

# Tha Chalom Courtyard

**Project:** Tha Chalom Courtyard

**Location:** Tha Chalom, Samut Sakhon, Thailand

**Area:** 2.5 Rais

## Project Statement

**A park space from the community, by the community and for the community.**

Tha Chalom, the first sanitation district in Thailand which is the habitation of the Thai-Chinese fishing communities that settled here in the past. Presently it is facing challenges from multidimensional change, from dense urbanization caused by a large non-registered population of migrant workers, a lack of public spaces to promote people's health, and the fading of historical identities. This project aims to develop a multifunctional space at an existing public health center, transforming it into a vibrant, multigenerational community hub. The design process deeply engaged the community, ensuring their needs and aspirations were met, thereby fostering a sense of ownership and social cohesion. With only 3,200 sqm, the project serves a space that is usable and beneficial to all its users, from young children, teenagers, adults and elderly. The concept connects the gems of the location, the sky, sea, sand and the community all together, for all to enjoy harmoniously.



## Project Narrative

Tha Chalom District, located in Samut Sakhon Province, connects to the seaside and is a heritage site for local historical buildings. The city aims to improve the quality of life sustainably, enhancing its economy, society, and culture. The Tha Chalom Courtyard Park was designed using a participatory process that sets new standards for community engagement in Thai urban planning. To create a sense of belonging for the people, the planning process involved communities from the start of research through to program planning to truly adapt to their benefits. The park listened to people from the surrounding communities, the elderly community, the youth from nearby schools and the migrant workers.

Tha Chalom Courtyard transforms the existing public health service center operated by the Thai Health Foundation (Thai Health) into a vibrant community space. The city of Samut Sakorn is facing challenges from multidimensional change, from dense urbanization caused by a large non-registered population of migrant workers, a lack of public spaces to promote people's health, and the fading of historical identities. Particularly, Tha Chalom's fishery economy and culture are under strain from international fisheries laws and regulations.

Through community participation in the design process, the project embodies principles of inclusive design, promoting sustainable cities and communities, cultural preservation and accessibility to public spaces. By repurposing abandoned infrastructure, fostering community engagement, and creating economic opportunities, it serves as a model for sustainable urban development.

The design process was community-driven, reflecting their daily lives and aspirations. The community envisioned activities such as exercise, leisure, recreation, community events, attractions, a library, and a learning space for the youth. The space aims to reflect the community's identity and way of life. The parks design emphasizes flexible spaces to benefit all generations while preserving the area's unique identity.



Participatory Process



## Design Strategies:

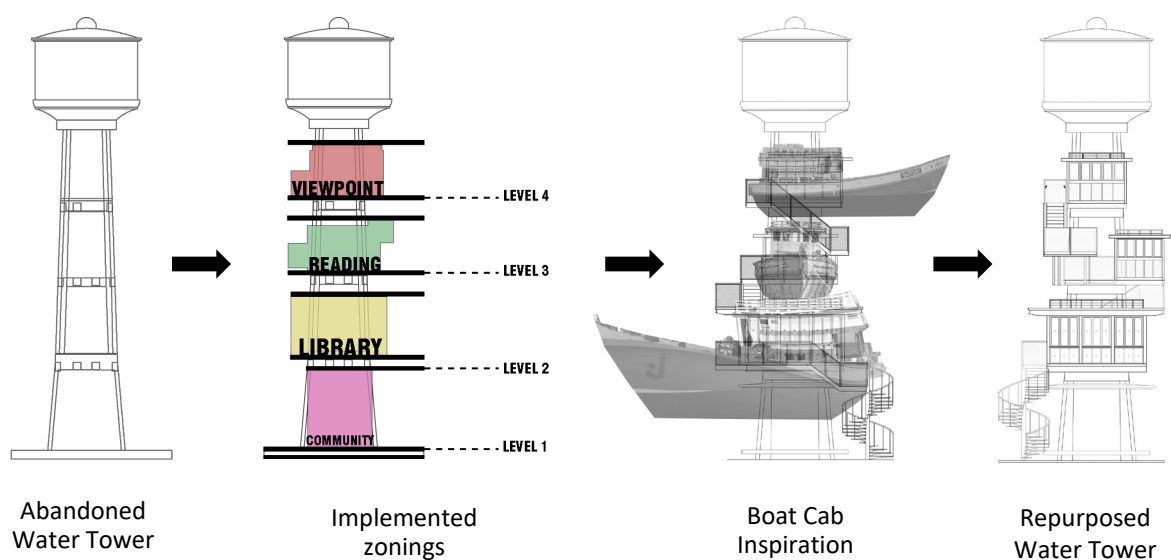
- A learning space for all rounded skills about sports, history, nature, apprenticeship, traditions and culture.
- Connectivity of space – the site is divided through the middle by a road hence the design should create connectivity and unity between the two spaces
- Sense of arrival – using existing and implemented large trees to build a memorable arrival atmosphere and sense of space
- Become the new destination for locals and tourists, being the cultural hotspot in the center of town that merges the connection between the local temple, old town, school, community, museum and Nong han lake.
- Entry and exit channels placed all around each side of the site to integrate with the flow of local's daily lives and becoming one with their daily passage.
- Active and passive activity zoning that integrates into the existing structures, preserving and educating people about the historical buildings. For example with the museum, formerly a prison, has interactive exhibitions and renovated with landscape design that connects all the buildings.
- Building a self-sustaining ecosystem, such as ponds and water filtration systems by aquatic plants and preservation of all existing trees.



Masterplan

# Repurposed Water Tower

Preserving existing structures of the abandoned water tower, repurposed into a usable space reminiscent of a fishing boat cabin, showcases the project's commitment to heritage preservation within regulatory frameworks. The Sky Boat Library of Tha Chalom courtyard aims to become a hub for learning and cultural-based tourism, contributing to the area's tourism development and inspiring creative urban solutions. The top two floors are designed as a reading area and a viewpoint that overlooks the panoramic view of the entire Tha Chin River settlement, bringing realization of being part of the city to create a public cultural and environmental awareness. Additionally, recycling concrete accelerates sustainable construction by repurposing abandoned structures with a long lifespan, capturing carbon dioxide over the concrete's lifetime. Repurposing heritage buildings also mitigates climate change, with second-hand materials like brick, metal, wood, and concrete having a lower carbon footprint due to their previous use.



Boat Cab Inspiration





### Lan Tai Kong

The 'Lan Tai Kong' fishing boat-inspired playground, located above the former underground water tank, can be enjoyed by children and used as conversation pits for adults. It is designed with Thai local wisdom and uses natural wooden material and climbing rope that represents the local fishing culture. The selection of equipment that will help develop both their cognitive and physical development and help strengthen gross motor skills. The playground serves as a family bonding area for all 3 generations, with outdoor exercise areas for adults and the elderly and a loop running track, promoting the health and wellness of everyone in the community.





## Park Landscape

The overall landscape is designed to be accessible and easy to use for all generations, incorporating 'Chaan,' a Thai traditional terrace, as a multipurpose activity space. The multiple lawn spaces allow for individual or group activities and even serve as stages for children or occasional events. Different times of the day see different generations using the space: elderly visiting the health center in the morning, kids playing after school, and adults exercising after work. By maximizing green spaces and repurposing existing infrastructure, the project demonstrates a steadfast commitment to sustainability within urban development frameworks.



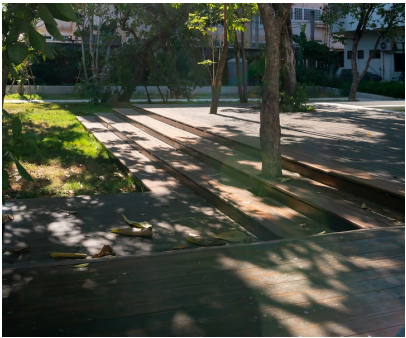
The parking spaces can adapt to facilitate sports activities and street food kiosks, economically benefiting small local vendors. The space has become a recreational park that allows the community to benefit not only from health and physical activities but also economically, by becoming a destination for daily locals and tourists. Furthermore, building a self-sustaining ecosystem, such as ponds and water filtration systems by aquatic plants, and preservation of all existing trees, the park is designed to have pockets of multifunctional spaces that are flexible towards each generation's usage timings. All the park spaces are connected for a flow of activities from the multipurpose parking space, exercise lawn, Lan Tai Kong, cultural lawn, a small show stage, street food kiosks, chess sala, wooden terrace, and sand pit. By repurposing existing infrastructure and maximizing green spaces, Tha Chalom Courtyard revitalizes the local economy, fosters environmental awareness, and promotes social cohesion.





## Community Engagement

Prior to The Tha Chalom Courtyard, public spaces in Samut Sakhon – and indeed much of Thailand – had been designed without meaningful consultation with local communities. A key goal of this project was to demonstrate to local government the benefits and possibilities afforded by community participation in urban design and urban planning. By successfully partnering with local government throughout our design process, we believe we are contributing towards a much-needed shift towards community participation in Thai public planning practices and regulations.



The project serves as a model for sustainable urban development, revitalizing the local economy, fostering environmental awareness, and promoting social cohesion.

By becoming a hub for learning and cultural-based tourism, the project not only revitalizes the local economy but also inspires other communities to embrace creative urban solutions. In essence, Tha Chalom Courtyard offers an inclusive, safe, and resilient urban development in Thailand and beyond.

