Phoenix is a Desert City

The cities that were studied in the studio were all ancient cities in arid lands, many with climates like that of Phoenix. Very hot in the summer, delightful in the winter, very dry for most of the year and dependent on water that often comes from far away. As pre-industrial cities, built before the days of air-conditioning they used many architectural devices to provide shade, optimize air movement, generate evaporative cooling from pools, fountains, and plants.

As we seek sustainable ways to enjoy life in our Sonoran Desert, nothing the periods when we must depend on full air-conditioning, which not only uses energy but cuts us off from the outer world, these ancient desert cities have much to teach us.

Continuity of street edges; narrower streets; pleasant shade; community gardens that harvest local water; courtyard and town houses; priority for pedestrians; linear markets, working alongside living, the integration of all phases of life.

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