2011 ASLA Design Awards

Westminster Center Park
Merit Award
Architerra Group, Inc. / City of Westminster, Dept. of Parks, Recreation and Libraries

Design over $500,000 Construction Budget
Project Fact Sheet: Westminster Center Park, Westminster, CO

Category 1A

Construction Budget: $3,200,000

Project Summary:
Westminster Center Park is a 10 acre neighborhood park located across the street from City Hall. The park provides an important social gathering and play space for the community. The unique design and integrated art work are inspired by their sister city of Westminster, England. These elements impart a sense of place and provide a subtle link to the city’s origins.

Purpose of Project:
The purpose of the project was to create a special civic space with a destination water feature and playground. A performance space was intended to meet programming needs within the city and allow for community gatherings. Bluegrass meadows were provided for informal play. The design intent was to create a park that seamlessly integrates with the City Hall campus across the street.

Role of Landscape Architect:
The landscape architect was the prime consultant for the entire design process including public facilitation, conceptual design, design development, construction documentation, bid administration and construction administration for the project. The design team also included architects, artists, civil engineers, electrical engineers, structural engineers, irrigation designers and water feature designers.

Special Factors:

Contextual Design:
The site’s proximity to City Hall offers a visual link between the two but 92nd Avenue, a four lane arterial street acts as a significant physical barrier. The landscape architect designed the park to include a future underpass that will directly connect the park site to City Hall. This improvement is planned for the future as budget becomes available. The formal geometry of City Hall is projected onto the park site with the program elements organized around this central axis. Surrounding multi-family and single family residential uses were respected by keeping the more active uses in the center of the park. Pedestrian access to the park is provided at the edges of the neighborhoods.

Unique Design Inspiration:
The landscape architects looked across the Atlantic Ocean for unique design inspiration. Their sister city of Westminster, England is a borough located along the Thames River which encompasses much of central London. The 14 story clock tower at City Hall was designed to symbolize Big Ben. The Peter Pan fable originated in nearby Kensington Gardens which became the inspiration for the playground. A Westminster, England street grid and Thames River water feature animates the central plaza space.

Park Elements:
- Peter Pan Playground
  The Peter Pan concept was refined to a “Neverland” playground theme. The playground includes semi-custom Westminster, England architecture (Big Ben, London Bridge, the Darling House) and the pirate’s ship in Pirates Cove provided by the playground manufacturer. The Neverpeak Mountain climbing structure and Neverwood tree structures were built by a local custom concrete company. Locally quarried boulders enclose the playground area and allow for additional climbing and seating.
• **Center Plaza**
The center plaza includes a Westminster, England street grid comprised of integrally colored concrete with stain on the surface. Street names and landmarks are sandblasted into the surface.

• **Water Feature**
The interactive water feature activates the center plaza space. The Thames River flows symbolically through the plaza as blue crushed, tumbled glass pavement. Randomly activated water jets located along the river paving are a huge hit with local children. Water also bubbles out of boulders into a small trough for younger children to explore. The river leads to the playground where it flows symbolically into the blue colored rubberized surface lagoon.

• **Structures**
Custom park structures include a restroom, shades structures and performance shelter. The brick colors and patterns match those of City Hall. Artful, perforated steel panels utilize LED lighting for playful nighttime effects. The structures are sited north and south of the central plaza to frame the mountain views to the west.

**Artwork:**
While public art was not part of the initial park program given by the client, the landscape architect included an artist on the project team and advocated for the use of integral art to further enforce a sense of place. The obelisk animates the center plaza space much like Cleopatra’s Needle in Westminster, England. The obelisk is made of stone and steel, reflects the shape of the clock tower at City Hall and also has LED lighting to make this a focal point of the park even at night.

**Principles of Sustainability:**

• **Responsible Water Use**
Due to the anticipated heavy pedestrian use, bluegrass turf was the only practical turf option. The design team felt strongly about conserving water. An existing non-potable irrigation line was located near the site but did not have sufficient pressure to meet the water demands of the site. The project team designed a pump station to allow the entire site to be watered with non-potable water. In addition, the plant palette is comprised of xeric and drought resistant species.

• **Water Quality**
While the city storm sewer eventually reaches a regional detention and water quality basin, the design team felt strongly about providing additional water quality protections to treat fertilizers, sediment and pollutants. We worked closely with the civil engineers to design a facility that blends into the park while providing additional treatment.

• **Sustainable Materials**
The custom features were all built by local subcontractors utilizing local materials.

**Significance:**
The landscape architect developed a plan that not only met the client’s design program, but created a civic space that strengthens community. The artful design of the park elements not only afford a beautiful and unique aspect to the design, but bestow a fundamental link to the city’s origins. The thoughtful park layout encourages interaction between users, helping to develop a true sense of community. Westminster Center Park truly has become the civic center of the community.