



PALESTINE MUSEUM OF NATURAL HISTORY

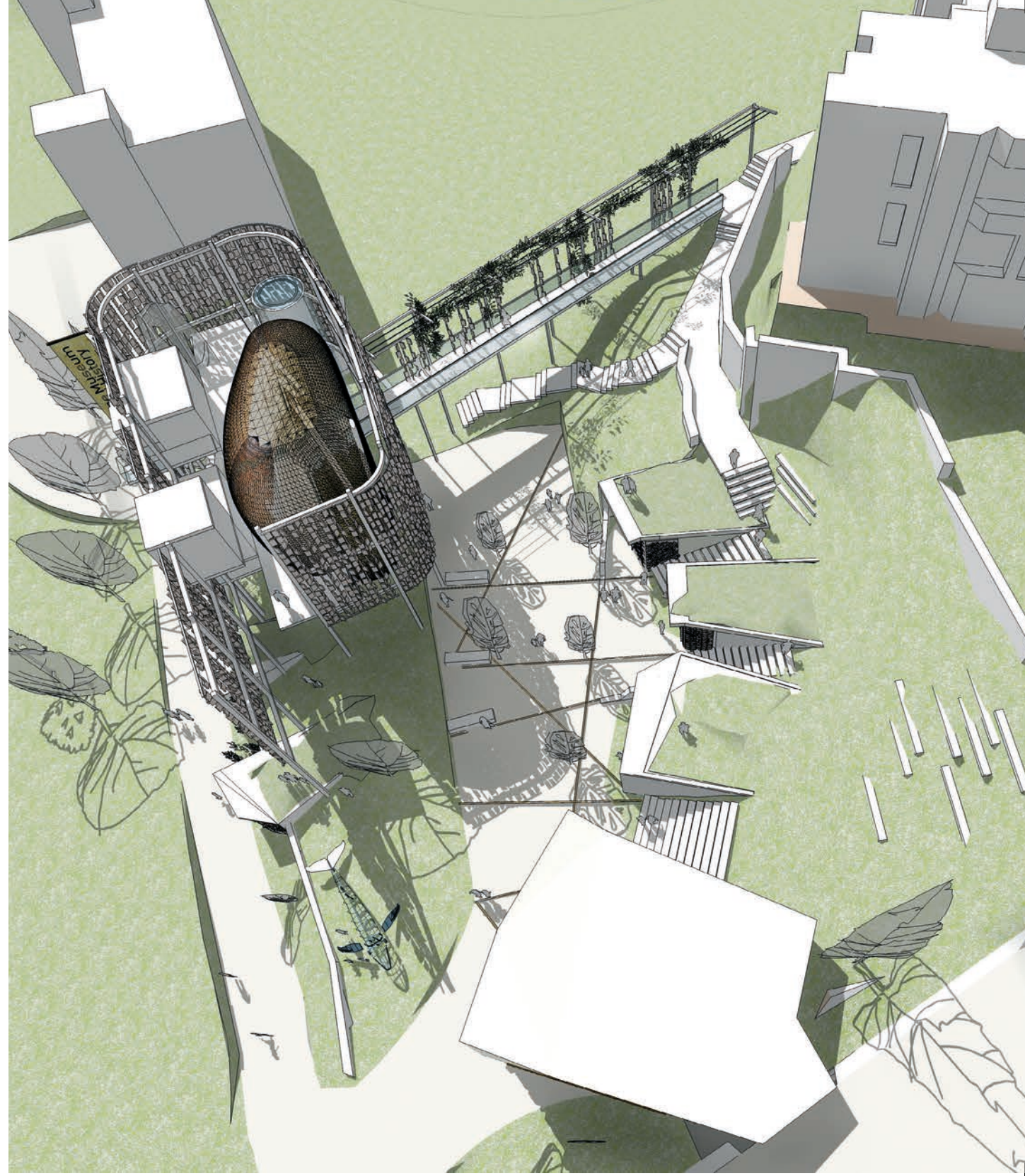
PROPOSAL FOR THE CONSTRUCTION OF NEW MUSEUM EXHIBITION SPACES

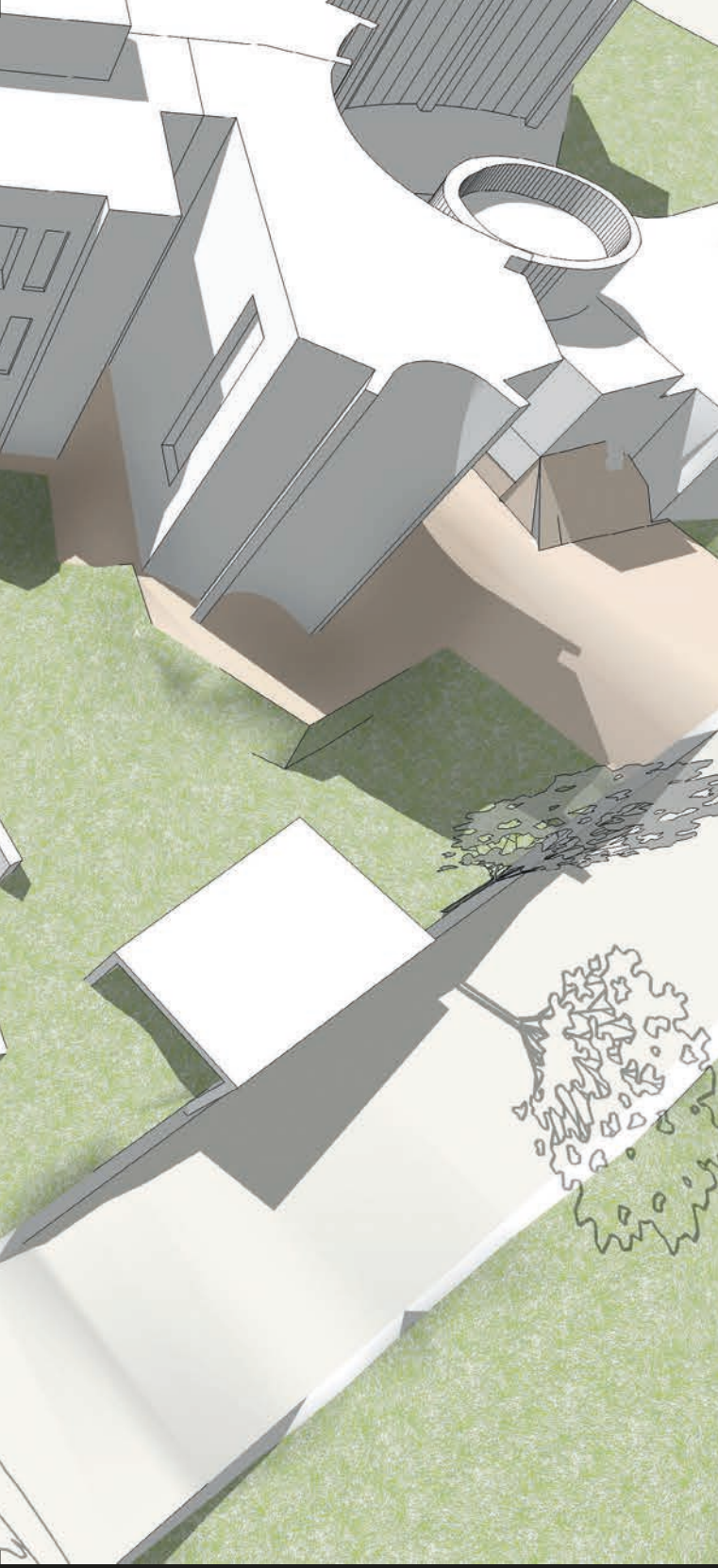
INTRODUCTION



The Palestine Museum of Natural History (PMNH) and the Palestine Institute for Biodiversity and Sustainability (PIBS) at Bethlehem University (BU) were established in 2014 with the mission to research, educate about, and conserve our natural world, culture and heritage, and to use knowledge to promote responsible human interactions with our environment.

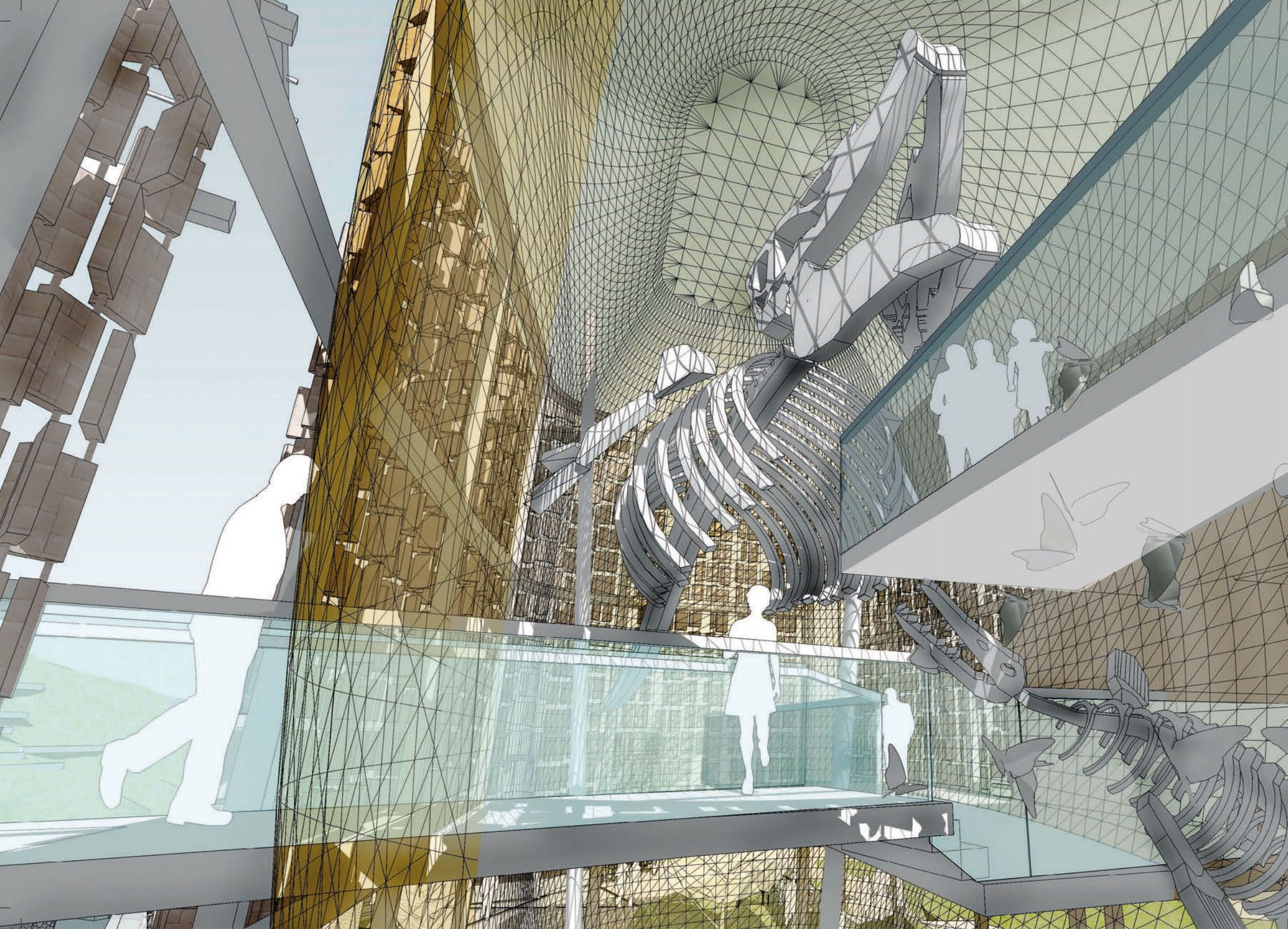
The Museum was started with land and a building provided by Bethlehem University, donations from Dr. and Mrs. Qumsiyeh (\$250,000) and from other individuals, and largely volunteer efforts.





Some examples of the great achievements of the past four years include:

1. Collections totaling thousands of photographs, data, plants, animals, fossils, ethnologic, and geologic specimens. A part of this resource is now exhibited in our small exhibit hall.
2. Implementing environmental education and awareness programs that have serviced over 8000 students and over 4000 other visitors.
3. Implementing a number of projects related to conservation in Palestine, including protecting endangered habitats/ecosystems, fostering environmental clubs at schools and protecting rich biodiversity areas.
4. Recruiting hundreds of local and international volunteers, who spend anywhere from two weeks to four months at a time to learn new skills and develop a spirit of volunteerism and team work while advancing their own careers.
5. Consulting to governments, NGOs, and academia on issues of education, environmental health and research.
6. Transforming a neglected 12 dunum area into a community and a botanical garden using permaculture principles (including composting, biotopia, food forest, bee-keeping, aquaponics, and hydroponics).
7. Working with farmers and others in the community to create environmentally friendly gardens and environmentally sustainable behaviors. This has included training agricultural engineers from Gaza in aquaponics and other sustainable agricultural methods.
8. Publishing over 40 applied research papers and over 120 other articles in diverse areas ranging from biodiversity to museology to Israeli effects on the environment.
9. Successfully funding and executing over a dozen projects in areas of research, education, and conservation with significant impact on our society.



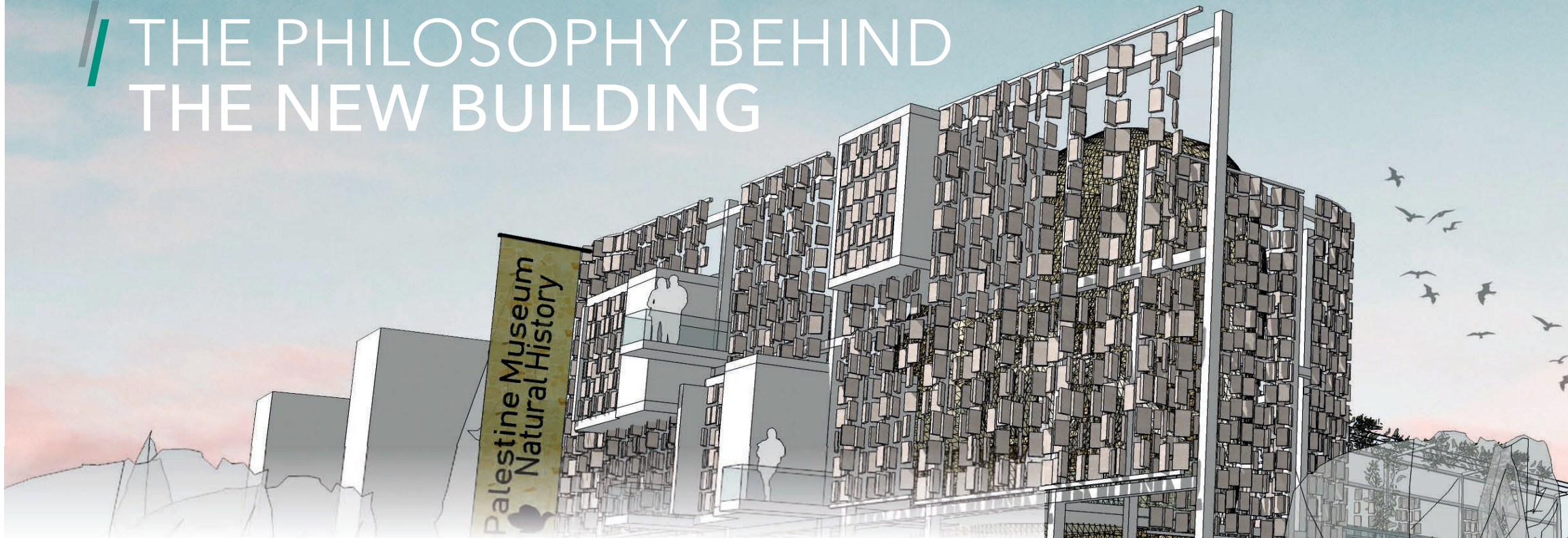
FUTURE AIMS AND AMBITIONS



All of the great achievements recorded in the PMNH/PIBS have been completed with great determination and effort. The modest facilities (less than 300 square meters) and limited land have been used in the most optimum way possible. As our collections and exhibits have steadily grown, so have our visions and plans for the future.

Thus we plan to develop new buildings that, serving the mission and goals articulated above, will enable us to create new academic programs and significantly expand our research, environmental awareness and conservation efforts to arrive at sustainable human and natural societies/ecosystems.

THE PHILOSOPHY BEHIND THE NEW BUILDING



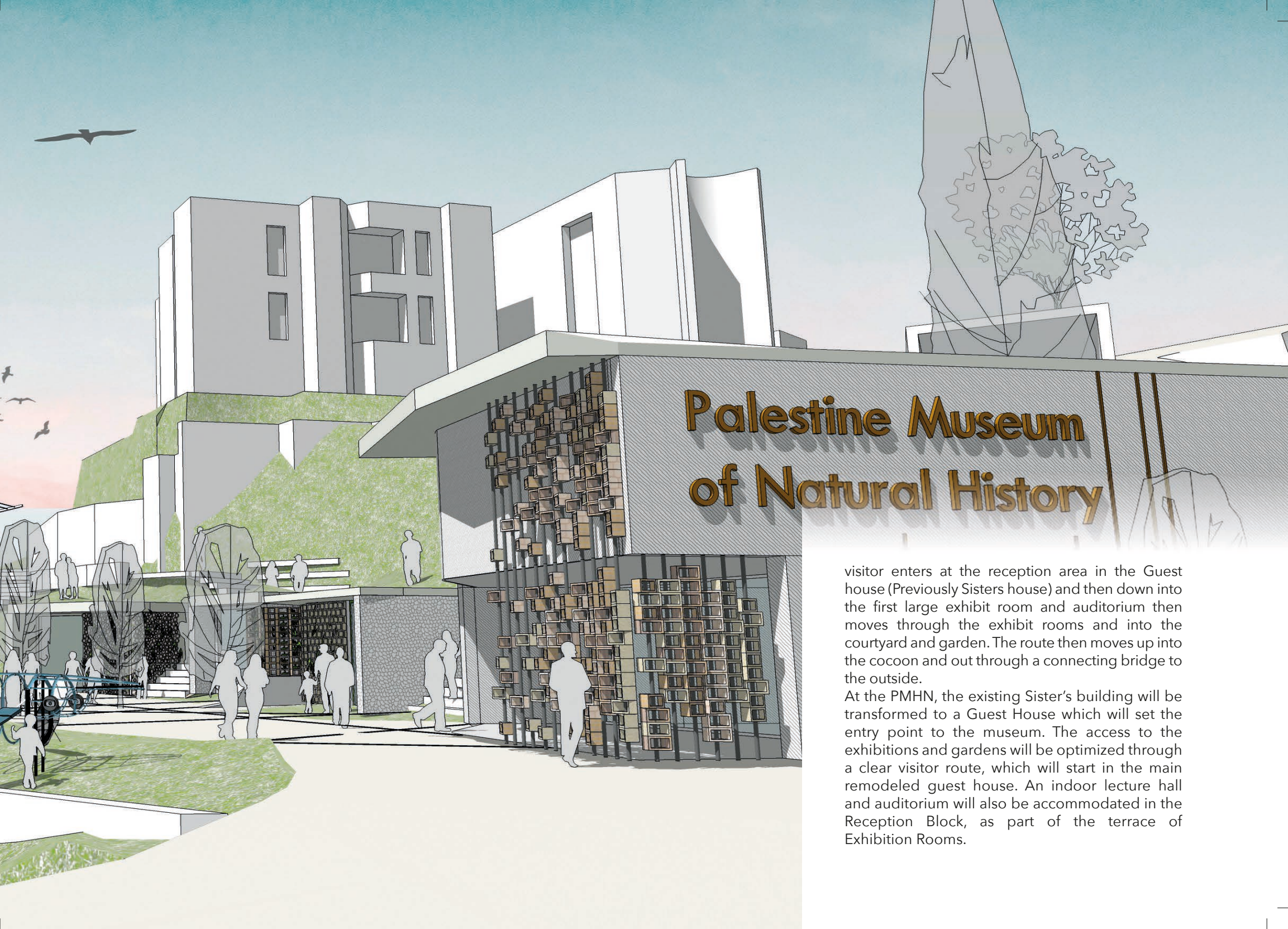
The unique setting and dominant landscape of the Palestine Museum of Natural History and the available land has influenced and framed the architectural approach and concept of the new proposed scheme. Two existing stone buildings (the Sisters Building to the north and the Admin Block, southwest) will be remodeled and used. The hill site topography encompasses areas with rare and endangered plant species like the Star of Bethlehem and four species of orchids. The values and spirit of PMNH/PIBS are reflected in a sensible proposal that blends architecture into the landscape using locally sourced materials and green design.

The proposal consists of a series of Exhibition Rooms emerging from the landscape and forming

an informal courtyard against the proposed 'Nucleus block', which will surround a "floating" Cocoon. The "Living Nest" exhibition rooms reflect the vision and Mission of PMNH in research, education, leading to conservation/sustainability. Thus, the proposed architecture reflects the modern interactive museum approach while preserving local conditions and cultural uniqueness. The present architectural design includes space for additional exhibits and events by enhancing the landscape through a flexible architectural design that allows additional space for showcasing new exhibits and for laboratory and education renewal to give continuous service.

The proposal expresses the minimally invasive strategy by which the scheme has been crafted. The





Palestine Museum of Natural History

visitor enters at the reception area in the Guest house (Previously Sisters house) and then down into the first large exhibit room and auditorium then moves through the exhibit rooms and into the courtyard and garden. The route then moves up into the cocoon and out through a connecting bridge to the outside.

At the PMHN, the existing Sister's building will be transformed to a Guest House which will set the entry point to the museum. The access to the exhibitions and gardens will be optimized through a clear visitor route, which will start in the main remodeled guest house. An indoor lecture hall and auditorium will also be accommodated in the Reception Block, as part of the terrace of Exhibition Rooms.

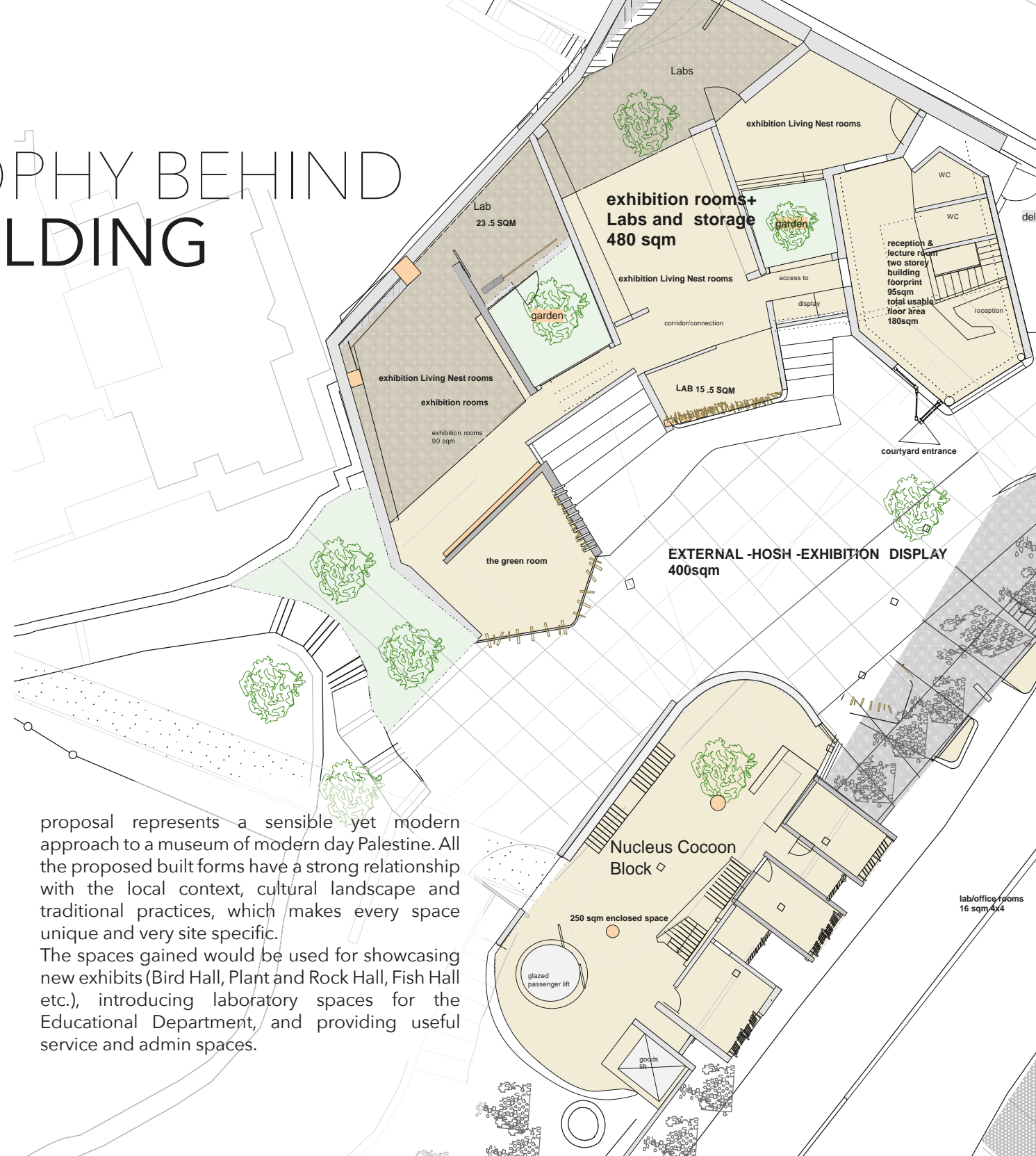
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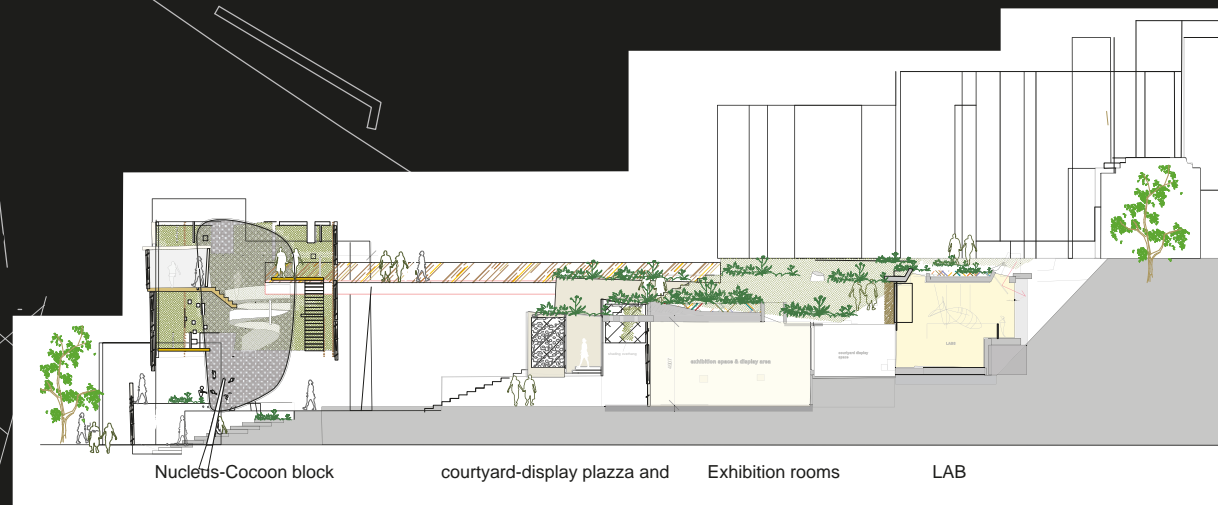
Exhibit rooms surrounding the courtyard

The proposal expresses the minimally invasive environmental strategy. In order to accommodate the Exhibition Rooms, the landscape is carved and rebuilt to embrace and cover the new buildings. In this way, the Exhibition Rooms become part of the landscape, seemingly pushed into the topography and enveloped by it. The constant temperature and darkness of the surrounding earth will become purposefully utilized within the rooms, as most of the artifacts exhibited at PMNH are light and temperature sensitive. This approach to designing the new exhibition room additions to the Palestine Museum of Natural History offers a new way of viewing displays. It challenges conventional large, all-purpose, generic warehouse-type exhibition space. Instead, the design seeks to provide smaller, tailored-domestic types of Living Room/Nests, housing personal artifacts.

The Living Nest exhibition rooms will be fitted for purpose, which resonates with the overall vision and character of the PMNH. The scheme proposed is a one-of-a-kind intervention in Palestine; with its environmental qualities, community involvement, interaction and sustained development, the

proposal represents a sensible yet modern approach to a museum of modern day Palestine. All the proposed built forms have a strong relationship with the local context, cultural landscape and traditional practices, which makes every space unique and very site specific. The spaces gained would be used for showcasing new exhibits (Bird Hall, Plant and Rock Hall, Fish Hall etc.), introducing laboratory spaces for the Educational Department, and providing useful service and admin spaces.





The Cocoon

The 'Cocoon' is inspired by the traditional rural setting in Palestine where a prominent structure usually leads visitors to a collective room at the entrance of the village. The proposed building floats over the landscape, supported by point columns and accessed by a suspended bridge, shaded by growing vegetation, which stretches from the existing Sisters building (becomes the entrance guest house). The Nucleus consists of an environmentally responsive skin and an inner Cocoon. The skin is made of clay tiles, which act as passive cooling agents to the organic shaped cocoon, which it protects. The nucleus consists of a tall exhibition space stretching over 3 stories, with the potential to exhibit large artifacts. Ancillary rooms hosting laboratory and office spaces are also part of the nucleus, which perforate through the Environmental Skin in certain areas, creating a playful scenario.

The Courtyard

The proposed scheme not only offers much needed space for current and future exhibits and events, but would also enhance the character of the site by articulating the landscape and creating a consistent architectural language throughout. The newly formed internal courtyard of the proposal becomes a key space for the events and gatherings organized by the museum. This is also inspired by the Palestinian cultural landscape, in which the courtyard is a space of activities, a shaded public space defined by the surrounding buildings. The steepness of the existing topography provides a great opportunity to integrate seating within the landscape, reinforcing the strong relationship between the new proposal and its surroundings. By doing this, the courtyard becomes an adaptable space, which can be transformed into an outdoor theatre/ auditorium.



The Living Bridge

The permeability and uniqueness of the scheme is furthermore underlined by the addition of a suspended bridge. The living bridge provides a strategic physical and visual connection with the existing Sisters building. Using canopy and vegetation, shading is provided over and under the bridge to enable the bridge to be an environmentally comfortable space where visitors can stand by and view the buildings and spaces including the courtyard from above. The shading strategy utilizes local vegetation in order to protect the bridge from direct sunlight and overheating, which also softens and camouflages its appearance, blending it into the landscape.

The Gardens and indoor/ outdoor connectivity

The buildings are open to the outside, minimally invasive and will accommodate exhibits that connect indoors to outdoors. For example the Palestinian cultural heritage exhibit will include indoor items including intangible cultural heritage exhibits and some small tangible cultural heritage while the courtyard will have larger items like carriages, ploughs etc.

PHASING

The project is set out in two phases of construction:

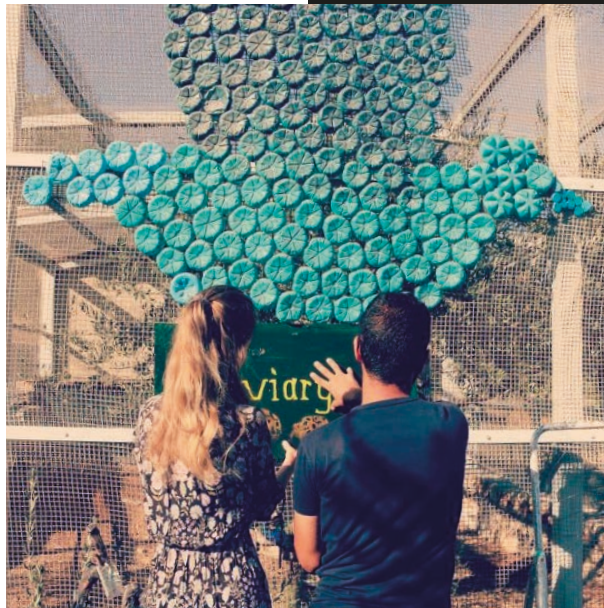
PHASE 1

- Remodeling the Sister's Residence into a reception area and Guest House
- Construction of all the Exhibition rooms into the landscape including the auditorium
- Removal of existing guard house and build a reception shed at main new entrance up the hill
- Foundation of Cocoon plus its skin

The construction of the environmental skin represents our commitment to sustainable and environmentally aware design. The Environmental skin will offer students, visitors and investors a sense of the ambition and vision of the museum, paving the way for future projects. This first phase of construction would help to frame and prepare the site for the construction of Phase 2.

PHASE 2

1. Construction of the bridge
2. Construction of the Cocoon and additional two small buildings in the courtyard



PARTNERSHIP REQUEST

The great achievements of PMNH/PIBS-BU began thanks to the generosity of individual donations and volunteers and have expanded rapidly in partnership with local and national authorities, other universities, and people around the world. The future projects, like past successful ones, all start with a team/community vision that transforms into reality through the continuous efforts of our staff and your generous contributions. We are determined to continue this tradition and extend our reach through this proposal. We appreciate your help and support and would gladly consider any donations that help us reach the full potential of PMNH/PIBS.

The Munib R. Masri Family Foundation have pledged USD \$400,000 towards the first phase of this project. We now seek funding of \$450,000 to launch and complete Phase 1 and an additional \$500,000 for Phase II.



www.palestinenature.org



متحف فلسطين للتاريخ الطبيعي
Palestine Museum of Natural History
(PMNH)

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