How can a design firm thrive in today’s economy?

EXCLUSIVE
A Model of Success: Design/Build within the Commercial Landscape Industry
Who’s Going to Pay for All of This?
From the sound of things, the new look to our Chapter Publication was noticed. We appreciate your compliments. In conjunction with the redesign of the quarterly publication, members have also received their copy of the Annual Awards Book which also underwent a redesign. We’re sure the awarded firms recognize the advertising benefit of the State awards and hope that, with the addition of new categories in 2009, we will be able to reach out to a broader audience of entrants. The Call for Entries will be announced in June, so please stay posted to our website for more information.

We are just past the halfway point of the 2009’s Executive Committee’s term. A quick update on where we are:

• The slate is being pulled together for the July election of the 2010 Executive Committee. If you are interested in being involved with the chapter as a Board Member or an event volunteer, please contact us for more information.

• The redesigned website should be launched in late June. We are excited for this opportunity to better reach our members through this media.

• LARE review courses have been successful and we hope to expand on our educational programs by the end of the year.

• The Colorado sent four representatives from the Chapter to the Mid-Year meetings in Washington, DC, where representatives from all chapters convene to discuss issues on a state and national level. Colorado continues to be one of the largest State Chapters, ranking 7th in the nation with over 557 members recorded as of April.

Maintaining and increasing membership continues to be a goal of the chapter. We have initiated a campaign to recruit both licensed Landscape Architects in the state who are not currently members of the Association, as well as those whose memberships have lapsed in recent years. We believe the benefits of joining go far beyond this magazine subscription and would welcome a conversation with those who may feel differently. If your financial situation will not allow you to make your membership payments, please be aware that National offers options to help people stay connected with their membership in these tough times.

To close this message I would like to extend a thank you to our 2009 State Conference Planning Committee. Led by Pat Mundus and Greg Williams, this committee has worked long and hard to provide a Colorado State Design Conference that has appeal across our diversified profession and seeks to help firms and individuals “be better” during this difficult economy. If you were able to attend, we thank you for supporting this event and look forward to hearing your feedback. In the upcoming months, we will be analyzing what programs were of benefit to our members and which programs we should continue to provide for our members in 2010. With that said, thanks for reading the publication and I hope you have an excellent start to your summer.

Kimberly Douglas, ASLA Colorado Chapter President

Correction: In our last issue, on page 26, Shay Lundblad was inadvertently left out of the byline credit for the article “North of the Border: What’s News in Wyoming”
I want to let you all know that I just finished reading—from cover to cover—the latest issue of our "new and improved" CCASLA “Exposures.” I have never (and I mean, never) read a professional publication in its entirety! I really like the condensed (National Geographic) size, as it made it easier to ‘flip through.’

Since it’s a bit smaller, it made reading the entire page a bit easier, as I moved forward with each page and more quickly. I found myself not minding that I was reading through more pages. (Truly amazing) I enjoyed the updated format of the articles on each page, along with a small info paragraph on the author. It’s obvious that adding more ‘color’ in the print makes it much more appealing. Kudos for adding the “Inbox”, it made it more personal and I liked how each comment ‘challenged’ each of us with what we’re doing, “Right Now.”

I’m not sure how you tracked down the articles that you had in this issue, but...'bravo’ on the variety of content, insight, depth and educational value. My highest compliments to all of you for a job very well done! This new ‘look’ is refreshing, vibrant, informative, beyond interesting...and with great design.

Vivian, lone tree

Agree to disagree

I have thought of the future appearance of Denver and other cities as well. But I don’t always see your neighborhood still there or maybe even Stapleton. Population growth, preserving critical natural resources and forces of nature has a way of changing things. Still I agree we should educate ourselves about livability issues of the future and dedicate ourselves to build the best we can with respect to the resources we have and with an imagination open to potential adaptive uses.

Judy, denver

A perfect green roof?

I found the Green Roof photo on page 11 of the Sustainability Issue most interesting. The story behind this beautiful green roof, however is not so beautiful if one becomes aware of the history of this project. It would be an interesting article for someone directly involved with this project to enlighten us on the experience gained by this green roof project. My point is, this photo depicts a perfect green roof, probably taken immediately after the first planting. When I last visited this site last year, the roof was much more presentable than it has been, thanks to the support and help of CSU staff and others in the Colorado Green Roof industry, which was necessary to revive the initial installation, which in my opinion and experience building and maintaining green roofs, was poorly designed and conceived. As a Landscape Architect and contractor, this photo by and of itself is misleading to our colleagues that read this periodical.

Mark, denver
Executive Committee

The Executive Committee is the governing body of ASLA Colorado and meets monthly to provide guidance and direction relating to the activities and finances of the association. The meeting is attended by both voting and non-voting members and all ASLA Colorado members are welcome to attend or to participate by teleconference. The meetings begin at 5:30 p.m. and are over before 7:30 p.m. Please contact Greg Williams, ASLA Colorado Association Manager, at 303-830-6616 or info@ccasla.org if you are interested in receiving the agenda packet (by email) for a future meeting.

The Executive Committee had met on April 1, 2009 and May 6, 2009. Budget and expense reductions were made to various line items in order to keep quarterly expenses in line with anticipated quarterly revenue. Volunteers were sought for various upcoming events including Colorado State University Landscape Architecture Days, the 2010 ProGreen Expo Planning Committee, and Doors Open Denver. A volunteer coordinator position was established on the ASLA Colorado Executive Committee.

Final plans and the final speaker line up were made for the ASLA Colorado Mini-Conference “Tools for Change,” which was held on May 15, 2009 at Denver University. Attendance at the conference was slightly lower than anticipated but revenues from exhibitors and sponsors will help ensure that the event will indeed generate revenue.

Board members were asked to participate in several important activities by making phone calls to potential and lapsed members, to potential conference sponsors, and to former and prospective advertisers for the Exposures magazine in order to enhance the revenue stream for the organization.

Web redesign efforts and community public relations outreach projects continued through the spring with an expected launch of the newly redesigned website in June. For more information on current ASLA Colorado events, be sure to visit our website at www.ccasla.org and check out “Hot Topics”, the posting of the most recent Elliottin, and the general and educational calendars which are found under the “Events” tab and under the “Education” tab on the left of the main page. For contact information relating to Executive Committee members mentioned above click on the “About Us” tab.

Government Affairs

The Colorado General Assembly adjourned sine die on May 6th. The interim committees of the legislature will be meeting during the summer and fall months in preparation for the 2010 session which begins in January, 2010. Several bills of interest to landscape architects and ASLA Colorado were enacted during the 2009 legislative session. These bills include the following measures:

HB 09-1082, by Representative Pension, relaxes the utility notification requirements relative to landscape maintenance to less than twelve inches in depth and was initiative by the Green Industries of Colorado (ProGreen) and the Associated Landscape Contractors of Colorado. This measure was supported by the Colorado Council of Landscape Architects (CCLA) and was signed by the Governor on March 20, 2009.

HB 09-1129, by Representative Looper, authorizes the Colorado Water Conservation board to initiate residential or mixed-use development pilot projects to collect rainwater from rooftops. This bill was headed to the Governor for signature.

SB 09-80, by Senator Logan, authorizes “limited exemptions for water collected from certain residential rooftops” including irrigation of gardens and lawns and ordinary household purposes. This bill was signed by the Governor on April 22, 2009. CCLA supported both of these water conservation measures.

In March of 2009, at the request of CCLA, Colorado Governor Bill Ritter signed a proclamation declaring April as Landscape Architecture Month. This was part of the American Landscape Architects Association – Colorado efforts to promote the profession in April.

On the regulatory side, the Colorado State Board of Landscape Architects met on April 17, 2009, and reported that 43 Landscape Architects have already allowed their licenses to lapse. Licensed Landscape Architects are responsible for keeping their licensure current and should check with the Colorado Department of Regulationary Agencies (DORA) periodically to make sure their license and contact information is current. Go to the ASLA Colorado website at www.ccasla.org and follow the link to the State Board of Landscape Architects. Because licensure by prior practice is no longer an option in Colorado (expiring by the end of 2008), anyone whose license expires will have to re-apply through examination. Landscape Architects interested in serving on the State Board should contact DORA for more information. At the urging of CCLA and others DORA sent a letter to local governments in Colorado urging them to adopt internal policies and procedures consistent with state law requiring the stamp of a Licensed Landscape Architect on all relevant documents. A copy of that letter is on the ASLA Colorado website under the government affairs tab.

At the May 15th ASLA Colorado Mini-Conference members heard an update from Charlie Adams, Program Director, Colorado State Board of Landscape Architects concerning board activities during the year. Colorado State Senator Abel Tapia was also invited to meet with the ASLA Colorado members and provide an update on the legislative session and offer his insight concerning future legislation. Senator Tapia was the 2007 sponsor of Senate Bill 07-107 which brought licensure to Colorado Landscape Architects in 2008.

The Colorado Council of Landscape Architects (CCLA) is represented in the legislature and before state agencies by Greg Williams, of Redpoint Resources, and Scott Meiklejohn, of Meiklejohn Consulting; jointly to monitor state legislative and state regulatory activity during 2009. Dennis Booike is chair of the American Society of Landscape Architects – Colorado Government Affairs committee and is a member of CCLA. He will provide liaison between the two groups and report on government affairs issues to the ASLA Colorado Executive Committee during the regular monthly meetings. Don Godi is chair of CCLA. For more information on becoming involved in CCLA or in the ASLA Colorado Government Affairs committee contact Greg Williams, ASLA Colorado Association Manager, at 303-830-6616 or email him at info@ccasla.org.
By Chris Perry

Design/Build is not new within the construction industry, but this model of project delivery has not been used to its fullest opportunity within the commercial landscape arena. Few can deny that the current economy has led to significant changes in how firms do both procure and provide services. As a result, design/build is proving to be successful to Landscape Architects, Contractors and Project Owners alike. Success can generally be traced to one key component that ties the entire concept together: Pre-construction collaboration. This approach unites the design team and contracting team under a shared goal of project success. For this to work it requires communication, transparency, trust and respect between the two distinct groups. When these prerequisites are met, there can be tremendous synergy as designers take advantage of the contractor’s construction and cost estimating expertise and the contractor embraces the designer’s program goals and the importance of the design intent.

At the end of the day, successful design/build projects are about accountability, and the contractor should take the lead of the entire process. This allows Owners the benefit of single-point accountability eliminating any potential for finger pointing with regards to budget, material availability, or constructability. The opportunity then exists for multi-million dollar projects to be built with only minor change orders. When challenges arise during construction, owners do not have to worry about who is responsible for resolution. Through the design-build model, at the time of installation, all of budget, procurement, and constructability concerns should already be resolved, and construction can occur without any delays.

While the roles of the design-build team members certainly can vary from project-to-project, and with differing program requirements of each owner, a standard approach will help make the process win-win. Consider these suggestions:

- Landscaping
- Irrigation
- Maintenance
- Hydromulching
- Retaining Walls
- Renovation
- Reclamation
- Snow Removal
- Grading
- Seeding
- Erosion Control

The fear of design/build by some Landscape Architects is that it might eliminate the integrity or purity of the design and that it puts all of the control in the contractor’s hands. While this is understandable, the foundation of the design/build process is trust and teamwork. If this trust does not exist before the project begins, then the process simply cannot work. It’s about having the right contractor in place to run the process with the right Landscape Architect to help guide the design.

And finally, if you remember nothing more, there are six specific points within the model which will make design/build projects a success:

1. Clear Accountability – Single point of contact for design, construction and maintenance.
2. Better Design to Budget – Early warning budget issues allow Owners to make informed decisions.
3. Faster Time to Market – Fast track capability; Pricing kept current with design evolution.
5. Reduced Administrative Burden – Contractor serves as an extension of the Owner’s staff to help manage the design process.

Chris Perry is the Branch Manager of ValleyCrest Landscape Development’s Colorado Operations. Chris has been in the industry for over 20 years and within the Colorado market for over 15 of them. Chris is a currently an executive board member of the Colorado Chapter of the ASLA and also a lead mentor with ACE for over 4 years. ACE promotes educational opportunities for high school students within the Architecture, Construction and Engineering fields. Born and raised in New York, Chris is a graduate of the State University of New York at Cobleskill in Landscape Development and continues his dedication to the industry.

While ValleyCrest continues to work within the bid/build industry, as we celebrate our 60th year in business, we are seeing current market conditions and client needs that are changing exponentially in their complexity. As practitioners and educators, we must consider and enter into a dialogue about the implications and opportunities inherent in these changes and the effects they will have on the profession, as well as the education of future landscape architects. At the University of Colorado Denver (UCD), faculty and students spend considerable time discussing anticipated future societal needs, reflecting on current practices, and exploring how to lead the profession in adjustments for future needs.

As we all know, pursuing a degree in landscape architecture or design is just the beginning of a much longer learning endeavor. It takes a lifetime and a lot of self-motivation to acquire the skills, knowledge, and attitudinal values necessary to create and actualize our visions in a complex and rapidly changing world. We obtain these attributes through a variety of experiences in school, our personal lives, and practice.

With this in mind, as educators we ask ourselves, “What should students know and be able to do by the time they graduate?” In response to this question the department of Landscape Architecture at UCD identified four broad categories for student learning outcomes: content knowledge, design, communication and representation, and professional ethics. These categories, while distinct from each other, are overlapping and intertwined. Students are expected to at least be proficient in each of these areas by the time they complete this program.

For me, one philosophical link to facilitating and achieving these learning outcomes is the work of Donald A. Schön. As a practitioner, student, and more recently an educator, Mr.

*Wetland Restoration as a “Performative” Space: Community, Ritual and Event by Stephen Hall, UCD Student. Faculty Advisor: Joern Langhorst.

By Lori A. Catalano, ASLA

Our world is changing. The population is more diverse with differing and sometimes conflicting values; the amount of information available is extensive and immediate; and issues related to the occupation of the earth have grown exponentially in their complexity. As practitioners and educators, we must consider and enter into a dialogue about the implications and opportunities inherent in these changes and the effects they will have on the profession, as well as the education of future landscape architects. At the University of Colorado Denver (UCD), faculty and students spend considerable time discussing anticipated future societal needs, reflecting on current practices, and exploring how to lead the profession in adjustments for future needs.

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Solving design issues separately involve themselves in messy but crucially important problems. “There are those who choose the swampy lowlands. They deliberate,” according to Schön (p. 40). The kind of knowledge honored in academia, careers as landscape architects, and the kind of competence valued in professional practice (p.vii). Schön questions “the kinds of knowledge honored in academia and the kind of competence valued in professional practice” (p.vii). From his perspective both are flawed when they rely only on Technical Rationality. Technical rationality is “problem-solving made rigorous by the use of scientific technique” (p.21). This method is limited because it requires that the ends be defined before the means can be selected to accomplish the ends. With this emphasis on problem-solving, “we ignore problem-setting” by the selection of the problem (p.21).

Schön’s insightful book, The Reflective Practitioner: How Professionals Think in Action (Basic Books, Inc, 1983) resonates with me. The concepts presented in this book have directly influenced my opinions of what is important for students to experience as they begin their careers as landscape architects. Schön questions “the kinds of knowledge honored in academia and the kind of competence valued in professional practice” (p.vii).

Solving design issues separately involve themselves in messy but crucially important problems. “There are those who choose the swampy lowlands. They deliberate,” according to Schön (p. 40). The kind of knowledge honored in academia, careers as landscape architects, and the kind of competence valued in professional practice (p.vii). Schön questions “the kinds of knowledge honored in academia and the kind of competence valued in professional practice” (p.vii). From his perspective both are flawed when they rely only on Technical Rationality. Technical rationality is “problem-solving made rigorous by the use of scientific technique” (p.21). This method is limited because it requires that the ends be defined before the means can be selected to accomplish the ends. With this emphasis on problem-solving, “we ignore problem-setting,” the process by which we define the decision to be made, the ends to be achieved, the means which may be chosen” (p. 40). The kind of inquiry required for problem-setting falls outside of the realm of Technical Rationality and is better suited to address the phenomena of instability, uncertainty, and uniqueness. Problem-setting does not separate the means and ends, but does develop them interactively as the problematic situation is framed.

Schön evokes imagery of topography in describing the various terrains of professional practice. The high, hard ground is where practitioners use research-based theory and techniques to solve problems. However, the problems of the high ground are relatively unimportant to society as a whole. Then there are the lowlands, where the practitioner is faced with situations that are messy and not technically solvable, but which are of greater human concern. “There are those who choose the swampy lowlands. They deliberately involve themselves in messy but crucially important problems and when asked to describe their method of inquiry, they speak of experience, trial and error, intuition, and muddling through” (p.43).

One literal and figurative example of venturing into the “lowlands” is the UCD Department of Landscape Architecture’s recent experiences in New Orleans, Louisiana. Led by Dr. Austin Allen, this endeavor is highlighted over many others because the majority of both faculty and students have been involved in the University’s work there. When confronted with incompatible, unique, and inconsistent demands all were challenged to engage in the non-technical processes of framing the situation. It was messy and based on trial and error, but students learned to work and communicate in unfamiliar cultural, political, and economic contexts, making significant contributions to the redevelopment and revitalization of a community. It is my hope that upon completion of the program, students graduating from UCD will experience venturing into the “swampy lowlands” to engage in significant challenges of greater human concern.

Lori Catalano is the Interim Chair for the Department of Landscape Architecture at UCD, and has been teaching there since 2003. She holds a bachelor’s degree in landscape architecture with a horticultural minor from Iowa State University and master’s degree from the University of Pennsylvania. Prior to teaching, she worked at Civitas where she focused on crafting built environments ranging from city parks to college campuses. Among her honors are the College of Architecture and Planning Faculty Excellence Award for Non-Tenure Track Teaching in 2007 and the Van Alen Travel Fellowship at the University of Pennsylvania.

Design - Students will be able to formulate questions and arguments about the landscape and landscape architect’s role as a significant cultural medium, determine processes and practices that lead to conceptual, analytical, and formative actions which transform existing situations into preferred alternatives based on ethical, communicative, and content knowledge criteria.

Students will be able to:
- Research, identify and assess constraints and opportunities.
- Situate the design problem within a larger cultural, social and ecological context.
- Set-up and test strategies that synthesize the research and contextual processes.
- Implement and demonstrate the strategies through physical application.
- Evaluate and reconsider outcomes.

Communication and Representation – Students will be able to write, speak, create, and employ appropriate representational media to effectively convey ideas on subject matter contained in the professional curriculum to a variety of audiences.

Students should be able to:
- Write an organized, compelling and grammatically correct argument or thesis supported by well-documented research.
- Prepare and present an organized, professional and compelling verbal and visual presentation using appropriate media to explain complex ideas and concepts.
- Constructively critique their work and the work of others.
- Clearly articulate and document the iterative process of developing design ideas.
- Effectively communicate design ideas to a variety of audiences.

Professional Ethics – Students will be able to critically evaluate local and global ramifications of social issues, diverse cultures, economic systems, ecological systems, and professional practice as guiding principles for design thinking and implementation.

Students will be able to:
- Understand, critique, integrate and articulate different sources, constructions and principles of ethics, including personal, professional, economical, social, cultural, and ecological concepts in their historic and present contexts.
- Critically identify and assess personal and professional predispositions to reflectively participate in a discourse on the motivations, intents, reasons and effects of landscape architectural practices and of specific design proposals.
- Critically develop and apply ethical frameworks to appropriately respond to culturally, socially and economically diverse conditions.
- Critically identify and assess personal and professional predispositions to direct actions, recognize the influences on design decisions and be accountable for an ethical course of action.

Student Learning Outcomes

The Department of Landscape Architecture at UCD developed the following student learning outcomes in faculty and students have a shared understanding of the goals that are directing curricular development.

Content Knowledge – Students will be able to develop a critical understanding and application of the histories, theories, and practices of landscape architecture and its role in reflecting and shaping culture and environments.

Students should be able to:
- Identify and understand the genesis and impacts of major movements and examples of built landscapes from antiquity to the present.
- Identify and understand various formal, social, economic and political forces giving shape to the built environment.
- Analyze and discuss in written, visual and oral form the relationship of a built work to the culture that produced it.
- Identify and apply design theory and methodology to their work.
- Demonstrate an understanding of the landscape architect’s legal responsibilities with respect to professional standards for public health, safety, welfare and other factors affecting design, construction and practice.
- Demonstrate an understanding of the principles, conventions, standards and applications pertaining to the manufacture and use of construction materials, components and assemblies.
- Demonstrate an awareness of the basic principles of office organization, the different methods of project delivery, the corresponding forms of service contracts, and the evolving legal context to render competent and responsible professional services.

UCD Students at work in the Lower Ninth Ward. From Left: Brian Stuhr, Stephan Har, and Deborah Finch.

UCD Student-led design charette in New Orleans, LA.

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By Brad Goetz

My teaching philosophy centers on two primary themes: 1) methodology for landscape design that has a basis in defensible ideas, and 2) the adoption of Frank Lloyd Wright’s notion with the Taliesin Fellowship – that we learn by doing/making.

The design process employed at CSU follows a logical progression from research, to analysis, to synthesis and finally to evaluation. All of this is done with a goal of making a positive contribution to society and to the environment. To do this, the students at CSU use a great deal of drawing, modeling, writing, and other creative approaches to explore and represent ideas.

Landscape architectural project research is based much in the interpretation and representation of precedent. These precedents include previously designed or incidental landscapes with similar characteristics to the present design problem. Such analysis by the students typically involves making in-depth drawings and summarizing conditions and responses of space and circumstance. Many practicing landscape architects employ a similar research phase in their everyday projects. The so-called design inspiration is often used as a way to convey ideas to clients or property owners before pen ever touches paper.

Landscape architectural analysis, on the other hand, involves rigorous interpretation and representation of the problem, the site (including cultural, environmental, spatial, ephemeral conditions of a site), the program, and the client’s personal goals. This analysis is most often presented as a bubble diagram and is a very effective and simple tool to graphically represent all of the ‘external factors’ affecting design on a single sheet of paper.

Research and analysis can then synthesize into the creation of a landscape design through the lens of individual expression. This is often referred to as artistry and it is the physical form, material, meaning, and experience conferred to the landscape by the designer. The result of a landscape design process becomes understandable through, and results in, a cultural artifact as a built work – the “real” landscape as well as drawings, collages and/or models as design representation.

Evaluation occurs after a project is completed – completion being either representation of a landscape or the actual built landscape. Evaluation can be both objective and subjective. Objective evaluation can be obtained after a landscape is built and desirable goals can be compared to actual measurable accomplishments, such as water cleansing through the addition of a wetland area in the drainage basin of a project. Measurements can be taken to understand whether or not substantial influence has been made.

A student’s studio project presents a different sort of evaluation. Objective evaluation about unrealized projects is difficult; hence, studio teaching and evaluation take on a subjective character. Subjective evaluation is often referred to in the discipline as criticism, and references the history of the designed landscape – how previously designed landscapes accounted for culture, time, and place. Subjective evaluation is usually about the perceived (by an audience or jury) impact of the work in terms of the profession, the wider culture, the time, and the place.

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Criticism usually has broad implications about the expression of landscape.

It is the subjective evaluation that overwhelms the academic environment. Since not many academic (studio) projects are realized, there is no way, other than the opinion of an individual (instructor) or many individuals (a critical jury), of testing design solutions of students in the context of success. Visitation, measurements or environmental impact, or how pleased (or not) a client is with the result, or the experience of a visitor are all imagined circumstances. This subjective condition makes the traditional system of grades very difficult for instructors and students alike because of the complexity in measuring effort, time, etc., involved in the work. Also, because a studio project is not to be realized as built work, there are no “right” answers.

These conditions mean that a teacher of landscape architecture needs a regime of personal development including a rich and contemporary understanding of landscape history, culture, representation (drawings, models), and technology.

For students to become proficient in the design studio it is important to explore a wide range of ideas while concentrating on the fundamental skills of the profession. Studio projects are chosen for their ideological potential and the accompanying project briefs stress a development of process and skill. The projects are typically conceptual in nature and cause the instructor to become, as Alistair McIntosh describes, a fellow traveler with each student in the studio.

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Brad Goetz grew up in Colorado. He studied Landscape Architecture under Merlyn Paulson, Jeff Lakey and Shunsaku Miyagi at Colorado State University. He completed a master’s degree at the Harvard Graduate School of Design and later worked with the Boulder firm of Hyatt, Raines and Vitek. He also spent time with EDAW and currently practices with Studio BCG. Brad has been teaching at Colorado State University for 15 years.

1 The fellow traveler in a design studio learns/discovers with the student rather than asking on the role of master where the student learns the master’s and only the master’s traits or concerns. The fellow traveler enables both student and teacher to engage in the process of design learning. Alistair McIntosh, Studio Teaching: Making, Knowing and Judging in Studio Works (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University GSD).
Oftentimes, I fail to understand the essence of ‘greatness’ until we experience it. A soprano’s solo performance of J.S. Bach’s St. Matthew Passion may impress us with her uplifting voice. Then we visit a rehearsal of the Mormon Tabernacle Choir in Salt Lake. Your daughter’s French horn recital may seem ordinary, yet even a dad’s highest adoration doesn’t compare to the Saturday evening gala performance of Beethoven’s Ninth by the Boston Symphony Orchestra. As “artists” in our own realm, designers can learn from the performances of a soloist or an orchestra by listening to the music.

A symphony written for an orchestra is the most complex of compositions. A symphony requires the most instruments, the most talents, their instruments and their passions greatness comes to the symphony hall. The new era of landscape architecture, what I refer to as Integrated Outdoor Living Design, is an art and a science. Much like the concertmaster, talented architects, landscape architects and interior designers are trained professionals with disciplined skills. Yet, designers are also artists, musicians in their own right. As we move outdoors, from the symphony hall to the grand backyard of a luxury residence, we understand that our collective landscape is changing. Residential outdoor spaces are no longer the formalized halls of just the landscape architect. Outdoor rooms are becoming the playing ground of interior designers and architects. To create harmony in the backyards of luxury and super luxury homes, we as designers mustn’t act as independent designers or soloists; we must perform as an orchestra. The new audience in this new era is expecting it.

Harmony at Home

Something bigger and greater is evolving outdoors. Forward thinking residential landscape architects are looking for ways to affiliate with complementary professionals that are influencing the shape, function and style of luxury outdoor rooms. Architects are designing custom homes with more terraces, decks, patios and courtyards. Interior Designers are being asked to help select pavers, stamped concrete, glass pool mosaics and fire place brick. Lighting Designers bring a higher standard of lighting design expertise to gardens, water features and terraces. Together, they bring harmony to the home.

During the high season, our company receives more and more calls and visits from affluent customers who express a wish list of backyard needs. We as interior designers can fulfill many of them but we don’t have the professional training to fulfill them all. Not even close. But their vision is real and their willingness to invest is immediate. I ask, “Where do I turn to assemble the design team? Who has the complementary skills? Who shares the same passions? Who can design with one vision? Who has the material resources that we can’t supply?” If it’s harmony that the customer seeks and harmony that we want to embrace, then I know, as a soloist, I cannot perform alone. As an orchestra, we can.

The New Backyard

Once the stainless steel grill on wheels rolled outside to America’s decks and patios in the early nineties, the gourmet kitchen was soon to follow. The backyard became an open door to innovations in products, services and materials. The new backyard was evolving. The edges between architecture, landscaping and interior design blur when designing outdoor rooms. For the homeowner, this blurring in roles and responsibilities is a magical blending of color, balance, function and style. Landscapes, hardscapes, decks, pools, furniture, fabrics, pottery and sculpture create the “symphony of sight.” The client cares little about who created the composition, as long as the end result mirrors the photos that inspired them in Architectural Digest, Western Interiors or Veranda.

Their dreams become yours.

The new backyard is inviting architects, landscape architects, lighting designers and interior designers to design together. Why? Residential landscape design is becoming enormously more complex. In addition to mastering plant materials, hardscapes, water feature design and sprinkler systems, today’s residentially focused landscape architect is called on to provide information and solutions for a plethora of outdoor products beyond the traditional scope of their academic training, experience and resources.

Lessons from an Orchestra

From visioning through design development and specification, through installation, the Outdoor Living Design team of the future has to perform as one. These seven lessons will help us as designers transition from soloists to orchestras:

Lesson One: Members of an orchestra have foundational skills and training.

- Musicians must be able to skillfully read and write music and be competent with their instruments.
- The Design Team must be able to skillfully draft by hand and/or AutoCAD and know materials.

Lesson Two: Harmony is created through respecting the complementary talents of others.

- Musicians practice and perform knowing that the whole is greater than the sum of its parts.
- The Design Team must relinquish control to the greater design objective.
Lesson Three: An orchestra practices and performs from the same page.

- For musicians, the score must be adhered to by all.
- For the Design Team, the plan must be implemented by all.

Lesson Four: An orchestra relies on the leadership of its conductor.

- Harmony can be achieved only if there is one musical interpretation.
- Harmonious design can be achieved only if the all elements of design follow the project lead.

Lesson Five: The orchestra must adapt to its environment and acoustics.

- For musicians, varying acoustics will influence how the music is performed.
- For designers, varying site conditions influence our design interpretation.

Lesson Six: A reputable orchestra needs quality instruments. Invest in tools of the trade.

- For musicians, the quality of the sound is a function of the quality of the instruments.
- For the Design Team, the quality of the installation is a function of the quality of the materials.

Lesson Seven: The audience is watching and listening.

- For musicians, the orchestra cannot disappoint its audience.
- For the Design Team, the team must strive to fulfill the dreams of its customers.


So how do we find greatness to together, architect, landscape architect, lighting designer and interior designer? How do we perform as one, allowing our audience to experience the essence of our backyard symphony?

Jim Sweet, principal of a Colorado interior design firm launched its Outdoor Living Design division, Terrace Views, in January, 2008. From its Centennial Design Studio & Showroom, Terrace Views designs and decorates outdoor rooms for their homeowners in concert with select landscape architects and design-build contractors. Jim can be reached at 303-727-1000 or jim@terraceviews.com.

Together, we bring drama. Together we bring warmth. Together, we bring greatness: The essence of our backyard symphony.

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The Denver Housing Authority has enjoyed a rewarding relationship with Denver Water since 2005: Denver Housing Authority installs landscape and irrigation upgrades and Denver Water writes them a check for it. What are friends for? Denver Water has helped the Denver Housing Authority keep maintenance costs under control by offering them a custom irrigation incentive plan, which is saving the agency time, money and plenty of water.

Starting in 2005, Denver Housing Authority partnered with Denver Water to design and implement water-efficient irrigation systems and Xeriscape landscaping in two of its developments. In these areas, Denver Water reduced sod coverage by 25 percent and reduced irrigation water use by 6-8 million gallons annually. Overall, for the Denver Housing Authority, who covers the water bills for all homes and properties it manages, water costs are significantly less and maintenance of home exteriors is much more manageable. However, the most notable perk is the $60,000 Denver Water paid the agency to make these upgrades.

“Denver Water helped Denver Housing Authority make changes that have proven to be cost-effective for property maintenance and enhancement of the community and property,” said Greg Williams, Denver Housing Authority Facilities Manager. “The check is certainly a benefit too.”

Denver Water conservation specialists visited two Denver Housing Authority developments and performed a free audit on their irrigation systems. Specialists outlined a list of landscape and irrigation changes that maximized water savings. The Denver Housing Authority’s Lincoln Park development implemented a thorough landscaping plan based on these suggestions that replaced much of the existing sod, put in water-efficient Xeriscape landscaping, changed sprinkler heads, added drip irrigation and installed new controllers with rain sensors. The price tag for this makeover was around $500,000; however, each year this amount is whittled away when Denver Water mails a $20,000 incentive check for the sizeable water savings.

The Denver Water incentive program pays $7500 per acre foot of water saved over a five year period, including up to $10,000 of landscape design assistance. Additional rebates on rain sensors and irrigation controllers are also available to reduce overall costs. Denver Water was able to design a plan for Denver Housing Authority, based on the upgrades they made, that utilized incentives and rebates to make the construction project more affordable. Denver Water incentive program contracts can be customized for golf courses, commercial properties, Home Owners Associations, park areas and other irrigation customers.

“Our partnership with Denver Water enhances the appearance of our properties in a manner that is both economically and ecologically sustainable,” said Ismael Guerrero, executive director of the Denver Housing Authority.

Residents were initially apprehensive about the landscaping changes, concerned their landscaping would stand out against neighboring lawns. What they found, however, was that Xeriscape lawns were both compatible with Housing and Urban Development standards and equally as aesthetically appealing. Denver Housing Authority facilities managers also found that the irrigation and landscaping changes had little effect on the curb appeal of the homes and helped them with everyday maintenance.

“The healthy, well-maintained landscapes complemented the adjacent neighborhood and enhanced the community as a whole,” Williams said.

The Denver Housing Authority has been emphasizing the importance of conservation as something that is both economically and environmentally responsible. Denver Water’s incentive program makes being green more economical by shortening the payback period for irrigation and landscape upgrades or modifications.

Allison Shaw

The Denver Water incentive program pays for irrigation efficiency.
Discovering New Design Firm Models (originally published in DesignIntelligence)

By Phillip G. Bernstein

Fixing the design industry’s economic problems isn’t simple. But research by two Senior Fellows at the Advanced Management Institute shows how design firms can not only survive, but thrive in today’s economy.

For Kyle V. Davy, AIA, and Susan L. Harris, Ph.D., a two-year-long research project with 23 design professionals as research partners led to the conclusion that the industry must break out of its old economic model. They believe that architecture and engineering firms should move away from selling hours, and instead take stock of what value they are creating for clients.

The research findings, which also draw on more than a decade of ongoing research projects at AMI (Advanced Management Institute), are presented in their report Discovering A Search For New Models of Practice, now available from the Advanced Management Institute.

Davy and Harris came up with nine key findings which outline how design firms came to have the business model they use today, why it no longer works, and what firms must do to survive in the future. Davy and Harris explain that the old business model is focused on selling time, and making short-term profits; the new business model they propose takes a longer-term approach based on creating value. Under the new model, design firms take on the role of partner and strategic advisor to their clients.

“Value creation lies at the heart of a professional design firm’s performance,” write Davy and Harris. “Design professionals create value as they shape the built environment where people live, communities thrive, companies prosper, and society progresses. That value and the compensation they earn for their efforts are directly linked to their own organizational success.”

Here is a summary of their key findings:

1. Design firms are trapped in an antiquated business model. Design firms operated in a boom period following World War II. Standard agreements set their fees, and A/E professionals enjoyed relative independence. But recessions in the 1970s and 1980s forced firms to adopt new business practices: marketing, strategic planning, financial and accounting systems. In the 1990s, while the U.S. economy shifted from being capital-based to being knowledge-based, project delivery methods changed, and design firms were challenged by new competitors, they stayed with the old, familiar business model—and began to fall out of step.

2. Design firms can catch up to the knowledge economy by becoming “Living Companies.” Davy and Harris differentiate between economic companies and living companies. Living companies exist to fulfill their own potential and become as great as they can be and perpetuate themselves as an ongoing community, according to Arie De Geus, whose work, along with that of James Collins and Jerry Porras, is cited by AMI. “Profitability is a symptom of corporate health, not a predictor,” according to De Geus. Living companies are learning organizations, have a strong sense of identity, are tolerant and decentralized, with a diverse, entrepreneurial staff, and utilize conservative financing, minimizing their debt to provide flexibility. In comparing the two models, Collins and Porras found that a portfolio of visionary companies outperformed a comparison set of economic companies by a factor of six over a 65-year period. A dollar invested in the visionary “Living Company” portfolio on Jan. 1, 1926, would have been worth $6,356 by Dec. 31, 1990. A dollar invested in the economic company portfolio would have grown to just $955.

3. Design firms must create value, not sell hours. Davy and Harris discuss how the focus on utilization has trapped design firms in a vicious cycle: In the escalating effort to boost utilization, firms cut research and development, training and coaching time, and arrest efforts to build their infrastructure and prepare the firm for the future. While this drives up profits in the short term, eventually this tactic erodes the firm’s creative and innovative abilities, leaves staff overworked and prevents the firm from confronting real market conditions. We must realize that design firms don’t sell hours—they create value. Even Wal-Mart recognizes the importance of non-monetary value, using such intangible assets such as brand awareness, human capital, knowledge assets and leadership qualities of management as measures of valuing a company’s stock.

4. Design professionals must understand living systems, business ecosystems, and value networks. Again, Davy and Harris turn to the work of De Geus, who argues that a living company is nested within a hierarchical structure that connects outwardly to larger living systems (community, nation, society) and inwardly to smaller business units. Each system works to preserve itself, and each is dependent on the health of the larger living systems it is a part of.

Business ecosystems are communities made up of interacting organizations and individuals. Business ecosystems typically revolve around one or more central companies, such as Wal-Mart, which has a network of businesses around it who align their strategies around Wal-Mart’s needs and actions, and contributing value to Wal-Mart and each other. Design companies contribute value to the ecosystems that form around their clients. Value networks describe the value created, assessed, and exchanged within living systems. Design firms must examine these systems, learn how value is assessed, and decide where they fit and how they can contribute to the system’s success.

5. Design firms need to examine their work with clients in terms of collaboration, transformation and experience. Citing the work of Ronald Heifitz, Davy and Harris outline three types of work that are important today.

• Type I Work tends to be technical; it addresses a known problem with a known solution, and little participation by the client;
• Type II Work is collaborative; it addresses a known problem, the solution to which requires interaction with the client, and therefore leadership, facilitation, and collaboration skills;
• Type III Work can be called transformational. This work is more complex, where neither the problem nor the solution is yet understood. Clients need a trusted advisor to guide them through these new challenges—which require change and transformation as part of their solution.

All three types of work have different implications for creating value, and therefore different implications for pricing.

6. A new ecology of design firms. It is not too late for design firms to adapt their business models, to become living companies matched to their client needs, Davy and Harris write. They don’t have to be commodity providers. They needn’t cede the role of strategic advisor to management consulting firms, design/build companies and foreign competitors. The advent of the Internet spawned a boom in the invention of new business models. While eBay created a new model for the garage sale, and Charles Schwab wiped out its own traditional brokerage by starting an online brokerage service, design firms failed to embrace the move towards evolution and diversity. By adhering to a single business model, design firms came to look like a single commodity to clients: As far as clients can tell, design firms are all alike and all produce the same product.

In nature, this lack of diversity is often the precursor of disaster—life forms that can’t adapt often succumb to changes in the environment and the competition of more flexible new arrivals. New species of management consulting firms, design-build companies, and foreign competitors have already eroded the design firm’s traditional role. Design firms must move quickly to increase their diversity from one another, and adapt to their clients’ needs for Type II and Type III work. An increased diversity of design firms can both survive and thrive in the new economy.

The design industry must understand the evolutionary role of technology. Davy and Harris outline six major trends transforming the world of design firms:

• The shift from capital to knowledge. Machines not only do what formerly manual labor; they have also taken on mental functions. As a result, we need workers who function at higher levels of knowledge to maneuver in this complex environment. Human capital is more important than ever.
• The shift from a local, geographically bounded world to a global one. Global work is no longer limited to large corporations. Inexpensive communication and faster travel make the global environment available to organizations of all sizes.
• Shift from having two options—a one-of-a-kind product or a mass-produced product—to the new option of mass customization, (i.e. the ability to purchase a great basic product or a mass-produced product)—to the new option of mass customization, (i.e. the ability to purchase a great basic product or a mass-produced product).
• The ever-greater segmentation of design services. Computer users by workers in countries where labor costs are now cheaper have shifted certain functions from high-cost to low-cost, e.g. the use of offshore CAD operations for producing design documents. At the same time, design professionals have given up responsibility for program management, construction management, and other services.

In reaction to this, some now want to reclaim control of the design and construction process as a whole.

• The shift from a centralized management approach to...
8. The design industry must lay the foundation for a new ecology of firms. Davy and Harris applied the information/technology trends described above to these basic questions: Who do you work for—is your client capital-intensive or knowledge-intensive, is it a local or global company? What is your business providing—integrated or segmented services, one-of-a-kind design, mass production or mass customization? How does your business provide services—alone or through networks/associations. This has led firms to operate through networks and alliances. They must leverage the new tools available to them through technology and advances in management techniques to create new design processes and new forms of value for their clients.

9. Design firms can create value by transforming design. Just as the digital spreadsheet revolutionized the world of finance, design firms can revolutionize how we use, work, and modify the built and natural environments. Design firms are critical to the processes that create the infrastructure for human society, and are critical to the processes by which we preserve and sustain the larger natural environment that humanity lives within.

Clients need the wisdom and imagination that only design firms can offer them. But in order to survive, the design industry must take stock of alternative business models, look at how they fit into their client’s business ecosystems, and have a clear understanding of what value they bring to the design process. They must leverage the new tools available to them through technology and advances in management techniques to create new design processes and new forms of value for their clients.

Phillip Bernstein is a practicing architect with twenty-five years of experience and a vice president at Autodesk, Inc., a provider of architectural and engineering software, where he leads industry strategy and relations for the AEC Division. At Autodesk he is responsible for setting the company’s future vision and strategy for technology serving the building industry, as well as cultivating and sustaining the firm’s relationships with strategic industry leaders and associations. Prior to joining Autodesk, Mr. Bernstein was an associate principal at Pelli Clarke Pelli Architects. He writes and lectures extensively about practice and technology issues and has been published in Architectural Record, Architecture, Design Intelligence, Fortune, and Perspecta. Mr. Bernstein is a trustee of the Emma Willard School of Troy, N.Y., a senior fellow of the Design Futures Council, a fellow of the American Institute of Architects, and former chair of the AIA National Documents Committee. Mr. Bernstein is also a lecturer at the Yale School of Architecture.

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executive committee has given me the opportunity to guide and mold the future of our profession and to grow professionally through regular interaction with the leaders of our profession,” commented Dennis Brookie, a senior associate at Wren Associates, Inc. “This in turn promotes my own and my firm’s marketability throughout our sphere of influence and among industry partners.”

Association membership provides exposure to new ideas and practices. Whether it’s casual conversation at a professional get-together or a formal presentation at a national meeting, your professional association is a virtual petri dish for innovative thinking. Your fellow members can be a rich source of ideas, information and even inspiration.

To sum up, if you want to rise to the top of your profession, you need your professional organization. Through that membership, you’ll become better at your work and better at your business. And because of the benefits your active participation provides, you may very well make more money—even in these tough times.

Some specific Membership benefits, that fill all of these aforementioned reasons for joining, are built into both National ASLA and the Colorado Chapter, and include:

- Credibility
  - Only members can use the ASLA professional designation.
  - Advocates the profession and offers the membership active participation through the Advocacy Network where ASLA communicates and connects you to the latest issues important to the profession and the policymakers you need to contact.
- Visibility
  - Both ASLA National and the Colorado Chapter sponsor an Awards Program that recognizes outstanding work.
- Open Doors & Makes Connections
  - Annual Meetings and events that connect you with the leaders and peers in the profession. In the past we have co-hosted the Chapter’s annual meeting with the AIA and APA.
  - Orchestrate Professional Practice Networks (PPPs) that lets you connect with professionals who share your interests. First one is free then small fee for additional ones. Join as many as you like.
  - JobsLink connects employers and potential employees.
- Exposure to New Ideas & Best Practices
  - Landscape Architecture Magazine is just the beginning of keeping abreast of what’s happening.
  - ASLA National membership offers other publications free to members such as LATIS (landscape Architectural Technical Series), Electronic Land Online, and newsletter called The Dirt.
  - Weekly eBulletin of ASLA Colorado activities, events and timely news.
  - ASLA Colorado’s Quarterly magazine Exposures.
  - Professional education seminars with opportunities to both take or teach.

VOLUNTEERING

In-District Advocacy Day

Dennis Brookie

On February 18, 2009, Dennis Brookie, John Spencer and Craig Coronato met with The Honorable Mike Coffman at his local Colorado district office where he represents the U.S. Congressional 6th District of Colorado. The ASLA of Colorado representatives met with Rep. Coffman to discuss current issues, trends and bills impacting Colorado landscape architects. Coffman took the opportunity to ask how the slump in the housing market and the sluggish economy were impacting Colorado Landscape Architects. The representatives explained how the profession was directly linked to the housing market as well as the local and national economic downturn. Mr. Brookie explained how many individuals and design firms are reducing staff, employee benefits or employee’s salary and work hours. He continued to explain that many developers and home builders have cancelled their ongoing and proposed projects that were being lead by landscape architects or included landscape architects on the design teams. Additionally, projects that were moving forward with municipal bonds were being placed on hold due to the fact that the bonds could no longer be funded with the high interest rates. The interest in some cases has more than tripled which prohibits continuing with the projects financially.

Mr. Coronato explained the Historic American Landscape Survey (HALS) program, which documents American landscapes with historic or cultural significance throughout Colorado and the United States. He discussed local examples of HALS sites that included; Riverside Cemetery, S.R. DeBoer Estate and the Santa Fe Trail Mountain Branch. The ASLA of Colorado representatives asked for Rep. Coffman’s support for continued funding for the HALS program. Since its inception in 2000 the HALS program has not been funded.

The meeting also included a discussion on the importance of multivariate, sustainable transportation planning and design. Mr. Spencer discussed specific Colorado transportation projects and how landscape architects lead or played key roles on these projects. Spencer also explained that Colorado ranks within the top ten states with highest number of bicycle commuters/state capita within the United States. The representatives ended by asking for Rep. Coffman’s support of H.R. 3, Safe, Accountable, Flexible, Efficient Transportation Equity Act-A Legacy for Users. This is legislation for funding of federal-aid highways, highway safety programs, in transit programs, and other transportation programs throughout Colorado and the United States.

STUDENT CHAPTERS

Student Design Awards

ASLA is pleased to announce the 2009 ASLA Student Honor and Merit Awards for both the University of Colorado Denver (UCD) and Colorado State University (CSU). The procedure for selection is a two-step process. It begins with the department faculty selecting the student nominees that meet the following criteria:

1. Nominees must be in their final two years of study with an expected graduation date between Spring 2009 and Spring 2010.
2. Nominees must be truly outstanding as measured by your program’s long-term standards of excellence.
3. Nominees must have demonstrated the highest level of academic scholarship and of accomplishments in skills related to the art and technology of landscape architecture.
4. Nominees must have demonstrated personal qualities and skills of:
   a. responsiveness and willingness to work with others,
   b. self-motivation and responsibility,
   c. design abilities: exploration, discovery, synthesis and representation of landscape architecture design.

The students nominated by their schools were then required to present their work to a jury composed of ASLA Colorado representatives. The respective juries selected the following individuals to represent the Students of the ASLA Colorado Chapter at the national level.

Honor Awards

David Sprunt, UCD
Industrial Gardening
Christine Poirier Shime, UCD
Industrial Ecology: Closed Loop System
Ann Cawse, CSU
Shihomi Kuriyagawa, CSU
Ryan Sand, CSU

Merit Awards

Maureen Cameron, UCD
Nick Soper, UCD
Andrea Day, CSU
Kyle Wolf, CSU
Jeff Lombardi, CSU

FIRM NEWS

Denver Design District Earns Recognition as Smart Growth Project from the Colorado Tomorrow Alliance

Denver, Colorado – Last week a jury formed by the Colorado Tomorrow Alliance (CTA) recognized the Denver Design District for the project’s demonstration of smart growth principles. The proposed project is nearly 60 acres of infill redevelopment, designed to be a transit urban village located just 1.5 miles from downtown Denver.

The CTA is an organization of 17 business, environmental, academic, housing, government organizations and associations working together to foster smart growth principles in the region and state. With the Denver region projected to add more than one million people in the next 20 years – and the state more than two million – the challenge is to find ways to accommodate this growth while enhancing neighborhoods and protecting the environment. CTA is responding to that challenge through initiatives such as the recognition program.

In recognizing the Denver Design District project in the CTA Recognition Program, Building Better Communities, the jury lauded the developer, CF Property Management, for working to redevelop a mixed-use infill site including residential, commercial, retail, transportation, hotel, and education.

The recognition also pointed out that the project brings a higher density, compact design that will create a unique sense of place. The project embodies many other smart growth principles, including proximity to two light rail stations; green building techniques; and intention to achieve LEED certification; and creation of a pedestrian-oriented community similar to other award-winning neighborhoods in Denver such as Riverfront Park, Stapleton, Highlands Garden Village and the proposed redevelopment of the Gates Company property.

“Through the developer’s intention to redevelop three distinct areas – Broadway Marketplace, the Denver Design Center and the Collection – with a common vision,” said CTA Co-chair Richard Epstein of RNL Design. “With green building techniques and the incorporation of multiple transportation choices, the project promises to become a vibrant, sustainable, new neighborhood.”

The goal of CTA’s Recognition Program is to promote and implement smart growth principles by recognizing proposed projects prior to full development approval! The program previously recognized Alinea Station in Aurora – a transit-oriented development project along the I-25 Fastracks corridor – as a
smart growth project, and The Walnut, an urban infill project near downtown Boulder.

The Denver Design District will incorporate the Regional Transportation District’s Alameda Station into the development, and will take advantage of the Broadway Station adjacent to the project. The project will also expand upon existing Denver Design Center tenants such as Quest diagnostics and Wells Music, adding a significant education component. By retaining current tenants the developer ensures that surrounding neighborhoods will still have convenient shopping options. The project is also planning a series of parks and open spaces that will incorporate sculptures and outdoor art projects. The program calls for nearly 900,000 square feet of retail, wholesale and office uses on the site.

**LEED Accreditation**

Aspen, Colorado – Valarie Alexander Yaw, principal at Bluegreen, is recently recognized as an accredited Leadership in Energy & Environmental Design— or LEED—professional. According to the United States Green Building Council, which oversees this designation, LEED accreditation “is the mark of the most qualified, educated, and influential green building professionals in the marketplace.”

Motivated to become a LEED accredited professional following the adoption of the Pitkin County Energy Action Plan, Valerie notes LEED accreditation adds to her firm’s already solid commitment to the green building philosophy. In 2008, Bluegreen received ZGreen certification, a unique City of Aspen program that distinguishes businesses implementing real sustainability that will encourage radical improvements in the community’s energy needs, and replace all fossil fuels. The neighborhood is intertwined with natural systems, stormwater fed landscapes, and civic spaces. Rain and snow melt feed street tree rain gardens, percolation parks, plazas, and community gardens. Geos received final development approval from the City of Arvada and will begin construction in 2009.

The Geos Neighborhood incorporates symbiotic relationships in site planning and architecture, at all scales. Urban density is optimized with passive solar access. Stormwater is integrated and omnipresent within the neighborhood layout. Energy is generated from ground source loop fields, solar thermal panels, and photovoltaic panels on every rooftop. The overall town plan aims to foster bio-civic relationships with natural processes, neighborhood ecology, and environmental stewardship.

The neighborhood is the brain child of developer Norbert Klebi, who is seeking to build a demonstration project in sustainable living. The neighborhood is the brain child of developer Norbert Klebi, who is seeking to build a demonstration project in sustainable living. The neighborhood incorporates symbiotic relationships in site planning and architecture, at all scales. Urban density is optimized with passive solar access. Stormwater is integrated and omnipresent within the neighborhood layout. Energy is generated from ground source loop fields, solar thermal panels, and photovoltaic panels on every rooftop. The neighborhood is the brain child of developer Norbert Klebi, who is seeking to build a demonstration project in sustainable living. The neighborhood incorporates symbiotic relationships in site planning and architecture, at all scales. Urban density is optimized with passive solar access. Stormwater is integrated and omnipresent within the neighborhood layout. Energy is generated from ground source loop fields, solar thermal panels, and photovoltaic panels on every rooftop. The neighborhood is the brain child of developer Norbert Klebi, who is seeking to build a demonstration project in sustainable living. The neighborhood incorporates symbiotic relationships in site planning and architecture, at all scales. Urban density is optimized with passive solar access. Stormwater is integrated and omnipresent within the neighborhood layout. Energy is generated from ground source loop fields, solar thermal panels, and photovoltaic panels on every rooftop. The neighborhood is the brain child of developer Norbert Klebi, who is seeking to build a demonstration project in sustainable living. The neighborhood incorporates symbiotic relationships in site planning and architecture, at all scales. Urban density is optimized with passive solar access. Stormwater is integrated and omnipresent within the neighborhood layout. Energy is generated from ground source loop fields, solar thermal panels, and photovoltaic panels on every rooftop. The neighborhood is the brain child of developer Norbert Klebi, who is seeking to build a demonstration project in sustainable living.

**ASLA Colorado 2009 Conference: Tools for Change**

The reviews are in and the ASLA Colorado 2009 Conference, Tools for Change, held at the University of Denver on May 15, 2009 was filled with “high energy” and “excellent content” that was relevant to “the current economic climate.” Local humorist David Shirley was the luncheon keynote. He provided a very entertaining presentation with an important message about laughter and life.

The conference was attended by nearly 70 registrants, speakers, guests, and exhibitors, who together brought eleven hours of non-stop education, entertainment, networking, and business opportunities to the Landscape Architects and sponsors who participated in the day-long event. This springtime conference marked a move from the usual fall conference schedule. Future ASLA Colorado conferences will also be held in the spring in order to fall “conference fatigue” and competition with ASLA national conference.


This year’s conference planning committee was chaired by ASLA Colorado Past President Pat Mundus, of Mundus-Bishop Design. The conference could not have happened without the support of Conference Direct, who volunteered on the steering committee; Seth Clark of ValleyCrest Landscape Development, Kimberly Douglass of studioNSITE, Lucy Girley of EcoDesigns Landscape Architecture, Vivian Kovacs of Landscape Forms, and Scott Sinn of EDAW. Mary Jo Lagasse of Conference Direct was invaluable in working with the meeting facility. Greg Williams, ASLA Colorado Association Manager, provided overall support and coordination services.

The next ASLA CO conference will be in the spring of 2010, watch the regular membership eBulletins and monitor the website at www.asla.org for updates and future information.

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**Colorado Design Firms Win National Award For Net Zero Energy Neighborhood**

Eldorado Springs, Colorado – The American Society of Landscape Architects in Washington DC has announced on May 5th that an Honor Award has been bestowed on the Geos Net Zero Energy Neighborhood planned for Arvada, Colorado.

Designed by David Kahn Studios of Eldorado Springs, Colorado and Michael Tavel Architects of Denver, Colorado, Geos will be the largest net-zero energy, urban mixed-use neighborhood in the United States. Earth and sun power will completely sustain the community’s energy needs, and replace all fossil fuels. The neighborhood is intertwined with natural systems, stormwater fed landscapes, and civic spaces. Rain and snow melt feed street tree rain gardens, percolation parks, plazas, and community gardens. Geos received final development approval from the City of Arvada and will begin construction in 2009.

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**Before It Was Pretty**

Aspen, Colorado – SAW (Studio for Art + Works) Gallery in Carbondale, Colorado hosted an exhibit where local architects, landscape architects, furniture designers and lighting designers were the featured artists. The gallery’s theme: Before it was Pretty. Designers were invited to create art installations that demonstrated the design process in action. No finished drawings were allowed; no flashy marketing images; just raw, gritty, sketchy, and inspirational works to offer a glimpse into the designer’s mind. To illustrate the process, design teams creatively used materials ranging from tracing paper sketches to 3D models, and construction materials to office toys to create their individual exhibits from floor to ceiling.

During the opening reception, the general public and designers alike were invited to participate in a model-off competition, entitled Shake your Model Maker. Six teams were given a bag of recycled materials and 60 minutes to construct a model from a top secret brief that was not disclosed until teams were geared and ready. Although every team was a winner, the Bluegreen team (the only landscape architect team participating in the event), took home first prize for their innovative model. That’s right, the landscape architects prevailed!

Timed well with landscape architecture month, the gallery has been open for display throughout the month of April. The exhibit uniquely demonstrated a range of work and methods of process. Approximately ten local firms participated along with many folks from the local community attending. The event was a huge success and would not have been pulled off without the hard work of the organizer, Andrea Korber from Land+Shelter.
Who’s Going to Pay for All of This?

Brian Koenigberg, RLA, AICP

One decade ago there were no houses at Stapleton, no parks, no Town Center. One decade ago the Villa Italia Shopping Center at Belmar sat as an underutilized urban eyesore. One decade ago early residential construction at Lowry begins but its success was unknown. One decade ago the Congress for New Urbanism (CNU) convened in Denver to discuss the future of mixed use development projects across the country. The preachings of CNU were still seen by many as "idealist" and developers, for the most part, did not see the value added by building friendly, walkable communities.

Well, the Congress for New Urbanism is back in Denver and their development ethics have been tested time and time again across the nation with great success. There is no doubt that conference participants will see dozens of powerpoint slideshows plastered with images of Stapleton and Belmar. There is no doubt that these are two huge success stories for Denver, helping to put us at the forefront of urban planning in the country: Right up there with California. Is this where we want to be, however?

Walkable communities, those espoused by the Congress for New Urbanism, are founded on an adequate number of parks, schools, churches and libraries all within walking distance of neighborhood residents. There is no doubt that is indeed a very noble idea. However, much of the existing public infrastructure within the Metro Area is underfunded. Most libraries are only open a few days a week. Schools are faced with decreasing the number of teachers while enrollment continues to grow. Facilities at public parks continue to fall into disrepair or are maintained at an inadequate level of service. All of this is due to our tax revenues being stretched too far as it is.

So when a new urban re-development is proposed, complete with its acres upon acres of public parks and open space and new state-of-the-art public schools, who is going to pay for these visions of grandeur? When these lands are removed from the tax rolls to become beacons of public good, the tax revenues in these areas plummet, obviously becoming a burden on the neighborhood and city alike.

As we design a future for the City of Denver, let's keep in mind that everything comes with a cost. Even when we are doing good.

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