The Chesapeake Bay Watershed is made up of a dynamic mix of ecological regions. The health of the bay depends on these regions thriving. The National Aquarium looks to these regions as inspiration for an elevated visitor experience and as a research focus.
Site Context

The project sits between the dense urban core of Baltimore City and the Inner Harbor Waterfront Park. Today campus faces the city, and turns its back to the harbor. The master plan aims to refocus the site towards the harbor as a cultural experience of water.
Native marsh conditions are represented across the site, each framed by an edge transitioning from the urban experience.

The boundaries between land and water are blurred by eroding the delineation of campus and harbor.

Chesapeake Bay Watershed habitats define the campus experience.
CURRENT: Harbor species diversity has diminished over time as the availability of nutrients decreased and harmful industrial chemicals have gone untreated.

PROPOSED: Interventions improve water quality, return habitat to native species with increased biodiversity, and provide a wildlife refuge in the harbor.
Connections to Water

By creating a thriving waterfront that inspires hope for a healthier Chesapeake Bay, the aquarium is modeling best practices for fostering community and stewardship in all watersheds.

**CURRENT:** Engineered bulkhead

**PROPOSED:** Waterfront edge brings life down to the water, with one option having cantilevered oyster reefs.
Studies of the water’s edge look at alternatives to bring people closer to the water. Careful analysis was given to ephemeral conditions, including how the user experience changes with low and high tide.
Multiple arrival spaces greet visitors approaching campus from different directions.

A mixture of spaces can accommodate assorted programs.

Immersive experiences are spread throughout the site.

Campus is envisioned as a welcoming civic space where visitors have immersive and memorable encounters with natural systems.
The project goals are to welcome and engage people, inspire conservation action, restore ecosystems, be a living lab, and foster community engagement.
Salt Marsh Slip

Once underutilized space becomes a memorable part of the experience with outward facing harbor views framed with ecological improvements inspired by the Coastal Plains of the Chesapeake Bay Watershed.
Immersive Experiences

A series of immersive experiences are proposed across campus. Multi-sensory installations engage visitors on campus, connecting them with authentic Chesapeake Bay watershed habitats.
The addition of the saltwater marsh highlights the daily and seasonal effects of water movement, while creating a unique and inspiring civic gathering place.
Tidal Saltwater Theater

Terraced seating framing the space offers dramatic views that encourages reflection and appreciation of this unique habitat and its changing beauty across the four seasons.
Fresh Water Marsh

The Fresh Water Marsh arrival plaza provides a habitat that creates a cooled microclimate where researchers have the opportunity to study species from the upper regions of the Chesapeake Bay.
Floating Salt Marsh

Floating wetlands, perched amphitheaters, terraced bulkheads, and a variety of multi-sensory experiences invite guests to connect with the harbor in ways that foster a memorable civic experience. Additionally, it offers valuable water quality control to a degraded urban harbor.