

Project Name: Los Perros Beach Club

Project Location: Rancho Santana, Nicaragua

Project Category: Commercial

Site

Playa Los Perros is a surfing hot spot on the Pacific coast of Nicaragua renowned internationally. It is beloved for its relatively undeveloped natural beauty and contains two of Nicaragua's most famous waves, Colorados and Panga Drops. One unique aspect of this location is that the wave types can vary across the beach from accessible beginner waves (Los Perros) to advanced high speed tubes (Colorados) to massive swell (Panga Drops). The beach is located at the south edge of the Rancho Santana Resort, a community of 2,700 acres of rolling hills and 5 beaches.

Program

The program of the Los Perros project started with the bar function, but evolved as needs were identified. The popularity of the beach for surfing created demand for some basic amenities for the surfers. This included a snack bar, bathroom, showers, a place to store surf boards, and parking. The varying wave types also make this a perfect location for a surfing school, which defined rental needs that were integrated into the surf shop. The ranch already had some surf themed retail elsewhere, but it needed more space and there became a desire to relocate the shop closer to the beach.

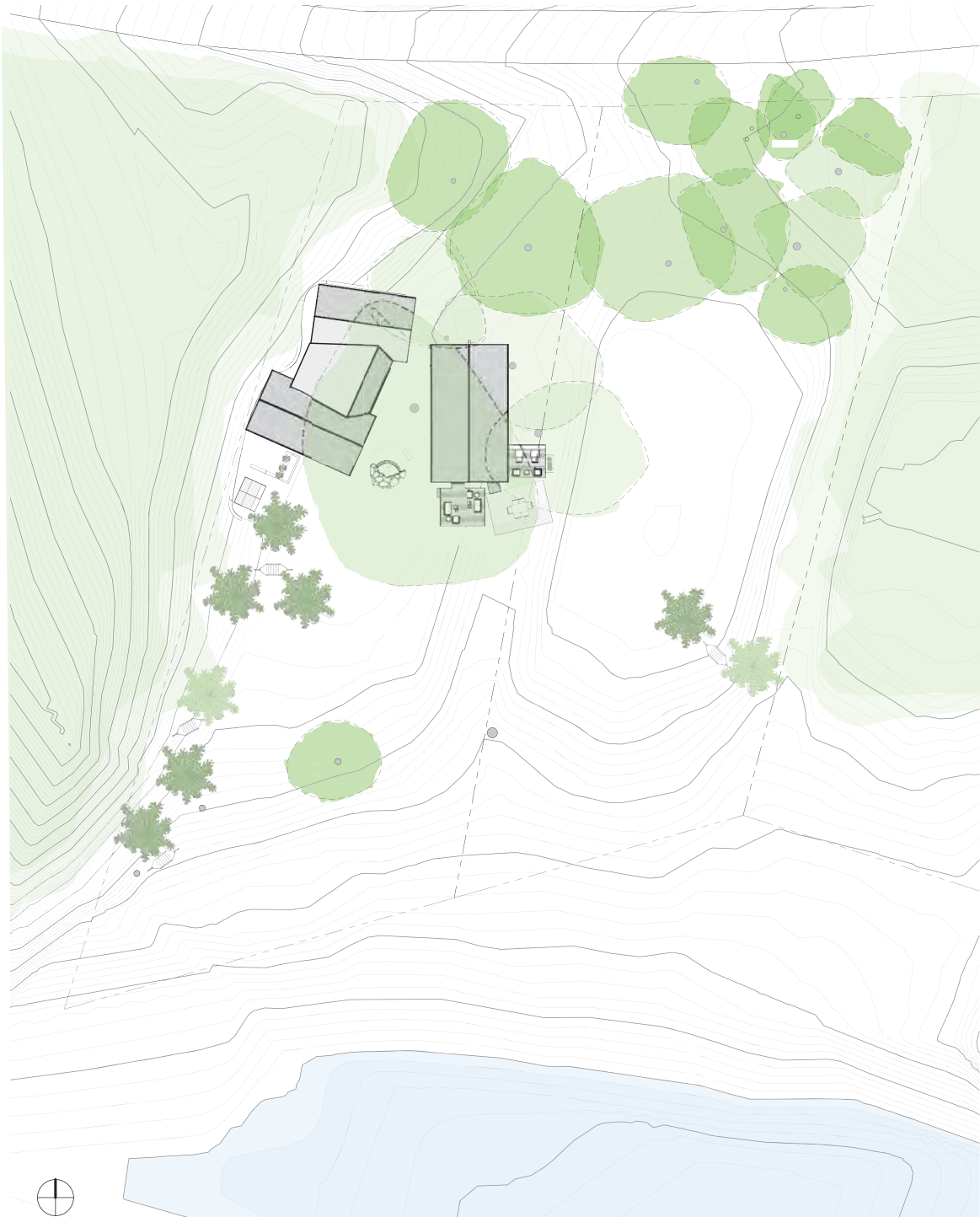
Concept

The entering firm proposed two structures – an open air pavilion to serve as a beach bar cafe, and a semi-enclosed structure to serve as the surf shop and school.

The owner's original idea located the pavilion close to the beach, but out in the punishing sun. The design team proposed pulling the buildings back and tucking them into a grove of nearby shade trees. This accomplished two purposes – the shade provides relief to the surfers after a long day in the sun and, with the buildings pulled back, the beach remains undeveloped and rugged. The bar reveals itself as you approach down the boardwalk from the beach. It's the perfect place for a post-surf refreshment.

Solutions

- In the site approach from a local dirt road, the landscaping screens the ocean view. Crossing the site, visitors walk under a shade tree and see the large barn style doors that open on the surf school. After passing between the surf school and the bar the first glimpse of the ocean appears.
- Much care was taken to preserve the existing trees on the site. The buildings were carefully angled to provide ocean views while allowing clearance around each tree.
- The client's desired to capture a refined rustic aesthetic that let guests feel that they are truly in Nicaragua. The architect honored aspects of Nicaraguan vernacular architecture with large open louvers to capture breezes, low roof lines, generous overhangs, clay tiles roofs, & simple local wood construction.
- The client has its own wood and metal working shop, which presented the architects with the exciting opportunity to design and build everything from scratch while providing opportunity for craftspeople in Nicaragua, the second poorest country in Latin America. Almost everything was handcrafted with local labor and materials including light fixtures, furniture, retail shop displays, site furnishings, doors, windows, & the buildings themselves.
- The building materials include: reclaimed locally sourced barrel tile, reclaimed locally sourced white washed wide board siding, locally sourced wood (including the large peeled bark columns supporting the structures), and a cast in place concrete countertop.
- The roof of the bar pavilion creates a warped plane by splaying each joist at a different angle. The result is a structure that is protected in the back and open to the ocean while creating a dramatic space for dining.
- An open porch on the surf shop provides space for board repair or simply sitting and watching the waves.
- The climate in this part of Nicaragua is considered "dry tropical rainforest". Draught tolerant plant species were selected to minimize irrigation needs.
- A series of outdoor spaces create informal gathering spots. Terraces provide additional dining opportunities directly under the tree canopy, while a large grill simply constructed with a pile of boulders houses special grill nights.
- At night, the tree canopy comes alive with handcrafted perforated metal lanterns which hang from the high branches overhead.
- No HVAC was needed. The buildings are cooled by the shade of the trees, the open louvers to catch breezes, and a few ceiling fans.



Beach view - siting allowed minimal disturbance.



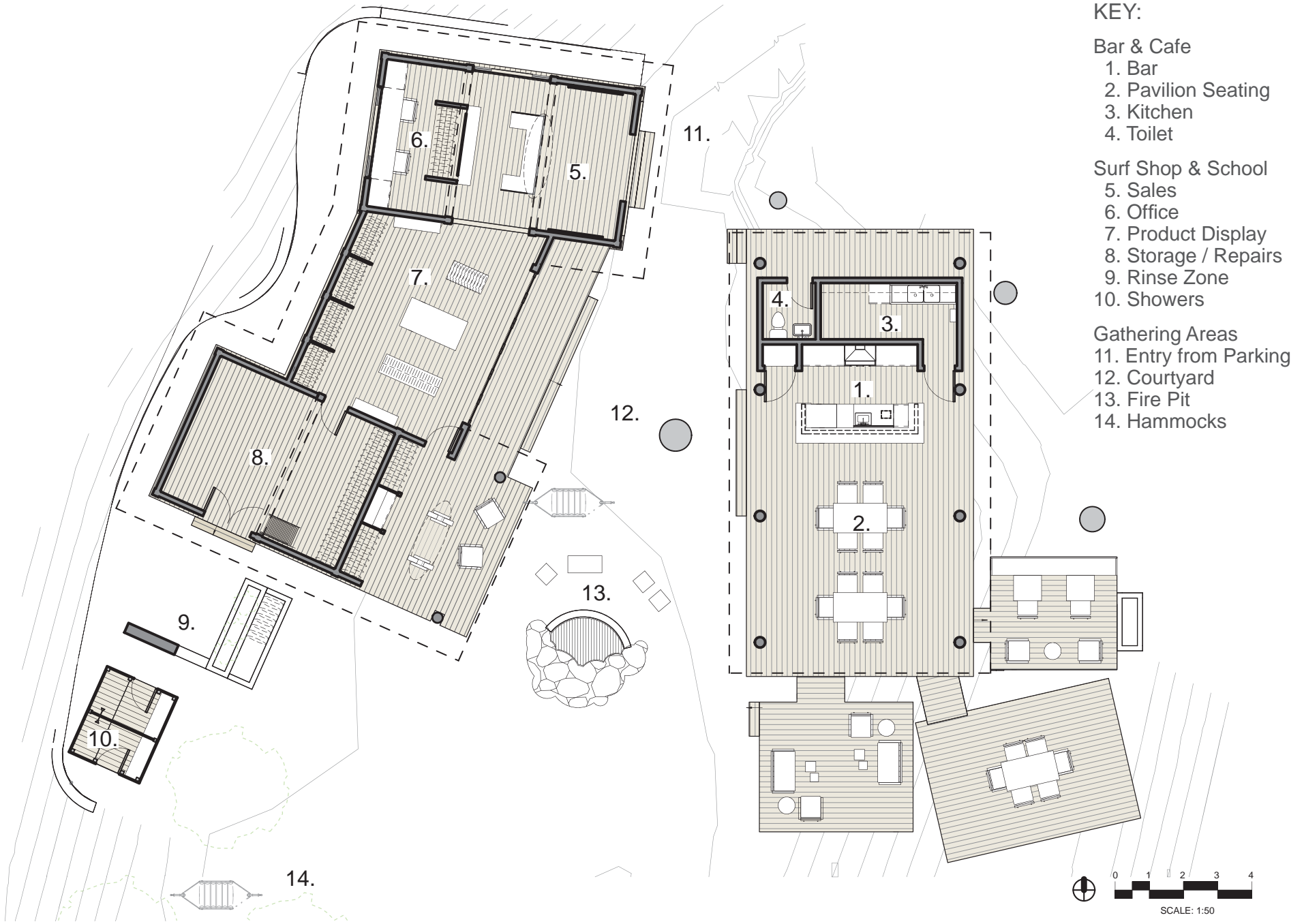
View lines between buildings & from the pavilion.



Site location nestled buildings into the vegetation.



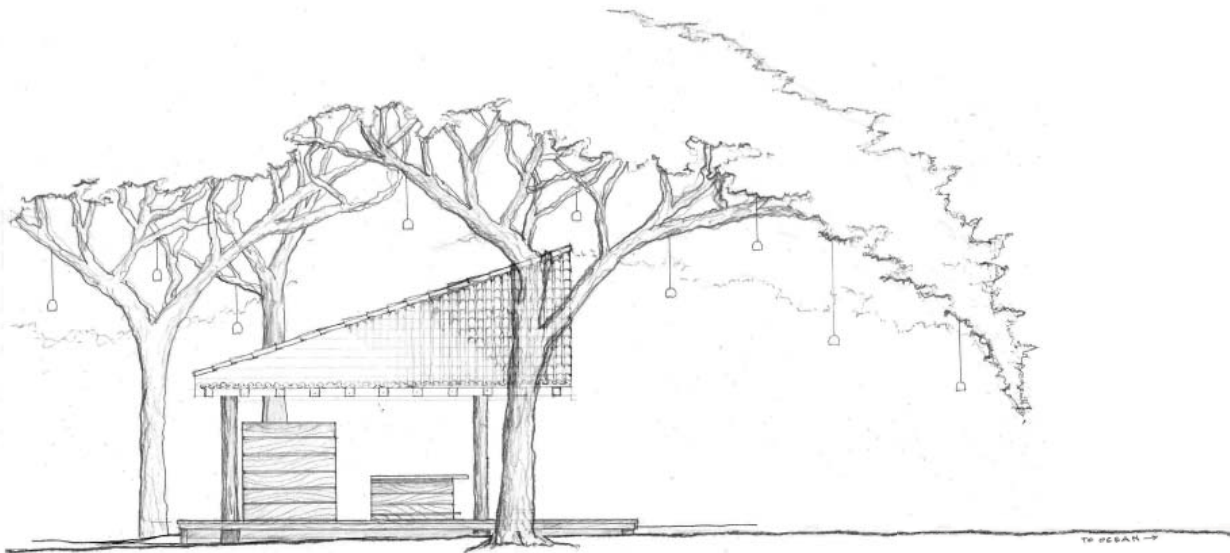
An ocean view is framed by the buildings & trees.



By breaking the program into several smaller structures, the building masses are reduced, allowing them to blend into their surroundings, while creating outdoor gathering areas in between the forms.



Beach Bar at dusk with integrated site lighting



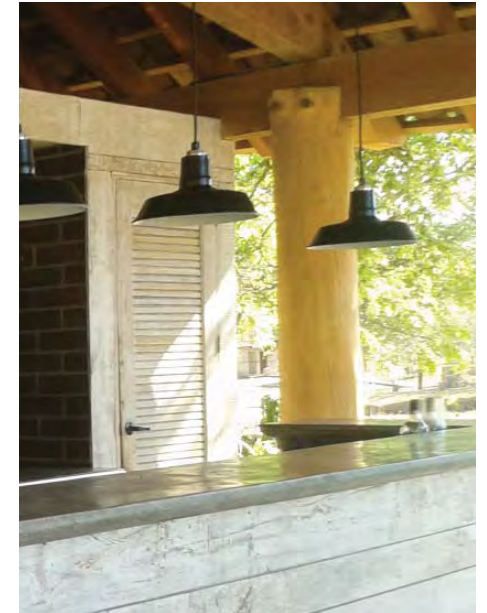
Concept sketch and tree pendant lanterns



The open bar pavilion filters the view of the surf shop beyond, as both structures nestle into the adjacent vegetation.



The view through the courtyard highlights the trees that were careful protected through construction. Their trunks play off of the rough hewn columns and filter the views between the informal outdoor zones.



The cafe pavilion features a custom bar and seating. The bar enclosure is held down beneath the splayed wood roof joists, allowing breezes to pass through & accentuating its casual atmosphere.



The surf shop and school can be seen as a layer though the open bar pavilion. Large barn doors screen the retail function, while a generous porch provides space for board repair or simply watching the waves.



Hammocks, wood benches, porches, and terrace seating invite guests to enjoy the landscape in informal gathering spots.



Simple details, like mortise & tenon joinery and wood louvers, add personality and texture to the buildings. These detailing and material selection combine a rustic aesthetic with a sense of craft and place.