging the canal and cleanups by dedicated local residents, the Yanagawa canals were once again allowed to flow cleanly and without interruption.

Many other parts of the world have seen proposals similar to the "Clean River Project" which involve community participation and advocacy. Friends of the Los Angeles River (FOLAR), for example, conducts annual cleanups with local volunteers and hosts educational programs to inform the public of the important role the river plays in their lives. A bit closer to the southeast is the Chattahoochee Riverkeeper that not only organizes cleanups but also conducts research, collects and monitors data, and patrols the Chattahoochee River. Indeed, it is vital for communities nowadays to take personal responsibility for the rivers and creeks they live near and realize that the health of our watersheds is intertwined, and perhaps directly consequential, to the continuum of our daily lives.

The Story of the Yanagawa Canal tells a striking tale of the human connection to water, a connection that is as ancient as human civilization and possibly just as dynamic. Takahata successfully conveys the ebbs and flows that dominate this connection, while demonstrating the profound impact a setting can have on a civilization. He presents Yanagawa as a model for conscious design and responsive policy that looks to balance environmental value with human centered development; objectives essential to the future of the landscape architect profession.

Through this lens, he reveals that our environments have always changed over time, and rightfully so, however, the human hand that shapes these ecosystems has perhaps been too demanding and unjust at times. It is not long before the essential services we receive from what seem to us autonomous and self-correcting systems will fade, unless we take decisive action soon. Otherwise, what's to stop us from sharing the same fate as the Sumerians all those millennia ago?

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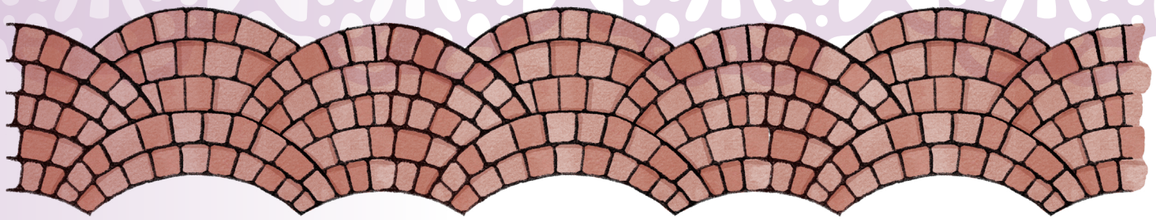
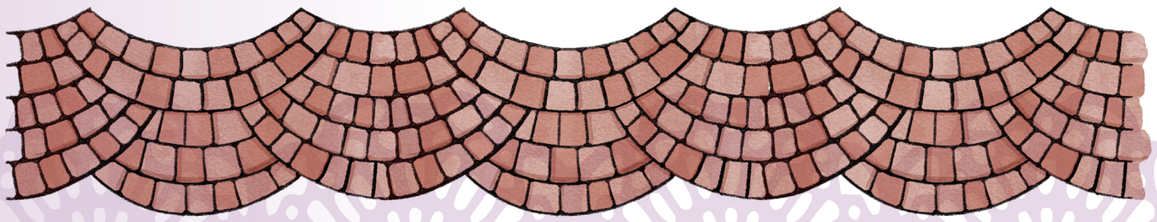
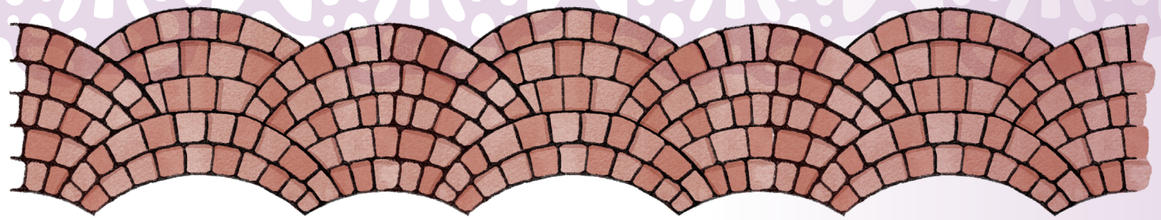


A Love Letter to Bricks

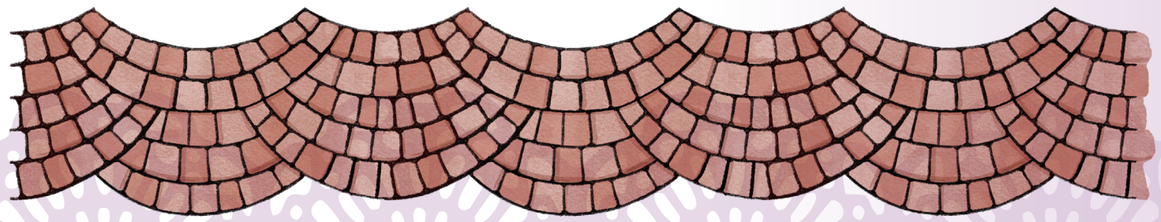
Mimetic Materials and Cultural Importance





I fell in love with the color of clay from 30,000 feet. I flew alone in late winter, visiting a college I did not expect to attend. Georgia existed on a map to me. It was the name of a place 900 miles away, only becoming real from the plane window. The Northeast's frozen landscapes softened into gentle greens and sandy yellows. Shorelines ebbed and flowed. Lakes and streams gave way to warm red earth. I left Boston in winter. When I arrived in Athens, I found myself in spring. The warmth convinced me to stay — magnolias, azaleas, and the color of clay. On the plane ride home, I pictured the rolling red landscape. I imagined the structures inhabiting it: structures built of red earth. I wondered how many millions of bricks compose the town of Athens — each one a fragment of earth and sunlight. When I returned to winter, I tracked traces of red earth through the snow.

Seasons shifted, and Athens became my new home. I moved in late summer and learned to live in an alien landscape. Summer turned to fall, and leaves began to rust. Fall gave way to winter, and rain washed down brick facades, turning the world a cold orange. Winter softened into spring, and the sun breathed life into blossoms, leaves, and bricks. By summer, I felt at home. I love hot afternoons, heavy air, and thunderheads a mile high. I love swimming in creeks, carried along by churning ochre water. I love lingering twilight



that bathes the world in a gentle orange glow. Most of all, I love bricks and the color of clay.

Bricks are the most minimal expression of architecture. They are modular building blocks, simple and standardized. Bricks fit together into resilient lattices — perfect, infinite patterns contained within the built environment. They are a collective, forming walkways, walls, and facades. When used in mass, bricks become protean. Mortar bends harsh right angles into fluid curves. The brick's rigid nature fades away. Each brick is insignificant, but regardless of scale, each brick remains beautiful.

The beauty of the brick lies in its subtle irregularities. It is a fragment of landscape compressed into a rectangular prism. It reflects the land it came from — minerals mixed in variable proportions: iron oxide, silica, lime. The brick is born in a kiln at several thousand degrees. It emerges tectonic and individual, marred by countless imperfections — crumbling corners, air pockets, hairline fractures. Irregularity introduces a level of detail seldom matched by other materials. Upon installation, color becomes relative. Sunlight shimmers on an expanse of polychrome scales. Mica, quartz, and feldspar catch the light. In fading twilight, red ceramic reflects the last rays of sun. It is warm to the touch, radiating heat with a faint internal glow.

A brick is a living thing. As seasons pass, its color fades. Wind and rain quietly soften the brick's edges. The brick strays from its geometric ideal — cracking, crumbling, held together only by its neighbors, who are, in turn, eroded into individuals in much the same way. Eventually, the strange, organic beauty of weathering becomes too much; the brick is subject to demolition, decay, and abandonment. It is recycled, crushed, and spread underfoot. Aggregate absorbs soft footfalls, and fragments of land return to the landscape. I love the color of clay because it is multitude. A brick, the color of clay, is all the warmth and light in Georgia transmuted into a single building block.

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