

# URBANLAND



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ANNUAL DESIGN ISSUE

## TRADE WINDS

Repositioning tall buildings

## Art Parks: Art Blended with Green Space

America's public spaces are combining parkland and art programming; now that the definition of public art is expanding to include temporary and dynamic works, this inclusion ultimately may affect private developers' "percent for art" selections.

THE TEN-MONTH-OLD Olympic Sculpture Park in Seattle is a lesson in site specificity. Walking among the valleys and inclines created by New York-based design firm Weiss/Manfredi, the 8.5-acre (3.4-ha) park choreographs views to the skyline and to the Olympic Mountains, and offers many intimate glimpses of artworks. From a distance, the five massive steel elements of Richard Serra's *Wake* evoke the ripples of adjacent Elliott Bay and the Puget Sound. The 36-year-old *Eagle* by Alexander Calder is perched to take flight, and *Typewriter Eraser, Scale X*, a 1999 collaboration between Claes Oldenburg and his wife, Coosje van Bruggen, appears to careen down to the park's new crescent-shaped beach.

The sculpture park, operated by the Seattle Art Museum (SAM), is not the first example of wedding art to green space. A trend cemented by Battery Park City in New York and accelerated by the Chicago's Millennium Park three years ago, public spaces are combining parkland and art programming. Although each of these parks is the result of different public and private collaborations, they demonstrate that art parks appeal to multiple constituencies—winning a seemingly impossible land grab in the case of the Olympic Sculpture Park, or major funding for the ArtsPark at Young Circle in Hollywood, Florida—and to a range of users. These examples also suggest that the definition of public art is expanding to include temporary works, which may ultimately affect private developers' "percent for art" selections. ("Percent for art" selections are artworks that are mandated usually by municipal governments and funded by a small portion of a total building budget.)

Martha Wyckoff, a national board member of the San Francisco-

based Trust for Public Land (TPL), had not expected to change the face of downtown Seattle when she accepted her mother's last-minute invitation to join her on a fishing trip to Mongolia in 1996. But once there, Wyckoff found a travel companion in Mimi Gardner Gates, director of the Seattle Art Museum, and the conversation turned to their hometown.

Seattle Commons, a proposed 80-acre (32.3-ha) park that would have provided much-needed green space to core Seattle residents, had just failed to gain voter support in a second funding measure. Gates spoke of the missed opportunity to display monumental sculpture, fearing that a lack of exhibition

space would compel local collectors to donate their art to other cities. "Great partnerships come of unlikely partners," Wyckoff says.

The boards of TPL and SAM joined forces to create a sculpture park shortly thereafter, and Wyckoff and TPL project manager Chris Rogers learned that Union Oil of California (Unocal) was going to sell a former transfer site and fuel storage facility. The remediated brownfield on Elliott Bay was the last undeveloped waterfront lot in Seattle, and Unocal was already in the process of reviewing developers' proposals to build 850,000 square feet (78,967 sq m) of commercial and residential uses on it. In February 1999, the company



The Seattle Art Museum's Olympic Sculpture Park, located on the last developable waterfront parcel in the city, includes intimate glimpses of artworks such as Richard Serra's *Wake* and Alexander Calder's *Eagle*.



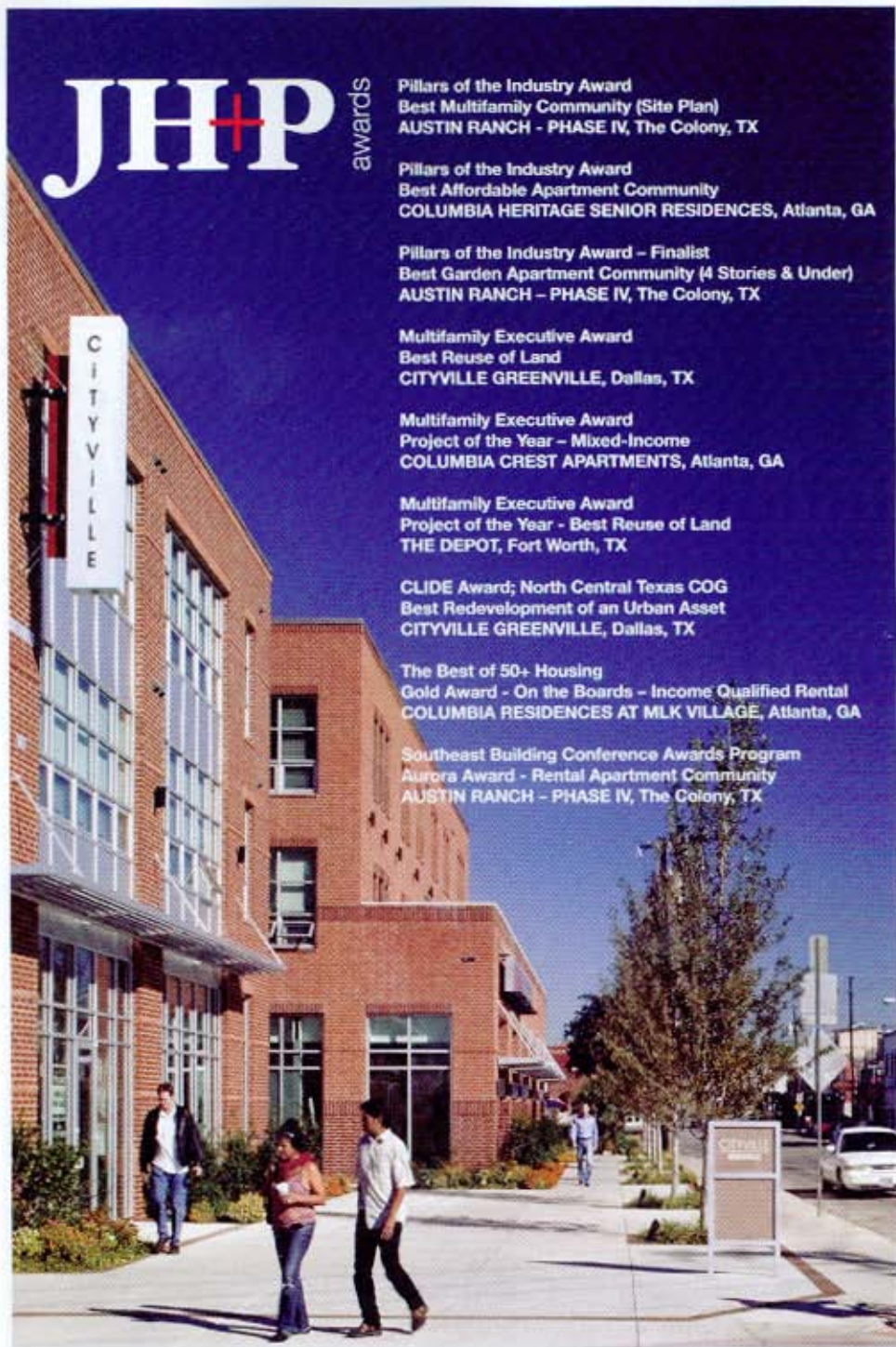
accepted \$100 from TPL and SAM to hold the purchase, agreeing to close on the \$16.5 million property six months later.

"Unocal saw the potential in turning what had been a problem site into a public asset," Rogers says of the turnaround decision. "They were also concerned about perceived liability over future development on the site—what if some of the contamination was still in place?"

While museum and TPL officials note the importance of public support from then-mayor Paul Schell, the biggest impetus to achieving the sale came from Jon Shirley, a museum board member and former president and COO of Microsoft, and his wife, Mary. In addition to contributing \$5 million to the fundraising campaign, the Shirleys promised to endow the Olympic Sculpture Park with \$20 million if the museum could assemble the purchase price. The endowment would ensure the park's upkeep, and, ostensibly, its operation as a free public space.

The process of acquiring the land and transforming it into the \$85 million Olympic Sculpture Park has had to clear other hurdles. Even before the Weiss/Manfredi design was revealed to the public in 2001, for example, the Nisqually earthquake last February underscored the vulnerable Alaskan Way viaduct and seawall, handing SAM the possibility that its site would be pegged for a replacement tunnel. (The project team undertook a reinforcement of its 800-foot-long [244-m-long] section of seawall on its own, building a federally funded underwater buttress that serves also as a salmon habitat.)

While the possibility of a viaduct replacement tunnel is not dead, today the Olympic Sculpture Park is a fully realized work of art, architecture, and landscape. Bicycle commuters ride through Myrtle Edwards Park and a city-owned parcel of Olympic Sculpture Park that SAM maintains for the municipality. Art tourists bridge the arterial roadway Elliott



urban planning :: mixed-use communities :: sustainable communities :: affordable housing :: senior housing :: military housing :: student housing

# JHP awards

**Pillars of the Industry Award**  
**Best Multifamily Community (Site Plan)**  
**AUSTIN RANCH - PHASE IV, The Colony, TX**

**Pillars of the Industry Award**  
**Best Affordable Apartment Community**  
**COLUMBIA HERITAGE SENIOR RESIDENCES, Atlanta, GA**

**Pillars of the Industry Award - Finalist**  
**Best Garden Apartment Community (4 Stories & Under)**  
**AUSTIN RANCH - PHASE IV, The Colony, TX**

**Multifamily Executive Award**  
**Best Reuse of Land**  
**CITYVILLE GREENVILLE, Dallas, TX**

**Multifamily Executive Award**  
**Project of the Year - Mixed-Income**  
**COLUMBIA CREST APARTMENTS, Atlanta, GA**

**Multifamily Executive Award**  
**Project of the Year - Best Reuse of Land**  
**THE DEPOT, Fort Worth, TX**

**CLIDE Award; North Central Texas COG**  
**Best Redevelopment of an Urban Asset**  
**CITYVILLE GREENVILLE, Dallas, TX**

**The Best of 50+ Housing**  
**Gold Award - On the Boards - Income Qualified Rental**  
**COLUMBIA RESIDENCES AT MLK VILLAGE, Atlanta, GA**

**Southeast Building Conference Awards Program**  
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Avenue and an active BNSF rail line that connect the park to Myrtle Edwards and the Bay, or attend music and film events in the amphitheater.

The sculpture park has also had a ripple effect, according to Rogers, now a partner at the Seattle-based development company Point 32. Within the adjoining Belltown neighborhood, "most of the low-rise buildings and surface parking lots have been transformed into condominium or apartment buildings."

Like Seattle's Elliott Bay, Buffalo Bayou was once a thriving industrial zone for the city of Houston, Texas. With a shift to a service economy, and the movement of larger shipping vessels to deeper ports in Galveston, the meandering body of water was ready for a makeover.

In 1986, the Buffalo Bayou Partnership (BBP) was established to redevelop the namesake bayou.

Although the nonprofit group was a volunteer organization, it still managed to transform the area into a park; the park's first phase included the renovation of the former tennial Park;

when Anne Olson was hired as the first full-time employee and president of the BBP, the organization went on to raise \$5 million to complete the second phase of the park.

Although the BBP was originally staffed to administer a windfall of Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act (ISTEA) funds intended to build hiking and biking trails along the bayou, the organization managed to embrace public art from its beginning, installing three such works in Sesquicentennial Park. "It's something that can activate the bayou even more," Olson says of the move to art. "A lot of people don't jog, so I think art helps attract people and gives a new twist on the meaning of the place. And with a lot of focus on cultural tourism, public art can really put us on the map."

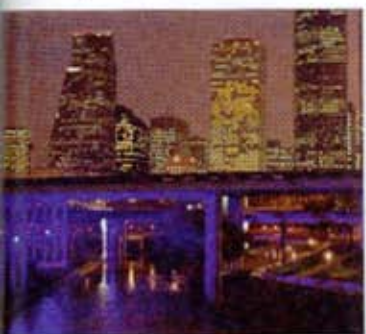
One series of trails, the year-old Sabine-to-Bagby Promenade, also includes art. Stainless-steel boat sculptures by John Runnels serve as landmarks for pedestrians, who

rarely frequented this 23-acre (9.3-ha) stretch of parkland previously. A majority of the art budget was committed to lighting design by the New York studio L'Observatoire, which programmed the luminaires to shift from blue to white to correspond with the lunar cycle. That, too, Olson says, is meant to attract the public: "By having things that change, you'll be able to keep people coming, both new people and regulars."

In that spirit, the BBP and arts consultant Sandra Percival have recently established a series of partnerships with local art institutions, including the Museum of Fine Arts and the Menil Collection, to commission temporary art installations on the bayou to coincide with different exhibitions.

ArtsPark at Young Circle, the recently completed 12-acre (4.8-ha) centerpiece of Hollywood, Florida, represents another interpretation of

**Buffalo Bayou in Houston includes the Sabine-to-Bagby Promenade with public art such as stainless-steel boat sculptures that serve as landmarks for pedestrians (bottom). In addition, programmed luminaires shift from blue to white to correspond with the lunar cycle (below).**



TOM POUYAN GROUP



LEIGHTON

public art. The buildings designed by Glavovic Studio, located in the southeast quadrant of the circle, will house groups of glassblowers, metalworkers, and visual artists who work in studios in front of onlookers and teach free classes to the public.

The park was born of a confluence of forces. In 2001, Glavovic founding architect Margi Nothard was approached by Hollywood's Community Redevelopment Agency (CRA) to design a gazebo for Young Circle, which was located at the intersection of the city's commercial core, a 22-block cultural district serving all of Broward County, and a historic residential neighborhood. It also sat within the half square mile that had been named the downtown redevelopment district in 1979; the district has been granted tax increment financing until 2025.

Nothard responded to then-CRA director Jim Edwards's request with a redesign of the entire site, which, due to a lack of visibility and an intimidating traffic condition (Young Circle is ringed by Federal Highway), suffered from underuse. "Downtown is where people were hanging out, so if the edge [of Young Circle] was not interesting, then nobody would come to the center," Nothard says of her vision, comparing it to a simpler beautification project. "My goal was to create a powerful series of connections along the periphery that drew you to the park."

Nothard's concept took a step closer to reality when, in 2002, Broward County issued a request for letters of intent (RLI) for its "artsparks" initiative, which would provide as much as \$5 million in funding from a 2000 land preservation bond. Mary Becht, the director of the Broward County cultural division, says the matching grant was written into the bond issue because, in researching the county's 2010 community cultural plan, public respondents requested hands-on facilities to supplement the institutional

**A new public art project, ArtsPark at Young Circle is a ten-acre (4.04-ha) circular park in downtown Hollywood, Florida, that includes site-specific artworks integrated with the landscape. Buildings on the southeast quadrant of the circle will house groups of glassblowers, metalworkers, and visual artists who will work in studios in front of onlookers and teach free classes to the public.**



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settings of the existing cultural district. (ArtsPark at Young Circle also includes an interactive artwork by Ritsuko Taho mandated by the county's 2 Percent for Art program.)

ArtsPark, now managed by the municipality, has since budgeted more than \$20 million to complete the first two phases of work. The workshop and classroom buildings, as well as a not-yet-funded phase-three performing arts space, are requirements of the county. Steve Shulman is president of the Greater Hollywood Arts Foundation, which plans to raise the \$6.8 million required of the third phase of the ArtsPark project, which he directs.

Becht has expanded the ArtsPark initiative to encompass projects in three other Broward County cities,

with total expenditures exceeding \$60 million. Neil Fritz, who has been director of the CRA since 2005, says that ArtsPark anchored Hollywood's recent residential boom, with the massing of new buildings emphasizing the park's circular footprint. The group is now working on luring office and mixed-use tenants to ensure lively activity around the park's immediate vicinity throughout the day. **UL**

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