

APR 2011 / VOL 101 NO 4
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LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE MAGAZINE

THE MAGAZINE OF THE AMERICAN
SOCIETY OF LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTS



CAIRO'S GREAT OASIS

The welcome calm of Al-Azhar Park

THOMAS BALSLEY

What every good public space needs

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Architecture Month

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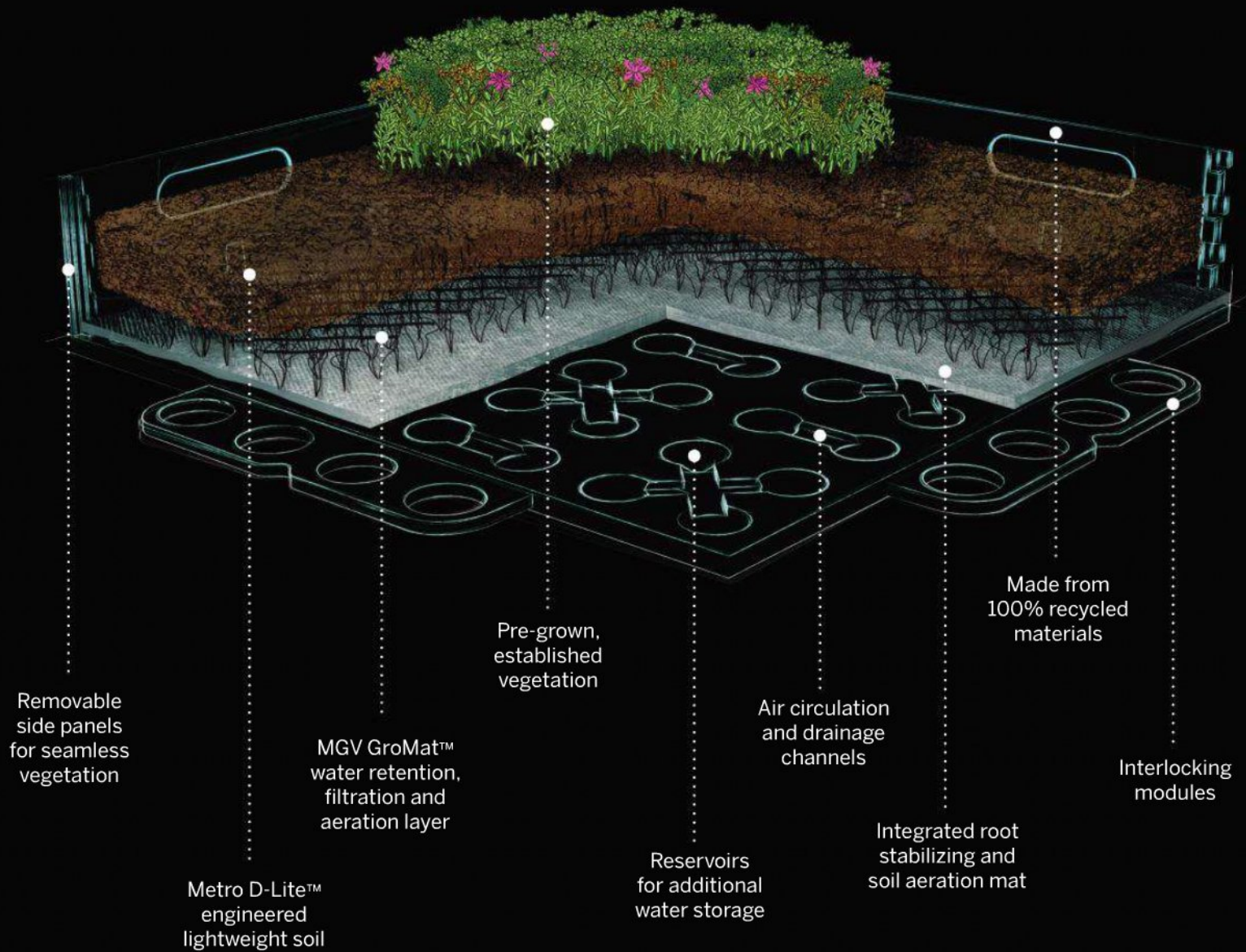
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EDITED BY LINDA MCINTYRE

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BY CONSTANCE CASEY

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BY LINDA MCINTYRE

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BY BILL MARKEN, HONORARY ASLA



“WE WANTED TO
CAPTURE THE
SPIRIT OF HISTORY ...”

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BY MIMI ZEIGER

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EDITED BY DANIEL JOST, ASLA

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BY ALEXANDER GARVIN

IMAGE CREDIT

Hala F. Nassar

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THE MAGAZINE OF THE AMERICAN
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ON THE COVER

Al-Azhar Park in Cairo,
page 88.

IMAGE CREDIT

Courtesy Aga Khan
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ROUGH CUTS

Early on, it was obvious that people in the Obama administration were thinking spatially about the state of American life and trying to make it more efficient. One of the most interesting developments in the federal government in a long time has been the administration's Partnership for Sustainable Communities, a program that brings together federal agencies, policies, and spending—mostly stimulus money, so far—for housing, transportation, and the environment to try to make cities and regions more livable and more likely to thrive economically. It has also been putting a number of landscape architects to work. But, well, guess what: It has quickly come under the threat of being scuttled by the new Republican leadership in the House of Representatives.

The Sustainable Communities initiative began in June 2009, and by February 2010, the U.S. Department of Transportation issued \$1.5 billion in grants for 50 new projects it chose after coordinating with the Environmental Protection Agency and the Department of Housing and Urban Development; the goal was to target investments that have the roundest community

around Knoxville, Tennessee; and a rural section of northern Wisconsin, among dozens of other places. Another set of grants is making it possible for plans already begun by other jurisdictions to move ahead.

If all this sounds too terribly sanguine, it is—at least to the people newly in charge of the House Appropriations Committee, who claim to be at war with “discretionary” spending. In February, the committee passed, and then the full House approved, a bill that, among other cuts, would gut HUD's Sustainable Communities funding. It proposed scrapping the \$150 million in funding set aside for the rest of 2011 and went one worse by trying to rescind \$130 million in money already awarded, if it had not been already obligated. Most if not all of it had, and the bill is sitting idle for now anyway. But in this new Congress, there is a 100 percent chance of future hostility toward sensible regional planning.

The administration has made clear its desire to continue sustainability-minded planning in its proposed 2012 budget. The Transportation Department would receive more than \$7 billion for “livable communities” programs. At the EPA, where Obama's budget as a whole would drop by 13 percent, the brownfields cleanup budget would stay basically even, at \$99 million, and its Sustainable Communities budget would nearly double, to \$9.9 million. HUD would receive \$150 million to pay for sustainable planning programs.

Averse to this whole idea are laissez-faire types who believe the federal government has no role in local planning efforts, and there are enough past planning casualties to buttress that viewpoint. But in this generation, the feds aren't directing the plans so much as making them possible with money and a broad set of guidelines so that localities will hit a number of sweet spots at once. These are ideas worth supporting for the sake of building the economy and saving energy. At least, local officials seem to think so, or the federal agencies would not be inundated, as they've been, with far more planning grant requests than they can possibly oblige.

AN EXCELLENT NEW FEDERAL PUSH FOR REGIONAL PLANNING ALREADY HAS ENEMIES IN THE NEW CONGRESS.

benefits. These included projects at a number of scales, such as a streetcar loop in New Orleans; a new bus and rail station in Revere, Massachusetts; and a better streetscape for Whitefish, Montana. Having HUD, DOT, and the EPA work together to promote municipal-level plans perhaps shouldn't carry the force of revelation, but it does, considering the mutual obliviousness among these agencies in the past.

Under this new push, you have the transportation and housing departments jointly awarding another \$68 million in grants to pay for local planning work that weaves together housing, transit, and workplaces. One of these grants is going to Jersey City, New Jersey, to plan the redevelopment of a 111-acre swath that holds 30 brownfield sites. And then there are the 45 regional grants, worth a total of \$100 million, that HUD awarded last October for metropolitan-scale plans that consider housing, land use, economic development, transportation, and infrastructure as parts of a whole. Because of this program, new regional plans are under way in Gulfport, Mississippi; a five-county region



BRADFORD MCKEE
EDITOR



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SCHOOLYARD GARDENS

Great article (“Reading, Writing, and Radishes,” on supporting school gardens, *Land Matters*, February)! I still can’t believe the objection and red tape out there when it comes to schoolchildren’s hands getting dirty. Reminds me of Chef Jamie Oliver’s show *Food Revolution*, where the man was just trying to change a school district’s lunch menu from unhealthy processed foods to a healthier selection... but the school’s regulations prevented him from doing so; what a shame. Children don’t get out enough as it is today with all the modern distractions. Any way to introduce a child’s mind to agriculture and the natural environment will give them a well-rounded education and appreciation of where produce comes from and what it takes to get it on their plates. Those objecting should see that school gardens won’t necessarily make children walk down the path of a laborer, but they may spark an interest in horticulture, agricultural science and technologies, plant breeding, and maybe even landscape architecture!

J. CARLOS VARGAS JR., ASSOCIATE ASLA
WADING RIVER, NEW YORK

While we’re teaching kids where fruits and vegetables come from, let’s show them how to plant and care for trees on their school grounds, and rip up some pavement and plant a rain garden. Bending the rules, risking contact with bugs and dirt, and getting the kids to experience plants and the outdoor world will help them appreciate the important, and essential, role that nature plays in their lives.

NANCY BULEY, HONORARY ASLA
BORING, OREGON

I agree—school gardens are wonderful. They can change eating habits for the kids and their families (when a child says he ate a tomato or some lettuce right from the garden in response to “What did you do in school today?”). Some studies even show an improvement in test scores for students with gardens. I have seen this all firsthand through my company, Teich Garden Systems. We design and build low-maintenance raised-bed garden systems for schools and other community organizations. The garden movement is gaining more momentum every day, and one day all schools will have garden programs.

JARED T. FINKELSTEIN
SOUTH SALEM, NEW YORK

Great article! Sure, the sky is falling in many ways, but I firmly believe that this is also an exciting time when good grassroots work is being met by “top-down” players such as government, policy makers, designers, and health providers. A confluence of movements—sustainability, locavore, children and nature, healing landscapes, livable cities—are meeting and building on each other to create meaningful change in our time.

NAOMI SACHS, ASLA
BEACON, NEW YORK

Huh! The school garden we built over several years at Arlington Science Focus (in Northern Virginia) was integrated into the curriculum in so many ways. Besides the obvious science lessons, we had Virginia history lessons (tying into Standards of Learning tests) with Native American plants and planting methods, plus the English colonists’ use of plants for dye and medicine. Native wildflowers and shrubs replaced the front lawn, and we had a grant from the Chesapeake Bay Foundation to study erosion control using different plants. The inner courtyard has a Japanese tea house and koi pond, with beds along the sides for teachers to use. Kindergarteners harvest native flower seeds and then make packets with pictures and planting info to sell at school events. As far as I know we never killed any kids...although some were scared to eat the *Amelanchier* berries at first! The school garden I work on now here in Dallas has donated about 3,000 pounds of food to the food bank over the past few years. Haven’t killed any of those people either—in fact, they mug us for okra when we show up. Shame on Montgomery County for being afraid of dirt!

WENDY MEYER, ASLA
DALLAS

Montgomery County can learn a lot from what the District of Columbia is doing with its Schoolyard Greening program (www.dcschoolyardgreening.org). Many eager and qualified Montgomery County Department of Environmental Planning staff stand ready to help their school board colleagues adjust their thinking.

CHERYL CORSON, ASLA
UPPER MARLBORO, MARYLAND

Take a look at this web site: createachangenow.org. Las Vegas is starting to bring gardening to the schools. We are also lucky to have great chefs in the area who are willing to visit the schools to teach the children how to prepare healthy foods and make better food choices. The kids are incredibly excited about it.

ANNA PELTIER
LAS VEGAS

SUBMIT

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“NATURE IS DEAD” REVISITED

I agree with Rene Bihan’s assertion (“Nature Is Dead: Long Live Design,” January) that landscape architects need to rise to the challenge and boldly take more responsibility for the profession’s visibility and design leadership. We need more big ideas, innovation, and influential advocacy on the national and global stages. Bihan’s premise, “Nature Is Dead: Long Live Design,” however, does a disservice to his point in that it trivializes nature as a big idea, and as a sound bite does not convey a real basis for rebranding the visibility of the profession. We as a profession persist in getting hung up on whether or not our designed landscapes are nature or not nature; whatever lens you wear when you look at landscapes, they are still built from elements of natural systems and as such contain nature within their framework. The “design with nature” mantra comes to mind if we are to embolden our profession with responsibility and leadership.

The challenge is not just consumer mentality but education and understanding of the role of landscape design and nature’s intrinsic value—both real and designed. People value their homes and their possessions because they are tangible entities they can see, touch, and understand. It seems that society in general does not “get” the spaces, the voids, and the systems between the objects that we as designers are invested in making

the legible, connective, and tangible fabric of our culture. Generally, there is not enough recognized value for the environment or art, especially in the United States, yet both environment and art factor highly in our profession’s building blocks. “It is nice but...” seems to be a typical response to many design ideas both big and small. You can’t blame this attitude solely on commercialism or an idealized romantic view of primeval nature. It is much more embedded than that.

The dilemma with “perceiving” landscape and making it legible is that even with a big idea, time can obscure that idea if a place is left unmanaged, unappreciated, underused, or if it is unseen. A building may weather or fall into ruin over time, but it is still physically visible as an object that can be torn down or rebuilt. There are also cultural perceptions that landscapes, whichever “nature” they are, using Bihan’s definitions, primarily are seen as “decorative,” thus relegating them to only a superficial layer of visible beauty. Most people do not understand what makes a landscape beautiful or how to read a “big idea” made visible, and that brings us back to responsibility and leadership.

Design cannot *shift* cultural perceptions through just Big Design ideas—though that is a great foundation to start with, and yes, the world needs “big ideas” if we want to enlighten it with more

meaning, beauty, and innovation. I too believe, like Bihan, that we need to boldly rebrand the profession—but we cannot achieve this solely through design. Rebranding needs to happen through grassroots efforts at local levels *and* it needs to be driven at the national level, through advocacy innovations such as SITES, which aims to make a dent in the understanding of the value of ecosystem services to the marketplace; through more focused education—both about what we do and why it is important; and through rethinking our message—perhaps a national campaign about how landscape architects design our world. Reshifting cultural perception will not be an easy task since paradigm shifts do not happen overnight. What we need now is to be united as a profession in leading the movement to rebrand our profession in the light it so richly deserves. Why not take a systemic approach and grow this movement organically—a network of ideas spreading throughout the globe, gaining momentum, and permeating national consciousness. Let’s commit to taking a collective giant leap forward to rebrand, reshift, and rethink the path ahead—what do we have to lose?

A big thanks to Bihan for sharing and sparking the dialogue.

APRIL PHILIPS, FASLA
SAN RAFAEL, CALIFORNIA

MORE ON LAM’S REDESIGN

I love the new format, especially the pages with the large images and slanted white space.

I do, however, have a problem with the font. The letters are simply too small, and it’s therefore too difficult and discourages reading the articles and sidebars. Furthermore, the light gray color of the sidebars that describe illustrations is almost impossible to read.

ANN L. BUTTENWIESER
NEW YORK

Just wanted to say that I like the new look of the magazine—however, it seems the font size of the main text of each article has shrunk, leaving a lot of wasted white space. Please bump the font size up and use some of that white space. It seems to me that we are wasting paper and putting a little strain on old or not-so-old eyes.

MICHAEL E. ASKIN, ASLA
CONCORD, NORTH CAROLINA

WHAT'S YOUR INTEREST?

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REACH OUT

NATIONAL LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE MONTH 2011

Across the country, ASLA and its chapters will celebrate National Landscape Architecture Month in April by engaging the public in conversations and activities that highlight the profession as a career choice, demonstrate what landscape architects do, and communicate the environmental benefits of sustainable landscape design.

Be part of the celebration! Contact your local chapter and see how to get involved. Tap ASLA's National Landscape Architecture Month resources online at www.asla.org/lamonth to both plan an activity and tell us about it. Commit your firm to reaching out in substantive ways to students, the public, and potential clients. ASLA has been Green Since 1899 so please use www.asla.org/sustainablelandscapes to prove how your work benefits the environment, communities, and everyone's quality of life.



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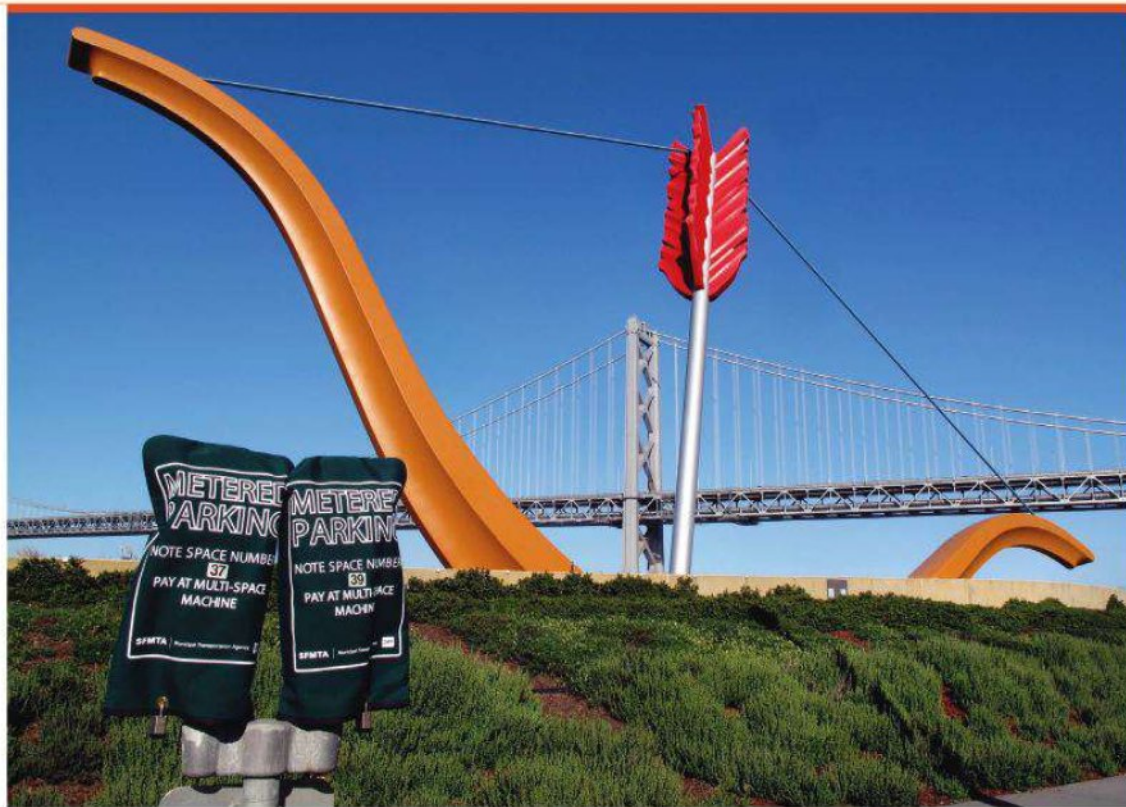
FOREGROUND

NOTES AND REPORTS FROM THE FIELD

More-popular parking will cost you more, the hunt for mycorrhizae may ease, and a new landscape architecture degree focuses on cities, in **NOW**. Wasps, giant perennials, and impostor lupines in **SPECIES**; a riverfront competition for Minneapolis in **IDEAS**; a plan for sanity along a Maine highway in **REGION**; quicker exports from 3-D models to 2-D drawings in **WORKSTATION**; sleek furniture and site fixtures in **GOODS**; and a beachfront garden matches pleasure with prudence in **HOUSE CALL**.

IMAGE CREDIT
Jim Bartsch

FORGET PARKING PRIX FIXE



LEFT
SFpark will soon make real-time data available to drivers.

IMAGE CREDIT
Courtesy Matthew Roth/
Streetsblog SF

MORE CITIES ARE EXPERIMENTING WITH MARKET- BASED APPROACHES.

BY LINDA MCINTYRE,
EDITOR OF NOW

Walkable neighborhoods generate their share of buzz in planning, design, and media circles. But people keep driving, even to those walkable neighborhoods. Maybe that's because, as Donald Shoup has observed, 99 percent of all driving trips in the United States end in a free parking space.

In his 2005 book, *The High Cost of Free Parking*, Shoup, a planning professor at the University of California, Los Angeles, vividly illustrated that accommodating drivers at virtually no cost has its own price. Parking lots that sit empty much of the time—often required by local zoning and development laws—don't make good or economic use of land, and the large swaths of impervious paving across most parking lots take a toll on the environment. Encouraging driving by making parking cheap and easy also fosters pollution and traffic. Drivers circling city blocks waiting for convenient spots to open up are a major source of urban traffic congestion—an estimated 80 percent in some places. But drivers take cheap parking for granted, a state of affairs that violates

the tenets of free-market capitalism as well as environmentalism.

That might be changing. Last summer, San Francisco began rolling out SFpark, a two-year, high-tech experiment in market-priced parking. Wireless sensors, installed on metered spots and in city-owned garages, track usage patterns and will soon make real-time data available to drivers via electronic street signs, the Internet, and smartphone apps, so drivers will know where spots are likely to be available. The cost of parking in those spots will ultimately be based on demand. Meter prices will range from 25 cents to six dollars an hour, and spaces in garages, which have been underused, will be priced lower to attract more customers.

Seattle is also phasing in a more market-based parking approach. The city council, in its 2011 budget, directed the local transportation department to tweak rates to bring about a typical availability of one or two spots per block, an occupancy rate that Shoup endorses. After analyzing parking trends, officials

began rolling out new prices earlier this year, with rates going up in four neighborhoods, going down in 11 neighborhoods, and staying the same in seven neighborhoods. The new top rate will be four dollars an hour, up from \$2.50. The hours for paid street parking were also extended in areas where nightlife is busy. Seattle's Department of Transportation will continue to collect data and use it to refine the program, with potential changes to include customization by block and time of day.

Even Fairfax County, Virginia, a sprawl-heavy county outside Washington, D.C., is contemplating modest reductions of free parking for some new developments. The county, which currently requires at least 2.75 parking spots for each unit in new town house developments, is considering draft recommendations to instead impose a *maximum* of 1.75 spaces for each unit within a quarter-mile of a Metro subway stop. Units within a half-mile of a Metro stop would have a maximum of 2.5 spaces.

What's driving this trend? Many annoyed parkers blame cash-starved local governments. "It's all about the money," one resident told the *Seattle Times* about that city's new plan. The topic's recent popularity among economics bloggers such as the libertarian Tyler Cowen and the liberal Matt Yglesias—both of whom have noted these kinds of experiments with approval—also implies that financial forces are at work. →



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← But Jay Primus, SFpark's program manager, says it's all about good parking management. "We're legally obligated to charge the lowest price possible to meet our availability targets," he says. "We have new meters that make it easy to pay, including with credit cards. They have longer time limits. It's easier to avoid parking tickets. It's a better experience for everyone."

Shoup says that some of the interest has been generated by the U.S. Department of Transportation's Urban Partnership grants. One of these grants is funding 80 percent of SFpark's costs. But Rachel Weinberger, a planning professor at the University of Pennsylvania and coauthor of the new book

Auto Motives: Understanding Car Use and Behaviours, says the impact of that program is limited and nobody really knows why so many cities are experimenting now. "I think we've just become desperate for better travel demand management tools," she says. "People are realizing that what we have been doing isn't working."

Maybe eye-catching design can help persuade people that parking is a commodity worth a higher price. In Miami Beach, a new, privately owned, \$65 million open-air garage designed by the architects Jacques Herzog and Pierre de Meuron is drawing tourists, starchitecture pilgrims, and even brides to be. The top floor can be used as an event space for those willing to spend \$12,000 to \$15,000 per night. Just want to park your car there? It'll cost you four dollars an hour, about four times as much as nearby city-owned lots. ●



ABOVE
Fungal hyphae and spores are visible on this carrot root.

IMAGE CREDIT
Courtesy Francisco Calderon, ARS

● AN EASIER HUNT FOR FUNGI

SPECTROSCOPY MAKES QUICK WORK OF MYCORRHIZAE.

The term "mycorrhiza" refers to a mutually beneficial, or symbiotic, association between fungi and plant roots. The fungus feeds on carbohydrates produced by the plant, and it in turn expands the roots' surface area, increasing their uptake of nutrients from the soil. The presence of mycorrhizae indicates good soil and plant health.

Traditionally that presence has been confirmed by looking at samples with a microscope or chemically analyzing the level of fatty acids in the samples—time-consuming and cumbersome processes. But Francisco Calderon of the USDA's Agricultural Research Service (ARS) says he may have found a better way: infrared spectroscopy, or passing a beam of infrared light through a sample and analyzing its absorption characteristics.

Calderon, who had previous experience measuring soil quality with spectroscopy, came to ARS's Central Great Plains facility to help determine what was causing a trend on local farms: Wheat grown in fields previously planted with corn performed better than wheat in other situations, regardless of typical factors such as water or nitrogen. Corn, he says, fosters mycorrhizal growth.

"I realized the usual way of analysis would be a titanic endeavor," he says. "You have to get the roots out of the field, bleach them with potassium hydroxide, and then apply a stain that will stick to the fungus but not the root so you can see the fungal structures. It's a lot of time and labor, especially if you have dozens or hundreds of samples. With a spectrometer, you still have to dig and clean the roots, but the next step is straightforward. You scan the dried and powdered roots, and it only takes about three minutes per sample. You can do hundreds of samples per day."

He and his colleagues are continuing their research on crop roots, but based on the encouraging results so far, Calderon is optimistic about the potential for this technology to make soil analysis faster and potentially cheaper—good news for horticulture as well as agriculture. ●

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THIS MONTH IN ICONIC TREE NEWS

**ONE HISTORIC TREE IS
ATTACKED BY VANDALS
WHILE ANOTHER RISES
FROM THE ASHES.**



Christian legend has it that when Joseph of Arimathea visited what is now the town of Glastonbury in Somerset, England, he stuck his wooden staff into Wearyall Hill and it grew into the Glastonbury Holy Thorn tree. The original tree was destroyed by Oliver Cromwell's troops as a totem of superstition during the English Civil War in the mid-1600s, but several specimens of the original spring- and fall-blooming hawthorn (*Crataegus monogyna* 'Biflora'), grown from its cuttings, remain in the town. The most celebrated of its descendants still sits on the Wearyall Hill site, drawing thousands of pilgrims and tourists every year.

But the tree was vandalized, possibly fatally, in December. The attackers hacked away at its trunk, dismantled its crown, and left the limbs scattered around Wearyall Hill. They were collected and moved to the Glastonbury Abbey for safekeeping while townspeople wait to see if the tree starts to regenerate in the spring. Police are investigating, but have not yet identified a motive or culprit.

Meanwhile, in New York City, another beloved but traumatized tree met a

much better fate. In October 2001, during the cleanup of the World Trade Center site after the previous month's terrorist attack, a damaged, but not quite dead, Callery pear tree (*Pyrus calleryana*) was plucked from the rubble and taken to a Parks Department nursery in the Bronx. In late December, the Survivor Tree, as it is now known, headed back to downtown Manhattan, where it was replanted at the National September 11 Memorial & Museum Plaza.

The tree was originally planted in the 1970s, but it arrived at the Arthur Ross Nursery in Van Cortlandt Park as an eight-foot fragment. Now it's about 30 feet tall. "The presence of the Survivor Tree on the Memorial Plaza will symbolize New York City's and this nation's resilience after the attacks," said New York City Mayor Michael Bloomberg, Honorary ASLA, at the ceremony. "Like the thousands of courageous stories of survival that arose from the ashes of the World Trade Center, the story of this tree also will live on and inspire many." ♦



ABOVE LEFT

The Holy Thorn tree has grown on Wearyall Hill in Somerset, England, for hundreds of years.

INSET

Vandals attacked it in December, destroying its crown and severely damaging its trunk.

LEFT

The Callery pear tree returned to its home at the World Trade Center site after a long recuperation in the Bronx.

IMAGE CREDITS

© Matt Cardy/Getty Images, top and above; Malcolm Pinckney/NYC Parks, left





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A NEW REPORT EXAMINES THE VALUE OF GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE.



A green roof seems like a better idea than a plain black tar roof. Porous paving seems like a step up from petroleum-based impervious asphalt. Planting trees seems to make public spaces more comfortable and inviting. But does sustainable infrastructure make sense when you consider the bottom line?

A new report by the Center for Neighborhood Technology (CNT) and American Rivers says that it does. *The Value of Green Infrastructure: A Guide to Recognizing Its Economic, Social, and Environmental Benefits* rounds up a slew of recent studies and crunches a lot of numbers for a close look at the benefits of both individual sustainable tools (including green roofs, tree planting, bioretention/infiltration, porous paving, and rainwater harvesting) and the cumulative impact of combining them.

Assembling the information in an accessible form was a daunting task. As the report makes clear, it is not the last word on valuation. In fact, says Danielle Gallet, an infrastructure policy analyst with the CNT and a leader of the team that prepared the report, it's a first step toward what the group hopes will be a new way of looking at infrastructure at a time when every dollar counts. "Green infrastructure might cost less than gray, or it might be the same price," she says. "Maybe it even costs a little bit more. But the benefits

of this approach for the community, like reductions in flooding and energy savings, should also be factored in."

Some of those calculations are easier than others. The STRATUM model developed by the U.S. Forest Service's Center for Urban Forest Research (see "Treeconomics," *LAM*, February 2008) makes it possible to do sophisticated analyses of tree planting benefits based on factors such as the trees' position relative to buildings (for energy savings) and leaf area (for stormwater management). But it's harder to generalize about some benefits, such as mitigation of the urban heat island effect or the extremely site-specific impact of a green roof.

Steve Wise, director of the CNT's natural resources division, says the way forward is to build on available data. "The key is to start benchmarking the performance we believe we should get according to existing data," he says. "Cities like Nashville, Tennessee; Pittsburgh; and Portland, Oregon, have green infrastructure programs. We have to monitor performance and we'll have to adjust our valuations. But we're putting down a marker."

For more information, and to download a copy of the report, visit www.cnt.org/news/2011/01/21/new-guide-helps-municipalities-monetize-the-value-of-green-infrastructure-2. ●

ABOVE

The report suggests that sustainable infrastructure such as green roofs can be effective and economical, and calls for more analysis of performance in the field.

IMAGE CREDIT

Courtesy Linda McIntyre

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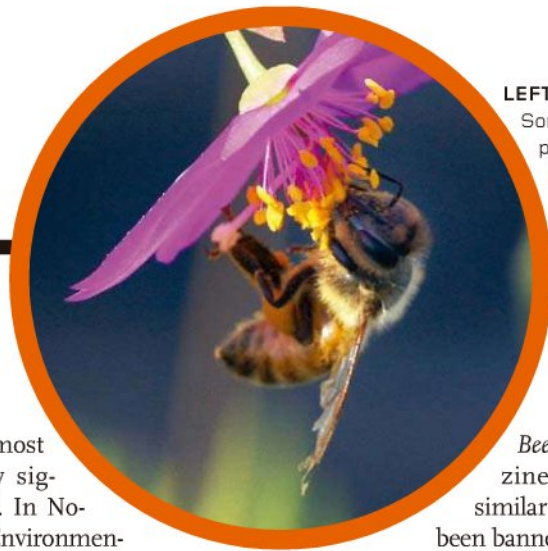
BEE AWARE

A MEMO INDICATES A POSSIBLE CONNECTION BETWEEN PESTICIDES AND BEE DEATHS.

About five years ago, when beekeepers began to see a big jump in honeybee deaths, the phenomenon was labeled “colony collapse disorder,” or CCD. The population declines have continued, but the cause has never been determined.

Suspicion is growing, however, about a class of pesticides called neonicotinoids. In the United States, one of these pesticides, clothianidin, is heavily used to treat seeds of corn, the nation’s

biggest and most economically significant crop. In November, an Environmental Protection Agency memo detailing concerns about clothianidin’s impact on honeybees, and the reliability of studies the agency examined for the chemical’s conditional approval in 2003, was released to Tom Theobald, a Colorado beekeeper. Theobald had questioned the safety of clothianidin in an article in



LEFT

Some believe neonicotinoid pesticides are implicated in the recent decline in the honeybee population.

IMAGE CREDIT

Courtesy Ed Snodgrass

Bee Culture magazine, noting that similar chemicals had been banned in Europe.

The EPA memo attracted a lot of notice among environmentalists and others on the Internet, but almost none among major news media outlets. On its web site (www.epa.gov/oppp00001/about/intheworks/honeybee.htm) the agency dismisses questions about the clothianidin

study, which critics say is flawed because test and control plots were planted too closely together, and it used canola rather than corn, the crop bees rely on most for winter sustenance. An EPA spokesman told me on background that the agency “has not closed the door on any possible causes” of CCD and “continues to evaluate the data.”

But Theobald, whose honey crop last year was the smallest in his 35 years of production, says the lack of response means that another season’s corn crop will be treated with the chemical, releasing more of it into the environment. “They’ve turned the environment into an experiment, and we’re making huge sacrifices to sustain industrial agriculture,” he says. And Theobald believes the impact goes beyond bees and other pollinators. He cites claims in *The Systemic Insecticides: A Disaster in the Making*, a 2010 book by the Dutch toxicologist Henk Tennekes, that neonicotinoids, which persist in soils and have a cumulative impact on insects’ sensitive neurotransmitters, are also affecting bird populations, which rely on insects for food.

Theobald hopes people will seek out information and educate themselves about the dangers of these powerful chemicals and press for change. “The regulatory process,” he says, “isn’t going to reform itself.” ●

● SALMON ON BOARD

BAY AREA BUSES PROMOTE ENDANGERED ANIMALS.



ABOVE

San Francisco bus riders were treated to an ecology lesson last winter.

IMAGE CREDIT

Todd Gilens

Buses and subway trains wrapped in ads are commonplace. But the landscape architect and artist Todd Gilens put an environmental spin on the practice with “Endangered Species,” an awareness campaign in which four San Francisco buses were wrapped with images of endangered animals native to the region (the coho salmon, the brown pelican, the Mission blue butterfly, and the salt marsh harvest mouse). The wrapped buses, which began to carry the displays in mid-January and were to last until mid-April, included a web address (www.endangerbus.org) where the curious could find more information about the featured species and the environmental benefits of transit use.

Gilens was inspired to kick off the project when he noticed in 2006 that the San Francisco Metropolitan Transit Authority (SFMTA) was tracking maintenance, efficiency, and rider stats, but not the wider impact of choosing

transit. He developed it through the nonprofit group Community Initiatives, and the SFMTA donated the advertising space. He says he has enjoyed tracking the reactions of riders and others around the city who posted updates on social media sites or contacted him, mostly to register pleasure about this spark of surprise and beauty during the otherwise humdrum experience of getting around the city.

“I am reminded of what someone said about how we experience landscapes in a state of distraction,” Gilens says. “But there are moments that emerge from that dense experience—a smell or movement, a particular form or play of light, that gives us back to ourselves in sympathy with that moment of the place. I’d like to think the buses sometimes work this way, constellating an experience of the city that includes them and everything else too.” ●

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ABOVE

The app lets you search for plants based on a vast array of attributes, from water requirements to malodorous flowers.

IMAGE CREDIT

Courtesy Timber Press

WOODY PLANTS? THERE'S AN APP FOR THAT

DIRR MANUAL NOW AVAILABLE FOR THE IPHONE.

If, as I did, you stood in line at last year's ASLA Annual Meeting to have Michael Dirr, Honorary ASLA, sign your dirty and dog-eared copy of his *Manual of Woody Landscape Plants*, you know that book is both indispensable and a pain in the neck to carry around. But now, with the Dirr Tree and Shrub Finder app from Timber Press, you can have that same wealth of horticultural information at your fingertips 24/7, wherever you are, on your iPhone or iPod Touch.

The app lets you browse plants by common or botanical name, or by form (tree, shrub, vine, or ground cover).

When you choose a species from the list, you get a quick list of information, including hardiness, sun and water requirements, size and growth rate, and features both good (for example, "pH adaptable") and possibly bad (for example, "colonizes"). For a full-on Dirr experience, there's a "details" option that reproduces text from the manual.

There are photos, often a gallery of them, so you can see (or show clients) what a tree or shrub will look like in leaf, in flower, in fall color, and so on. Even the beautiful line drawings, done by Dirr's wife, Bonnie, are there. You can easily e-mail images (both photos and drawings), information, or lists you compile in the app to yourself or to clients, suppliers, or others.

You can search by light or water requirements as well as any combination of 12 attributes, including growth rate and habit and landscape use; refining your search to the nth degree is also possible—the "plant features" field, for example, lets you select for pH adaptability, salt tolerance, malodorous flowers, or contorted leaves, to name just a few qualities.

At \$14.99 from the iTunes store, Dirr's Tree and Shrub Finder will set you back more than Shazam or Angry Birds. Plant nerds risk draining their phone charge playing around with the app for hours. But access to this wealth of information without lugging around a 1,000-plus-page reference book? Priceless! ●

● **ONE DEGREE'S DIFFERENCE**

FIVE-YEAR URBAN LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE PROGRAM TO DEBUT AT NORTHEASTERN.

BY NICOLE NEDER, ASSOCIATE ASLA

Even though landscape architects have been tackling the problems of leftover infrastructure and sustainable urban design for years, some practitioners have complained that there has been little relevant formal education to cover these kinds of topics. With a new program, Northeastern University in Boston plans to equip future landscape architects with the tools to tackle contemporary design quandaries by directing an academic focus toward urban themes.

The thinking behind the new program echoes recent debates on landscape urbanism. George Thrush, Affiliate ASLA, director of Northeastern's School of Architecture, cites the "critical triangle of design, policy, and science" as an important focus of the urban landscape architecture (ULA) program as well as the school's existing architecture program. The ULA program "will break new hybrid ground," he says,

by exploring cross-disciplinary work in architecture, urban design, and urban landscape.

The new ULA program will offer its first classes later this year. Students from other majors will be welcomed into ULA classes. The five-year program includes a first year with the architecture students, a mandatory semester abroad in the third year, and two semesters of co-op work with urban firms all over the world. The study-abroad semester will take place in Berlin, but Thrush expects to offer more options, such as China, as the program evolves.

At press time, the school was still engaged in the hiring process for landscape architecture faculty. For more information on the new ULA program at Northeastern University, go to www.architecture.neu.edu/news/new-program-urban-landscape. ●

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NOTES FROM THE WORLD OF LIVING THINGS

BY CONSTANCE CASEY

WINGED INVADER



ABOVE
Sirex noctilio, the Sirex woodwasp.

IMAGE CREDIT
David R. Lance/USDA
APHIS PPQ

There's an alien wasp—*Sirex noctilio* or the Sirex woodwasp—that's causing alarm at the U.S. Forest Service and among commercial pine growers. It's one more of those darned tree-killing creatures that enter North America accidentally as eggs or larvae in wooden packing. Like the emerald ash borer or Asian long-horned beetle, this wasp has an unfair advantage in the fight on our turf.

The wasps are about an inch long, a glossy blue-black with orange legs, and almost indistinguishable from native North American horntails. ("Horntail" denotes the spike that projects out from their backs. What looks frighteningly like a stinger is, on the female, the ovipositor.) Forest entomologists look for the dripping resin drops on the tree bole from the holes the female makes when laying eggs and the holes left by emerging adults. The less-subtle symptom is needles turning red, followed rapidly by tree death. The extremely

bad news is that the Sirex woodwasp attacks healthy pines, while native wasps attack only stressed trees. One of the alien wasp's favorite hosts is the loblolly pine, crucial to the Southeast's lumber and pulp industries.

It's not yet a proven felon like the Asian long-horned beetle or the emerald ash borer; it is so far reliably detected only in New York, Pennsylvania, and Ontario, Canada. It's hard to predict how the Sirex woodwasp will behave in North America, where it may thrive without the controlling predators of its native Europe, North Africa, and Asia.

The creature was discovered in upstate New York six years ago. But the damage that makes lumber growers nervous has occurred in Argentina, Brazil, and Chile. Plantations there have seen extensive damage to ponderosa, lodgepole, and Monterey pines, as well as the loblolly—exotics in South America and natives up here. In its na-

tive range the Sirex woodwasp is a minor pest; in the Southern Hemisphere it is the most devastating pest of pines.

The wasp is a threat in noncommercial ways as well. Stands of jack pine, another tree Sirex consumed in South America, are important to the survival in Michigan of the endangered Kirtland's warbler. Environmentalists note that the wasps are present in a part of Ontario bordering on Michigan, and, unlike the Asian long-horned beetle, these insects are good flyers.

The invader has a curious reproductive life involving two strange ingredients that deliver a double blow to the tree. As the female Sirex wasp inserts her eggs into the bark, she injects with them the spores of a wood-decaying fungus that makes the tree easier for the larval wasp to consume. She also injects mucus that protects the fungus itself from defensive antifungal toxins that the attacked tree might produce. As if the tunneling larvae weren't damaging enough for the tree, the fungus grows and causes the wood to dry out and the tree to die, sometimes in a few weeks.

Though armed with this potent concoction, the alien wasp also has important enemies. The first is two other wasps, which brings us to a phenomenon that inspires horror. Think of the famed ichneumon wasp, which deposits its eggs inside of caterpillars. The wasp larvae that hatch gnaw their way out of the host, taking care to eat the vital organs last. This grisly but efficient practice inspired the scene in *Alien* when a parasitoid monster emerges from a human body.

Another wasp, an aggressive female, finds the same egg-laying hole and lays her egg inside the egg of the Sirex.

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As the *Sirex* is growing, the parasitoid wasp's larvae are growing inside of it. It's not clear whether our North American parasitoid wasps will step up to the plate. They have been introduced into Australia and are attacking *Sirex* larvae.

The second *Sirex* enemy is a certain kind of nematode, a worm as slim and small as a piece of thread. The worm feeds on the same fungus as the wasp, thus reducing the damage to the tree. But that's not the worm's only strategy. The nematode can also act as a parasite, living inside the larvae, pupae, and adult wasps.

The story gets even weirder, in the way the nematode has evolved not to kill the female host but to use her as transportation to the next tree.

If an infected larva is female, she emerges and lays her eggs. The hidden truth is that the nematodes migrated to the developing eggs and ate their contents; the eggs she lays are now filled with 20-some nematodes instead of potential wood-boring larvae. Our native parasitoid wasps and nematodes have the same system, but they don't match up with that of the invaders.

There is more good news from Down Under: Nematodes in Australia took

the country from a *Sirex* outbreak to a nearly complete collapse of the invasive wasp population in three years. But nothing's simple. If we bring the killer Aussie nematodes in on our side, what happens if they kill native wood wasps, our important beneficial insects, along with the aliens?

The lesson, a familiar one, from the South American plantations is that a crowded monoculture makes life easier for any invader. Entomologists advise a landscape with pines widely spaced and plenty of hardwoods. Of course, keeping the nonnatives out of the country in the first place is the best strategy. ●



ABOVE
Verbascum, or mullein.

IMAGE CREDIT
© Fotoserach

BENIGN GIANTS

Their footprint is not so big. Narrow and vertical, these three towering perennials respect the boundaries of neighboring plants. They give a sense of exuberance and energy to a planting, and indeed often inspire people to ask, "What in the name of God is that?" These are all USDA Zones 3 to 8, prefer full sun, and don't mind dry, ordinary soil once they're established.

Readers will think of plenty of other tall, slim plants. The lacy-foliaged *Thalictrum*, or meadow-rue, for one, but that gets plenty of good publicity already. Other giants such as joe-pye weed are bulky and tend to lean on their neighbors. Same for the alarming but wonderful *Persicaria polymorpha* or fleece flower, and similarly fleecy flowered *Macleaya cordata*, the plume poppy that

has gorgeous, enormous figlike leaves. The plume poppy, as well as being a hulk, spreads aggressively both by seed and underground.

***Rebecca maxima*.** In midsummer, from a rosette of blue-gray leaves, a stem shoots up six to seven feet, presenting what is basically a black-eyed Susan, just one, at the top. In late summer the slightly drooping petals drop, leaving a seed-rich black center. In late summer the stems sway with the weight of finches eating the seeds. It seems the plant doesn't spread its seed about profligately, or perhaps the birds consume it all. From spring till late fall, the grayish tone of the leaves looks great against a stone wall, particularly one with lichen. *Rudbeckia* 'Herbstsonne' would give you similar height, but it has multiple flowers and is wider.

***Verbascum*,** also known as mullein. True, you're more likely to find news of this plant in a Department of Agriculture note advising farmers how best to remove

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it from their fields than in a garden catalog. In a garden, however, unwanted seedlings are easy to pull up, and their woolly texture a pleasure to touch. In England the poor used to put the fuzzy leaves in their shoes for warmth, thus the common name Old Man's Flannel and Beggar's Blanket. Hummingbirds use the fuzz to line their tiny nests. There are several hundred species of this biennial or short-lived perennial, and a few ridiculously gaudy cultivars, like 'Caribbean Crush,' which has flowers in mango, pink, and yellow. The primrose yellow flowers, in racemes, of the common *Verbascum* are beautiful enough. You've probably often seen them blooming from July to August on a gravelly bank along the road. Though it is a common, one might unkindly say weedy, plant, *Verbascum* is not invasive. (The seed needs open ground to germinate.)

PLANTS THAT GROW TALL AND SLENDER ATTRACT ATTENTION AND CAN ADD ENERGY TO A PLANTING.

***Hemerocallis* 'Autumn Minaret.'** This is one of the tall daylilies that has been around long enough, since 1951, to prove its worth. (Daylilies are so easy to hybridize that six-footers are popping up here and there.) With 'Autumn Minaret' you get the benefits of daylily adaptability—tolerance of a wide range of soils and of summer heat. Then toward the end of summer naked scapes shoot up and deliver an orange-yellow flower with a rusty eye that looks you right in your eye if you're about six feet tall. This is a happy alternative to the ubiquitous 'Stella de Oro' and 'Happy Returns,' which are, though useful, excessively cute. There's much to be said for blooms that appear at eye level or above and do not try to be cute. ●



RIGHT
Baptisia australis.

IMAGE CREDIT
Steven Still/Perennial
Plant Association

A HEAT-LOVING “LUPINE”

It's hard not to love the story of the Russell lupine, and hard to resist a stab at growing the stately flowers. George Russell was a railroad crossing guard from Yorkshire who, in his late 50s, began crossbreeding common lupines in his garden allotment. After laboring for two decades, he came up with the Russell lupine (spelled lupin by the Brits), and in 1937 the crown awarded the railroad employee an MBE—Member of the Order of the British Empire. From the various species, particularly 30-some varieties of the mainly blue

Lupinus polyphyllus brought back to England from our Pacific Northwest by 19th-century plant hunter David Douglas (of Douglas fir fame), Russell managed to produce red, pink, orange, and yellow blooming lupines, then even showier bicolored blue and yellow, pink and amethyst.

There are stunning stands of lupine in the gardens of the great country homes of England, an incitement to obsessive picture-taking and lupine lust. But even the Duchess of Devonshire, mistress of



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BELOW

A close-up of *Baptisia australis*.

IMAGE CREDIT

Steven Still/Perennial Plant Association

HOT, HUMID SUMMERS ARE HARD ON LUPINE, BUT BLUE FALSE INDIGO AND BUSH PEA CAN THRIVE IN THE HEAT.



Chatsworth, sees their shortcomings. Of her famed lupine beds she writes, “An advantage of having a very big garden is being able to give an area to a really good show of one kind of flower and then forget it when it is over.”

A sharper warning comes from another British garden-er, the famously brusque, late Christopher Lloyd, master of the Edwin Lutyens garden at Great Dixter, who wrote that, though his lupines make a great show in May, “the display will be over before the end of June. We rip the lupins out and chuck them.”

Lupines usually don’t persist in any North American garden, and they give up completely when challenged by heat and humidity. In hot summer areas persevering gardeners grow them as short-lived perennials or even as annuals. There’s a warning hidden in the name; it doesn’t come, as commonly believed, from the Latin *lupus* for wolf, but from *lupe*, a Greek word meaning grief.

Happily there are two great plants with a similar look, though not quite as showy as lupine. They are long-lived—no need to rip them out and chuck them in June. They take sun, average soil, and, once established, tolerate drought. Most important, both of these faux lupines thrive in heat.

The first is *Baptisia australis*, known as blue false indigo, or more familiarly,

as popularized by Tony Avent of Plant Delights Nursery, Redneck lupine. Like the late George Russell, *Baptisia* has been honored—in its case as the Perennial Plant Association’s Plant of the Year for 2010. And like the Russell lupine, it’s a star of early summer with blue pealike flowers. The blooms work well with more vivid flowers of that season like fuchsia peonies or red poppies. The blue-green foliage looks good on the shrub-sized plant till fall, a nice backdrop to rust-colored *Helenium* or the strong yellow *Rudbeckias*, and the shiny black seedpods persist through winter. Native to meadows from Maine to Texas, *Baptisia* spans USDA Zones from 3 to 9. A gorgeous cultivar, ‘Purple Smoke,’ with glossy charcoal-gray stems, looks more sophisticated than Redneck.

The other resilient and uncomplaining quasi lupine, a related North American legume, is *Thermopsis caroliniana*, variously known as bush pea, Carolina false lupine, or Blue Ridge buckbean. Late in spring it sends up sulfur-yellow flowers on strong stems up to five feet high. *Thermopsis* looks good with emerging catmint or lavender at its feet. Any one of the bluish grasses like *Panicum virgatum* ‘Dallas Blues’ goes well with the strong yellow spikes. The big gray-brown seed heads of *Thermopsis* last into winter on sturdy, leafless stems. ●

CONSTANCE CASEY IS A FORMER NEW YORK CITY PARKS DEPARTMENT GARDENER AND WRITES ON NATURAL HISTORY FOR THE ONLINE MAGAZINE SLATE.



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RETURN TO THE MAINSTREAM

**IN MINNEAPOLIS, A COMPETITION
FOCUSED ON A NEGLECTED
STRETCH OF RIVERFRONT.**

BY ADAM REGN ARVIDSON, ASLA

ABOVE

The Tom Leader Studio/Kennedy & Violich Architecture team's plan for Scherer Park, a new open space near downtown, includes a new habitat island, a secluded lagoon for swimming and boating, and scattered wooden recreational docks reminiscent of historic log drives.

IMAGE CREDIT

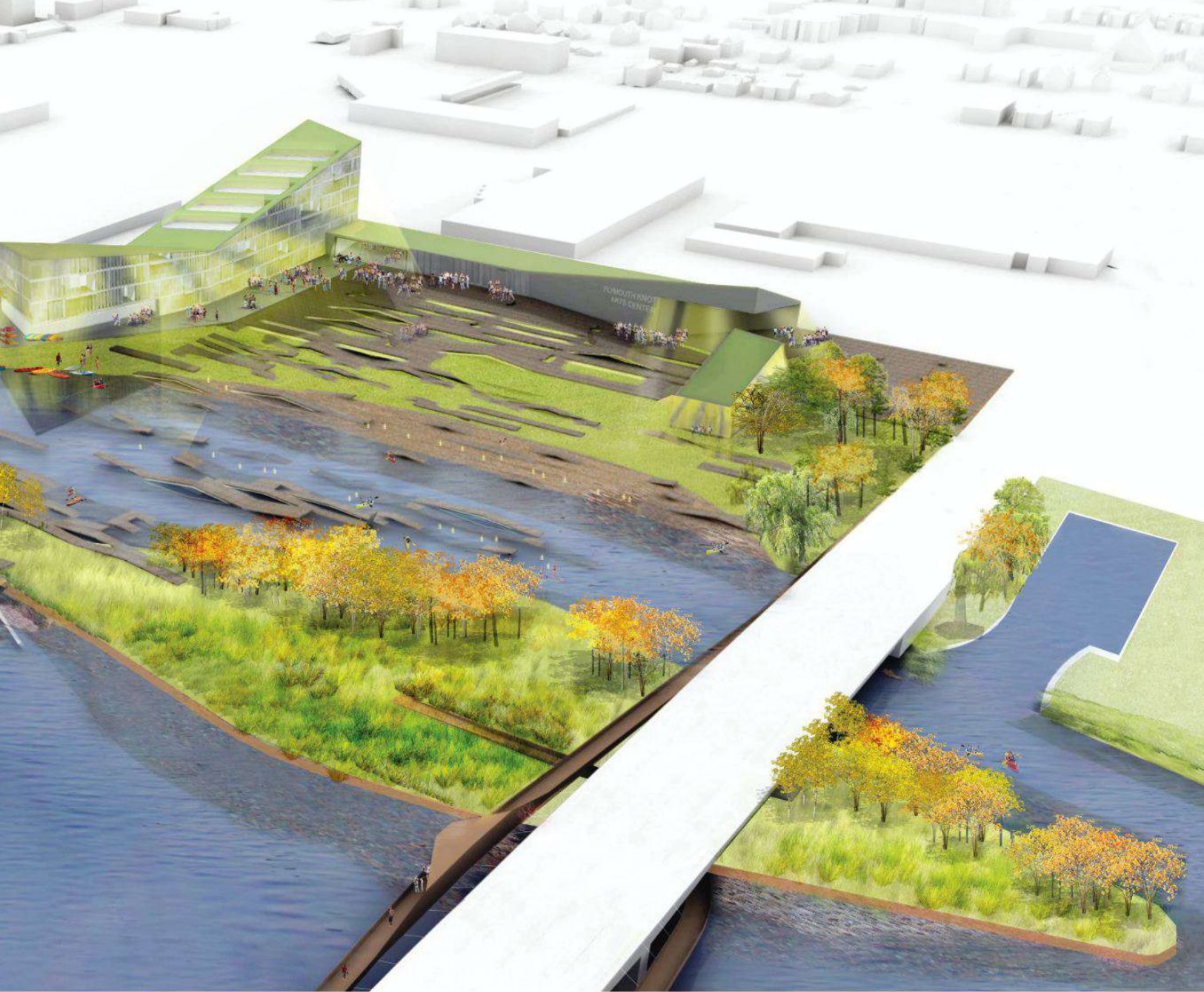
Courtesy TLS/KVA team

Minneapolis is known for its waters. Even its name is a Dakota-Greek mash-up that means "city of lakes." Industry founded the city at Saint Anthony Falls. Then in the 1890s, Minneapolis capitalized on its liquid resources in a different way, commissioning the landscape architect H. W. S. Cleveland to plan the Grand Rounds, a 40-mile interconnected system of parkways and trails that still flanks all of the city's waters. Well, almost all. The Mississippi River north of downtown is home to industry and infrastructure. The trail system here is disconnected, parks are spotty, and, on the west side, neighborhoods are cut off from the water by Interstate 94.

Planners have recognized this for some time, coming up with various ideas over the years. But none has been as ambitious

as the recently organized Minneapolis Riverfront Design Competition (nor has boasted its star power). A partnership of the city's park board, the University of Minnesota's College of Design, the Minneapolis Parks Foundation, and the Walker Art Center, this competition invited designers to reenvision 5.5 miles of river corridor.

The initial solicitation brought in a who's who of 55 landscape architecture offices from around the globe, from which four finalists were invited to prepare final proposals (each for a meager \$30,000). The four (whose schemes are described on the following pages) explored some common themes—like beaches, green industry, and naturalized stormwater management—but also showed a notable diversity of landscape



architectural thinking. On February 10, a jury of elected officials, park board staff, and design professionals announced the winner: the collaboration of Tom Leader Studio and Kennedy & Violich Architecture.

And now that the selection has been made, says the competition's official blog, "As you know, an end is really a beginning." So begins the Minneapolis Riverfront Initiative, which hopes to build, in the next few years, an initial project on a site yet to be determined.

There are, of course, precedents for this competition-then-incremental-improvements model (Toronto comes to mind), but it usually happens in more high-profile parts of cities. North Minneapolis is more often in the news for its crime than anything else. To use a river term, it's an off-channel part of the city, not typically in the

mainstreams of funding, investment, and improvements. It was forgotten by Minneapolis's early Grand Rounds planners and has been forgotten ever since.

Tom Leader Studio's ideas truly seem to grasp the tricky economic, racial, and physical complexities of this part of town. They're grand ideas, and they could change the face of the north side.

The complete schemes of all four finalists are available online, as well as full team lists and video of the public presentations, at www.minneapolisriverfrontdesigncompetition.com. ●

ADAM REGN ARVIDSON, ASLA, IS A REGULAR CONTRIBUTOR TO LAM AND FOUNDER OF TREELINE, A DESIGN/WRITING CONSULTANCY IN MINNEAPOLIS.

TOM LEADER STUDIO, BERKELEY, CALIFORNIA, AND **KENNEDY & VIOLICH ARCHITECTURE LTD.**, BOSTON, TEAM LEADERS

RIVERFIRST

Presented to the public over the soft techno sounds of the local band Solid Gold, Leader's winning scheme plays up the difference between the two sides of the river. Hydrologically, the west bank is depositional—sediments collect there—while the east is scoured, flanked by high bluffs. TLS/KVA proposes a series of overlooks on the east side, split by naturalized ravines that would cleanse stormwater and provide habitat. On the western side, a land bridge over I-94 would connect Farview Park, the city's highest point, to the low banks of the river. With these and other elements, the team proposes solutions to "four challenges for the 21st century": water, health, mobility, and the green economy. Stormwater would be cleansed as it moves downslope from the neighborhoods. Trails and transit routes would improve access to the river and jobs. Greenhouses and markets would nourish local bodies and pocketbooks. At the northern end, more cleansing wetlands would cut inland, anchoring a natural public park and a green barge port. Nearer downtown, the Scherer Lumber site at the eastern abutment of the Plymouth Bridge would sport another back bay for secluded boating and swimming. ●

FAR RIGHT

TLS/KVA's scheme recognizes the natural differences between the riverbanks: low wetlands on the west and high overlooks and ravines on the east.

NEAR RIGHT

Existing Farview Park connects to the river via a major new land bridge.

IMAGE CREDITS

Courtesy TLS/KVA team



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TURENSCAPE, BEIJING, TEAM LEADER

THE RESILIENT RIVER

Time is the key element in the Turenscape team's vision, which breaks the next 50 years into four phases—with an introduction of sorts. In the short term, the team proposes painting murals on the large industrial buildings that dot the corridor, and planting “rustic” crops like sunflowers on under-used land. Phase one (two to five years) would see two major projects: a new park on the Scherer site and an undulating, double-decker, bright orange skywalk linking west side neighborhoods to the water. In phase two (five to 10 years), the scheme envisions a “horticulture enterprise zone” with facilities to reclaim polluted soil, and a new wetlands and art park, with recreation amidst cleansing waterscapes, soil piles, and industrial silos. The last two phases would transform the urban fabric by installing a river-centered streetcar line, relocating industry inland, and building new carbon-neutral housing near the water. ●



ABOVE

The Turenscape team's scheme replaces riverfront industrial uses with carbon-neutral housing to create a wider green corridor.

LEFT

Near the city limits, land is set aside for ongoing soil remediation facilities (on the right bank) and water-cleansing wetlands (on the left bank).

IMAGE CREDITS

Courtesy Turenscape team

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KEN SMITH WORKSHOP, NEW YORK,
TEAM LEADER

CITY OF THE RIVER

Smith's is a layered scheme intent on completing the Grand Rounds parkway system along the river. Though that parkway would be set back from the river on the west side, the riverway itself would become home to nine park "scenarios." The "New Islands" scenario at the northernmost city limits would excavate stormwater-cleansing potholes and use that earth to create islands in the river. "Domes and Silos" would repurpose industrial relics as indoor venues for installation art, extreme sports, and an ecological laboratory. "The Fields" would include trails and natural areas interwoven with orchards, native plant nurseries, crop fields, and a maple sugar bush. The tongue-in-cheek "Mussel/Muscle Beach" would carve into the landscape to make Boom Island Park into an island again, with the new channel supporting bivalve habitat, and it would create a beach on the Scherer site. The key feature of the downtown "Fishing the Falls" scenario is a long cantilevered bridge/pier just below Saint Anthony Falls that would "let you feel the spray." ●



PLAN

The Ken Smith Workshop team proposes nine park scenarios within a wider green corridor.

LEFT

A new backwater channel behind existing Boom Island Park creates wildlife habitat and secluded bays for boating.

IMAGE CREDITS

Courtesy Ken Smith Workshop team



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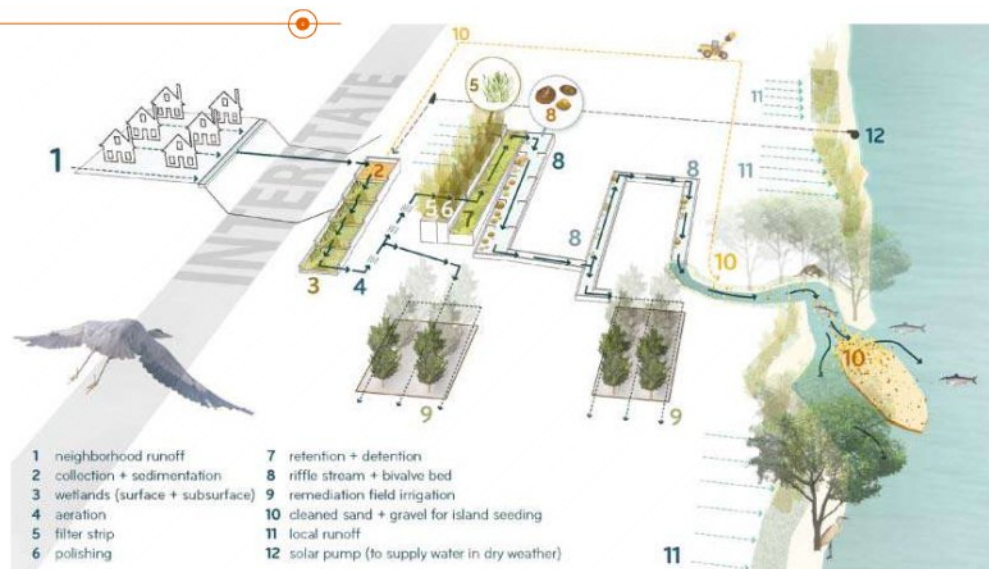
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STOSS LANDSCAPE URBANISM,
BOSTON, TEAM LEADER

STREAMLINES

Building on the idea that a river is actually a complex, braided landscape of ever-changing channels, the Stoss scheme looks to extend the Mississippi into the neighborhoods. This extension of the “social or civic floodplain” would be accomplished through new parks, forested fingers, and incubator areas for green industry. But before that, Stoss proposes to reclaim the river through custom-designed rowboats, barges repurposed as stages and floating swimming pools, and an art installation consisting of high-powered searchlights placed on both sides of the river. The scheme also proposes “botanic overlooks”: vegetated parks that feature hot tubs warmed by industrial waste heat. All the bridges that cross the river would be reconsidered—through upgrades or replacement—as public gathering spaces. New islands just north of downtown would be home to urban agriculture, and a major west side park would include water-cleansing mussel beds, sandbarlike promontories reaching into the river, and an “industrial cultural center.” ●



TOP

The Stoss team plan cleanses city stormwater with created wetlands and mussel beds.

RIGHT

Ideas ranging from a flotilla of custom rowboats to green fingers reaching into the surrounding neighborhoods would reclaim the river for the public.

INSET

All the bridges are redesigned as landmarks and gathering spaces.

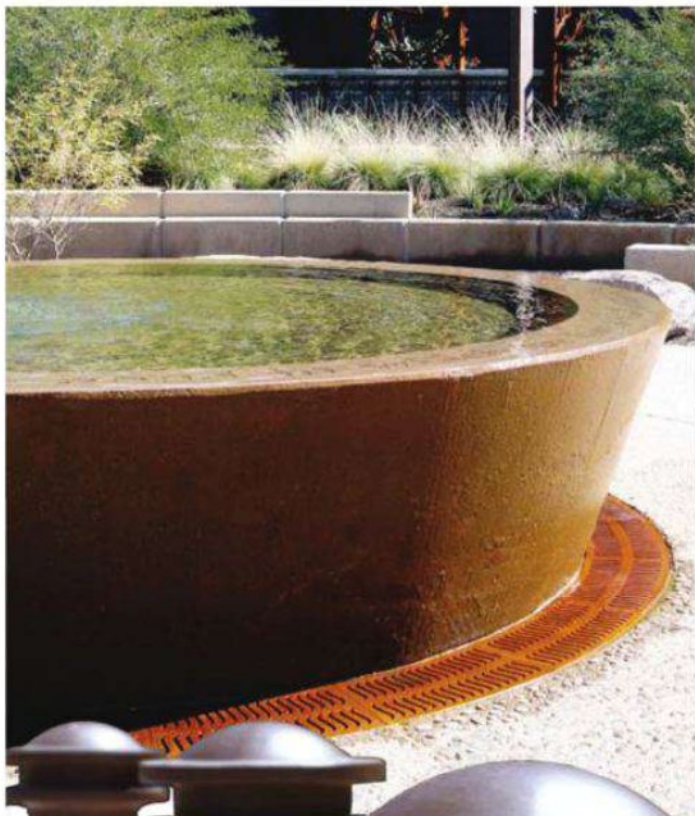
IMAGE CREDITS

Courtesy Stoss Landscape Urbanism team



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LEFT

Truck traffic along Route 1 can be loud, fast, and dirty, making its pedestrian lane unpleasant to use.

IMAGE CREDIT

Courtesy Gateway 1

A GROUP OF COMMUNITIES IN MAINE SHOWS ONE ROAD TO BETTER PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT.

BY LINDA MCINTYRE

Smart growth is not just for suburbia—it can be relevant to places far from the urban core. Many rural communities have recently seen large shifts in their populations and economic fortunes. Farm-based employment has been declining for decades, but development at the farthest edges of metropolitan regions has been growing fast. Small local governments don't always have the resources or experience to cope with the challenges presented by growth and demographic change, and local zoning ordinances and other regulations are not always coherent, making it hard to manage growth on a regional scale.

Maine, particularly along its Atlantic coast, is no stranger to these issues. Along Route 1, from Brunswick in the southern part of the state to Stockton

Springs on the central coast, residents of a string of picturesque New England communities vie for a piece of the road with vacationers, second-homeowners, and commuters to jobs in growing industries including defense, science and technology, education, and the arts. The road is a valued public resource and a spine for commerce and development. And in many of these communities, it's literally Main Street. But it's not an unalloyed benefit. There aren't many transit options here, so most people drive to get around. Heavy use of Route 1 and bottlenecks when it changes from four lanes to two means traffic often slows to a crawl, but on some stretches speeding is a problem. Trucks are loud, they spew sooty emissions, and they endanger cyclists and pedestrians.

But the people of these communities, with some help from state and federal agencies, are working toward a different future. The Gateway 1 Corridor Action Plan, an award-winning collaborative planning effort among a group of cities and towns along a 100-mile stretch of U.S. Route 1 in Maine, shows that rural areas can not only benefit from smart growth practices, they can also produce innovations that can inform the efforts of other regions.

It's hard for small towns to solve these kinds of problems in a comprehensive manner. The strong New England home rule tradition makes the ceding of any authority to outsiders, even in the next town over, difficult. Regional planning authorities here have some input when the state makes transportation and



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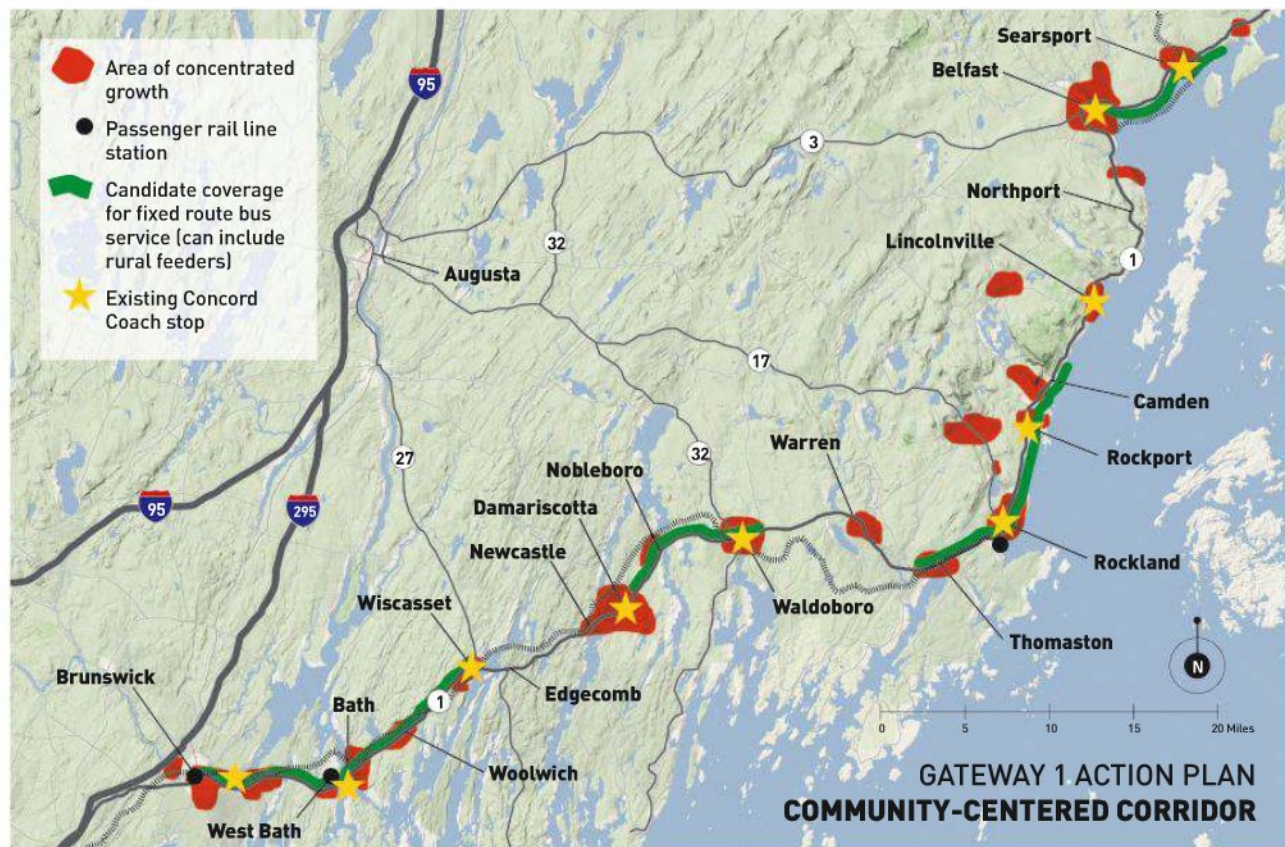
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ABOVE
The plan would promote concentrated development in core growth areas and improved transit access.

IMAGE CREDIT
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planning decisions, and they get small stipends from the state government, but they have no access to federal funds and compete with many other similar organizations for smaller state grants. Area residents want jobs and economic development, but they don't want to lose the character and history of their small cities, towns, and open spaces, or the continuity provided by the road that links them to their neighbors. Traditional road modernization approaches don't always work: Building bypasses breaks up this continuity, and it's disruptive and expensive. Widening roads often fails to move traffic more efficiently.

The disconnect between the perceptions of the government and the townspeople along Route 1 became painfully apparent to Maine's Department of Transportation (DOT) almost a decade ago. In 2002, DOT crews arrived in Warren to begin removing trees as part of an effort to pave shoulders and were shocked by what they found. "When we got to town after years of planning and design, and some outreach, people from the community showed up and literally chained themselves to trees,"

says Kat Beaudoin, who was at the time the DOT's assistant director of planning. "Sheriffs came with bucket trucks, cut people out of the trees, and hauled them to jail."

The magnitude of the protest effort caught the DOT off guard. "Just before the bulldozers showed up (to clear the trees), there was a little bit of controversy and blogging, but we thought, hey, we're just paving shoulders, not even widening the road, no big deal," says Beaudoin. "We had completely underestimated the town's sense of place." Twelve people were arrested in Warren, and not long afterward 200 people in Camden (which has a population of only about 5,200) protested removal of more than 150 trees for another shoulder-paving project.

Beaudoin and her colleagues knew the agency could not be effective in these circumstances. With support from the then-new administration of Governor John Baldacci (who retired in January after finishing his second term), they began meeting with leaders of communities along Route 1, asking them to

detail their difficulties with transportation and growth. That series of conversations made it clear to Beaudoin that there were a lot of shared problems, and that working together would probably make them easier to solve.

That notion was not immediately embraced. "The communities did not necessarily trust the DOT, and they didn't want the state to take over local decisions," says Beaudoin. "But they were intrigued that we were willing to facilitate a conversation, and by our insistence that we wanted *them* to design their future. The DOT had been reacting to growth and land-use decisions that the communities were making individually, and if they didn't like the way we were reacting, they needed to determine what kind of future they wanted to create."

Ordinary citizens acting as local representatives of communities along the corridor, not elected officials or planning professionals, drove this early exploratory stage of the project. Don White of Camden, for example, a retired sales and marketing executive who is now the unpaid chairman of

THE COMMUNITIES NEEDED TO DETERMINE WHAT KIND OF FUTURE THEY WANTED TO CREATE.

the project's implementation steering committee, got started when he saw an ad in the local paper by the local government seeking volunteers for a group to provide opinions on transportation and land use. He and about 17 neighbors served as Camden's response panel.

Participants from 20 cities and towns, all volunteers, identified common concerns, including the usual DOT suspects (traffic, speeding) as well as broader worries that the special character of the region was being lost through piecemeal design and land-use decisions. Many people also wanted to expand transit options, making it easier to choose not to drive. Trust began to develop among the participating communities as well as between the local representatives and the state government.

Solving a spate of problems along a 100-mile stretch of highway was going to be expensive, and even before the recession, funding was not easy to come by. The group decided the best option would be a collaborative planning process through which solutions could be implemented in phases. The

decision to embark on the process was formalized in a memorandum of understanding (MOU) in 2005, signed by representatives from all 20 municipalities. Each community would only have to choose a representative for a steering committee—it wouldn't cost anything to participate, and participants were not locked into any course of action.

Unusually, the state and federal agencies involved in the process—the Maine DOT, the state planning office, and the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA)—provided technical guidance and consultants but let local participants take the lead in setting goals and priorities. "Once the MOU was approved, we had a scope of work and engaged [the steering committee] in every detail of the planning process as if they were the executive team of an entity that called the shots," says Beaudoin. "It was a unique approach that gave them ownership."

The timing was fortunate, she says. Federal transportation programs were—under increasingly ambitious authorizing legislation including the Intermodal Surface Transportation

Efficiency Act (ISTEA, 1991) and its successors, the Transportation Equity Act (TEA-21, 1998) and the Safe, Accountable, Flexible, Efficient Transportation Equity Act: A Legacy for Users (SAFETEA-LU, 2005)—ramping up funding of holistic and context-sensitive approaches, and the state commissioner of transportation had been a regional planner and had a solid understanding of economic and community development. Jonathan McDade, the Maine administrator of the FHWA, says that Beaudoin's background in land use as well as transportation planning—she became the Maine DOT's chief planner during the process but recently moved to the private sector—was also useful, helping professionals from each discipline get a better sense of the big picture.

As the process of gathering data and looking at various scenarios for economic development and growth progressed, it became apparent that a transit-oriented corridor (TOC) pattern of development—a mainstream planning approach based on compact, focused growth with a mix of uses and multiple modes of transportation—



LEFT

Residents hashed out issues at community meetings all along the corridor.

RIGHT

The plan would preserve more rural land than the current low-density approach used in the region.

IMAGE CREDITS

Courtesy Maine Department of Transportation



could achieve many of the group's aims. But it would be a big shift from existing policies, which favor (and in some cases require) low-density development. A TOC-based approach would channel residential development into narrowly targeted areas, requiring significant changes in existing local land use and stormwater management regulations, affordable housing policies, and public opinion. So the team settled on a middle-ground approach they dubbed a "community-centered corridor."

Like the TOC pattern, the plan would direct residential and commercial development to 81 compact areas identified by the communities and selected for growth based on their expansion capacity. That would be determined by availability of water and sewer services, location outside a floodplain, and similar factors. But each core area would be relatively small, typically less than 100 acres, in keeping with traditional New England village patterns, and they would be separated by stretches of rural land.

The community corridor approach would concentrate housing in these

core areas at a rate that's half that of a TOC approach, yet twice that under the current low-density pattern (about 8,000 total new dwelling units over the next 25 years, versus 16,000 under TOC and 4,000 under current low-density regulations). Planners estimate the core growth areas would be able to accommodate about 18,000 new jobs in total. Rural land would still be available for development under a community corridor approach, but the plan encourages the adoption of land-use ordinances that reduce the footprint of this development by promoting infill beyond the main roadways and less shallow commercial "strip" development tightly hugging Route 1. Vehicle miles traveled would remain about the same, but traffic-calming measures envisioned in the plan would reduce speeds, which would allow cars to move in more tightly spaced clusters and increase road capacity. Improvements to other roads would reduce volumes on Route 1. More dense development and improvements such as trails and sidewalks would mean more walkable and bikeable trips.

The Gateway 1 Corridor Action Plan was endorsed unanimously by the volunteer local representatives in 2009. Now most of those communities are working toward formal adoption of the plan by their respective local governments. This requires legislative action—approval by a town or city council or in a town meeting, depending on the form of local government—and whether that happens will in large part depend on whether the volunteers who devoted so much time to the project can persuade their neighbors to support it.

In 2010 the DOT gave 16 participating communities about \$30,000 each to lay the groundwork for formal adoption with planning and feasibility studies. Those that adopt the plan commit to amending their zoning ordinances and taking other steps necessary to bring their land-use policies in line with the plan's goals; the DOT has pledged \$1.3 million to help with this implementation. As expected, this phase is challenging in the face of leadership changes and the pressure of other priorities. But any of those communities that has

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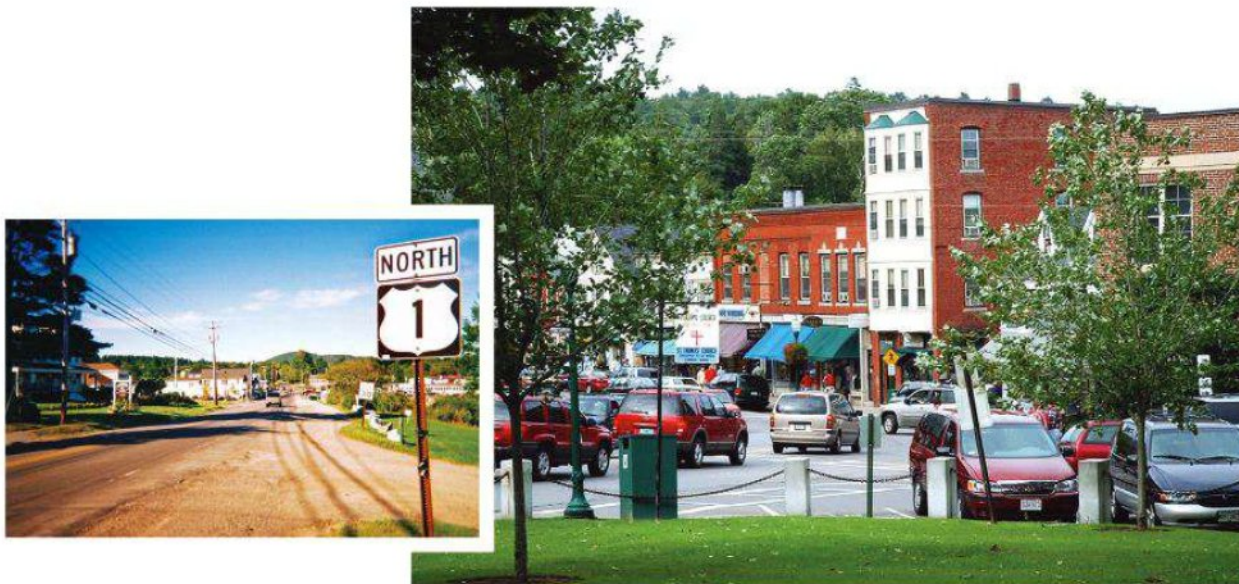
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**LANDSCAPE
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RIGHT

Camden would see more infill development under the Gateway 1 plan.

INSET

Lincolntonville, nestled among hills, is a popular recreation destination for residents and tourists.

IMAGE CREDITS

Courtesy Maine Department of Transportation

stopped participating in the project can rejoin again at any time, says project administrator Stacy Benjamin.

The Gateway 1 project, which won an EPA Smart Growth award in 2010, has attracted a lot of attention. Some of this attention has come from skeptics of government, including people affiliated with the Tea Party political movement, who see planning and zoning regulations as efforts to weaken individual property rights. Some have even suggested the Gateway 1 project is part of an antiproperty conspiracy led by the United Nations. *The Forecaster*, a local newspaper, reported that at a public meeting of the steering committee in November, Rockland resident Ted Cowan told attendees that “beneath a facade of laudable objectives...you are in the process of implementing rather radical, unpopular, socialist central planning directives.”

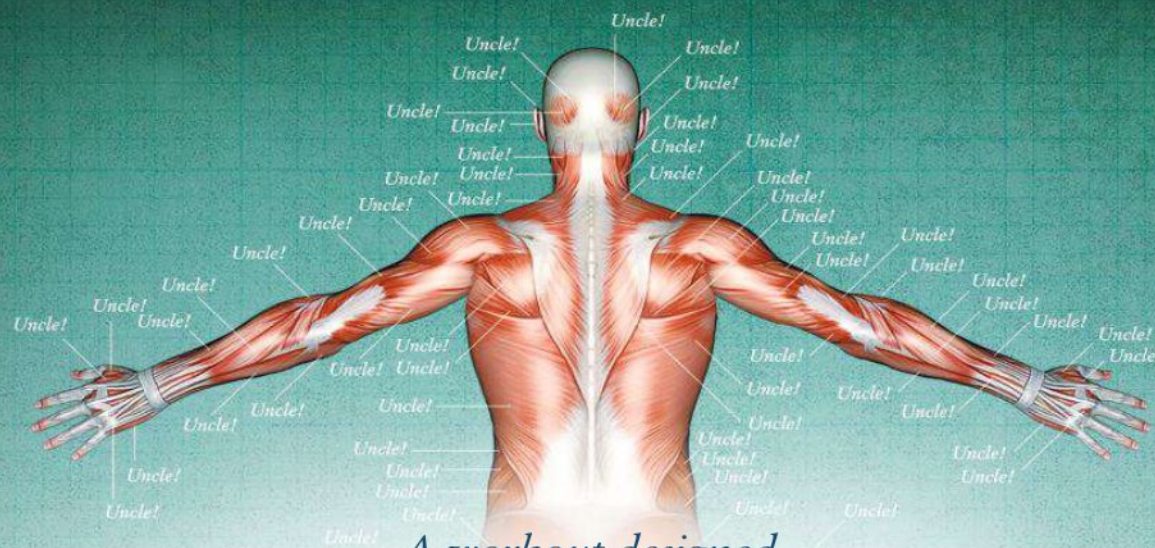
To some extent, the fears are understandable. “People have thought of Route 1 as something that’s free,” says Jim Upham, the planning director of Bath. “Congestion and sprawl happen

slowly. We’re planning for 25 to 30 years into the future, and it’s hard for people to envision how much worse it will be if we don’t do something now.” The collaborative nature of the project also, for some, represents an infringement of private property rights, which many here hold sacred. “Some counties here have no zoning or land-use regulations, and the people who live there don’t want any,” says Upham.

But progress continues. As of late February, 13 of the original 20 communities were still working toward formal approval, and it had already been secured by two—Rockland and Brunswick. If at least 12 communities adopt the plan—the goal is for this to happen by July 1—the next step is the formation of a coalition with 501(c)(3) nonprofit tax status. This would allow the coalition to function as a municipal planning organization and bid for funding from federal agencies. The spadework the group has already done could also, says McDade, help the coalition make an effective case for federal dollars even as budgets tighten and competition for scarce funds intensifies.

The citizen-driven forms of local government in this part of the world make the outcome, especially in communities governed by town meetings, hard to predict. White says he has not heard of any community deciding to vote against the plan, and he believes some of the five communities that dropped out of the voluntary planning process will eventually decide to participate again (the incentives for local government participation if the action plan is formally adopted, including a greater role in allocating funding for improvements along the corridor, are compelling). “A lot depends on how much more education the reps can do over the next few months,” says Benjamin. “That’s the thing about town meetings. So much depends on who shows up, how much they understand, what their neighbors think. If 12 towns vote yes, it will be a huge accomplishment on the part of the reps.” ●

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EXPORT CONTROL



HOW TO TAKE LINE WORK FROM SKETCHUP INTO AUTOCAD.

BY DANIEL TAL, ASLA

ABOVE
A rendered SketchUp model of a park can be converted and exported to AutoCAD.

INSET
In AutoCAD, the SketchUp components become AutoCAD blocks and layer names and states are maintained.

IMAGE CREDITS
Daniel Tal, ASLA

Many landscape architects have embraced Google SketchUp as a tool for 3-D modeling. But when it comes to making 2-D construction drawings, AutoCAD is king. More and more landscape architects are now working between these two programs.

As your design progresses in 3-D, you change spaces, you move trees and amenities, and you add details. Your CAD base will need to be altered to reflect these changes. But going from SketchUp to AutoCAD can be frustrating and time consuming. Often, the person making the updates eyeballs the 3-D model and translates information manually, as it was at the drafting tables of yesterday. Design features like complex steps, walls, and fountains may be difficult to translate into AutoCAD this way, and with complicated plans there is a greater likelihood that something will be missed.

Many SketchUp users are unaware that you can convey line work, blocks, and layers from SketchUp to AutoCAD. It is possible to bring your SketchUp model back into AutoCAD

and use it as a direct digital reference to update designs. If you plan ahead, you may even do your initial drafting in SketchUp and use the imported SketchUp file as the CAD base. Three-dimensional SketchUp models can also be used to create elevations and 3-D details that can add clarity to construction documents.

The Basics

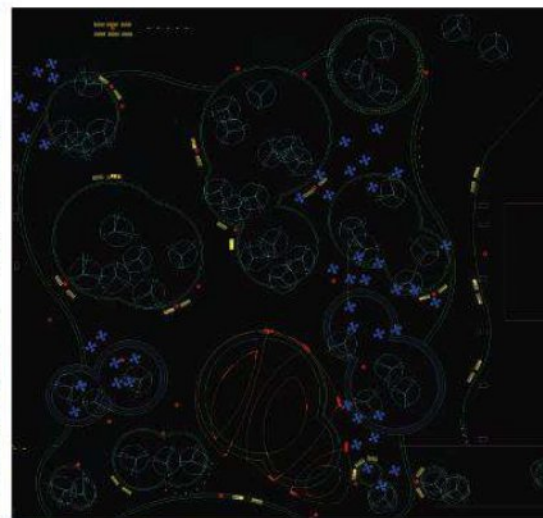
Let's start with the basics. To convert SketchUp files to DWGs, the native file format for AutoCAD, you must have Google SketchUp Pro (\$495 per seat). Unfortunately, the free version of SketchUp does not and never did have the ability to export to CAD. It used to be able to import DWG files, but this feature is no longer available in the most recent releases, SketchUp 7.1 and SketchUp 8. If you want to experiment with this process without purchasing SketchUp Pro, there is an evaluation version of the software that can be downloaded at www.sketchup.com.

To export DWGs from SketchUp, open the document you wish to convert in SketchUp and go to the File

menu. From there choose File → Export → Graphics, and you will see several options for exporting your model. Two of those options are relevant here: 2D Model or 3D Model. Both options allow you to export the model as a DWG.

The option 2D Model → Export DWG will export a 2-D snapshot of the current SketchUp view similar to a screen capture. A file exported in 2-D may be a plan or an axonometric view, but either way, it has no dimension; all of its lines are on a single plane. It is possible to take 2-D snapshots of a plan. However, this option will not export SketchUp layers and components (the equivalent to blocks in AutoCAD). Also, detailed components, like 3-D trees, require the export function to process every leaf and twig. The export will work but it might take a considerable amount of time to process. Exporting a 2-D snapshot can be useful, however, for creating elevations and 3-D details.

A SketchUp model exported as a 3-D DWG retains all layers and all 3-D extruded volumes. SketchUp components transform into AutoCAD blocks.





The Wait is Over

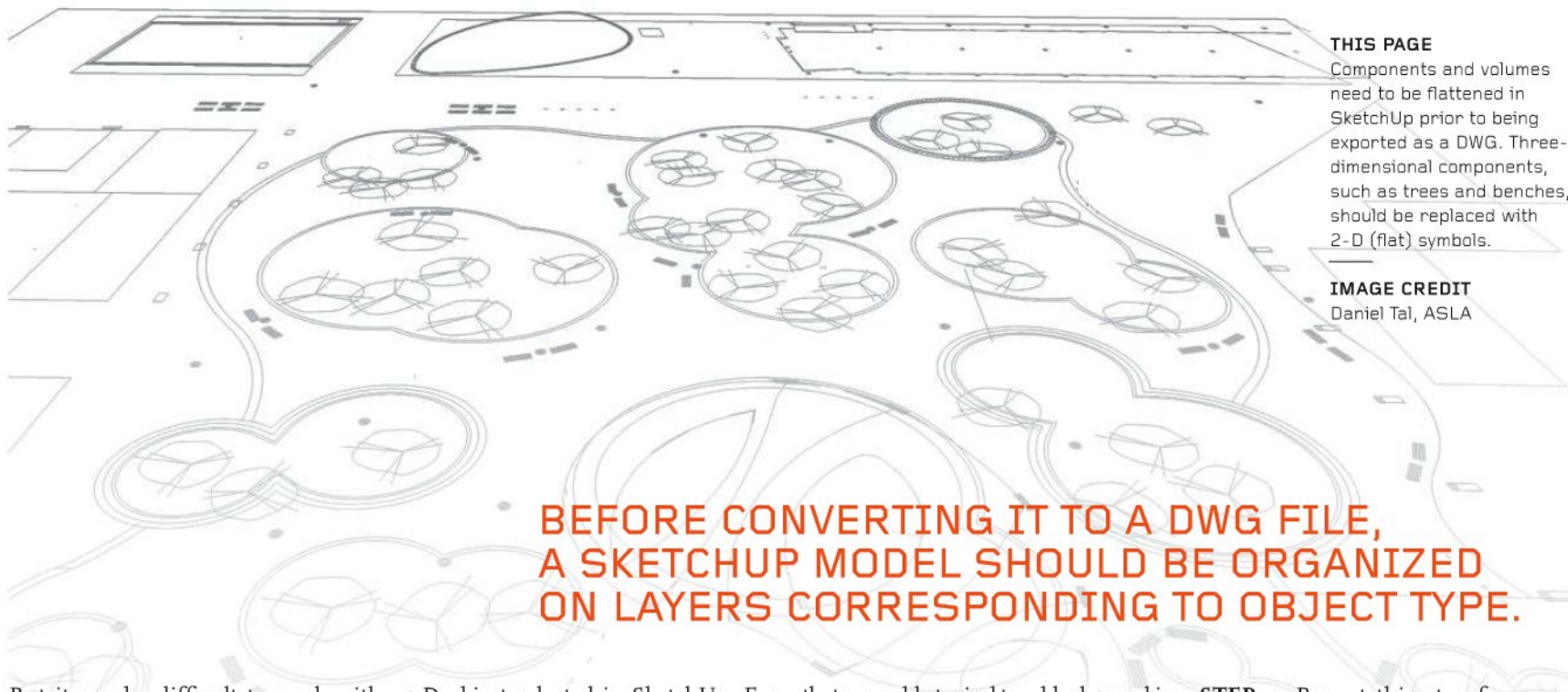
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THIS PAGE

Components and volumes need to be flattened in SketchUp prior to being exported as a DWG. Three-dimensional components, such as trees and benches, should be replaced with 2-D (flat) symbols.

IMAGE CREDIT

Daniel Tal, ASLA

BEFORE CONVERTING IT TO A DWG FILE, A SKETCHUP MODEL SHOULD BE ORGANIZED ON LAYERS CORRESPONDING TO OBJECT TYPE.

But it can be difficult to work with a fully articulated 3-D model from SketchUp when you are creating plans in CAD. There is simply too much information. The SketchUp model geometry and extruded volumes make it hard to open, navigate, and use the file in AutoCAD. The 3-D DWG export can still be very useful, though, if you follow the process I lay out below.

Before you begin, a well-organized model is strongly recommended. As you draw in SketchUp, component objects and amenities must be organized on layers corresponding to the object type: trees on tree layers, benches on bench layers, pedestrian lights on pedestrian light layers, and so on. Simply put, the layer structure in SketchUp should closely resemble the layer structure your office uses for AutoCAD drawings. Additionally, components should be segregated from other line work, and it is important that the model is precisely drafted.

To convert a SketchUp model to 2-D line work you will need to install a tool called Flatten. Flatten is a Ruby script, a custom tool not available in the native version of SketchUp. The tool simply flattens any

3-D object selected in SketchUp. For example, a 3-D wall will become 2-D line work once the tool is applied to it. The simpler the volumes, the quicker and more accurately the Flatten script functions. It is not recommended for use on any object that includes a component or group or overly complex geometry.

The Flatten Ruby must be purchased, downloaded, and installed in SketchUp before you begin. The Flatten tool can be purchased for \$10 at www.smustard.com (Google search “Smustard Flatten” and select the top result). Installing Ruby scripts is relatively easy, and plenty of documentation is available at Google SketchUp’s web site (Google Search “SketchUp installing Ruby scripts” and select the top result).

Preparing the Site Plan

STEP 1: Unfortunately, the Flatten Ruby does not work on 3-D components. It will cause the selected component to explode and lose its definition or it might not work at all. So before you use this tool, begin by manually flattening all 3-D components to create 2-D components. For example, 3-D trees should be replaced and converted into 2-D versions

that resemble typical tree blocks used in site plans. Creating these 2-D symbols is easy. Some can be found online at 3D Warehouse, a massive free repository of SketchUp components (Google search “3D Warehouse”). Another option is to copy the component you want to flatten, explode it so it contains no groups or components, then use the Flatten script on the loose geometry. You can then convert the flattened lines into a 2-D component.

STEP 2: Once you’ve imported or created the 2-D component symbol you want to use into SketchUp, select the symbol and go to Edit→Copy. Next, select the corresponding 3-D component you would like to replace with this symbol, right click on it, and select Edit Component. Select all the lines and faces within the component editor and delete them.

STEP 3: Without exiting the component editor (called the component instance), go to Edit→Paste. The 2-D symbol will appear. Position the 2-D symbol in the correct location within the component editor. Done correctly, every instance of that component will be updated with a 2-D version instantaneously.

STEP 4: Repeat this step for every component in the model until all 3-D components have a 2-D symbol in their place. Make sure all 2-D symbols are situated on their proper layers. If you have complicated buildings and structures, delete these. If you want to retain a building footprint on the horizontal plane, draft an outline of the building.

STEP 5: Now, turn off all the component layers. (As mentioned above, components should have been put on different layers than your other line work as you drafted the model). Select the remaining site plan geometry (lines and edges) in the model. This may include flatwork, walls, steps, roads, trails, and curbs. Go to the SketchUp Plugins menu and select Flatten 2D. All volume will be removed from the model, and what remains is a 2-D plan. In many cases, some of the faces will be deleted, which is fine. The Flatten Ruby causes all the selected volumes to be truly flat; they have no Z value.

STEP 6: Turn all the layers back on. What is visible should resemble a 2-D AutoCAD site plan complete with blocks defining site amenities.



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LEARNING HOW TO CONVEY SKETCHUP MODELS INTO AUTOCAD CAN CHANGE THE WAY LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTS DESIGN PROJECTS.

TOP

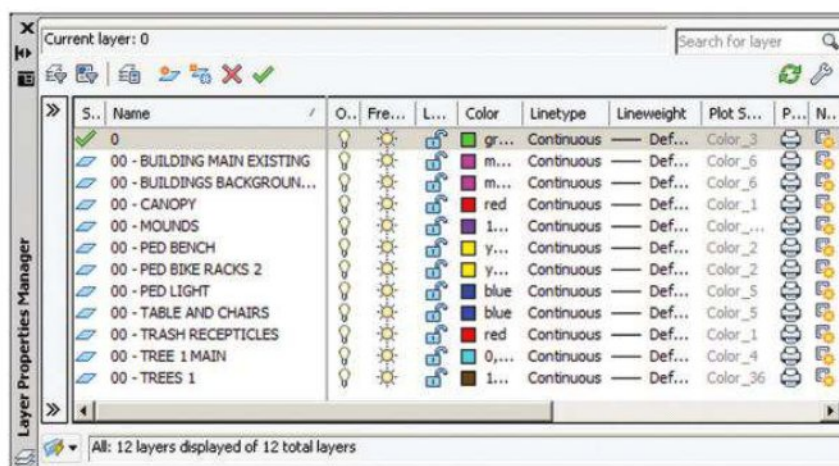
True elevation views can be set up in SketchUp (top panel). These views, exported using the 2-D DWG export function, result in flat DWG representations composed of AutoCAD lines (bottom panel).

BOTTOM

Layer names, layer states, and information on those layers will be preserved in AutoCAD once exported from SketchUp using the 3-D Model export function.

IMAGE CREDITS

Daniel Tal, ASLA



STEP 7: Go to the Camera drop-down menu and select Parallel Projection to remove perspective from the model.

STEP 8: Go to View → Toolbars → Views to activate the Views menu. From the Views menu select Top. SketchUp will adjust the view to a true 2-D plan view. Save the scene (Window → Scenes and hit the Add button) and save the file. When exporting from SketchUp, the

exact view is retained. Steps 7 and 8 ensure that the exported SketchUp model opens up in AutoCAD as a true plan view.

STEP 9: You are finally ready to export your model. Go to File → Export and select 3D Model. From the drop-down menu under Export Type, select DWG. Prior to exporting select OPTIONS at the bottom right and ensure the export

is set to the compatible version of AutoCAD. In the same options menu, next to AutoCAD version, make sure Edges is the only box checked. Exporting faces or other items is not required and might mess up the model in AutoCAD.

Select OK and SketchUp will indicate the export is complete and ready to be opened in AutoCAD.

What is visible is a 2-D flat AutoCAD file and associated line work. Selecting a tree or other symbol will show it's still a defined block. Opening up the layer menu will display the corresponding layers. Turning off or freezing layers will toggle off the associated blocks on those layers.

Updating AutoCAD

There are two ways to incorporate the exported SketchUp base with an existing AutoCAD base file. The first is to XREF the exported SketchUp DWG into the AutoCAD base plan. The SketchUp plan becomes a template to draft changes and updates into the AutoCAD site base. Using the plan as an XREF prevents the merging of line work and objects. Since the exported SketchUp file has no depth or elevation, snapping drafting lines or copying lines directly into the base plan is viable. In addition, the XREF file can have layers turned on or off, making it easier to identify lines and details.

The second option is to directly integrate the SketchUp export into AutoCAD. The best way to accomplish this is to XREF → Bind → Insert the file (these options are in the AutoCAD XREF menu). The SketchUp export DWG will be a block in the base plan. To fully integrate the file, the SketchUp export needs to be exploded. However, using it as a block is similar to the XREF method: The SketchUp DWG can be evaluated against the original base plan. If it is deemed useful, exploding the file will merge it with the site base file. Once exploded, all layers are retained, providing full control of line work and blocks.

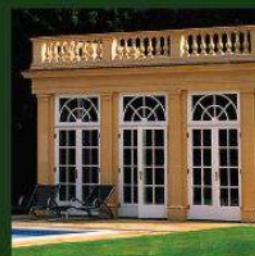
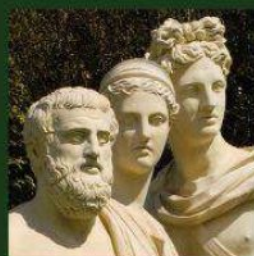
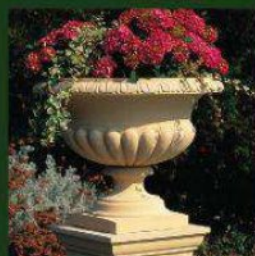
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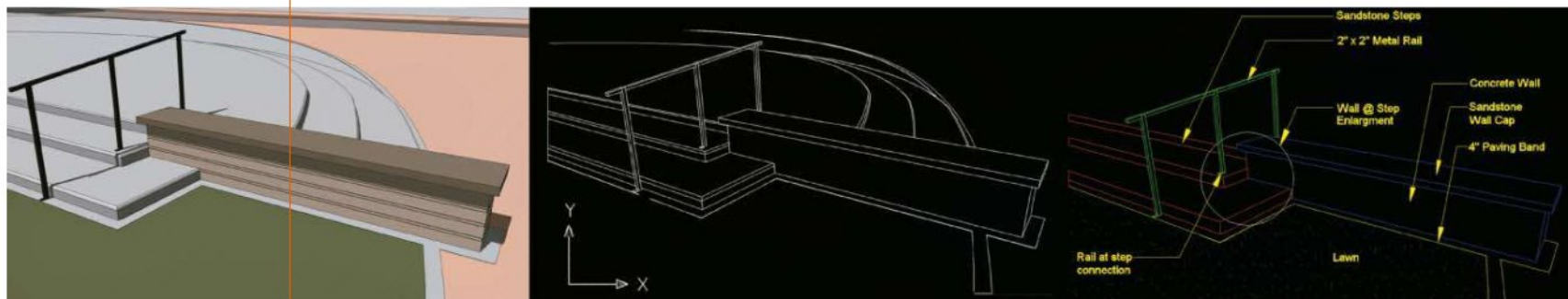
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ABOVE

The 2-D DWG export function takes snapshots of any location and perspective in SketchUp (panel 1). The result is exported line work in CAD (panel 2) that can be adjusted and annotated (panel 3).

IMAGE CREDIT

Daniel Tal, ASLA

TIPS AND TROUBLESHOOTING

HERE ARE SOME TIPS TO ENSURE THE PROCESS WORKS CORRECTLY.

- The Flatten Ruby will not work on 3-D components or groups. It will cause the selected component to explode and lose its definition, or it might not work at all. Flatten works only on loose geometry.
- Before exporting a 3-D model DWG, make sure there are no 3-D volumes or aspects to the site plan. Any 3-D volume will export into AutoCAD and interfere with drafting.
- Occasionally, arcs do not translate properly when a SketchUp file is converted into AutoCAD. Usually it is a simple fix. In AutoCAD, ensure that the View Resolution (View Res command) is set to 5,000 or greater to smooth out the appearance of arcs. In some cases, there is a random bug that will cause arcs to be segmented when imported into CAD.
- Layer colors in SketchUp can be translated into AutoCAD with the 3-D export option. It is possible to adjust the colors of layers in SketchUp to match your line weight definitions in AutoCAD. In the SketchUp Layers menu, select the color swatch next to a layer name to edit a color.
- When creating 3-D details and elevations, you will need to hide and adjust lines in the model. Holding Shift while using the Eraser Tools hides lines instead of deleting them. •

2-D DWG Snapshots for Elevations and 3-D details

SketchUp models can be further leveraged to generate AutoCAD elevations or 3-D details. Exporting 2-D DWG snapshots can be useful to help show how amenities, flatwork, and objects relate and connect. And unlike images, 2-D DWG snapshots can be dimensioned in CAD.

The process to produce snapshots is simple. Focus on any part of the model. Pick a location that would be useful to show a connection, scale, height, or important relationship. Go to File→Export and select Graphic→2D Model. From the pull-down menu (under Type) select DWG. Under OPTIONS, select the compatible version of CAD but leave all other options as they are and hit OK.

Open the exported DWG file in AutoCAD. What is created is a 2-D representation of a 3-D model, and the line work can be selected and adjusted.

It is possible to create true elevations with this method. Change the Camera view from Perspective to Parallel Projection and select an elevation view in SketchUp using the View tool (View→Toolbars→Views; Front, Right, Back, Left), zoom in or out on the area of focus, and export as a DWG. Open the exported file in CAD. The result is a true elevation in AutoCAD.

Prior to export it is strongly recommended that any 3-D vegetation be replaced with 2-D Face Me components. These are components that stand vertical but possess a single face that represents the vegetation. When you orbit your camera view in SketchUp, these 2-D Face Me components rotate to face the camera. Trying to export highly detailed components (like 3-D trees and shrubs) will take the better part of eternity.

The process in this article is not restricted to AutoCAD. DWG file extensions are readily compatible with other CAD software including Vectorworks and DynaSCAPE, not to mention Adobe Illustrator. These other programs will be able to import and display exported SketchUp DWG line work and keep layer and block definitions.

Familiarity with this process could change the way landscape architects design certain projects. Instead of being restricted to designing in plan view, initial site concepts could be created as 3-D models in SketchUp, then imported into other software for construction drawings. Though one hopes that future iterations of SketchUp make this process easier. •

DANIEL TAL, ASLA, IS THE AUTHOR OF *GOOGLE SKETCHUP FOR SITE DESIGN*. PLEASE E-MAIL DANIEL WITH COMMENTS AND QUESTIONS AT AMBIT3D@GMAIL.COM. INTERESTED IN A PARTICULAR TOPIC RELATED TO 3-D MODELING? PLEASE LET US KNOW.



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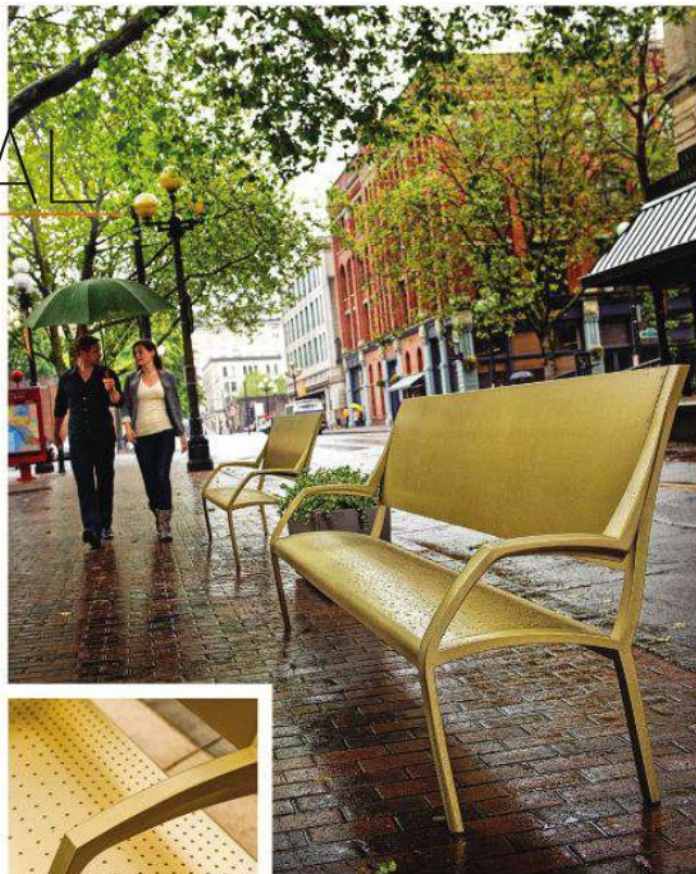
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FUNCTIONAL FRILLS

BY LISA SPECKHARDT

PRACTICAL STYLE

Benches, tables, bike racks, shade structures, and fans in public spaces can be functional or they can be stylish—but in the best cases they're both. Fresh furnishings can set off a stunning site design. The Maggie bench and Charlie table from Landscape Forms were originally designed for Chicago's Millennium Park by landscape architecture firm Gustafson Guthrie Nichol. A sleek addition to outdoor fans comes from the Big Ass Fan Company, which recently introduced its Isis series. The super-sized Bahama Magnum umbrella from Bahama Umbrellas can provide shelter for up to 100 people. And DuMor's 199 series leaf-inspired bike rack (shown in Hunter Green) reminds riders that they're reducing their carbon footprint when they ride instead of drive.



LANDSCAPE FORMS MAGGIE BENCH

The perforated steel seat and back panels of the Maggie bench from Landscape Forms prevent rainwater from puddling and allow air to flow through. Gustafson Guthrie Nichol designed the Maggie bench in 78-inch and 102-inch lengths. Optional contoured cast-aluminum seat dividers provide personal space while discouraging skateboarders. The bench can be freestanding or surface mounted. Landscape Forms' proprietary powder coat resists rust, chipping, peeling, and fading and is lead free.

FOR MORE INFORMATION, VISIT WWW.LANDSCAPEFORMS.COM.

IMAGE CREDIT

Courtesy Landscape Forms



LANDSCAPE FORMS CHARLIE TABLE

The Charlie table from Landscape Forms was also designed by Gustafson Guthrie Nichol. Its oval form comfortably seats up to six people on two benches and encourages socializing as sitters face each other directly across the table. The 67-inch steel tabletop is supported by ribbonlike steel legs that are surface mounted. An offset umbrella hole can be specified.

FOR MORE INFORMATION, VISIT WWW.LANDSCAPEFORMS.COM.

IMAGE CREDIT

Courtesy Landscape Forms



BIG ASS FANS ISIS SERIES

Big Ass Fans, the designer of large-diameter, low-speed fans, introduces its Isis outdoor series, featuring the ceiling-mounted Isis for covered areas and Isis-on-a-Stick for ceilingless spaces. The Isis series is engineered, precision balanced, and hand built with aircraft-grade aluminum and industrial components. The fans' sweeping airfoil blades, shaped like aircraft wings, revolve slowly, delivering breezy comfort while deflecting airborne insects. The ceiling-mounted Isis is available in diameters of eight, nine, and 10 feet and weighs less than 100 pounds. Isis-on-a-Stick incorporates a powder-coated 10-foot steel pole and mounting structure while the patented winglet and airfoil design spans 10 feet in diameter. Both members of the new outdoor series are safe to use in wet locations and can extend the availability of patios and outdoor spaces on even the hottest days.

FOR MORE INFORMATION, VISIT
WWW.BIGASSFANS.COM.

IMAGE CREDIT

Big Ass Fan Company

DUMOR 199 SERIES BIKE RACK

This single-loop bike rack with its leaflike design is constructed entirely of steel for sturdiness. It is available in any of DuMor's standard powder coat colors. The rack is about 32 inches tall and 25 inches wide and can be surface mounted. It weighs 19 pounds.

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IMAGE CREDIT

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FOR MORE INFORMATION, VISIT
WWW.BAHAMAUMBRELLA.COM.

IMAGE CREDIT

Courtesy Bahama Umbrella

PALMY WEATHER

**A FAMILY COMPOUND BY
THE BEACH HAS A NEW
CANOPY OF FRONDS.**

BY BILL MARKEN, HONORARY ASLA



ABOVE

Offset panels of recycled concrete wend their way from the entry between the guesthouse (center) and studio (right) through a palm-shadowed courtyard. The multitrunk specimen on the left is a queen palm; on the right is a smaller butterfly palm.

IMAGE CREDIT

Jim Bartsch

Before Keith LeBlanc, ASLA, started to work on this California project, even before his clients bought the house, he walked the beach past it a number of times. He admired the low-slung, redwood-clad architecture, its 1970s-style mellowness contrasting with the eclectic lineup of neighboring homes squeezed together on a lovely white sand strand of oceanfront just east of Santa Barbara. Not long after, the clients told him, “We bought a house you will love. It’s not exactly our style, but it has a lawn for our kids, and we hope you can make the place better for us.”

Their new house was the same one LeBlanc had admired, and “make the place better” for a family with five young children is what he did. His landscape design created a Hawaii-like family compound—while also celebrating the iconic modernist architecture, heightening the experience of the exquisite natural setting, and adding a needed note of contemporary environmental stewardship to the site.

LeBlanc comes originally from Louisiana, which he says gives him a feeling for tropical gardens, and is now based in

Boston. In a rare bicoastal double play, he won two ASLA Professional Awards in 2010. Both his winning landscapes—one on Cape Cod as well as this one in Southern California—are comfortable and livable, but they also sensitively fit into their spectacular settings.

The California property is 1.7 acres, long and narrow as is typical for a beach lot, but with an almost unheard-of 150 feet of sandy beachfront. The original owner and designer of the house and garden was Sherill Broudy, a regionally influential architect,

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THE SITE'S MODERNIST PAST INFORMED LEBLANC'S DESIGN, ALTHOUGH HE SAYS THE ORIGINAL BROUDY DESIGN WAS NOT A DIRECT INFLUENCE.

ABOVE

Glass doors from the studio open to a viewing garden backdropped by a fence of recycled redwood and translucent glass panels. Border plants include purple heart, silver plectranthus, baby's tears, and other ground covers.

IMAGE CREDIT

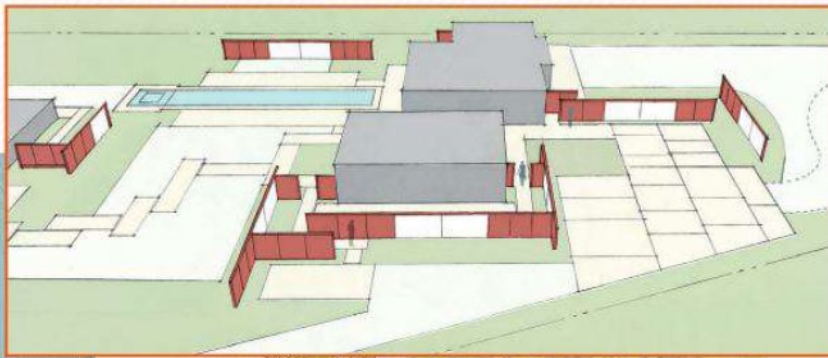
Jim Bartsch

sculptor, ceramicist, and wood-carver who teamed up with noted Los Angeles midcentury designers Jerome and Evelyn Ackerman, and later went on to form his own modern design firm. Around the neighborhood, Broudy was known mostly for his yard full of startling, oversized modern sculptures that were visible from the road.

The site's modernist past informed LeBlanc's design, although he says the original Broudy design was not a direct influence on his design. "But given that we reused most of the original materials, we were certainly in keeping with the DNA of the original design," he says. "The architecture is strikingly simple and bold, and we knew from

the beginning that small terraces or fussy paving patterns would look weak against this architecture."

When LeBlanc began working with the new owners in 2006, what he had to start with was a 25-year-old mature and overgrown landscape with a long asphalt driveway, an aging miscellaneous collection of fruit trees in the front, too expansive paving in a central courtyard between the guesthouse/garage and main house, and, in the back, a beautifully sited terrace almost touching the sand.



SITE PLAN

- 1 REINFORCED LAWN DRIVEWAY
- 2 PLAY LAWN
- 3 GLASS AND REDWOOD PANELS
- 4 PARKING COURT
- 5 VIEWING GARDEN
- 6 STUDIO
- 7 GUEST HOUSE
- 8 POOL AND SPA
- 9 CENTRAL COURTYARD
- 10 MAIN HOUSE
- 11 EAST DRIVEWAY STAIRS
- 12 EAST DRIVEWAY
- 13 ROOF GARDEN TERRACE
- 14 OCEANSIDE TERRACE



RENDERING

Fences partition the center of the property, including the guesthouse (top) and the studio (lower).

PLAN

From the property's gate (at right), the drive leads to the parking court and the entry to the central courtyard, the main house, and the beachfront terrace.

AERIAL

Heavy planting along the property lines gives privacy to the long, narrow lot. A deep front garden reduces the sound and impact of the nearby road and highway.

IMAGE CREDITS

Courtesy Keith LeBlanc
Landscape Architecture





ABOVE

The pool's stone coping and redwood decking match the basic materials used in the modernist architecture. Recycled glass tile adds a shimmering blue at the waterline.

RIGHT

A beachfront terrace off the main living area of the house includes a pad for casual dining. Masses of purple sea statice and a row of 'Dark Delight' New Zealand flax lend color without cutting into the ocean view.

IMAGE CREDITS

Jim Bartsch



To create more family-friendly spaces with a sense of privacy, LeBlanc added kentia palms (*Howeia forsteriana*), lady palms (*Rhapis excelsa*), philodendron (*Philodendron selloum*), and black bamboo (*Phyllostachys nigra*) to fill out the existing palms and avocados along the property lines. For child safety, he partitioned the property into zones that separate toddlers from cars. A redwood and glass fence now separates a new play lawn (in place of the crowded orchard) from a new parking court in front of the guesthouse.

A forbidding stretch of paving between the guesthouse and main house was replaced by a lush central courtyard. Concrete pavers, recycled from the torn-up pavement, meander across a lawn on the way to the front door. A medley of elegant palms powerfully evokes the tropics and provides light shade. Queen palms (*Syagrus romanzoffiana*) were handpicked at a local nursery for their uncommon multiple trunks. A large, octopuslike multitrunk butterfly palm (*Dypsis lutescens*) is a singular eye-catcher. Smaller palms in-

clude kentia and pygmy date palms (*Phoenix roebelenii*).

The swimming pool remains in the same central area but was resurfaced and lengthened by about 10 feet to hold a new spa at the ocean end. For the pool area, LeBlanc called on some of the same basic materials used on the house, including redwood, stone, and glass. A monolithic stone coping surrounds the pool, and a freestanding deck provides lounging space out of the ocean breezes. Above and below the pool's waterline,

PLANT LIST

TREES

Archontophoenix alexandrae (King palm)
Howeia forsteriana (Kentia palm)
Syagrus romanzoffiana (Queen palm)

SHRUBS

Abutilon x hybridum 'Albus' (White flowering maple)
Agave attenuata (Fox tail agave)
Cordyline australis 'Red Star' (Red grass palm)
Cycas revoluta (Sago palm)
Cyperus papyrus (Papyrus)
Dicksonia antarctica (Tasmanian tree fern)
Doryanthes palmeri (Spear lily)
Fatsia japonica (Japanese aralia)
Grevillea 'Long John' (Long John grevillea)
Philodendron selloum (Split leaf philodendron)
Philodendron 'Xanadu' (Xanadu philodendron)
Phoenix roebelenii (Pygmy date palm)
Phormium tenax 'Dark Delight' (Dark Delight flax)
Rhapis excelsa (Lady palm)
Strelitzia reginae (Bird-of-paradise)
Zamia furfuracea (Cardboard palm)

PERENNIALS, VINES, AND GROUND COVER

Anigozanthos 'Orange Cross' (Orange kangaroo paw)
Aspidistra elatior (Cast-iron plant)
Clivia miniata (Orange clivia)
Farfugium japonicum 'Gigantea' (Giant leopard plant)
Lantana montevidensis 'Alba' (White lantana)
Limonium latifolium (Sea statice)
Plectranthus argentatus (Silver plectranthus)
Sedum spp. (Mixed sedum)
Tradescantia pallida 'Purple Heart' (Purple heart)
Woodwardia fimbriata (Giant chainfern)



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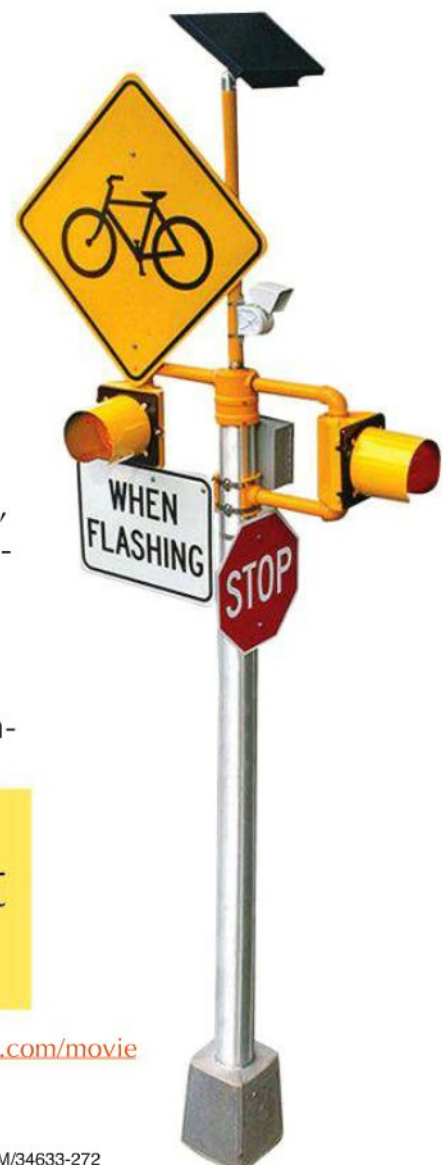
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**SO CLOSE TO THE BEACH,
A MAJOR CHALLENGE WAS TO
REDUCE RUNOFF FROM ALL THE
IMPERVIOUS SURFACES.**



ABOVE

Along the east side of the property, a reinforced lawn drive leads all the way to the beach—handy for maintenance vehicles or for hauling surfboards and other beach equipment.

RIGHT

The view from the parking court shows the front garden, screened from the road with plantings, and shaded by large date palms and eucalyptus existing on the property.

IMAGE CREDITS

Jim Bartsch

recycled glass tiles shimmer as they fade from dark to light blue.

At the beach end of the house, on the lower lawn level, LeBlanc carved out a space for a cast-concrete surface that serves as a waterfront dining area. At the corner of the house, built-in seating of teak and all-year cushions provides family-style seating for dining. The master suite has its own private deck, and above it, a green roof (planted mostly with sedums) offers even better ocean views.

Throughout a property so close to the beach, a major challenge was to reduce runoff from all the impervious surfaces. LeBlanc replaced the asphalt driveway with reinforced lawn, which can be driven on and played on. Panels of permeable paving in an offset pattern serve as the parking court.

LeBlanc likes to “work with what we have and add to it.” Using existing materials was not a request of the new owners, but LeBlanc points out that, “like most clients, once they heard about the money saved as well as the time saved compared to bringing in new plants, they were convinced it was the way to go.” Along with repurposing concrete paving as courtyard pavers, LeBlanc recycled redwood planking salvaged from the house remodel and incorporated it into the parking court’s fence. To stretch out the limited supply of redwood, he interspersed panels of translucent glass, which lighten the feeling and create a delicate tracery of shadow patterns from nearby fan palms and phormium.

The old garage was converted into a studio that opens to a fenced, contemplative garden of plants selected for color and texture and their nighttime

silhouettes against the fence’s glass panels. Plants include purple heart (*Tradescantia pallida*), cabbage tree (*Cordyline australis*), papyrus, *Grevillea* ‘Long John,’ *Plectranthus argenteatus*, *Plectranthus* ‘Mona Lavender,’ and giant leopard plant (*Farfugium japonicum* ‘Gigantea’). The garage door once displayed carved wood panels designed by Broudy; they now grace the entry opening gates—a fitting welcome to visitors to the property.

LeBlanc’s recycling strategy extended to the plants already growing on the site—to cut costs, reduce waste from the installation process, and to maintain and build on the existing tropical effect. King palms (*Archontophoenix cunninghamiana*), pygmy date palms, *Agave attenuata*, and *Doryanthes palmeri* were tagged, cataloged, and transplanted to other spots. He was also able to transplant

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USING EXISTING MATERIALS WAS NOT A REQUEST OF THE NEW OWNERS, BUT THEY BECAME "CONVINCED IT WAS THE WAY TO GO."



ABOVE
A rooftop deck and garden provide even better views of the Pacific. Entry is through the door on the left from the master bedroom below. Plantings include three kinds of sedum, *Senecio mandraliscae*, and *Sempervivum* 'Royal Ruby.'

IMAGE CREDIT
Jim Bartsch

some full-sized tropicals—kentia palms, pygmy date palms, and sago palms (*Cycas revoluta*)—from another garden that belonged to the clients.

The fairly simple palette of new plants introduced to the landscape makes use of striking forms, such as *Phormium* 'Dark Delight,' in rows and masses that create strong geometric patterns matching the impact of the house's planar shapes. A handful of rustic terra-cotta pots with spiky suc-

culents such as *Dasylirion wheeleri* add their strong punctuation.

Standing on the beach on a sunny, 70-degree midwinter day, one can sense how rare this location is—especially when the palms are swaying and three dolphins bob up through the breakers nearby. LeBlanc says, "You don't take on a project like this to do something different." Preserving its natural setting and man-made design legacy is more than enough—especially when

he also creates a family-pleasing garden in the process. ●

BILL MARKEN, HONORARY ASLA, IS THE FORMER EDITOR IN CHIEF OF *SUNSET* AND *GARDEN DESIGN* MAGAZINES.

Project Credits

DESIGNERS KEITH LEBLANC LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE, INC., BOSTON (KEITH LEBLANC, ASLA, JOHN HAVEN, ASLA, VERONICA CHEN). **GENERAL CONTRACTOR** HEIMBERG CONSTRUCTION, SANTA BARBARA, CALIFORNIA. **LANDSCAPE CONTRACTOR** CAL-WESTERN LANDSCAPE, SANTA BARBARA, CALIFORNIA.

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FEATURES

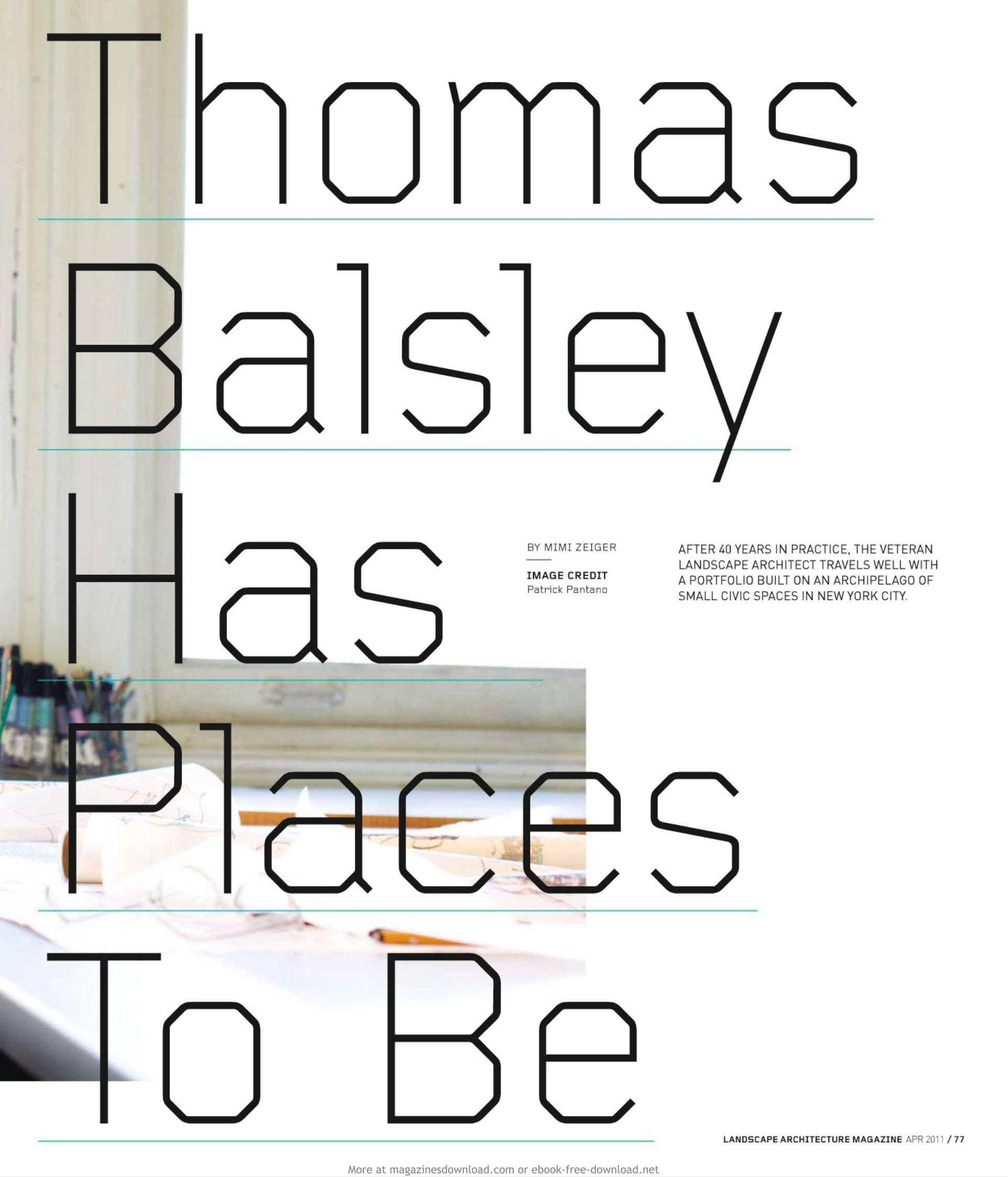
EXPERIENCE SHOWS

Thomas Balsley has been lucky enough in recent years to design big, panoramic parks with some of the best views in New York City. Yet, as he tells Mimi Zeiger this month, he is mainly scaling up a basic precept he's relied on for the design of numerous small parks in the city: You need to give people a reason to stop and sit. Ask the people of Cairo, who are flocking to the huge, beautiful new Al-Azhar Park (pictured) and probably realizing, as Hala F. Nassar explains, just how little open space they have enjoyed before now in that city's crowded life. The results of any design are obvious enough. Usually obscured are the origins of a designer's impulses. This month, 12 landscape architects tell us about the places that have moved them most.

IMAGE CREDIT

Courtesy Aga Khan Trust for Culture





Thomas Balsley Has Places To Be

BY MIMI ZEIGER

IMAGE CREDIT
Patrick Pantano

AFTER 40 YEARS IN PRACTICE, THE VETERAN LANDSCAPE ARCHITECT TRAVELS WELL WITH A PORTFOLIO BUILT ON AN ARCHIPELAGO OF SMALL CIVIC SPACES IN NEW YORK CITY.

It would be hard to overestimate the changes that public spaces have undergone

in New York City in the four decades since Thomas Balsley, FASLA, founded his landscape architecture firm. The once-gritty urban realm is now marbled with city-sponsored green streets and bike lanes, and the era of modernist plazas has blown by like the wind that swept them free of activity. With the development of new parks in almost every borough as well as the revival of existing urban parks, Gotham is in the midst of a landscape renaissance, and Thomas Balsley Associates (TBA) is behind the design of great swaths of acreage.

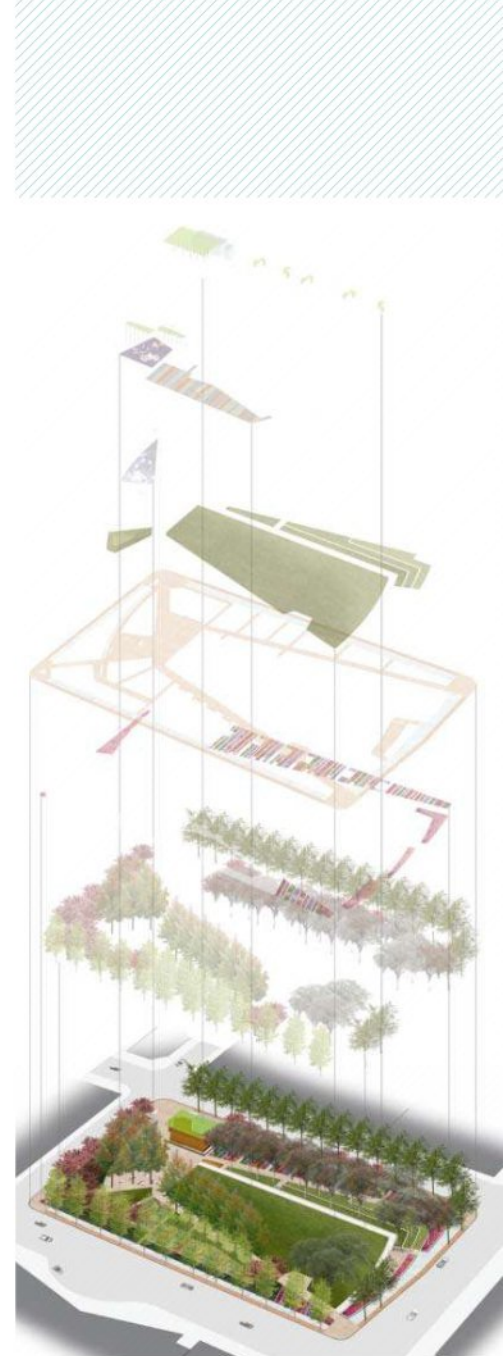
Early in his career, Balsley would weigh the importance of many small, local parks in the urban fabric against Frederick Law Olmsted's iconic Greensward Plan with its grand meadows and forestlike rambles. These days, when his office tallies up the amount of parkland it has shaped in New York City since Balsley hung out his shingle in 1970—waterfronts, pocket parks, public plazas—it nearly equals the size of Central Park.

However, TBA's work isn't limited to the five boroughs. The firm has created plans for places as far afield as Doha, Qatar, and Seoul, South Korea. And stateside, cities such as Baltimore, Dallas, Cleveland,

Tampa, and Denver have turned to Balsley for help in fashioning green space and reviving urban cores. Over the past few years, the office has been building a robust civic portfolio—and it's reaching a critical mass.

Balsley is an expert at creating intimate moments within the city grid. His practice was built on advocating for and designing (or rather redesigning) bonus plazas—those parcels of land required to be set aside by developers as public space. More often than not, they exist as bleak, underused wastelands in the shadows of high-rises, but when optimized by designs like his, they provide a green respite and an outdoor seat.

"A little piazza is where someone can go to on the weekend or after work or during work or for breakfast or coffee," Balsley says, passionately listing off uses. "It's a place to get off the street, like in Italy or France. And people remember those little piazzas. They don't know the name. It doesn't really matter. The point is, they got off the beaten path, they sat down, and they watched the world go by. So I make the case sometimes that these little spaces could even be more important than Central Park in touching our daily lives and defining our urban experience."



TBA's projects in New York City, such as Gantry Plaza State Park in Long Island City and Riverside Park South along the Hudson River side of Manhattan, deploy the lessons learned from small parks across a larger canvas. Balsley takes design cues from existing bits of the built environment—a crumbling pier, railroad tracks, a skyline. But his thinking about how people act in public space is indebted to the sociologist William Whyte's studies of New York City's parks and plazas. It was Whyte who famously stated the now seemingly obvious aphorism, "People tend to sit most where there are places to sit." As such, TBA creates places for people to gather, play, walk, and take in a view. Terraces, lawns, and footpaths combine with extensive seating areas and shade structures.

Perhaps as an outgrowth of working within the constraints of Manhattan's bonus plazas and trying to make as much as possible in a tight space, Balsley's work is filled with design moments and activities. And, at times, his schemes teeter on the brink of overprogramming. For example, Main Street Garden Park, which opened in downtown Dallas in late 2009, fits, among other things, a café pavilion, a dog park, a stage, a burbling fountain, a

ABOVE LEFT

TBA's Main Street Garden Park restores a previously ragged edge of downtown Dallas.

ABOVE RIGHT

Multiple programs—a café, dog park, art installations—ring the park's main lawn.

IMAGE CREDITS

Craig D. Blackmon, left; Courtesy Thomas Balsley Associates, right



LEFT

Junior landscape architect Chris Barnes (standing) and project manager Marc Delouvrier pore over new designs in the firm's New York City office.

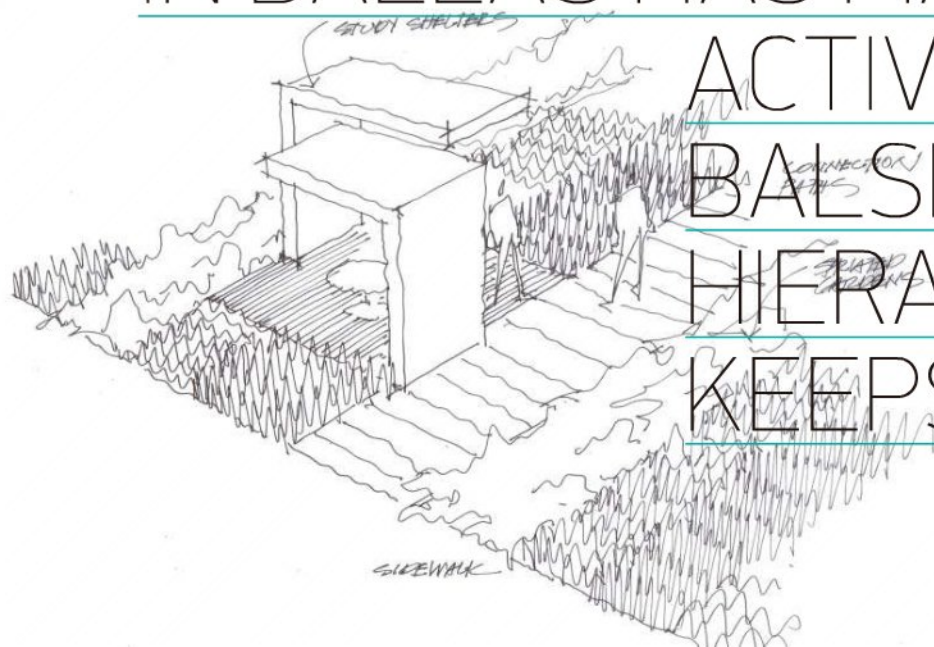
BELOW

Study shelters appear in a sketch of Main Street Garden Park.

IMAGE CREDITS

Patrick Pantano, top;
Courtesy Thomas Balsley
Associates, bottom

BALSLEY'S MAIN STREET GARDEN PARK IN DALLAS HAS MANY PREDEFINED ACTIVITIES, BUT BALSLEY SAYS THE HIERARCHY OF SPACES KEEPS IT FLEXIBLE.





LEFT

Good sight lines in Main Street Garden Park, far left, not only offer a feeling of security, but knit the greenspace into the urban fabric. A playful water feature, near left, appeals to the diverse constituency that visits the park.

BELOW

A parkwide Wi-Fi connection makes the bright green “study shelters” ideal for a working lunch.

IMAGE CREDITS

Craig D. Blackmon

children’s play area, and sculptural “study shelters” in a 1.75-acre block. (TBA teamed with local ALB + Blair Architects and landscape architecture firm Linda Tycher and Associates to build the park for the city of Dallas.) The dense programming is a direct response to the complex urban condition. It’s an effort to revive civic space. In November 2010, Willis Winters of the Dallas Parks and Recreation Department sat on a panel with Balsley at the 2010 ASLA Annual Meeting and EXPO in Washington, D.C. Cityparksblog.org quoted the discussion. “Main Street Garden served as the reason to revitalize the buildings surrounding the area,” Winters said.

The park, which replaces a parking lot, sits within Dallas’s Harwood Historic District, a collection of commercial buildings that date from the late 1800s through the 1950s. As is the case with many older downtowns, city officials and developers are hoping to redevelop the area. Landmarks surround the park—the Dallas Municipal Building, the Texas Commerce Tower, and the currently shuttered Dallas Statler Hilton, the chain’s midcentury modern flagship—but within just a few blocks, the urban core gives way to vacant lots. Rather than limit the use of the space, Balsley contends, predefined activities make the place usable for a diverse population.

“To a certain extent you can say that the defining of those spaces and uses removes some flexibility from the park,” Balsley says. “However, I mitigate that danger because I create a hierarchy of spaces, because we can’t predict what’s going to happen 10 years from now. There needs to be that big central space that can be anything to anybody at any given time. So, that flexibility is built in. And then the creation of these secondary and tertiary spaces offers more human experiences. I feel, to create that more human experience, you really have to literally define those more intimate spaces.”





THIS PAGE

On the far west side of Manhattan, Riverside Park South, above, is a green oasis, despite the looming highway. TBA's design transformed a derelict waterfront filled with crumbling piers, top right, into a rich ecosystem planted with grasses and crossed with boardwalks, bottom right.

OPPOSITE PAGE

A large esplanade and several smaller platforms jut out over the water, making reference to the working piers that once lined the shore.

IMAGE CREDITS

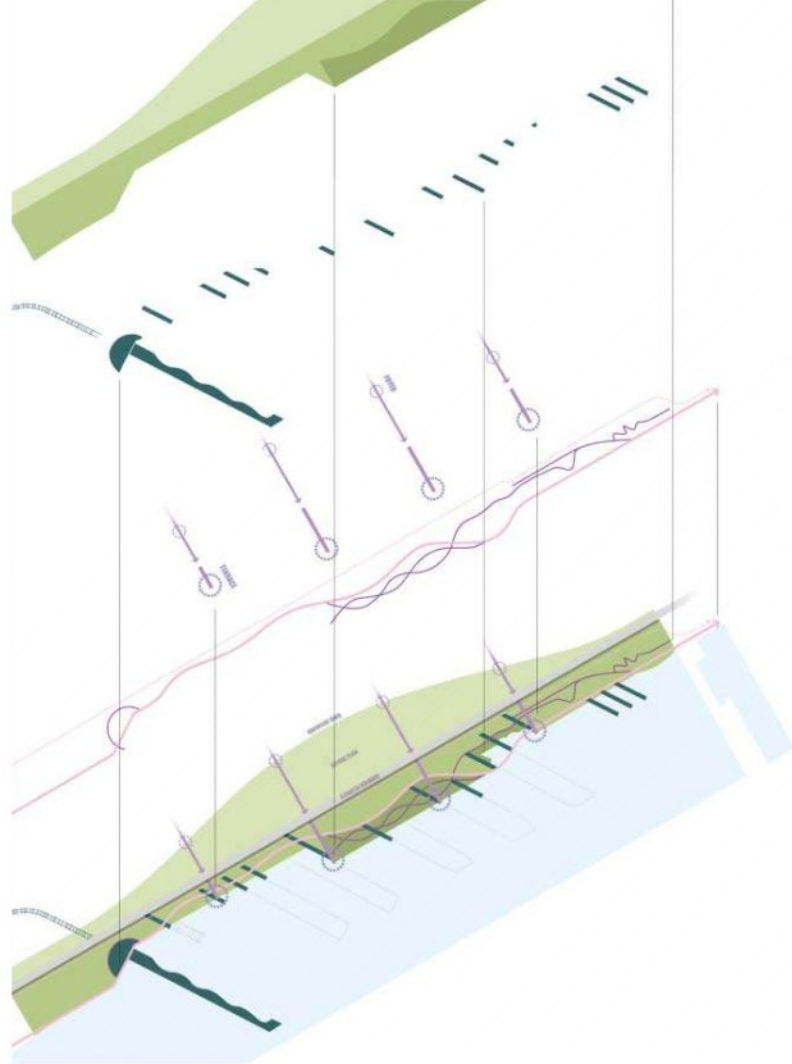
David Quinones, top left; Courtesy Thomas Balsley Associates, top right and opposite; Michael Koontz, Thomas Balsley Associates, bottom

Case in point, on a chilly November morning, white-collar residents who live in the lofts recently constructed nearby bring their dogs to the Main Street Garden Park's central lawn. Moms sit with strollers and lattes by the coffee kiosk (a boxy, lime-green structure surrounded by an ipe deck and sheltered by a dramatic shade canopy), and a few homeless men sit on the concrete seat walls that form lawn terraces, quietly warming themselves in the sun before shuffling off to another perch. Most surprising is that people are working on laptops. A dozen "study shelters" sit among grasses and azalea borders. Each small, bright-green shade structure brackets a metal café table and two chairs and, because the park has WiFi, provides neighbors and students a coveted Internet connection. (Outposts of Texas A&M University Commerce and the University of North Texas are housed across the street.) Here, Balsley's design, combined with technology, points to a redefined future of democratic public space: parks that are acutely aware of the pluralistic needs of the people they serve. "It may sound like we're throwing everything and the kitchen sink in there, but I don't think we're doing that," he notes. "We're thinking long and hard to make sure that we're reaching out to the different constituents. I don't think anyone is going to walk up into that park and feel like it's not for them."

Balsley believes that parks fundamentally express our democratic ideals. "They reflect how we feel about each other and how a city—or a municipality or a state—feels about the unspoken promises made to us, its citizens. They give the terms of the kind of quality of life that we should expect from that entity."

In New York City, Riverside Park South illustrates the complexities that come with democratic design. The park is a collaboration





with Skidmore, Owings & Merrill and part of a 65-acre redevelopment that was first approved in 1991. The first phase of the project opened in 2001, and the past decade incrementally ushered in four of the proposed seven phases, with phase four finished in 2010. The park is a critical link between Olmsted and Calvert Vaux's 1875 landscape and the waterside promenade, designed by Gilmore D. Clarke and Clinton Lloyd under the administration of Robert Moses. The first piece of park along the river since 1930, the greenway covers 23 acres of waterfront from 59th Street to 72nd Street, but to reach the extensive network of sinuous and interwoven paved paths, wooden boardwalks, and overlooks, you have to pass under the elevated West Side Highway. Plans are in the works to remove the rumbling and fuming roadway and bury it, thus linking the parkland to the lineup of high-end apartment buildings that look out over the Hudson. Extell Development, which funded the Riverside Park South project, is pushing forward on hiding the highway underground, but that plan is wrapped up in a web of federal and municipal decision making and faces uncertain funding. Balsley strategically designed the park to accommodate eventual demolition and development, even if it takes another two decades.

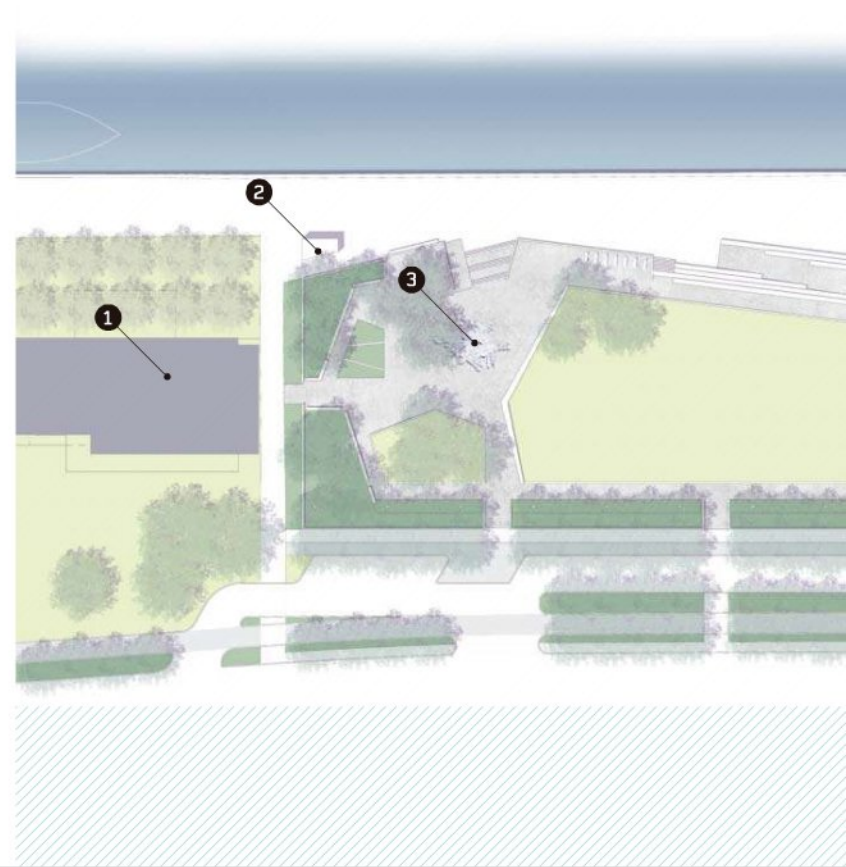
Meanwhile, locals vie for the coveted lounge chairs that dot the esplanade—some decadently arranged as if on the deck of one of the cruise ships that dock just south of the park. Balsley's design references the site's old piers (the remains of which are still evident) with a new brick-paved pier edged by a subtle scallop that reaches more than 800 feet into the Hudson and with several more modest wood-planked decks that jut out over the water. True to Balsley's desire to make places for people to sit and watch the world go by, each small deck is enclosed in a

BALSLEY'S
WATERFRONT
PARKS IN
NEW YORK
SHOW WHAT
UNDERPINS
HIS WORK—
HISTORICAL
NODS,
ECOLOGICAL
SENSITIVITY,
ESPLANADES,
AND, OF
COURSE,
PLACES TO SIT.



sleek steel railing, and the intimate space is just large enough for a lounge and several high stools that are cantilevered from a countertop built into the protective rail. More industrial past is referenced in the wooden boardwalks that are edged with railroad ties and native grasses. In an effort to restore the Hudson River ecosystem, TBA reconstructed a marshy wetland by preserving a rocky inlet and planting native sedge along the shoreline. Also preserved is a black steel gantry that once lifted freight in and out of Manhattan. Its hulking outline, rising from the water, is a historic reminder and visual folly. There's even a vintage locomotive that, poised as sculpture, forms the focal point of the paved plaza at 62nd Street.

Adrian Benepe, Honorary ASLA, the New York City Department of Parks & Recreation commissioner, was instrumental in the park's development (it was his idea to install the locomotive), and he's also an enthusiastic user. He runs and cycles through it often, zipping down the dedicated bike path tucked under the highway. "I love [the landscape's] pastoral quality—the grasses, *Rosa rugosa* roses, the boardwalk," Benepe says. "It's amazing how that can take you away from the noise of the city. Once a park replaced the rail yard, it immediately attracted wildlife. Crickets and song





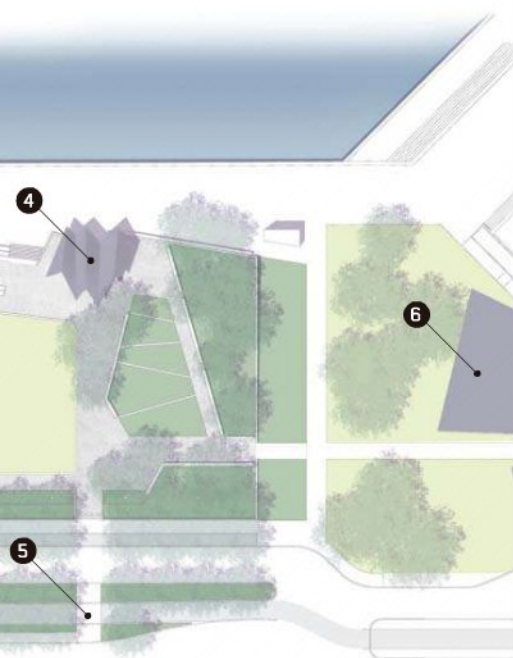
sparrows—a kind of bird associated with beach meadows—you really don't hear that anywhere else in Manhattan."

Over on the industrially frayed banks of the East River in Queens, Gantry Plaza State Park mirrors many of the design approaches at Riverside Park South. Both projects were developed over the same time period and, taken together, form the vocabulary that underpins TBA's work—historical nods, ecological sensitivity, esplanades, and, of course, places to sit: beaches, lounges, seat walls, chess tables, and bright red Adirondack chairs. Undertaken as part of the 26-acre Queens West Open Space Master Plan (the client is the Queens West Development Corporation), the first phase of Gantry Plaza State Park, located in the middle of the site, opened in 1999; the second phase to the north opened in 2003, and the last phase, Hunters Point South Park, is scheduled to open in 2012. Wrapping the southern edge of the Long Island City shoreline, this landscape is a collaboration between TBA and Weiss/Manfredi with the engineering expertise of Arup. The project, designed for the New York City Economic Development Corporation, is an ambitious combination of real estate development and environmentally minded infrastructure. The park encompasses 11 acres of the Queens West site. "The whole master plan takes into account what uses go together well. [Balsley's] taken very detailed care of each of the individual elements. He's created many small parks within the larger park," explains Arup's project manager, Matt Best.

Some of those uses include a recreational artificial turf field and an intensive marshland habitat reconstruction (plans include biofiltering plantings such as ferns, rushes, and asters); play areas and a dog run; Weiss/Manfredi's architectural pavilion (a sweeping folly that serves as park offices, a concession stand, and a shade structure for the water taxi dock), and the pathways that reconnect Queens residents to the water. Unlike Riverside Park South, where the luxury Trump Place high-rises overlook the parkland, here the hope is to build housing for a variety of tax brackets on the currently light-industrial blocks next to the river, a prospect that raises Balsley's spirits.

"A diverse constituency is one of the most critical elements in the sustained success of a park," he explains. "If any space is designed too much to the needs of a narrowly defined constituency, the public will come, and then they will go. I love the mix of the intense urban and the social sustainability and the environmental sustainability coming together."

Balsley's ability to engage a community (with all its varied needs) is on display at the West Shore Park in Baltimore's Inner Harbor. TBA and a local landscape architecture firm, Horde Coplan and Macht, Inc., were commissioned by the city of Baltimore. The



SITE PLAN

IMAGE CREDIT

Courtesy Thomas Balsley Associates

1 VISITOR CENTER

2 CAFE KIOSK

3 INTERACTIVE FOUNTAIN PLAZA

4 OVERLOOK/STAGE CANOPY

5 BIKEWAY

6 SCIENCE CENTER

OPPOSITE TOP

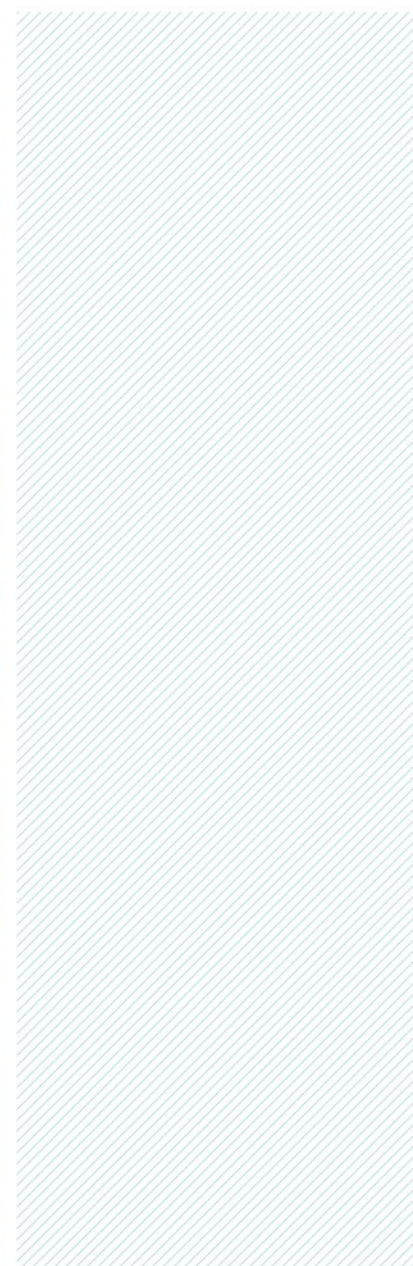
The Baltimore Area Visitors Center and the city's downtown backdrop the West Shore Park's red oaks and water feature.

ABOVE

Still hands on after 40 years of practice, Balsley consults with senior associate landscape architect Dale Schafer, ASLA.

IMAGE CREDITS

Patrick Ross, opposite top; Patrick Pantano, above





BALSLEY SAYS THAT LITTLE PARKS CAN SOMETIMES BE MORE IMPORTANT TO USERS THAN LARGE PARKS.

OPPOSITE

In view of Baltimore's harbor and the colorful facade of the National Aquarium, local kids splash in the TBA-designed fountain.

ABOVE

Benches set among Natchez crape myrtles, black-eyed Susans, and tall grasses are a tranquil respite from the active promenade.

IMAGE CREDITS

Thomas Balsley, Thomas Balsley Associates, opposite and above; Patrick Pantano, right

2.5-acre park they developed has transformed what was essentially a bus drop-off squeezed between the Maryland Science Center and the Baltimore Area Visitors Center into a space for civic performance. The park sits three feet higher than the brick-lined promenade, and the grade change allows for an elevated view of Baltimore's quirky waterfront skyline—the stocky World Trade Center tower, the National Aquarium's angular and colorful facade, and the tall masts of the USS Constellation. Built as part of a 30-year redevelopment of the industrial harbor into a tourist destination, Balsley's design, which replaces a parking lot, is a place for both locals and visitors to pause amid the promenade's renewed bustle.

A clipped lawn forms the centerpiece of the composition. Outlined by a walkway, a few shade trees, and geometric planting beds, it's large enough for sunbathers or for school kids on field trips to eat lunch and play tag, but it isn't a great lawn like in Central Park. It is, fittingly, the scale of a neighborhood park. There are simple benches and, in the warmer months, an in-ground fountain spurts water several feet into the air, much to the delight of the kids who run through the sprays. However, raised above the lower walkway, the green space takes on a civic grandeur. Two staircases—one on the north and one on the south—take you directly to and from the water's edge. In both cases, they grow out of the seat walls that line the promenade. Yet it is a gently sloping ramp, angled to catch walkers and joggers, that effortlessly eases the public into the park. If the pavers didn't change from red brick to gray hexagons, the transition would almost disappear. "It was immediately obvious to me that other than a few spaces outside the aquarium, there was no open space, just the promenade where you had to drink Coke, buy a beer, buy a T-shirt, have an ice cream, and keep moving," Balsley recalls. This park, on the other hand, is supposed to be a sort of stage for downtown Baltimore. "You're not going to have performances every day," he says. But the idea is that as more people began to pass by the area, they would pause, stick around, and start to populate a part of the city they had neglected to consider. ●

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