



CASE STUDY

By
B the Light Consulting
Brenna St. Onge

Shift Esperanza
NOSARA, COSTA RICA



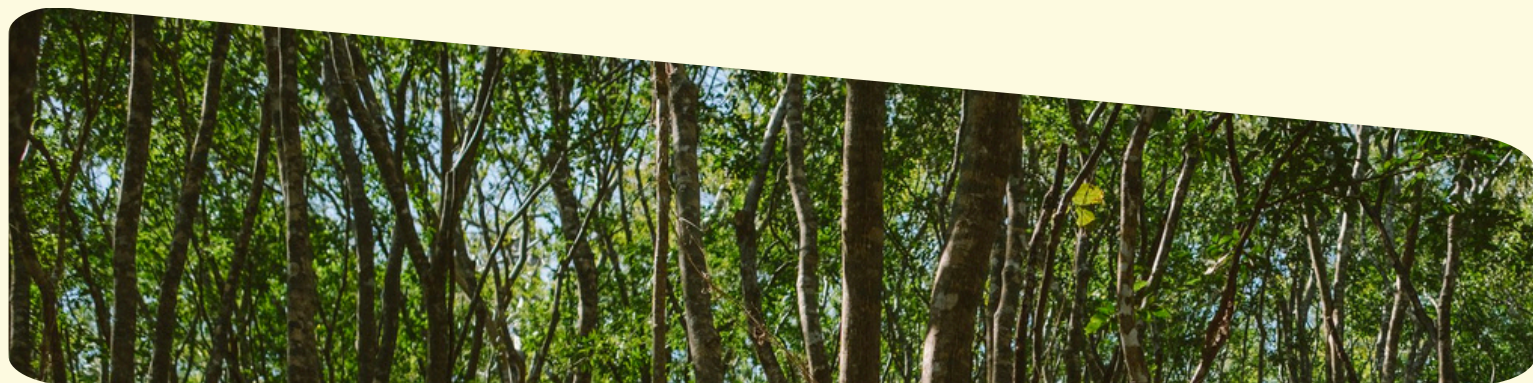
Why? We are living in a time of system breakdown. The structures we have depended on for generations are changing rapidly and we can no longer rely on them for stability (food, healthcare, government, infrastructure etc.). As the polycrisis (multiple crises that fuel each other) intensifies, how we organize locally to strengthen community fibers will determine our experience and well-being in the years to come.

What? Regenerative Living represents a way of living in deep connection with self, each other and the natural world. It is a paradigm shift beyond extraction, and consumption that represents a way of being, acting, governing, and living in deep harmony with nature. It is the fullest expression of self-sufficiency and resilient community design. Rather than simply mitigating future climate impacts, regenerative living seeks to enhance the vitality, abundance, and long-term health of social, economic, and ecological systems; creating the conditions for all life to thrive through holistic management.

How? The systems break down we are living through was human generated and we can recode the systems to create shared prosperity on a healthy planet. This way of living is alive all over the world, it is just not evenly distributed or widely known.

The Regenerative World Quest (Quest) is an immersive research project to study and uplift communities all over the world that are living in a regenerative way. We will explore the systems, successes, challenges, and insights to create a database of scalable solutions. How can we redesign human systems that are healthier, more resilient and holistically managed? By honoring indigenous wisdom, and modern innovations, the Quest seeks to uplift and replicate best practices to craft a blueprint for shared prosperity on a healthy planet.

Who? The project was founded by Brenna St. Onge and is fiscally sponsored by Savory International, a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization. This case study is part of a series of ten projects researched in Costa Rica as part of the Regenerative World Quest's 2025 fieldwork. There are three phases to the Regenerative World Quest: 1- immersive, international research, 2- content creation and awareness building and 3- local implementation.





Shift Esperanza

NOSARA, COSTA RICA

FOUNDER:

Matthew Blesso

WEBSITE:

<https://www.shiftesperanza.com/>


SHORT YOUTUBE VIDEO:

@Regenerative World Quest: Shift Esperanza



Shift Esperanza is a globally inspired community in Nosara, Costa Rica. Its mission is to enhance residents' lives while making a positive impact on the local community and the environment. Backed by the award-winning U.S. developer Blesso Properties, the project envisions 11 neighborhoods, with El Pochote as the first under development. As of 2025, seven of the 30 lots in El Pochote have been sold, with ten additional neighborhoods planned. The community places strong emphasis on design, aiming to blend aesthetics with ecological performance to reduce environmental impact and ultimately achieve carbon negativity. There are eight home designs residents can pick from a team of award-winning-sustainable architecture firms: VOID, HWKN, QBO3, Jaime Peña Studio, K Arquitectura, and AM Design.

Water management and land regeneration have been foundational to the design since day one, forming the backbone of all of the farm's productive systems. While currently led by the development team, Shift plans to evolve into a democratically governed, self-managed community. Its six core principles—interconnectedness, environmental stewardship, self-inquiry, accountability, generosity, and play—guide the project's culture and long-term vision. Shift Esperanza seeks to serve as a replicable model for high-quality, regenerative living that integrates social and ecological well-being.



“WE’RE NOT JUST TRYING TO
BUILD HOMES—WE’RE
RESTORING A RELATIONSHIP
WITH THE LAND AND WITH EACH
OTHER.”

MATTHEW BLESSO-FOUNDER

THE BEGGS FAMILY- FUTURE RESIDENT

“AS A PARENT OF YOUNG
KIDS, IT’S IMPORTANT TO
ME TO OPEN THEM TO A
WORLD WHERE
COMMUNITY AND
RELATIONSHIPS ARE AT
THE HEART OF THEIR
IDENTITY.”

PROJECT SPECIFICATIONS:

- Zoned as “Condominiums” and governed by the Condominium Property Regulatory Law
- Land Size: 44 hectares (108 acres)
- Development Area: 25% for development and 75% dedicated to conservation

SHARED AMENITIES:

- 12.3 acres permaculture farm ("Finca La Esperanza" already in operation)
- 17.4 km of hiking and biking trails
- Boutique Hotel (to be built)
- Farm to table restaurant and cafe (to be built)
- Co-working space (to be built)
- Retail stores (to be built)
- Art gallery (to be built)
- Gym (to be built)
- Pool (to be built)
- School and education space (desired but not identified as of 2025)



SOCIAL STRUCTURES, GOVERNANCE, EDUCATION, AND COMMUNITY:

Shift Esperanza is designed to become a self-governing community, with bylaws that grant voting rights to each member and promote democratic participation. The project's core values—interconnectedness, environmental stewardship, self-inquiry, accountability, generosity, and play—guide community culture and support a respectful, inclusive environment. While formal systems for education and conflict resolution are still in development, the community encourages intergenerational engagement and shared experiences that strengthen social resilience and personal connection.



LAND REGENERATION EFFORTS AND MEASUREMENTS:

- 75% of each lot is dedicated to nature preservation and land regeneration.
- Over 5,000 vetiver grass plants propagated and planted to control erosion, provide soil cover, and create habitat.
- Over 2,500 trees and plants planted to provide shade, nutrients to the soil, and food for the community.
- 12.3-acre agroforest designed to retain water, grow food, and improve soil health.



FOOD SELF-SUFFICIENCY:

- Shift aspires for full food self-sufficiency through a 12.3-acre permaculture farm.
- Over two tons of food has been produced since 2023.
- The farm is replicating patterns of the tropical, dry-forest ecosystem that features a diversity of species representing the various layers of the forest canopy and niches below.
- Over 1,800 fruit trees were planted, including 30+ varieties of primary fruit trees.
 - More than 1000 Musaceae species (banana family)
 - Over 500 pineapple starts were planted

WATER MANAGEMENT:

- Water self-sufficiency is attained through a private well (pumping 5 liters per second) and an on-site wastewater management plant.
- Water consumption is tracked per capita.
- Natural water patterns are studied and integrated to slow and spread water flow across the landscape, optimized for both wet and dry season.
- Water retention infrastructure includes over 500 meters of earthworks, capturing millions of liters annually.
- Installation of 3 water retention basins that link upstream catchments, extending the effects of the wet season by holding water in the landscape for longer periods.
- Long-term goal is to decrease the effects of the dry season and increase overall soil moisture content on-site.



RESOURCE FLOWS AND CIRCULARITY:

- Roadways paved with recycled plastic pavers, with plastic cleaned up from local beaches.
- Food scraps from local restaurants are donated to the farm, and produce and meat are sold back to the restaurant.
- Comprehensive recycling and composting infrastructure throughout the community.
- From 2023-2025 the community composted 26,455 lbs
- Eco-construction practices prioritize the use of recycled and sustainable materials.

ENERGY:

- By 2038, only electric vehicles (EVs) will be allowed for residents.
- All homes will be off-grid with solar and battery backup.
- The master plan is designed to be off-grid for most of the shared amenities, with dual backup to the Costa Rican grid.




CARBON FOOTPRINT REDUCTION: MEASUREMENT:

- N/A not able to measure at this time

SOCIAL EQUITY AND INCLUSION:

- Condo units starting at \$175,000.
- 10% of all profits go to local initiatives.
- 20% of lots reserved for local Costa Ricans, with a 20% discount.
- “Growing Trees Together” program supports carbon offsets and regional food security.
- Sponsors: Costas Verdes, Nosara Civic Association, and Delicias Elementary School.
- Pre-ownership program offers 12% guaranteed returns with low upfront investment.
- ADA-accessible design for homes and common areas.
- Bylaws grant members voting rights for budgeting, administration, and self-governance.
- Community guidelines foster personal growth, inclusion, and low ecological impact.





"WE INVESTED IN SHIFT TO BE
PART OF A VIBRANT, LIKE-
MINDED COMMUNITY, TO
NURTURE A PLACE WHERE
OUR CHILDREN AND FUTURE
GENERATIONS THRIVE. SHIFT
IS WHERE WE FEEL MOST
OURSELVES, WHERE
FREEDOM TAKES ROOT IN THE
EMBRACE OF OUR
COMMUNITY."

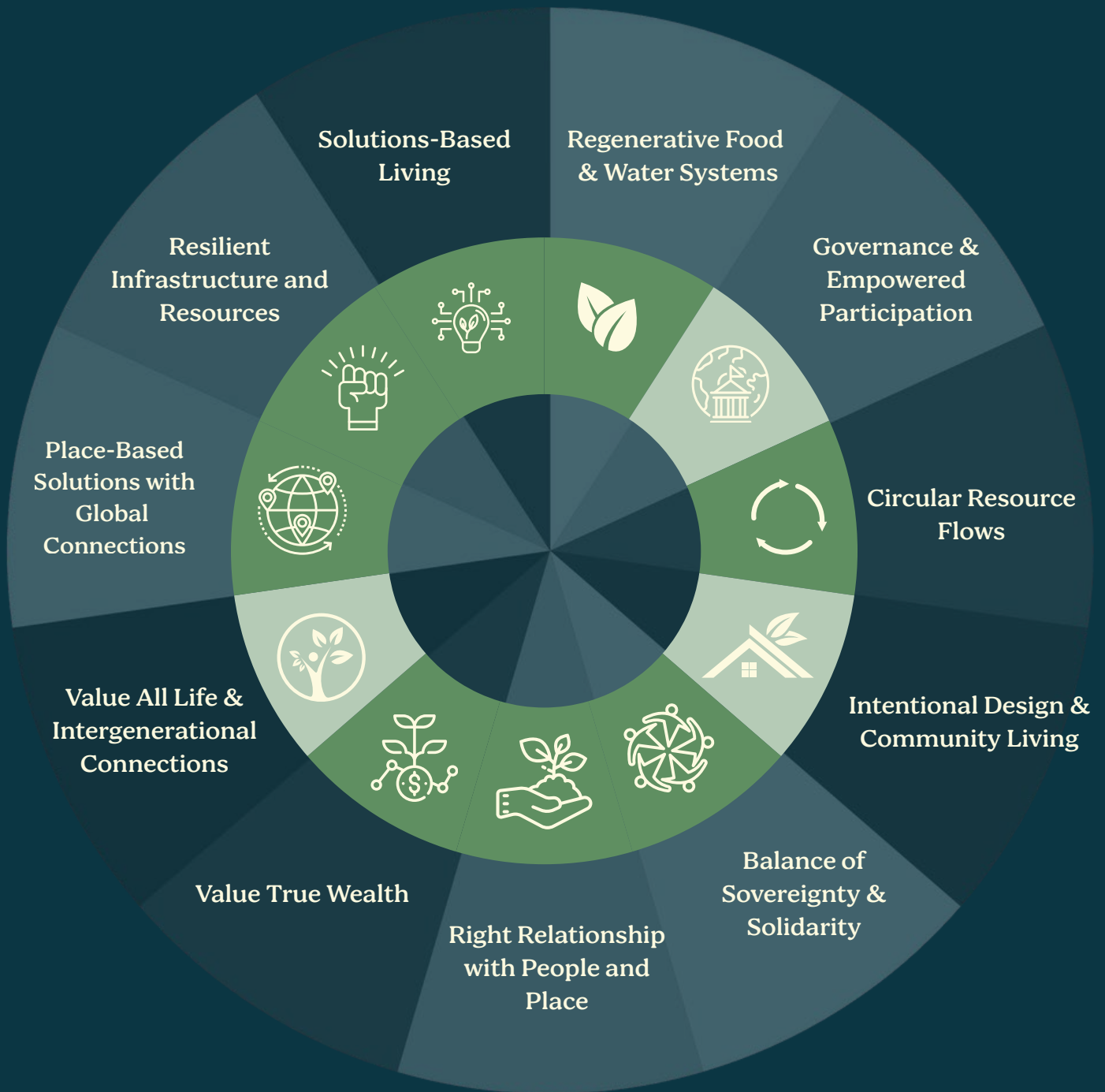
EDGAR AND NELLY- FUTURE RESIDENTS

"I INVESTED IN SHIFT BECAUSE
IT FELT LIKE HOME. IN THIS
COMMUNITY, I'M ENCOURAGED
TO EXPLORE, SHARE, AND
GROW. WE'RE UNITED, YET EACH
OF US IS FREE TO SHINE."





LANE- FUTURE RESIDENT

Shift Esperanza

REGENERATIVE ECOSYSTEM ASSESSMENT



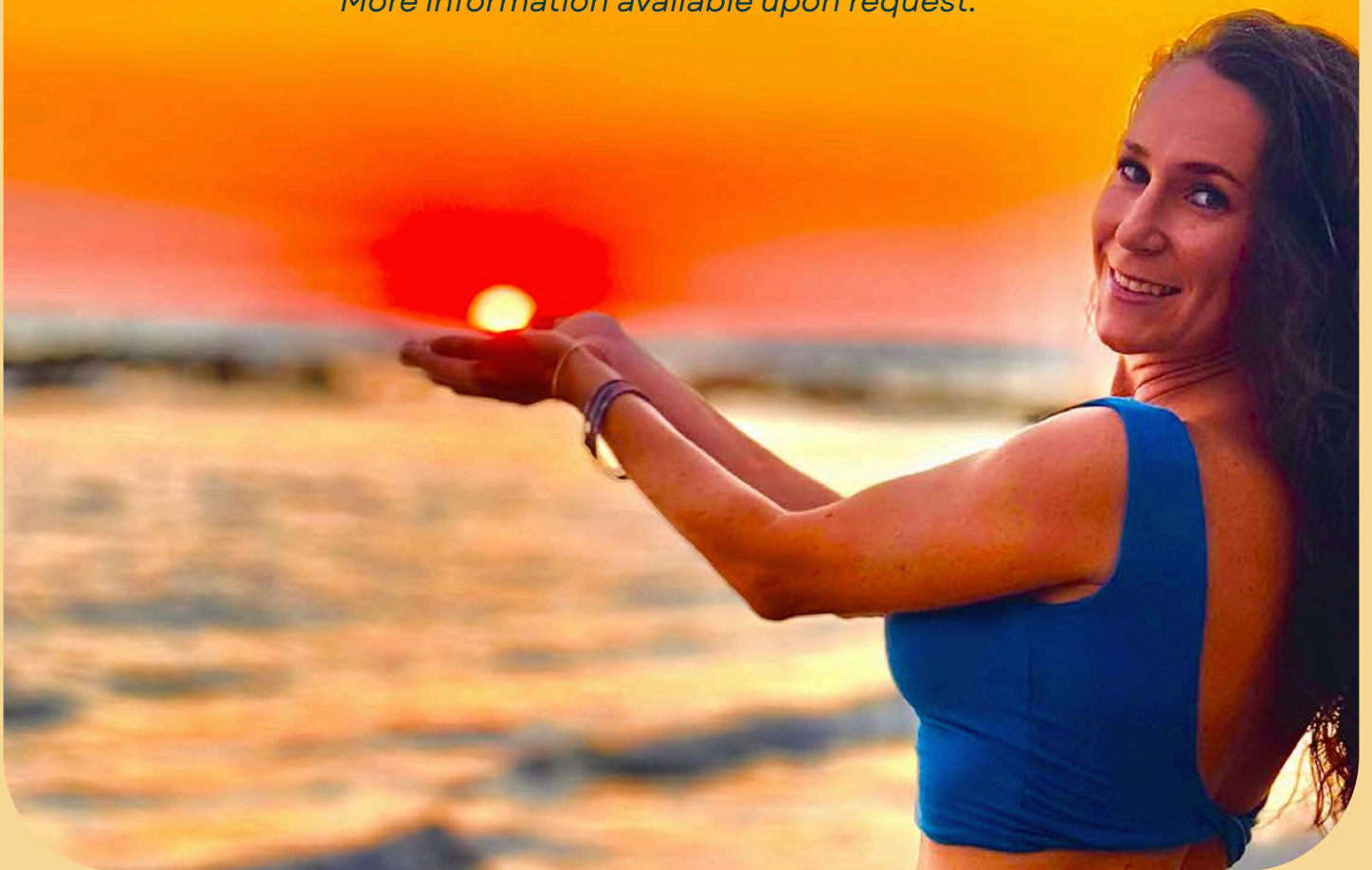
Key

-  Not Present
-  Early Stage
-  Operational
-  Thriving

A NOTE ABOUT THE ASSESSMENT:

There are many ways to assess communities. Each person must identify their own best use case. This assessment was created by studying leading regenerative frameworks and mapping them to regenerative living (defined on page one) and holistic management. The community's ability to maintain a thriving lifestyle if/when global supply chains are interrupted is a key element in all areas. Aspects of community life and culture are essential parts of resiliency, as well as food, water, education, healthcare and infrastructure systems etc. The Quest has a weighted numerical scale to assess each project which provides the qualitative and quantitative data behind the assessment.

More information available upon request.



REGENERATIVE ECOSYSTEM ASSESSMENT

DEFINITIONS AND SCORING



Regenerative Food and Water Systems: farming as a service to restore landscapes, connect people with nature and provide a healthy and holistic diet in a way that restores the carbon cycle, builds soil, heals watersheds and ecosystems. Healthy soils=healthy communities.

Shift's score here is *Operational* as they have made significant investments in food sovereignty through its 12.3-acre permaculture agroforest. With over 750 fruit trees, 1,000 banana-family plants, and integrated composting and restaurant partnerships, the community is moving toward 50% food self-sufficiency.



Communal structures for **Governance** that enable **empowered participation** by all in the ecosystem through transparent and just decision making, holistic management, distributed authority with clear delineation of duties and responsibilities.

Shift's score here is *Early Stage* The community is structured to evolve into a self-managed community, with bylaws in place to ensure democratic voting. However, its governance system is still in early stages, and conflict resolution protocols are not yet formalized.



Circular Resource Flows (energy, water, trash, recycling, compost, information etc.) where there is no waste, no extraction and all elements from one system can be inputs into another system. Communities are designed to not just minimize but neutralize and heal any negative impact to the land and surrounding areas, while flourishing economically.

Shift's score here is *Operational* as they demonstrate strong performance in circular systems. Roads use recycled plastic, water is captured and cycled through 500+ meters of earthworks and three basins. Composting infrastructure is in place including partnerships with local restaurants for farm to table food sourcing and compost collection.





Intentional Design and Community Living by which individuals in the community can share living, working and communal space that honors place and people while holding appropriate boundaries for the unique needs of each individual and the community through holistic management.

Shifts score here is *Operational* as they emphasize sustainable architecture and design with 85% conservation land. One neighborhood (El Pochote) is partially developed, with infrastructure for shared amenities underway.



Balance of Sovereignty and Solidarity where the good of the community does not come at the cost of an individual and the good of the individual does not impair the community at large.

Shift's score here is *Operational* as the community values prioritize self-inquiry, generosity, and accountability. Residential units are designed at several price points and a variety of options including ADA accessibility. While the bylaws ensure inclusive community governance this area is still evolving as residents have yet to move in.



Right Relationship to Place and People by honoring the natural ecosystem where the community is (healing the land through human stewardship) and by being in an intentional relationship with indigenous wisdom and locals (healing the community and human relationships), living with love of place, honoring its history and all life it supports.

Shift's score is *Operational* as they are regenerating degraded land through tree planting, vetiver grass, and syntropic agroforestry. The community is located in a busy tourist destination and in many cases locals are becoming priced out. There is a deep connection with local farmers and businesses as well as discounts and economic advantages offered to Costa Ricans. 10% of profits go to local causes.



Valuing True Wealth where money and finance are not the end goals. Wealth is defined as quality of life, a sense of belonging, purpose and meaning and all resources are holistically managed.

Shift's score here is *Operational* as they offer low-barrier entry via its pre-ownership program with 12% returns. True wealth is redefined around connection, play, meaning and quality of life.



Value all life and the contributions to the larger ecosystem where communities treat both the youth and the elderly with respect and intentionally create cross-generational connections. The value of ecosystem services are revered and service roles (teaching, health care, youth and elderly care etc.) are respected and valued.

Shift's score here is *Early Stage* as residents have yet to move in. Shift envisions a community that honors and prioritizes intergenerational connections. The school and shared amenities to support multigenerational life are still in development.



Resilient Infrastructure and Resources The necessary skills, resources and infrastructure to sustain life are within the community, from growing food to energy production, to building shelters and water systems, education, health care, community economic systems, arts, and entertainment etc. Focus on sourcing locally with little to no reliance on global supply chains.

Shift's score here is *Operational* as the foundations for resilience include food production, renewable energy design, and water capture. Broader systems like health care and education are still developing.



Place-Based Solutions with Global Connections While knowledge, connections, and sharing are connected globally; solutions, actions and projects are nuanced for local culture and climate, led by people from the area and living in the community.

Shift's score here is *Operational* as the project draws on global architecture (VOID, KWKN, Terraform ONE), and design influences while rooting in Nosara's ecology. Plans for educational tourism and replicability reflect its global intent.



Solutions Based Living whereby the simple act of HOW the community lives is a solution to climate change, inequality, injustice, violence and greed. It is not about telling others how to live, rather living the solutions in day to day lives as a model.

Shift's score here is a *Operational* as the project is fundamentally built as a model for solutions—from land healing to economic access. It aspires to serve as a replicable blueprint for regenerative development. All homes solar-powered by 2038, no fossil fuel cars, carbon-negative goals.





THANK YOU

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