Kirkbride Road Reserve: Co-design for the shared use of common land.

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- Auckland University of Technology (AUT), School of Art & Design.
- The Southern Initiative, Auckland City Council.

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- Resilio Studio
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- Auckland Teaching Gardens
Context.
The Mangere-Otahuhu district of Auckland, New Zealand, boasts a growing, youthful population, with 60% identifying as ‘Pasifika’. Community spirit is strong, but the area faces high levels of economic deprivation. The Kirkbride Road Reserve project seeks to strengthen the community through a design-led strategy for the shared use of common land.
The project.
The Southern Initiative (TSI) is an entity within Auckland Council, tasked with creating transformational change. TSI manages a block of council land, currently occupied by Auckland Teaching Gardens and the Cook Islands Development Agency (NZ), both with distinct visions for the land. AUT design students were invited to explore the possibilities.
The design process.

AUT students began by undertaking a site analysis, mapping the current environmental and social capital, and also exploring the ecological and economic potential of the land. Tensions between stakeholders were managed by bringing both parties together, along with permaculture experts and council representatives, as co-design participants in the project.
The project arose from the two main stakeholder groups approaching council with opposing visions for the development of the land. The iterative nature of the co-design process meant that various actors from within those groups were able to voice their concerns and aspirations to the student designers, and to provide ongoing feedback on design developments. Their participation was integral to the project, and had distinct influence on outcomes.
Social Interactions and Relations

The two stakeholder groups held disparate views on how the council land should be developed to best serve the community – one wanting to extend existing food gardens; the other wanting to build a multi-use community centre. The co-design framework enhanced the ability for the parties to work together on a mutually acceptable solution that not only addressed their unique goals, but also served to strengthen the social connections between them.
Kirkbride Road Reserve is a largely undeveloped resource comprising 1938 hectares of land. The Southern Initiative had been reluctant to recommend a decision to council planners that would impact on the aspirations of either stakeholder group. The AUT student plan successfully addressed the needs of both, and highlighted new partnership opportunities. It being implemented by Auckland City Council over the next 5 years.
The aspirations of the Auckland Teaching Gardens were incorporated into the final proposal. A closed-loop vertical integration scheme would educate locals to successfully cultivate crops on site, a skill they could then take into their communities for growing food at home. Produce could be consumed at shared gatherings, gifting to local foodbanks, or sold at nominal prices to reinvest in garden operations. Organic waste would be composted on site.
This project gave students an opportunity to put their design education into practice. Specifically, they were able to engage in cross-disciplinary collaboration; to put human-centred design methods into practice in a live project with real stakeholders; and to engage in a project with distinct social and environmental sustainability impacts. Stakeholders were also able to experience the benefits of participating in the co-design process.
The student proposal outlined opportunities for several new ventures to be established at the site, including an early childhood centre to support working Cook Island families, a pop-up café and a semi-permanent farmers’ market, which
Students presented their work to council, local government agencies, charity groups and stakeholders at an event on site. They provided visual representations of their vision for the land, in a plan that could be carried out over five years. This was supported by a print document that provided detailed diagrams and written descriptions. Stakeholders were unanimous in their support of the plan, and it is currently being implemented by council.