

CREATING SACRED PLACES

A Primer on Nature Sacred's Community-Led Design Methodology for Healing Green Space



Nature Sacred

Americans' Mental Health is in Peril

27.8%

of US adults recently surveyed reported feelings of depression vs. 8.5% pre-COVID.

31%

black Americans personally know someone who has died from COVID.

84%

of US physicians recently surveyed reported experiencing severe or close to severe stress due to the pandemic.

1. Ettman CK, Abdalla SM, Cohen GH, Sampson L, Vivier PM, Galea S. Prevalence of Depression Symptoms in US Adults Before and During the COVID-19 Pandemic. *JAMA Netw Open*. 2020;3(9):e2019686.
2. Goldstein, A. and Guskin, E. (2020, June 26) Almost one-third of black Americans know someone who died of covid-19, survey shows, **Washington Post**.
3. Primary Care & COVID-19: Week 9 Survey. (2020, May 13.) Primary Care Collaborative.

Why nearby nature matters



21%

drops in cortisol, a stress hormone, within 20-30 minutes of being in nature



40-50%

Drops in acts of aggression, violence, and crime, especially in public spaces



13°F

reduction in urban temperatures

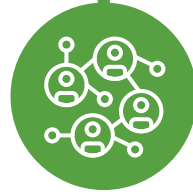
Source: The Power of Sacred Places, 2021.

What we do



GREEN SPACE SERVICE PROVIDER AND PARTNER

We help enable the creation of Sacred Places where they are needed most.



NETWORK BUILDER

Our Nature Sacred Network now comprises more than 100 Sacred Places and Firesouls.



RESEARCH SUPPORTER AND AGGREGATOR

We bridge academia and the green space movement.

A woman in a blue shirt is sitting on a wooden bench in a lush green park. The park features several large, dark grey rocks scattered across a grassy field. Tall, leafy trees surround the area, creating a serene atmosphere. The woman is looking down at a book or tablet she is holding on her lap.

Sacred Places

Green spaces designed with a specific purpose: to provide mindful reflection and solace to intentionally improve health & wellbeing.

Neighborhoods



Universities



Hospitals



Museums



Prisons



**Sacred Places
can be found
all around**

With 100+ Sacred Places across the country —



What sets a Sacred Place apart



Community
led design –
with intention



Project
management -
with soul



Beyond
project
management -
*to capacity
building*



Ongoing
stewardship
support – *with
longevity*

Guiding Principles of a Sacred Place

open

Welcoming and accessible to visitors regardless of race, creed, background or beliefs — all are welcome.

nearby

Located within the neighborhood it serves — close by.

sacred

Designed to bring respite, encourage mindful reflection, engender peace.

community-led

Built for and by the community it serves; reflective of place, story and culture.





The Firesoul

The Firesoul

A leader, a force of positive change, and the passionate steward of the design and care of your Sacred Place.

Nature Sacred nurtures and supports the Firesouls who are already among you.



Todd Marcus,
Executive Director

Intersection of
Change



Liesje Gantert,
Founder/ Executive
Director

Backyard Basecamp /
BLISS Meadows



Sandra Abbott,
museum curator

University of Maryland
Baltimore County



Pastor Michael Martin,
Senior Pastor

Stillmeadow PeacePark



Gretchen Mulvihill,
grants manager

Anne Arundel Medical
Center

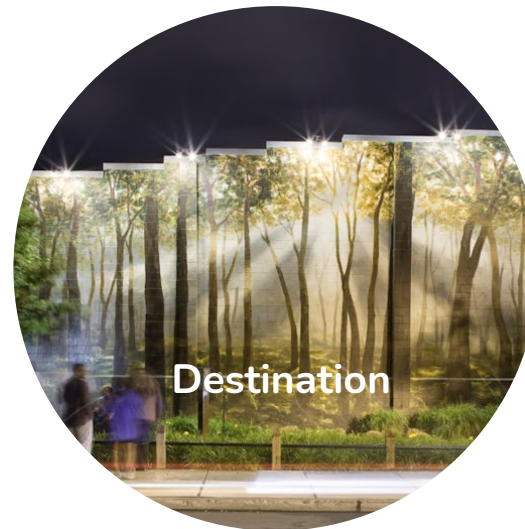
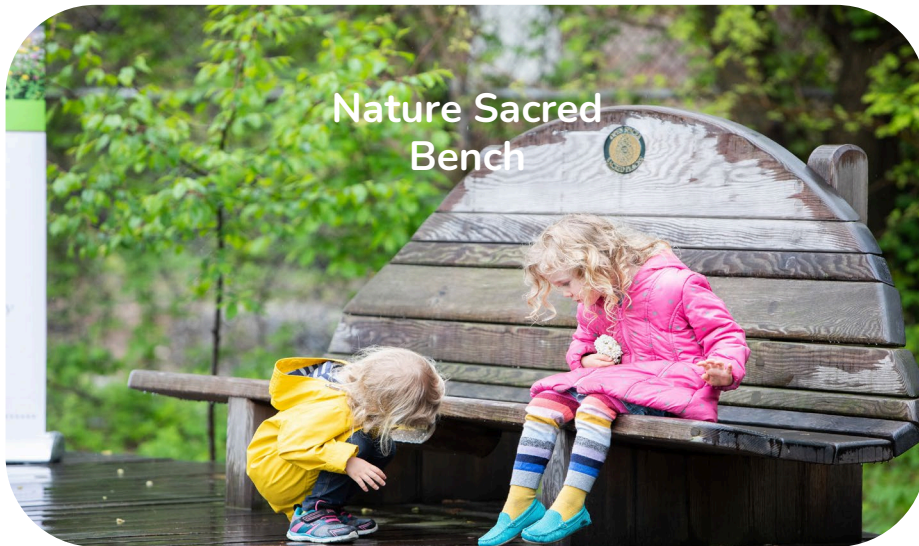
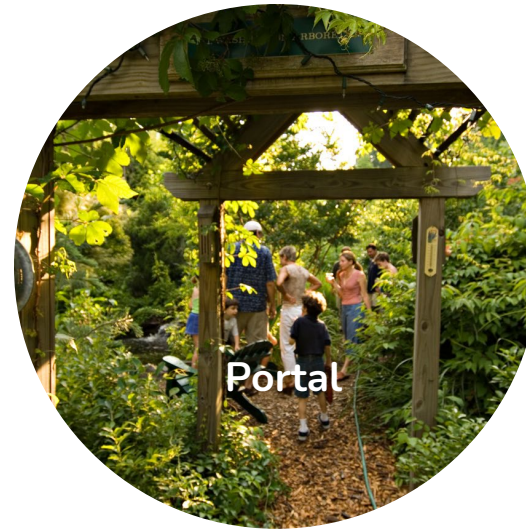


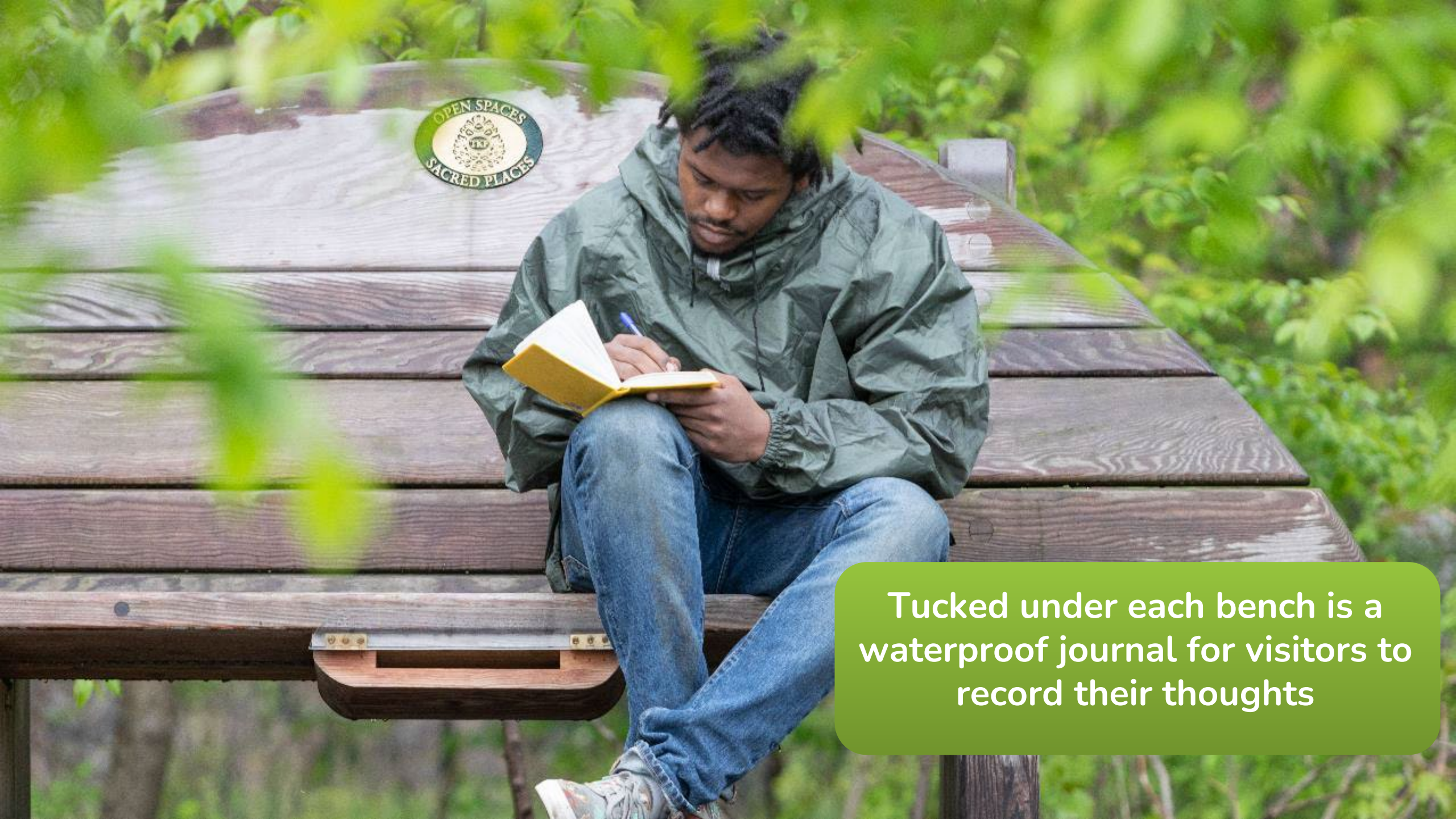
Donald Quarles,
Block Captain &
President of Friends of

Kirby Lane Park



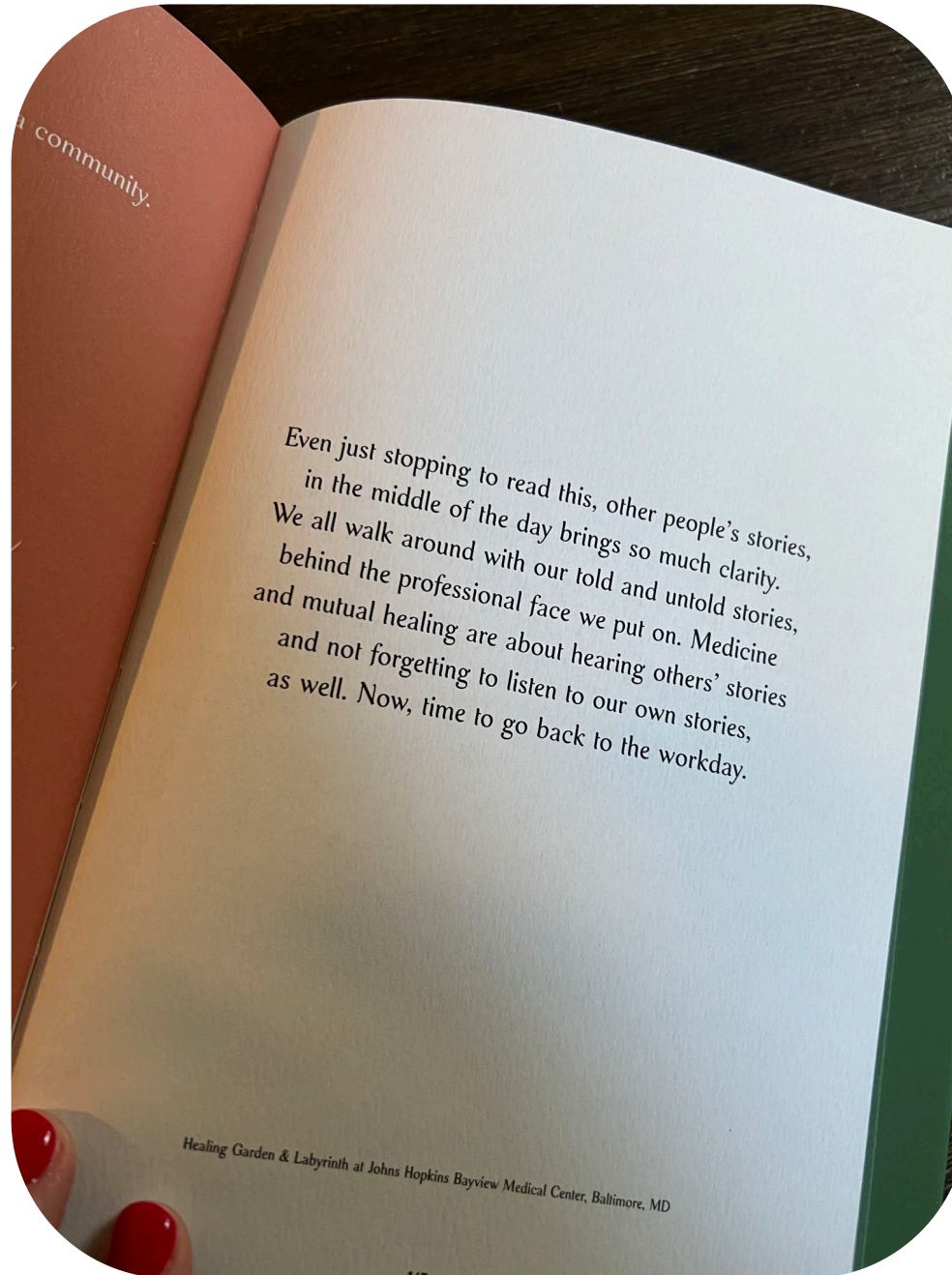
5 Elements Guide Our Community- Led Design

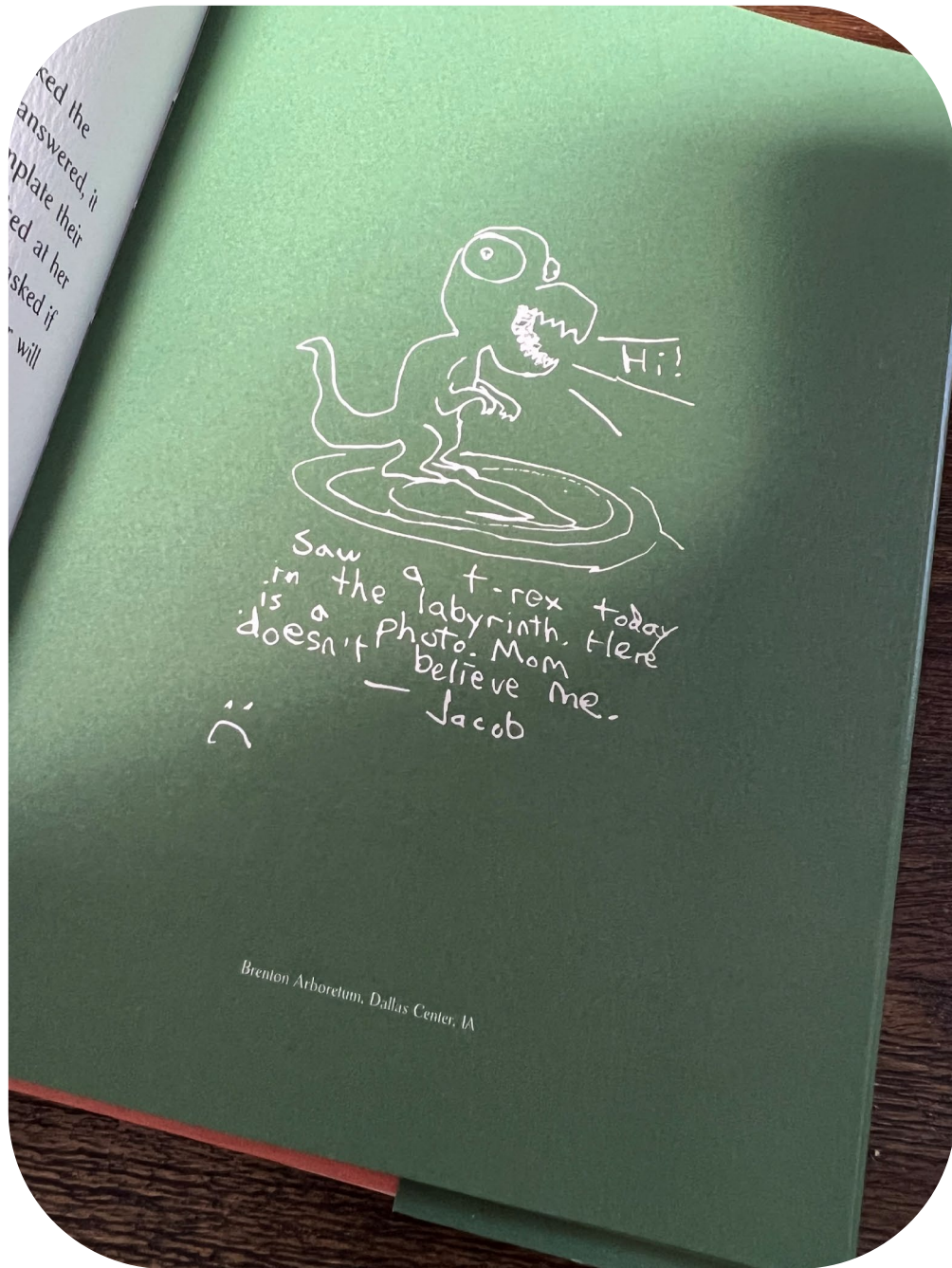




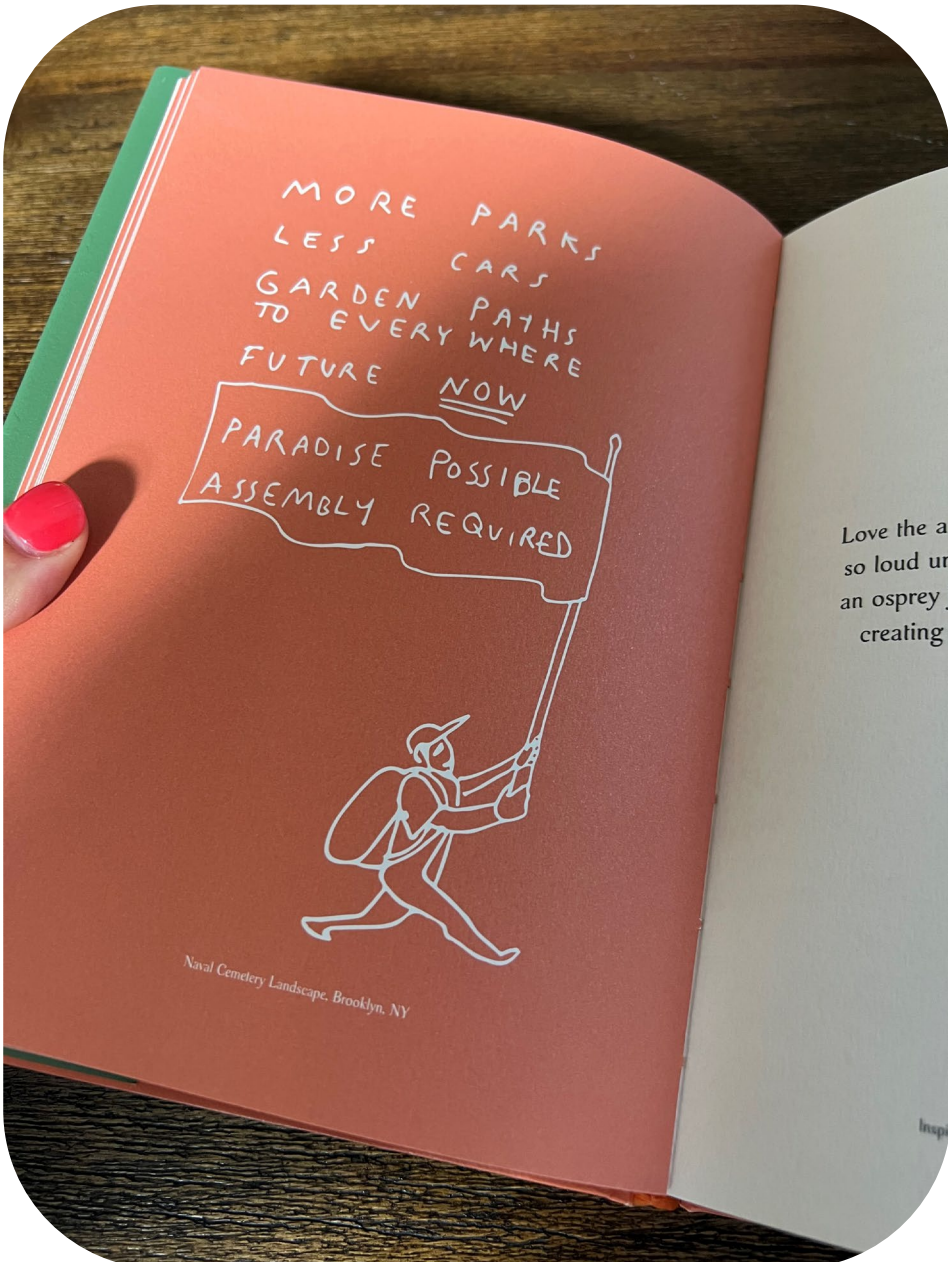
Tucked under each bench is a waterproof journal for visitors to record their thoughts

**Captured
for the first
time in the
recently
released
book -
BenchTalk**





Brenton Arboretum – Des Moines, IA



Naval Cemetery Landscape – Brooklyn, NY

Types of Projects



Community Healing Initiatives



Nature for Wellness – Higher Education



Nature for Wellness – Health Care Institutions



Corporate Projects



Nature Sacred's Design Process Honed through 25 years of experience

- Identify a Firesoul
- Select a Steering Committee
- Steering Committee meeting #1
- Canvass your Community
- Charrette #1
- Charrette #2
- Steering Committee meeting #2
- Final design approval
- Sharing with the final vision with the community
- Bringing your design into being
- Grand Opening

Community Engagement

➤ Sacred Place Steering Committee Meeting #1:

- Establish baseline information about the site and the core elements that can and can't be a part of the final design.
- Craft a vision statement for the site.

➤ Charrette #1:

- A creative approach to gathering feedback on the overall direction and desired features of the Sacred Place.

➤ Charrette #2:

- Building on the feedback and energy from Charrette #1 this event will deepen the engagement with community members around design of the Sacred Place.

➤ Sacred Place Steering Committee Meeting 2:

- Meet with the Firesoul and Nature Sacred Design Team to finalize the schematic design.



Every Community & Every Design Process is Unique



What can happen in Sacred Places?



Case study: Roberta's House



A Black-led bereavement center in Baltimore,

Roberta's House was looking for a design for the rooftop space of their new building that would include space for both active programming and small group or solitary reflection. They also have a ground-level space that they wanted to use as an open lawn and event area.

ROBERTA'S HOUSE

Third Floor Roof

- 1 Egress stairs
- 2 Elevator core
- 3 Future meeting room
- 4 Pedestal pavers over waterproofing
- 5 Guardrail
- 6 Utilities



Site Conditions

Firesoul

President, Annette March-Grier

- Set initial goals for the site
- Provided budget considerations
- Identified steering committee members and invited them to join
- Co-facilitated all design meetings with Nature Sacred and landscape architects



Design Team

Nature Sacred Team + Landscape Architects



ROBERTA'S HOUSE



Dot Exercise

Instructions:

- Place a green dot on any image you would **like** to be incorporated into the space
- Place a red dot on any image you **don't like** and would not like to be incorporated in to the space

PORTAL

An archway, gate, stand of trees, pergola or other marker that denotes a clear transition from the everyday hustle to a reflective space in nature.

<p>Welcoming + Anticipation</p>	<p>Thru Threshold → Low barrier</p>	<p>Mix of existing features. Talk chairs</p>
<p>Overhead + Shade</p>	<p></p>	<p></p>
<p></p>	<p></p>	<p></p>
<p></p>	<p></p>	<p>Lighting for in the evening (and some steps)</p>

Steering Committee Prep

Steering Committee Meetings

Tools for Healing

- Space for group activities
- Small comfortable areas - 1 to 1
- Individual areas - safe and healing
- Flexibility



ROBERTA'S HOUSE

This Sacred Place will create a sense of serenity, peace, healing and spirituality. It will provide a flexible, multipurpose space of safety and refuge. It will be a place that is comforting, peaceful, and welcoming to all. Nature will be the heart source of healing.



Vision Statement

ROBERTA'S HOUSE

I envision our new space as a place of SERENITY.

When I am in the space I want to feel calm,
AT PEACE RENEWED

The feature I want

The activity I want

I envision our new space as a place of Peace/Serenity.

When I am in the space I want to feel embrace,
love, and Hope.

The feature I want to have the most is Transformation.

The activity I want to do in the new space is Be Silent!

What do each of these represent to you?



PORTAL	PATH
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> *Transformation *Journey *Adventure *Entrance *Growth *Unknown *Leaving stuff behind 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> *Method of healing *Compass/direction *Spiritual *GPS (God's purpose) *Map *Travel
DESTINATION	SENSE OF SURROUND
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> *Healing *Journey *Beginning/ending *Feeling of arrival-spiritually *Tranquility *Mindfulness 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> *Solitude *Being still *Awareness of Nature *Observation (Senses) *Connected to nature *Open to what's happening around you *Revelation



ROBERTA'S HOUSE

Charrette Feedback

Trauma-Informed Care Through Nature

- Connection to nature
- Positive stimulation through site, sound, smell, touch
- Safe place
- Art: make and display
- Activity: yoga, meditation, games



Layers of Design

Path

Whether straight or more meandering, a path gives an individual a sense of safety in time and space—a means to have one's feet on the ground while connecting to a greater reality.



Destination

A defined point or points toward which someone moves along the path—a kind of journey or pilgrimage of discovery.

Sense of Surround

Shrubbery, fencing, trees, gardens, sculpture, or other means to provide an encompassing sense of boundary, safety, and enclosure within the Sacred Place.

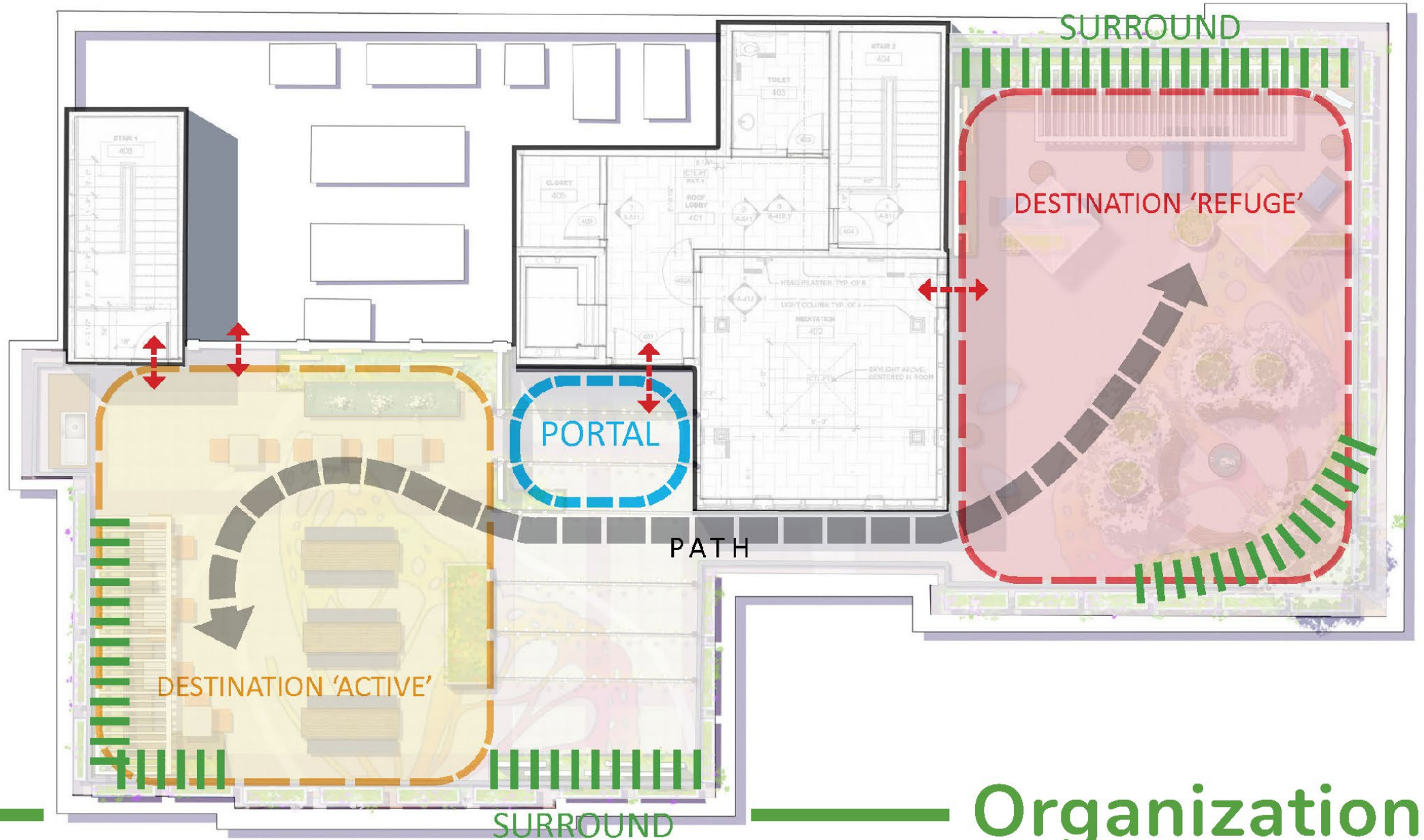


Portal

An archway, gate, stand of trees, pergola or other marker that denotes a clear transition from the everyday hustle to a reflective space in nature.



ROBERTA'S HOUSE



Organization

ROBERTA'S HOUSE

Legend

- 1 Gate
- 2 Trellis
- 3 Planters
- 4 Storage + Sink
- 5 Tables + Chairs
- 6 Harvest Tables
- 7 Nature Sacred Bench
- 8 Water Table Fountain
- 9 Screen Panels
- 10 Bubbler
- 11 Sofas
- 12 Lounge Chairs
- 13 Movable Raised Bed
- 14 Hanging Chairs
- 15 Corten Planter
- 16 Festoon Lighting
- 17 Green Wall
- 18 Banquette



Final Roof Design

ROBERTA'S HOUSE



LABYRINTH BY LARS HOWLETT



NORTH AVE.

Another Opportunity

ROBERTA'S HOUSE



Existing

ROBERTA'S HOUSE



Defining

ROBERTA'S HOUSE



Foundation

ROBERTA'S HOUSE



Activating

ROBERTA'S HOUSE



Inviting

ROBERTA'S HOUSE



Sacred Place



ROBERTA'S HOUSE



ROBERTA'S HOUSE

Construction Phase Advisory

- Construction checkin #1: Before submitting for permit and review
- Construction checkin #2: Before going out for bid
- Construction checkin #3: Prior to the start of construction
- Construction checkin #4: Upon staking of hardscape
- Construction checkin #5: After completion of construction



Grand opening

Welcoming community members in the sites.

Establishing pathways for community engagement.



Simply creating a green space isn't enough.

The Nature Sacred Firesoul Network supports long-term stewardship ensuring that your space continues to grow in every sense — by nurturing both the Firesoul & the Sacred Place.



Networking



Education
& learning



Enhancement
funding



Wellness
programs



Events





The Firesoul Network

Nature Sacred's Firesoul Network cultivates collaboration between Firesouls.

Creating a forum for over 150 green space stewards across the country to connect with each other to share resources, ideas and build relationships between communities.



Long-term Stewardship Support Firesoul Network Enrichment & Enhancement Grants





Calendar

See upcoming Firesoul Events

[VIEW](#)



Add Event

Add your own event to the Firesoul Calendar

[VIEW](#)



Grant Requests

View information on open grants and submit a request.

[VIEW](#)



Opt-in programs

View available opt-in programming. (These programs are offered at no cost to Firesoul. We encourage all who are able to participate!)

[VIEW](#)



Resource Center

A helpful hub for our Nature Sacred Network to share resources, marketing materials, images and videos.

[VIEW](#)



Newsletters

We share a lot of exciting stuff in our monthly Fire Circle newsletters—and here is where you can browse past issues and catch up on anything you may have missed.

[VIEW](#)



Request for Bench Maintenance

Does your bench need Fire? Submit a request here.

[VIEW](#)

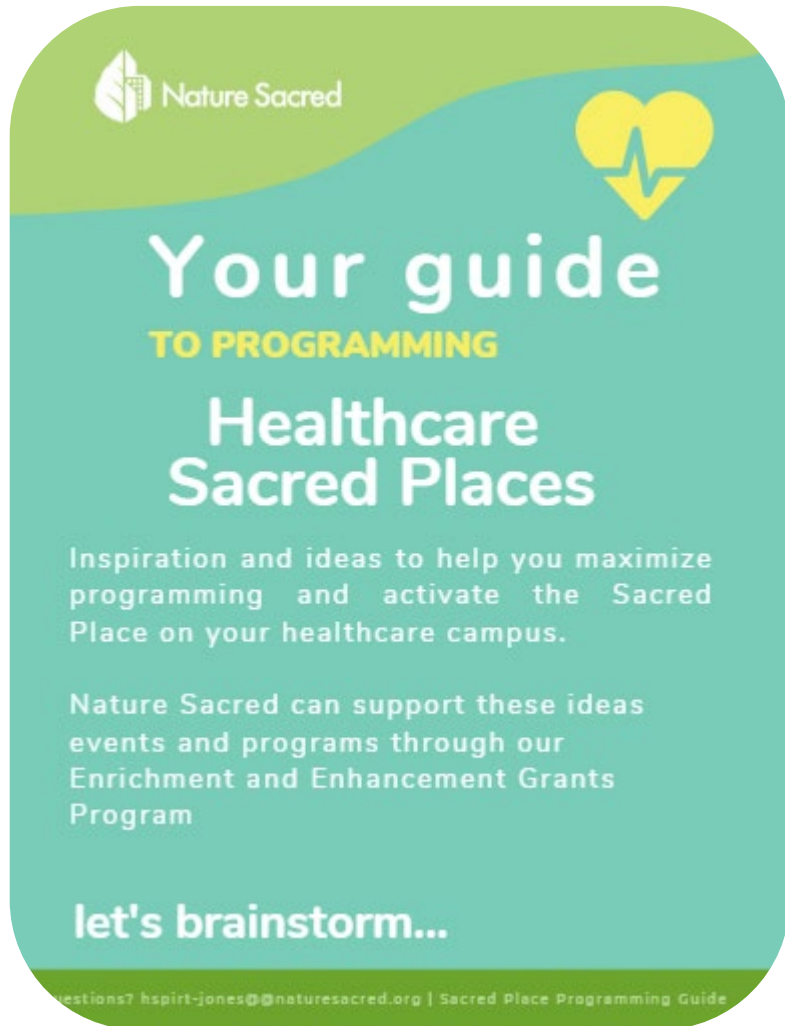


Request for new journal

Sometimes journals are damaged or walk away, and that's okay! If your journal is filled or something has happened to it, submit a request here and we'll replace it ASAP (on us!)

[VIEW](#)

Putting peer-to-peer learning into practice



 Nature Sacred

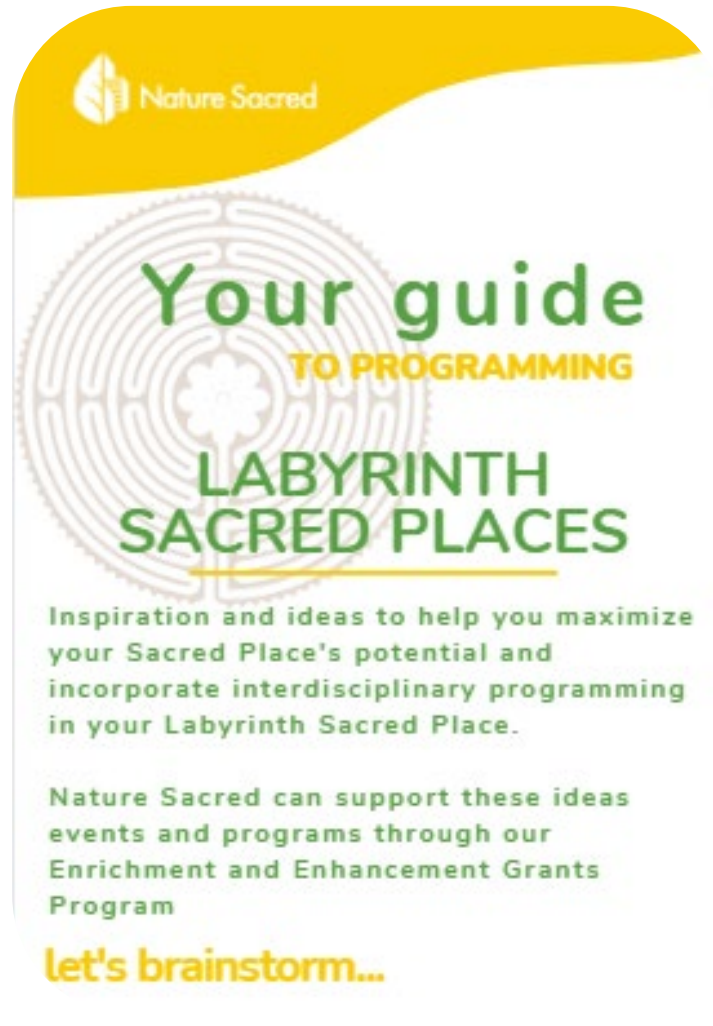
Your guide
TO PROGRAMMING
Healthcare Sacred Places


Inspiration and ideas to help you maximize programming and activate the Sacred Place on your healthcare campus.

Nature Sacred can support these ideas events and programs through our Enrichment and Enhancement Grants Program

let's brainstorm...

Questions? hspirt-jones@naturesacred.org | Sacred Place Programming Guide



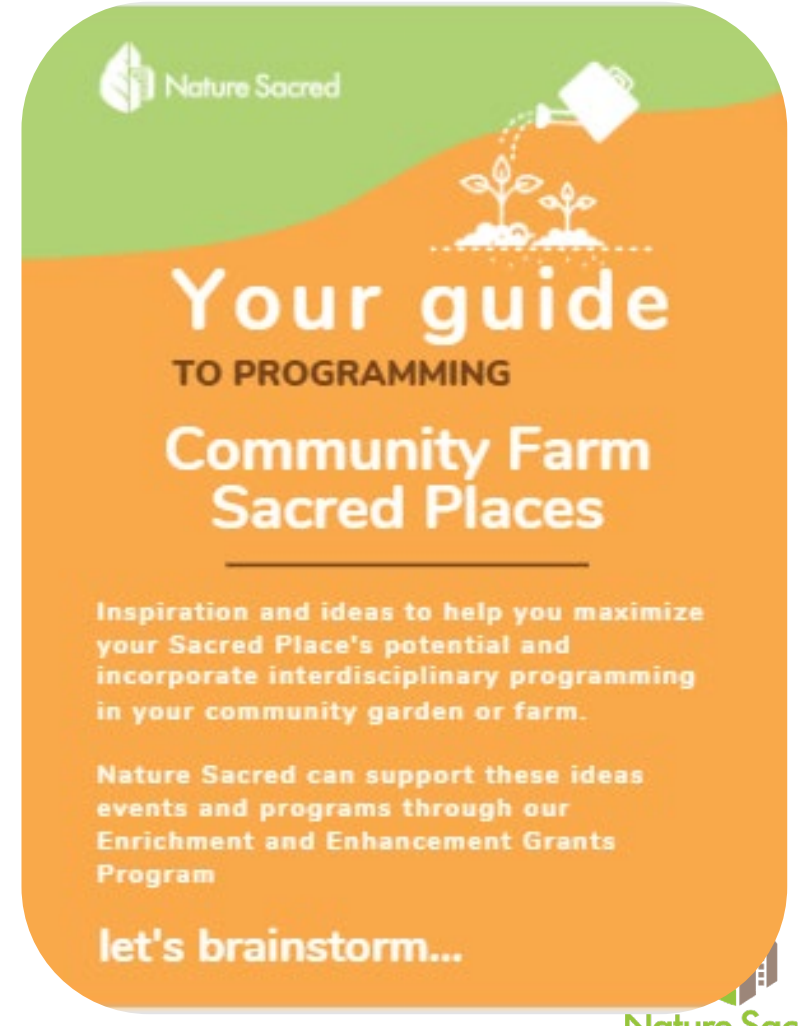
 Nature Sacred


Your guide
TO PROGRAMMING
LABYRINTH SACRED PLACES

Inspiration and ideas to help you maximize your Sacred Place's potential and incorporate interdisciplinary programming in your Labyrinth Sacred Place.

Nature Sacred can support these ideas events and programs through our Enrichment and Enhancement Grants Program

let's brainstorm...




 Nature Sacred

Your guide
TO PROGRAMMING
Community Farm Sacred Places

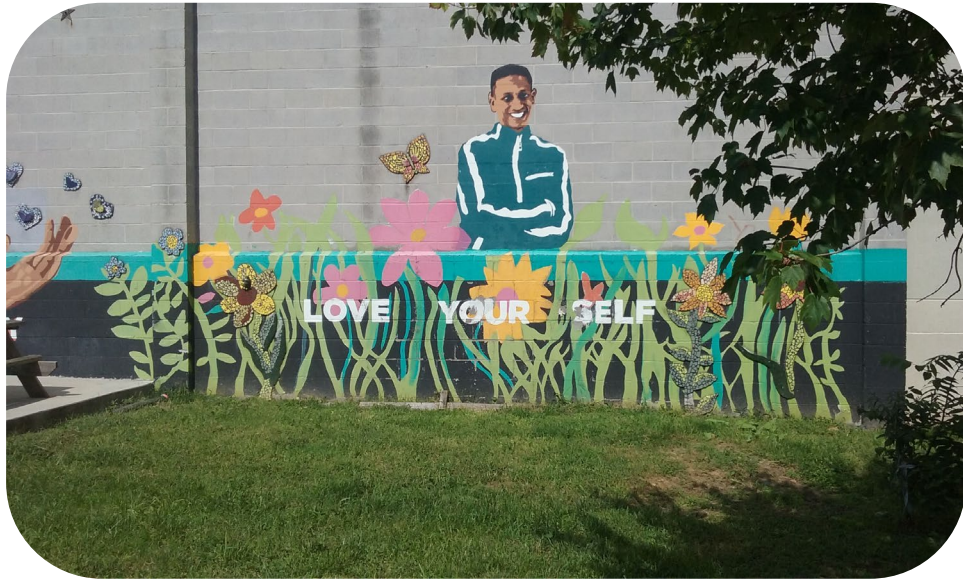
Inspiration and ideas to help you maximize your Sacred Place's potential and incorporate interdisciplinary programming in your community garden or farm.

Nature Sacred can support these ideas events and programs through our Enrichment and Enhancement Grants Program

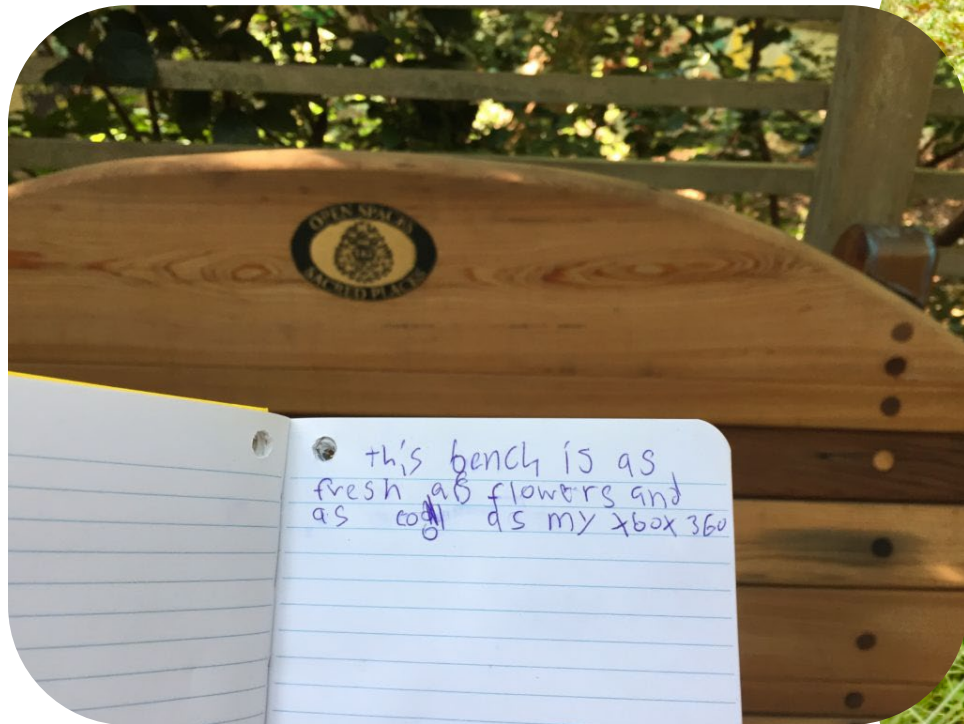
let's brainstorm...

 Nature Sacred

Intersection of Change



Mount Washington Arboretum



Minary's Dream Alliance



Filbert Street Garden

Sacred Place Vision

Statement: This Sacred Place will revitalize the shared habitat of Filbert Street Garden's many creatures and caretakers, re-envision the garden's capacity to serve its community and work to make the space accessible to all visitors. By growing a refuge rooted in justice, Filbert Street Garden seeks to offer a Sacred Place where those who feel lost can be found.



Imagine What We Can Do Together

[Naturesacred.org](https://naturesacred.org)



Nature Sacred