**The Living Library**

(Re)Design Innovative Challenge

**Vision**

An urban oasis building on the garden’s foundations of the Countway Library and transforming it into a multipurpose living library where students, faculty, staff, and the local community can foster and exchange ideas, learn from each other and the space around them. Drawing on Harvard’s Living Lab theme, the new garden design incorporates biophilia, sustainability, knowledge generation, and health promotion principles to provide diverse social engagement, educational, interdisciplinary, and cross-cultural opportunities for the entire community. The visuals and auditory connection with nature via diverse plant beds, green walls, pergolas to filter in light, shaded overhangs, wood-based furniture, water flow from aquaponic fish tanks, and wind chimes are designed to reduce stress, increase tranquility, and improve health and well-being – a refuge from stressors of urban living and demands of work and school. Trees and vegetation help dampen ambient noise, improve air quality, cool the space, and be a source of food security.

**Equity and Access:** The garden will be open and un-gated so the Harvard and local community can truly maximize the benefits of the space anytime. Signage in the space will include braille. There will be wireless internet, water fountains, electrical outlets, bike racks, recycling and composting stations; overhead coverage for rainy weather; additional lighting; an emergency call box; and security cameras to ensure visibility and safety of the space.

**Sustainability:** Our design incorporates garden beds on wheels, allowing user to redefine their space regularly to suit the weather, an event, or their mood. Green walls and pergola’s covered in deciduous vines will absorb excess heat, making the garden more resilient to the extreme temperatures expected in the future. The south-facing aspect of the garden makes the library wall ideal for a vertical solar photovoltaic feature wall that can be added as funding permits. An aquaponics system will be implemented, which do not require the constant watering of a soil-based garden bed and are more sustainable than using other fertilizers. The increase in water efficiency and locally-based water and fertilizer solutions will reduce the emissions intensity of the gardening activities.

**Health:** The garden will be a de-stress space, with books, lawn games, and board games on-site, as well as a site to host myriad events, such as weekly fitness classes, farmer’s market, health fairs, visual and performing arts, movie screenings, open mics, interesting talks, and cultural and diversity engagement. Also, community gardening has been shown to improve diet and social capita. The Harvard and local community can sponsor a garden bed, with the focus of the vegetation on native species, medicinal, and food-generating plants.

**Knowledge Generation:** The new garden design provides an outdoor black board and a teaching/discussion space. It is also a source of knowledge, with diverse educational topics from food and nutrition, to aquaponics, medicinal plants, to environmental stewardship. We will outreach to local primary and secondary schools, colleges, after school programs, and non-profits to encourage field trips to and use of the space. The garden will also serve as gallery space to for the arts and to raise awareness. There will be a weather resistant bookcase for individuals to donate and swap books. A volunteer activities board will be created to help to coordinate events, as well as a website and an on-site bulletin board installed to share exciting events and engage the community.

**Team Biophilia**
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