

Provost Farm

Agricultural Heritage Center and Environmental Green Space

Project Description

[K. McClung, Assoc. AIA, Assoc. NOMA, Associate Professor, UL School of Architecture and Design]

As outlined in episode 5 of *The 1619 Project*, a section of land belonging to **Provost Farm** in New Iberia parish is currently under litigation over the property's foreclosure, which was facilitated by discriminatory loan practices. This condition is not new to **Black farmers** in America; there is an insidious history in America of Black growers and land-owners being discriminated against and having their land taken, either through intimidation, destructive, or institutional means. While we cannot not possibly speak to the allegations on both sides of the conflict between Provost Farms and the various institutions involved, what we can speak to is what instances like this do to the **legacy of Black agriculture and land-ownership** in America. More importantly, we can use design to highlight the benefits of preserving these spaces and addressing the **history** of natives and Blacks in the agriculture on U.S. soil, as a way of challenging the inequities that still plague people of color today.

What are the ways in which architecture is connected to the serious inequities that plague the built environment and its marginalized populations? What methods do we use to **examine** the crossings between architecture, society, and the cultures that shape both? How can these examinations be utilized to ensure for adequate situational consideration of all stakeholders and individuals affected? What methods can we **employ** to guarantee that effective critical architectural discourse results in equally effective architectural responses? With this project, students taking a course called **Design and Social Equity** engage in serious cultural inquiry about the relationship between architecture, people, and the socio-cultural issues that affect every-day life. These students explored these spatial intricacies through diagrammatic studies, in an effort to **understand** how valuable these histories are to our society. Students, by engaging in a design project that bring these issues into sharp focus, will explore how a situational design approach can help **promote equity** and achieve justice for all involved.

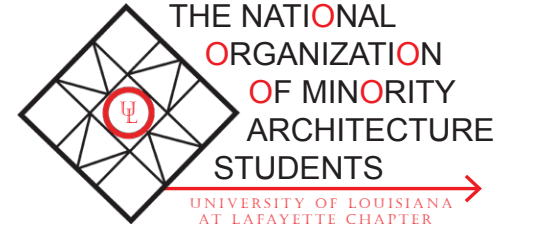


Images (Clockwise): June Provost and workers on Provost Farm; Frank Provost in front of tractor; Frank Provost with his Wife and Daughter; June and Angela Provost pose in front of Provost Farm; Angela Provost stands with one of her paintings, inspired by Louisiana farming culture.



Provost Farm

#CultivateEquity



Project Focus & Goals

Preserve History



Acknowledge the history of the land on which Provost farms sits, its people, and celebrate their rich, diverse culture; Use the existing structures on site to preserve the history and culture of New Iberia, LA.

Operate Sustainably



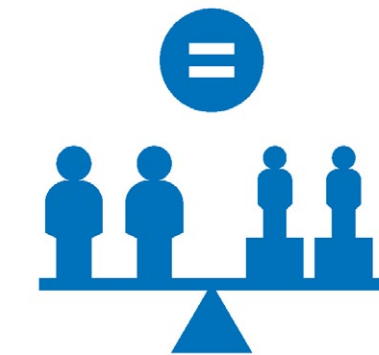
Be environmentally responsible by using recycled materials, strategies for water conservation, and renewable energy; Produce safe and clean sugarcane, produce and hemp products from crops.

Connect Communities



Connect communities, promote community gardening, and provide agricultural education; support local schools and residents by hosting educational and recreational events on Provost Farm.

Cultivate & Promote Equity



Cultivate equity through the celebration of agricultural heritage, recreation and environmental responsibility; pair up with minority professionals, design students, and scholars.

Provost Farm Background and Mission

Though the property that is now Provost Farm was purchased in 1964 by June's grandfather, Frank Provost, the family itself has a history of farming that stretches back to the Antebellum era. This legacy is shadowed by African enslavement, but also prompted incredible innovation by African American sugar growers, including the planter wagon, which was originally designed by Leonard Julien. In 2005, the Provost family experienced its first tidal surge flooding after Hurricane Rita, severely affecting the farm's economic security. By 2014, parts of the property were facing threats of foreclosure due to USDA secured farm debt and predatory bank practices. This prompted June and Angela Provost, the direct beneficiaries of the farms, to begin an activism and awareness campaign focused on the plights of Black farmers in America. The Provosts understood that even if the farm was not lost to foreclosure, it was under threat of destruction from climate change and removal was imminent. In 2018 they made the decision to act and they have been making important gains in the realm of Farm equity and preservation of agricultural history. June and Angela Provost, in addition to working on their farm, now travel the world to spread their message and learn more about Black farming culture. They have traveled to places such as Accra, Ghana to visit the MIM Cashew Farm and Rum Distillery, to Paris, France, and participating in speaking engagements such as The Barbara Jordan National Forum Panel at the University of Texas and the Good Food Network Conference Panel in New Orleans, Louisiana.



Image credit: Audra Mulkern - The Guardian

Preserve & Celebrate History

Provost Farm Agricultural Heritage Center and Environmental Green Space



Acknowledge the Complex and Rich Histories of The Land, its People and Their Cultures

[K. McClung, Assoc. AIA, Assoc. NOMA, Associate Professor, UL School of Architecture and Design]

The Land and its People

The land that Provost farm sits upon has a rich and complex history that precedes European colonization. Resting about three miles west of the Bayou Teche in the Attakapas region, its soil was once occupied by The Chitimacha Indians, or the Sitimacha-"people of the many waters", whose culture was deeply connected to the land and just as beautiful. The architecture exhibited in the permanent villages of the Chitimacha was what we today would call "sustainable architecture", as they were constructed from natural materials found in the area like cane, wood, and palmetto leaves. The Chitimacha were avid basket weavers and the practice was deeply rooted in the ecology of the area, reflecting the tribe's history, spirituality, and daily lives. The territory of the Chitimacha steadily began to diminish starting in the 1800s. An 1848 map by John La Tourette and other records indicate the land was surrounded by legal parcels along the Bayou Teche, belonging to several French-speaking landowners engaged in the production of sugar cane. Census maps from 1840 indicate that significantly more than half of the souls in St. Martin parish were enslaved individuals of likely West African roots (4,641 out of a total 8,674 people were enslaved) and an additional 484 who were designated as free people of color.

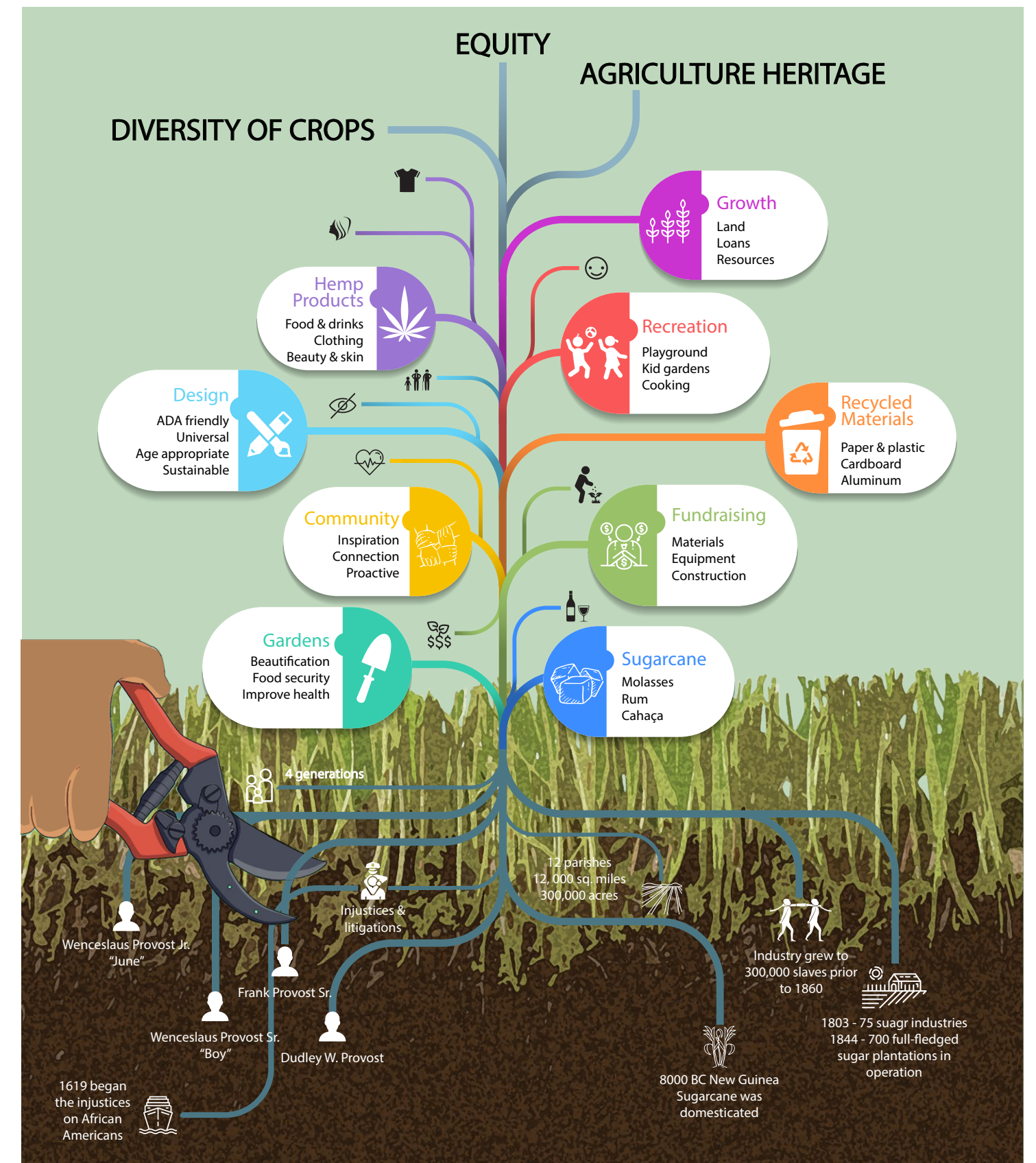
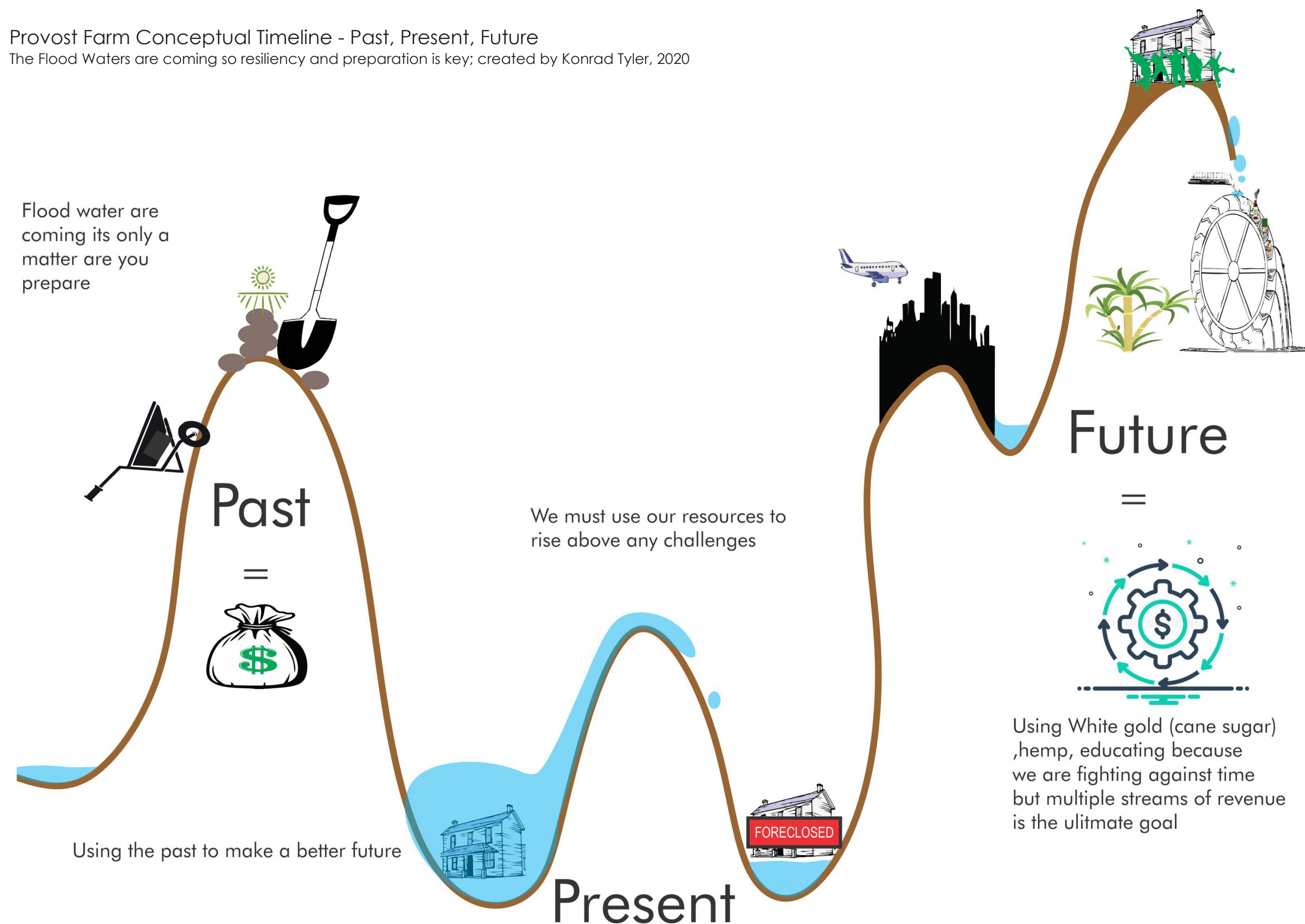
Given that the sugar cane planting strategies of the time, which were focused on high yields, required almost constant laborious activity, the descendants of enslaved West Africans have a unique connection with the land. Acting as both farm and factory, these lands required that enslaved people work long days all year round, spreading out into the landscape to collect grass and weeds to feed the animals and manure for the crop. This means that people of West African ancestry spent a lot of time touching and pouring their very life-blood onto the lands of this area. This blend antebellum agricultural life and West African culture can still be seen today in the music, art, unique dialects, oratory storytelling, and literature of Black Americans today. Like the Chitimacha, enslaved Blacks were also excellent craftsman who kept plantations running like well-oiled machines. Several innovations to streamline the work on sugar plantations were created by enslaved West Africans, freed Blacks, and their descendants. In 1964, Leonard Julien, a farmer from Modeste, Louisiana developed the first fully mechanized planter of whole sugarcane. Before his invention, the sugar industry had successfully mechanized almost all of the agricultural aspects of the sugar cane industry, but planting was still done by hand. Provost Farm seeks to preserve and celebrate these unique histories for today and many generations to come.

Provost Farm Conceptual Timelines

Design students created these conceptual timelines to show how the history of Provost Farm connects to the new vision of Provost Farm as a center for Agricultural Heritage and justice. The diagram to the upper right envisions the history of Provost Farm as roots that were either cut or cultivated, and the future initiatives as the growth that the Provosts hope to cultivate through their new dynamic programming. The image to the bottom left outlines the challenges faced by the Provost Farm family and the various ways those challenges have informed their vision for the future. These images are intended to graphically convey the comprehensive picture of the farm's purpose, in the past, present, and future, for clarity and understanding. The students saw the past as a motivating force for the new mission of Provost Farm and wanted this connection to be clear.

Provost Farm Conceptual Timeline - Past, Present, Future

The Flood Waters are coming so resiliency and preparation is key; created by Konrad Tyler, 2020



Provost Farm Conceptual Timeline - Diversity, Equity, and Agricultural Heritage; created by Shaela Nelson, 2020



Leonard Julien, Jr. and Carlos Julien stand by the sugarcane planter invented by their father Leonard Julien, Sr. after delivering it to the WBR Museum Wednesday, Sept. 26, 2018. (The Advocate)

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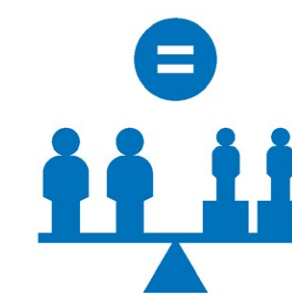
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Cultivate & Promote Equity

Provost Farm Agricultural Heritage Center and Environmental Green Space



Provide Opportunities and Highlighting Inequities

[K. McClung, Assoc. AIA, Assoc. NOMA, Associate Professor, UL School of Architecture and Design]

The new mission of Provost Farm is steeped in the collective experiences of the Provost Family as minority farmers in New Iberia, LA. The discrimination they've faced resulted in some painful losses in terms of their families heritage and legacy, prompting June and Angela Provost to reexamine the overall purpose of the farm and how it addresses issues of inequality and inequity. As such, the defining mantra of Provost Farm has evolved to demonstrate their desire to promote equity and cultivate community. Provost Farm plans to meet the edicts of this mantra in a variety of ways.

concepts of identity, accessibility, and age. These explorations reveal all of the considerations to be made about the design of Provost Farm, so it may become an equitable and Just place.

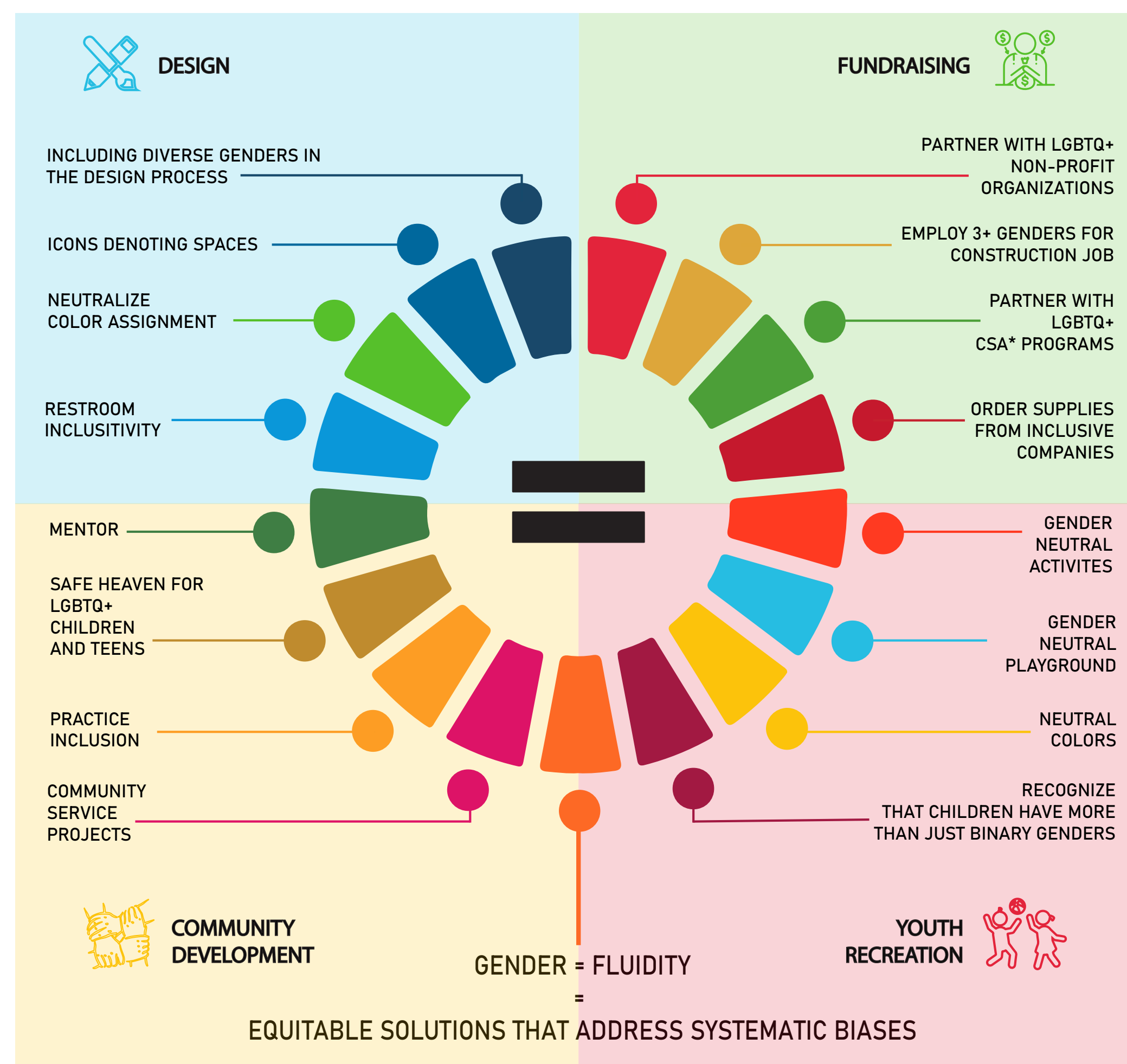
The diagram to the right explores four areas of focus for Provost Farm and suggests strategies for promoting equity in those areas. The diagram below is reflective about the ways that issues of inequity like racism, sexism, ageism, homophobia, employment discrimination, housing discrimination, marriage inequality intersect and sometimes compound.

Certainly, one of the most important goals is to produce safe and clean sugarcane, produce and hemp products from the crops grown at Provost Farm. This would be done using heavily vetted, sustainable growing and production practices that result in a superior products, with minimal harm done to the land itself. Another way Provost Farm plans to cultivate equity is through history, the celebration of agricultural heritage, education, recreation, and environmental responsibility. By making space for stories and items that contextualize the history and heritage of Provost Farms, the community is invited into the cultivation of the Provost Farm future. Community involvement allows for educational, recreational, and coalition building opportunities for

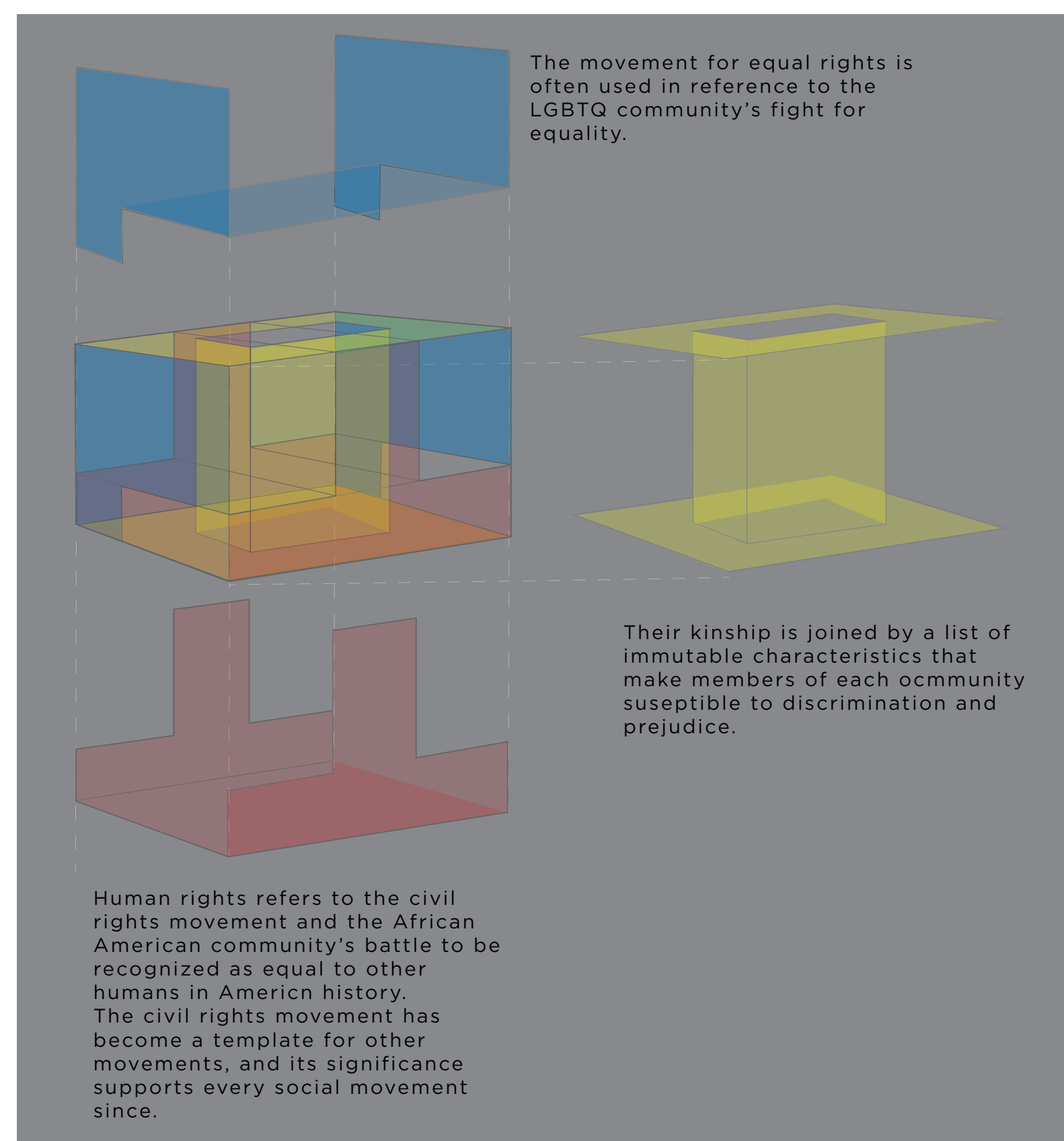
When thinking about the mission of Provost Farm, the students felt strongly that the concept of Equity had to be considered extensively when diagramming, especially when thinking about bringing in the community. Consequently, the diagrams displayed reflect the ways that activities tied to Provost Farm intersect with

IMMUTABLE CHARACTERISTICS			
E Q U A L R I G H T S	PREJUDICE	EMPLOYMENT DISCRIMINATION	COMMUNITY ASSOCIATIONS
	BULLYING	INCOME INEQUALITY	GENDER IDENTITY
	HATE CRIMES	FINANCIAL INSECURITY	INFLECTION OF VOICE
	MARRIAGE INEQUALITY	ACCESS TO BENEFITS	NATURAL HAIR
			SKIN COLOR
			HOUSING DISCRIMINATION
HUMAN RIGHTS			

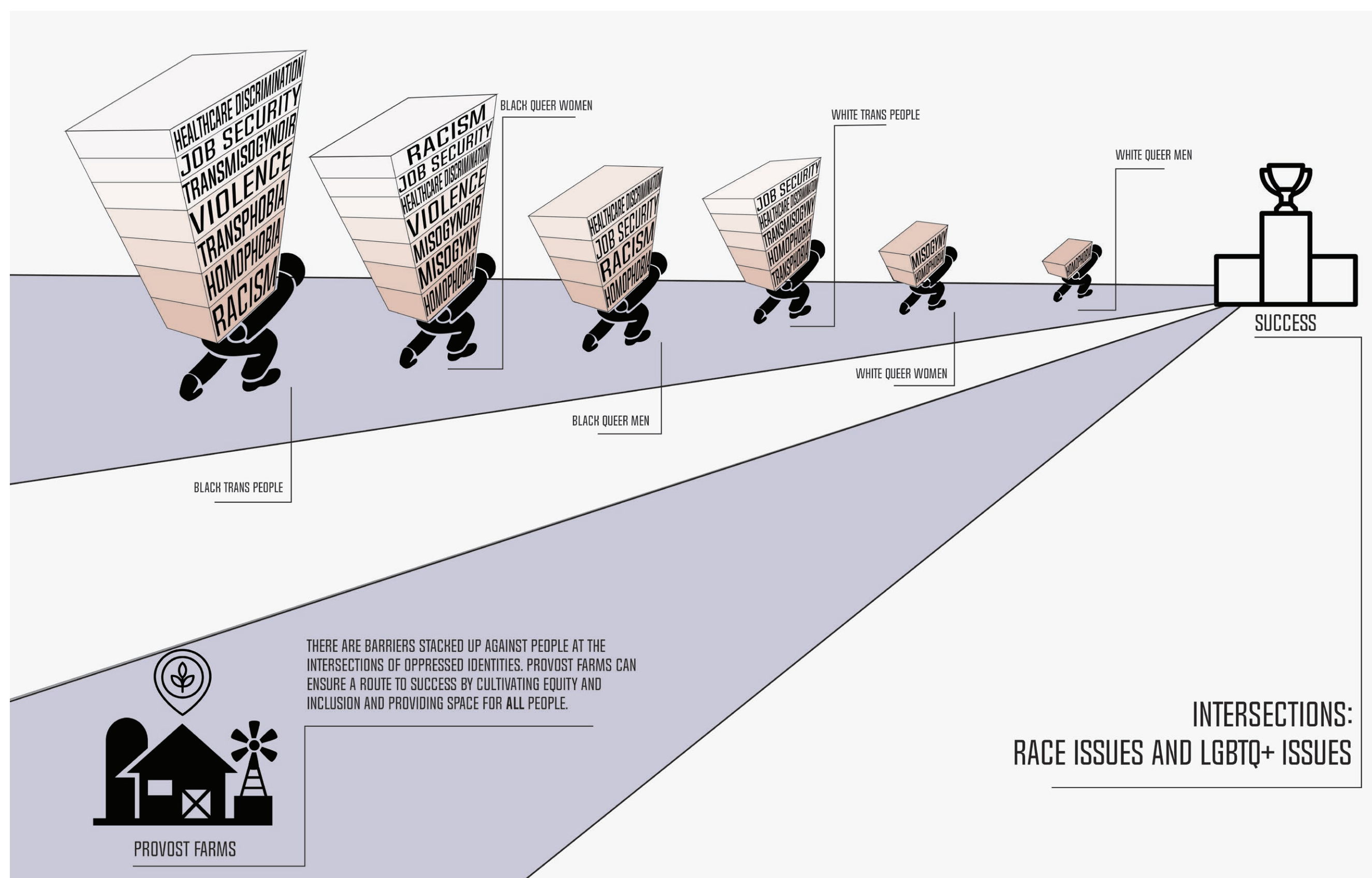
Immutable Characteristics of Equal Rights and Human Rights; created by Adam Ortego, 2020



Equitable Solutions For Inclusiveness Diagram - Four Areas of Exploration; created by Shaela Nelson, 2020



A Spatial Study of the Intersection of the Equal Rights and Human Rights Movements; created by Adam Ortego, 2020



Intersectional and Compounded Oppressions - Providing Space for All at Provost Farms; created by LaShayla Lumpkins, 2020

Operate Sustainably

Provost Farm Agricultural Heritage Center and Environmental Green Space



Sustainable Strategies for Economic and Physical Resilience

[K. McClung, Assoc. AIA, Assoc. NOMA, Associate Professor, UL School of Architecture and Design]

The Sustainability Goals of Provost Farm focus on the concept of Sustainability at multiple scales and from a variety of perspectives. As detailed in Episode of the 1619 project, there is a larger sustainability issue with Black-owned farms. Just 1.7% of all farms in the U.S. are Black-owned and operated, and 1.4% of all producers in the U.S. are Black. This reflects a history which has used Black labor to cultivate land for the economic benefit of others, but has denied, stripped, and robbed, Black people of the right to own land themselves. This is why it is a stark juxtaposition that a people whose ancestors spent four-hundred years cultivating this land under chattel slavery and the sharecropping system, now suffering from Food Insecurity. Food Insecurity in Black communities is an alarming issue underscoring a host of other disparities. According to the U.S. Department of Agriculture [USDA], 26% of African American households are food insecure, which is 12% higher than the national average. Additionally, Food Insecurity can lead to chronic illness, which severe affects quality of life, especially when one factors in associated medical costs, physical limitations, and disability. One study found that older adults with Food Insecurity had similar functional limitations to food secure adults that were 15 years older. When looking at these realities, the students realized they would have to consider the concept of sustainability from the perspectives of strategies, materials, the land, and the people. Sustainable Design strategies have to be employed to conserve water and limit the use of non-renewable resources. Materials have to be used sustainably, responsibly, and with consideration for the land and its ecology. The land must be protected and cultivated for resilience and Food Waste must be eliminated. Most importantly, people and communities must be sustained with options for fresh food, nutrition classes, opportunities to learn about gardening, and support networks for Black farmers.

The Sustainability Goals for Provost Farm are:

- To be environmentally responsible by using recycled materials and employing strategies for water conservation.
- To utilize existing structures to preserve the history and culture of the area.
- To produce safe and clean sugarcane, produce and hemp products from farm crops.

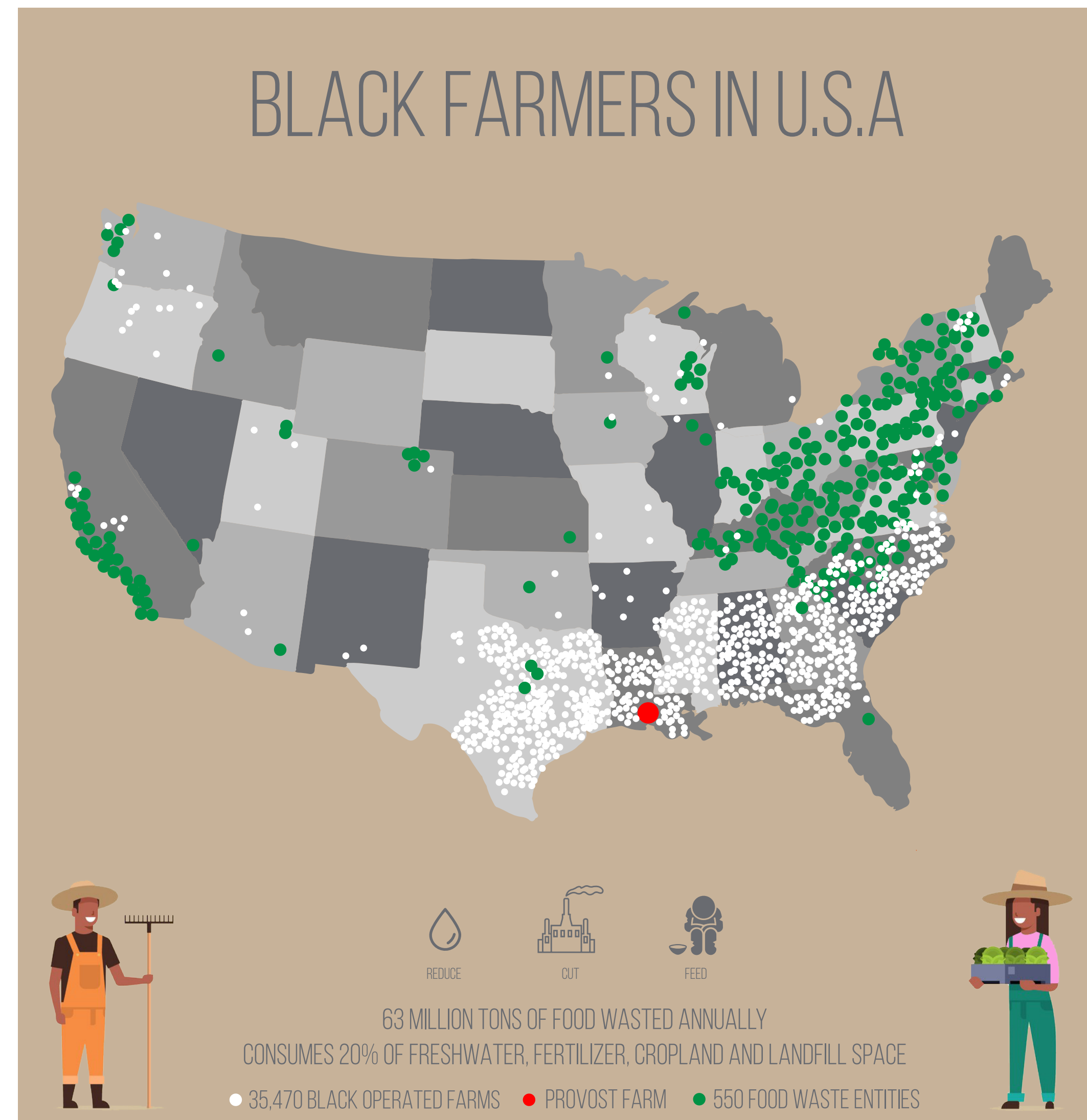
After considering these goals, the students explored diagramming the various issues that undercut them. Ideas of Environmental Responsibility and the plight of Black Farmers led to the creation of the diagram on the right, which focuses on the concept of the amount of resources dedicated to farming versus the amount of food wasted annually. The concept of the Net Zero farm is explored in the diagram to the bottom left and its strategies speak directly to Provost Farm's Sustainability Goals. The diagram to the bottom right is a perspective that is especially unique to farms in South Louisiana. The Louisiana Coast is losing more than 25,000 acres of land a year, the largest contributor to this being soil subsidence due to saltwater intrusion. This has contributed to many communities in south Louisiana suffering from the devastating affects of flooding. This diagrams explores the ways that Provost Farm, being so close to the coast, could achieve resiliency in the face of this growing problem. All of these diagrams provide important consideration points for the preservation, sustainability, and resiliency of Provost Farm and the people of the community.

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Exploring the Overlapping Concepts of Black Farmers, Water Conservation, Food Insecurity, and Food Waste; created by Shaela Nelson, 2020

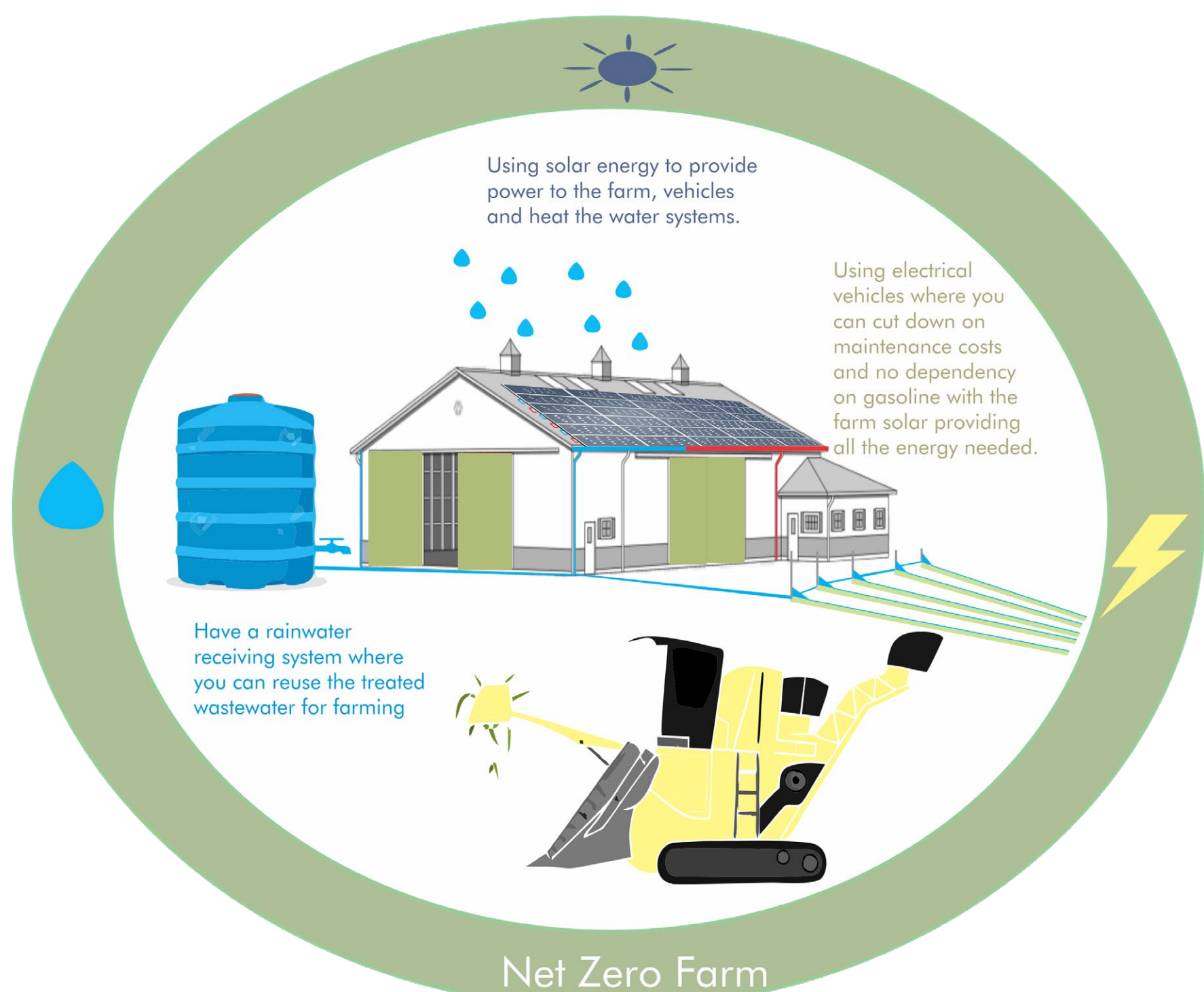


Diagram of Strategies towards a Net Zero Farm; created by Konrad Tyler, 2020

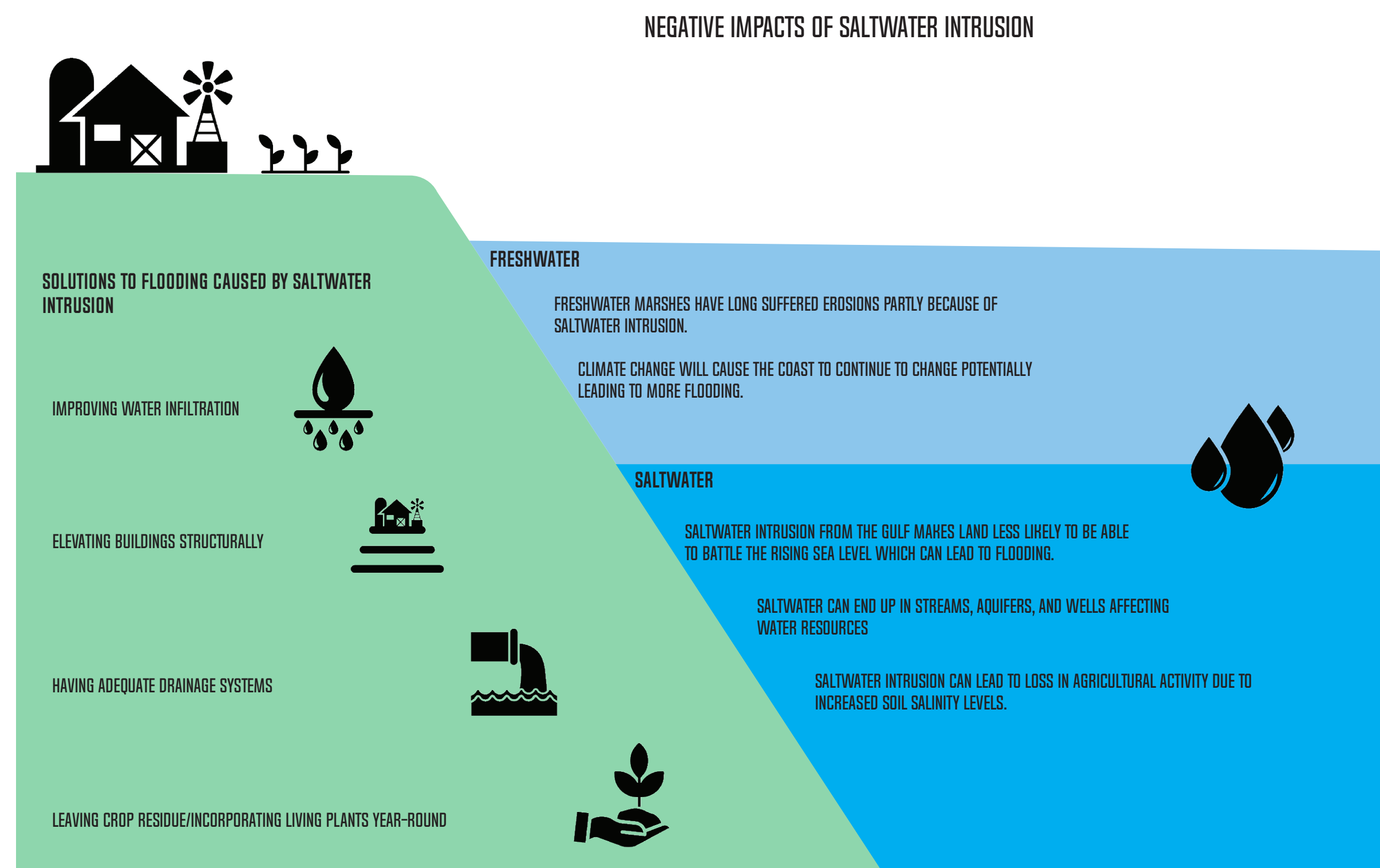


Diagram Exploring the Negative Impacts of Saltwater Intrusion and How they Could Affect Provost Farm; created by LaShayla Lumpkins, 2020

Connect Communities

Provost Farm Agricultural Heritage Center and Environmental Green Space



Strengthening Communities Through Education and Recreation

[K. McClung, Assoc. AIA, Assoc. NOMA, Associate Professor, UL School of Architecture and Design]

One of the truly beautiful aspects of the new mission of Provost Farm is its strategies for connecting to, developing, and supporting local communities. Agriculture plays an important part in the lives and health of communities and the Provost Farm has several ways in which it wants to leverage its assets to benefit of thousands of families in its vicinity. An Agricultural Heritage Center would fall in-line with preserving history, while providing the community with an important educational resource. The gardens at Provost Farm could be a great place for the community to not only acquire fresh, home-grown produce and herbs, but also to learn more about gardening and nutrition. Provost Farm intends to become a venue for recreational and educational activities that emphasize the importance of environmental responsibility. In addition, the farm could be a great stage for fundraising events that benefit the community.

The owners also recognized the importance of connecting to other kinds of communities, like the academic and professional communities, in order to make important research connections and archival opportunities. These diagrammatic studies were completed by students through academic partnerships with academics at the University of Louisiana at Lafayette's School of Architecture and Design, the Ernest J. Gaines Center at UL, student-run design organizations like the UL Chapter of the National Organization of Minority Architecture Students, and professional design organizations like the Louisiana chapter of the National Organization of Minority Architects. Partnerships with multiple entities allows for the weaving together of communities that is connective, empowering and enduring. The students, when they discussed ideas of how to foster connections between Provost Farm and the community, focused on activities and scenarios.

The goals that specifically align with and benefit communities are:

- To cultivate equity through history, the celebration of agricultural heritage, recreation and environmental responsibility.
- To pair up with minority professionals, design students, and scholars to realize their vision
- To support community gardens and educational field days for students
- To support educational and entertaining farm fundraising events

The image to the right is a digital collage that envisions a refurbished space at Provost Farm, one in which recreation, history and education could all come together to benefit of all. The diagram to bottom left reflects on ways to engage the site at Provost Farm. Accessibility and design for the impaired immediately became an important aspect to consider for ensuring equity when bringing in the community. The Diagram to the bottom right diagrams the various ways communities can interface with Provost Farm. Local schools can partner with Provost Farm for educational workshops and demonstrations. A Volunteer-based Community Garden could help with cultivating fresh food for the community. An on-site farmer's market, allowed develop on well-designed overflow space at Provost Farm, offers opportunities for interaction and commerce. A curated museum, equipped with space for storytelling and tours, could serve as an important and educational community connector as well. All of these aspects when considered in the design of Provost Farm's new agricultural Heritage and Research Center would help set the stage for vital community connections.



Art Education Programs and Opportunities

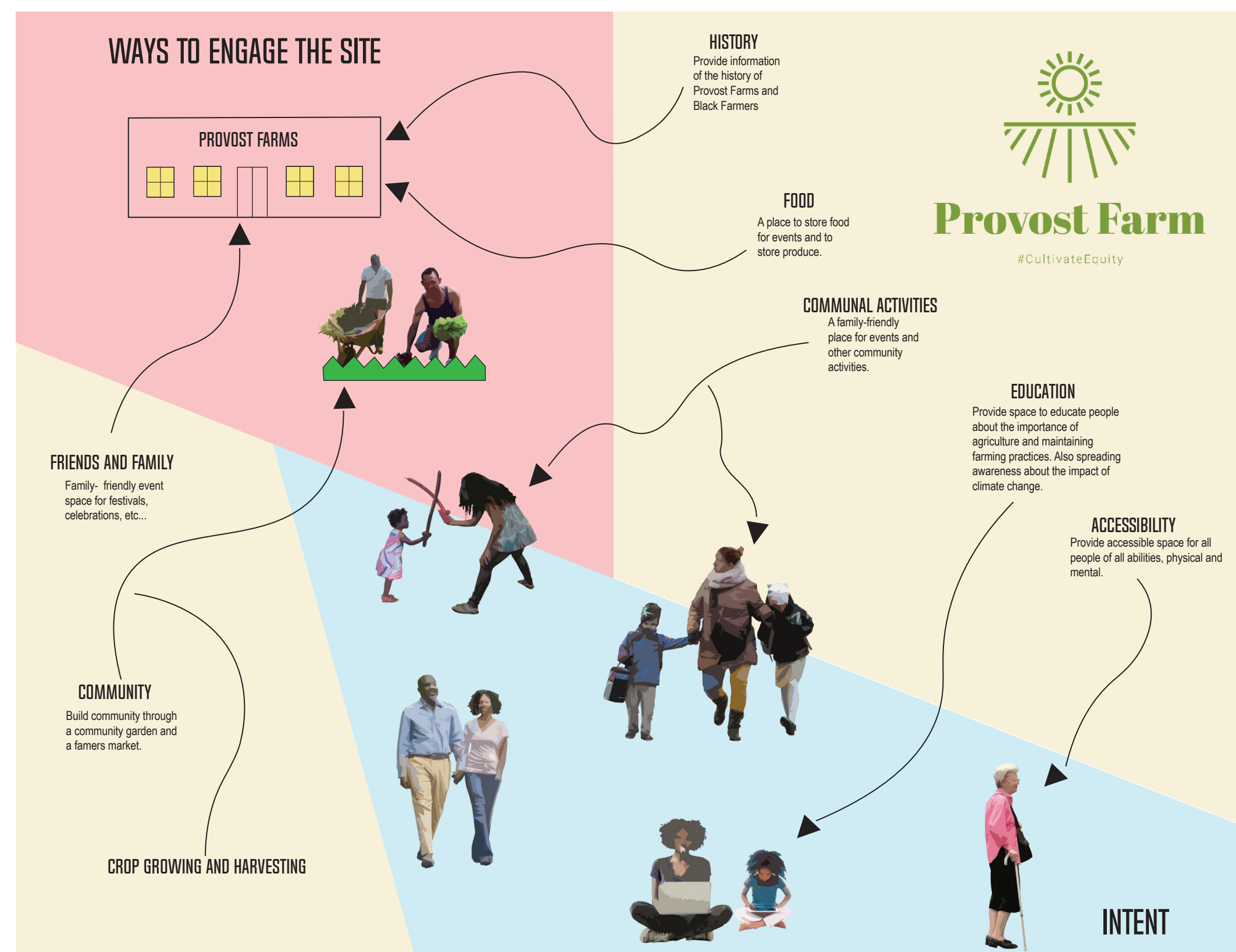
Historic Artifacts, Exhibits, and Events

Accessible Spaces for the Physical, Hearing, and Vision Impaired

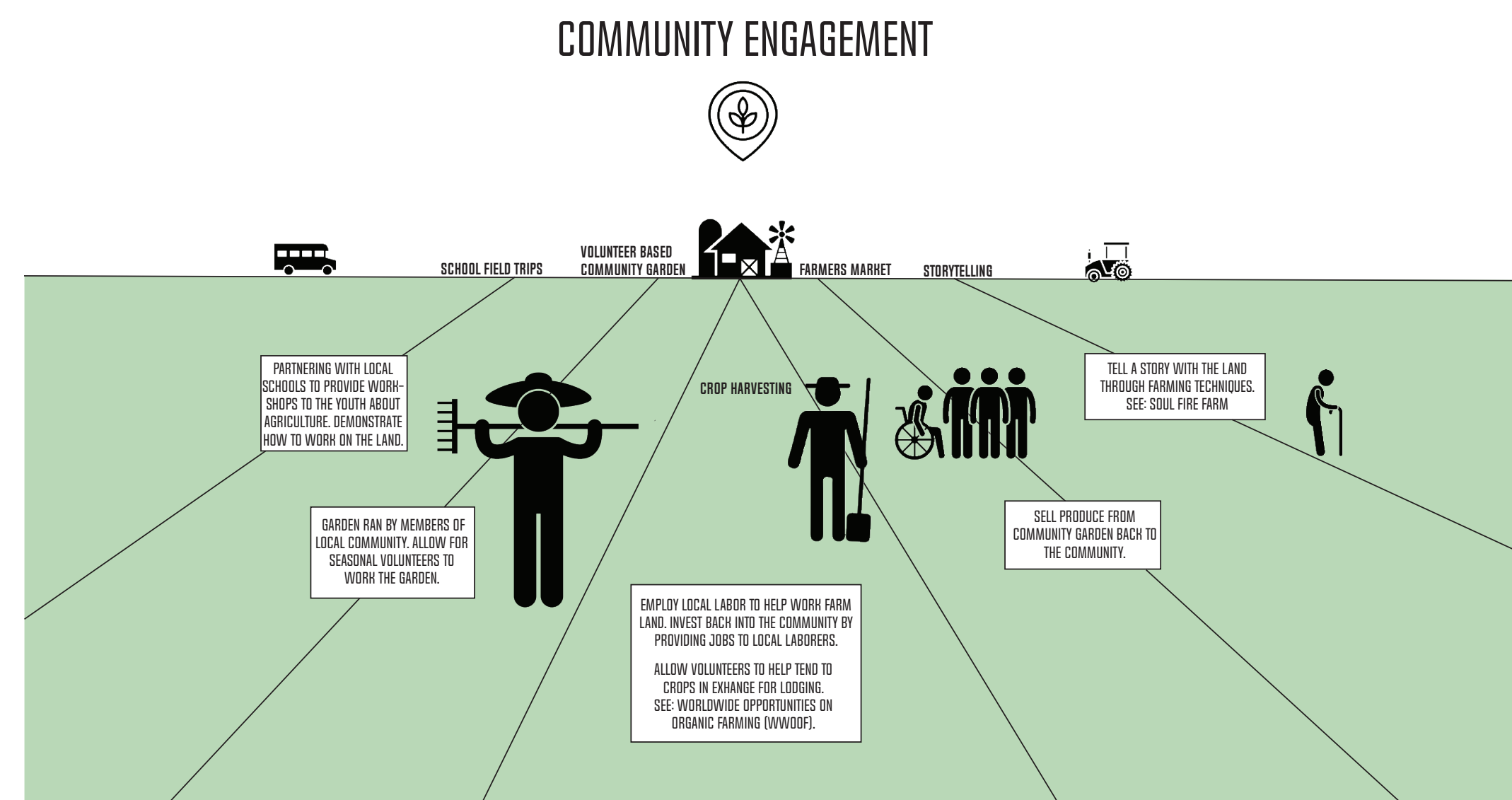
Recreational Activities, Community Gardening, and Farmer's Market

Storytelling, Tours and Agricultural Demonstrations

Digital Collage; created by Kirsten Cases, 2020



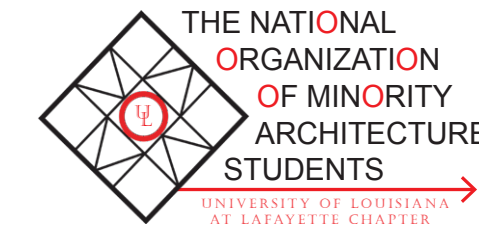
Speculative Diagram on Ways for Community Patrons to Engage the Site at Provost Farm; created by LaShayla Lumpkins, 2020



Speculative Diagram Exploring Strategies for Connecting the Community at Provost Farm; created by LaShayla Lumpkins, 2020

Design Strategies

Provost Farm Agricultural Heritage Center and Environmental Green Space



Suggested Sustainable, Community Boosting, and Equitable Design Strategies [K. McClung, Assoc. AIA, Assoc. NOMA, Associate Professor, UL School of Architecture and Design]

In exploring the various goals outlining the mission of Provost Farm, several design considerations and strategies emerged that will drive the future design of Provost Farm. This phase of exploration revealed that while there are barriers and obstacles to overcome in cultivating equity on Provost Farm, there exists numerous assets as well. The site not only is a traversable distance away from New Iberia, LA, but also right off a major highway, which connects it in a very real way to other communities in the Southern Louisiana region. Provost Farm is in prime location physically to connect to community entities and bolster the many festivals that take place in the region. The diagram to the right reveals how the location of Provost Farm connects to various community entities and spaces in the region.

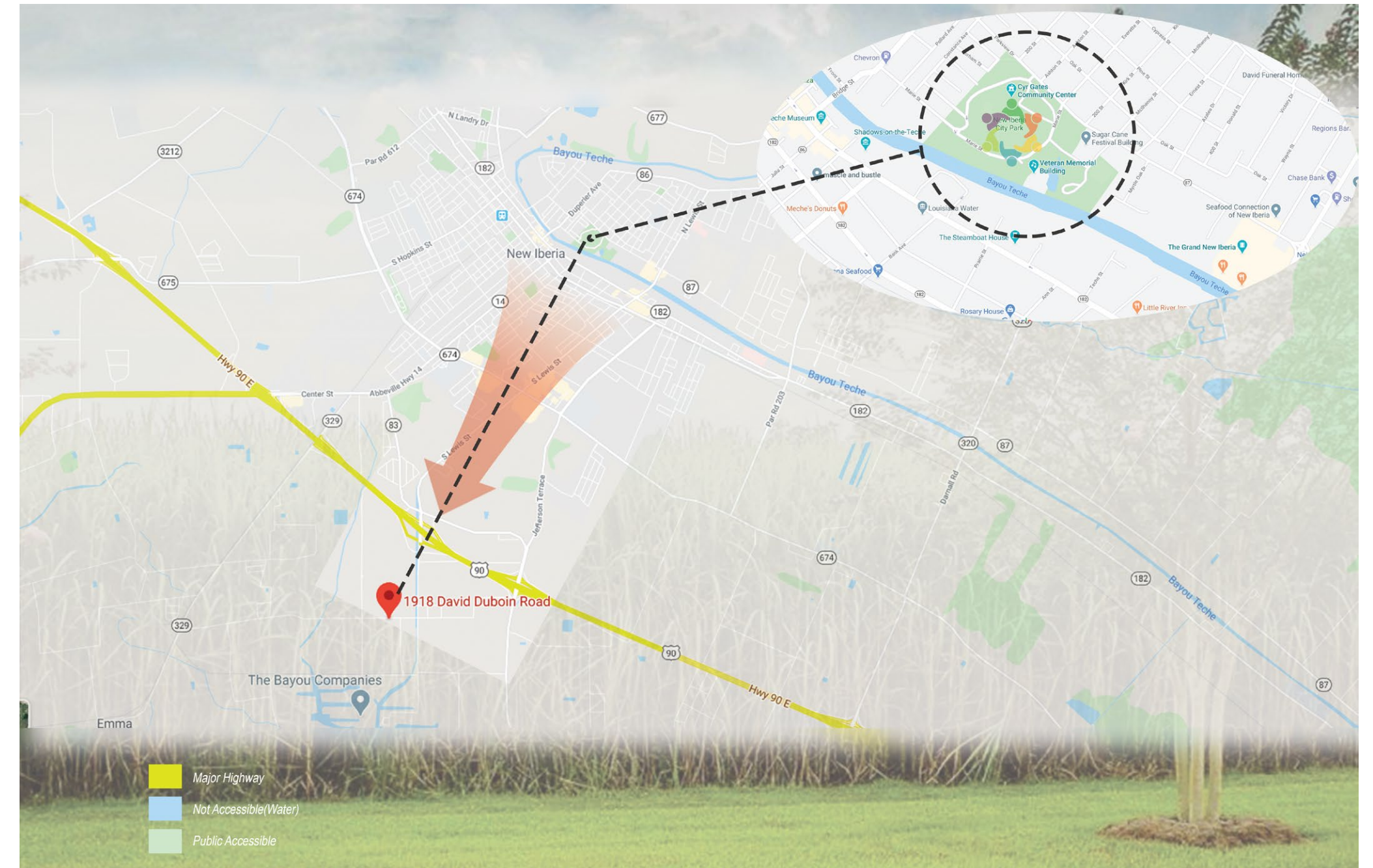
Unfortunately, the location also brings its challenges. The numerous waterways in the area along with its low elevation make flooding a huge issue which could bring a host of other problems. The area is in constant flux and the ecology of the area has adapted to the changing conditions. Consequently, the design and changes that take place at Provost Farm must respond to these changes as well. The image to the lower left reveals some of the strategies that may have to take place during design. Undoubtedly, the residential structures of the farm will need to be raised as well as the garden beds. The scheme below also explores drainage improvements which could make room for sidewalks and trees, simultaneously improving the connectivity of Provost Farm across David Duboin road.

In terms of the program and spaces at Provost Farm, the warehouse near the planting fields is the perfect space for cultural and exhibition space. The space would first need to be renovated due to structural damage at the roof and roof structure.

The photographs to the middle right reveal the potential of the existing structures an exhibition space despite its disrepair. Since the mission of Provost Farm includes the reuse of existing objects and structures, the new multi-use and exhibition space could preserves as much of the building as possible while the objects could be either preserved for exhibition or recycled for use in the renovation. The space would be divided into exhibition and cultural space, with the ability for events to overflow into the excess spaces around it.

The diagram to the bottom left also reveals the way various community activities could connect to programs at Provost Farm. The newly raised residential structure would be preserved for important community meetings/events, rentable spaces, and storage. The new cultural and exhibition space would be the site of schools trips, dining, and shopping for Provost farm products and merchandise. The spaces around both structures could be fluid, alternatively serving as overflow space for events like farmer's markets and space for excess gardening beds as needed. The diagram to the bottom right looks more specifically at how the design of Provost Farms can be equitable for all.

Designing the new spaces so they are accepting to those with physical, vision, and hearing disabilities sends a powerful message about Provost Farm's position on community and honoring everyone within it. Ensuring those spaces have gender-neutral bathrooms dis-invites confusion about gender identity that could make some feel unwelcome. The strategies found here are the start of a scheme that could ensure Provost Farm carries out their mission to cultivate equity and preserve the heritage of Black farming in America.



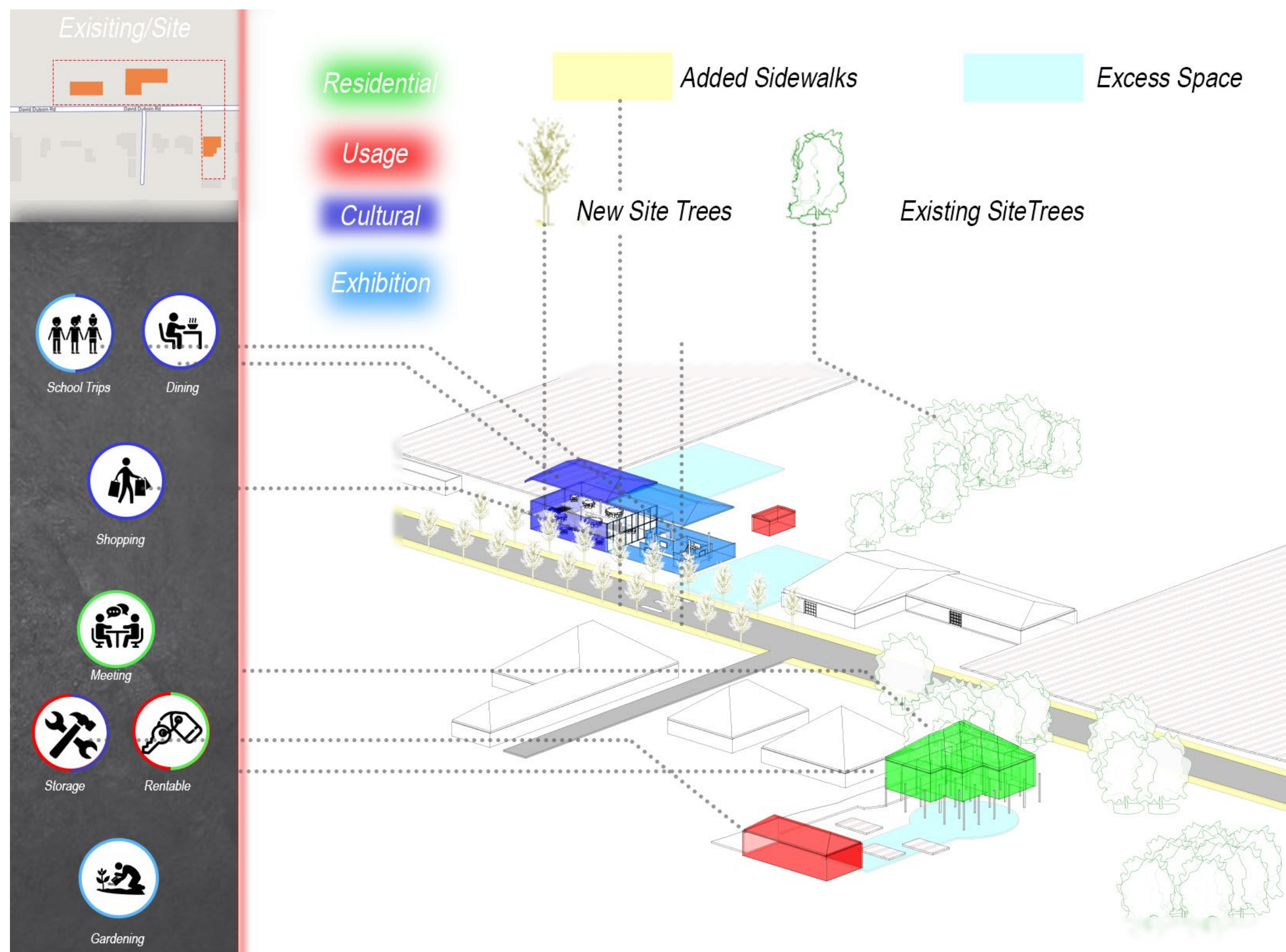
Site Diagram Showing the Location, Major Features, and Community Connections to Provost Farm; created by Arzavia Dobard, 2020



These are photographs of the existing structure slated to be the exhibit/multi-use space. Scrap metals and metal objects found in the warehouse could be recycled and used in the renovation of the existing structures or preserved as artifacts for the museum exhibit. Though a few joist may have to be replaced, most of the existing structure can be preserved and supported with new supports. Existing overhangs can be utilized as overflow space or an outdoor dining patio for special events. The renderings to the right show how these overflow spaces could be utilized.



The image below reveals how considerations can be made for accessibility and equity in the new multi-use and exhibition space. Lowered windows, ramps, considerate lighting and gender-neutral restrooms all would make this new space equitable for all.



Site Design strategies for Provost Farm; created by Arzavia Dobard, 2020

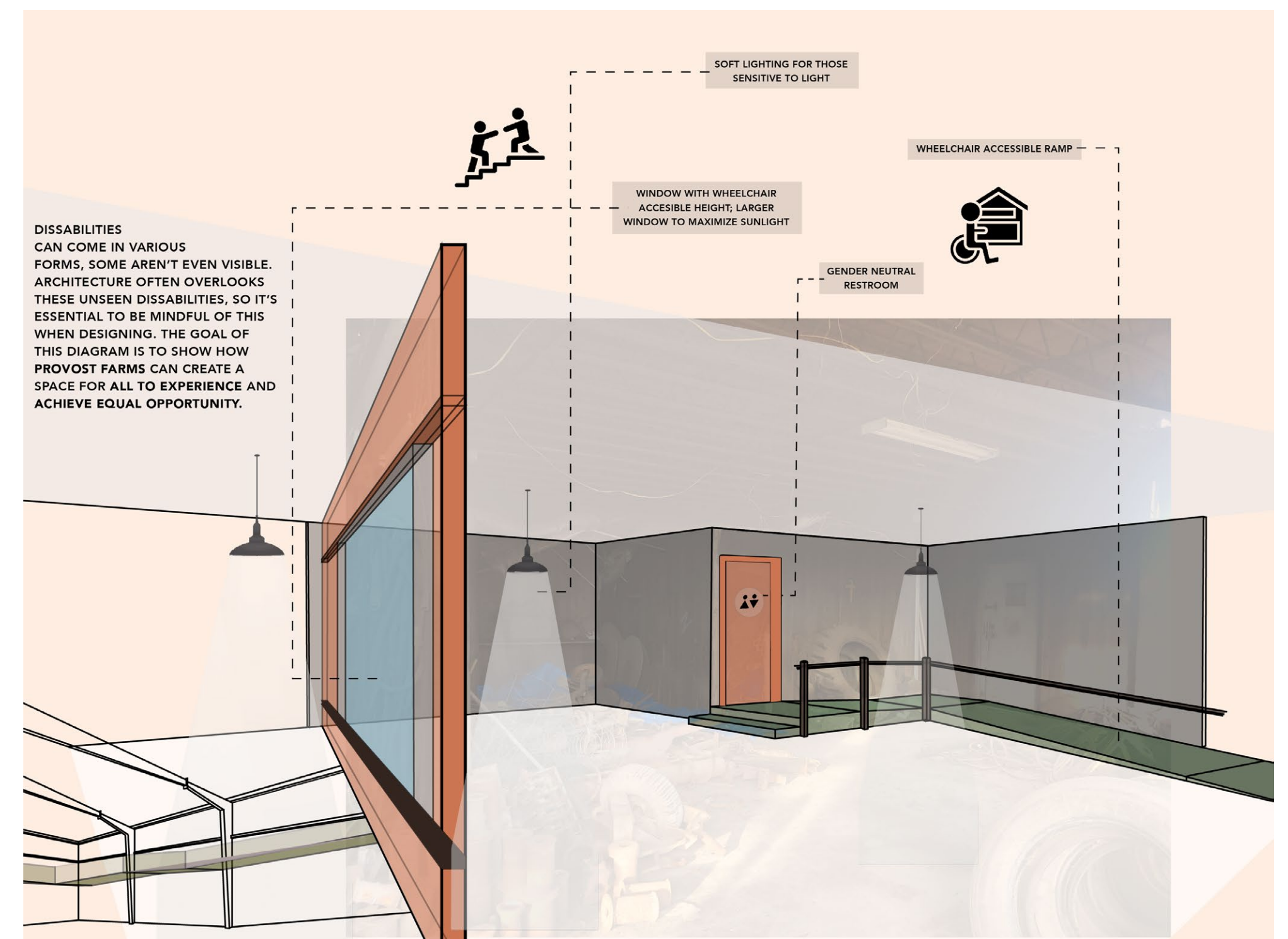


Diagram Exploring Accessible and Equitable Interior Design Strategies for Provost Farm; created by Jade Honnegger, 2020