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Ai-Gams: underground aqua-tecture: a Namibian thermal bathhouse & water research hub

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Underground AQUA-Tecture

A Namibian Thermal Bathhouse & Water Research Hub

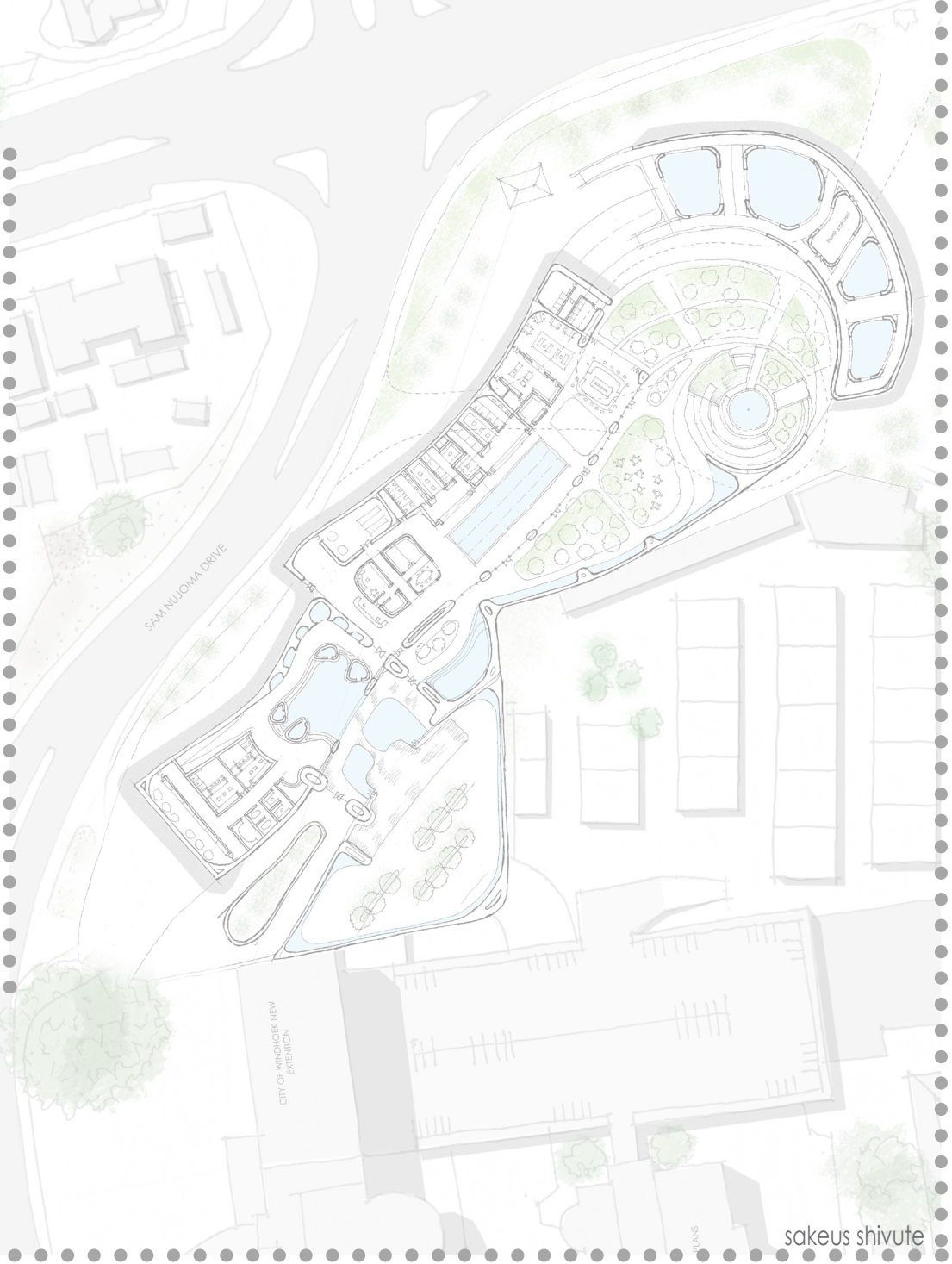
ABSTRACT

Namibia, like the rest of the world, has experienced devastating water shortages in the past. The lack of water has affected livestock, agriculture, and mining industries. As a result, Namibia's economic growth has been under immense stress. Furthermore, residents have had to endure water usage restrictions implemented by the city to save water. These circumstances have forced the City of Windhoek to consider radical new methods of preserving water to prevent another water crisis. In 2009, the municipality executed a revolutionary new project to store surface water underground in designated aquifers to prevent water evaporation. Although this new alternative doesn't completely prevent another water crisis, it at least buys the city time.

The revival of Windhoek's historical underground aquifers has opened up contemporary questions about the city's natural underground water resources. The city was discovered and built because of its abundant underground water. Hot water springs provided essential water for the horses and cattle of Jan Jonker, and his Oorlam Afrikaner people, when they first arrived in Windhoek from the Cape in 1830. Today this underground jewel is virtually unknown by the general public. Therefore, there is now an opportunity to re-introduce the city to its natural water system, that has been forgotten due to so many water shortages over the years. The city's Aquifer Recharge Project establishes a platform to investigate the potential of directly tapping into this natural resource and introducing an architectural intervention that commemorates water.

A Bathhouse and Water Research Hub provides a perfect place and program for citizens engage with a hidden natural history. In an arid country where water is associated with scarcity and crises, there's a need to exhibit water in a different light. It will be the city's first facility of such kind. Bathing and swimming pools for leisure will provide a space for people to completely indulge themselves in this scares resource . The facility will also comprise a water research hub that will act as the city's water laboratory and public water education department and provide water technology and engineering consultation services to private clients. This facility will be called "/Ai-//Gams" which means Fire Water in Nama.





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