



MiSITES

VOLUME 17, NUMBER 3

MICHIGAN CHAPTER OF THE AMERICAN SOCIETY
OF LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTS



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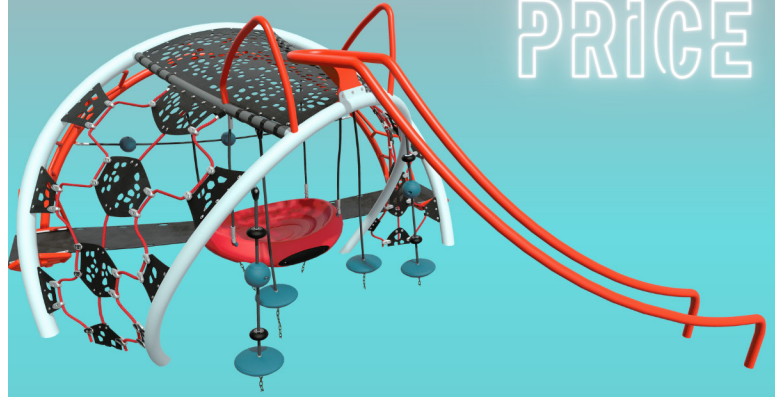
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LETTER FROM THE PRESIDENT

Greetings Michigan Chapter ASLA members!

On behalf of the Michigan Chapter ASLA Executive Committee and the MiSITES Editorial Board, we are excited to bring you this latest issue of MiSITES. It is our hope that you will find it engaging, informative and inspirational to read more about what's happening in our Chapter. This is, after all, a publication by us and for us. Do you have an idea for a future article or know someone that does? Please share it with us by emailing us at SITESpublication@michiganasla.org

We are coming off a busy October here at the Michigan Chapter. We held an eventful annual meeting on October 12 in Bay City. The annual meeting was bookended by a Sketchcrawl hosted by Jack Goodnoe, ASLA and the LA Ride hosted by Bob Ford, ASLA and Pam Blough, FASLA. I was fortunate to have attended both and, if you haven't participated before, I would ask that you consider doing so in the future. In addition to networking with a bunch of talented and fun landscape architects, you also receive LACES continuing education credits (attendance at both events earned the participant a total of 6.5 LACES credits).

Our conference was attended by more than 130 professionals and students and included over 20 vendor sponsors. The day was highlighted by sessions on Artificial Intelligence, the ASLA Climate Action Plan, Biomorphic Urbanism and a presentation on "Their Untold Stories: Black Landscape Architects Michigan

Connection". The day was full of energy capped by our State Chapter Design Awards ceremony. More to come on the awards in our next issue.

I would like to take a moment here to thank Meghan Diecchio, Devyn Quick and Deborah Dawe for all of the time they have volunteered in serving as our editorial team for this publication. The effort that goes into curating content, assembling and editing the publication and compiling advertisements is significant. I am very proud of this showcase we offer that highlights our chapter, our members, our firms, new technologies, innovative projects, and chapter events and I know many of you are as well. If you know Meghan, Devyn or Deborah, I hope you will share a word or note of thanks with them. It is no small endeavor they undertake to bring quarterly issues of MiSITES to your mailbox.

As the year winds to a close, I wish you all a fun and exciting finish to the calendar year. I hope you will all take the time to reflect with gratitude and joy on all you have accomplished throughout the year – both personally and professionally. It has been a pleasure to serve as your President alongside our Chapter Executive Committee, the Michigan Chapter DEI Committee, and our Executive team at KDA (shout out to Matt Solak and Lauren Concannon).

Kyle Verseman, ASLA
President, Michigan Chapter ASLA

ON THE COVER: Ornamental grasses and sedges soften the edges of granite-clad walls at WMU's renovated Board of Trustee's plaza. See story, page 12. Image Credit: OCBA.

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SHARE AN IDEA!

We're currently filling our 2024 MiSITES editorial calendar. If you would like to contribute or suggest a topic or project to cover, please email: SITESpublication@michiganasla.org.

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Image 1

PLAYING IN THE MUD: REFLECTIONS ON SUSTAINABLE BUILDING MATERIALS

Sarah Huddas, PLA, ASLA | OHM Advisors

There are different ways of living, of creating our own “habitat” to be healthier, more welcoming, and sourced right from our own land. Utilizing natural materials in design is intrinsic to our health and the health of our environment. It is important for everyone, be it for our own families or the general public that will experience life in the outdoor spaces we’ve molded. I hope this article inspires and resonates with my fellow landscape architects, colleagues, and friends, taking you on your own journey to finding and using natural building alternatives.

My exploration of natural building started at the height of the COVID-19 pandemic. I found myself researching topics that sparked this curiosity. One of those topics was captured in a YouTube video of a woman from Washington state. She and her father had constructed her home with recycled materials and earthen plaster for walls. It was a gem. Exquisite. I was hooked.

Since that moment, I have been on a journey, exploring different workshops, learning to build with these materials, and getting to meet some influential teachers, thought leaders, and trailblazers along the way. Participating in these workshops has led me to the following question:

“How do we apply this great scope of natural building to the field of landscape architecture?”

NATURAL BUILDING MATERIALS & HOW WE CAN APPLY THEM

There are an abundance of natural building materials and methods that exist. Three applicable materials to the landscape architecture field are: strawbale, earthen plaster and cob, and wattle and daub.

Strawbales are just as they sound: bundles of straw or other grain secured by polytwine. Strawbales, when stacked, form robust walls. They can be used to

create freestanding walls to delineate outdoor spaces, as well as for structures like pavilions and homes. They can be finished with either earthen plaster (see below) or lime plaster.

When comparing these insulative walls from a building perspective to standard stick-construction practices, strawbales are the Olympic athlete that consistently out-competes our “modern” methods of construction. The current code in Michigan calls for wall insulation values to be at or above R-19. Strawbale’s R-value performance starts at R-30! Beyond their insulative performance, they create a soothing sense of enclosure and offer a quiet sanctuary due to the thickness of the wall. It’s possible to create artful niches, sculptures and windows with these materials as well.

When building with strawbale, it is important to give your design “a good hat and boots,” as Sigi Koko, principal designer and owner of Down to Earth Designs, shared during one of her workshops. If your roof and foundation are designed and installed correctly, you can create garden walls or other unique site features that will have a beautiful and lasting positive impact on the environment you are designing. A local educator and owner of Strawbale Studio, Deanne Bednar, has some magnificently crafted curvilinear garden walls on her property that create dynamic, playful and unique spaces (see images on following pages).

Earthen plaster has been used for thousands of years in different building applications, most notably to create luxurious walls and floors. Earthen plaster is composed of clay, angular sand, straw (or a variety of other fiber types for tensile strength) and water, all of which are readily available in Michigan. Percentages of these ingredients vary slightly depending upon the type of clay and fibers you are using, as well as their intended use. The mix can be colored if desired, utilizing different natural pigments. Alternately, nature-based paints can be applied to the surface after it has been finished, similar to painting traditional walls.

You can also create garden walls with special mixes of earthen plaster, commonly referred to as **cob**, when the desire is for a slightly thinner wall versus the wider, strawbale walls. The same principles apply to cob walls as



Image 2



Image 3



Image 4



Image 5



strawbale walls: a good roof and foundation is key to protecting the cob, so it isn't negatively impacted from exposure to the elements.

Part of the enjoyment of mixing the ingredients together is the opportunity to play in the mud! Experiencing the texture of your mix through foot stomping is vital to understanding what your mix feels like and learning when the proportions are perfect for application. While you can use different types of mixers to speed up the process, some natural building leaders do recommend getting your feet dirty.

Wattle and daub is a weaving technique utilizing sticks and branches of more pliable trees, like willow, to develop fencing that can help delineate spaces and create garden walls. The weaving can be exposed, so the end-user can see the intricacy of the work that was developed. This is called wattle. The "daub" is the addition of earthen plaster. You can apply earthen plaster to a wattle for aesthetic reasons, and sometimes for privacy purposes too, if the desire is to have an opaque wall instead of a somewhat transparent fence.

THE BUILDING CODE

Strawbale construction is a proven, sustainable and tested practice of building. The natural building industry leaders have blazed the trail for strawbale construction. Because of their efforts, it is now incorporated within the International Residential Code or IRC (<https://codes.iccsafe.org/content/IRC2015P3/appendix-s-strawbale-construction>).

THE IMPORTANCE OF NATURAL BUILDING MATERIALS

The possibilities and positive, sustainable impacts of building with natural materials are endless. Beyond the beauty of the materials, they are locally available resources. Natural materials give designers free reign to create eco-friendly, sculpted, and unique spaces. Healthier environments are generated through their use, and they come with the added benefit of being completely non-toxic. They are mostly renewable, and if we walk away from the creations we make with them, in time, they will completely return to the earth. Offering a low carbon footprint, lower energy costs (for structures), and fire-resistant capabilities, these building methods are becoming more widely used as holistic alternatives to modern construction. Natural materials are affordable,



and while the cost of labor can be higher than standard construction, if we involve sweat equity and community in the builds, it is a great way to reduce cost. Community builds have the added benefit of teaching the trade while sharing the experience.

A CALL TO ACTION

Reflecting on my evolving journey with natural building materials, two notable themes emerge:

1. Utilize the naturally occurring materials around us. These techniques are not new concepts. They are tried and true methods of construction, and some of these techniques have been utilized by indigenous civilizations for thousands of years, throughout the world. They are proven. They are regulated in the code. And they are ready for us to use.

2. Education and awareness. Building with natural materials is usually taught as a community-based experience. It promotes healthier and more vibrant indoor and outdoor living spaces with a small environmental footprint. Continuing to educate and spread the word about these alternative building materials will help to normalize and implement them into the construction industry. •

INDUSTRY EXPERTS

Deanne Bednar, Strawbale Studio: <http://StrawbaleStudio.org>
Joseph Trumpey, Joseph E. Trumpey Home: <http://JTrumpey.com>
Sigi Koko. Down to Earth Design: <http://BuildNaturally.com>
Morrison, Scurso and Nartker, Strawbale.com: <https://Strawbale.com>.

LEARN MORE

Strawbale.com offers a wealth of resources on straw bale construction, including articles, e-courses, workshops, and plans. See the article “Fire Resistance of Straw Bale Walls Outperforms Conventional Construction”.

The Hand Sculpted House (Evans, Smith, Smiley and Bednar) is a good read on natural building materials and techniques.



Image 9



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Image 1. Strawbale wall with a base coat of lime plaster at Andrew Morrison Workshop in Montezuma, New Mexico.

Image 2. Strawbale garden wall construction in progress at Andrew Morrison workshop in Montezuma, New Mexico.

Image 3. Strawbale casita during construction at Andrew Morrison workshop in Montezuma, New Mexico.

Image 4. Strawbale garden wall with seat and archway. Deanne Bednar's Strawbale Studio.

Image 5. A strawbale garden wall, complete with archway, niches and greenroof. Wall finished with earthen plaster. Deanne Bednar's Strawbale Studio.

Image 6. Cob garden walls and interior walls can include decorative elements such as colored glass. Deanne Bednar's Strawbale Studio.

Image 7. Lime plaster is applied to strawbale walls at Andrew Morrison workshop, Montezuma, New Mexico.

Image 8. Example of a wattle garden wall. When earthen plaster is added to the face of the wattle, it is called 'daub'. Image by Oleg Propenko (architectphd) via Vecteezy.com.

Image 9. A beautiful example of a strawbale home. Designed and built by Professor Joseph Trumpey, owner.

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ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE (AI) IN LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE

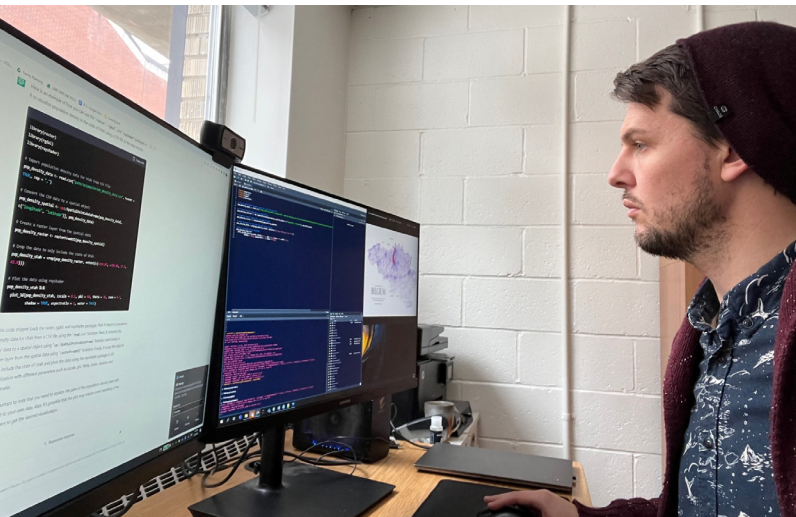
Tim Pratt | Landscape Architecture Foundation

This article profiling one of LAF's 2022-2023 Fellows is reprinted with permission from the Landscape Architecture Foundation and the author. Phil Fernberg spoke at the 2023 Michigan Conference on Landscape Architecture.

For Phil Fernberg, artificial intelligence (AI) is as fascinating as it is misunderstood. With capabilities to carry out project management tasks, perform analysis and optimization, and even autonomously engage in creative acts, AI already is affecting the way many forward-thinking companies do business. Yet, within the landscape architecture community, Phil has found a “healthy skepticism” toward AI. There’s also a lack of resources to easily explain AI, how it can be used, and how it will impact landscape architecture moving forward, he said.

Now, Phil is using the Landscape Architecture Foundation’s (LAF) Fellowship for Innovation and Leadership to examine AI and its place in landscape architecture, with a goal of creating a resource for designers to better understand, prepare for, and use AI in the future. While he’s still examining the possibilities, the Utah State University PhD candidate envisions a multi-media platform with explanatory articles, white papers, videos of landscape architects using AI in practice, and more information on AI’s potential. “I don’t want it to just be something all us tech nerds geek out on,” said Phil, who received his MLA from Louisiana State University. “I want anyone from the average principal to entry-level designers to be able to understand it and make conscious decisions about how they use it in their work.”

AI is the theory and development of computer systems able to perform tasks that normally require human intelligence. Recent advances in AI have accelerated its use across numerous disciplines, landscape architecture included. Within the field, AI’s use can be as simple as typing keywords into a program and allowing the program to create a rendering, or more complex, like accessing datasets to analyze a design and adjust it to optimize impacts.



So far, Phil's work has included extensive reviews of academic and industry articles on AI inside and outside of landscape architecture, along with a host of books and online materials. He also has been interviewing practitioners to learn more about AI approaches and engaging with those who are using AI or writing about it, including authors, journalists, and academics.

Phil said his research has been enlightening, and even led him to shift the focus of his fellowship since it began last June. Initially, he wanted to create an open knowledge-sharing platform to compile literature, case studies, and applications of AI in landscape architecture. Early in his research, however, Phil realized few landscape architects were using AI in practice, and many others weren't sure what it was or how it can be used. That's when his focus shifted toward creating the multi-media platform for designers that he envisions now – one that would help educate users and serve as a resource for anyone seeking information about AI in landscape architecture.

Throughout the research process, Phil has heard numerous concerns about AI from people within the profession and among his students at Utah State who are experimenting with AI in their designs. There are concerns about AI leading to automation and job loss (or at least job shifting), with AI programs creating designs in a fraction of the time it takes humans. There are concerns about equity and the biases of AI creators seeping into algorithms and applications. There are concerns about intellectual property rights, the elimination of traditional design processes, and even the loss of creativity itself, along with moral and ethical arguments.

Some of those same concerns drew Phil to his fellowship topic in the first place. AI technology and the breadth and scope of its uses is only expanding. The landscape architecture discipline can either choose to look away or it can actively engage to inform and shape the development of AI so that the values and best practices of landscape architects are built into the problem statements and algorithms.

"I don't consider myself a techno-optimist, but a techno-realist," he said. "Technology, but in particular AI, which is much more relational in nature than it is transactional, creates a lot of possibilities that can go in either direction. It can be mind-bendingly amazing and push us forward and address the

world's biggest problems, but it can also be mind-bendingly grim because it can create the world's biggest problems."

Phil isn't advocating for or against AI. He recognizes the potential benefits it can have within landscape architecture, particularly the ability to create efficiencies and optimize designs for key criteria, but he also realizes AI has the potential to be "disruptive," as it has been elsewhere. The art world and academia, for instance, both have experienced highly publicized controversies in recent months over AI-generated content.

"If we can talk conversationally about AI and figure out how it fits into what our ethics, morals and intentions are, and we can communicate those things to a system, there is great opportunity," Phil said. "But if we remain ignorant about it, we'll find ourselves irrelevant or subsumed by all the things that went wrong because we didn't jump into the fray." •

LEARN MORE

"Future Problems, Now: Landscape Architecture in the Age of AI" presented by Phil Fernberg at the LAF Innovation + Leadership Symposium, June 15, 2023. Recording available at: htlafoundation.org/resources/2023/06/2023-symposium-videos#fernberg

"Artificial Intelligence and the Future of Landscape Architecture", a panel discussion with Karla Saldaña Ochoa, Jeff Cutler, and Zihao Zhang, moderated by Phil Fernberg. Recording available at: lafoundation.org/resources/2023/07/artificial-intelligence

Big Data, Big Design: Why designers should care about Artificial Intelligence, a book by Helen Armstrong, Professor of Graphic and Experience Design at North Carolina State University. Review written by Phil Fernberg for The Dirt: dirt.asla.org/2022/08/08/things-you-should-know-about-artificial-intelligence-and-design

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Image Credits. Top Image is free stock imagery by Markus Spiske via Pexels.com. Bottom image is courtesy Phil Fernberg,



Image 1

GREY TO GREAT: REPURPOSED GRANITE BRINGS CAMPUS PLAZA TO LIFE

Sandy Bliesener, PLA | OCBA

Tucked between the pink tile-clad walls of the campus library and computing center, this plaza space was transformed into a through-way and a respite. The project presented many challenges including a space defined by multiple large buildings at varying angles and a mandate to reuse both the existing radial tile-clad retaining walls and client-owned granite slabs of irregular dimensions to create an attractive plaza space with the sound of water.

THE RULES OF RENOVATION

The Board of Trustees Plaza and Fountain replaces the Alumni Fountain created by O'Boyle, Cowell, Blalock & Associates, Inc. (OCBA) in the 1980's at the center of Western Michigan University's (WMU) campus. While the original feature was beautifully designed (see image 2 at right), it was placed in the center of a plaza that serves as a major pedestrian thoroughfare, forcing pedestrian traffic to the edges of the space instead of through the center. In addition, the water feature was recessed into the ground plane and from the outset, large planters and benches were placed around the feature to keep passersby from falling in, compromising the integrity of the lovely design.

The project program was a complete renovation of the outdoor plaza to highlight the sound of water trickling on the edges of the courtyard with clear pedestrian circulation through the center. Reducing maintenance, simplifying snow plowing, greening and softening the space without adding trees that block views of the surrounding architecture, and repurposing expensive building materials already owned by WMU were key aspects of the program.

The plaza is the primary focal point for the outdoor patio of the new Student Center under construction along the north edge of the space. The large buildings and site retaining walls framing two sides of the courtyard are of a post-modern architectural style and clad with pale pink tile. The curved walls retain raised beds planted with mature trees and shrubs. Initially, the client

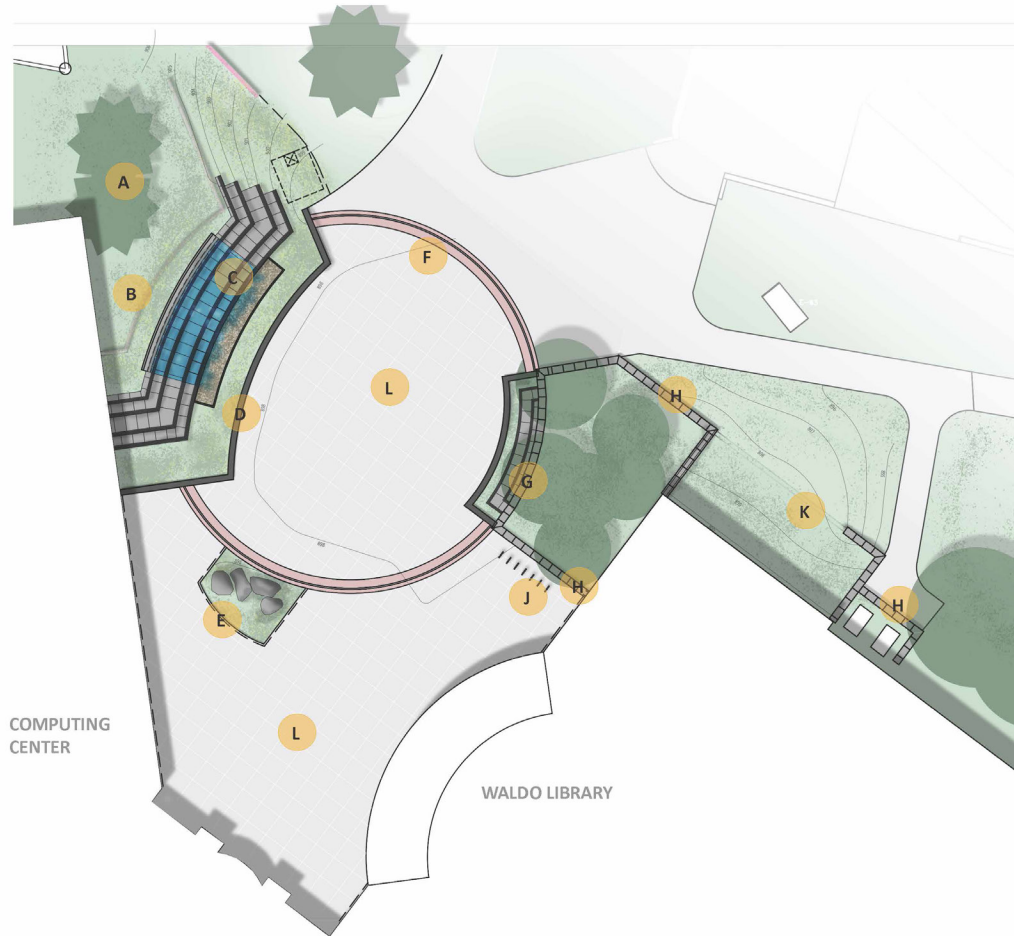


Image 2

WMU BOARD OF TRUSTEES PLAZA SITE PLAN

Legend

- A** Maintain existing shrubs where possible.
- B** Seal and bury existing tile walls.
- C** Four-tier flamed granite pondless waterfall with lighted spillway and decorative catchment basin.
- D** 18" cast-in-place concrete seatwall to match Student Center.
- E** Green space with boulders from original Board of Trustees Plaza.
- F** Colored concrete band and trench drain.
- G** Dry granite stacks, two-tiers.
- H** Granite veneer and cap on all remaining existing tile retaining walls.
- J** Bike racks reinstalled at Waldo library window.
- K** Existing retaining wall partially removed for planting bed.
- L** New standard concrete in entire plaza space.



wanted the existing vegetation and walls to remain; however, the tile cladding and aluminum wall caps were in extremely poor condition and in desperate need of a facelift.

The geometry of the existing site walls presented a significant design challenge as they radiate from a central circle that does not relate to the adjacent buildings surrounding the space. In addition, the buildings framing the plaza are placed at random angles, resulting in a lack of cohesiveness and a clear path of travel.

OCBA assembled a multidisciplinary team that included an architect and structural engineer to assist with the structural design of the fountain steps, a mechanical engineer to design the pumps and connections to existing infrastructure, and a landscape contractor to assist with the fountain design and estimating construction costs. The team included Slocum Architects; Engineering Plus, Inc.; Geotech Inc.; and LDW 2.0.

The redesigned plaza space is open in the center and framed by plantings and a water feature made of stacked granite, with space for movable tables, planters, and pedestrian movement through the open pavement. WMU's campus landscape master plan, recently completed by OCBA, calls for a variety of seating options along walkways from which students can see and be seen. Based on that idea, OCBA developed a concept offering a seat wall along the plaza perimeter that defines the edge of the water feature, with a planting area stepping up behind it. The use of a seat wall edging the plaza ties this area of campus to another plaza space nearby that similarly organizes pedestrian traffic and gives students a place from which to people watch. In the large, paved central plaza space, tables with umbrellas offering more seating and shade are located to the sides without blocking pedestrian traffic through the center of the space.

A large set of granite steps set back behind the seat wall allows water to cascade down into an underground basin before recirculating back to the top. The pondless recirculating fountain system has an equipment vault located in the landscaped mound behind the fountain. The changing, colored lights in the fountain provide a focal point at night. Plantings between the seat wall and granite steps are intended to discourage students from accessing the water

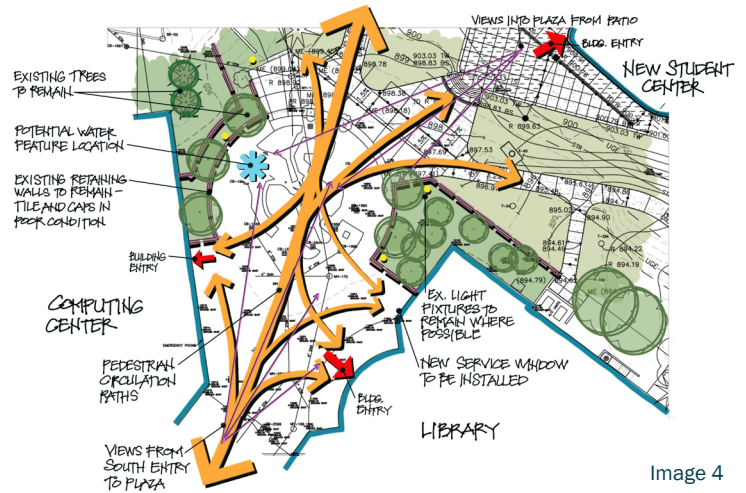


Image 4



Image 5



Image 6

cascade and aesthetically soften the edges of the granite steps. Setting the water feature back from the plaza space and separating it with a seat wall and planting reduces the likelihood of contact with the water and many of the risk concerns associated with it.

Because the adjacent Student Center was being designed by a different design team and constructed at the same time as the plaza space, collaboration and coordination were required throughout the process. Landscape architects from both design teams met regularly during design and construction to coordinate paving layout and planting materials. Seat wall details were shared so that a small portion of seat wall within the student center limit of work would match the plaza walls and blur the lines between the two projects. And the granite stack concept was carried into the student center landscape closest to the plaza.

RECLAMATION IN ACTION

The required materials included more than 23,000 square feet of river rock; flamed, dark, and smooth granite; and white marble slabs (see Image 5). The slabs vary in size from 2" to 4" depth and in nine sizes, ranging from 2'x9' to 4.5'x4.5' in length and width. The smooth and flamed granite were available in the greatest quantities; however, smooth granite had been used in small amounts around campus on previous projects and had proven too slippery to serve as a paving material. The client's mandate was to use most, if not all, of the material so it would no longer take up space in the yard where it has been stored for almost two decades. The concepts that emerged intentionally celebrated the flamed granite texture and varied thicknesses while organizing the material into a clean sculptural feature and tying it into the site context.

Once the design concept was established, the design team began to explore how the existing walls could be treated to address the failing tiles and cap while remaining in place to retain the existing vegetation behind them. The budget did not allow for replacement of the walls, and the variable granite dimensions would make it impossible to clad the walls with the slabs set vertically. The preferred solution was to cut the flamed granite slabs into consistent 18"x4"x2" units and set them on brick ties to re-face the existing walls. Wider slabs of smooth granite were then used to cap the walls. Larger



Image 7



Image 8

3'x3' units of four thicknesses were used to create the tiered fountain and required careful placement and patterning to reconcile the varied dimensions of the existing material.

The project reused approximately 750 slabs of the existing 1,249 slabs of granite that had been sitting unused for more than twenty years. Positive environmental impacts include repurposing the granite for the fountain stacks and cladding of existing walls and reducing waste that would go to landfills. OCBA selected the height of each tier of stone to respect the odd stone dimensions and utilize the material most efficiently. Similarly, cutting down and burying some of the existing retaining walls rather than removing them completely reduced waste going to landfills.

DISCOVERED OBSTACLES

Some of the challenges faced by the team during the design and construction process included:

- Evenly distributing water across the face of the granite steps, waterproofing the fountain, and working with granite slabs that were uneven and inconsistent in size. Stacking the stones to keep the water moving and have a uniform look required detailed spreadsheets mapping out each of the granite stacks.
- Navigating both construction access in a confined area and maintaining student access to the adjacent buildings took careful construction sequencing planning.
- Multiple utilities converge into a snarled mess in this area of campus. The contractor found that not all recorded utilities existed per the as-builts, so the vault had to be relocated and pumps added due to utility inverts being higher than expected.
- Finding that the wall conditions were worse than expected once excavation started required adapting the design to beef up support for the stone veneer and cap.

The plaza now offers a clear pedestrian path through the space, the sound of trickling water, and a variety of seating. Students love the new design and find it a relaxing place to stop when passing through this area of campus. •

.....
All images courtesy OCBA.

Image on Cover. *Ornamental grasses and sedges soften the edges of the granite-clad walls while discouraging students from accessing the pondless water cascade.*

Image 1. *The plaza now offers a clear pedestrian path through the space, the sound of trickling water, and a variety of seating.*

Image 2. *Planters and benches placed around the original water feature for safety reasons compromised the integrity of the design and limited the use of the existing plaza.*

Image 3. *Site Plan.*

Image 4. *Site Analysis.*

Image 5. *A key goal of the project was to make use of some, if not all, of the 23,000 square feet of stone that the client had been storing for almost two decades.*

Image 6. *The existing trees around the plaza were originally intended to remain, so existing retaining walls were protected. Late in the design process, the client decided to remove and replace the existing trees to open up views to the surrounding buildings.*

Image 7. *Water cascades down a large set of granite steps into an underground basin before recirculating to the top. Color-changing lights in the fountain wall provide a focal point at night.*

Image 8. *Seat walls and plantings edge the plaza, providing a separation from the water, a place from which students can people-watch, and a tie to similar treatments in other areas of campus.*



LANDSCAPE DESIGN CAMP WOOS STUDENTS TO PROFESSION

MiASLA Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Committee

Nine students from Southeast Michigan, Chicago, and Brooklyn, New York, registered for the week-long “Placemaking through Landscape Design” Summer Camp, organized by Lawrence Technological University, the MiASLA DEI Committee, the City of Southfield, and Southfield City Centre. “I learned what landscape architecture really is,” said Hugo Urena, a junior at ITW David Speer Academy in Chicago. “Now that I know what it is, I’m thinking about a career in this field.”

When the students gathered on the LTU campus on Monday, July 17, two said they had lawn mowing businesses. A third planned to open a construction company with his brother once they were both out of school. Another expected to learn about “planting and bed design.” The students formed three design teams and—after an intensive five days that involved lectures and tours led by area professionals—developed creative, detailed plans for a teen park at Carpenter Lake Nature Preserve off 10 Mile Road in Southfield.

The summer camp aims to introduce landscape architecture to BIPOC and underserved students and, through this exposure, encourage them to consider the field as a career choice. “We also expose students to the various professions in which landscape architects work—the private sector, public, non-profit, education, and research, for example,” said Terry Croad, AICP, ASLA, and director of planning for the City of Southfield. To provide additional support to those who chose to pursue a career in landscape architecture, the Michigan Chapter ASLA Foundation annually awards two Diversity, Equity and Inclusion scholarships of \$2,500 each to BIPOC students studying at Michigan State University or the University of Michigan.

Over the course of the week, students learned how to identify opportunities and constraints at the Nature Preserve, develop a schematic design to

illustrate their concept or “big idea,” and create a design development plan. Students participated in a creative site modeling workshop, a new topic added to the camp this year, to create their conceptual design models.

On the afternoon of the last day, each team presented a site plan to a jury of professionals and their campmates. Components of the teams’ design plans included, among other things, safety features, enhanced streams and ponds, accessibility for visitors with disabilities, multi-purpose sports areas and playgrounds, the use of mural walls to provide noise reduction and local public art, and solar panels to cover parking areas and generate electricity.

After each presentation, jury members, one-by-one, offered a critique of the plan, asked follow-up questions, and noted the use of novel attributes. “That is a charming design for birdwatching,” commented Joane Slusky, PLA, ASLA, ASID, landscape architect and jury member.

“I really love the bridge over the wetland,” said Kyle Verseman, PLA, ASLA, business development for Landscape Forms and jury member. “I’m drawn to water, as most humans are. So this notion of being able to get out into the middle of it is really, really cool.”

“You have learned systematic problem solving,” commented Thomas Paison, AICP, Southfield’s deputy city planner and another jury member, after the students’ teams had finished their presentations.

This was the second year the camp was offered. Organizers have made the affordability of camp a priority. The \$100 registration fee, one-eighth of the cost of a typical week of summer camp on a university campus, is made possible, in part, by the following professionals who serve as volunteer instructors:

- Meghan Diecchio, PLA, landscape architect, SmithGroup
- Lisa DuRussel, PLA, LEED AP, assistant professor of Landscape Architecture, University of Michigan
- Delores Flagg, chair, Southfield Public Arts Commission
- Bob Ford, ASLA, landscape architect, Landscape Architects & Planners
- Mark Hieber, ASLA, LEED AP, principal landscape architect, HED





- Beverly Hannah Jones, AIA, managing partner, Hannah-Neumann/Smith
- Dr. Hubert Massey, Detroit-based artist
- Ralph Nunez, PLA, CLARB, ASLA, GRP, design principal, NunezDesign, Inc.
- Stephanie Onwenu, ASLA, VP of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion, Michigan Chapter ASLA, creative artist at ljeomalandartscapes LLC
- Joane Slusky, PLA, ASLA, ASID, landscape architect
- Kyle Verseman, PLA, ASLA, business development, Landscape Forms

In addition, members of Southfield's Planning Department designed the curriculum, provided overall management of the program, and led the five days of hands-on learning:

- Terry Croad, AICP, ASLA, director of planning
- Thomas Paison, AICP, deputy city planner
- Souzan Hanna ENV SP, LEED AP, sustainability planner
- Sarah Mulally, AICP, assistant city planner
- Alex Bollin, planner I

After the teams made their final presentations and the jury had offered feedback, Croad, who served as master of ceremonies, asked the jury members to stand in a receiving line at the front of the room. One at a time, Croad called a student forward. The camper shook hands with each juror before being presented with a certificate of completion. Then Croad invited the room to clap for the recipient.

As students packed up to leave, Alex Bollin, Southfield's planner 1, passed out his business cards and invited the students to call, text, or message him via LinkedIn any questions they may have as they chart their futures. "It's connections that get you in the door," he said.

Aubrey Collins, a recent graduate of Martin Luther King Jr. Senior High School who plans to attend Purdue University, came to the camp already interested in pursuing a career in landscape architecture. "I wanted hands-on experience first," he said. •

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