







Open house event held at the Moses Springer Community Center in September 2025.

INTRODUCTION

The City of Waterloo, in partnership with SHIFT Landscape Architecture, is developing a new park space in the Lincoln Heights neighbourhood: Margaret Ave Park. This exciting project will introduce a variety of new features, activities, and gathering spaces for the community.

This report builds on Community Engagement Summary Report #1 and provides an overview of the second phase of engagement, which took place between September 22nd and October 15th, 2025. Based on the feedback gathered during the first engagement phase, the project team prepared two preliminary concept designs for the park. These concepts were shared with the public for the second engagement period, through an open house event in September 2025 and an accompanying online input period.

The project is being completed through several stages, including background research, concept development, final concept selection, preparation for construction, and the eventual construction of Margaret Ave Park. We are currently working toward the selection of a final concept. Throughout these stages, there will be additional opportunities for community participation.

The second phase of engagement, completed in October 2025, focused on collecting community perspectives on the two preliminary concept designs. This report summarizes the methods, process, and outcomes of the second engagement phase.

METHODS

A variety of methods were used to inform and engage interest holders with the project. Early in the project, a visual identity was created to form a consistent 'brand' for the project. Inspired by cross-stitching, the design of the identity reflects how the project will weave together ideas to shape the park. Along with the visual identity, a number of different engagement and outreach activities and events were held as part of the second phase of engagement. These are described below.

1. Margaret Ave Park project web page

The Margaret Ave Park web page was launched on Engage Waterloo, the City's public engagement online platform, early in the project. The specific Margaret Ave Park page was updated with project announcements and new documents throughout the second phase of engagement. The page serves as the main method for providing information and receiving public input. Over a 3-week public



input period, the page was promoted on the City's website, via social media platforms, and through promotional materials, directing people to review the preliminary concept designs and complete a feedback survey (hosted on the Engage page).

The project page is set up so that the public can subscribe to updates and receive notifications when new information about the project has been shared. For the Margaret Ave Park project, the information reached 12,320 Engage Waterloo user accounts, with 673 clicks to the project page. This is in addition to those who visited the page through other means.

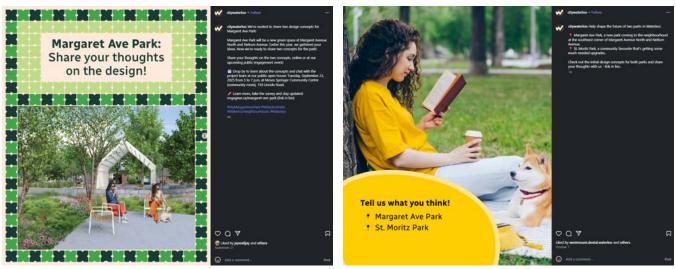
Since the page was launched, visitors had the opportunity to publicly post ideas and comments through the 'Ideas' tool. Since the first engagement period and into the second, new posts were received and reviewed by the project team.

The preliminary concept designs survey was also hosted on the Engage Waterloo page for Margaret Ave Park. Social media posts, ads, and news updates all directed people to complete the survey and share their feedback on the preliminary designs for the park. The survey was live for a three-week period (launched the day of the open house) and received **49 responses.**

2. Social media

The project team worked with the City of Waterloo's Corporate Communications team to share news of the new park project publicly on multiple social media platforms (Facebook, Instagram, Twitter/X, TikTok). The social media posts were published the week before the open house event. Through the posts, people were invited to attend the open house with event details provided in the captions. Additionally, viewers were encouraged to visit the Margaret Ave Park web page to learn more about the project and participate in the survey (which was made live the day of the event). Following the event, an additional social media post was made 1-week after the open house.

After reviewing the response rate at the close of the planned survey window (two weeks following the event), it was decided that the survey would remain open for an additional week. This was paired with sponsored social media ads to encourage people to fill out the survey and learn about the project.



Social media posts by the City of Waterloo advertising the engagement period and open house.

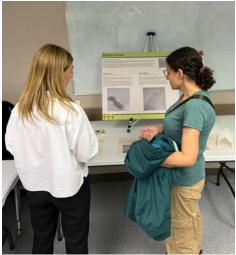
3. Project open house #2

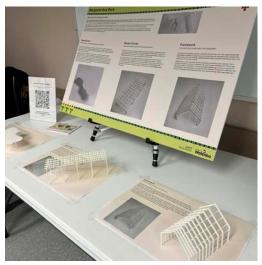
The second public open house for the Margaret Ave Park project took place on September 23, 2025, from 5 to 7 p.m. in the community room at the Moses Springer Community Centre. The event invited residents to explore and share feedback on the two preliminary concept designs for the park. Attendees had the opportunity to review detailed information boards featuring layout plans, illustrations, and renderings of the designs, along with early ideas for public art being developed in partnership with the City of Waterloo's Public Art team.

There were 15 members of the public at the event, and it created meaningful opportunities for discussion between community members and the project team, with five team representatives available to answer questions and collect input. To ensure everyone had equal opportunity to participate, the same materials were provided digitally online through the project's Engage Waterloo survey. This allowed those unable to attend in person to provide their thoughts and preferences on the park design.

Together, the open house and online survey provided a consistent and accessible engagement experience, helping the project team gather a wide range of community perspectives on the emerging vision for Margaret Ave Park.









Discussions with the public and images of the information boards used during the open house event.



4. Additional outreach and engagement

Beyond the public open house and online survey, additional outreach helped ensure that information about the project reached a wide cross-section of the community. Building on the first phase of engagement, the large project sign remained in place at the corner of Margaret Avenue North and Neilson Avenue, marking the future park site and continuing to invite interest and participation. The sign included a QR code and project webpage link, making it easy for residents to learn about the designs, share feedback, and stay informed throughout the process.

To extend outreach within the neighbourhood, the City of Waterloo's Neighbourhoods Team collaborated with the Lincoln Heights Neighbourhood group, who helped share updates and project materials through local events, newsletters, and social media channels. Ward 5 Councillor also supported the engagement by promoting the project and encouraging residents to get involved. These combined efforts helped reach residents who may not have been able to attend the open house or complete the survey directly.

As the design process moves forward, the project team will continue to work closely with local community groups, schools, and City departments to refine the park concept and confirm priorities. Future outreach will focus on maintaining open communication and ensuring the evolving design continues to reflect the needs, values, and ideas of the Lincoln Heights community.

COMMUNITY VOICES: RESPONSE THEMES & KEY OUTCOMES

This section highlights the key outcomes from the second community engagement process, drawing on feedback collected through both the online survey and conversations at the public open house. All input was carefully reviewed by the project team to identify the main themes and ideas that reflect what matters most to the community. These insights are summarized in the sections that follow and continue to guide the refinement of the park design.

Preliminary Concept Survey

To gather input on the two preliminary concept designs for Margaret Ave Park, the main method of data collection was the public survey hosted on the Engage Waterloo project page. Through social media, update posts, and through the in-person event, the community was encouraged to complete the survey to share their input on the project and the two preliminary designs.

Building on the direction provided by the community following the first round of engagement, the survey included multiple choice questions, open-responses, and general feedback questions. The intent of the survey was to get feedback on the two proposed concept designs and the specific elements and features that were presented. The responses to the survey will help guide the design and ultimate selection of a final concept for the park.

A total of 49 responses were received during a three-week survey window. While not everyone responded to the optional demographic questions, the survey captured a wide age range, from 10 to 60 years old. Many participants that live near the park site also referred to their personal experience visiting nearby parks, indicating a good local representation. The overall feedback showed genuine enthusiasm and thoughtful perspectives across age and background, demonstrating a clear interest in creating a park that feels inclusive, welcoming, and well-loved.

What We Heard: Major Themes

Desire for unique features

Community feedback shows that people want Margaret Ave Park to be a welcoming, distinctive, and memorable place that truly reflects the Lincoln Heights neighbourhood. There's a shared excitement about creating a park that feels special, becoming a place that's comfortable, full of character, and enjoyable for everyone.

People highlighted a strong interest in comfortable and creative seating, from porch swings and shaded benches to small gathering areas where friends and neighbours can relax and connect. Many also loved the idea of feature lighting that adds warmth and atmosphere in the evenings, and defining elements like the Framework or Cloud Cover structures that bring something whimsical to the park while providing a unique shade feature.

Natural features are just as important to the park's identity. Respondents spoke about the value of trees, shade, and lush planting that make the space feel calm and welcoming. The idea of creating smaller "rooms" or distinct areas within the park also stood out, giving people different ways to enjoy the space - from play and activity to quiet reflection. Together, these ideas paint an optimistic vision for a park that feels lively, creative, and uniquely part of its community.



Some examples of species noted by the public when asked: Imagine walking through Margaret Ave Park when it is complete. Which native species (plants, birds, etc.) would you like to see using the space?

· New park ecology is important

Nature was a recurring theme throughout the feedback, with many respondents expressing a desire for the park to actively support biodiversity and local ecology through native plants, pollinator habitats, spaces for wildlife, and environmental features (such as rain gardens). People want garden areas that look intentional, while still feeling natural. Sensory experiences such as the scent of flowers, the texture of plants, and the sound of birds were also seen as important to creating a park that feels alive and engaging. Several participants suggested including edible species to add another layer of interest, though they emphasized the need for practical and low-maintenance options.

Alongside these ideas, there was strong interest in incorporating educational and interpretive features that help visitors learn about the park's ecological features. Respondents mentioned opportunities for interpretive signage, storytelling elements, or other creative ways to share information about local plants, wildlife, and natural processes. Overall, the feedback reflects a community vision for a lush, green park that celebrates nature through experience, balancing aesthetics, learning, and sustainable approaches.

Lawn spaces are valuable for flexible uses

As a smaller park space, both concepts for the park include lawn areas. While this is typical to many parks, the project team wanted to understand how important lawn space is to the community, considering that more lawn space means fewer garden and ecological features.

Based on the responses received, some amount of lawn is important to maintain in the park (60% of responses). People noted a desire to be able to kick a ball or play catch, and just have space to sit on the grass. With that, around 40% of responses noted that they'd prefer to see the park space prioritized for gardens or other ecological features. The two concept options show a balance of lawn space and garden areas, and this balance can continue to be incorporated in the design, while ensuring varied space for ecological features and gardens.

Variety of options for shade and shelter

Shade and shelter in park spaces supports greater use, protection from the elements, and refuge in the heat of the summer when parks are at their most active. Margaret Ave Park will include a structure of some type that provides shelter. Through community feedback, there was a mix of responses around what type of shade structure would be preferred, with some preferring sun and rain protection, others, only sun protection, and there was also a response from those who felt trees are enough to provide shade at the park.

Overall, the community strongly supports a shade structure of some type, with half of those in favour of a structure also wanting it to provide rain protection (a solid roof). Trees will be included in the park design but will not be the sole means of providing shade/ shelter. Related to shade and shelter in the park, the community wants a park that feels comfortable in all seasons. Together, the feedback points to practical shade, a thoughtfully placed covered area that stays visible, and lighting that helps the park feel welcoming in the evening.

At the open house event and through online engagement, several examples of shade structures were shown to the community. Of the options shown, the 'Framework' structure from Concept 1 and the 'Cloud Cover' structure from Concept 2 were well received. Of those who liked the Cloud Cover structure they noted the benefit of its continuous canopy. The historic tie-in of the Framework structure (borrowing from the form of local homes) was appreciated as well.

Teen space should be appropriate to the park

Feedback on the idea of creating a dedicated space for teens in Margaret Ave Park was mixed. Many respondents recognized the value of having safe, welcoming places for youth to gather outdoors, connect with friends, and spend time away from screens. Supporters noted that opportunities for teens to socialize in public spaces are limited, and that parks can help fill this gap by offering comfortable, visible, and inclusive areas. Some felt that these spaces could contribute to a sense of belonging and community, encouraging positive use of the park and interaction across age groups.

Others expressed that a teen-specific space should not be a major focus of the park. These respondents felt that teens often prefer to find their own gathering places and may not use a designated area. Some were also concerned about potential issues such as noise, litter, or conflicts with younger park users. A few participants were unsure what a "teen space" would look like and emphasized the importance of creating universally appealing areas rather than age-specific zones.

Overall, the feedback suggests that there is clear support for welcoming teens in the park through a unique approach. The space could integrate a flexible social area for teens that remains well integrated into the park. While being uniquely teen-focused, it can still be used by anyone.

Play space should be a focus

Community feedback emphasized that play is central to the success of Margaret Ave Park, with many people excited about spaces that encourage kids to be active, imaginative, and social. The playground was often described similar to the heart of the park, bringing families together and supporting community life. Respondents noted the importance of a centrally

located play area set back from busy roads, with good visibility, seating, and shade for comfort and supervision.

There was strong interest in equipment like swings, slides, and climbing structures, with several people noting a lack of swings in nearby parks. With that feedback, many also noted nature-based play with logs, boulders, and gentle slopes that invite exploration and creative movement. The response to these traditional and natural features highlights a desire for unique play equipment, something heard in the first round of engagement.

Exercise equipment received mixed feedback but remains of interest, especially for adults and older teens. The community suggested placing it along paths or near gathering areas so it feels accessible and inviting. Overall, play and activity spaces should be central, inclusive, and thoughtfully designed, offering opportunities for both active fun and everyday enjoyment.

Space for all ages

Feedback about all-age and multi-generational spaces showed strong community support for a park that feels welcoming and usable for everyone. Many residents emphasized the importance of designing spaces that invite people of all ages to spend time together, rather than separating areas by age group. Features such as flexible seating, shaded gathering spots, open lawns, and walking paths were seen as essential for encouraging interaction between children, teens, adults, and older residents. Respondents appreciated that both park concepts aimed to create a balance of active and quiet spaces, allowing for play, rest, and social connection in the same setting. Overall, the comments reflected a shared vision for a comfortable, inclusive park where multiple generations can meet, play, and connect as a community.

Safety and proximity to adjacent roads

Community members emphasized that the park should feel safe and comfortable, particularly given its location along Bridgeport Road and Margaret Avenue, both of which are busy streets. Many expressed the need for clear separation between play and family areas and the adjacent roads, using design features that provide comfort without compromising visibility. Clear sightlines and good lighting were frequently requested, with a desire for paths and gathering spaces to be visible from multiple vantage points and free of hidden corners.

To help achieve this balance, residents suggested incorporating natural buffers such as trees, berms, and low plantings, along with strategic fencing or barriers that define a safe yet open park edge. Seating along busy streets should be thoughtfully placed, either buffered with planting or set slightly deeper into the park to create calmer spaces while maintaining open views for safety.

Access and active transportation

People asked for easy, intuitive ways to move through the park and to arrive by bike. Suggestions included placing bike racks at both ends of the site, especially near Margaret and Neilson Ave as well as Bridgeport Road, and making sure curb cuts are smooth and accessible for mobility devices and strollers. Several comments encouraged aligning paths with the natural routes/desire lines people already take to reduce cutting across planting or loose surfaces.

Public art opportunities

Public art will be an important part of Margaret Ave Park, guided by the City's Public Art Policy. As part of this engagement phase, the Arts & Creative Industries attended the open house to share information and collect input, and several art-focused questions were included in the public input survey launched in September 2025. The responses received will help guide the public art process and give a sense of what residents value and how they imagine art contributing to the park experience.

Through input, respondents expressed a strong preference for art that is integrated into the landscape rather than installed as standalone sculptures. Many felt that incorporating artistic elements into seating, paving, lighting, or play features would make the park feel more welcoming and functional. Themes that resonated most included nature, ecology, and local history, with interest in designs that reference native species, pollinators, or meaningful stories from the neighbourhood. Interpretive and educational elements were also viewed positively, especially when they encourage learning in a low-key, accessible way.

Residents also emphasized that public art should help tie the park into the fabric of the Lincoln Heights community. Thoughtful, place-based artwork can reflect the character of the area, strengthen identity, and create a sense of belonging for people of all ages. As the concept is refined, the project team will continue working with the City's Arts & Creative Industries staff to explore opportunities for integrated, inclusive, and community-rooted public art.

CONCEPT-SPECIFIC INPUT

The survey for this phase of engagement focused on understanding how respondents felt about the two preliminary concept options. Questions asked about specific elements, overall likes and dislikes, and general preferences. The following highlights the positive and negative reactions to each concept, as well as the general preferences between the concepts among survey respondents.



Landscape rendering and plan illustration of Concept 1: Common Thread



Response to Concept 1: Common Thread

46% of survey respondents indicated that they prefer Concept 1: Common Thread. There were also 27% of respondents who indicated that they wanted to see a combination of both concepts.

Overall, respondents expressed appreciation for the variety and inclusivity of spaces in Concept 1. Many liked the string lights, seating options, and Framework structure, noting that these elements help create a welcoming, flexible atmosphere. People valued the separation of the play area from busy roads, the central path layout, and the presence of shade, trees, and gathering areas that make the park feel both open and safe. The inclusion of exercise and seating zones was viewed as thoughtful and suitable for a range of ages and abilities. Several respondents appreciated the park's flow and clear visibility, saying it felt easy to navigate and inclusive for mobility-device users.

At the same time, a number of participants shared constructive concerns. The most frequent critiques related to the teen hangout and exercise zone. Some felt these spaces lacked clarity in purpose or could lead to issues such as noise, loitering, or conflict with nearby homes. There was also some who felt the exercise zone would not be well used, and that there was a similar "Fit Zone" at Bluevale CI. Others worried that the concept felt too structured, with limited green or lawn space for informal play, or that certain areas might become overcrowded or underused. Practical comments included requests for swings, more garbage bins, and better barriers or fencing along Bridgeport Road and Margaret Avenue to enhance safety.

In summary, the community response to Concept 1 highlighted strong support for its variety, safety, and comfort features, alongside a desire for balance between structure and openness. While many appreciated the design's sense of organization and social potential, others encouraged more natural elements, flexible play areas, and careful attention to how spaces like the teen zone and exercise area will be used and maintained.



Landscape rendering ans plan illustration of Concept 2: Floorplan as Siteplan



Response to Concept 2: Floorplan as Siteplan

Through the survey, 23% of respondents preferred this concept, with an additional 27% wanting to see a combination of both concepts.

Many participants responded positively to Concept 2's welcoming and home-like atmosphere, noting that elements such as the porch swings, "welcome mat" entrances, and Cloud Cover structure made the park feel cozy and distinctive. People appreciated the variety of spaces, smaller "rooms," lawns, and shaded seating areas, which provide opportunities for quieter, more reflective use. A small number of respondents felt this concept offered better balance and flow than Concept 1, with a calm, natural feel that encouraged smaller gatherings and discovery through layered spaces.

At the same time, a number of participants shared concerns about layout and safety. The most frequent comments focused on the playground's location near busy streets, with calls for stronger buffers, fencing, or more central placement. Some also found the design too segmented, feeling it did not encourage intuitive movement through the park or clear sight lines. Others noted that certain secluded or hidden areas could lead to safety or visibility issues, while several respondents requested additional lighting, more seating near the playground, and swings (a recurring theme across both concepts).

Overall, Concept 2 was described as peaceful, natural, and thoughtfully detailed, but respondents emphasized the importance of visibility, openness, and safety to ensure comfort for all users. While many appreciated its distinct character and residential feel, others preferred the livelier energy of Concept 1.

Overall Direction for a Refined Concept

Community feedback highlights a strong desire to blend the best aspects of both Concept 1 (Common Thread) and Concept 2 (Floorplan as Siteplan). Participants consistently valued variety, shade, and comfortable seating, alongside clear sightlines, safety from traffic, and accessible connections. The refined concept should capture Concept 1's flowing, connected layout that allows for movement and visibility across spaces, while incorporating elements from Concept 2 that support neighbourhood character, such as porch swings, a unique and functional shelter similar to 'Cloud Cover', and smaller gathering areas that feel welcoming and intimate. This would support a final concept that feels both inviting and inclusive.

Play remains a core priority. The playground should be centrally located and set back from busy roads, with good visibility, clear buffers, and accessible seating for caregivers. There is a clear and repeated request for swings, alongside diverse play experiences for different ages. Nature play and exploration were also both important and should be integrated into the play experience. The park design should balance active and passive areas, providing lawn or flexible open space for unstructured play and community use, without crowding the site. Seating, tree cover, and lighting should be thoughtfully distributed to support comfort and safety for all users, including teens and older adults.

Finally, the park should foster a sense of inclusivity and belonging. While a defined teen hangout and exercise zone are valued, they should be integrated rather than isolated, ensuring visibility and positive use. Attention to maintenance, planting visibility, and safe edges - particularly along Bridgeport and Margaret - will be critical. The refined concept should aim for a balanced, multi-generational park that feels both lively and calm, layered with gathering spaces, playful features, and natural elements that express a shared community identity for the Lincoln Heights neighbourhood.

The key design considerations and important elements identified through engagement are listed below:

Centrally located playground

A well-sized, centrally placed play area that is set back or separated with barriers from busy streets.

Swings and play equipment

Swings, slides, and climbing structures were mentioned repeatedly as essential features.

Nature-based and sensory play features

Logs, boulders, planting, and gentle changes in terrain that invite exploration and imaginative play to make the park more engaging and connected to nature.

Shade and weather protection

Shade trees and at least one unique covered structure that provides sun and light rain protection while remaining open, visible, and welcoming.

Ample, comfortable seating

Frequent and varied seating options including benches, seats, porch swings, and shaded sitting areas for all ages.

Strong planting and 'green' character

Native, pollinator-friendly, and well-maintained vegetation to provide a lush, green feel with trees, flowering species, and sensory plants.

Lighting and visibility for safety

Clear sightlines, adequate lighting, and open views between spaces to make the park feel safe and welcoming at all times.

Distinct yet connected gathering spaces

Provide a variety of spaces while maintaining openness and flow, including seating clusters, lawns, and flexible gathering areas.

Public art integrated into the design

Art should be woven into everyday park features such as paving, seating, or lighting and reflect community themes like history, ecology, and belonging.

Accessible and connected circulation

Paths that are easy to navigate for all abilities, with connections to sidewalks, and bike parking.

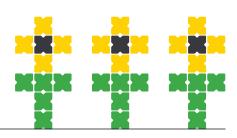
Additional community insight about the project

Through the survey and conversations with the public, the feedback shows a strong sense of excitement and pride in the future of Margaret Ave Park. Many residents appreciated the opportunity to share their ideas and were pleased to see new investment and thoughtful design coming to the Lincoln Heights neighbourhood. A large majority of people spoke positively about the park's potential to bring the community together and emphasized how important it is to have accessible, inclusive, and welcoming spaces for all ages.

The feedback also highlighted several priorities to help refine the design. Safety and visibility remain key considerations, with requests for clear sightlines, lighting, and open layouts that feel secure and easy to move through. Participants also shared the importance of comfort, noting that shade, naturalized planting, and plenty of seating will help make the park enjoyable and usable throughout the year.

A few comments extended beyond the direct scope of the park project but reflect broader community concerns. These included mentions of homelessness and social safety in the area, as well as requests for continued updates as the project moves forward. While these issues fall outside the physical design of the park, they underscore the community's care for the neighbourhood and the importance of collaboration between City teams, local organizations, and residents to ensure the park remains a safe, welcoming, and well-used public space.

Together, these insights point to a shared vision for the park: a space that feels welcoming, safe, and connected to its neighbourhood. The final design can build on this excitement by creating a flexible, multi-generational park where people can play, relax, and spend time together.



SUMMARY AND NEXT STEPS

Summary: moving to a refined concept design

The next phase of the project will focus on creating a determining the final concept design for Margaret Ave Park. This stage will build directly on the feedback gathered during the recent round of engagement, to integrate and respond to comments on the preliminary concept options. The project team will review and integrate community priorities such as safety, shade, accessible pathways, naturalized planting, play opportunities for a range of ages, and comfortable seating, among others. The refined concept will bring these ideas together into one cohesive vision that captures the neighbourhood's character while responding to what residents most value about the park's future.

This phase will also include collaboration with City of Waterloo staff, community groups, and local organizations to help shape the design in a way that reflects shared goals for inclusivity, sustainability, and community connection. The refined concept will illustrate how the park can balance active and quiet areas, incorporate opportunities for public art, and create a welcoming green space for everyone to enjoy. Future engagement will provide opportunities for the community to see the refined design before it moves into detailed design and construction stages.

APPENDIX A: MARGARET AVE PARK PROJECT

Open House Information Boards

Images of the information boards presented at the September 23rd, 2025 open house event are included in the following pages.

















Margaret Ave Park

Something Overhead



Shade and Form at Margaret Ave Park

These three models represent early ideas for a new shade structure in your park. Each one explores a different way to create a helter, invite gathering, and reflect something about the character of this neighbourhood. They are not finished designs, but starting points. Each model offers a different way to think about how form, structure, and meaning can come together in public space.

The final pavilion will be shaped through continued design development, input from the community, and the practical realities of construction and budget. These models are not presented as asswers, but as questions. What does it means to build lightly? To honour memory? To frame the everyday?

At its heart, this project is about creating something unique to this place. A structure that belongs here and that you can be ground of. Not a monument, but a marker. Not a story written about you, but an arrarile with a story written about you, but an arrarile with a story written about you but a narralle with you. Something that speaks to your experiences, your aspirations, and the quiet strength of the community you are building every day.



Cloud Cover

Softness, light, and the atmosphere of memory



Woven Stories

Layered histories expressed through structure



Framework

A familiar form made open and adaptable







