

PINKSTER AZALEA COLLABORATIVE

Rodney Leon Architect: RODNEY LEON, WILLIAM BARTOC
 _mpathic design: ELGIN CLECKLEY
 Creative Urban Alchemy: IFEOMA EBO, XIMENA DIAZ VELASCO



Lukasa Threshold - Moment 1



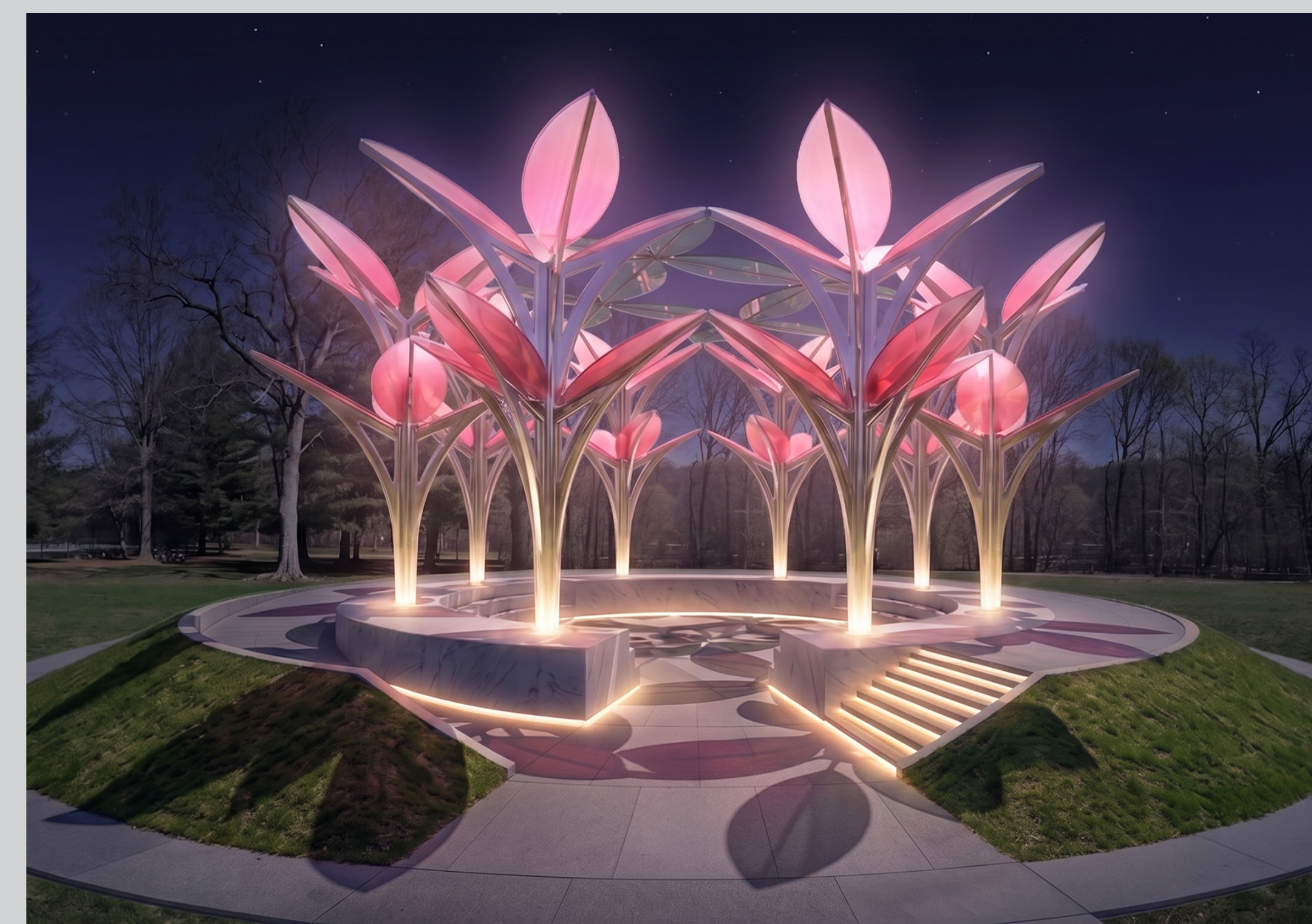
Pinkster Azalea Pavilion - Moment 4



Ancestors' Grove - Moment 6



Lukasa Threshold - Night View



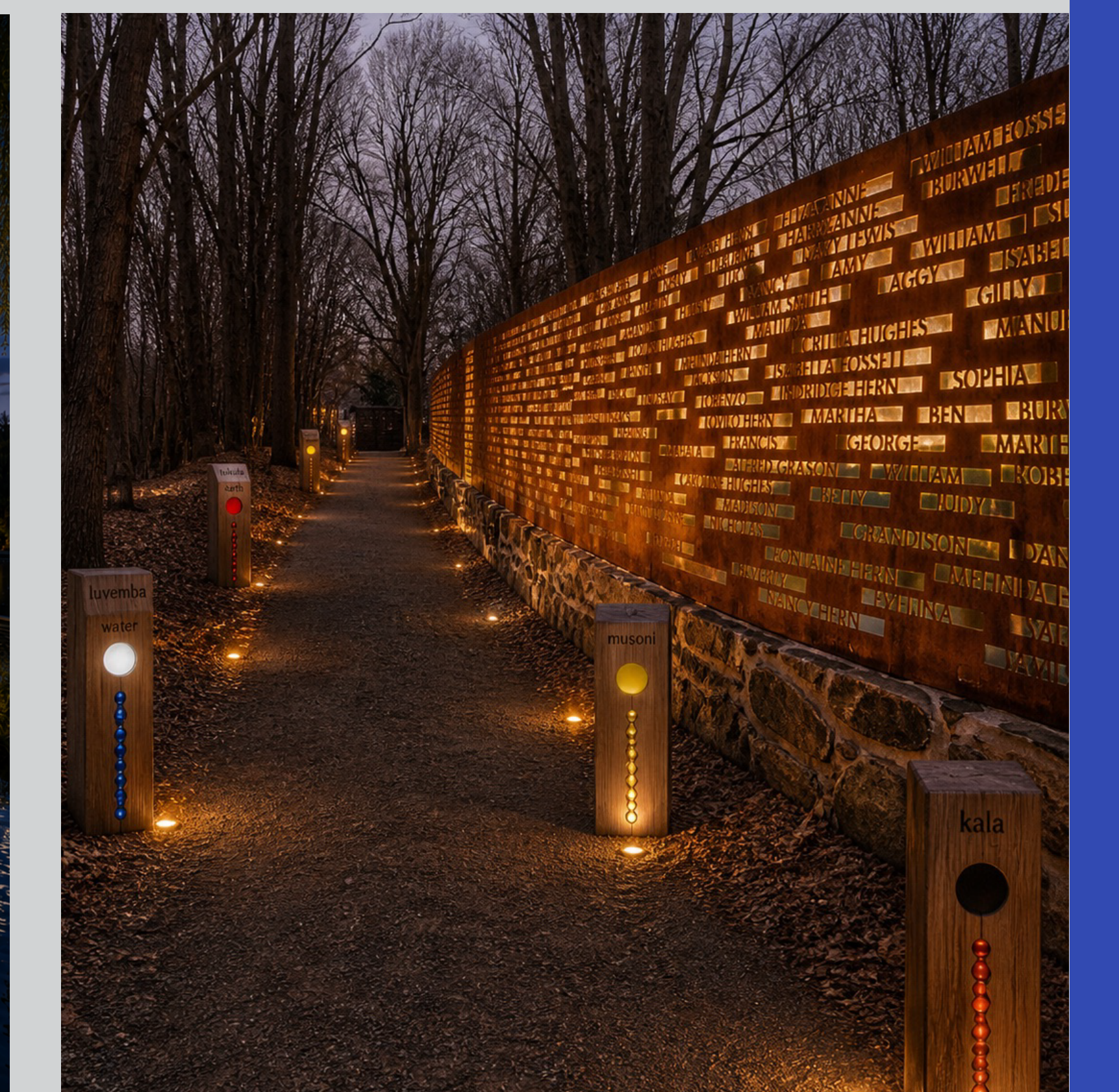
Pinkster Azalea Pavilion - Night View



Pinkster Azalea Pavilion - Site Plan



Ancestors' Grove - Night View



Ancestor Memory Wall - Moment 3



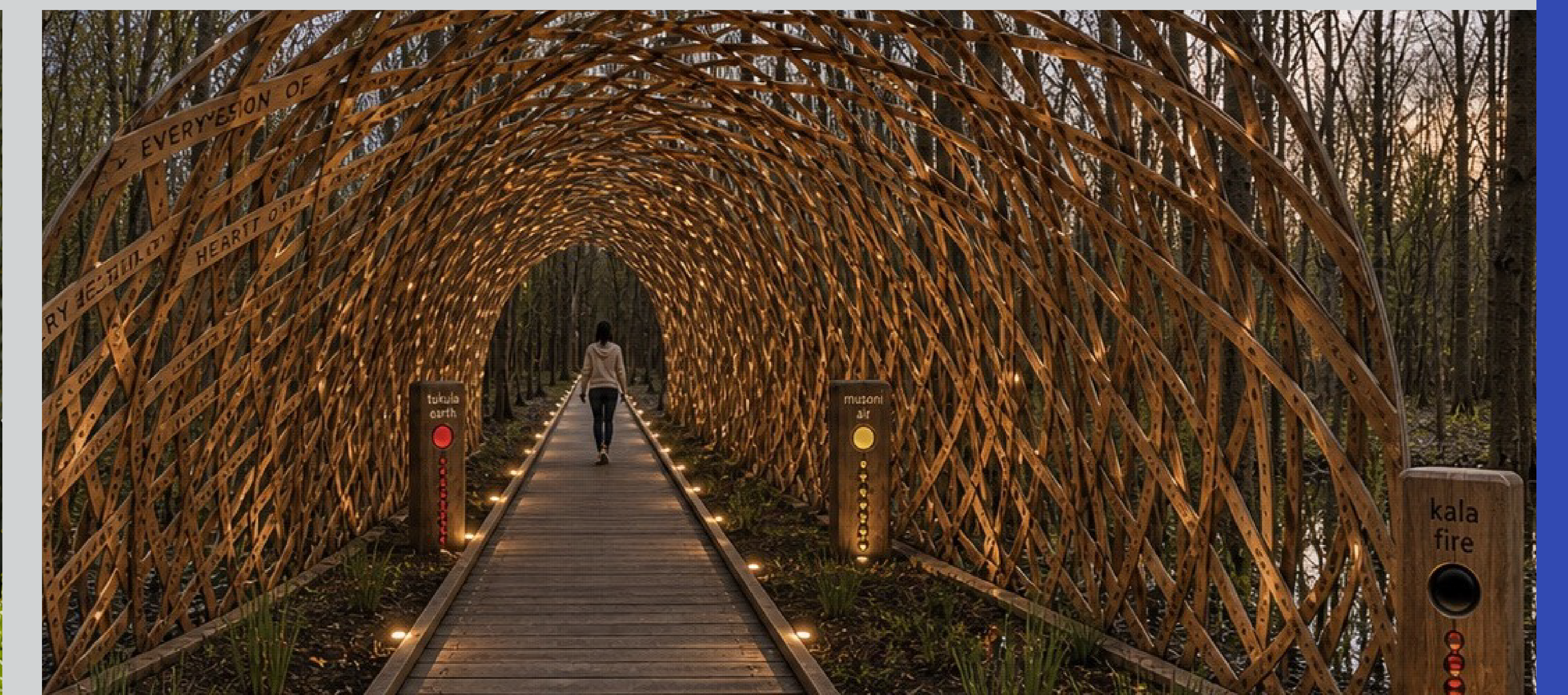
Dikenga Cosmogram - Moment 2



Memorial Fence - Moment 5



Memorial Fence - Detail Render



Weave of Life - Moment 7

LUKASA THRESHOLD / MOMENT 1 - The Lukasa Threshold transforms the entrance to Van Cortlandt Park at 242nd Street and Broadway into a spatial memory device inspired by the Congolese Lukasa boards of the Luba people. Through illuminated poles, tactile signage, and culturally significant planting, the threshold embeds stories, orientation, and ancestral knowledge directly into the landscape, creating a transition into remembrance, learning, and spiritual grounding.

DIKENG COSMOGRAM / MOMENT 2 - The Dikenga Cosmogram reinterprets the Congolese cosmological symbol as an immersive landscape space for reflection, orientation, and ancestral connection. Positioned within the wetland, the intervention aligns visitors with the cyclical journey of life, death, and rebirth through seasonal plantings that connect Lenape ecological knowledge with African Diasporic cosmology.

PINKSTER AZALEA PAVILION / MOMENT 4 - The Pinkster Azalea Pavilion is formally inspired by the Pinkster Azalea and the Historic Dutch and African-American Pinkster Holiday. It is an architectural expression of collective memory, protection, and spiritual continuity. Inspired by traditions of communal gathering, the layered canopy creates a sheltered gathering space that frames views upward toward the sky and east toward the ENSLAVED AFRICAN BURIAL GROUND establishing a symbolic dialogue between visitors and their ancestors. Rising upward in a circular arrangement, the pavilion creates opportunity for both shelter and ceremony with its branching columns supporting a luminous colorful canopy that filters light like a living bloom.

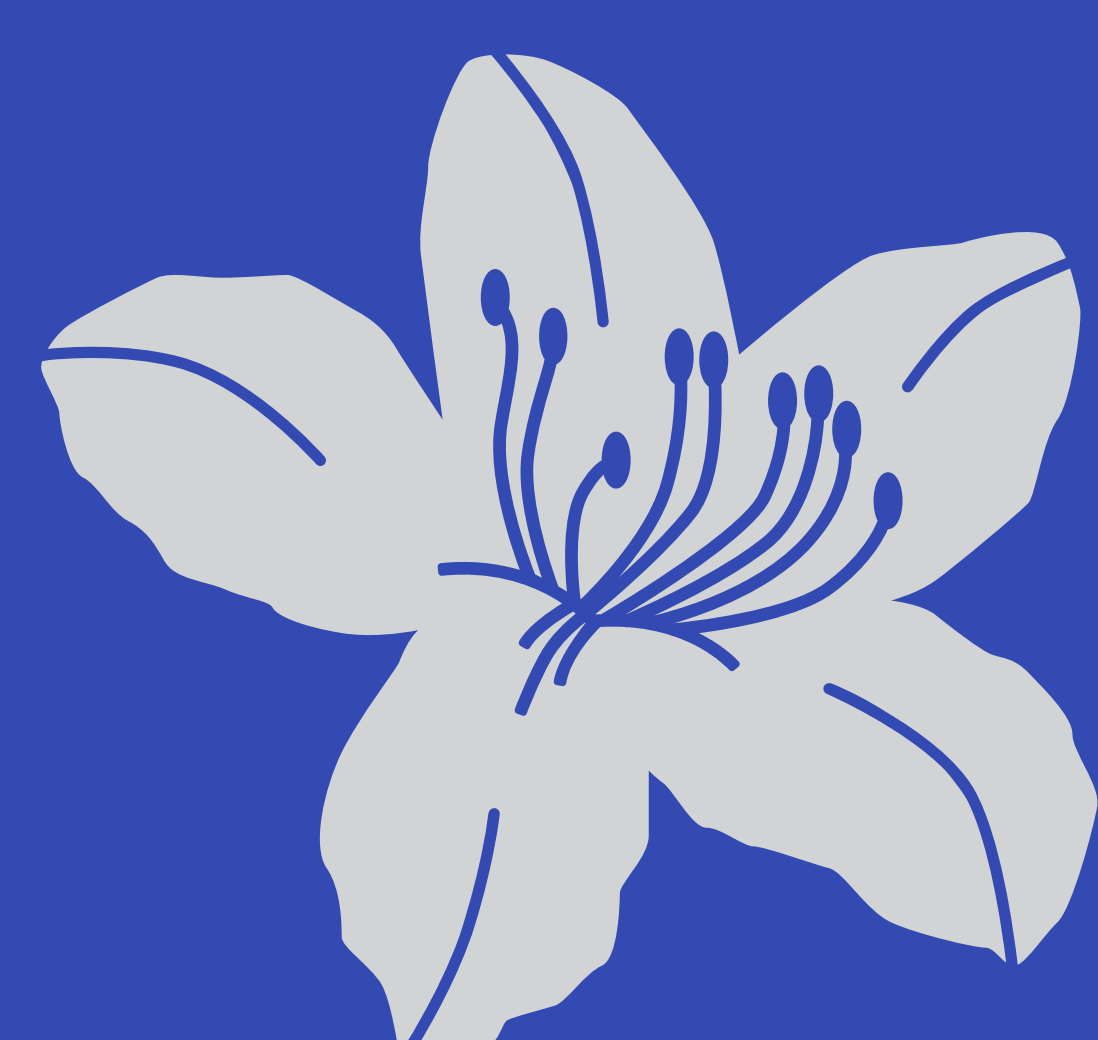
MEMORIAL / FENCE MOMENT 5 - The Memorial Fence navigates the boundary of public and sacred by establishing a visual and physical perimeter around the ENSLAVED AFRICAN BURIAL GROUND. The proposed fence honors the 22 known names of those enslaved on the Van Cortlandt Plantation in bronze and the 60 unknown names in polished mirrored metal. The pattern in the wrought iron is derived from the core geometry of the Pinkster Azalea. The names, bronze and mirrored metal chosen are a reminder of the lives and precious resources that were extracted from West Africa during the Slave Trade.

ANCESTORS' GROVE / MOMENT 6 extends a boardwalk to the Mill Pond, creating a place for reflection and remembrance. Etched silver disks along the water's edge symbolize connections between past and present. New names can be added through the Legacy Council, while interpretive signage shares ancestor histories and collective memory.

ANCESTOR MEMORY WALL / MOMENT 3 features a Corten steel wall framed by Dikenga colors and beads, symbolizing life's cyclical passage. Inspired by the Ancestor Memory Wall at Monticello, it records the names and histories of ancestors connected to the Van Cortlandt House Museum, with space reserved for future discoveries.

WEAVE OF LIFE / MOMENT 7 is a woven structure surrounding the wetland boardwalk, expressing the interconnected forces of earth, water, fire, and air. Carved messages, engraved pathways, and Dikenga markers guide visitors through memory and renewal, while light and shadow encourage reflection and stewardship.

The Design Ideas Lab is part of Van Cortlandt Park Alliance's REIMAGINING initiative, in partnership with the Design Trust for Public Space and Immanuel Oni, Liminal Sp, the Legacy Council, and NYC Parks. This initiative invites the community to reimagine the park's Enslaved African Burial Ground site as a memorial space that fosters long-term healing and restoration. This project is supported by a generous grant from the Mellon Foundation. Today, and every day, we acknowledge that this land is the traditional territory of the Lenape and Algonquian peoples. We honor and thank them for their stewardship of this land and recognize their continued presence.



Reimagining the
Enslaved African
Burial Ground



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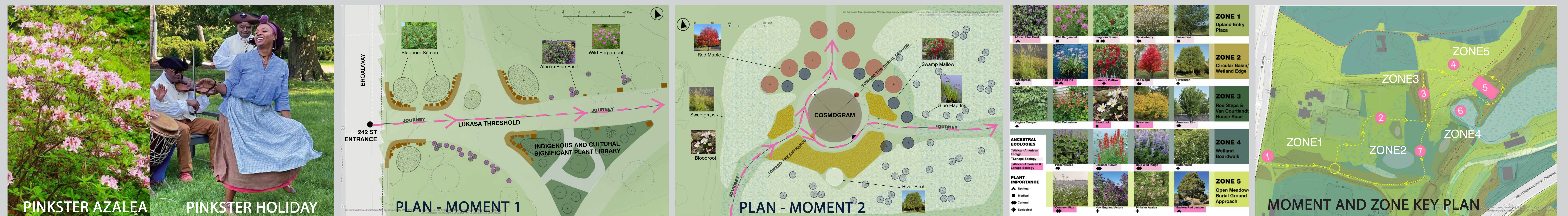
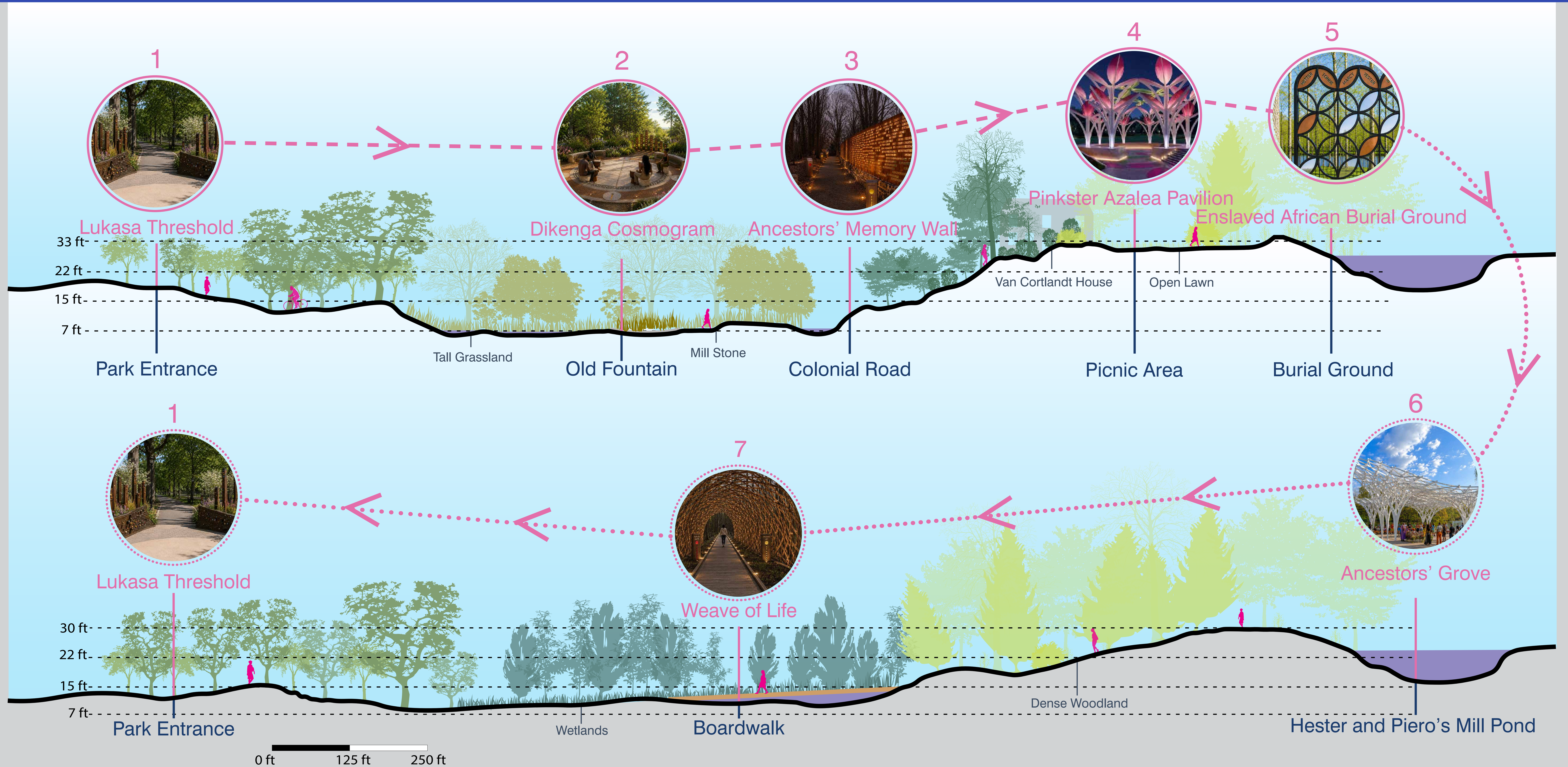
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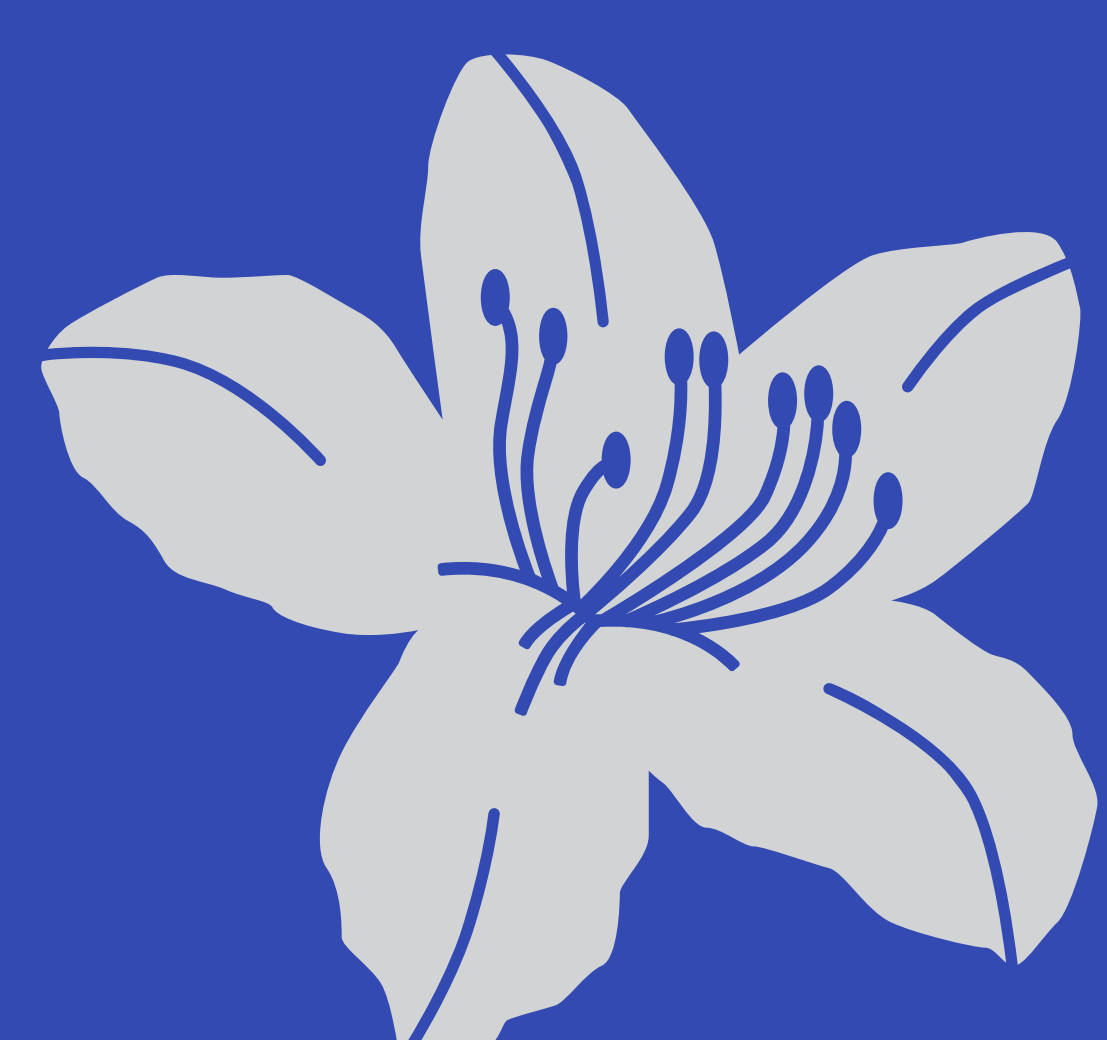
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SEVEN MOMENTS ALONG THE JOURNEY TO AND FROM THE VAN CORTLANDT PARK ENSLAVED BURIAL GROUND

Our Journey is defined by seven sacred moments weaving ecological, cosmological, and embodied narratives. African cultural and spiritual traditions provide historic meaning and inspiration throughout the journey. The 7 moments individually and collectively create a landscape of sacred contemporary experiences rooted in the past. Ancestral Ecologies carry memory through plantings once tended by Lenape communities and later by enslaved Africans in acknowledgement that this land was once a food system and a spiritual landscape.



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