

SOCB Sustainable Six Designs Winners and Special Mentions 2024-25

The Sustainable Six Designs (SSD) celebrates visionary projects that redefine sustainability across six categories. Many brilliant ideas remain unseen buried in drawings and research. This gives them a voice, honouring students, mentors, and changemakers worldwide. It's a tribute to innovation, collaboration, and the shared hope for a better future.

The Sustainable Six Designs (SSD) is more than a design showcase. It's a call to action in the face of a planetary emergency. As we confront the climate crisis and accelerating environmental degradation, the need for truly sustainable innovation is more urgent than ever. Our world can no longer afford ideas that are beautiful but unsustainable, or systems that serve short-term goals at long-term cost.

This brings to light transformative, research-backed ideas from around the globe projects that rethink how we build, live, learn, and share resources in a world already grappling with ecological limits. From climate-adaptive buildings to circular design systems and community-centered urban strategies, the featured works respond directly to the deepening environmental and social challenges we face.

We believe sustainable design must be a shared responsibility and that begins with shifting mindsets. The SSD reflects a growing movement to reframe education, research, practice, and governance through the lens of sustainability and resilience. Each of the featured projects was developed with careful attention to local context, inclusive collaboration, and a forward-thinking approach to both people and the planet.

The SSD is part of the (SOCB) School of Collectively Building Research Call, an international platform that showcases breakthrough thinking on sustainable living. Guided by the UN Sustainable Development Goals, this initiative supports cross-disciplinary work across: Product, Industrial, Innovative Material, Engineering, Technology, Construction, Architecture, Interior, Design, Heritage Documentation, Conservation, Restoration, Landscape, Environment, Preservation, Urbanism, Planning and Transportation.

Finalist works exhibited in Vienna. One of the world's most liveable cities and the best projects are published in this book, giving global visibility to ideas that offer hope, courage, and clarity in a time of climate uncertainty.

"We shape our buildings; thereafter they shape us. But in this era of climate crisis, we must reshape not only our structures but our systems, our thinking, and our responsibilities to the planet and each other."

- Adapted from Winston Churchill & reimagined for the age of sustainability.

SOCB Sustainable Six Projects 2024-25:

01 Grain Gradient

Reviving Waste with Elegance

This vase design rethinks wood veneer often discarded as scrap, as a key aesthetic and structural element. By cleverly combining offcuts of different sizes and colours, it creates a stunning gradient visual effect. A darker base anchors the piece both visually and functionally, reducing the appearance of stains over time. The result: an elegant, sustainable product that elevates waste into art.

02 Adaptive and Sustainable Educational Community Spaces

A Blueprint for Future-Ready Schools

This award-winning design reimagines educational spaces as adaptive, resilient hubs for learning and community life. Based on a modular 6x6m grid, the structure is easily reconfigurable and energy-efficient. It features six themed clusters from Science to Agriculture interconnected by social zones. Accessible and sustainable by design, the building uses solar films, rainwater harvesting, smart lighting, and natural ventilation. A bomb-protected basement doubles as an emergency school, while the green rooftop offers gardens, running tracks, and outdoor classrooms. This isn't just a school, it's a flexible civic center prepared for the challenges of the future.

03 Symbiosis (συν + βίος)

Breathing New Life into Brutalist Icons

Many of the University of Washington's aging buildings are slated for demolition. This project proposes a bold alternative: adaptive reuse. By applying circular design and parasitic architecture, existing structures especially Brutalist ones like Schmitz Hall are retrofitted with vertical extensions and microclimate-improving systems. The concept explores symbiotic relationships in architecture: new structures (the "parasites") grow from the old, enhancing function and sustainability without erasing history. It's a model for preserving architectural heritage while meeting modern needs sustainably.

04 Pollen Totem

Art, Ecology, and Action for Urban Pollinators

Pollen Totem is a 3D-printed, modular beehive tower designed to restore biodiversity in cities. Made from clay and inspired by biomimicry, it offers nesting spots for native bees, growing zones for plants, and interactive learning spaces. The design is scalable and adaptable, and each installation functions as both ecological infrastructure and public art. Through workshops and exhibitions, the Pollen Totem invites communities to engage with the urgent issue of pollinator decline. It aligns with global goals like SDG 11, 13, and 15 and reimagines sculpture as a living, learning, evolving part of the urban ecosystem.

05 Integrated Sustainable Systems for a Coastal Desert Community

A Closed-Loop City in the Desert

Set on Egypt's north-western Mediterranean coast (but adaptable to deserts worldwide), this doctoral research project proposes an entirely self-sufficient community. Solar stills, wind turbines, hydroponics, aquaculture, and methane digesters are all interconnected to minimize waste and maximize efficiency. The design treats waste as a resource and views sustainability as a system. From roof-top greenhouses to neighbourhood-scale controlled farming environments, every element supports both ecological resilience and local economic independence.

06 A House of Shadows

A Home That Breathes with Nature

This residential concept embraces sunlight, shadow, and seasonal change as architectural tools. Carefully oriented to harness natural light, the home features textured materials, a central reflective pool, and sculptural cut-outs that transform everyday spaces into moments of sensory calm. Built using local materials and passive cooling strategies, this flexible, modular house is ideal for sun-rich regions facing climate stress. It's not just a dwelling. It's a retreat that nurtures well-being, environmental integration, and timeless beauty.

07 Urban Renewal, The Resonant Design of Agriculture and Circularity

Farming the Vertical City

In dense urban areas, how can farming and public life coexist? This design proposes a layered urban farm within a high-rise structure, rooted in the rhythms of Asia's night market culture. Residents grow produce, sell it in daytime and night-time markets, and live among vertical gardens, hydroponic systems, and composting zones. Each layer supports the next: waste fuels growth, food feeds the community, and public space becomes a cycle of shared purpose. It's a replicable model that makes sustainability tangible and social, not just technical.

08 Transforming Thailand's Government Complex

From Bureaucracy to a Model of People-Centered Governance

Sprawling and traffic-clogged, Thailand's 178-acre Government Complex was in desperate need of renewal. Now, it stands as a national model for climate-responsive, people-friendly urban transformation. A new Skywalk connects the metro directly to the site. Car parks have become plazas. Rainwater is harvested and reused. Solar panels and passive cooling meet more than half the energy needs. The redesign emphasizes walkability, greenery, and flexible public spaces that humanize government. More than a facelift, this transformation proves that government spaces can be both efficient and empathetic: built for people, planet, and the future.