IMAGINING THE VLORA WATERFRONT: Inventory + Analysis

Water Circulation Enhances Connection
- Cruise ships: Brings international tourists
- Ferry Station: Connects Points of Interests
- Recreational Activity: Rental Boating

National Highway Leaves the Shore
- Rruga Murat Terbaci is a national highway, but it is possible to be removed and becomes a pedestrian first secondary road.

Possible underground parking

Points of Interests
- Educational Institution
- Recreational Programs
- Prop. Primary Road
- Ex. Secondary Road
- Beach
- Commercial Area
- Hotel District
- Public Open Space

General Characteristics & Distance Map
- West Segment
  - Wide & Sandy
  - Old Beach Area
  - Ex. Infrastructures
  - Proposed Tourism Zoning
  - The hinge connects the West segment and South segment
  - Opportunity to become the focus of tourism plan
- South Segment
  - Narrow & well defined
  - New Beach Promenade
  - Beach destinations near real & nature
  - Opportunity to become traffic free area
  - Contains unintergrated sub-segments with different programs

Legend
- Ex. Primary Road
- Prop. Primary Road
- Major Nodes
- Secondary Nodes

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CONCEPT:
The City of Vlora called for an international design competition to transform the city's old port and its entire three mile waterfront to be a mixed-use tourism attraction. The design goal is to enhance the accessibility of the waterfront, develop a series of inviting public open spaces that are orientated towards sea, and create a strong identity for the waterfront that expresses its genius loci. The design concept is to extend the city's existing geometry towards the sea, open up the old port to be a gateway into the city, and create a three-mile multi-purpose promenade connecting points of interest. Native plants and Albanian cultural elements are displayed and carried though along the promenade throughout the design to reinforce the identity of the waterfront.

FEATURES:
- The Extension of the City’s Geometry: The two strongest axes in the existing city fabric are celebrated by extending them out towards the sea to become two major piers. The two piers frame a series of inviting public open spaces.
- The Gateway: By redesigning and relocating the university, the new building complex frames a strong central axis that connects the bay and the city. Along the axis, a sequence of public open spaces, including picnic lawn areas, boardwalk with a central lookout, and sculptural lighting form the ceremonial walk towards the sea.
- The Promenade: The three mile long concrete promenade zigzags through the site, changing its character in response to the existing landscape. The paving pattern is inspired by Albanian decorative folk art. The width varies between thirty and fifty feet, allowing pedestrians, bikers, skateboarders, and emergency vehicles to share the space. It serves as the primary circulation for both locals and tourists along the waterfront.
A series of steps from the Port area leading towards the sea frames the water plaza. The grand steps are broken down by seating, ramps, landings, and vegetated retaining walls. The design aims to create spaces that are both open and intimate. As the West Pier projects out towards the sea, its contrast in elevation with the water plaza creates a sense of enclosure. Attached to the wall are a series of cascading water features that create dynamic movement within the site. Two shallow pools centered within the design, along with stepping stones of various elevation heights, encourages people to interact with the water. The stepping stones create opportunities for sculpture display and seatings and serves as pathways connecting the two ends of the shallow pools. By periodically extending the landing area out over the steps, a series of “lookout pockets” are created. These spaces provide shaded seating and engage views of the plaza below. The bridge creates dynamic lighting and shade effects on the passageway beneath it. The space above the bridge is divided into a circulation passage with resting areas shaded by umbrellas, connecting the west pier with the rest of the waterfront design.