

LIFE FRAMES, INC. & A LIVING LIBRARY

PROJECT EXPERIENCE



**BONNIE ORA SHERK, PRINCIPAL
FOUNDER & DIRECTOR**



LIFE FRAMES, INC. & A LIVING LIBRARY FIRM PROFILE

COMMUNITY PLANNING ECOLOGICAL DESIGN INTEGRATED CURRICULA



Life Frames, Inc. (LFI), and its Founder & Director, **Bonnie Ora Sherk**, have been planning, designing, and building place-based, content-rich, ecological and multicultural, learning landscapes with integrated community programs, hands-on, interdisciplinary curricula, and green skills job training for youth and adults, in New York City, San Francisco and other cities, nationally and internationally, for over 35 years. *LFI* offers practical processes and imaginative solutions resulting in ecological land use planning, landscape architecture, participatory design with multiple, systemically linked, interactive, community and school programs, which also function as community and economic development for the area, resulting in transformation of the community.

As named, the **Life Frame** literally frames and incorporates life and local resources, so we can see, understand, learn from, appreciate, and experience more profoundly - our community, our world, each other, and ourselves. The *Life Frame* is *Cultivating the Human & Ecological Garden*.

LFI has a range of experience developing large master plans, reconnecting multiple communities and resources, such as underground creeks and watersheds, to creating plans for individual civic centers, parks, schoolyards, public housing. Each pragmatic, unique design solution incorporates sustainability, creative ideas based on the site and situation, and meaningful opportunities for children, youth, and adults to participate in multiple processes of planning, design, and transformation.

An early and pioneering *Life Frame*, founded, directed, and collaboratively designed by *Ms. Sherk* beginning in 1974, was called **Crossroads Community (the farm)**, in the crossroads of four communities and three hidden creeks. **The Farm** led the transformation of 7 acres of derelict land fragments, including a major freeway interchange, into a vital and bucolic environmental and agricultural community education center replete with agro-ecology gardens, farm animals, multi-arts programs, and a new City park. This award-winning, pioneering work has helped to inspire current interest in urban agriculture - locally, nationally, internationally - and has been exhibited in art museums and galleries, world-wide.

Beginning in 1981, the *Life Frame* evolved to become, what is known as **A Living Library. A.L.L.**, for short, is a powerful framework, planning tool, and series of strategies and methodologies that incorporates local resources: human, ecological, economic, historic, technological, aesthetic – seen through the lens of time – past and present. *A.L.L.* combines these rich community assets into a master plan for the future. Children, youth, and adults are engaged together in research, planning, design, implementation, use, maintenance, management, and communications of their unique *Branch Living Library*. Through these processes, the public realm is transformed into an ecological, multicultural, community gathering place, or town center, and for students, all subjects come to life: math, science, history, language arts, multi-arts, technology, health, nutrition, youth leadership, among others.

A.L.L. provides a cost-effective methodology and framework that leverages local resources, including bringing in more dollars; giving participant's real-world learning experiences, and sense of accomplishment; while making ecological community change. *LFI* works with all sectors of community including multiple city/state agencies, community groups, families, students, teachers, administrators, individuals, to bring about a unique transformation of their community.

LFI has developed master plans and educational programs for **Branch Living Library & Think Parks** currently underway in San Francisco in three neighborhoods with over 1000 children and youth engaged monthly. As pilot for whole watershed, *LFI* has planned, designed, and developed a **Nature Walk** linking schools, parks, public housing, streets, and other open spaces leading to currently hidden creek. Another *Branch Living Library* has also been in development for over a decade in NYC on Roosevelt Island. Other cities in this country are in discussion with *LFI* about developing Branches, as well as in China, India, and Mexico.

A goal of *LFI* is to develop multiple *Branch Living Library & Think Parks*, locally and globally, to be linked through *Green-Powered Digital Gateways* so that diversities and commonalities between cultures and ecologies are shared and understood.

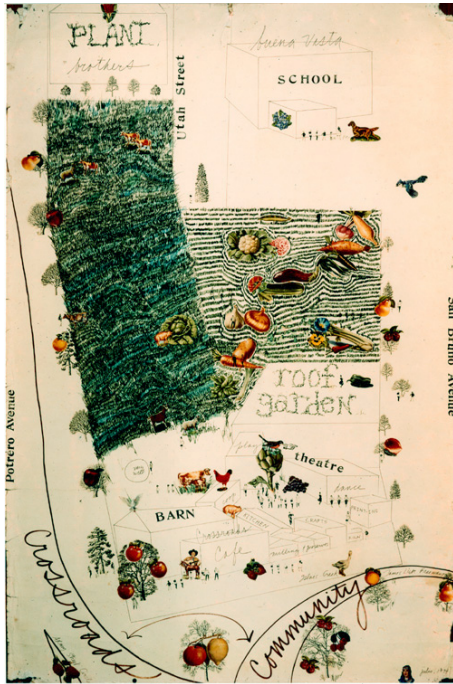
Crossroads Community (the farm), San Francisco, CA.

Bonnie Ora Sherk, Founding Director, President, Chief Designer – 1974-80 – with SF Recreation & Park, DPW, Caltrans

Client: SF Recreation & Park Department, SF Department Public Works, Caltrans

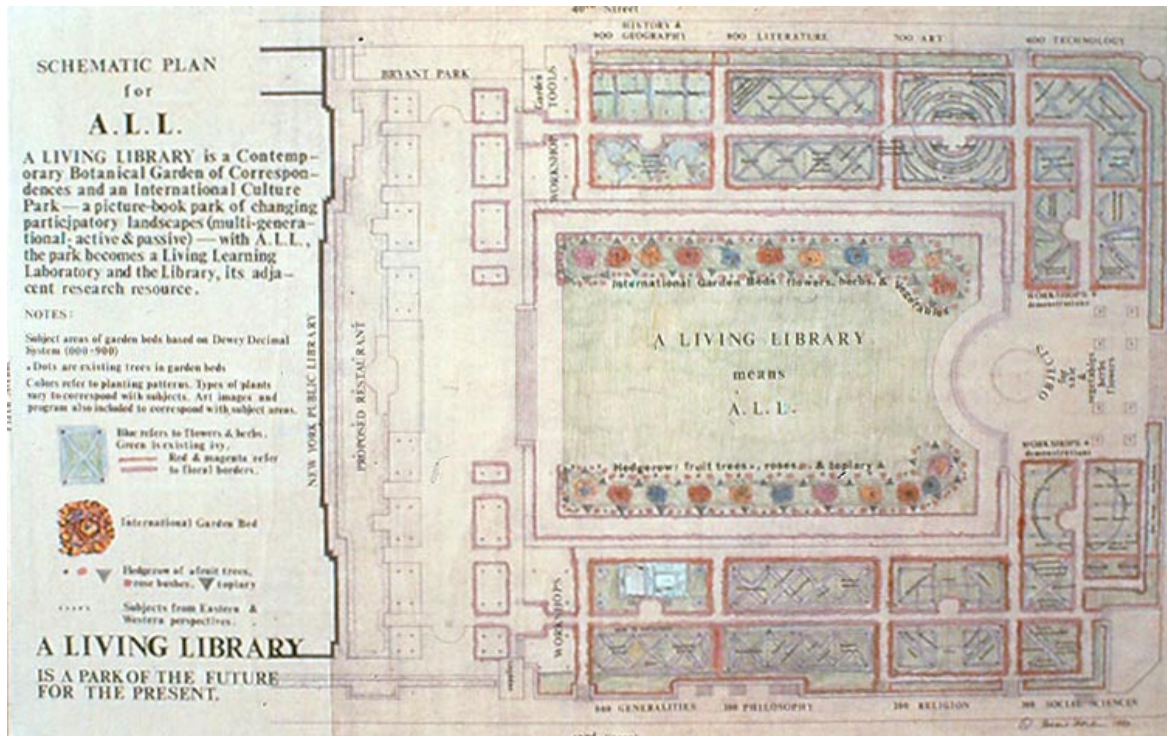
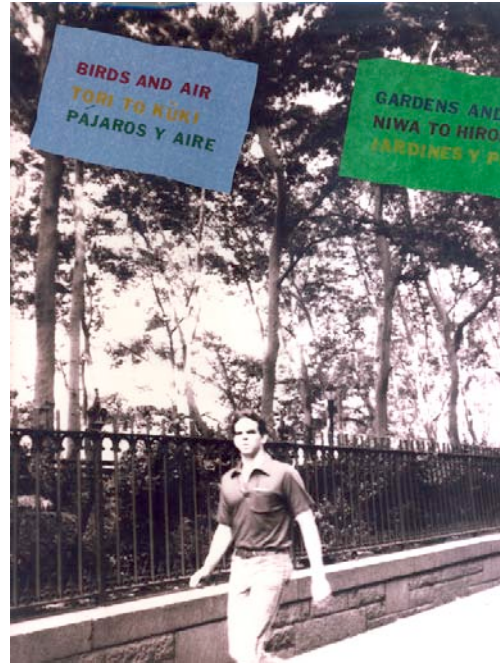
Funders: National Endowment for the Arts, California Arts Council, CETA, Prop C, Prop J, Trust for Public Land

Transformation of 6.5+ acres of derelict land fragments including freeway interchange in the crossroads of four communities: Mission, Bernal Heights, Potrero Hill, Bayview-Hunter's Point. Concept and implementation to transform land into new **City Farm Park** and bring people together with each other, plants, and animals. Students from over 75 public schools came to visit and participate in **The Raw Egg Animal Theatre (TREAT)**, where they had experiential involvement in nature and the arts. It was one of five Alternative Education Programs in California funded by the *California Arts Council and National Endowment for the Arts*.



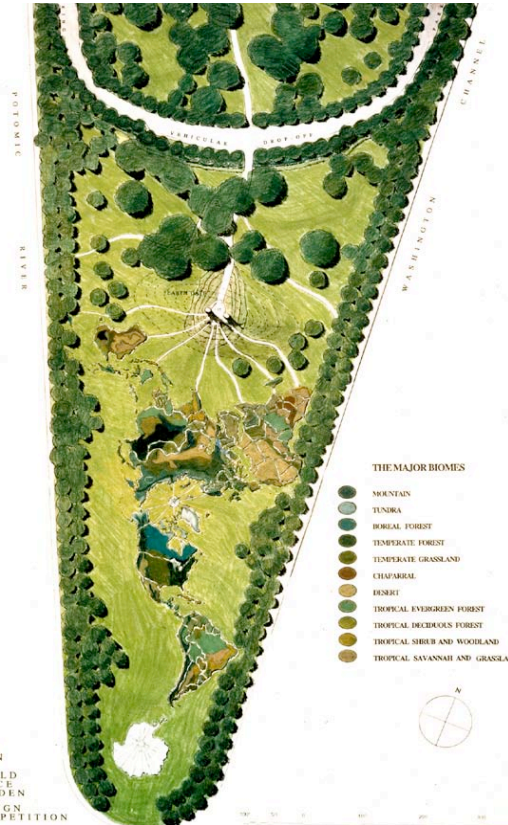
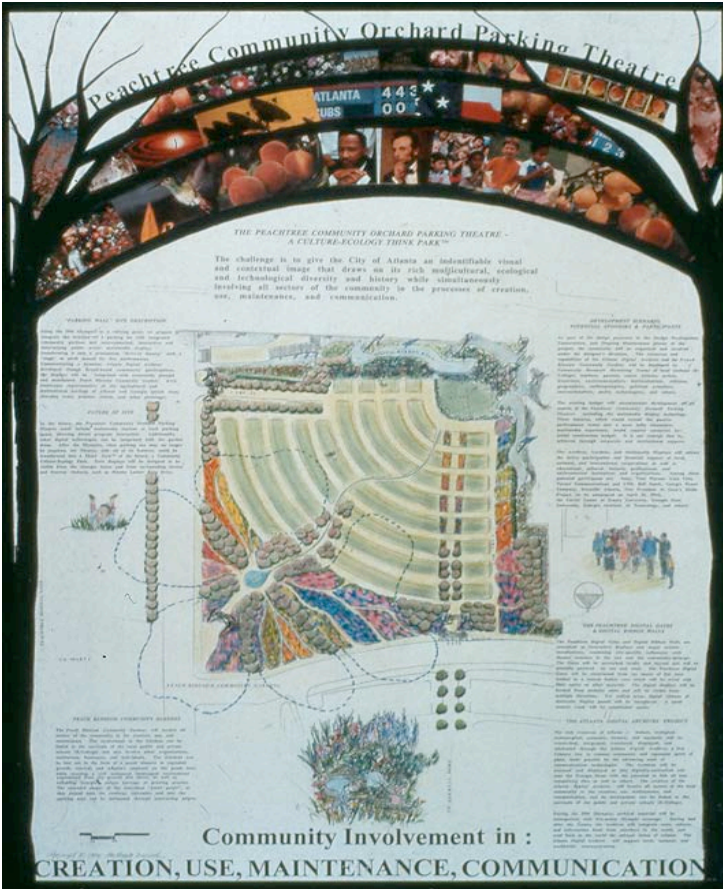
A Living Library for Bryant Park, New York City – 1981
Concept & Plan – Bonnie Ora Sherk

This site and plan, incorporating the Beaux Arts elegance of Bryant Park, was the original inspiration for **A Living Library** and the development of *International, Culture, Ecology, Technology Think Parks*. For this site, it was proposed to bring the inside of the adjacent Main Research Branch of the New York Public Library outdoors through **Gardens of Knowledge** based on the *Dewey Decimal System* in the peripheral gardens of the Park. Each Garden would have plants relating to the subjects; visual and performed artworks; programs of lectures, demonstrations, research institutes, and *Green-Powered Digital Gateways*, giving more detailed information from the NY Public Library, and also linking this *Living Library* to other *Branch Living Libraries* around the world. Also suggested were **International Gardens** for the interior of the Park to involve the United Nations and diverse Consulates and Embassies in New York. The total programmed landscape would be linked to the curricula of local schools (K-16). The successful, ongoing international fashion shows in Bryant Park, were part of this original concept, proposed to generate revenue to support sustainability of **A.L.L.**



World Peace Garden – Washington, DC – 1989
Concept & Plan – Bonnie Ora Sherk

We enter the *World Peace Garden* through the *Earth Gate*, linked online with NASA's satellites monitoring the globe, giving us visual and textual information about the planet's health and well-being. As we pass through the *Earth Gate*, the world literally unfolds before us, based on Buckminster Fuller's north-south *Dymaxion Map*. Each part of the World is planted whenever possible with vegetation, from the major biomes of the Earth. Additionally, as you pass through each area of the world, there are interactive, green-powered, live electronic linkages to that part of the world and its *Branch Living Libraries*.



Peachtree Community Orchard Parking Theatre, Atlanta, Georgia - 1994
Concept & Plan – Bonnie Ora Sherk with Rick Phillips

This plan proposes transforming a parking lot adjacent to the Georgia Dome into the *Peachtree Community Orchard Parking Theater* with a series of *Peach Blossom Community Gardens*, an Orchard of Peach Trees, Parking areas for 400 cars arranged as in a proscenium theater, *Digital Ribbon Walls*, and *Peachtree Digital Gateways* as entrances that display the Atlanta Digital Archives, with live feeds to the Georgia Dome. All aspects of the environment involve the local community including school children in its creation, use, maintenance, and technological communications through *Community Research Mentoring Teams*.

Civic Center Living Library & Think Park, San Francisco, CA 1996

Concept & Plan – Life Frames, Inc. & Bonnie Ora Sherk

Client: SF Recreation & Park Department, San Francisco Unified School District

Funders: SF Foundation, Columbia Foundation

Reference: Jill Wynns, Board of Education Commissioner, SFUSD – 415-828-7204

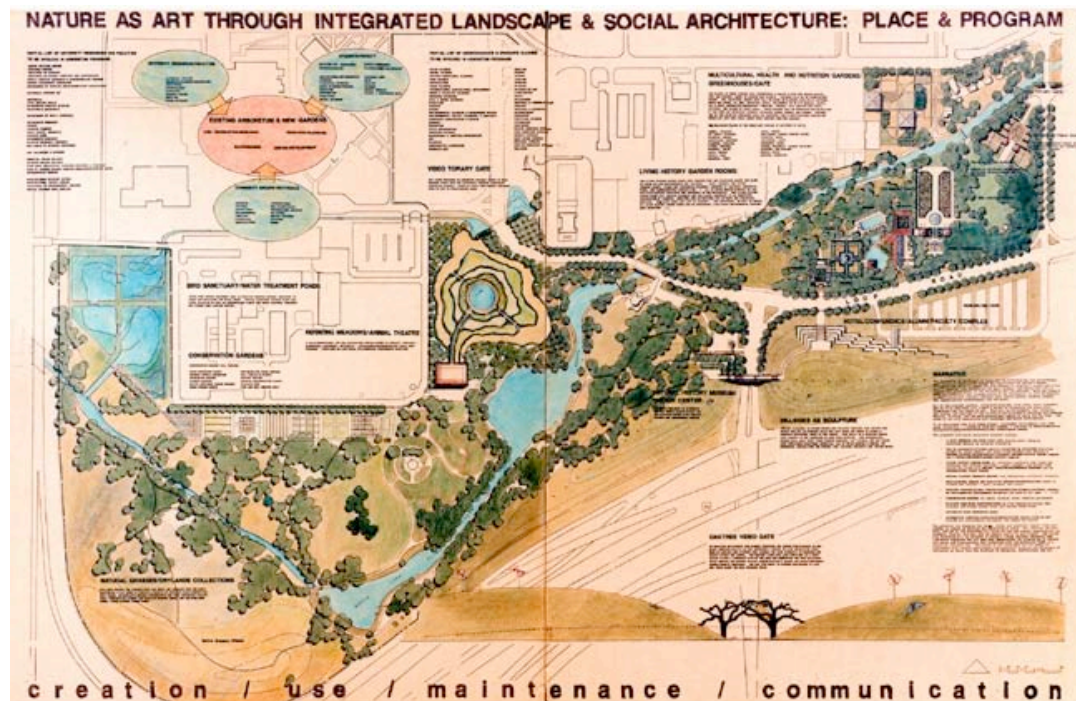
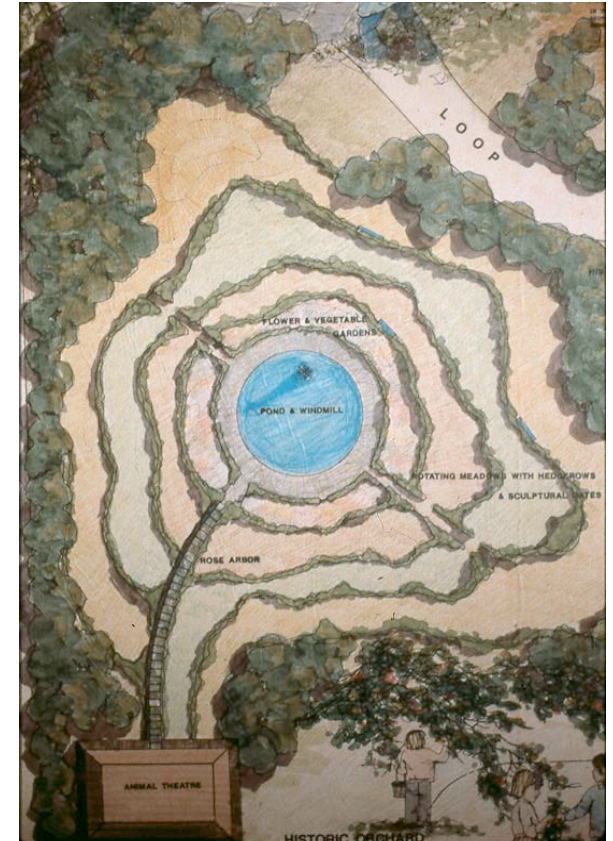
This plan recommends incorporating the original historic Beaux Arts 1912 design for the San Francisco Civic Center and rearticulating it for the 21st century, by creating many opportunities for creative expression, learning, sustainable development, and participation by all sectors of the community through *Community Research Mentoring Teams*, while integrating the past, present, and future. Proposed for the four quadrants of the main Civic Center Plaza are themed gardens with integrated community programs, curricula, and products, that express in the landscape what is occurring in the surrounding architecture. Proposed gardens include: **Government, Law & Justice Garden; Civic Center, San Francisco, California History Garden; Garden of the Arts; and Ecology/Health Garden**, incorporating the creek flowing beneath the Plaza. Also proposed to delineate the main axis from Market Street to City Hall, reminiscent of the bosquets or garden rooms from the 17th century French formal gardens, on which the Beaux Arts style is based, are **International-Multicultural Gardens** involving and representing the cultural diversity of the San Francisco community. Additionally proposed, underground in Brooks Hall, is a mixed-use commercial / educational / cultural development showcasing local and international, multicultural and ecological products and programs.

The **Assyrian Garden**, shown here, showcases the Mesopotamian culture – past, present, future – through its many elements and features. One enters through the sculptural, *Green Powered Digital Gateway* with a ziggurat motif displaying the *Mesopotamian Multimedia Archives* showing the past and present cultural and ecological diversity of that region, or shows a live feed from the area, or other related resources, such as 6th grade classrooms that study ancient Mesopotamia. The existing statue here, is King Ashurbanipal, the Assyrian King who founded the first library in the world. He is holding a clay tablet, an original “book”, that was incised with reeds in the wet clay with the cuniform language. Shown here are reeds in the symbolic Tigris and Euphrates Rivers on either side of the Garden, replete with lotus blossoms, signifying “Eternity” to the Assyrians, pomegranites and palm trees, signifying the “Tree of Life”. Herringbone pavers are also typical Assyrian design elements. This garden was developed with the local Assyrian community including the sculptor of the statue, and 6th grade students. This Garden and other proposed *Multicultural Gardens* provide exciting and relevant project-based learning opportunities for students, K-College, parents, and others in the community. The SFUSD Board of Education voted unanimously to support this Plan as did many other sectors of the community.



University of California, Davis - Arboretum, Davis, CA. – 1988
Concept & Plan – Bonnie Ora Sherk with Mark Bunnell, Theresa Cheney

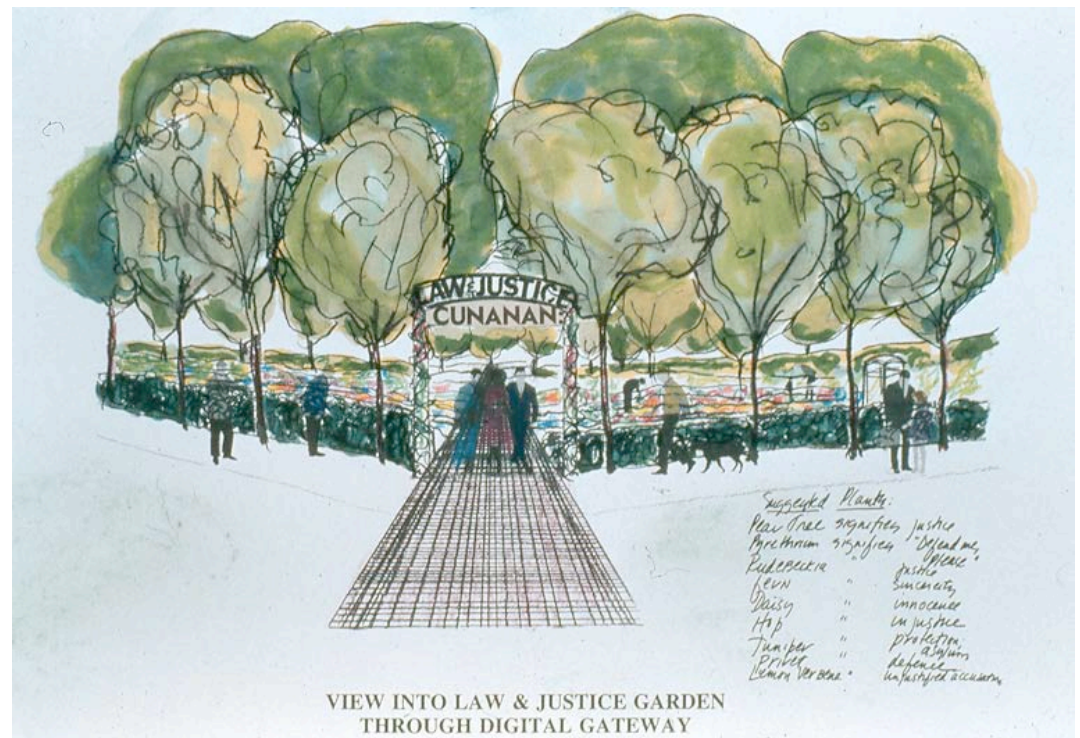
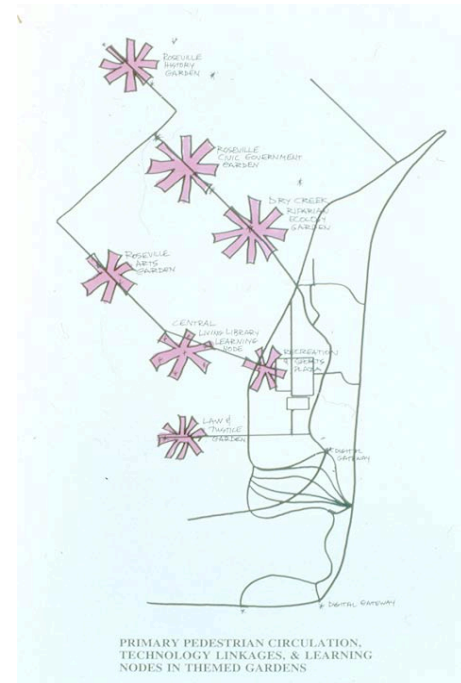
This campus of UC is known for its focus on agriculture and environmental design. In this plan, agriculture and design students are engaged in all aspects of planning, design, implementation, use, management, and communications. The **Living History Garden Rooms** move through time and locations around the globe to bring to life environments and cultures- past, present, future – through plants, visual and performing artworks, programs of lectures, demonstrations, and video/computer capabilities – all of which relate directly to the interdisciplinary curricula and resources of the University. The **Living History Garden Rooms** with its **International Peace Garden** and **Gardens of the Future** involve students and the larger community in an innovative celebration of learning, creating, and maintaining our ecological and multicultural heritage. The **Rotating Meadows/Animal Theater** is designed to be an indoor/outdoor multigenerational art and agriculture center for students and community for education, inspiration, recreation, and a showcase for the arts, in addition to being a functional and healthy living environment for farm animals. People will experience the processes of growing plants and the native intelligences of the domestic animals. The physical environment with its rotating meadows is designed so that the animals will be given many opportunities to make choices – indoors and out. The complex provides a series of ringed, rotating meadows of diverse grasses to be planted by students. While an area is being grazed, the other meadows are growing – the shapes of the pastures are designed to give the maximum sense of space and interest to the animals. In the center, a pond with windmill and aquaculture is accessible from the **Animal Theater** (indoor barn) through a rose arbor or through a series of gates and hedgerows from the various meadows.



Roseville Living Library Master Plan, Roseville, CA – 1997

Concept & Plan – Bonnie Ora Sherk

Themed gardens with integrated community programs and the school's curricula, that relate to the many resources of the community are linked together electronically. Proposed is the **Roseville History Garden**, relating to the community's railroad history; the **Roseville Civic Government Garden**, adjacent to the new City Hall; the **Garden of the Arts**, adjacent to the Arts Center; the **Riparian-Ecology Garden** that integrates and makes accessible, Dry Creek; the **Recreation/Sports Garden** that incorporates and expands the existing Park; the **Law & Justice Garden**, next to the Courthouse; and the **Central Living Library Garden**, adjacent to the Public Library, showing all themed environments represented and linked. Shown here here, additionally is the **Law & Justice Garden** with a **Digital Gateway** and planting symbolizing different aspects of law and justice from Victorian times, such as Pear Trees signifying "Justice".



OMI/Excelsior Living Library & Think Park, San Francisco, CA – 1998 / Present

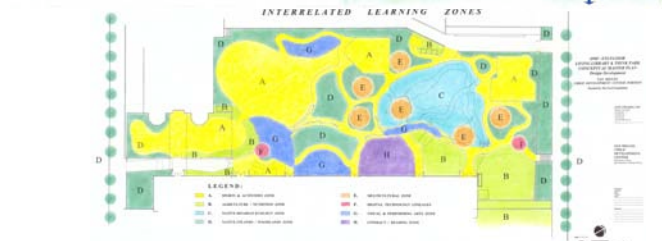
Concept, Plan, & Implementation: Life Frames, Inc. & Bonnie Ora Sherk

Client: SFUSD, James Denman MS, Balboa HS, San Miguel CDC, Leadership HS (more recently)

Funders: Mayor's Office of Community Development, Ford Foundation, SF Foundation, Flow Fund, Potrero Nuevo Fund, Department of Children, Youth, & Their Families, California Department of Forestry & Fire Prevention, SFDPW, SFPUC, others

Reference: Jill Wynns, Commissioner, SFUSD – 415-828-7204

LFI, led by Bonnie Ora Sherk, with all sectors of schools' communities, incorporated A.L.L. *Framework/Methodology* of linked resources and processes, and developed a Master Plan to transform three adjacent schools into **OMI/Excelsior Living Library & Think Park** on contiguous SFUSD 9+ acres. Resources include *Islais Creek* that flows under Balboa HS, agricultural history of the site, Native Ohlone Indians who lived there, multicultural diversity here today. **Themed Learning Zones** were planned to bring these assets into view. Implementation of plan, and maintenance of features, has been carried out by PreK-12 students with LFI, through ongoing, real-world, hands-on, interdisciplinary, standards-based learning opportunities, year-round, in the **Living Library Garden / Ecology / Multi-Arts / Nutrition / Literacy Program**. Design Development for San Miguel campus and some Denman portions have been completed, with many features now in place: Native Streetscape transformation and Artwalk (formerly a sterile streetscape); Lower Garden between Denman and San Miguel; Upper Garden at San Miguel; San Miguel Orchard & Redwood Reading Circle; Native Trees on San Miguel campus; wells dug with PUC for *Riparian Learning Zone*.



Roosevelt Island Living Library & Think Park, New York City – 2001 / Present

Concept, Plan, & Implementation: Life Frames, Inc. & Bonnie Ora Sherk

Client: Roosevelt Island Operating Corp. (RIOC), RI Resident's Assn., PS/IS 217, Coler-Goldwater Hospital, RI Senior's Assn.

Funders: Ford Foundation, RIOC, 217 PTA, Youth Arts New York, Salesforce, Child School

Reference: Matthew Katz, Past-President, RIRA – 212-935-7534

With the community, and incorporating the *A.L.L. Framework*, LFI developed a Master Plan for the 13 acre Southpoint open space directly across the East River from the United Nations. The Plan called for diverse features with integrated community programs and education opportunities: Stabilize the **Renwick Ruins** and build a new green building to house a **Global Center for Sustainable Development and Civil Society**; surrounded by **International Gardens** with technology linkages around the world; **World Stage** with the UN as backdrop; **International Café** with integrated International Arts, Crafts, Performances; **International Agro/Ecology Plots & Greenhouses**; **Green-Powered Digital Gateways** linking all parts of Island together and to the world; **Native Garden** areas next to the water around periphery of park; **International Boathouse**. In addition to this Master Planning Process, the community wanted to begin a hands-on, **Roosevelt Island Living Library Garden / Ecology / Multi-Arts / Nutrition / Literacy Program** transformation program. Thus, the **RI Living Library & Think Park** was begun at PS/IS 217, greening the campus of the school and bordering streets. When scaffolding surrounded the School, a new *RI Living Library & Think Park* was started behind 504 Main Street, engaging the local schools and community.



Bernal Heights Living Library & Think Park & Nature Walk, San Francisco, CA – 2002 / Present

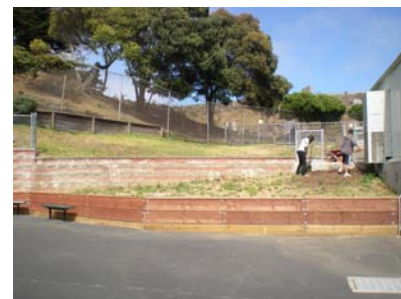
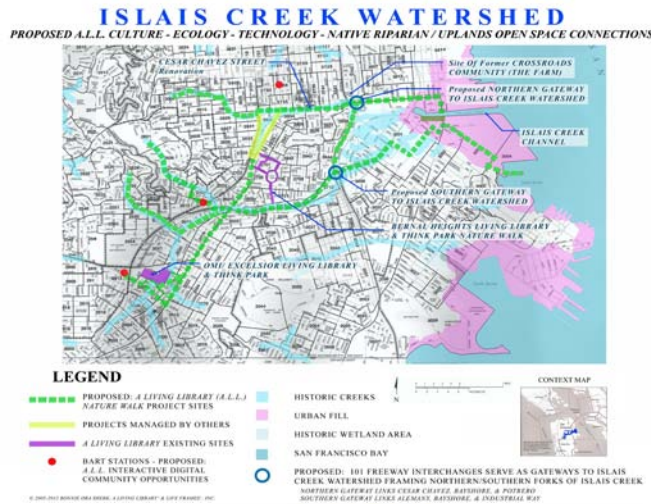
Concept, Plan, & Implementation: Life Frames, Inc. & Bonnie Ora Sherk

Client: SFUSD, Junipero Serra Elementary School, Junipero Serra CDC, Housing Authority, SF Recreation & Park, DPW, PUC

Funders: Mayor's Office of Community Development, SF Foundation, DCYF, California Department of Forestry & Fire Protection, CA Strategic Growth Council

Reference: Phil Ginsburg, General Manager, SF Recreation & Park Department – 415-831-2701

Working with students, teachers, administrators, city agency staff, and community members, *LFI*, led by Bonnie Ora Sherk, developed a Master Plan to create the **Bernal Heights Living Library & Think Park Nature Walk** filled with California native trees, understory, narrative artworks, interpretive signage, and other related elements, linking the local schools, parks, public housing, other open spaces, and multiple streets throughout the community, all leading to the Islais Creek at the south end of St. Mary's Park and Alemany Dwellings. The Nature Walk is currently being implemented with students and the community with funds from Cal Fire and Strategic Growth Council. The first 700 trees have been planted, and *LFI* is poised to continue planting more trees and understory. *LFI* also works year round with the schools and students greening their school grounds through the **Bernal Heights Living Library Garden / Ecology / Multi-Arts / Nutrition / Literacy Program**. Plans are also being developed with *LFI*, the community, and the PUC to daylight portions of the Creek, and **Frame the Islais Creek Watershed**. Both the *OMI/Excelsior* and *Bernal Heights Branch Living Library & Think Parks* are located within the *Islais Creek Watershed*, providing many ecological learning landscape opportunities to explore, design, and develop, bringing added value to these sites and the community.



Chinatown Living Library & Think Park, San Francisco, CA – 2007 / Present

Concept, Plan, & Implementation: Life Frames, Inc. & Bonnie Ora Sherk

Client: SFUSD, Gordon Lau Elementary School, Commodore Stockton CDC

Funders: Department Children, Youth, & Their Families, Chinatown Neighborhood Center Inc., Cal Fire, SFPUC

Reference: Jill Wynns, Commissioner, SFUSD – 415-828-7204

LFI and Bonnie Ora Sherk worked with the Principals of both schools to identify opportunities for lifting asphalt and concrete and greening the shared campuses with diverse Learning Zones. The greening has been accomplished by PreK-5 students with LFI in the year-round **Chinatown Living Library Garden / Ecology / Multi-Arts / Nutrition / Literacy Program**. Additionally, LFI designed and installed **Rainwater Harvesting Gardens & Mural** in three languages, depicting two diverse demonstrations of rainwater collection and use.

