



USEED

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urbanSEED stands for Urban, Social, Environmental and Economic Development. We are a cross-disciplinary design and planning action tank seeking to enact positive change through architecture, urban design/planning and development.

WHO WE ARE

Our history? urbanSEED was founded in late 2016 aiming to create inclusive, contextual and sustainable projects and developments. Based between Washington D.C. (USA) and Bogotá (Colombia), we work as a collaborative with a core team composed of our Leadership and a support team, and work with a solid network of collaborators that come on board to fulfill the needs to each context and project. Our experience spans from post-disaster reconstruction to long-term urban development, and from community-scale interventions to infrastructure resilience planning, bridging humanitarian assistance and sustainable development.

What we do? We call it Urban Stitching. Focusing on an integrated approach and strong participatory processes, our projects seek to enhance sustainable urban development and create more inclusion, equity and resilient city making. Through partnerships with leading international organizations and direct engagement with communities and governments, we have deepened our expertise in climate adaptation, disaster risk reduction, and resilient infrastructure while maintaining our participatory, community-centered approach. Our work addresses interconnected urban systems—physical, social, economic, and environmental—recognizing that sustainable solutions must integrate technical rigor with genuine community engagement.

Our interdisciplinary approach in design, planning, and development, and strong participatory processes allow our projects to respond to context and the specificities of each place, while bringing innovation and fostering strong community engagement and ownership.

Our focus? We work with different types of programs and projects focused on housing (including housing reconstruction and housing development PPPs), urban rehabilitation, disaster risk reduction and reconstruction, community development, and resilience. We work across multiple phases of a project—from strategy and programming to participatory approaches and design to implementation support—and across scales from building to city-wide infrastructure. Our work bridges emergency response and

WHAT WE DO

Design, Urban Planning + Vision Development. We aim to create dynamic urban fabrics that engage with the life of neighborhoods, their surroundings and the environment. We integrate multi-hazard risk assessment and climate adaptation strategies into all planning work, considering urban systems as interconnected networks.

Climate Resilience + Infrastructure. We bring systems-based approaches to climate resilience and disaster risk reduction, integrating multi-hazard risk analysis, historical landscape analysis, and nature-based solutions. We contribute participatory planning and community-centered design expertise to infrastructure projects, ensuring technical solutions are contextually appropriate and sustainable.

Participatory Planning + Community Development. Allowing PEOPLE to be at the center of our approach, we can create successful projects and a strong sense of place-making. These are co-creation processes, tactical urbanism, and community empowerment strategies that ensure local ownership and sustainability.

Housing Development + Policy. From incremental housing to PPP advisory, creating climate-smart, affordable housing solutions grounded in community needs. We bring innovative solutions to create productive, sustainable and resilient spaces and community.

Urban Rehabilitation + Informal Settlement Upgrading. Integrating marginalized communities through improved infrastructure, public space, and nature-based solutions. We also focus on the social infrastructure to ensure strong local governance, appropriation, as well as grounded operation and management (O&M) strategies.

Bridging Reconstruction & Long-term Development. We apply a whole settlements approach that addresses immediate post-disaster needs while building long-term resilience and sustainable development.

We work across the multiple phases of a project, and have a particular knack for:

> **LONG-TERM SUSTAINABILITY & LOCAL ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT:** We help develop integrated approaches to create sustainable, productive, and resilient communities and urban assets, considering both immediate needs and long-term climate adaptation.

> **CLIMATE-CHANGE ADAPTATION + NATURE BASED SOLUTIONS:** Through our system-based approach, looking at infrastructure as interconnected networks rather isolated interventions, we bring a landscape-driven approach to planning and design, incorporating NbS and locally appropriate interventions.

> **PLACEMAKING + TACTICAL URBANISM:** Allowing PEOPLE, NATURE AND CLIMATE to be at the center of our approach, we can create successful projects and a strong sense of local appropriation and place-making, bringing forth specificities of place and innovation.

> **SUSTAINABLE MATERIALS + VERNACULAR CONSTRUCTION:** Exploring sustainable materials and construction techniques, such as bamboo and earth, as well as leveraging local skillsets and techniques.

HOW WE DO IT

We aim for **integrated interventions** and **strong participatory processes** to enhance sustainable urban development and create more inclusion, equity, and resilient city-making. Our **systems-based approach** recognizes that urban challenges are interconnected—infrastructure, governance, environment, economy, and social equity—and solutions must address these dimensions holistically.

We value local appropriateness and sustainability in every sense—physical, environmental, financial, and socio-cultural. Our process begins with understanding place: **historical landscape analysis** reveals how the settlements evolved, what ecological systems were disrupted, and what vernacular strategies existed. Multi-hazard risk analysis identifies vulnerabilities across floods, earthquakes, landslides, and climate change impacts. This foundation informs designs that directly **incorporate passive and nature-based strategies** for optimizing natural resources, efficient and responsible water management, risk management, and production alternatives that **promote self-sustainability, local economic development, and community empowerment.**

OUR CORE VALUES

Collaborative and participatory nature: We seek a collaborative process with both the Client and the community at hand, thus aiming to directly respond to needs and desires as well as the specificities of place (environmental, social, cultural and political). In this manner, our process seeks to respect and bring forth for local cultures, values and heritage.

Integrated and interdisciplinary approach: We bring an integrated approach merging architecture, planning, landscape, sociology and geography, engaging in both hard and soft components needed to build a self-sustainable community.

Resilience: Acknowledging the pressing issues related to climate change and consequences surrounding natural disasters, we place resilience at the center of our approach. Resilience and risk reduction strategies (including nature-based solutions) are integrated as a cross-cutting priority issues to ensure the physical resilience of structures and infrastructure facing various natural hazards.

Through historical landscape analysis, we identify the key features of the target landscape—from ecosystem services and biodiversity to interdependencies with other ecosystems, populations, and infrastructure. Understanding how landscapes were historically constructed and what natural systems existed provides the foundation for interventions that enhance biological and cultural diversity, ecosystem services, and people's livelihoods. We conduct multi-hazard risk analysis to understand vulnerability patterns across multiple threats (flooding, seismic, landslide, climate change), informing integrated risk reduction strategies that address root causes rather than symptoms.

Ecological and Environmental Focus: Our methodology and interventions take into account environmental considerations in all program activities in order to reduce environmental impacts, while increasing resource efficiency and enhancing ecological approaches and more naturally resilient solutions. In this respect, nature-based solutions are actively sought and prioritized where possible.

Our systems-based approach treats urban elements as interconnected networks rather than isolated interventions. We analyze how infrastructure systems (water, transportation, energy, waste) interact with ecological systems, social dynamics, and governance structures. This holistic perspective allows us to identify leverage points where interventions create multiple co-benefits—for example, green infrastructure that manages stormwater while creating public space, cooling urban heat islands, supporting local biodiversity, and providing opportunities for urban agriculture.

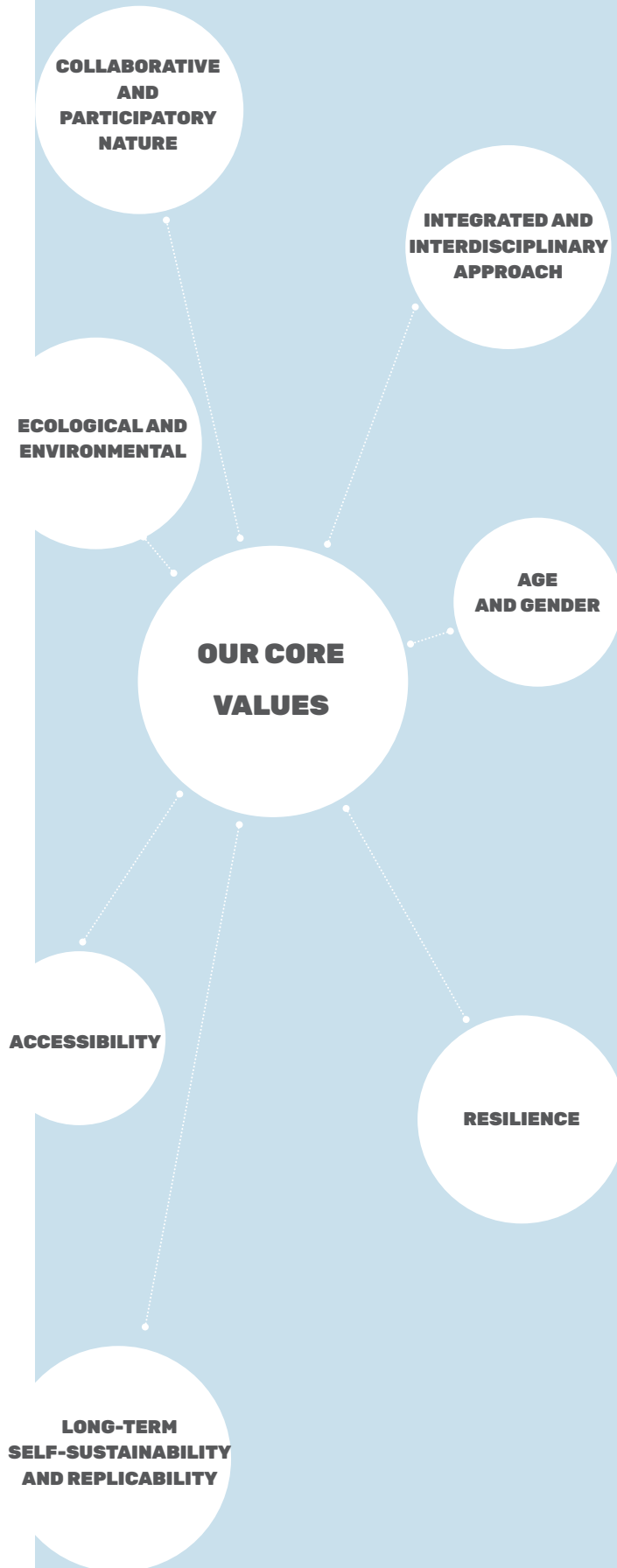
We incorporate passive design solutions (for example green infrastructure strategies for water management, such as permeable paving stones, rain gardens, bio-retention areas, etc.) to optimize natural resources and create, resilient, comfortable and productive spaces that respond to specific climates and contexts.

Long-term Self-sustainability and replicability: We seek to bring forth design interventions that are appropriate and contextual, replicable and innovative. Our designs take into the specific needs, customs, values and desires of each community, and include participatory processes in order to enhance local ownership. We strive to use locally sourced or locally accessible building materials and existing skillsets (in construction, aesthetics, art and crafts), and bear in mind low-level maintenance and cost with regards to the long-term maintenance and operation of interventions.

Moreover, we aim to support local governance aspects through design and operation and management (O&M) strategies.

Age and Gender: Our process identifies and takes into account gender, in terms of equitable participation of women as well as men, and in terms of gender-sensitive interventions, taking into account the needs of both women and men, girls and boys, for a more inclusive design and opportunities. Participatory activities are designed to encourage the inclusion and engagement of all age groups, including particularly marginalized age groups such as youth and seniors. Activities aim at equitable representation of an age range within representative community structures and consider interventions that are inclusive of the needs and desires of people of all ages.

Accessibility: The activities of the initiative should be designed in such a way as to encourage the equal participation and inclusion of people with reduced mobility. Particular emphasis should be placed on design intervention related to improving access and mobility so that they can include people with reduced mobility.





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OUR TEAM

urbanSEED is an urban collaborative and nimble organization that strives to bring an interdisciplinary perspective and approach. Our strong network of multiple expertise brings the necessary knowledge and experience to address each project needs and the context's specificities of place.

Our leadership team is comprised of our Founder and Managing Principal, Adriana Navarro-Sertich, and our Principal and Lead Designer, Maria Carrizosa. Between them, they hold over 35 years of professional experience ranging from the private sector, to academia to international development work.



ADRIANA NAVARRO-SERTICH
Founder + Managing Principal



MARIA CARRIZOSA
Principal + Lead Architect



SERGIO GARCIA
Junior Architect + GIS



BIBIANA HERNANDEZ
Junior Urban Designer +
Graphic Design



ANDRES RENJIFO
Junior Architect + Urban
Design



LAURA PINEDA
Junior Architect + Urban
Design



FRANK D'HONDT
Senior Urban Planner



DIEGO BERMUDEZ
Landscape Architect + Nature
based solutions



IVAN SOLANO
Landscape Architect + Urban
Design



SANTIAGO MANDRIÑAN
Botanist



BLANCA CALVO BOIXET
Architect + Community
Planner



AKBAR MODAN
Disaster Risk Management +
Reconstruction + Community
Development



VIDHEE GARG
Housing Finance + Housing
Management + PPP Structures



LAURA ZIMMERMAN
Social Scientist +
Community Planner



PAOLA LUNA
GIS Expert



DORIS TARCHOPOLIS
Housing + Urban Informality +
Urban Policy



SILVIA SOONETS
Urban Informality + Housing +
Urban Design



MARGARITA ROMERO
Biodimatic Design



DIEGO SILVA
Urban Economics



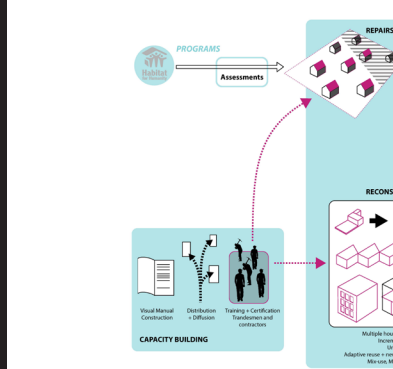
ANGELICA ARIAS
Cultural Heritage +
Architecture



JULIANA RAMIREZ
Vernacular Architecture and
Alternative Materials +
Participatory Design



GABRIEL GUTIERREZ
Biophilic Design



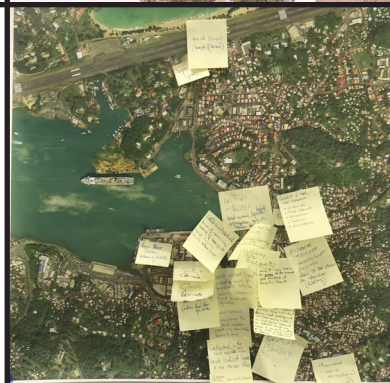
← Puerto Rico Housing reconstruction, with Habitat for Humanity. Developing pathways from informal to formal housing and resilient reconstruction frameworks



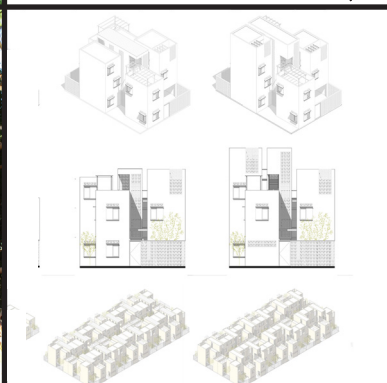
← Urban diagnosis and flood zone flood zone, Kinshasa. Systems-based approach to flood and climate risk, integrating historical landscape analysis, multi-hazard vulnerability assessment, and nature-based solutions to transform vulnerability into productive, resilient infrastructure.



Social housing cluster in peri-urban areas, Colombia. Climate-smart affordable housing with passive design

Incremental Housing & NbS schemes for
displaced populations, Senegal |

Republic of Congo, Context analysis,
informal settlement



Co-creation workshops, Washington D.C.

Capacity building for local governance and maintenance



Construction process with the community, Bamboo and Land exploration workshops in Colombia with Building Local



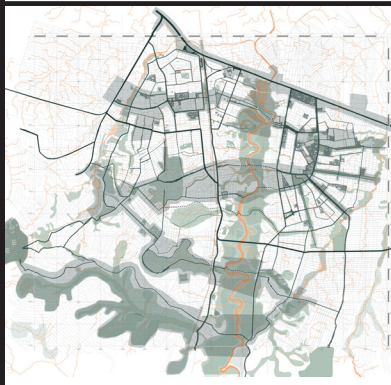
Conceptual design for public space for the development of social housing in Saint Louis, Senegal

Urban Vision 2040 Castries City Region

Our task consisted in advising UNOPS and the island-government on a planning methodology to review the 10-year-old plan within a limited budget of time and finance. Instead of simply conducting a desktop/expert-based technical review and update of the old plan, we conducted a participatory bottom up review process that was more aligned with the SDGs/New Urban Agenda. A fast-track planning process was established through a series of stakeholder consultations and Focus Groups, culminating in the first ever Castries City Region Urban Forum, resulting in a Shared Vision Declaration as foundation for the New Castries Urban Vision. Themes explored included housing, informal settlement and urban upgrading, land management, transportation and mobility, climate change and resilience, local economic development, port infrastructure and economy, culture and public equipment, green and public spaces, amongst others.

After compiling a Castries Urban Profile, a draft Urban Vision was developed, including strategic project proposals to incrementally implement the new Vision. Intensive meetings were held to discuss the draft vision, including direct negotiations with PM Chastenet. The final draft was presented to and adopted by the Cabinet of the Government, co-opted by the Lord Mayor's Office of Castries.

The project exemplifies urbanSEED's ability to facilitate high-level strategic planning while maintaining genuine community participation, bridging technical rigor with inclusive engagement.



Flood and Erosion Risk assessment and Mitigation: N'djili River urban watershed, Kinshasa, DRC

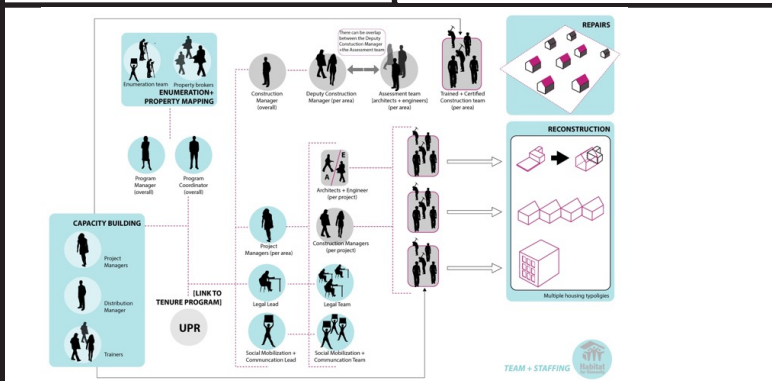
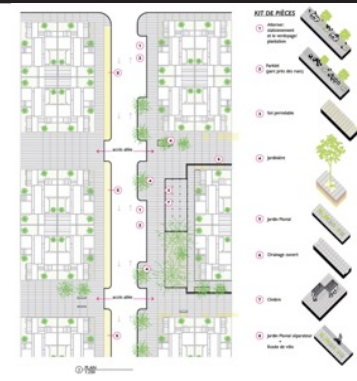
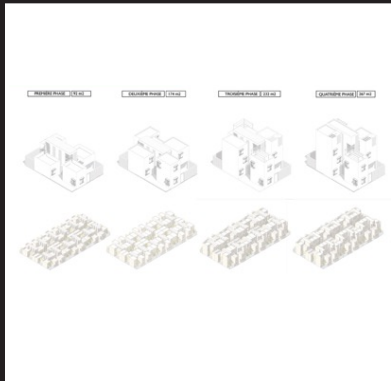
This project aims to build multifunctional infrastructural spaces that address all forces at play – physical, eco-logical, social and economic. The project reflects an integrated approach to urban planning, design and landscape architecture.

The Project proposes a Socio-Ecological Network informed by historical landscape analysis and multi-hazard risk assessment. Rather than gray infrastructure alone, the approach combines structural measures with NbS to support the multifunctional nature of the intervened neighborhoods and enhance the vibrant, dynamic life of the existing urban environment while protecting and fostering the livelihood of other species. The systems-based approach recognizes interconnections between water management, public space, mobility, land use, and community development. Opportunities include the combination of placemaking strategies such as spaces for encounter, productive spaces, spaces for recreation and contemplation, as well as opportunities to promote local biodiversity through the creation of wildlife habitats, water filtration, aquifer recharge, and other ecosystem services.

Project for the relocation of the displaced populations of La Langue de Barbarie, Senegal

This housing project responds to the need to relocate the fisherman community of the Langue de Barbarie in Saint Louis, Senegal that was displaced from their original land due to climate change. It consists on the development of 500 incremental units (1500 people) as well as infrastructure, services and the urban development of a vacant 14 acre site on the outskirts of the city.

The proposal includes a review of an existing urban plan by the municipality, and the design of a prototypical housing unit. The reviewed urban plan offers insights for a more resilient and sustainable approach, incorporating Nature Based Solutions for water management, temperature reduction and enhancement of ecosystem services; integrating a mix of uses to enhance walkability and access to services and jobs; and a re-orienting of the lots to reduce sun exposure, improve comfort conditions and energy efficiency in the housing units, as well as guarantee its sustainability over time.

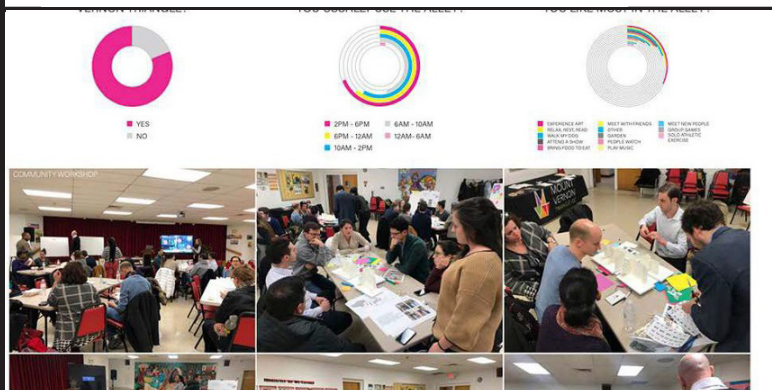


Development of Hurricane Maria's Recovery Program Strategy, Puerto Rico

The project Objectives was to provide Habitat for Humanity the inception and development of Hurricane Maria recovery strategy and resilient housing reconstruction strategy.

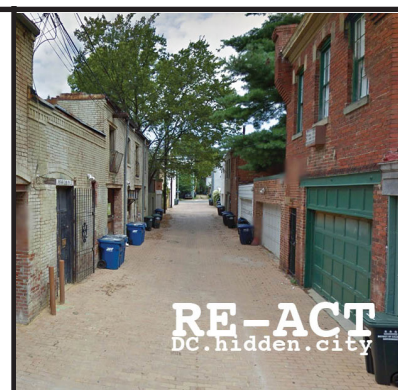
Based largely on the Pathways to Permanence strategy, the developed recommendations offered a framework to assist families to move from risk-heavy informal housing to lower-risk formal housing options that are safe, adequate and could serve as financial assets. In some cases the programs here take the first step in incremental movement to reduce risk. The framework recognizes that this requires different types of programs, and that security of tenure, community participation, access to finance, employment opportunities, public infrastructure, and basic services must be addressed alongside housing programs.

This project exemplifies urbanSEED's whole settlements approach—bridging immediate humanitarian response with long-term resilient development, addressing not just housing structures but the entire ecosystem of community resilience including infrastructure, services, governance, and economic opportunity.



Reimagining Washington DC's alleys, Urban Rehabilitation and Tactical Urbanism

Reclaiming and revitalizing Washington DC's alleysways, and in collaboration with Community Improvement Districts in the city, the project aims to optimize underutilized and undervalued urban spaces and alleys by proposing intermediate scale, inclusive, mix-use interventions with a strong focus on public space, community development and tactical urbanism. This work demonstrates urbanSEED's ability to apply participatory, community-centered approaches in U.S. urban contexts, scaling tactical interventions toward long-term transformation.



RE-ACT
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We have experience in housing, ranging from the physical design and planning of housing communities, to experience and technical knowledge in housing processes and policy, including different approaches and modalities- from PPPs to sites and services to incremental housing, ranging from single family homes to multi-family housing.

A/ Our focus on housing and community development

urbanSEED focuses on integrated interventions and strong participatory processes seeking to enhance sustainable urban development and create more inclusion, equity and resilient city making.

Recognizing housing as a process and not a simple product, our approach to housing focuses on designing and building communities. Housing is much more than “4 walls and a roof” and needs to engage both hard and soft components together, linking infrastructure, basic services, public space and public amenities, as well as addressing access to employment opportunities, local governance, tenure and micro finance aspects, amongst others.

We value local appropriateness and sustainability in every sense of the word- physical, environmental, financial and socio-cultural. The results arising are designs and a physical manifestation that directly incorporate passive strategies for thermal control and the optimization of resources, efficient and responsible water management, risk management, and production alternatives that promote self-sustainability, local economic development and community empowerment.

We work in synergy between the urban and housing scales, incorporating participatory processes putting people at the center of our process, and encompassing the principles and objectives reflected in the New Urban Agenda, the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and international planning guidelines.

B/ Our experience

Our experience ranges from site design and the urban scale to the architectural scale of the house. We have experience on various types of housing approaches from a final model approach, to incremental housing and self-help models to “sites and services” and core housing strategies, working in both urban, peri-urban and rural contexts.

Our practice incorporates passive strategies to provide energy efficiency and comfortable living spaces. Moreover, both of our principals have extensive knowledge, and hold degrees in both architecture and city and regional planning. As such, the urban design scale is very much embedded in the architectural proposals urbanSEED tends to make and vice versa.

We touch on all phases of the design process and have substantial technical expertise on the housing process and models, including the multiple soft components that accompany the physical interventions (tenure and land governance, local governance structures, access and creation of employment opportunities, micro-finance, etc.).

We work in synergy between the urban and the architectural scales directly responding to the specificities of place (context, culture and values) and privilege passive design strategies optimize natural resources. Our interdisciplinary approach provides an integrated approach linking the necessary hard and soft components and aspects of sustainability and resilience.

More than “4 walls and a roof”, we see the production of housing as an opportunity to build communities.

Contingent on the latter, we understand the importance of participatory processes and designing directly with the community and client in order to enhance local appropriation and properly respond to users’ needs and desires.

HOUSING AS A PROCESS

Incorporate relevant infrastructure, services and public space, and public equipment

Address multiple scales from the micro (individual, unit and block) to the macro (neighborhood, city and region)

Strive for context driven designs seeking appropriate materials and solutions that reflect culture and values

Provide financial accessibility and secure tenure

Integrate construction efficiency and environmentally friendly approaches

Create multivalence and flexibility acknowledging growth and evolution

Understand housing as a productive good and enhance local economic development

Support local governance and long-term self-sustainability - maintenance and operations



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WORKING ACROSS SCALES & PARTNERSHIPS

urbanSEED works both independently and in partnership with leading international organizations. Recent partnerships have expanded our expertise in infrastructure resilience and large-scale climate adaptation projects while maintaining our core commitment to participatory, community-centered approaches.

Through collaborations with organizations like Miyamoto International, we have contributed participatory planning, nature-based solutions, community engagement, and urban design expertise to major infrastructure resilience programs in Central Africa and beyond. These experiences have deepened our ability to integrate community-centered approaches into complex, multi-hazard infrastructure projects, demonstrating that technical rigor and genuine participation are not just compatible—they're essential to sustainable outcomes.

Whether leading community-scale projects or contributing specialized expertise to larger multidisciplinary teams, we bring the same values: people at the center, systems-based thinking, nature-based solutions, and long-term sustainability.

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Areas of Expertise:

Urban Resilience & Climate Adaptation | Participatory Planning & Community Development | Disaster Risk Reduction & Reconstruction | Housing Development & PPPs | Urban Rehabilitation & Informal Settlement Upgrading | Nature-Based Solutions | Passive Design Strategies | Tactical Urbanism & Placemaking | Local Governance & Policy

Geographic Focus:

Latin America | Caribbean | Sub-Saharan Africa | North America

Working Languages:

English | Spanish | French | Portuguese

