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Texas Architect

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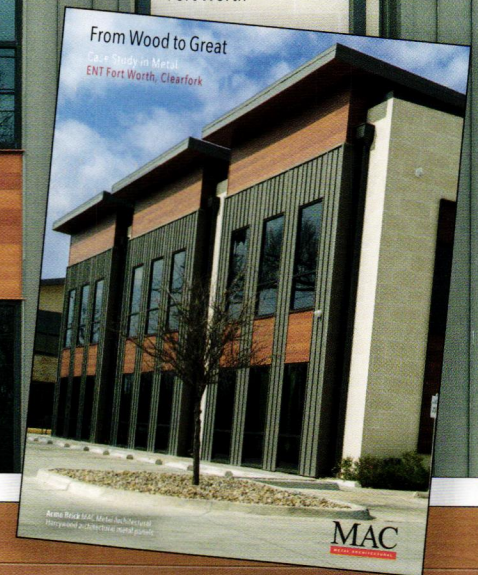
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Photo: Terracotta Brick, Opaque Limewash,
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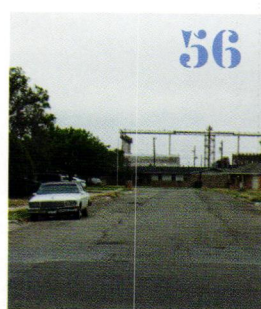
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Catch a preview of TxA's 2021 Design Award winners.

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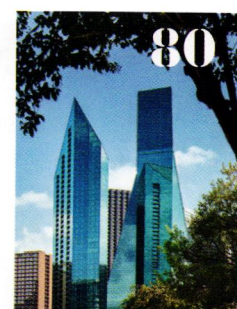
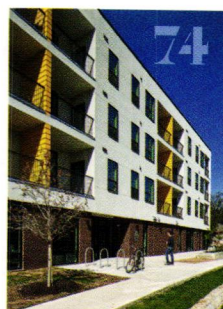
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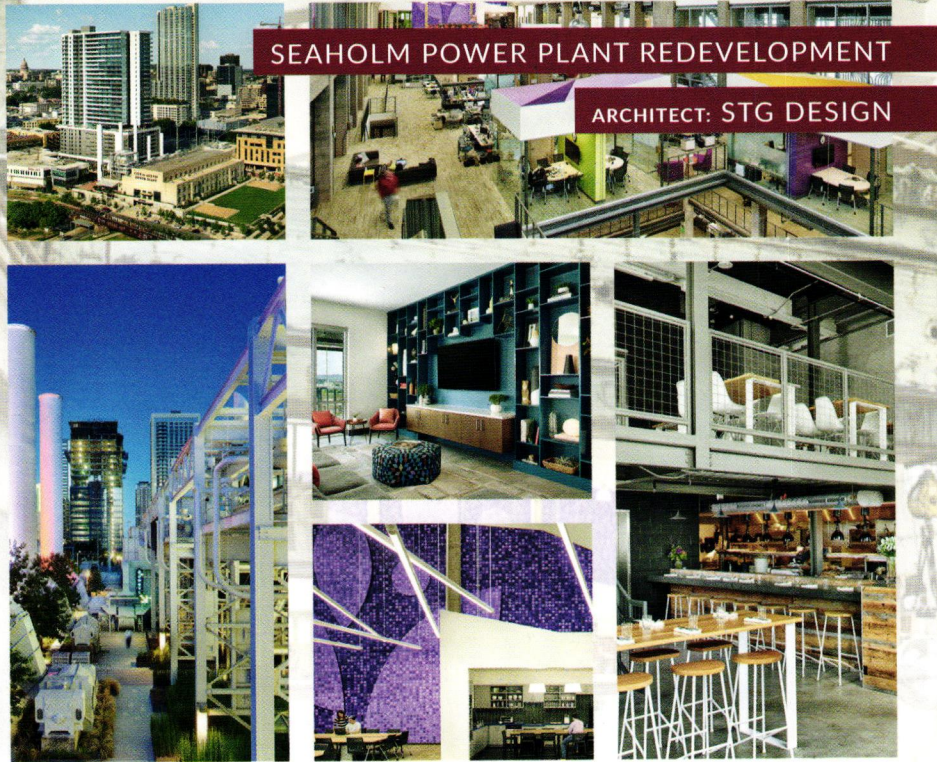
Daylight on the folded aluminum facade of the Oklahoma Contemporary by Rand Elliott Architects.

Enclaves



Housing





Images Courtesy of STG Design

Seaholm Power Plant in Austin, Texas was operational until 1989. City Council approved its decommissioning and adaptive reuse in 1996. Halford Busby provided an estimate at schematic design for the historic renovation of *Seaholm Power Plant* in late 2011-early 2012.

This 810,000 square foot project entailed a transformation of the former municipal power plant into a mixed-use anchor with two new buildings, a retail arcade, building lobbies, seven levels of structured underground parking, green roof plaza and an outdoor terrace overlooking Lady Bird Lake. The 28-story *Seaholm Residential Tower* features 300 apartment units over the 23 upper levels and is located in the northeast corner of the project site. The west-facing apartment units will have protected views of Lady Bird Lake, Zilker Park and the Texas Hill Country. East-facing units will boast dramatic views of the downtown Austin skyline.

All buildings achieved LEED Gold® and AEGB 3 Star greenbuilding ratings. Construction was completed in late 2016.

SOURCE: <http://www.austintexas.gov/department/seaholm-power-plant-redevelopment>

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An alligator and two turtles share a log at the Smith Oaks Bird Sanctuary on High Island (p. 44).

Final Crit

As a member of an advisory group to MIT, I've been a bit critical. The other day while talking with the Associate Dean, I casually remarked, "I guess I stepped on a few toes." She retorted: "You've stepped on a whole foot!"

— Bill Caudill, "The TIBs of Bill Caudill"

by Aaron Seward

The TxA committee that hired me to edit this magazine put forth an unexpected but welcome mandate, which was among the chief reasons I took the job: They asked me to develop a critical voice in *Texas Architect*. Critical perspectives had been featured in *TA* at various times throughout its long history, but by and large the magazine hewed closely to the polite, collegial sort of cheerleading that is normal for a members' circular. This mode of — you can't really call it journalism because it's more akin to marketing, though it's more insidious than marketing because it cloaks itself in journalists' clothes — continues to proliferate, even in non-association design publications. In fact, it's an issue that plagues all news media, and always has. I call it golf-clap writing because of the tepidness and unoriginality of its descriptions, and the alacrity it displays in accepting without question and passing along the claims of the subjects it purports to review. In so doing, it cheats its readers, obscures the full truth it knows — it lies.

I don't know what's more remarkable: that this state AIA component asked me to do criticism in its prized publication, or that a magazine by and for architects wasn't already — and for its entire history — a vehicle of incisive critique. Architecture, architects will tell you, is a culture of criticism (see comments by Robert Ivy, FAIA, on p. 13). It is through criticism that architects are trained in studio. Students pour their hearts into design proposals and then pin them up to be savaged by successive waves of critics: their cohort, their professors, visiting reviewers, maybe their parents. The purpose of this ritual bloodletting is to refine and improve the design itself and teach students the value of collaboration and outside perspectives, which can often quite quickly pick out thorny issues that may have completely escaped their notice. It should also help in the development of a thick skin, or, more precisely, the ability to receive criticism without immediately retaliating: to instead listen and evaluate the substance of the critique, a real asset for any creative professional aspirant preparing to embark on a career of client service work.

Of course, criticism done in the context of a classroom — or a bar room for that matter — about fictitious or developmental design work is different from criticism done about a completed project, in a bylined article, in the public forum of a widely circulated periodical, even one read by a profession of purported critics. The critic's responsibility in this context is weighty. There is pressure to get it right and be fair. People's

feelings, even their professional reputations, are at stake. When done right, criticism should not just satisfy an author's ego, but should add something constructive to the discourse, something that could improve future efforts. At the same time, I believe it's important to make room for bad writing and hot takes. This sort of criticism can get people thinking and talking, which is a good thing. The real danger is that we stop communicating our differences of opinion, stop evaluating publicly, retreat behind the manufactured smile of the cheerleader while injustice and sloppiness parade to the serenade of our applause.

How long will it be, I've wondered throughout the past six years, before the Board decides this experiment has gone far enough and shows me the door? Well, they stuck it out with me all this time. Readers took note of the change in tone that accompanied my editorship, and while some have been flabbergasted, outraged — wounded! — the overwhelming preponderance of the feedback has been laudatory. I've been grateful to receive it all. The old saying that there's no such thing as bad press has its corollary among members of the fourth estate: There's no such thing as bad reader feedback. Acclaim or condemnation, the important thing is that people read us and felt something strongly enough to speak out. For or against, the conversation has been initiated. Who knows where it may go?

If this sounds like a coda, it is. This is my last issue of *TA*. I'm leaving to be the editor in chief of *The Architect's Newspaper*, a publication that is no stranger to brickbats. Thank you, Dear Reader, for your attention. I'm sure we'll be seeing each other real soon.



*Ruined adobe building,
Marfa.*

The following email was sent to the editor regarding “Open and Closed” in the May/June 2021 issue.

Aaron, you made me laugh out loud at my morning coffeeshop hangout while reading your review of the three coffee table tomes on recent architecture in Texas. Thank you for your willingness to (gently) tell it like it is when it comes to conflating documentation and marketing. I liked the May/June issue a lot.

Stephen Fox
Rice University
Houston

The following comment was submitted to txamagazine.org regarding “The Adobe Paradox” in the May/June 2021 issue.

Excellent article that captures the reality of today’s Marfa. I often wonder at [what] point will those that have relocated to Marfa or have purchased a second/third home in Marfa realize what drew them to Marfa in the first place is not so slowly changing. The irony is the transplants, themselves, are driving the change. It can be debated whether the change is benefitting the town or not, but I’m clear on where I stand on the issue and it’s not with the likes of the Hotel Saint George (a blight on downtown, but at least they finally paid their taxes) or the multitude of art galleries that probably exist more for tax purposes than anything else. The silver lining, if we want to call it that, is some of the \$18 hamburg-

ers you can get at local eateries taste pretty good (if you’re lucky enough to find a place open).

Jo Ann Nowak

The following comment was submitted to txamagazine.org regarding “Cloud Formation” in the March/April 2021 issue.

My appreciation to Anastasia Calhoun for what I consider as a well-written piece of prose. The text allows us to flow through the Kinder to study its materials and light, while engaging the museum and museums through the context of time and place.

Gregory Louviere, AIA
Huckabee
Houston

The following comments were submitted to txamagazine.org in response to “The Drift” from the March/April 2021 issue.

Thank you so much for this article, Lauren. I was reminded of “The Songlines” which describes Australian Aborigine connection to places in traversing long distances with mythical song. Also it has helped me understand what I am seeking in a new location for retirement. In New Orleans, 2 street car lines trundle down romantically lined streets while characters from some Southern version of a Dickensian novel step on and off. Walking is a higher level of this experience with more interactive closeness and less control over

your route, pause, interest or surprise. New Orleans has to be the finest example for derive in a built environment, while nature is all too ready to retake it, and does.

Thanks again.

Peter Davis

Thank you, Lauren, for sharing that beautiful piece. You are so present, observant, creative and wise, and this City is a better place because of you.

Gayle Borst
Stewardship Architecture
Austin

Thank you for this wonderful essay! I agree wholeheartedly that walking around your city is invaluable in healthy-living and helping to foster the interconnectedness that seems to disappear as we human “connect” through our electronic devices.

Lee Gresham

Thanks Lauren, what a beautifully written piece. It reflects so much of what I’m feeling these days. I think a lot about the difference in value we place on the forgotten “wild” landscapes versus the carefully considered urban experiences. Keep up the good work!

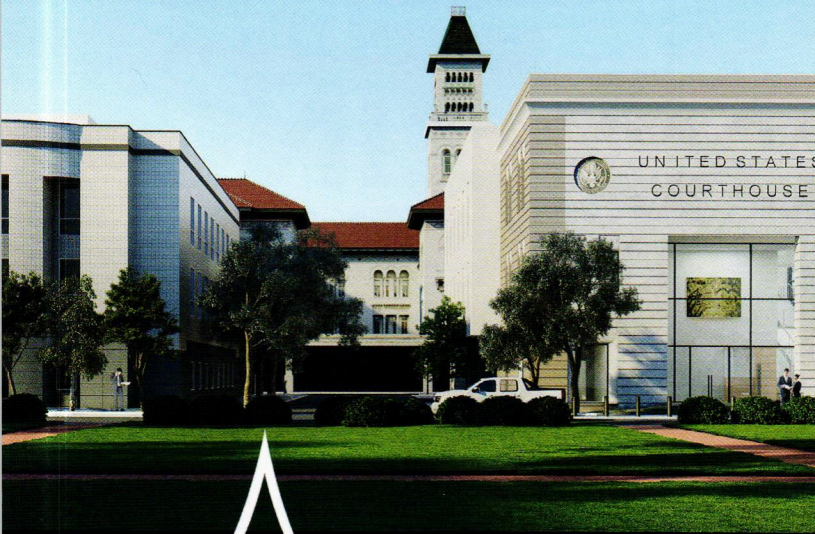
Joshua Brevoort
zeroplus
Seattle

The following comment was submitted to txamagazine.org regarding “Home Range” in the March/April 2021 issue.

Great article, Aaron. Sounds like a great idea and something we could advocate for from the TxA level in cooperation with our local chapters. We should develop a strategy to do that. This topic will only become more important as currently affordable housing becomes less affordable as material prices continue to escalate.

Darren Heine, AIA
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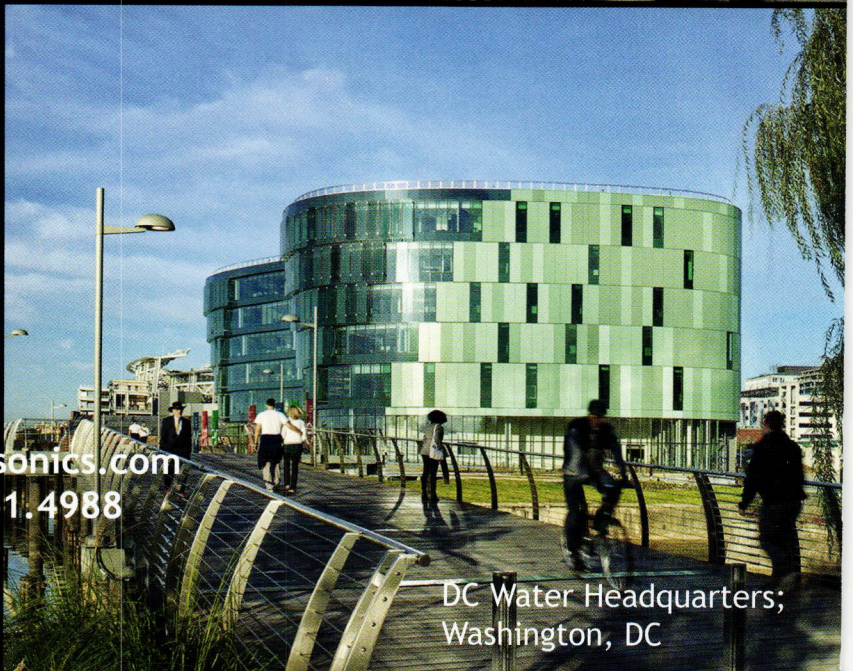


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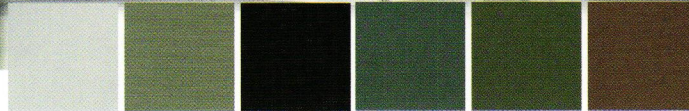
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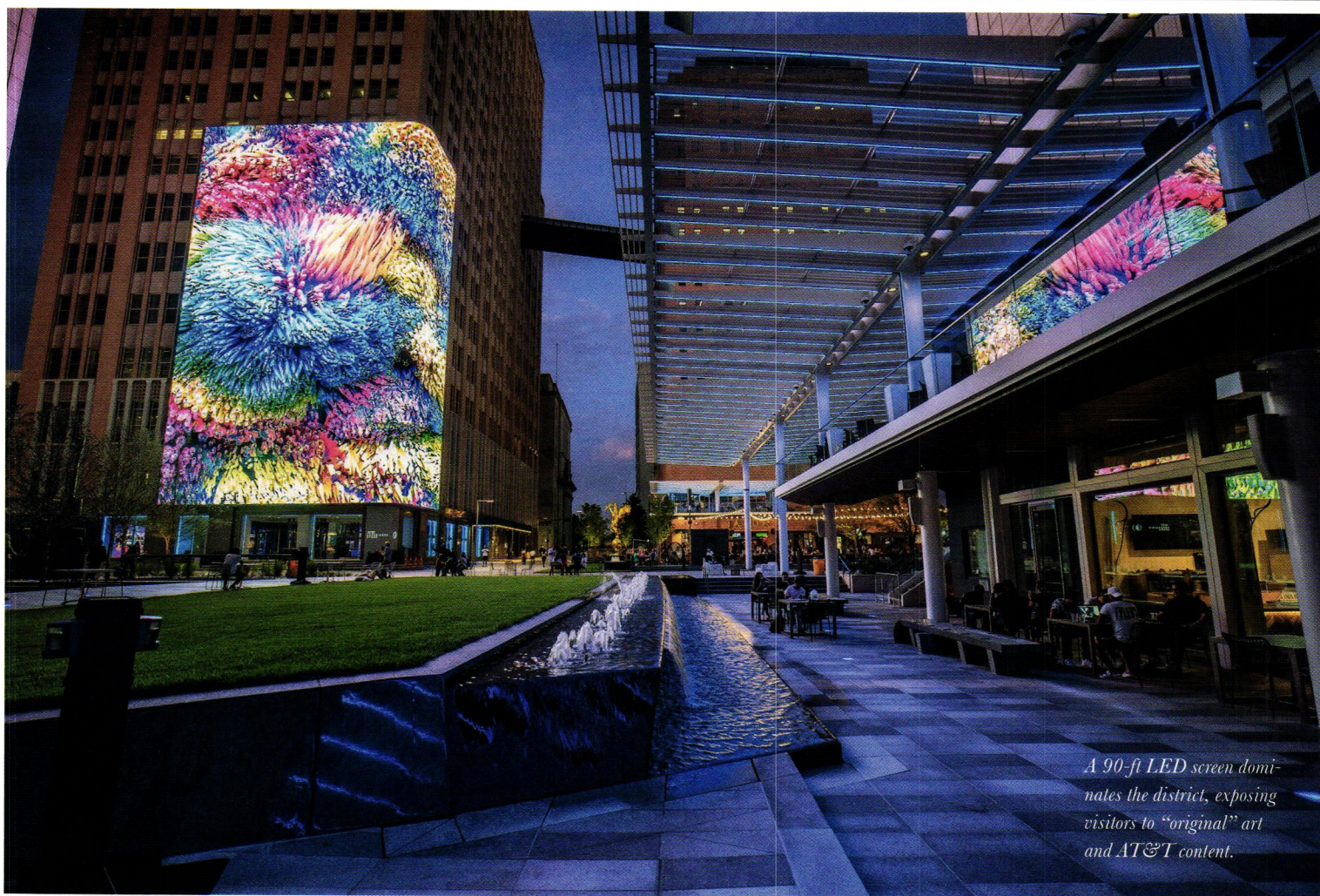


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A 90-ft LED screen dominates the district, exposing visitors to “original” art and AT&T content.

Dallas' AT&T Discovery District Mixes Media and Walkable Urbanism

In Dallas, a city dominated by the automobile, word has gotten out about the new AT&T Discovery District — an oasis of pedestrian-scaled activity in the blocks surrounding the communication giant's downtown headquarters. Despite not officially announcing the opening, or celebrating it in any way, people have gravitated toward this new urban space. “There is an insatiable appetite for compelling places for people in Dallas,” say Barry Hand, AIA, and Ross Conway, AIA, principals at Gensler who oversaw the effort. In reality, probably all it took was the construction fences coming down for people to pour in and discover the amenities gracing the AT&T headquarters' new front door. Jaxon, a beer garden and restaurant, opened in mid-2020 and is now a popular site at the district, according to the Gensler team. A handful of other planned restaurants and cafes have since opened in The Exchange food hall, all of which work

together to give this space a pleasant ambient hum of activity.

While the current state of the plaza is certainly compelling — every time I walk through, there is a wonderfully varied cross section of people out enjoying the space, strolling through, dining in the restaurants, or taking photos at the globe sculpture — the anticipated usage of the space is much more ambitious. The designers envision thousands of people there simultaneously, with many different activities happening at once. They see this as the place to be in Dallas to experience the hustle and bustle of humanity. In view of this ambition, Dallas Morning News architecture critic Mark Lamster's comparison of the space to Times Square was apt. Barring further pandemic slowdowns, it certainly has the potential to provide an exciting level of interest and activity.

Nearly 10 years ago after considering multiple scenarios, AT&T decided to stay in downtown Dallas. What began as an effort to make a few small improvements to the entry plaza grew into a much larger vision as Gensler

worked with AT&T to help them imagine the potential of the project. AT&T became dedicated to the greater vision of creating a lively and open urban district, a true destination. The decision was also made to integrate digital content throughout the district, which was made more relevant with AT&T's acquisition of Time Warner and its media offerings in 2018. This manifests in the 90-ft LED screen and the walls of LED screens in the main lobby. Gensler's in-house Digital Experience Design group led this part of the effort. Project leader Justin Rankin said AT&T was mindful about leveraging the screens as a canvas for original art, as well as unique district content developed from their intellectual property.

AT&T and Gensler pride themselves on the openness of the new district, which is effectively AT&T's campus, as all of the adjacent buildings are occupied by the company. As Hand says, “What other Fortune 100 headquarters is so open to the public?” It feels like public space, and it is, but at the onset AT&T desired to create

an “amenity-rich” mixed use district for the benefit of its employees first, and the greater Dallas community second. Corporations are wise to consider their surrounding urban environment. Employees will be more enthusiastic to work in locations that offer convenient opportunities for socialization and recreation. With AT&T providing this environment for their employees, instead of amenities hidden away at a major suburban campus a la Google or Facebook, we have publicly available food halls and beer gardens.

As one of the few public urban spaces in Dallas one can go to simply hang out, the district fulfills a key role. In a city without the central Ladybird Lake or Zilker Park of Austin, socialization usually involves spending money at bars and restaurants. This is a place where people can meet and spend time without the requirement of spending money. However, you are not free from AT&T’s marketing machine. Much in the manner of free online streaming services, or television for that matter, you have little choice but to watch and listen to the promotional content playing on the 90-ft media wall. The entire time I sat there eating my lunch, the screen was showing trailers of Time Warner products with the volume so loud

I could scarcely concentrate on my podcast. In addition to the intermittent auditory barrage, the screen is often visually dominant, especially at night when its glow is far brighter than the next brightest object. Rankin says the goal was not for the media wall to be the “star” or overwhelm the district, but to complement the activity that is already occurring. If this intent could be fulfilled and that one element reigned in, it would do much for the overall environment.

A varied series of spaces has been provided in a restrained physical environment. Opting for less visual drama in favor of emphasizing the public spaces and doing them right, Gensler, along with landscape architects Studio Outside, have created an effective and inviting urban space, whose healthy traffic despite the lack of a formal announcement is a testament to its allure. I wonder if it is a fair assessment that people in Dallas have “an insatiable appetite for compelling places” — or if there is simply a dearth of truly cool things to enjoy here, so that when one comes along (like this project or Klyde Warren Park), the city’s appetite to experience it is indeed great.

Andrew Barnes, AIA, is the founder of Agent Architecture in Dallas.

Q&A with Robert Ivy, FAIA

In May, the American Institute of Architects announced that Robert Ivy, FAIA, will retire at the end of this year, drawing to a close a decade-long tenure as executive vice president and chief executive officer of the architecture profession’s premier national association. Previous to joining the AIA, Ivy was vice president and editorial director of McGraw-Hill Construction and editor in chief of Architectural Record magazine. He’s also a registered architect who earned an M. Arch at Tulane University and ran his own practice, and a published author who wrote the definitive biography of legendary architect Fay Jones, now in its third edition. Recently, Texas Architect Editor Aaron Seward chatted with Ivy about his life and career. The following transcript has been edited for clarity and length.

Aaron Seward: I’d like to start this talk by going back to the beginning and asking, what was it that attracted you to architecture?

Robert Ivy, FAIA: I think the defining moment came when I was an intelligence officer in the U.S. Navy. Very few people know that. When you get out, you decide what you want to be when you grow up, where you want to

The urban district cum corporate campus was designed by Gensler and Studio Outside.



PHOTO COURTESY GENSLER

go to graduate school. It put me in this reflective mood, and I really began to think about architecture seriously for the first time. The town that I'd grown up in, it has beautiful architecture. I had always loved it. When I had traveled, what I had done was visit buildings and admire them, and walk through them, and touch them. I also had some sage advice from a friend of my parents who was an architect. He said, "Look around and see the people that you admire the most. What do they do?" I'm from a small town in the South. I looked at those people that I admired, and actually one or two of them were architects. I put all that together, and I literally made that kind of conscious rational choice.

AS: So how did you go from that decision to editing *Architectural Record*?

RI: I didn't have a burning desire to be an architect from the day that I was born. I thought I was going to be a writer, and my first degree was in English literature. What happened was that I ended up doing both. I went to architecture school at Tulane, and the first day in my first job at an architecture firm, my first boss said: "I'm editor of our state journal. Would you like to write an article?" And I said, "Yes."

So I had this dual career from day one in my job. I wrote for national architecture magazines. I guest-edited a Japanese journal. I did videos. I started a magazine in the Mid-South called *Architecture South*. AIAs from five states sponsored it. It was not as big as *Texas Architect*, but it wasn't bad. It was really to try to explain architecture to clients through imagery and words. And then I moved to New York in 1996.

AS: For the job at *Record*?

RI: For the change of *Record* to AIA distribution. I wasn't the editor immediately. I went up there as a consultant. The AIA sent me because there aren't that many architects that write. I stayed for eight and a half months and then was named editor.

AS: Amazing.

RI: It was amazing. I went from Columbus, Mississippi, to New York. Oh, you should have seen the faces in the room when they announced who the editor was. It wasn't pretty because everybody that was there had put their stake in the

ground. They said, "This guy, who is he?" And there I was.

I had the grounding of a little age on me at that point. And I had worked in New York before, in college. My wife is from Brooklyn, and I had the confidence to know that I really wrote well, and I was a good editor because I'd already edited more than one magazine and I really enjoyed it. And I wasn't unsure about what we were going to do. I was comfortable with it. So when people would look at me askance, I would sort of chuckle because I knew we could do what we needed to do.

I moved very quickly into that role. I was going all over the world and meeting these unbelievable people. I've had experiences, like with Santiago Calatrava — I went to his home, and he played Bach and sketched and his children were running around, and we walked along the lakeside and went to lunch and spent the whole day talking about architecture. I had experience after experience after experience like that, just drinking this stuff, and never regretted a day of it. I loved every minute, it was so great.

AS: So what then led you from *Record* to directing the AIA?

RI: I went for a long run while on vacation. It was sort of a beautiful, blissful afternoon overseas. I got halfway through the run and all these thoughts just literally percolated through my mind. They must have been there at night or subconsciously. What I understood is that I knew how to make a magazine, and that if I made another issue, it would be redundant. I didn't need to repeat myself. I loved it, but I'd done it. And I really had. Like what I've just told you, that one little mini experience with Calatrava multiplied a hundredfold, not just with stellar people, but experiences. Like being there when the World Trade Center fell down and observing it from seven blocks away. Or literally watching China explode with energy, being on the ground and being with Chinese architects and builders and seeing their country come to life.

It just so happened that this other position had come along right about at that time. I am an architect, and I thought, okay, here is a large segment of my life that was more focused on writing and thinking about architecture. I could take the knowledge that I had and actually apply it to the profession, because the profession was ready for, I thought at that point, a kick in the pants, a

fresh outlook, a new beginning in a new century. And boy, have we ever seen it.

I've actually gotten to take part in the change through the association — and associations are unusual creatures. They are not like corporations, where you can go into a conference room with a group of committed people and emerge and an answer has been determined and you go out and do it. It doesn't work that way in an association. Here at the AIA, there are 95,000 people who think they are smarter than you are. And every one of them is opinionated and they all weigh in and they all say, "Well, that's pretty good. But if you just did this...."

AS: Does it require a certain suppression of one's ego to play that role?

RI: Yes, but I think you have to have the confidence to know that you can allow other people to voice their own opinions and yet know when you have to have judgment. I would say that is a primary factor because, in weighing alternatives, some of them might really be bad for the future or for the organization, some might be stellar. You have to help discern what those distinctions are, and that takes a certain amount of confidence in your own ability. I felt extremely well-suited to do that because part of what an editor does is listen to people. You don't go into an interview with someone and tell them something, you glean what you can from what they say and then you help elucidate and articulate what they've actually expressed. And then you put it in some sort of context and present it back to an audience.

I really came [to the AIA] to try to discern what was going to be an appropriate direction. Part of what I did was I brought friends from New York. I brought Michael Bierut down from Pentagram, who was a good friend from the city and has a wonderful mind and fresh way of thinking. And he brought a man named Arthur Cohen, whom I didn't know, who has a firm called LaPlaca Cohen. They did a survey of 35,000 people — clients, fellow professionals, younger people, older people, the whole gamut — a really authoritative survey about the association and how it's viewed and so forth. The primary finding was something we knew, but now it was quantified, and that is that people admire architects, but they do not understand them, nor do they know what they do. So, if that's the case, how can they employ us appropriately? How can they ever pay us?

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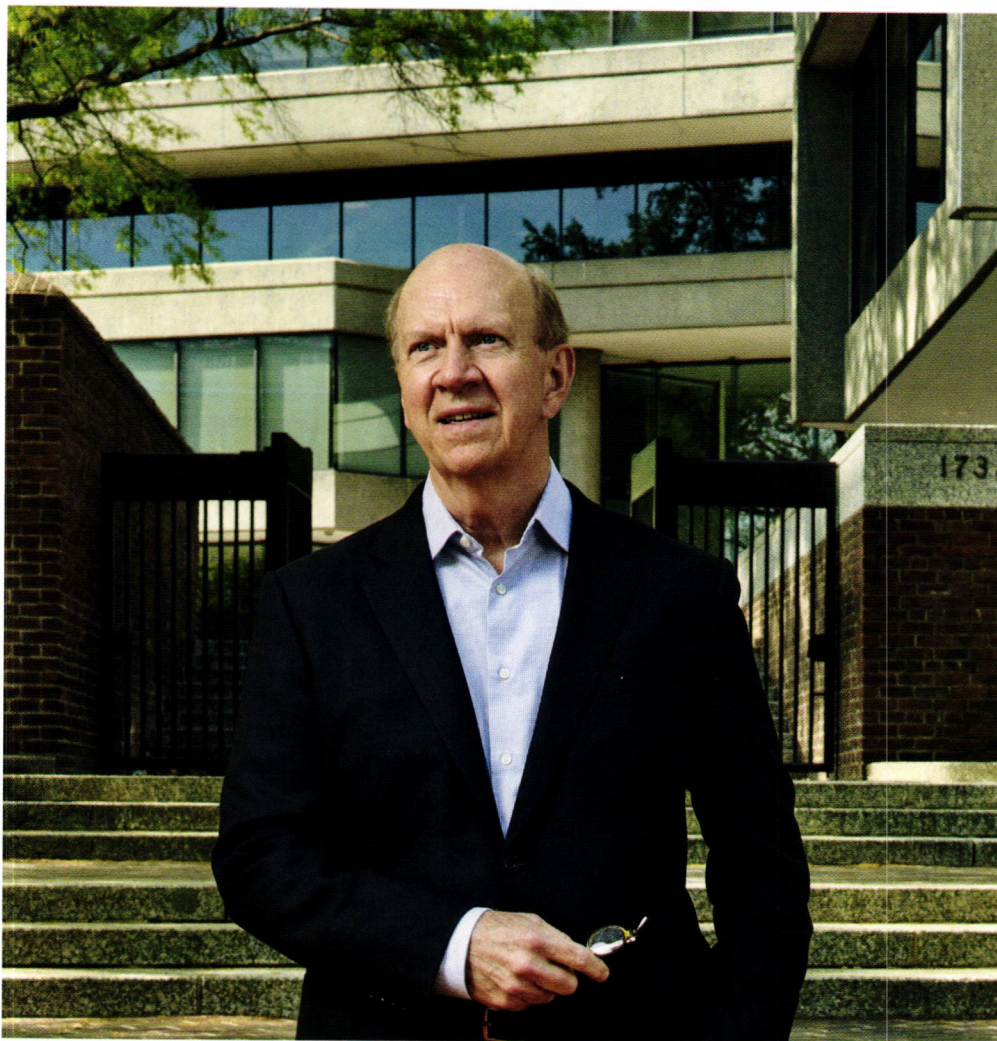
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Robert Ivy, FAIA

[Bierut and Cohen] got up there and, in a very New York way, laid it all out in front of the [AIA] board of directors. And then, so typical of architects, because we're all trained in criticism, they loved it, they loved the critique. "Give us more! Give us more!" They really bought it. And that, I think, was really the catalyst for a generational change within the organization — not the profession, but the organization.

AS: The complexities of architecture can be hard to communicate to a lay public that may not be interested in complex explanations. But architects also seem to rarely be willing to speak out on big issues that may be more relevant to people outside of the design professions.

RI: The last thing that [Bierut and Cohen] said was to be a bold voice on issues. I really think we've only just gotten going with that in the last four or five years. The association, with so many

different perspectives, has always been centrist. It has found it difficult to take bold stands, fearing that we would alienate members in some remote state that felt differently from people in some urban state. Actually, ironically, 2016 did that for us. We tried to convince [the new presidential administration] to let us help them figure out how to do infrastructure to include the work of architects: housing, schools, things that we wanted and needed. That blew up, and it was misunderstood as if we were supporting the administration, and that was the last thing we were doing. We're nonpartisan. But that brouhaha actually clarified for us the need to express our values clearly. And from that time, the board came together. They put out statement after statement of values, things that they care about or that they believe, and they call them "Where We Stand" statements.

The first one that we came out with was immigration. We said we support the ease of access for working within the United States.

People from other countries make up a large portion of many architects' offices across the country. We need those workers, and we need that talent. We covered school safety. We isolated it from guns, because that really is a flashpoint and would skew the argument. This was about school safety and how thoughtful design can create atmospheres that are safer. Then the world changed, and we now have a new strategic plan. It has two primary directions: One is climate action; the other is equity, diversity, and inclusion.

So, all of a sudden, Bierut and Cohen's charge to us is being answered willingly by the leadership of the association. And they're doing it visibly and verbally. They're standing up for these things that they believe, and they're doing it for all architects, which is super.

AS: Do you think that the way architects look at themselves and their duty to society has changed much in your time?

RI: I will point out one constant, and that is that we collectively have felt that we can change the world and make it better. I believe architects are optimists. Our projects take 18 months to five years, and so we look to the future.

When I was emerging from school, architects were passionately engaged with social action and climate. We did passive solar design. The AIA's Committee on Design was formed about that time. The passive solar design migrated into what has now become climate action. So that was one of the major directions that we pursued. The second was social action. That was a period of storefront architecture, where literally we began to put architects' offices, and association offices for that matter, on the streetfront, where people could walk by, see, come in, get advice, and, in fact, get designs done.

And yet, the world shifted. Let's look at the 1980s. We had a period of extreme prosperity, and we went to postmodernism and ended up putting marble and brass on every building. And the hyper prosperity led to a crash in the early '90s, and [social action and climate] have now re-emerged. This is really where our hearts and souls are. Socially, obviously we've shifted.

I think we have been so late to recognize the disparities within equity, diversity, and inclusion, first with women — that cracked the egg, and we now see some growth. It's about a percent or so a year coming into positions within offices. And now the numbers of women in schools frequently exceeds that of men.

The racial disparities have been so evident since the death of George Floyd. We were engaged with this at the association well before that. For instance, we were devising what we have called Guides for Equitable Practice. We contracted with the University of Minnesota to do research and to help us create a series of documents that can help people in their practices and their personal lives. Those guides are out there now. But I would say that those more recent events threw all this into a stark relief. So if there's a change, it's a cultural change, but it's a change that was going to be necessary within our profession and in our association. It's bigger than the association, though. It's the recognition of the civilization that we're currently inhabiting. We need to be where we are reflective of the people that we serve.

AS: You mentioned the misunderstanding over AIA's outreach to the last presidential administration on infrastructure, but the organization's advocacy efforts are much wider. What other priorities have you been working on?

RI: That's a good one. Our advocacy program is robust and successful. I'll give you one good example. If you remember, there was a presidential edict that all federal buildings over a certain dollar amount had to be in a neoclassical style. Well, I don't have any hair, but it made my hair on fire. I love neoclassical architecture, but no one should dictate a style, ever. We fought that tooth and toenail, and it was immediately overturned by the new administration.

We've fought for architects to be included in federal legislation on PPP. We fought for tax advantages for architectural firms. Our language is actually part of the language the Biden administration is using for climate action. A number of the proposals that you will see coming out legislatively from the current administration include the language that America's architects put in through the association.

It was more difficult in the last four years, but we were still advocating. We met with Scott Pruitt, who was the head of the EPA, and we

basically convinced him to not red-line out Energy Star. That administration was going to wipe out the Energy Star program, and, in that meeting, I think we convinced him not to do that. Advocacy is a bipartisan action. You have to do it, regardless of who is sitting there; you have to convince the powers that be what is important for the built environment in the United States.

AS: So you can convince government of the value of architecture, sometimes, but how's it going convincing people on the street? We started out with Bierut and Cohen's diagnosis of architecture's communication problems, so we might as well end there.

RI: We turned for advice to friends in Texas, to Roy Spence in Austin, who is a genius at plain language and helping people understand complex ideas in a very direct and meaningful way. Together with Spence and his firm, GSD&M, we launched the campaign "Blueprint for Better" to improve the visibility and understanding of architects and architecture. We did some display advertising; we did some television advertising; but I think really the more interesting work has been the volunteer efforts. The CSpence Group, which is an offshoot of GSD&M, helped us craft a new program inviting young filmmakers and young architects to submit to a film competition we call the I Look Up Film Challenge.

We get upwards of nearly a hundred films annually that are viewed in the hundreds of thousands all over the world. They're voted on, and there is a winner, and it's a popular vote. The competition invites people to talk about a topic each year that has something to do with why architecture matters. Some of the people who enter are rising stars in the filmmaking world, and some are collaborations with rising young architects. They're shown at the Architecture Film Festival and all over the country — in New York, and Washington, and San Francisco. They are also online, on our site, 24/7, telling the story about architects and architecture. That's just one element in that Blueprint for Better campaign.

AS: What's next for you?

RI: I just finished a book in November, and it's out. Go and buy it. It's called "Château La Coste: Art and Architecture in Provence." It's about a marvelous site with a patron who's basi-

cally built an outdoor museum and it is fabulous and fascinating. Tadao Ando wrote for it. I have another book that I'm talking to the same publisher about that I'm not going to tell you about, because it doesn't matter. I hope I'll be doing some consulting and maybe some board service, and teaching and lecturing. I failed to mention that, but I was an adjunct teacher when I was in practice. It's in my blood.

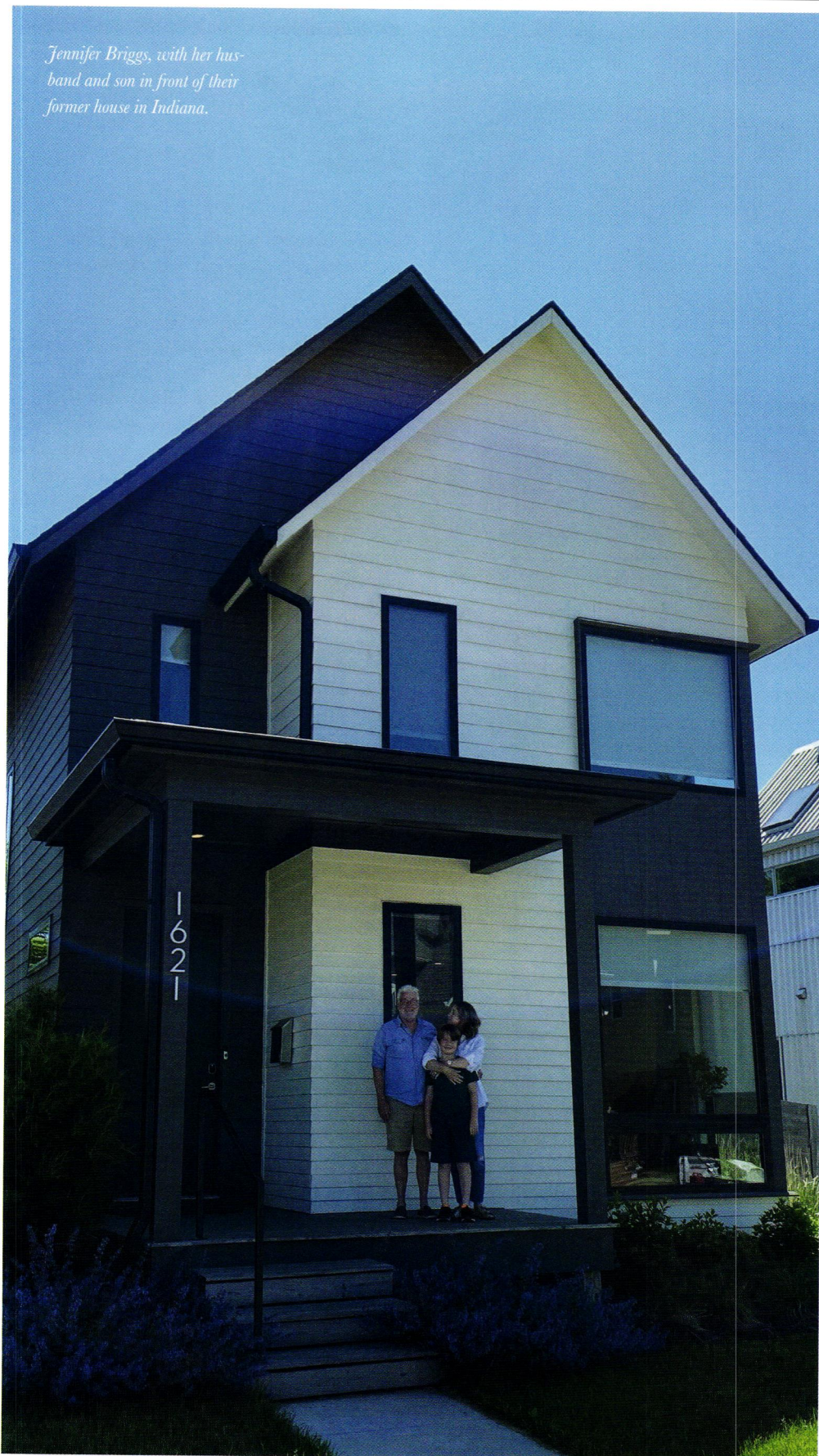
Q&A with Jennifer Briggs

On June 14, the Texas Society of Architects welcomed Jennifer Briggs as its new executive vice president. Briggs was previously president and CEO of the Indiana CPA Society, where she worked since 2002 in several roles, including director of member services, senior vice president, and chief operating officer. Prior to that, she served as executive director of five state-wide associations as an association manager with the KWK Management Group. Recently, Texas Architect Editor Aaron Seward spoke with Briggs about her thoughts on associations, architecture, and Texas. The following transcript has been edited slightly for clarity.

Aaron Seward: Your background is in association management, so I thought I would start by asking you how you see the value of professional associations for the industries they serve. Why should any professional join an association? What is the benefit?

Jennifer Briggs: I ended up in association management almost by accident. As many people do. But I quickly found I was in exactly the right place. I believe simply that we're all better together. Anyone who wants a career vs. a job knows that you get better by talking with, learning from, and engaging in activities with other people who do what you do and share your interests. I am a strong believer in continuous education, and joining a professional association is one of the best ways to continue to grow and challenge yourself to be your best — and not just from organized programs, but from meeting people, having a network to call on, being challenged in your thinking through volunteering, etc. All kinds of experiences contribute to enhancing professional competence, and associations make a multitude of experiences possible. Often, people only think about their professional association in difficult times (economically,

Jennifer Briggs, with her husband and son in front of their former house in Indiana.



personally, etc.), but having a sustained relationship with professional colleagues is always a good idea. Associations uniquely care about your profession as a whole in a way that an individual employer cannot do.

AS: This particular association serves architects. I understand that you have been the client of an architect. What was your experience like?

JB: Yes! My experience was fantastic. I have quite a few friends who are architects, and attempting to understand architecture and appreciating design have always been interests of mine. When I had the opportunity to work with a friend on a house, and then later on plans for an addition, it was so much fun. Talking through ideas and feelings and discussing how we wanted to utilize and feel in our spaces was challenging, but also almost magical. I think the client/architect relationship may include a little mind-reading on the part of the architect. It was incredibly satisfying. As someone who is simply an appreciator of beauty and function, to be able to have your general thoughts turned into something far better than you could have imagined and in a way that makes your life easier is incredibly special. We designed a modern house with lots of light and open spaces, but also lots of places to hide everyday clutter (which is important with a 10-year-old in the house).

AS: What is your view of architecture generally? Is there a historical era of architecture that particularly appeals to you? And what do you see as being architecture's role in the society it serves? Does it have a responsibility to society, and if so, what?

JB: My view of architecture is that it is undeniably valuable to the human experience. Architecture contributes not just to the way individuals experience their day-to-day but to how communities function, and even how people feel during the most profound or vulnerable moments of their lives. Our homes, schools, hospitals, churches, and the like make an impact on our quality of life. As far as a historical era that appeals to me, while I have a penchant for Bauhaus, I'm also a fan of Gothic architecture, classical, and even (some) postmodernism. I don't have a favorite. I think a building that fits perfectly into the landscape can be ideal, but a building that startles you and is unexpected



Art Gensler, FAIA

can be just as valuable. As far as responsibility to society, I think any learned profession has a responsibility to develop, learn new things, and find ways that serve the greater good. Otherwise, anyone could do the job.

AS: Architects love hearing what people think of them, and the same is true of Texans. You are only now moving to the state, but I gather you have spent quite a bit of time here and have family here. What are your general impressions of Texas at this point?

JB: Three words immediately came to mind when I heard this question — pride, exploration, and future. I hear so much pride in the voices of the people I know in Texas. Not that they don't recognize struggles, but generally there is a sense of "we've got this" about the Texans I know. There is strength and pride in their resilience. Exploration likely came from the fact that I have spent some time in all of the major cities in Texas over the years, and particularly in Austin, though there is so very much more to see, learn, and do, and I can't wait to get out and explore. And "future" because Texas will be a part of my future, obviously, but I also get such a strong sense of change and enthusiasm from Texas. When I see all of the young people flocking to Texas right now, it feels like a place where the future is being made at a faster pace.

Art Gensler, FAIA, 1935–2021

M. Arthur "Art" Gensler Jr. died on Monday, May 10. His six-decade career was marked by championing a culture of mutual trust, respect, empathy, and team spirit, culminating in the "one-firm firm" philosophy. Art believed in building a constellation of stars rather than focusing on individual accomplishments. He also put forth the then-novel idea that design is an experience-first endeavor, focused on the user journey in a building. His "inside-out" philosophy is the basis of the human-experience-centric approach that characterizes the firm's design ethos to this day. He also believed architecture and design professionals have a responsibility to lead on environmental challenges.

In 1965, Art founded his eponymous firm in San Francisco with three people, including his wife, Drucilla (Drue) Cortell Gensler, and helped grow it into the world's largest design firm, now with 46 locations and thousands of employees. He is also credited with establishing an arena of work that fell below the radar for many architects: space planning and interiors. Early in his career, Art recognized the need for a new architectural discipline that came to be known as tenant development. Beginning with the Alcoa Building in San Francisco, the firm created the programming practices that have become the framework for interior architectural projects throughout the profession. He brought

interior design to a new level of professionalism and helped clients understand its value within commercial real estate.

Probably less known is Art's impact on the practice in the state of Texas, a place that was special to him. He first arrived in Houston to begin work on the Pennzoil headquarters for Hines. He delivered his unique interiors approach for the energy corporation, while the building's core and shell was designed by Philip Johnson. This project was the start of a decades-long relationship with Gerald D. Hines.

Jerry Lea, executive vice president for Hines, notes: "Art changed the architecture of buildings by shifting the design to focus on the exterior appearance and entrance lobby, as well as the interiors. He paid close attention to floorplate efficiency, proximity to daylight, and the overall flexibility and usability of each floor to create a healthier and more productive work environment for owners, tenants, and their employees."

The Pennzoil project was also the catalyst for opening the Gensler Houston office in 1972 — the second, after San Francisco. This office, which called the Pennzoil building home for more than 40 years, is an anchor in the firm and planted the seeds for the Dallas (1997), Austin (2007), and San Antonio (2018) offices.

With Hines, Art and Gensler developed the Texas-based concept of the office of the future in the 1990s. In this integrated and collaborative process, Art not only advanced the evolution of interior architecture and design, but also introduced early ideas of sustainability that led to the creation of LEED standards and core components of the U.S. Green Building Council. This includes a core and shell rating system that was readily embraced by developers and building owners, which resulted in more sustainably designed buildings in Texas and throughout the country.

Client relationships were a cornerstone for Art and for Gensler's success in Texas. He was masterful in building strong bonds with clients, such as with Jerry Jones when the firm designed the Cowboys' world headquarters and practice facility at The Star in Frisco.



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Of Note

Gensler designed the second-ever Gap store in San Jose, CA, in 1970.



My professional experience shaped by Art Gensler actually spans more than 25 years. I am one of Gensler's principals and actually spent the first half of my career working with the Gensler team as a client. At The University of Texas Health Science Center at Houston, his team was invaluable in delivering fairly straightforward office, lab, and classroom improvements across the Texas Medical Center campus, until the fateful tropical storm Allison made a mess. Not only did Art and the Gensler regional leaders appear overnight to assist us in our recovery and in dealing with FEMA, but Art maintained regular contact over the years of recovery to see how we were faring.

Following my departure as the campus architect, I arrived at Gensler to lead the firm-wide sustainability and resilience focus. Art was instrumental in understanding the implications of this design delivery for every project across the globe. He would regularly use the analogy of a rubber band in discussing the need for the Gensler teams to "stretch" the client to new green opportunities, but not overstretch them; he was an invaluable coach for both everyday projects and the occasional global transformation mindset. One such project might have transformed parts of the Texas coast into a global seawater agricultural eco-

nomically and sustainably innovative area of innovation. Art was the leader of the effort in so many ways, from strategic thinking to worrying about tactical issues of local partnerships.

To date, the Texas offices have designed several thousand projects locally, totaling upwards of 60 million square feet. The work covers a vast range of project types, including aviation, large and small office buildings, hospital-ity, civic buildings and government facilities, houses of worship, libraries, retail and restaurants, schools, and sports venues.

Art was also a passionate supporter of education and culture, and of bringing up the next generation of designers. Judy Pesek, regional managing principal for Gensler's South Central region, which covers Texas, recalls how Art would always make time to visit with students taking her interior design class at The University of Texas at Austin. "It was such a treat for them," she says, "and some of those students are employees today."

Pesek also invited Art to join her at client meetings. She recalls one he attended with an interior designer who had transitioned to the brokerage side: "I did not have time to tell her that Art would be there. To say she was surprised is an understatement. Art was Art: a humble force. After lunch, he gave her his

business card, and she shyly asked, 'Would you mind autographing this?' When we got in the car to go back to the office, Art simply said, 'Gosh, these people in Texas sure are friendly!'"

In 2015, Art wrote "Art's Principles: 50 Years of Hard-Learned Lessons in Building a World-Class Professional Services Firm." It offers today's young entrepreneurs his well-tested ideas on leadership, talent acquisition, operations, and creative strategies.

Throughout his career, Art never lost sight of the inspiration that drives our profession, as expressed in a letter to his Gensler family:

Some of my greatest joy has come from walking through the studios as teams engage in intense collaboration, attending presentations (internal and external) of our emerging areas of expertise and of Gensler design excellence, listening to clients and others praise our work and our commitment, discovering inspired avenues for giving back to our communities, and watching new team members embrace the strong, vibrant Gensler culture. We enjoy a team spirit and a focus on excellence that is not only notable, but also sustainable. We are well positioned to continue our success no matter what challenges may lie in our path.

Rives Taylor, FAIA, is a principal in Gensler's Houston office and firm-wide design resilience co-leader.

It's summer, and in-person events are back. Here are six fun cultural opportunities across the state to get your mind off the heat and yourself out of the house.



34th Annual AIA Sandcastle Competition

East Beach, Galveston
August 21; aiahouston.org

On August 21, the 34th Annual AIA Sandcastle Competition will take place at East Beach in Galveston to raise funds for AIA Houston and the ArCH Foundation. Teams come prepared with design and execution plans, stretch out along the beachfront, and meticulously sculpt their piles of sand for five hours in the hopes of taking home the Golden Bucket Award. The sandcastles will be judged on originality of concept, artistic execution, technical difficulty, carving technique, and utilization of the site.



Beyond Van Gogh

Circuit of the Americas, Austin
Through August 8; vangoghaustin.com

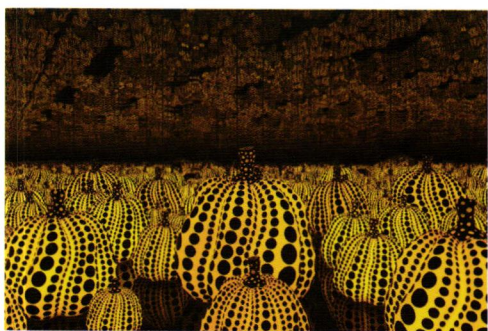
"Beyond Van Gogh: An Immersive Experience" will be in Austin at the Circuit of the Americas through August 8. The exhibition transports guests to a world of wonder as they explore Van Gogh's life through animated projections. Created by French-Canadian creative director Mathieu St-Arnaud and his team at Montreal's Normal Studio, "Beyond Van Gogh" features more than 300 of Vincent Van Gogh's iconic artworks and takes the art lover into a three-dimensional world that exhilarates the senses.



Ernesto Neto: SunForceOceanLife

The Museum of Fine Arts, Houston
Through September 26; mfah.org

This summer, the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston will present "Ernesto Neto: SunForce-OceanLife," one of the renowned Brazilian artist's largest crochet works to date. Over the course of three weeks, a team of a dozen people will construct a labyrinth of interior pathways for visitors to explore, all while suspended 12 ft in the air. The installation will be on view at MFAH through Sunday, September 26, in Cullinan Hall.



Limitless! Five Women Reshape Contemporary Art

The McNay Art Museum, San Antonio
Through September 19; mcnayart.org

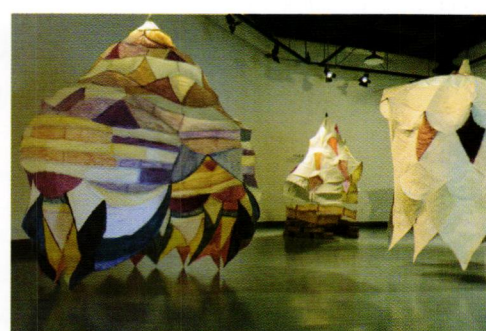
On view through September 19 at the McNay, "Limitless! Five Women Reshape Contemporary Art" features installations in diverse media by female artists Martine Gutierrez, Letitia Huckaby, Yayoi Kusama, Sandy Skoglund, and Jennifer Steinkamp. From floor-to-ceiling art and video installations to an Infinity Mirror Room, this multigenerational and multicultural group of artists demonstrates boundless creativity and serves as inspiration to their contemporaries and future generations.



Viva Big Bend

Venues in Marfa, Marathon, Fort Davis, Alpine and Terlingua July 28-August 1; vivabigbend.com

Celebrating its 10th anniversary, Viva Big Bend is a five-day music festival showcasing more than 50 bands in venues across multiple West Texas communities, including Marfa, Marathon, Fort Davis, Alpine, and Terlingua. Produced by the founder of Texas Music Magazine, the festival features a wide variety of music including blues, rock, country, Americana, folk, Latin, soul, and more. Get information about lineups, lodging, and tickets on social media or the website.



Joanna Keane Lopez

Blue Star Contemporary, San Antonio
Through September 5; bluestarcontemporary.org

Joanna Keane Lopez is a multidisciplinary artist whose work explores her New Mexican roots by blurring the boundary between contemporary sculpture and vernacular architecture. Through September 5, the Blue Star Contemporary in San Antonio is displaying a newly constructed architectural sculpture by Lopez that employs adobe, earthen plaster, and aliz (clay slip) in a quest to heal the condition of fragmentation toward land, home, family, and community.



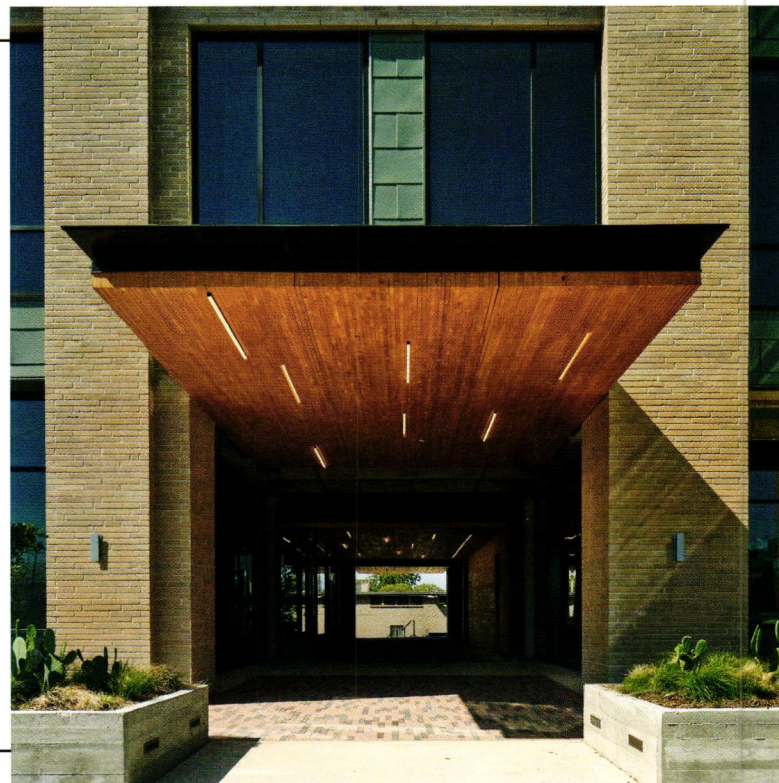
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The new Oklahoma Contemporary Arts Center building, “Folding Light,” pays homage to the light and sky of Oklahoma.

Contemporary Reflections

Oklahoma Contemporary Arts Center
Rand Elliott Architects
Oklahoma City

by Anastasia Calhoun, Assoc. AIA

Oklahoma Contemporary, a uniquely progressive cultural institution not only for Oklahoma but for the region, has opened its new campus in the Innovation District of downtown Oklahoma City. Dedicated to arts education and the encouragement of artistic expression in all its forms, Oklahoma Contemporary provides an accessible and inclusive arts experience to the community. The 4.6-acre campus includes the newly constructed “Folding Light,” a striking and sculptural nearly 54,000-sf building that serves as the central hub for the campus; a renovated 9,839-sf historical warehouse housing studios for wood- and metal-working, ceramics, and fiber arts; and the Campbell Art Park, a three-block-long park that provides space for outdoor exhibitions, educational programs, and public performances.

The new purpose-built arts center sits just north of Automobile Alley, an upscale, hip neigh-

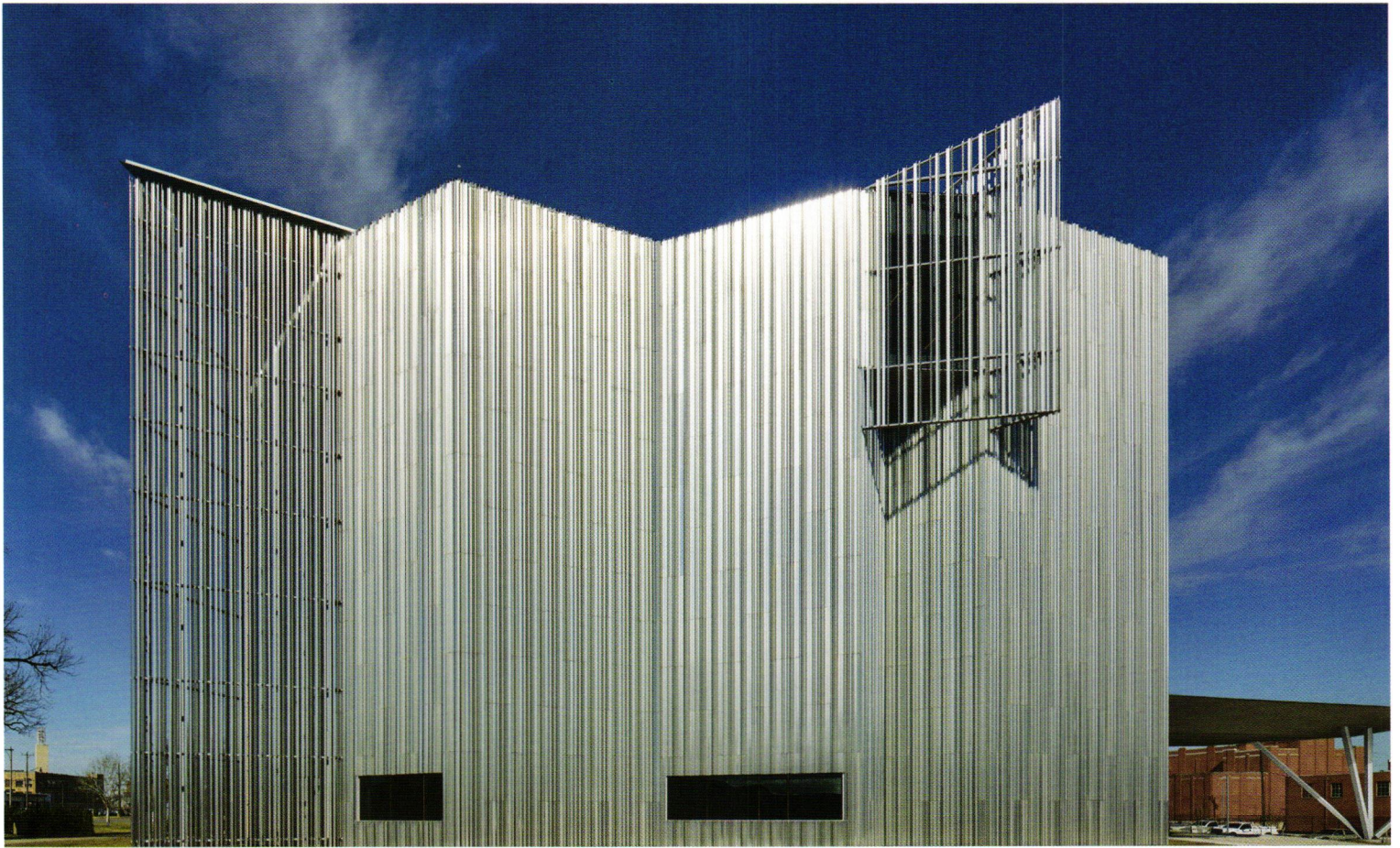
borhood known for its 1920s brick buildings that were home to more than two-thirds of the city’s auto dealerships. Its chameleonic, faceted facade comprises 16,800 custom-designed extruded recycled aluminum fins, transforming in hue and mood in response to the dramatic changes in light and sky that characterize the local landscape. At times, the building appears gold against an indigo night sky; at others, a silvery iceberg amid a rare Oklahoma snow; at dawn, a soft pink fading into a powdery violet backdrop. And though under the right conditions it can virtually disappear into its environment, the building is not shy. Its sharp angles and dynamic form are, well, contemporary. Yet the vertical metal fins allude to a salt-of-the-earth functionality reminiscent of corrugated metal sheds and other industrial typologies. In a notoriously conservative state where even the word “contemporary” is occasionally contentious, the building is deft in bringing an edgier flare to the Oklahoma City horizon while remaining familiar to more conservative palates.

Designed by Oklahoma City-based Rand Elliott Architects, the concept for the art center was developed over a decade and went through more than a dozen iterations — from a single-story structure with a large sprawling floor plate to a village approach involving multiple smaller units

— before landing on the final design, a four-story building that anchors the campus. The solution creates visibility and “the ultimate placemaking,” as Rand Elliott, FAIA, describes it, while conserving space to allow for future expansion — a rare luxury in a downtown location.

Eschewing the traditional historic tropes like the Land Run of 1889 and the Dust Bowl commonly referenced by other institutions in the area, the design team instead looked to “place, purpose, and poetics,” embracing the area’s unique weather patterns, quality of light, and native heritage as inspiration. “Through this process, I was looking for an idea that was more timeless, that was more ethereal, that was more positive in its approach,” Elliott says.

The concept of “folding light” is repeated throughout the building at different scales, evidenced not only in the vertical fins of the exterior but also in the case lighting of the hallway displays, the donor recognition panels, and the accented wood accents in the cafe, to name a few. The design team explored materials that would capture and hold the light rather than simply reflect it, a physical metaphor for the creative energy to be captured within the building itself. After mocking up five variations of building finishes with differing qualities of reflection and iridescence, the team



landed on a bright-dipped anodized aluminum rainscreen constructed with nine modules of varying angularity that, in addition to channeling water, harnesses wind to reduce heat load on the building's facade.

On the southwest corner, a triangular lantern of spaced aluminum fins illuminated with vertical LED lights extends beyond the conditioned space and above the roofline to announce the building at night. This helps to counterbalance the fact that the rear of the building faces the street — an unexpected siting decision if it were located in a traditional pedestrian-oriented urban environment. But in a city of commuters vying for the parking spaces nearest the entrance, this orientation allows the building to maintain a prominent physical presence near the street edge while tucking parking discreetly behind the structure and building anticipation as visitors approach the door.

A porte-cochère large enough to accommodate four SUVs shelters occupants from the elements upon arrival. The sculptural canopy is supported by three steel columns inspired by the tallgrass prairie of Oklahoma, with a single steel member extending beyond the canopy in a symbolic expression of the reach for creative inspiration. While



the intent is appreciated, the gesture instills a disquieting feeling of irresolution. With that said, it is executed with precision, perfectly extending the datum line from the beveled edge of the canopy through the angled surface of the column itself.

Inside, the light-filled first-floor lobby is thoughtfully organized to lend a sense of expansiveness with smaller moments for interaction. Ample interior glazing activates the space by providing views to the outside and visually connecting the cafe, Creative Lounge, and gift shop to the lobby. Around the corner are four general-purpose studio and classroom spaces, an early childhood classroom, and a teen art studio. The corridor connecting the studios serves a secondary function as a gallery space for student work, constructed with metal backing behind the drywall to allow for magnetic hanging.

While Oklahoma Contemporary hosts ongoing rotating exhibitions, it is not a museum and therefore does not maintain its own permanent collection. This is an important distinction to make, as the center's unfinished ceilings and exposed ductwork are more aligned with an industrial setting or atelier than with the highly refined aesthetic of most contemporary museums. Oklahoma Contemporary Artistic Director Jeremiah Matthew Davis explains, "I think the board felt long ago — and I concur with this — that at a certain point your collection pulls you back into history." This arrangement allows the center to remain nimble and



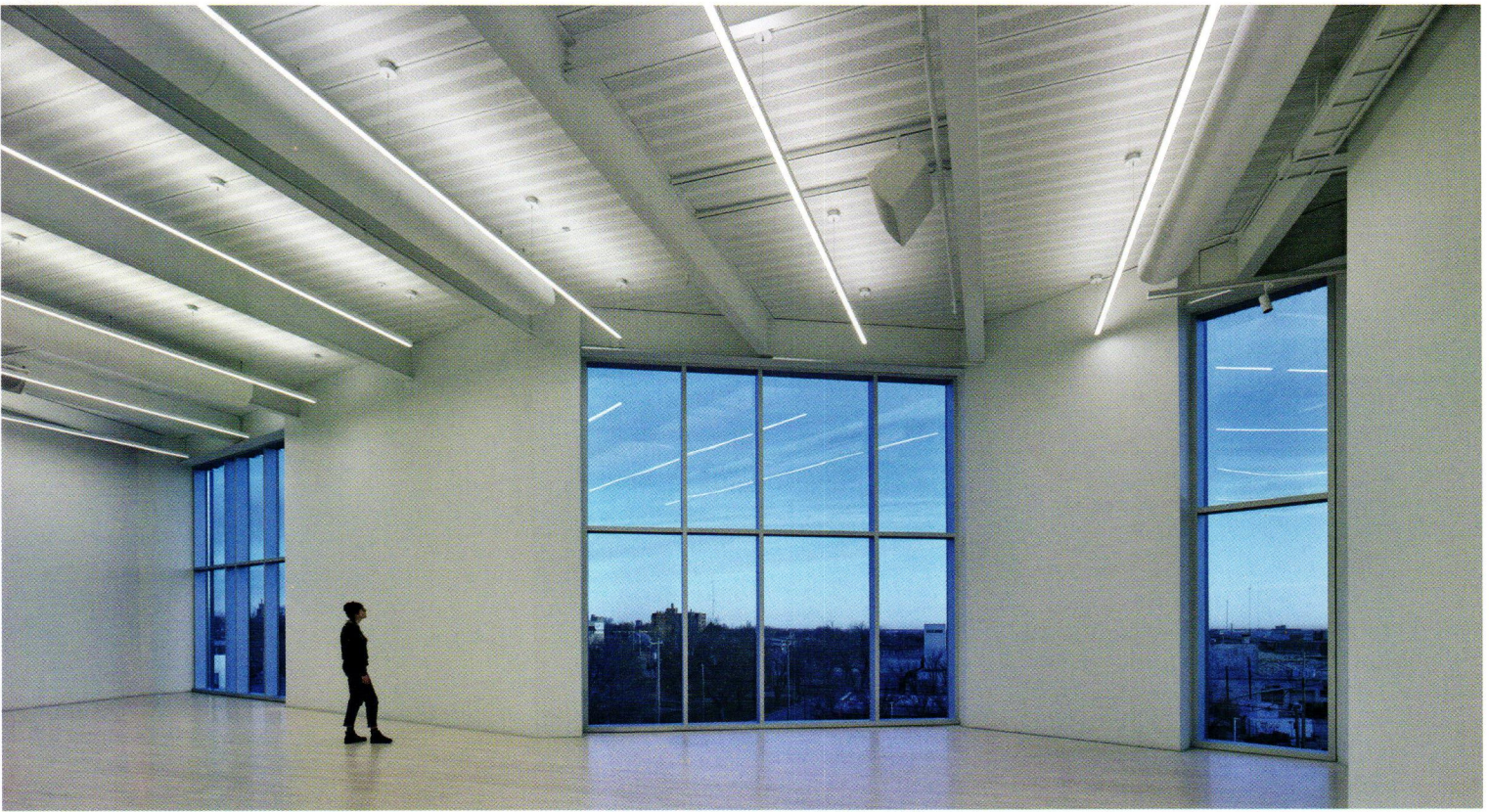
Facing top *The faceted facade comprises 37 miles of custom-designed extruded recycled aluminum fins.*

Facing bottom *Floor-to-ceiling glazing illuminates the lobby, and exposed structural elements convey a sense of an atelier setting rather than a formal museum.*

Left and bottom *The building's faceted geometry is registered in places on the interior, including in the main gallery, producing a dynamic viewing experience.*



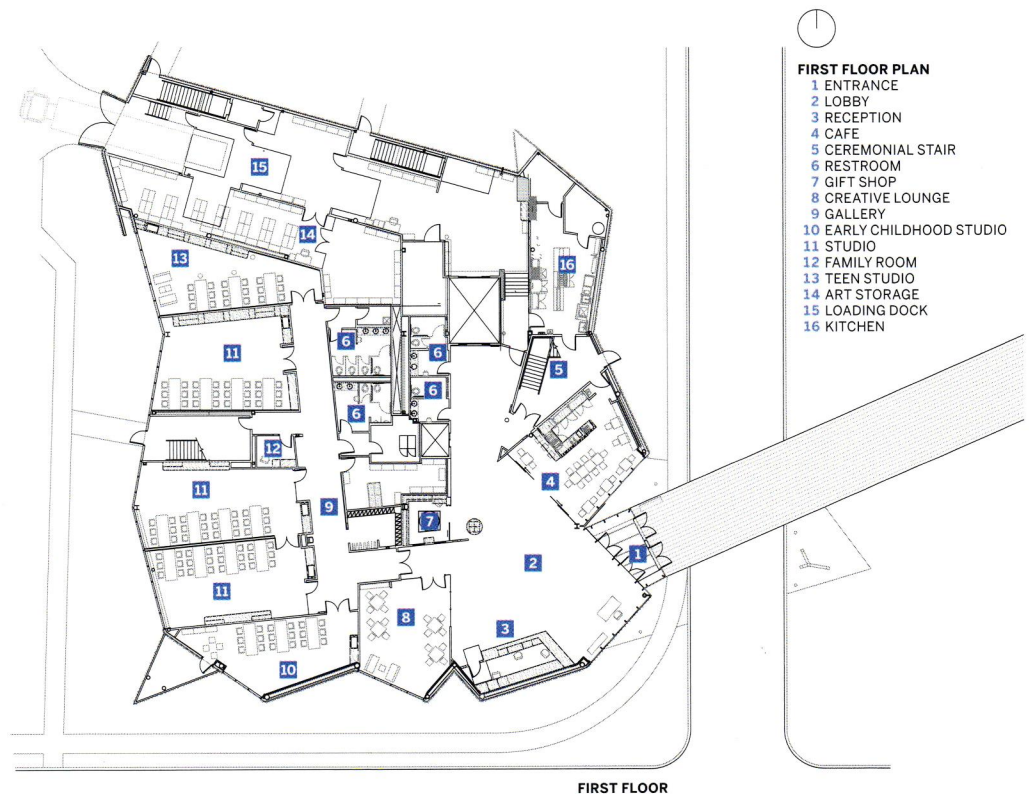
Review



responsive to the creative zeitgeist of Oklahoma, while still presenting world-class art that can't be seen anywhere else in the state through partnerships with collecting institutions.

Notably, in the main lobby, a land acknowledgment (a formal statement recognizing the value of indigenous knowledge and people as traditional stewards of the land) centers the history of indigenous peoples in the region. While this practice is becoming more common, there are very few organizations in the country that display a land acknowledgment on a permanent structure. It's a particularly complex issue in Oklahoma, as pre-contact cultures were already living on the land when other native cultures were relocated there through the Indian Removal Act of 1830, dispersed, and relocated there again. Oklahoma Contemporary worked closely on the effort with the First Americans Museum, another Oklahoma City-based cultural institution, which is scheduled to open September 2021 and whose mission is to educate the broader public about the unique cultures and contributions of the First American Nations. The land acknowledgment is only the beginning of their collaboration, as the center continues to seek guidance and contributions from contemporary indigenous communities.

Beckoning visitors to upper floors, a twisting, ceremonial stair with vertical LED lighting and translucent, corrugated polycarbonate balustrades

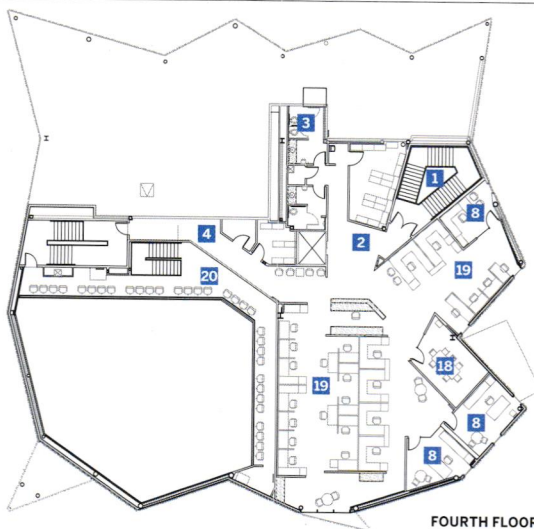


engenders a feeling of upward momentum. The second floor boasts nearly 8,000 sf of exhibition space as well as a sound studio, a multimedia lab, photography classrooms, an artist-in-residence studio, staff offices, and an outdoor terrace. A learning gallery precedes the main exhibition space, providing additional context for exhibitions to create a richer, more informed viewing experience. The inaugural exhibition, “Bright Golden Haze: Reflections,” featured the central theme of light as a medium for creating space. In fact, the building itself was included as part of this exhibition, with many of Elliott’s concept drawings featured in the learning gallery to illuminate the design process. As of this writing, the main gallery was exhibiting “Ed Ruscha: OKLA.” While Oklahoma native Ruscha is generally noted as a trailblazer of the 1960s L.A. Pop Art scene, this is the first exhibition to focus on the artist’s Oklahoma roots and, remarkably, his first solo exhibition in his home state.

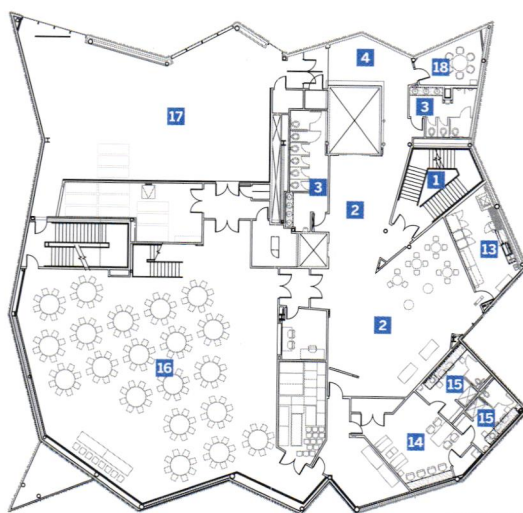
Virtually free of 90-degree angles, the gallery’s interior spaces express the same irregularity of the exterior, producing a non-traditional viewing experience that breaks the white cube paradigm. The dynamic angles communicate a playful, “don’t take yourself too seriously” attitude while also effectively encouraging visitors to move between spaces. Similarly, corridor walls do not remain parallel and instead move from compression to expansion as they peel back into adjacent spaces.

Opposite the artist-in-residence studio, a sizable north-facing terrace overlooks an event lawn and the Campbell Art Park, the building itself providing shade to temper the hot Oklahoma sun. “Having the land was a lifesaver for us,” says Oklahoma Contemporary Executive Director Eddie Walker. “Hosting outdoor exhibitions during the pandemic still brought people to us, and we were able to serve them. It’s a real asset that not a lot of landlocked traditional art centers might have.”

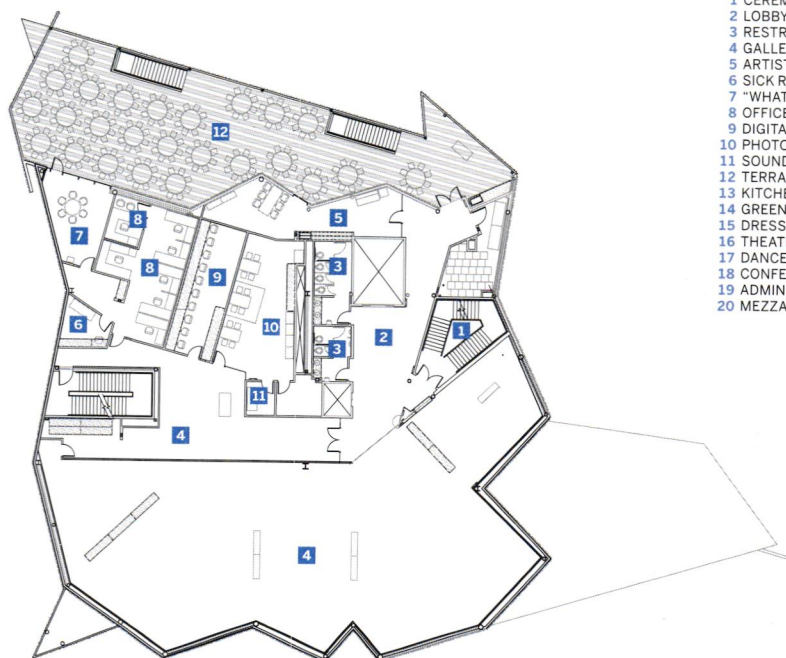
Originally scheduled to open to the public on March 13, 2020, the art center had to postpone suddenly due to the COVID-19 pandemic. “We closed before we opened,” says Davis. “It was heartbreaking. For some of us it had been a decade in the making. We were the first cultural institution to shut down in the state. Our decision to close came the same day, but earlier, as Broadway and the Metropolitan Museum in New York.” Though they couldn’t welcome people into the building, the institution remained connected to its audience by working with local artists and educators to create studio-at-home programming and other online



FOURTH FLOOR



THIRD FLOOR



SECOND FLOOR

Facing *The dance studio overlooks an event lawn and boasts views to the Oklahoma State Capitol.*



- SECOND – FOURTH FLOOR PLANS**
- 1 CEREMONIAL STAIR
 - 2 LOBBY
 - 3 RESTROOM
 - 4 GALLERY
 - 5 ARTIST-IN-RESIDENCE STUDIO
 - 6 SICK ROOM
 - 7 “WHAT’S NEXT” ROOM
 - 8 OFFICE
 - 9 DIGITAL MEDIA STUDIO
 - 10 PHOTOGRAPHY STUDIO
 - 11 SOUND STUDIO
 - 12 TERRACE
 - 13 KITCHEN
 - 14 GREEN ROOM
 - 15 DRESSING ROOM
 - 16 THEATRE
 - 17 DANCE STUDIO
 - 18 CONFERENCE ROOM
 - 19 ADMINISTRATION
 - 20 MEZZANINE

Review

content before opening the building in limited capacity to the public on August 26.

True to Oklahoma Contemporary's mission as a multidisciplinary arts center, the third floor features a flexible, 200-seat black box-style theater (though actually it is a dark navy blue) and a dance studio with views to the State Capitol that can also be used as a support space for the theater. The top floor houses administrative offices. "We hope to be a partner for some of the more traditional performance groups, where they can get out of their house and come do something that's a little off-brand, which totally fits our brand," Walker says. "We can be that safe space where they can play and do something edgier — and not have to sell 2,500 seats, so the economics work better." Case in point, they recently partnered with Painted Sky Opera to present "As One," an operatic coming-of-age story of a transgender woman.

The art center's handicraft studios are housed on the opposite side of the parking lot in an existing 1910 wood-and-masonry-construction warehouse, artfully complementing its newer, more polished neighbor while connecting it to the past. After digging into the history of the site, the design team discovered that the building had been used to manufacture light bulbs — a serendipitous and poetic connection to a project intended to honor the light of Oklahoma. The building was in rough condition when the property was purchased, with holes in the roof and some areas with rotting timber, but its functional and crafted nature serves as an appropriate analogue to the handicrafts born inside. Having the studio spaces in a discrete structure also provides an elegant solution for maintaining air quality by keeping the environmentally sensitive gallery spaces free from accidental contamination by sawdust or other particulates.

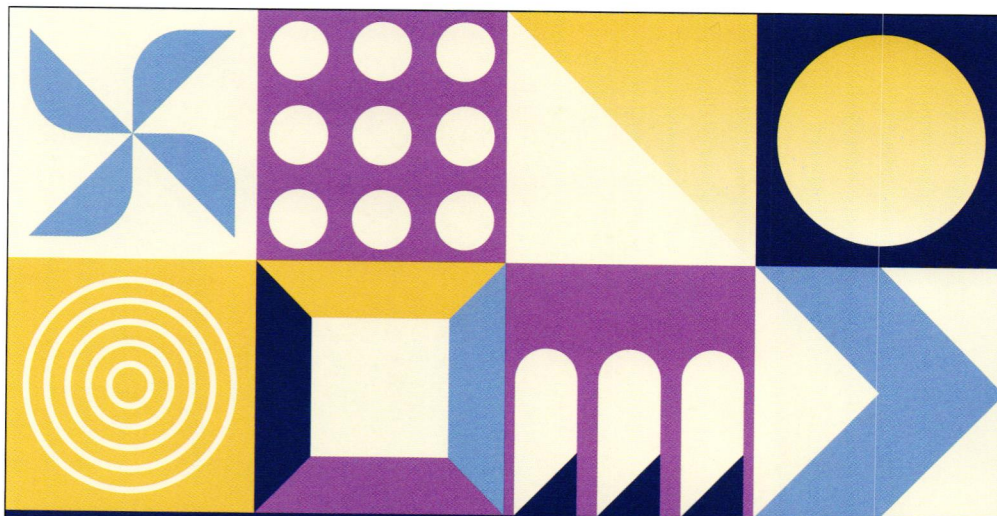
Oklahoma Contemporary is still following a phased opening strategy, but the center plans to host events over the summer as part of ArtNow, a biennial survey of work created in Oklahoma. Meanwhile, with no history of operations in the space to provide guidance, the leadership and staff continue to improvise. "We went from a mom-and-pop garage operation — and I mean that in no critical way: Great programs; great exhibitions. But it was all limited by an old building. Then suddenly, with the trip of a moving truck from the fairgrounds to here, we are a player. We felt it immediately," Walker says. "We're going to have several years of fun experimenting on our own, but also with community partners, about what this



building and facility can be." And, in doing so, Oklahoma Contemporary will likely be a pivotal catalyst for the community, pushing local culture beyond its comfort zone, challenging the status quo, and proving along the way that Oklahoma can be much more than OK.

A twisting, ceremonial stair beckons visitors to upper floors.

Anastasia Calhoun, Assoc. AIA, is chair of TxA's Publications Committee.



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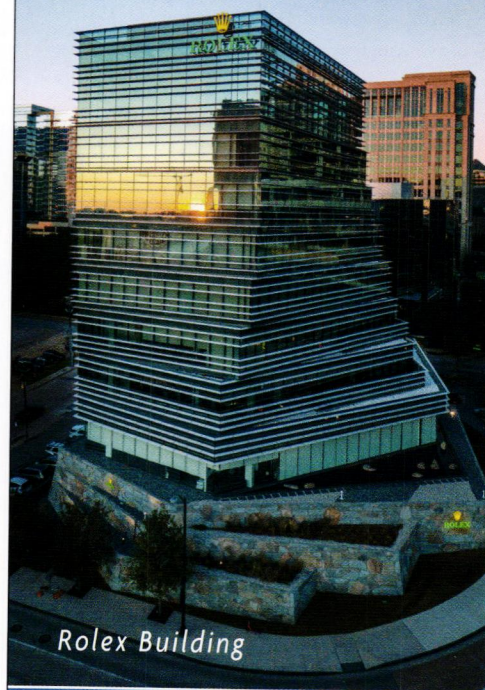


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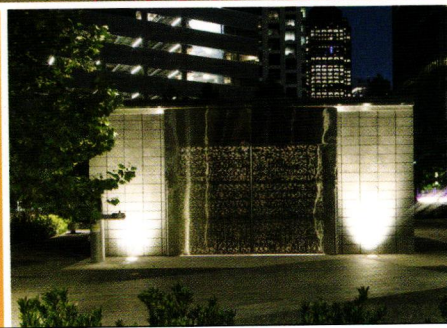
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by Rita Catinella Orrell

Here are some of the latest residential furnishings for both work and play that offer comfort, practicality, and good looks for the well-designed home.



Hipso Height-Adjustable Desk

Knoll
knoll.com

Knoll's "Work from Home" initiative includes furnishings that easily integrate into residential spaces, including smaller-scale performance chairs and desks and a range of lighting and accessories. The Hipso Adjustable Standing Desk is sturdy, easy to assemble, and delivers sit-to-stand functionality with the touch of a button. At 45-in-by-24-in, the desk is compact enough to be tucked in the corner of a living or dining room. Hipso features a laminate top and a steel base in sturdy black or white paint.



AMAI Table

Extremis
extremis.com

Suspended between two A-shaped side frames, this ADA-compliant, multipurpose table can be positioned from sitting to standing height for indoor or outdoor dining or collaboration for up to eight people. The table offers power outlets, USB and USBC connections, and dimmable LED lighting, controllable by a smartphone, with options including a Vitamin D stimulator, color change adaptor, and UV-C light "virus killer" module. AMAi offers a wind-resistant shade structure that improves acoustics indoors.



Flow X Stairlift

Pearson Lloyd for Access BDD
accessbdd.com

London-based Pearson Lloyd designed the modern Flow X stairlift for mobility specialist Access BDD. An elegant, ergonomic solution to home mobility, Flow X uses patented Advanced Swivel Levelling technology to ensure the seat and foot rest rotate together, maintaining optimal distance between the chair and the staircase and enabling the user to get on and off without twisting their body. A unique folding mechanism means the chair takes up minimal space on the stairs when not in use and allows the user to park the stairlift without bending the back and knees. Intuitive controls are located in 180-degree foldable arms that allow wheelchair users easy access.



Za Stool

Emeco
emeco.net

Industrial designer Naoto Fukasawa designed the Za stool with a round, defined rim to keep users comfortably seated in the center. Za is handcrafted in Pennsylvania of recycled aluminum through Emeco's elaborate 77-step process. Available in small, counter height, and bar stool height, Za can be used indoors or out as a seat or side table. Guaranteed for life, the stool is lightweight, strong, non-corrosive, fireproof, impervious to today's disinfectants, and environmentally friendly. It is offered with a natural, hand-brushed anodized finish, a hand-polished finish, or in six powder-coat colors.



Noonu

B&B Italia
beitalia.com

In the Noonu sofa system, designed by Antonio Citterio for B&B Italia, the supporting structure disappears from view, creating islands that appear to float. The deep seats have a roller cushion support element bound by sophisticated webbing to a die-cast aluminum frame beneath the seat cushion, allowing it to be arranged in a range of positions. Noonu is composed of four basic elements: a square, a rectangle, a piano-shaped base that creates a curve in the backrest, and a "sail," which gives rounded volume at the front. The sofa can be upholstered with a new fabric in 12 colors as well as leather.



Moa Armchair

Ligne Roset
ligne-roset.com/us

Inspired by the simple aesthetic of a traditional Japanese home, the upholstered Moa armchair was designed by Milan-based designer Keiji Takeuchi to offer great lumbar and head support. Ligne Roset was required to invent new techniques in order to create the design that Takeuchi envisioned for the chair's integrated headrest. The chair has a footrest and can swivel, rock, and recline, allowing users to sit comfortably and easily adjust positions when working, reading, or resting. The swivel and reclining mechanisms sit on a bent flat steel structure.

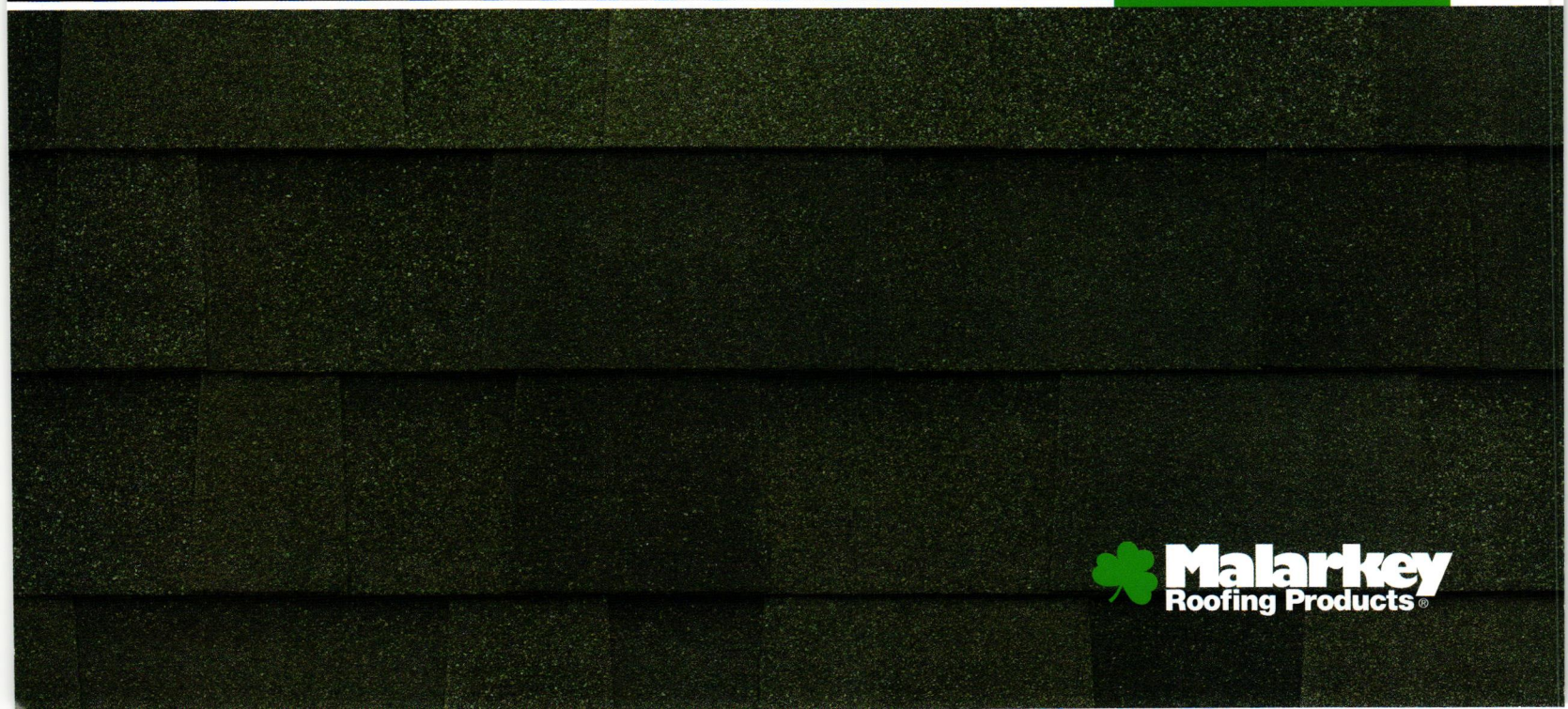


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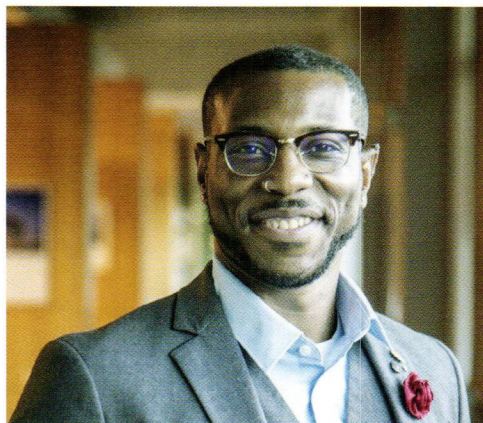
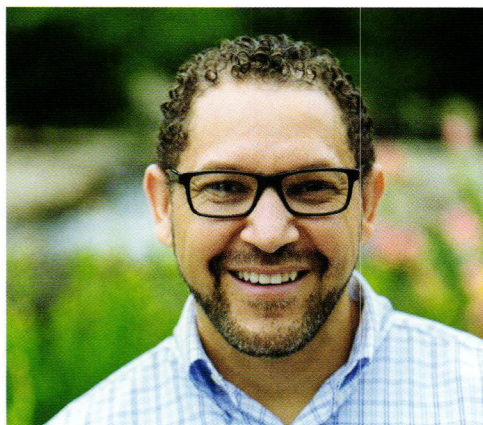
NOMA 50 X 50 Challenge Highlights Obstacles Facing Licensure Candidates and the Value of Firm Leadership's Support

by Sophia Razzaque, AIA

Of the 116,000 licensed architects in the United States, only 2,300 are Black, a number which has not changed much since 1968. This means that the number of those entering the field has not outpaced the number leaving. Further still, Black female architects make up only one fifth of that number. Last year, the National Organization of Minority Architects (NOMA), in partnership with the AIA Large Firm Roundtable, introduced the 2030 Diversity Challenge, which aims to increase the number of Black architects from 2,300 to 5,000 by 2030, an increase from two percent to four percent of all licensed architects, and an important step, even though Blacks represent 14 percent of the U.S. population.

This year is the 50th anniversary of NOMA, and as part of the larger diversity initiative, the organization has launched the 50 X 50 Challenge, which endeavors to recognize 50 newly licensed architects at its annual conference in Detroit this October. The organization has partnered with Black Spectacles, an NCARB-approved ARE-prep provider to offer up to 50 members a month a discounted rate for a range of services, including full access to video lectures, study guides, practice exams, and more. We recently interviewed several licensure candidates about their motivations, challenges, and sources of support. We also talked with NOMA members who are firm leaders about their experiences and advice for those going through the licensure process.

The licensure candidates we spoke with are all passionate and highly motivated. NOMA member Ricardo de Jesus Maga Rojas, Assoc. AIA, who was born in Cuba, is a senior project coordinator at GFF Architects in Austin. He has three exams left. His biggest motivation in getting licensed was the lack of Black Cubans in the field. "I didn't have any role models in the field I could look up to," he says. "That will always be the reason to push myself." Similarly, Zhetique Gunn, a designer and diversity champion at Perkins & Will in Houston, mentions that, along



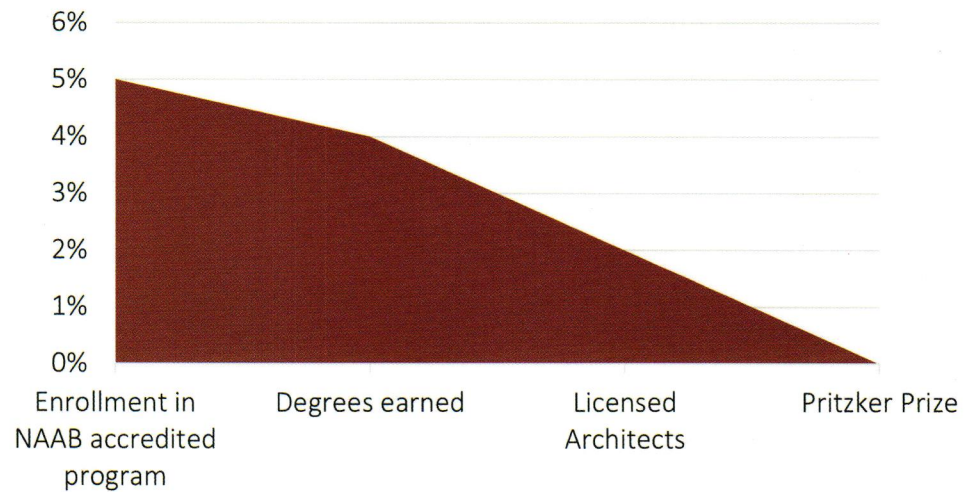
with the support and enthusiasm her family had for her chosen career, she was inspired to pursue licensure by the lack of Black women architects. "I was just shocked to know that [at the time] out of all of the professionals in our field, there were only 417 licensed black women," she recalls. "It was a daunting number. I was going to have to bring that around, to be a part of raising that number."

Both emerging professionals have demonstrated a commitment not just to their own success, but to helping others overcome the same challenges. Maga Rojas was named the Texas Society of Architects Associate of the Year in 2020 for contributions promoting diversity in the profession, including establishing a scholarship to help financially disadvantaged students at his alma mater, the HBCU Tuskegee University. Gunn is the NOMA Houston professional development coach heading up the chapter's ARE study groups. She says she began facilitating study sessions for fellow EPs to provide support, but also to help raise the numbers "in a way that was tangible and also could provide accountability."

Another factor encouraging licensure is its perceived necessity for advancement in the profession. "Other architects will hold you back if you are not licensed," Maga Rojas says. "Getting

Clockwise from top left: Joseph Benjamin, AIA, NOMA, Associate Partner, Lake Flato Architects, San Antonio; Zhetique Gunn, NOMA, Designer II, Diversity Champion, Perkins & Will, Houston; Traci Murray, Project Manager, U.S. District Courts – Western District of Texas; Wenguel Yohannes, NOMA, Associate Principal, Page, Dallas; Ricardo de Jesus Maga Rojas, Assoc. AIA, NOMA, Senior Project Coordinator, GFF Architects, Austin.

Black representation at key points along a career in architecture



licensed will be a way to say ‘I have done this,’ and will be a way to open doors. Others will say, ‘If he can do that, then he can do this as well.’” Traci Murray, who took a circuitous, nontraditional path and now works as a project manager for the U.S. District Court for the Western District of Texas and is working with Lake|Flato’s Joseph Benjamin, AIA, on the San Antonio Federal Courthouse from the client’s side, echoes this sentiment. She says that once she found her niche in the industry, she became motivated to take her exams. “Not because I necessarily wanted to be the best designer, but I wanted to be the best project manager. And I knew it was what everyone likes to see — a credential, you know; it just kind of comes with the territory. It’s like someone being a doctor, you know?”

All three of the licensure candidates identified the lack of time to study and to take the exams as their biggest challenge. Taking the exams makes a serious demand on a candidate’s energy, and throughout the process, the desire to feel supported and have conversations about their needs becomes paramount. Firm support makes all the difference. Being able to manage project commitments with their team — knowing they’ll be given dedicated time off to ensure they are well prepared and well rested — has been helpful, as has been time to decompress afterward. “You should not be expected to go back to the office after a five-hour exam when your brain is fried,” says Maga Rojas.

The financial burdens, too, can take a toll. Says Gunn: “Just applying to be able to take your exams has a fee associated with it, and then renewing it every year has a fee, and then when you get your license, there’s other fees.... It is just a constant barrage of fees. And that is very difficult. When we look at how Black women are paid and, whether it is race or gender, we tend to be underpaid. And so that is a big hurdle for us.” Some firms, like Maga Rojas’, provide study materials and pay for exams passed, and to supplement the Black Spectacles offering, the Houston NOMA

is providing reimbursement for exams when a member passes at least two in a year, which Gunn describes as “a nice incentive and kind of push to get it done by our 50th anniversary.”

Firm leaders, AXP supervisors, and mentors can all remember when we committed to taking the exams, and the energy and conviction it required to complete all of them. Wenguel Yohannes, originally from Ethiopia, is an associate principal at Page in Dallas. She recalls the challenges she faced when trying to complete her ARE. “During that time, I had a lot more responsibilities than, let’s say, someone that was fresh out of school,” she says. “I had people relying on me or reporting to me for work. So, it was not something that I could just put off to the wayside and focus on testing.” She postponed her last exam time and again because she was intimidated, as it was one she had previously failed. When the exam date fell on a work deadline, she was ready to postpone yet again, but her mentor and project manager refused to allow it. “He was like, ‘Take the whole week off. Go study. Deadlines will happen. We’ll make it work.’ I don’t know how many people get that kind of an opportunity.” She completed and passed the exam.

Now a firm leader and mentor for emerging professionals, Yohannes offers the following advice for licensure candidates: “What I always tell them is that it’s a sacrifice in time. That’s kind of a blip in your overall life and career. I think it’s always good to remind them that the earlier they take their tests, the better off they will be, because the longer you wait ... the more

responsibilities you have, the harder it gets. So it’s better to prioritize testing.”

Joseph Benjamin is an associate partner at Lake|Flato. He discussed the types of support his firm provides to EPs going through the licensure process. The company actively encourages licensure, provides study materials, pays for passed exams, promotes study groups within the office, and provides a stipend once a license is received. “I think from a firm leadership standpoint, it’s always, you know, trying to be empathetic to other people’s challenges when they are going through that process,” he says. “I don’t feel the need to punish the following generation just because I had it hard. I think the right thing is the right thing, and it should always be the right thing, even if you experienced the wrong thing.”

So, firm leaders, revisit your motivations and talk to your staff about how you can support them in their success. Time and money are needed to take the exams, but once passed, they are a huge turning point in a candidate’s career. If you have any Black staff in the process of taking the exams, let them know that you are aware of the NOMA 50 X 50 Challenge and that you want to help them finish before the conference in October. This would reinforce your support and commitment to their future in the profession. Anything firm leaders can do to help support Black licensure candidates will help all licensure candidates. Consider this your Call to Action.

Sophia Razzaque, AIA, is an associate at Lake|Flato Architects in Austin.



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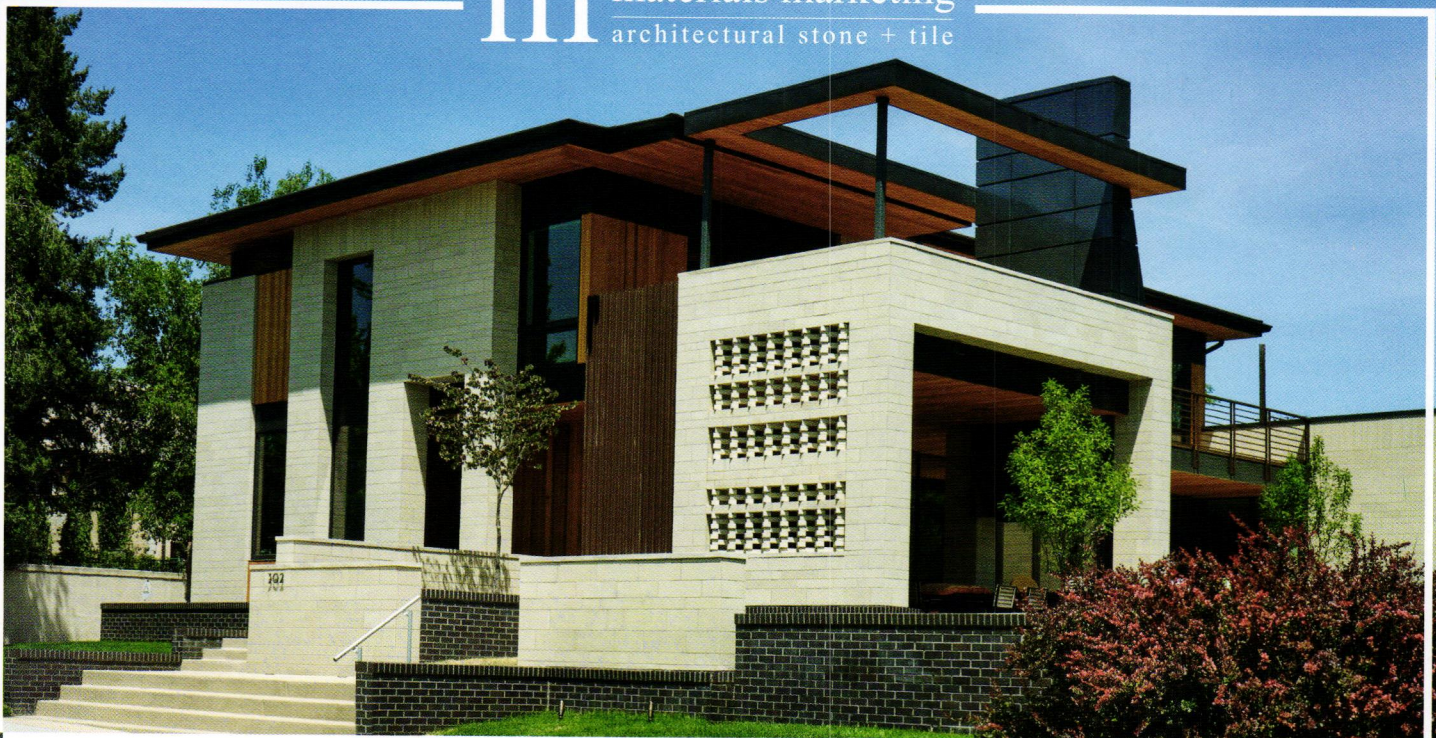
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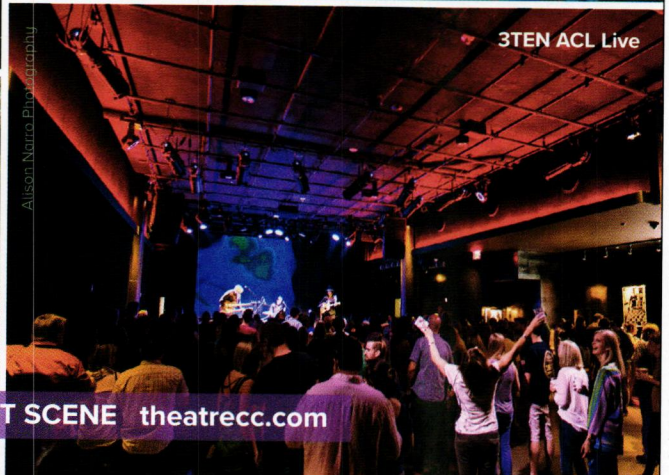
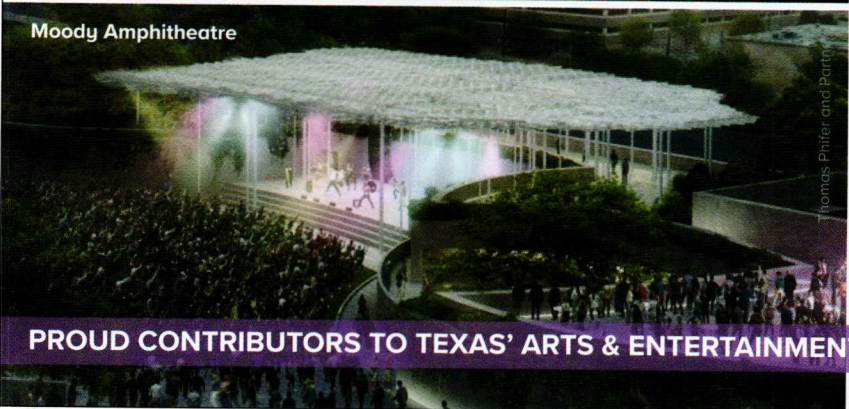
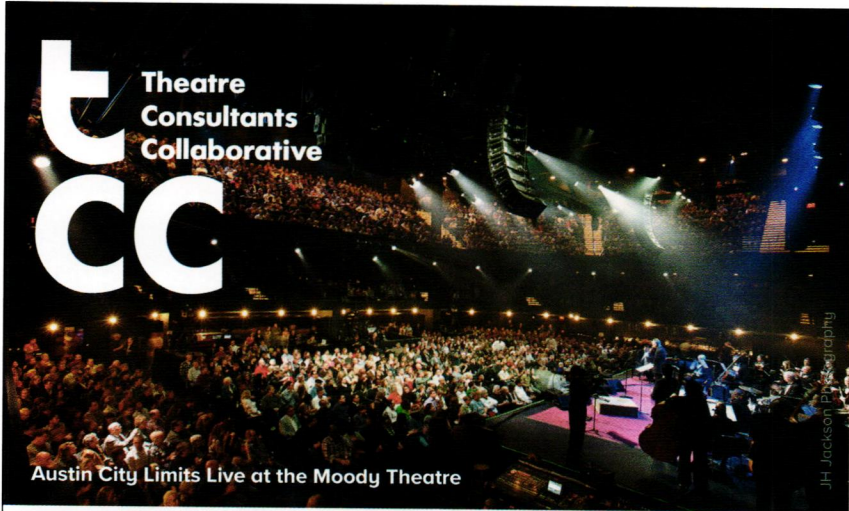
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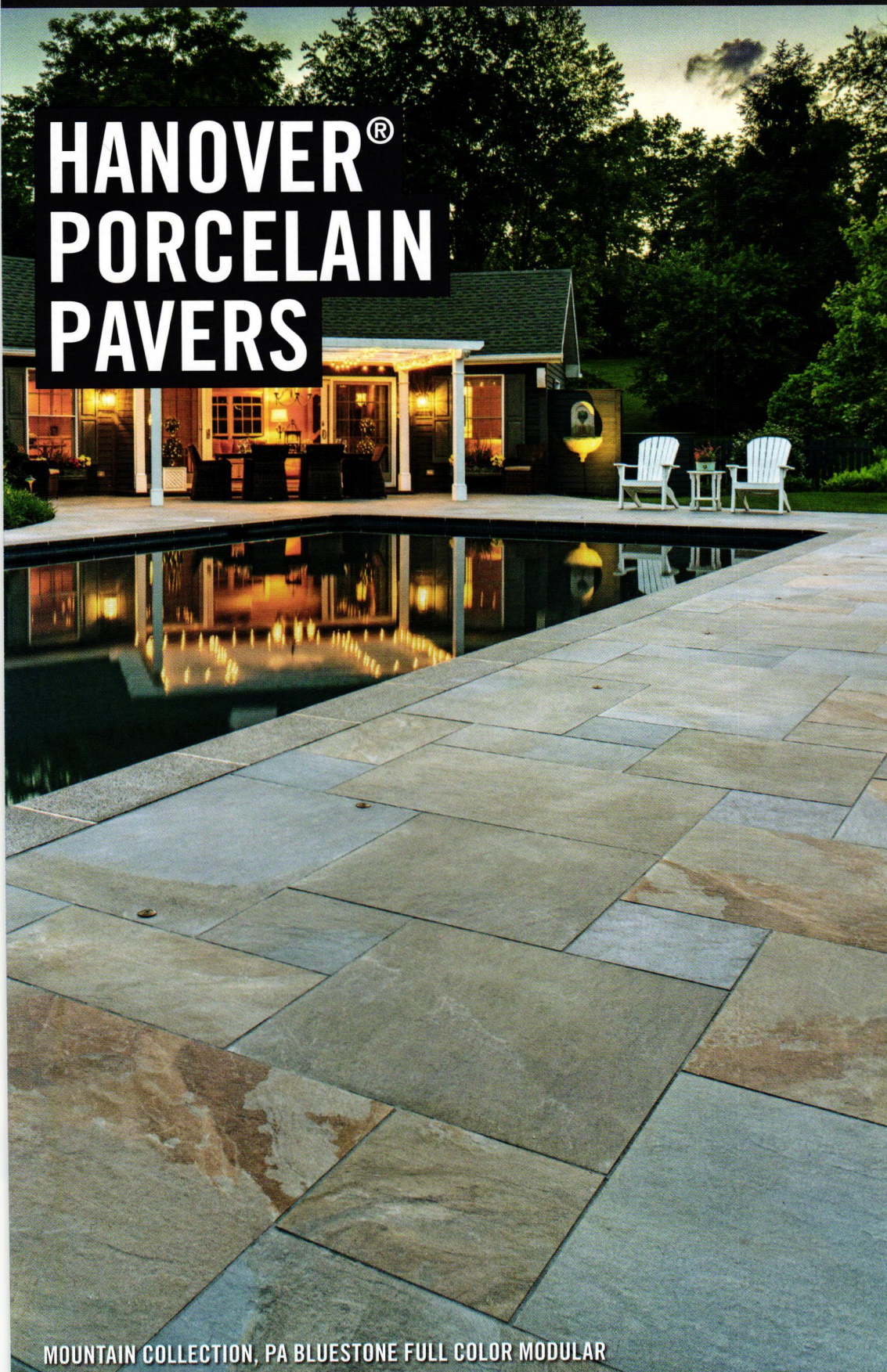
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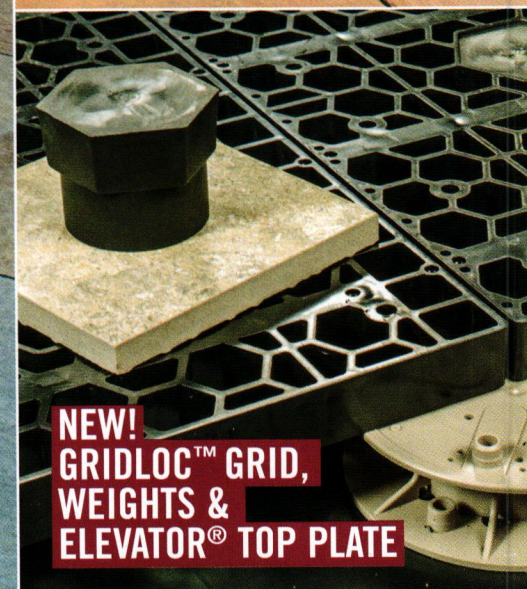
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One of my childhood friends lived in a big stucco house on a couple acres of wooded land enclosed by a high, steel fence. There was a fountain in the foyer lined with painted Mexican tile, a three-story-high atrium off of which the other wings of the house extended, an indoor tropical garden with an ersatz waterfall where lived an ornery macaw, and a wine cellar that was actually underground — a rarity in soggy Houston. Most of the furniture was upholstered in exotic animal hides. His parents also collected African tribal artifacts and erotic modern bronzes. Up a spiral stair was a lofted playroom, which was outfitted to resemble the cabin of a wooden sailboat, complete with a ship's wheel bolted to the railing. A sliding glass door opened from my friend's bedroom onto the stone pavers of the pool terrace, beyond which were the servants' quarters. Two large Doberman pinschers roamed the property, looking for intruders, but the trouble came from outside the fence, where men in pickup trucks would park to watch my friend's mom swim. She swam nude. The men would sit in the beds of their pickups, drink beer, and take it all in. After enough beer they would catcall and, when it was time to go, rev their engines and spin their wheels, rutting the muddy soil outside the fence. The dogs, though plenty vicious, could only bark futilely from behind the steel bars, which just made the men laugh. The solution was to build a wall of concrete block behind the fence, finished with the same cracking rosy-beige stucco as the house.

In this issue of *Texas Architect*, we consider four enclaves: a new urban park in Austin, a bird sanctuary on High Island, the campus of Rice University, and a historically black neighborhood in Lubbock.

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Constructed Wild

Austin's new Waterloo Park is set to open this fall. Both futuristic and familiar, it hopes, through a carefully calculated sequence of scenes, to bring humans and nature together for mutual enrichment.

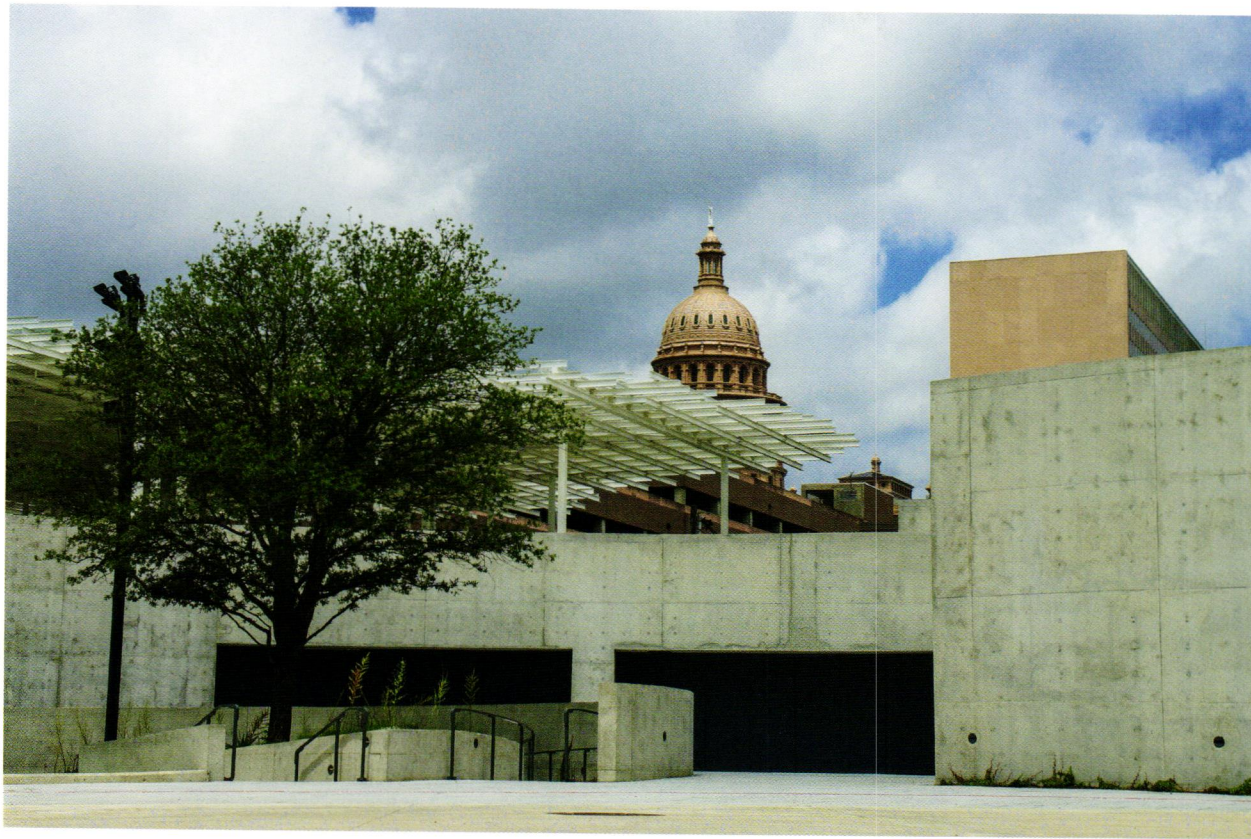
by Jessie Temple

"...get up parks, gardens, music, dancing schools, reunions, which will be so attractive as to force into contact the good & bad, the gentlemanly and rowdy." — Frederick Law Olmsted, letter to Charles Brace, c. 1854

"Instead of going up the wall I go down to the Creek." — Joseph Jones, "Life on Waller Creek," 1982

Some parts of the new Waterloo Park look like they've always been here. Look north from the 14th Street bridge and you might see a turtle sunning itself on a half-submerged stump, a blue heron launching into flight past the spreading canopy of a live oak tree, a monarch butterfly landing on a caliche block. But turn around and you'll see something new: a perfect green curve of lawn cantilevered over the creek bed and a gridded cloud of white steel floating under the pink dome of the Capitol.

The park, in planning (in its current iteration) since 2010 and under construction since 2018, is a feat — not just for the planning, coordination, and effort involved in turning a trash-festooned, flood-prone tangle of urban creek into a welcoming habitat for both turtles and humans; not just because the team made that effort look easy; but also because the resulting park draws on different eras and experiences of Austin to suggest something that's both familiar and refreshingly, optimistically new.



Facing *The “flying lawn,” suspended over the creek, reclaims almost half an acre of parkland for events or general park use.*

Left *The pink granite dome of the Texas Capitol rises over the Moody Amphitheater, designed by Thomas Phifer and Partners. The dappled shade cast by the steel mimics that of neighboring trees.*

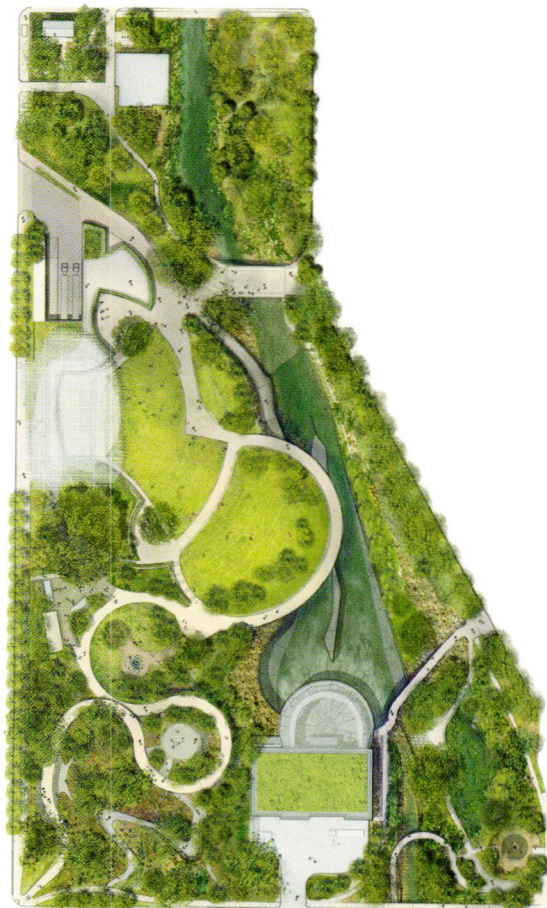
Below *“A green gem in the middle of the city,” says the Conservancy’s John Rigdon. The 11 acres of Waterloo Park comprise Phase 1 of the creek redesign; when the project is complete, visitors will be able to walk 1.5 miles down the creek to Ladybird Lake.*

Gullivar Shepard, associate principal at Michael Van Valkenburgh Associates (MVVA), calls that something the “new wild,” adding: “The idea is loosely formed right now but is rooted in learning, almost anecdotally, from the moments around the world where nature and humans have flourished together. Yes, that does exist.”

But not, historically, at Waller Creek. Wending from north Austin past the UT campus and through downtown before spilling out into Lady Bird Lake, the creek has been subject to periodic flooding, making creekside development risky. As downtown turned its back on the creek, it became a dumping ground for trash and a last-resort shelter for people.

The completion of a floodwater bypass tunnel in 2014 mitigated the flood risk. Funding for the Waller Creek Tunnel came from tax increment financing based on the projected growth and improvements resulting from removing some 10 percent of downtown Austin from the floodplain. In theory, says John Rigdon, director of planning and design at the Waterloo Greenway Conservancy, the city could have completed the tunnel and done no additional improvements, but community members, including then-councilwoman Sheryl Cole, wanted more. “She said, ‘We’re going to have to develop community benefits on the surface; it’s not all for private development.’”

That was the impetus for the Conservancy, which was founded in 2010 by board members (and familiar names in design-focused philanthropy) Melba Whatley, Hon. TxA; Melanie Barnes; and Tom Meredith. The Conservancy put out a call for proposals for the redesign of the creek, selecting a proposal from MVVA/Thomas Phifer that addresses the 1.5-mile stretch of Waller Creek from 15th Street down to Lady Bird Lake as four separate phases. Waterloo Park is the first phase; the second, known as the Creek Delta, will begin construction next year. The entire project is slated to be completed in 2026.





MVVA's first move was to essentially reinvent the natural state of the creek. To do that, they shifted the design of the flood bypass tunnel to create what Shepard calls a "cyborg creek." As originally designed, says Shepard, "the pumps would run continuously at a more even rate, creating conditions where a native plant community might not thrive and invasive species could flourish. Now, after close work with Austin's Watershed Protection Department, the tunnel system aims to artificially create dry downs and inundation cycles mirroring a healthy Texas creek in order to best stimulate a healthy biotic system."

With that infrastructure in place, the team turned its attention to Waterloo Park, located at the top of that 1.5-mile stretch of creek. While well-used during festivals like Fun Fun Fun Fest, the park was otherwise less than welcoming with its balding lawn and dark restroom building squatting under beautiful live oaks. Again, the board wanted something better. They wanted activation and inclusion.

Activation is perhaps best illustrated by the Moody Amphitheater, the aforementioned cloud of white steel floating just under the pink dome of the Capitol (the height of the building is determined in part by Capitol view corridor guidelines). Designed by Thomas Phifer and Partners, the amphitheater will host large touring acts and community events of all sizes; between events, it casts dappled shade that mimics that cast by the neighboring live oak trees. In fact, it may be more tree than cloud: Concealed in all that steel is a network of lights, drainpipes, and sprinklers, along with quite a few birds. "That was an unexpected pleasure," says Kathy Miller, interim CEO of the Conservancy, not entirely ironically. "We'll have to keep an eye out, but it's also very appropriate for an urban reuse project that manmade structures are also becoming habitats for the wildlife."

A heavy concrete base hides permanent concession and restroom areas for events as well as backstage and VIP areas. No more muddy

mosh pits, no more dust bowls, as the grass, too, hides infrastructure. The soil is engineered for drainage. Rainwater and spilled beer are collected underground in a cistern and pumped to a series of three raingardens at the southwest corner of the site, where they are filtered before returning to the creek. It's also built to withstand impact from dancing feet, furniture, and weather. Impact on the rest of the park is also limited, as a third of the park will be closed during concerts and other events.

Likewise, inclusion is illustrated by the circulation through the park. The term "accessible ramp," though technically accurate, is insufficient to describe the skywalk, a serpentine curve that gently transports park-goers over 50 feet of grade change, under broad-reaching live oaks, and past the viewing area for the inlet facility. The ramp is the primary circulation path. A slower, shaded secondary path, made of pervious paving for drainage, connects to seating areas and to smaller event spaces like the Lebermann Plaza. A stone scramble lit by firefly bollards leads adventurous park-goers up a rocky incline; elsewhere, play elements made of natural materials — a wooden climbing structure, a concrete slide — offer a starting point to engage with and explore the rest of the site.

The Family Pavilion, designed by Michael Hsu Office of Architecture, was initially conceived of as a restaurant, but, in an example of how the project has evolved over time, it is now a restroom and storage facility. "We investigated a cafe," says Michael Hsu, FAIA, but "after asking ourselves who the users are, who the audience is going to be, are we really feeding everyone by doing this? — this was a better answer in a lot of ways." For many park-goers, especially families with kids, a restaurant was less important than welcoming restrooms. Hsu's office designed a concrete structure that evokes Texas rock outcroppings and watering holes. Sunlight and fig ivy pattern a wall behind a huge concrete sink. The goal, Hsu says, was not just to provide the facilities, but "to make it a memorable,



Facing Dirty hands encouraged: A sculptural play structure, concrete slide, and wooden climbing structure are designed to promote hands-on exploration of the park.

Left The Family Pavilion, designed by Michael Hsu Office of Architecture, takes inspiration from both Texas rock outcroppings and Carlo Scarpa and awaits the growth of fig ivy.

Below The green lawn of the Moody Amphitheater hides a high-performance binded soil profile and drainage system. As Eric Schultz of *dwg.* notes, "What you don't see is the majority of the work."





almost emotional experience. Everything is about play and experience, even washing your hands.” Instead of a restaurant, there will now be food trailers. In addition to being a symbol of Austin, the team decided, food trailers would make the park more accessible to both park-goers and to local food vendors.

The picturesque tradition of Frederick Law Olmsted held that putting humans into natural landscapes, however contrived, would have a salutary effect. MVVA works solidly within that tradition. Says Shepard: “The quiet and delicate beauty of a Texas creek will impact people’s sense of wellness and offer the simple pleasure of appreciating, monitoring, and caring for a natural environment while walking through what will be the most congested area of downtown Austin.” The stump, the heron, the caliche block, the butterfly — these are all part of the new wild, an ecological system not so much restored as painstakingly reinvented with the help of a network of experts including soil scientists, arborists, and plant experts from the Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center.

“What you’re seeing here on the surface is great,” says Eric Schultz, managing principal at Austin landscape architecture firm *dwg.*, a local partner on the project, “but probably 50 percent of the work is under the ground.” The caliche blocks that help to stabilize the bank will crumble, allowing plants and habitats to get established. Stumps and logs salvaged from the site are anchored into the walls; they provide great habitat for

turtles and other wildlife, says Rigdon, and they won’t come crashing downstream during a storm. The materials and techniques developed for this first section of the creek form a kind of toolkit for subsequent phases of creek restoration. “You’re seeing Chapter Three of a much longer book,” Schultz says.

This approach seems to create networks. Of the eight mature live oak trees on site, for instance, four were unexpected gifts from other construction sites. The largest, a 42-in-diameter heritage live oak, was brought over from the Capitol Complex on North Congress. Schultz says: “It was rolled down the street on something like a space shuttle roller, with all of these wheels. They lifted up the telephone lines.” Rigdon describes this as “one of those unique moments where there’s a partnership between nonprofit, developer, state, city — in order to save these trees.” For the park, the full-sized trees were a great asset, providing not just shade but a sense of permanence. “When people come to the park, they’re not going to know that tree came from a few blocks away,” Schultz says. “They’re going to think it’s always been there.”

Another example of collaboration is in the cantilevered lawn, perhaps the most futuristic element of the park. “It’s basically a highway bridge,” says Rigdon of the structure, but it looks more like something from “Star Trek” (specifically, from one of those highly-evolved, peaceful planets whose inhabitants wear linen caftans — but happily, there is no dress code



The intake facility diverts both floodwater and trash. Facing The skywalk serves as the primary circulation through the park; the accessible sloped path navigates 50 ft of grade change.

at this park). The inlet facility, which diverts both floodwater and trash out of the creek, was constructed before the park was designed. However, the designers realized that a lawn big enough for concerts would need to extend out over the creek, so they again worked with the tunnel designers to incorporate sleeves to hold future supports.

But probably the most significant collaborations are invisible. While Waterloo Park is considered a city park, it has its own programming and fundraising teams and will use paid events like concerts and weddings to help pay for free programs. “Parks are all about people,” says Kathy Miller. The park offers many different sizes and types of spaces that can be programmed, “so it adds capacity for community organizations who haven’t had a space to do their kids’ camp or their light opera shows for 100 people,” she says. “This is a place where we can partner with them. We can help fundraise so those organizations can bring this park to life in the way that best suits them.”

When the Conservancy was first founded, they brought in Peter Mullan, former executive vice president of Friends of the High Line, as the CEO (as the Conservancy moves from planning to operations, the search for a new CEO is underway; Mullan is now chief of architecture and urban design at the Austin Transit Partnership). Initially, the High Line was an easy reference point for Waterloo Greenway, an example of existing urban infrastructure being reinvented for new uses. (The Conservancy, like the creek, was

initially called Waller Creek; they rebranded in 2019, at Mullan’s suggestion, to focus less on the creek and more on Austin. Waterloo, in addition to being the name of the park, is an early name of Austin.) Now, the team seems to resist those comparisons, maybe because the project is, in fact, very different, and maybe to distance this project from the concerns that the High Line was responsible for the gentrification of the surrounding neighborhood. Gentrification is not really the issue here, Miller says. “Austin has been growing at an exponential rate for years. I think preserving this open space to be accessible to everyone, with lots of free programming, is actually a way to mitigate the exorbitant prices of things in Austin. This park is going to add tremendous value across the board, not just in terms of dollars.”

The impact of the park is yet to be seen, but as a whole, it suggests an optimistic direction for Austin’s growth. “Parks aren’t really good tools for social engineering,” Shepard says, “but they can catalyze policy actions. Inclusive public spaces prevent a host of cultural issues from continuing to hide out of sight.” As downtown Austin grows, as people are cleared out of the tunnels and the skyline around the park fills with hospital and residential towers (it is currently mostly surrounded by structured parking), Waterloo Park, ideally, will offer an example of how humans can coexist both with nature and with each other.

Jessie Temple is an architect and writer in Austin.



Nesting

Houston Audubon's Smith Oaks Bird Sanctuary at High Island, designed by SWA and SCHAUM/SHIEH, is a case study in the amplification of a complex habitat.

by Aaron Seward

Once you put Winnie in the rearview mirror, driving south on Texas State Highway 124, the pine trees peter out and the landscape becomes a flat saltmarsh, nothing but grasses, cows, and the occasional resting pump jack, stretching as far as the eye can see. A line of telephone poles registers the straightness of the road, the one constant reminder of scale on this interminable plain, which otherwise seems to merge with the sky, where towering cumulonimbus clouds hover, indistinct and unreal behind a misty veil of hot, humid air.

In this context, it's easy to understand why the salt dome known as High Island, at a mere 38 ft above sea level, was given its name. Cresting the concrete ribbon of the High Island Bridge, it heaves into view, a green, forested mound, like the back of a giant tortoise sticking out of the mud. It is said to be the highest point on the Gulf Coast between the Yucatan and Mobile, Alabama. According to the "Handbook of Texas," Native Americans (probably the Karankawa) called it Doe Island. One can imagine deer being attracted to this spot, the sole place where it is possible to find shade, shelter, and freshwater springs for miles around. It also offers safety from the flood waters, whether storm surge or torrential rain, that can transform this hillock on the edge of the sea into an actual island, a safe haven for air-breathing lifeforms from all over the Bolivar Peninsula.

These characteristics have also made High Island a popular pitstop for migratory colonial waterbirds, who, after flying for two or three days over the Gulf from Central America, are looking for a place to rest up,



The rookery at Clay Bottom Pond is home to an unbelievable number of nesting birds. Facing The boardwalk improves accessibility to the sanctuary while the bathroom building (left) and restored pump house (right) offer the comforts of structured enclosure and plumbing.

wash the salt off their wings, and eat some bugs before pushing on to their summer feeding grounds in the upper Midwest and Canada. This makes it an ideal destination for birdwatchers, and, indeed, avian enthusiasts from all over the world make pilgrimages to this place. Houston Audubon, in fact, operates three bird sanctuaries there: Boy Scout Woods, Eubank Woods, and Smith Oaks.

Other characteristics of High Island have attracted yet another sort of habitu . Salt domes are geological features created when a thick bed of underlying evaporite minerals under great pressure behaves like a liquid and bubbles up through the overlying strata of rock, forming pillars that are often thousands of feet high. The pillars of impervious salt form reservoirs around their edges where hydrocarbons in other strata pool, making them favorite spots of exploration for oil and gas companies. (Spindletop, which is less than 50 miles away, is also a salt dome.) Today, the ring road that girds High Island is called Oilfield Road, but it's just a memorial. The oil and gas have been slurped up and burnt off into the atmosphere, the derricks and wellheads are long gone, and the companies have moved their operations elsewhere.

In fact, much of the land that makes up Audubon's Smith Oaks Sanctuary, which totals nearly 178 acres, was donated by Amoco Petroleum in 1994. But the sanctuary is named after George and Charlotte Smith, who acquired the property in 1879 and planted many of the oak trees there. George Smith engaged in a variety of agricultural activi-

ties, and even operated a sugar mill and cotton gin on the site. More famously, however, he dug several water wells around the property (one of which produced natural gas), bottled the effluence, and sold it up and down the Texas Gulf Coast as "High Island Mineral Springs Water," promising it would cure a variety of diseases, from liver trouble and asthma to baldness and zits.

High Island well water may not have been the panacea Smith advertised, but it did perform a sort of miracle. Over the years, two freshwater reservoirs were dug on the Smith Oaks property — Smith Pond and Clay Bottom Pond — to provide drinking water to the unincorporated town of High Island and industrial water for the mining of sulfur, which forms in the caprocks of salt domes. They also attracted wildlife, including alligators, turtles, and, of course, migratory colonial waterbirds.

But the freshwater wasn't enough to make the birds stay for long. They are called "colonial" because they form nesting colonies while breeding, based on the notion of safety in numbers. And yet, in spite of its seemingly appealing conditions, the birds were not nesting on High Island. The locals, it seems, used them, as well as the alligators and turtles, for target practice. The birds didn't like it, so they didn't stick around. When Audubon acquired the property, they prohibited hunting. They also constructed islands in the ponds to create better real estate options for nesting — an alligator-filled moat really helps to keep

away racoons, coyotes, and other terrestrial predators. Within a year of this change, 50 heron nests were counted. Two years after that, 332 bird couples nested there. Nowadays, more than a thousand bird families — Roseate Spoonbills, Great Egrets, Yellow Slippers, Cowbirds, Tricolored and Little Blue Herons, White Ibises, Neotropic Cormorants, Snake Birds, and Black-crowned Night Herons — choose High Island to have their babies.

The success of these simple modifications to the landscape got Houston Audubon thinking about what else could be done to improve the habitat, both for birds and the humans who look at them. Serious birdwatchers have a sort of pride in their willingness to endure uncomfortable conditions to catch a glimpse of their feathered friends, like clambering through a spider-infested swamp, but the same can't necessarily be said of SOBs (spouses of birders), the mobility challenged, or your more effete urban dweller, who may like looking at birds well enough but isn't willing to *suffer* to see them. And so Audubon engaged the Houston office of SWA for recommendations and design services. Natalia Beard, the principal in charge, also brought on architecture practice SCHAUM/SHIEH to give the project an alluring pop sensibility.

The design team's main intervention is minimally invasive, maximally impactful: a boardwalk, lifted into the tree canopy on weathering steel pipes, that branches out from the parking lot to overlooks of the rookeries in the two ponds. This lifted walkway is easy to traverse, puts the visitor at eye level with the birds, and is elevated away from the alligators, snakes, and most of the mosquitos, which can be so thick that it's impossible to breathe without inhaling them. To reduce the impact on the ground, the V-shaped pipe columns come down to a single footing, which rests on helical piles that were screwed into the soil so as not to disturb the birds with any piledriving. (A blind was also erected during construction to spare the nesting sites from unsightly activities.) Southern yellow pine boards, which are affordable and locally grown, make up the deck.

The project restored a historic 1920s pump house on site, which was built back when infrastructure was monumentally done. This one is



Top The boardwalk branches out from the parking lot to the rookeries in the two reservoirs.

Middle The birds share their nesting habitat with alligators and turtles.

Bottom High Island is a salt dome that rises to 38 ft above sea level.

Facing top Visitors wander through the tree canopy, eye-to-eye with their feathered friends.

Facing bottom The modified gable of the bathroom building was inspired by trees bending under hurricane winds.





brick and reinforced concrete, a rough but charming building. It was cleaned and stabilized, and skylights were poked in the roof. In a future phase, it may be enclosed with mosquito netting and used for receptions, or something. SCHAUM/SHIEH also designed a bathroom building, a modified gable structure of concrete block, wood, and standing seam metal. Painted green, its form was inspired by the way a tree looks when being blown back by hurricane winds.

While the construction was underway, Audubon made use of the opportunity to remove many of the invasive plant species at Smith Oaks. Plants like Chinese privet and tallow trees, which were popular in nurseries in the 1950s, flourish here. They were popular, and are now virulent, because local bugs don't eat them, so they can out-compete native species. But the birds eat bugs. Without the bugs, the birds wouldn't hang out here. And so, to support and amplify the bird population, bug food had to be provided too. It's a good reminder of the intricacies of the ecologies that surround us every day.

Aaron Seward is editor of *Texas Architect*.



Behind the Hedges

The campus of Rice University is one of Houston's premier bubbles of development, whose accretion of buildings represents a century-long dialogue about the role of context in architecture

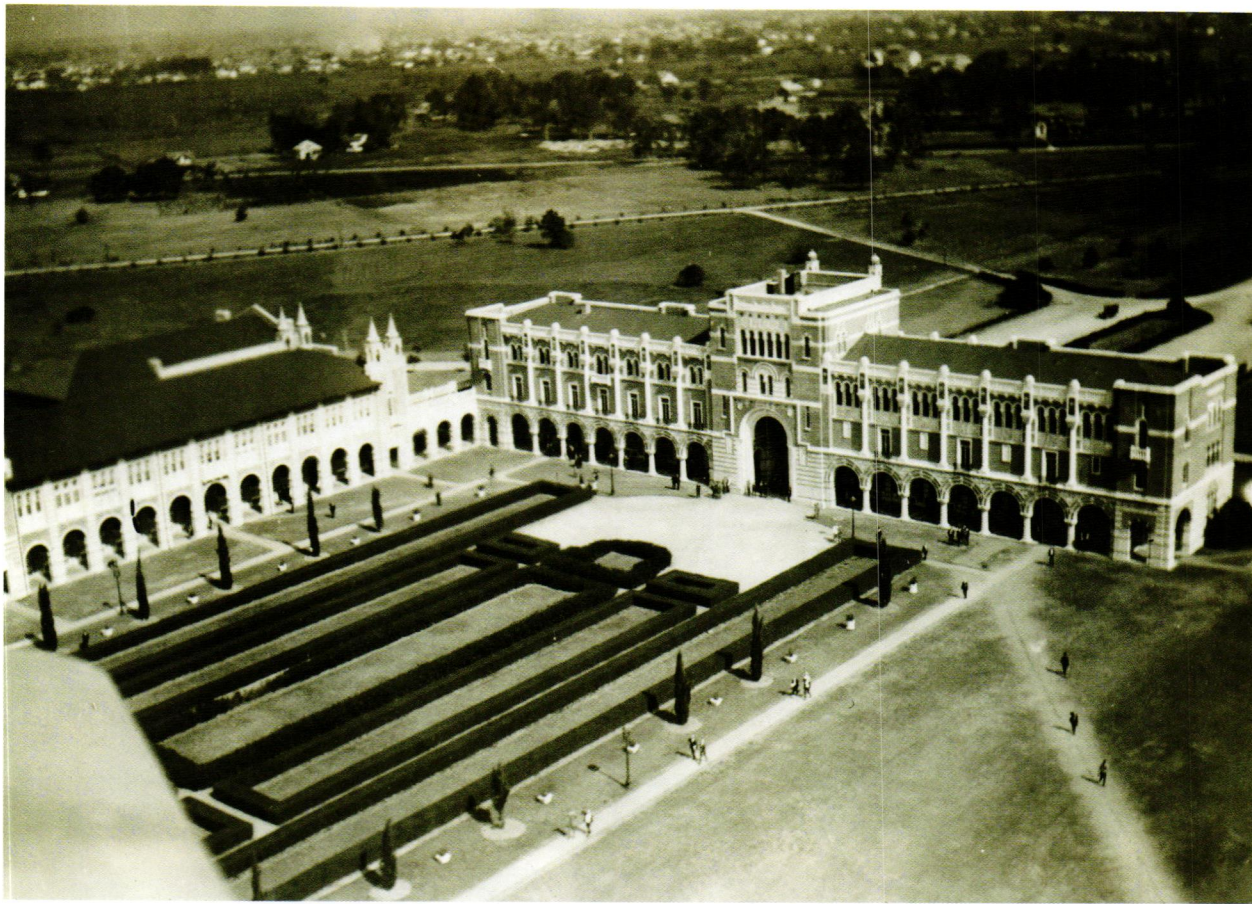
by Jack Murphy

Upon arrival at Rice, one visitor remarked that “we were confronted by an extraordinary spectacle, as of palaces in a fairy story.” He continued: “The Administration Building was before us, looking exactly as if it had arisen directly out of the earth. . . . The high, rounded windows, the lavishness of color and decoration, conspired with the simple and modern form to produce an effect of something entirely original. Here it stood, brilliant, astounding, enduring.”

These comments could be made today, but in fact the observation is from 1912, when a traveler arrived for the inauguration of the William M. Rice Institute. (The text opens architectural historian Stephen Fox’s “The General Plan of the William M. Rice Institute and its Architectural Development,” from 1980.) Today, Lovett Hall anchors a campus that unfolds under a canopy of live oaks in the middle of the state’s biggest city, but 110 years ago it was the lone structure in an open, muddy expanse, “rising out of the barren brown prairie which extended, unbroken save for a belt of trees, to the horizon and far beyond.”

Rice University is an enclave in Houston whose architectural importance has been enhanced by its relative isolation. First as an institute beyond the edge of town, and later as an expansive urban compound with regulated access (via gates and hedges), Rice University is as essential to Houston’s architectural landscape as it is un-Houstonian in its developmental controls.

The architectural legacy of Rice is a century-long dialogue about the role of context in architecture. While an overall plan was established prior to any construction and various planning protocols have been used, it may come as a surprise to find that there are no official regulations about what



Facing *The clay tile roofscape of Rice is punctuated by towers and spires, even as it blends into Houston's leafy landscape.*

Left *An aerial image of the start of Rice's academic court. The photo was taken in 1921 and included in the booklet "The Flying Owls: Rice Institute from the Air."*

Below *The General Plan for Rice University clearly establishes axial relationships and building shapes for the growth of the campus.*

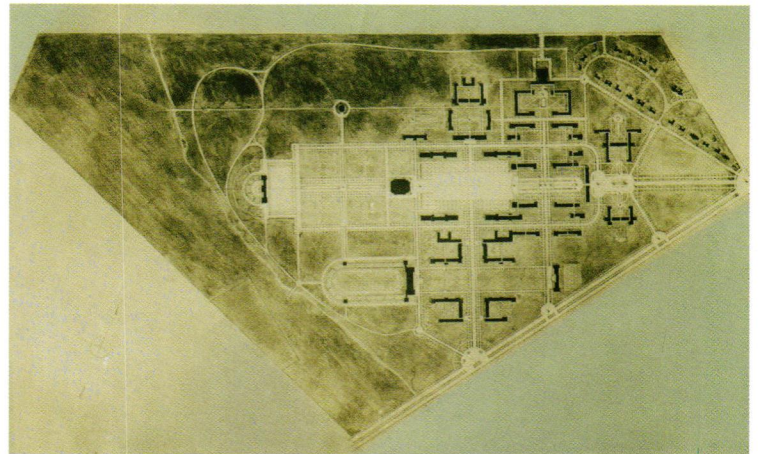
buildings should look like at Rice: Each architect selected to realize work on campus is faced with the task of assessing how to respond to what is already here — and then to survive the gauntlet of client aspirations, donor ambitions, a design subcommittee, and, at times, the Board of Trustees.

Rather than being a fixed, mechanistic reproduction of the Rice style, projects succeed when they add to the conversation that takes place through the forms and surfaces realized here across time. "Over the last several years, consistency across the multitude of buildings on campus has been less about the literal architectural style, and rather about recurring themes, identifiers, and aspirations," says Rice's university architect, George Ristow, AIA. "This is an important advantage, as it allows for longer-term goals — such as flexibility in design and scale, as well as innovation — while still maintaining cohesion."

Rice's role as a commissioner of architecture by contemporary architects is valuable. Over the years, its commissions typically serve to showcase the notable architects du jour.

Lately, the campus is in active expansion mode, and projects regularly arrive that challenge the standards of the campus. Michael Maltzan's Moody Center for the Arts landed on dark glazed brick rather than the standard St. Joe mix, proving one can deliver a building that's materially unorthodox, though the project is at the periphery of Rice's grounds. Rather than aesthetic control being laid down by regulations or personal-ity, building campaigns feel independent, subject to individual colleges and where the money comes from. The historic tightness of the enclave's feel changes with each new ribbon-cutting, but this is not a bad thing.

Recent projects showcase differing approaches to how to design a building for Rice.



Precedents

The General Plan for Rice University — the Rice Institute, until 1960 — was completed in 1910 by Cram, Goodhue, and Ferguson Architects of Concord, Massachusetts. It included layers of planning: A central axis with minor axes was established; academic buildings were grouped by discipline and use; and centrality and symmetry mark important locations. Buildings were to be long, thin slab shapes that both reinforced axial expression and worked in the hot, humid climate: Cross-ventilation was essential prior to the ubiquity of air conditioning.

Lovett Hall, Rice's first building, was completed in 1912. Beginning with the academic quad and early residential colleges, others followed in bursts as funding became available. Brick and its many variations were

Right *The lifted bar of the Brockman Hall for Physics responds in part to the arcade and patterning of Hamman Hall, designed by George Pierce and Abel B. Pierce in 1958.*

Below *Three generations of Rice buildings enter into conversation here: the Keith-Wiess Geological Labs (1958), George R. Brown Hall (1991), and Brockman Hall for Physics (2011).*

Facing *The terra cotta screen, as seen across the courtyard from the banded brick portal of George R. Brown Hall.*





quickly established as the architectural language of the young institution. Patterns emerged over the decades: The 1950s saw the creation of many laboratory buildings, including handsome contributions by Lloyd & Morgan and George Pierce - Abel B. Pierce; postmodernism flared up in the 1980s, with iconic buildings by James Stirling and César Pelli (the latter updated the master plan in 1994); and the 1990s saw a building boom that has continued into the present day. In the last 30 years, the list of architects who have contributed to the campus includes Ricardo Bofill, Michael Graves, Hopkins Architects, KieranTimberlake, Lake|Flato, Machado & Silvetti, Michael Maltzan, John Outram, Thomas Phifer, and Antoine Predock, among others.

In designing Lovett Hall, Ralph Adams Cram invented the neo-Byzantine architectural style that was to become the ur-precedent for the campus. It was ambitiously cosmopolitan. Constructed out of Llano granite and load-bearing arches whose bricks were pressed from Buffalo Bayou clay (St. Joe brick, from Louisiana, didn't become the campus standard until 1953), the building was deliberately expressive. Fox writes that Cram "constructed impressions of authority, power, and richness that endowed

the Rice Institute with an institutional legitimacy it might not have possessed had its setting not stimulated such awe." Describing their narratives as "rather fragile" and "blatantly fictitious," he says: "The architecture is representative of the 'idea' of Rice University. It constructs 'Rice-ness' in its historically allusive codes."

Here, a "Northern" architect imagined a new "Southern" academy. Fox notes that Cram was part of a movement of exploring regional vernaculars. Cass Gilbert indulged similar Mediterranean daydreams when realizing the original UT Austin campus, with "just as contrived" results. Fox characterized these architects as being "called on by provincial elites to envision new futures for local cultural institutions." Through recourse to architectural exoticism, their bold styles "asserted the institutions' singularity and superiority and legitimized the right of their leaders to exercise cultural authority."

Brockman Hall for Physics

KieranTimberlake of Philadelphia completed the Brockman Hall for Physics at Rice in 2011. Located in the engineering area, the laboratory building caps the court established by George R. Brown Hall, designed by Cambridge Seven Associates in 1991. When faced with multiple sites to choose from, the architects selected this one for its "low level of intrinsic vibration" and its proximity to other facilities.

The northern bar of the building is elevated off the ground, both for reasons of vibrational isolation (which can ruin multiyear experiments) and in response to the precedent of the arcades that connect many buildings on campus. The covered underside of the building is enhanced by sculptural concrete columns (think Corbusier's *Unité d'Habitation*) and a shallowly vaulted ceiling. Glass, clear and fritted, is used on the elevated floors. Terra cotta screens provide shading and brickly redness while, on the ground, brick-shaped glass blocks coursed with actual bricks engage the historic language of prior buildings. "It is an inventive take on Rice tradition," according to Mark Cottle and Sabir Khan, who surveyed recent efforts on campus in *Cite 86*, "and it adds a luster and vibrancy to the surface that accords well with the marble slabs and mosaic tiles of neighboring buildings."

After a series of contextually observant projects on campus in the 2000s, this building innovates on the Rice style in a pleasing way. The playfulness of postmodernism — seen at Rice most successfully in Pelli's Herring Hall and most wildly in Outram's Duncan Hall — returns, but mixed with the energetic concerns of the architect.

Other projects of the era worked using pure opposition: Thomas Phifer's Brochstein Pavilion, completed the same year, occupies a "lawn zone" as lightly as possible. Named for Raymond and Susan Brochstein, who led a prestigious woodworking company in Houston that's still in operation, its expression is all about transparency and lightness.

Hiring the same firm for subsequent projects doesn't guarantee repeat success. KieranTimberlake also completed the Cambridge Office Building on the south side of campus. Placement matters: The structure is transitional, from the outer bustle of Main Street to the inner calm of the campus. Despite its commendation with a 2019 TxA Design Award, the structure doesn't have the same attention to detail as the Brockman Hall for Physics; its exposed slab edges and large terra cotta panels don't play well with the Allen Center or, across the street, Lovett College (both were finished in 1967). The rear garage is clad in scrim printed with ivy, a cheeky moment of flatness that doesn't fool anyone.



Kraft Hall

The Patricia Lipoma Kraft '87 and Jonathan A. Kraft Hall for Social Sciences, designed by Rogers Partners, was completed in 2019. The 80,000-sf building, located along the Inner Loop across from Baker Hall, is the start of a new south axis, which will extend south from Jones Hall, across the West Quadrangle, and toward the intramural field. The facility is a new hub for social sciences; the Kinder Institute for Urban Research offices here.

With no immediate neighbors and out beyond the live oak canopy, Kraft Hall is isolated. To cope, it turns inward. Organized as a courtyard building, a primary entrance brings visitors up into the Russ Pitman Courtyard. In a nod to the Kieran Timberlake physics building, sculpted columns emerge from the grass, rise, and disappear into the soffit above. Major gathering spaces are on the ground floor. Two upper floors are double-loaded corridor rings, with triangular feature stairs that bump out into the courtyard.

The project's leaders — Rob Rogers, FAIA, and Tyler Swenson, AIA — are both Rice alumni, and the attention to Rice precedents shows. Up close, lower levels are clad in St. Joe brick, with a patterned set of recesses mixed with windows with expressed sills. Perforated dark red/brown metal — perhaps a response to terra cotta? — conceals some bands of the elevations as an interstitial material and clads the

stairs. Above, a glazed two-story lantern marks the corner that looks toward the central part of campus. The western facade includes “double columns,” faced with brick on the outside and, on the structural grid, concrete on the inside, which create a loggia of sorts. These reference the circular columns of Pelli's Herring Hall, which use brick on the outside and steel shells on the inside.

Density was important here. “As Rice looks to the next 100 years,” Rogers said in press coverage of a hard-hat tour of the building organized by the Rice Design Alliance, “the university intends to build with greater density, getting more out of the land while retaining the tradition of iconic outdoor spaces for which the campus is known.” Kraft Hall is nicely plain in its planar treatments and respectfully innovative of Rice's architectural precedents. The courtyard is pleasant but largely undiscovered, as the building was only open for a few months before the pandemic struck. Once campus life returns in the fall — and, looking ahead, as this part of campus is developed — the building will come to life. For now, it seems to be a successful take on the Rice style.

Brockman Hall for Opera

Allan Greenberg Architects provided the design of the Brockman Hall for Opera, whose inner workings were discussed in the previous issue

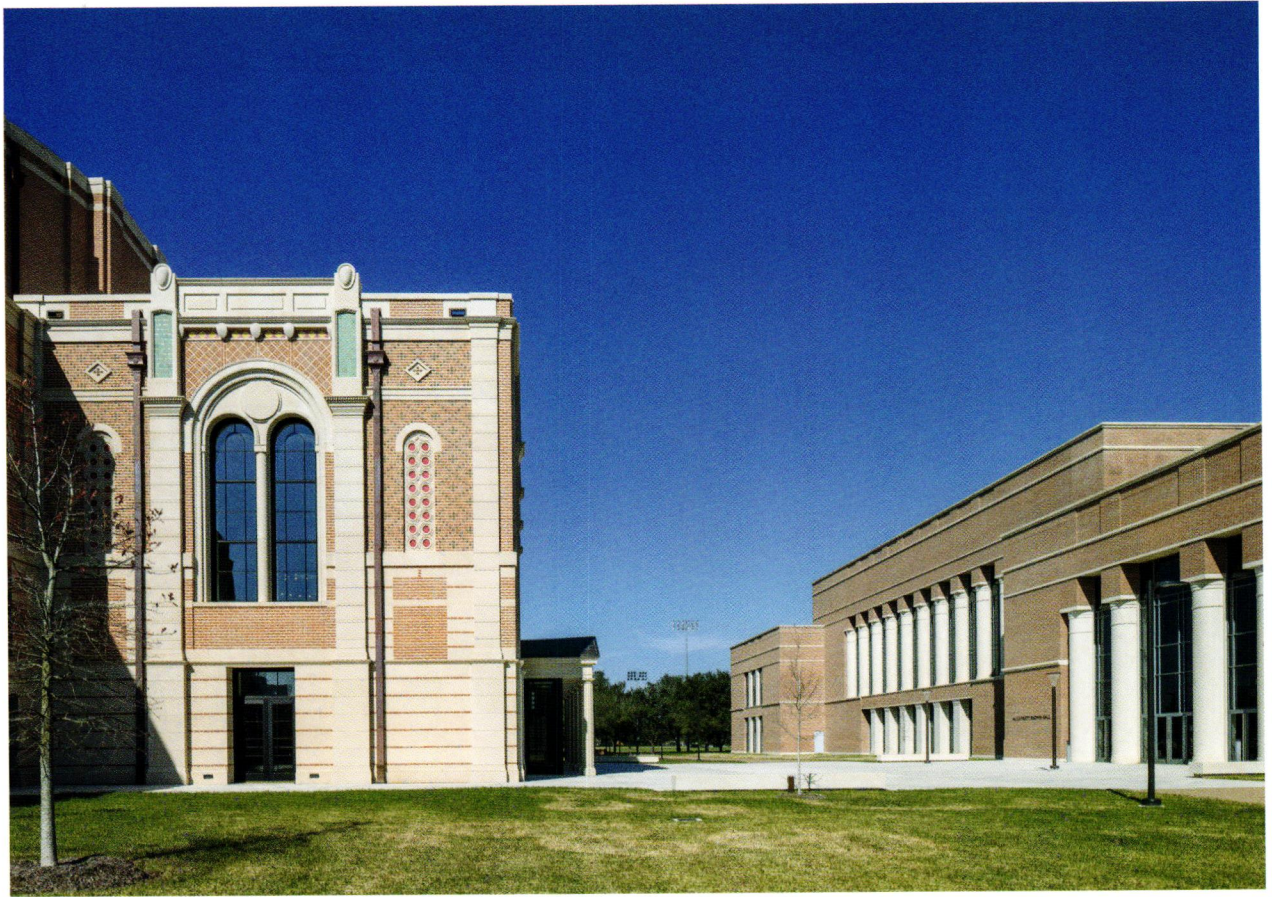


Facing Columns form a loggia at the base of the western facade.
Left Kraft Hall's outer corner is seen here in context with the brick and terra cotta of Baker Hall.
Below The heroic inner corner of Kraft Hall invites users up into its court between figured columns and grassy plantings.



Right *The connecting plaza between the Brockman Hall for Opera and Alice Pratt Brown Hall is an expanse of unshaded concrete until the trees grow in. Here, the banded, bulky original building is upstaged by the flourishes of the new facility.*

Facing *A rendering of the new wing of Hanszen Hall obscures its mass timber frame. The facade treatment extends the brick expression of Bar-kow Leibinger's recently completed Sid Richardson College.*



of *Texas Architect* (May/June 2021). What's of greatest interest here are the building's exterior elevations and their participation in Rice-ness.

The construction of the Brockman Hall for Opera was completed without financial support from Rice University. Instead, it was funded after a successful \$100 million philanthropic campaign by gifts from more than 60 donors. Contributions from the A. Eugene Brockman Charitable Trust, the opera hall's lead donor, were substantial enough that the two-building complex was additionally named the Brockman Music and Performing Arts Center. (That same trust was also the lead donor for the aforementioned physics building on campus). Here, donor interests shaped the design of the building, which resulted in its more traditional styling, as the architects looked to the original Lovett Hall and to their prior Humanities Building to inspire the lively patterned facade.

This state of affairs has resulted in a number of issues. Locally, it means that the building doesn't respond to its immediate contextual partner, Alice Pratt Brown Hall, designed by Ricardo Bofill. It's a bit like taking a date to a dance and staring across the room at someone else the whole time. Given its size, the hall is set close to the existing building, and the front entrance is oriented toward the rest of campus, which undermines the ceremonial grandeur of its expression. This also ignores the wide expanse of parking beyond and an increasingly active arts-oriented sector adjacent to Entrance 8. While Lovett Hall acts as a two-faced gateway, this building turns away from any potential wide view. Ristow says that "with the recent additions of the opera building, the Moody Center for the Arts, and the Anderson-Clarke Center, the area has evolved into a destination with increased density and a variety of functions increasingly

centered around visual and performing arts." But the opera hall isn't concerned with extending campus-ness outward, only magnifying it inward, despite its siting in a region of low building density.

The Brockman Hall for Opera prizes stylistic expression and contextual integration. But its location — at a distance from its sources of inspiration — exposes the shallowness of this method. This fetishization of context and style, says Fox, "confers, without further thought or effort, consistent and coherent architectural identity: enabling a new building to fit in as undisruptively and imperceptibly as possible."

A familiar pitfall is the downgrading of material assemblies from loadbearing capacities to purely symbolic functions. Bricks are no longer thick structural units, but veneers applied to steel frames, and joints are universally overwhelmed by trigger-happy caulk applications. Every inch of depth costs more money. This is one of the regular failures of neo-traditional architectures: In attempting to hide how flat everything actually is, they actually make it more apparent. This holds true even in buildings like this one, which is constructed with a high degree of craft. "Brockman Hall tries to deny the comparative thinness of its frame construction, rather than pose the architectural question of how architects might produce a version of Rice's traditional architecture that coheres with current construction technologies," Fox says. Rather than revisiting and extending the language of Cram's original building, other architects working at Rice chose to respond in a more architectural manner.

Insisting that a new building "look like Rice" strikes an ominous chord. To be concerned with a strict adherence to architectural tradition is to value an expression of purity over the eclectic concerns and



technologies of our current age. It reveals a distrust of our ability to make something of value today or tomorrow.

Futures

Under the leadership of President David Leebron for the past 18 years, Rice has been on a building campaign. Recently, Leebron announced plans to expand the undergraduate student body in coming years. Campus improvements continue: The 1970 Neuhaus & Taylor-designed Sid Richardson dormitory has been replaced with a new facility designed by Barkow Leibinger, which was completed in January. A tower rising from a five-story plinth, it is clad in Audubon Blend brick — a variant of Rice’s traditional St. Joe mix that has gray bricks added — laid up in a running bond pattern without relief, except between windows, where it is turned 90 degrees, and the base of the building, which features sawtooth bricks. Pelli’s student center will also be demolished to make way for a new one by Adjaye Associates. Cannady Hall, a new wing for Rice Architecture, is being designed by Karamuk Kuo. Abercrombie Hall has been torn down and will be replaced by an SOM building. Out by the Moody Arts Center, a building by Diller Scofidio + Renfro will replace the once-temporary Rice Media Center. A new wing of Hanszen College designed by Barkow Leibinger will be realized in southern yellow pine CLT and clad in brick.

Rice’s intra-hedge activity takes place within Houston’s wider froth. The city showcases a type of carbonated urbanism, which references both its reliance on petrochemical operations and its tendency to produce isolated bubbles of desirable space. It’s no wonder that so many enclaves arise in a city where the potential of a single lot is so open-ended. In an inter-

view promoting his book “Utopia’s Ghost,” Reinhold Martin reflects that an enclave can function “as both a space of absolute terror and a space of absolute hope.” Instead of a dialectic, where the two ends exist in conflicting opposition, he suggests seeing these as “two sides of a Möbius strip that are ultimately connected in some logically possible sense. The question always is, what side are we on?”

An enclave is an island, which can be used to empower or exclude. In Log 47, Pier Vittorio Aureli and Maria Shéhérazade Giudici resolve that “in its oppositional potential, the construction of an island might seem an act of rejection more than anything else, yet the project of settlement islands should be animated by a principle that is fundamentally inclusive: care.” How so? “The island can encourage an architecture of care because it is a space its inhabitants understand and read as a consistent body. In its finiteness, the inhabitant reads the island as his or her space, as the sphere where care begins to take material form and have material effects.”

The range of architectural projects recently completed or underway at Rice is a sign of the community’s health, but also the success of its philanthropic cultivation. More needs to be done to broaden our understanding of the histories that established what we take to be “context” now, even as we prepare to meet the challenges that are to come. Fox recently told me that at Rice, constructing continuity “maintains the university’s architectural coherence and consistency without inhibiting the capacity of architecture to respond to particular limitations, explore new questions, and afford new insights.” Balanced between past precedent and forecasted futures, it’s this evolutionary flexibility that makes an enclave not a place of stagnation, but of possibility.

Jack Murphy is editor of Cite. He lives in Houston.



A Caprock and a Hard Place

Lubbock has master plans in the works to invigorate and connect downtown and the Canyon Lakes, plans that put the historically black neighborhood of Dunbar-Manhattan Heights in the development crosshairs.

by Jes Deaver, AIA

A quarter of a million people straddle the high Western Plains of the Caprock Escarpment, where the horizon stitches land to sky in a single dark line. The dry air sticks in your throat, coating it with clay and caliche dust. Massive white turbines turn wind to power, standing sentinel over the miles and miles of cotton below. Lubbock is a flat, nearly featureless place, scored by small transitory streams and narrow canyons that drain into the recurrent and unpredictable shallow pools called playalakes. Highways from all directions run like spokes on a wheel straight to Hub City, which is bisected by the BNSF Railway. Missing from local guides is an explanation of how Lubbock's history continues to be shaped by the cotton gins — colossal superstructures looming like ancient temples over intermittent outcroppings of homes and dead-end streets, all zoned uncomfortably close. In Lubbock, as in most cities across the U.S., hidden in industry's shadows are the real stories of revitalization and urban growth: Communities, most of which were historically home to Black families, Indigenous people, and people of color, are being crushed between infrastructure and developers' dreams.

In June 2020, Lubbock City Council unanimously approved a Downtown Master Plan Update produced by Overland Partners. The goal of the plan is to reconnect Texas Tech University, located on the west side of town, with the Canyon Lakes on the east. Constructed by the city starting in the 1970s, the lakes are a significant yet underutilized local amenity, offering scenic views and recreational opportunities. The plan proposes



The BNSF Railway divides Dunbar from Chalmers Hill and Doernten to Lubbock. Facing Dunbar Historical Lake (Canyon Lake Six) is the largest lake in the Canyon Lakes System.

connecting these to the university through an activated downtown corridor along Broadway Avenue. While Overland Partners met the scope of the city's goals, did they consider the whole picture? The broader view includes the historically disadvantaged communities of color immediately adjacent to downtown and the industrial zoning areas these residents are concerned about. However, their voices were dismissed at city council meetings as "irrelevant" to the process, and they were not included as stakeholders in the recent master plan update.

Overland Partners' study of Downtown Lubbock echoed the city's urgency. They hosted four two-day workshops, only one of which was open to the public. This public workshop was held mid-week at 9 a.m. and 10 a.m., prohibiting participation by most working people. Designing and planning for the public is a challenging endeavor even for the most experienced of architects, but an attempt should be made to create places that reflect their unique character, places that speak to a diversity of experience. The 2020-21 Lubbock city budget calls for a new parks master plan, and it seems evident that the Canyon Lakes will be a significant aspect of this. But downtown districts and public green spaces are amenities for *all* community stakeholders in a city, and rushing through the planning stage winds up excluding the people who are living in those neighborhoods that will be impacted the most.

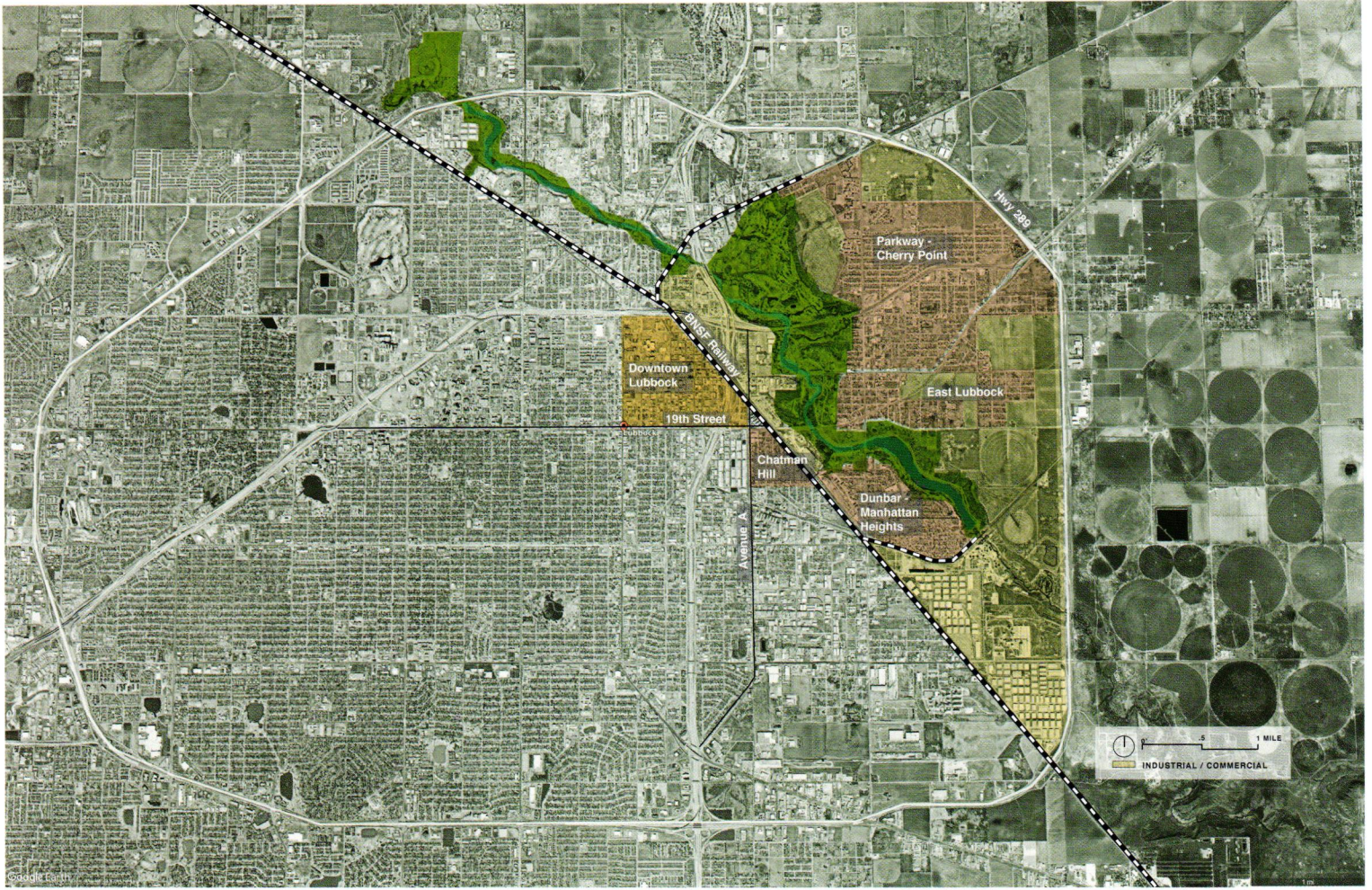
The railroad and the Canyon Lakes are both significant human interventions in Lubbock's urban landscape. In 1909, the arrival of the railroad made farm-to-market access easier and increased immigration to the region. Arduous agricultural and industrial labor were often the only work African-Americans and Mexican-Americans were offered, and xenophobic housing policies forced them to live east of the railroad, in the backyards of many of the plants and farms that employed them. In spite of this legacy of

redlining, vibrant cultures began to develop on the east side, in what was known as "The Flats." In his 1974 Texas Tech history thesis, Robert L. Foster described the term "flats" as possibly being "derived from other sections of the Old South," where it "was used with more accuracy to describe the black section which was often in the river bottom."

Lubbock's industry, agriculture, and segregation are intertwined. Prior to 1970, the railway, which runs parallel to Yellowhouse Canyon, was a dumping ground for businesses, and items such as junked cars and refrigerators were common sights in the basin. It is hard to imagine trash being piled up in the beautiful ravines today.

The Canyon Lakes are a chain of reservoirs that run along the northeast edge of Lubbock and reveal the ingenuity and sheer tenacity of a city defined by drought. Here, the word "water" is drawn out, spoken in a slow, unmistakable drawl and accented with a twang of doubt. "Do you know how the Canyon Lakes gets its water?" former Director of City Planning Jim Bertram asks rhetorically. "It's one of the nation's largest water reclamation projects." In 2001, the city of Lubbock renamed the Canyon Lakes the Jim Bertram Lake System in honor of his extensive work to direct their implementation.

Bertram first became aware of the potential for developing the canyons into lakes as a young city planner for Lubbock in the 1960s. Around that time, San Antonio was beginning to redevelop the River Walk, but the real inspiration for the project came from the city of Santee, California, 22 miles northeast of San Diego. "They were using third-stage tertiary in-plant treatment," Bertram remembers. For Lubbock, plant treatment of effluent water was cost-prohibitive, so the city focused on a more abundant resource in the high plains: land. Since 1938, effluent water coming out of the water treatment plant had been pumped onto farmland outside of Lubbock in the southeast, giving the eastern approach to the city a signature

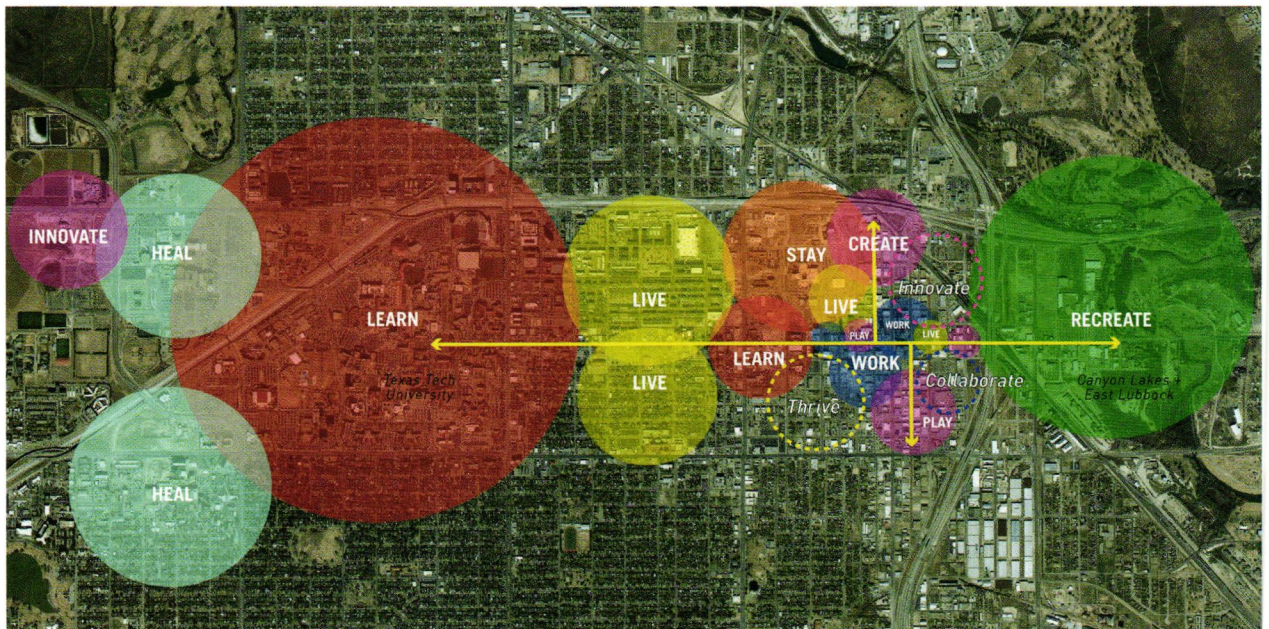


Above A map of Downtown Lubbock's adjacency to historically Black, Mexican, and Indigenous neighborhoods and the Canyon Lakes.

Right Downtown Lubbock's "Broadway Spine."

Facing top One of three bridges that serve as the only access points into the Dunbar neighborhood.

Facing bottom A mural by Joey Martinez occupies a wall of the Cavell Museum of African-American History.





odor. The idea was for water from the farm, which was filtered through the ground, to be used to help fill the canyons, but it would need to be pumped to the northernmost canyon to let it cycle by gravity through the lakes. The magnitude of the project was overwhelming.

In the original plan, there were eight lakes, and so far, the first six inside the city are completed. The initial concept was that the larger lakes, yet to be built, could be used as a domestic water source for Lubbock. Currently, plans are filed with the state of Texas to build Lake Seven south of the city and upstream from Buffalo Canyon. The ravine at this place is narrow but very deep, which translates to a lot of storage and less surface area for evaporation.

On May 11, 1970, a catastrophic F5 tornado tore a 1.5-mile-wide scar across the downtown business district. Locals still recall their fathers pulling people from the wreckage. Curtains fluttered from where the winds pried the roof from the walls before dropping it back down. Seeing the devastation only confirmed to the West Texans that they needed a place of respite and beauty to call their own. Despite the enormous cost of rebuilding, voters determined that the number one goal of the recovery bond was the Canyon Lakes Project. Bertram was tapped to direct the planning, oversee the disaster cleanup, and implement his plan for the canyons. "Canyon Number One was a large caliche mine, so the Corps of Engineers saw that as a handy place to put tornado debris," Bertram says. They used bulldozers to compact the rubble and fill in the caliche pit, returning the canyon to its pre-mining shape and size.

Lubbock is a young city. Founded in 1890, it has spent nearly half its existence seeking to reinvent itself after the tornado. Many of the city's buildings are deeply connected to a mythical view of the once-wild West. Texas Tech University's Spanish Colonial revival architecture boasts of



Right A typical detached residence near the PYCO Industries cotton seed processing plant on Avenue A.

Bottom Dunbar resident Thomas McLin, owner of T-Mack Millennium Designer Western Boots, with his Buddy Holly design.

Facing left A plaque at Mount Gilead Baptist Church.

Facing right Mount Gilead Baptist Church, founded in 1917.



conquest and *conquistadores*. Long, low shopping centers and hotels honor symmetry and embellishments that reference Spanish Missions. Brown suburban homes stand neatly along dusty extra-wide roads. Surrounding the urban center are vernacular commercial buildings shaped for function and longevity. It's hard to ignore the candor of these modest structures rooted to the ground, all sharing the same goal of permanence.

In the 1920s, lots in Lubbock's historically black neighborhoods measured 26 ft across the front and sold for 50 to 75 dollars. These lots allowed for long, narrow wood-frame houses that were usually financed by lumber companies for around \$500, according to Foster's research. Artist and local photographer Eugene Roquemore captured the rich history of life in East Lubbock with photos that highlight everyday experience. His images, as well as others, show parades, gas stations, bakeries, diners, skating rinks, convenience stores, grocery stores, fruit stands, and hamburger stands that are now only memories in the neighborhood.

East Lubbock is full of stories. The legendary bootmaker Willie Lusk, known for his signature flame stitch, gained notoriety with his thorough mapping of the customer's foot that marked every ridge. He sold his boots to such celebrities as Shirley Temple, Ronald Reagan, Betty White, and Merle Haggard. His tradition continues with T-Mack Millennium Designer Boots, by Thomas McLin, whose designs often stitch stories that are close to his heart and that feature a distinctive pocket on the side. "These are my favorite," he says, picking up an elegant pair of white leather boots detailed with the date and imagery of the Gettysburg Address.

McLin is a talented designer, business owner, and resident of the Dunbar-Manhattan Heights neighborhood, named after the first African-American high school in Lubbock, which in turn was named in honor of poet Paul Laurence Dunbar. Access to the enclave is limited to a bridge from 19th Street to Martin Luther King Jr. Boulevard to the north, a bridge over the BNSF Railway yard to the west, and a bridge from M.L.K. Jr. Blvd. to 34th Street in the south. During winter, the bridges freeze, making the way into and out of the neighbored treacherous. Dunbar is





pressed against the eastern edge of the largest Canyon Lake, Number Six, where a former open-air landfill and caliche pit once gaped. This compression reveals a fundamental housing inequity long ignored by zoning regulations that place commercial interests before human life.

One of the last remaining cotton seed oil mills in the world blocks the southern edge of Dunbar. Local historian and treasurer of the Lubbock Roots Historical Arts Council Cosby Morton explained the community's dependence on it: "You have to be pretty careful about the cotton oil mill, because [they were] the only people who would give us jobs. But, out of that, you get stories of people surviving." The jobs were dangerous; workers risked being injured and maimed by equipment. More insidious effects are the rampant asthma and other respiratory illnesses that still pervade life in the community. Cosby mentions fits of coughing and wheezing, and several other residents nod in agreement. Stepping outside, it's hard to ignore the acrid smell of chemicals that winds through the streets as families celebrate the warm spring weather in their yards.

The arts council meets in the Roots Community Revitalization Center, a humble brick building on Avenue A. Down the street is the Caviel Museum of African-American History, a building donated to the council by the family of Alfred and Billie Caviel, whose pharmacy was the first in the U.S. to be owned and operated by an African-American couple. As its mission, the Roots Historical Arts Council "seeks to enrich life by promoting a greater understanding of the African-American experience through the practice and appreciation of the visual and performing arts and through the study, interpretation, and preservation of the history of the African-American in the Early American West." The museum is one way they can do that, but funding is tight. Executive Director Shirley Green knows this personally. She used her own money to keep the electricity on during the last year. "It's hard," she says. "We are open by appointment only, and we are all-volunteer operated. This is your place in the community for you to have somewhere to go and meet. With the museum, we are trying to restore our history. We want to reach out to the young people and let them know what your roots

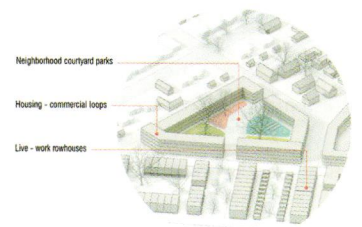
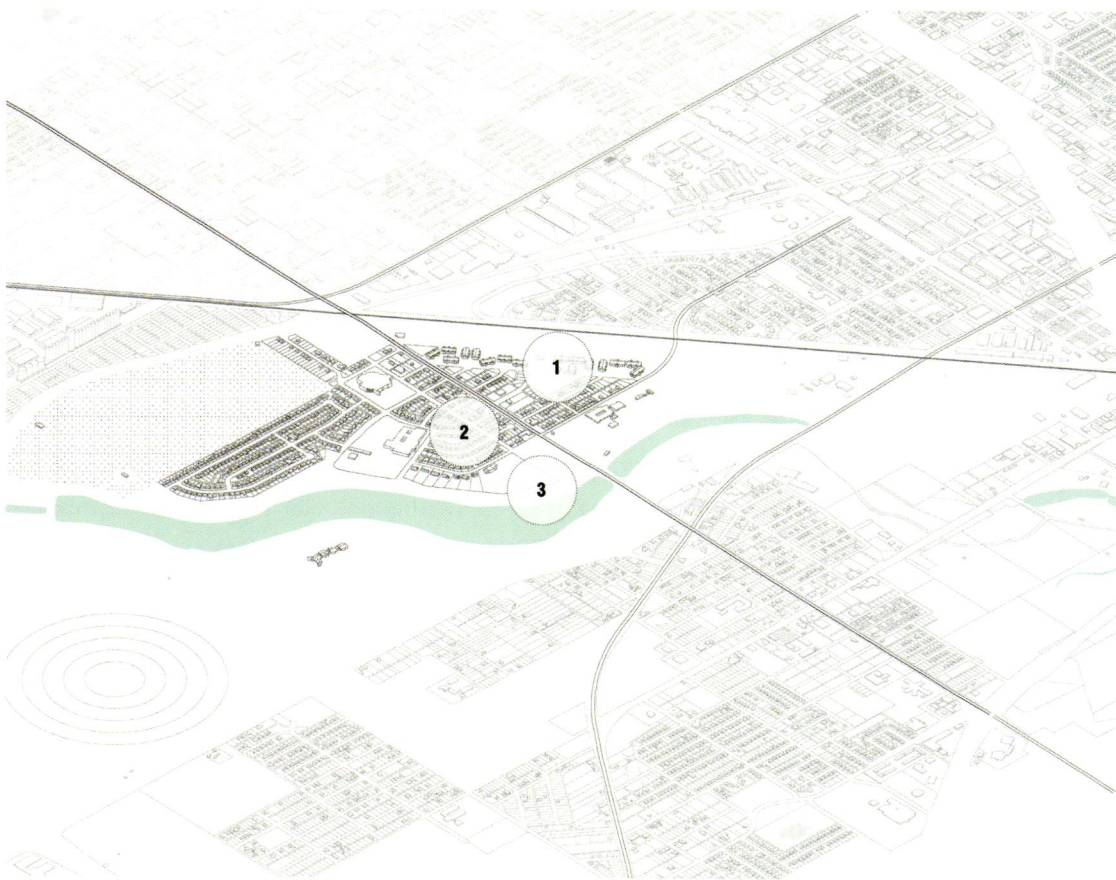
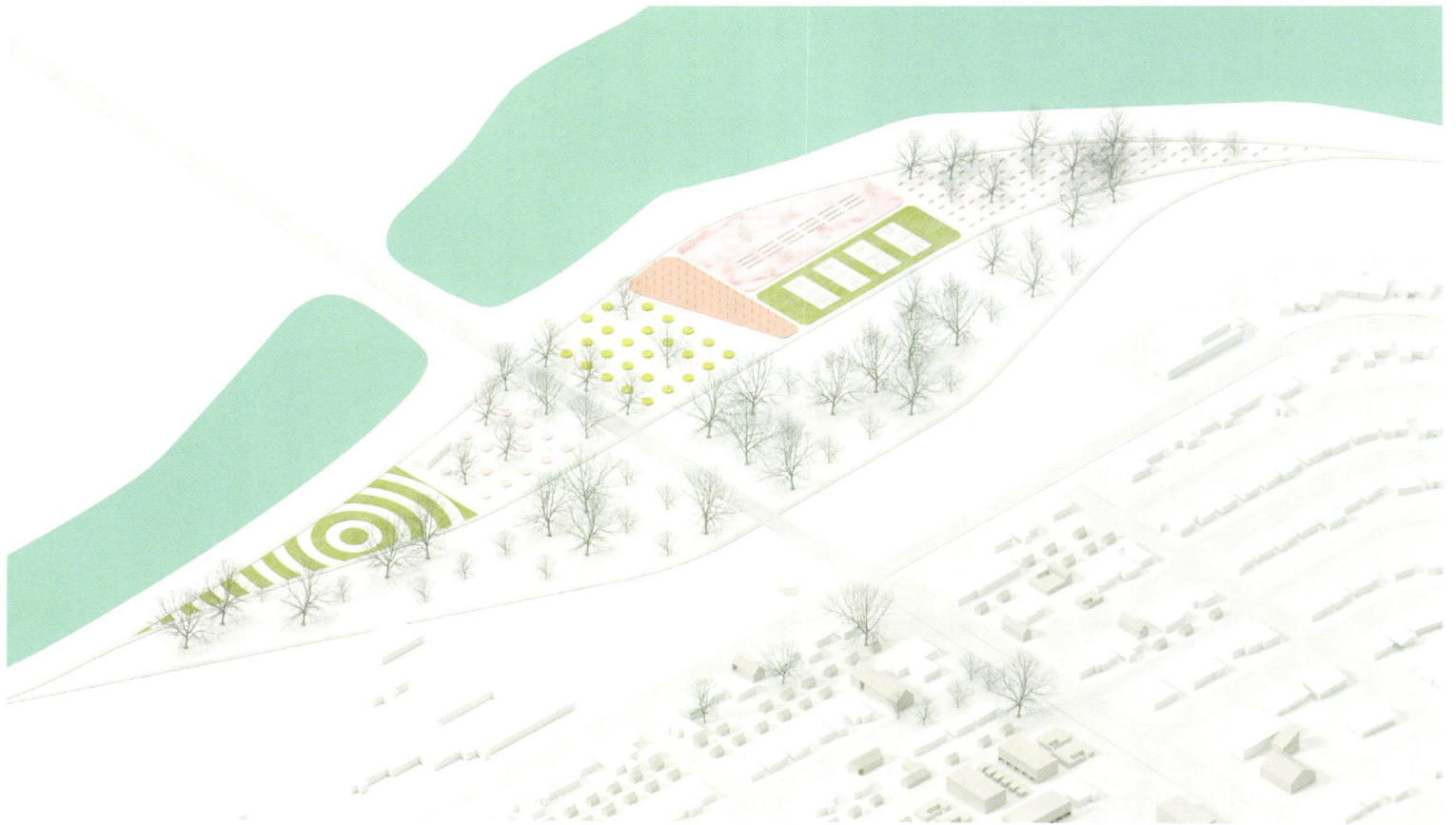
are — where you came from and what your relatives done. I'm from East Lubbock, and I'm very proud, because when I came up, we had everything we needed because urban renewal hadn't set in yet."

By "urban renewal," Green means the 1949 Federal Housing Act, which altered cities across America with brutal effects that began to excise East Lubbock from its foundation. This program was used to take land deemed a "slum" through purchase or condemnation, then to clear and sell it to developers who promised to improve the lot. Safeguards were not included, and most of those lots remain vacant, awaiting justice. Lubbock District 2 Councilmember Shelia Patterson Harris, who represents Dunbar, sums up the history concisely: "Urban renewal is often called 'urban removal' for a reason."

This history is precisely why a project like the development of the Canyon Lakes is so critical for vulnerable neighborhoods like Dunbar. A beautification effort and the expansion of miles and miles of linear park will require that the lakes take on a performative role as well as a recreational one. This type of oversight and investment should include the residents of adjacent neighborhoods like Dunbar-Manhattan who will be priced out of their communities if strong housing protections are not included in the codes as part of any Canyon Lakes master plan.

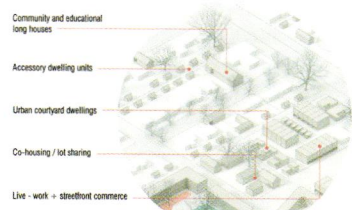
Lubbock's Canyon Lakes are undoubtedly a sustainable and precious resource for the city, but even during the project's initial phases, a chilling optimism was linked to the early water performance goals. A 1975 graduate civil engineering thesis from Texas Tech entitled "A Pilot Study of the Canyon Lakes Project" speculates that the increasing land values due to the Canyon Lake improvements will "achieve the goals of conventional urban renewal projects at a fraction of the cost. Therefore, it could set a precedent for a national program of development of similar projects." What this language reveals is what designers already know: Our work creates a model for others to follow. By overlooking people without the means to be heard, we continue a legacy of exclusion.

Councilmember Patterson Harris remains optimistic about the possibility of revitalizing the Canyon Lakes park space as a bridge to reconnecting the



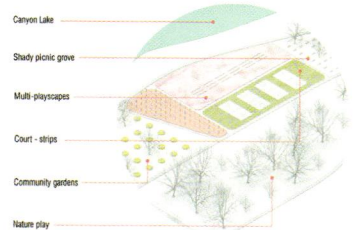
- Neighborhood courtyard parks
- Housing - commercial loops
- Live - work warehouses

1 LARGE TRACTS Mixed Housing Edge



- Community and educational long houses
- Accessory dwelling units
- Urban courtyard dwellings
- Co-housing / lot sharing
- Live - work + streetfront commerce

2 RESIDENTIAL PARCELS Middle Housing Infill



- Canyon Lake
- Stady picnic grove
- Multi-playscapes
- Court - strips
- Community gardens
- Nature play

3 LAKESIDE Civic Islands



Facing top “Civic Islands,” by Kristine Stiphany and Jorge Ituarte-Arreola, *Principles for “Dunbar Connect,”* developed within the Design for Resilient Environments Seminar at Texas Tech University.

Facing bottom “Sensitive Housing Density,” by Kristine Stiphany and Jorge Ituarte-Arreola, *Principles for “Dunbar Connect,”* developed within the Design for Resilient Environments Seminar at Texas Tech University.

Left A view from the East End, looking west across Dunbar Historical Lake.

east and west sides of the city, but she emphasizes the need to reach out directly to the community of Dunbar-Manhattan for residents’ input on any development. She says: “Juneteenth is held in Mae Simmons Park, and the parks are used for fishing, canoeing, paddle boat business, and kayaking. In 2019, an Iron Man qualifying event was held at Dunbar Historical Lake with over 1,000 people participating. The opportunity is there. The ideas are limitless, but people have to be walked through being receptive [to the development].”

Kristine Stiphany, PhD, AIA, an architect, an assistant professor at Texas Tech University, and founder of the Chapa Civic Data Lab, recently conducted a seminar entitled “Design for Resilient Environments,” which brought students face to face with the realities of urban design through the creation of a design research field guide and framework plan. “My graduate studios at the Texas Tech University College of Architecture typically travel to Latin America to engage questions of socio-spatial segregation and informal housing,” Stiphany says. “However, in the fall of 2019, I saw an opportunity to focus on these wicked problems in Texas’ backyard.” After learning about how Lubbock, like most cities in the U.S., historically segregated African-American communities, and that these racialized practices centered on Dunbar-Manhattan, Stiphany began engaging the community through the Texas Housers (the Texas Low-Income Housing Information Service). By January 2020, she concluded that a housing needs assessment could be a mechanism for listening to the community, and that the City of Lubbock could use it to make improvements across the east side.

As Lubbock grows, there is an opportunity to take a different approach, one aimed at unraveling the inequitable ways that issues of urban structure, buildings, and public spaces are tied to policies and zoning that continue to create racialized landscapes in U.S. cities. In support of the seminar and Phase One project, Stiphany, in collaboration with the Texas Housers, directed a community engagement process which revealed the following

five key challenges, based on planning documents in Lubbock and focus groups and interviews with residents:

1. Dunbar-Manhattan Heights’ isolation by pollutant land uses, heavy infrastructure, and the Canyon Lakes reinforces historical patterns of socio-spatial segregation and injustice.
2. Dunbar-Manhattan Heights has been continually dispossessed of commercial and cultural assets, and persistently segregated socially and spatially through urban renewal efforts.
3. Dunbar-Manhattan Heights, a neighborhood planned in the 1960s, lacks contemporary proposals and investment to improve the community’s housing and livability.
4. Dunbar-Manhattan Heights is located adjacent to natural resources that residents cannot access.
5. Dunbar-Manhattan Heights is housing-insecure and vulnerable to evictions and to the practice of “flipping” homes from owner-occupied to rental.

East Lubbock and Dunbar-Manhattan are not isolated cases. Areas like Houston’s Fifth Ward along Buffalo Bayou, South Dallas near Fair Park, and the Rio Grande Valley’s colonias, which run along the Texas-Mexico border, share this history of segregation and injustice. When Cosby Morton is asked about what he wants from future revitalization efforts in East Lubbock, he has a simple request: “Recognize that we are part of the city.” Lubbock is Willie Lusk, Thomas McLin, Eugene Roquemore, Mae Simmons, Vivian T. Cooke, Eric Strong, E.C. Struggs, Dr. Joel P. Oliver, Alfred and Billie Caviel, and countless others. Their stories are what we are at risk of losing when we do not include everyone in the design process. Great design begins with uncovering the complete truth of a place and then aspiring to more.

Jes Deaver, AIA, is an architect in Austin.

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The apartment on Crosby Street was on the second floor of a 19th century tenement building, just upstairs from a hip-hop club and a tapas bar, where they had regular flamenco performances. Depending on the night, the air was filled with either stomping, clapping, and whistling, or throbbing bass and braggadocio. There were two bedrooms in the apartment and four guys. The two who had been there the longest each had their own bedroom. My brother and I shared the living room. His bed was pressed against the windows. Mine, turned at 90 degrees, was pressed against his, wedged between the brick wall and a wooden desk where I had a 50-year-old mechanical typewriter. When I lay down, my feet touched the chairs of the dining table. The kitchen was large enough for one person to stand in at a time. The bathroom was even smaller. The floor sagged so badly that if you put a marble down anywhere it would roll to the same spot by the front door, if it didn't fall into a hole first. The rusting tin ceiling sagged at exactly the same point. During summer, it was suffocatingly hot inside, even with the cross ventilation allowed by the windows that opened onto the shaft way, where decades of pigeon poop, feathers, and unanswered wishes scrawled on scraps of paper moldered in the funereal light. In the evening, we'd crawl out on the fire escape and watch the garbage men kick up dust hauling away the mountains of trash from the stores on Broadway.

In this issue of *Texas Architect*, we consider three housing types: a Houston townhouse, an Austin public housing project, and a luxury high-rise in downtown Dallas.

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Mirror, Mirror

Fountain Place
Residences
Michael Malone, FAIA



Street Facing

The Rose/Knox Townhouse addition and renovation opens to its Houston neighborhood, invigorating public and private realms.

Architect Architect Works

Client Donna Kacmar, FAIA, and Jonathan Myers, AIA

Structural Engineer Insight Structures

Mechanical Engineer E&C Engineers & Consultants

Materials Testing A&R Engineering and Testing

by Florence Tang, Assoc. AIA

In April 2021, the Rice University Kinder Institute for Urban Research released the report “Re-Taking Stock: Understanding How Trends in the Housing Stock and Gentrification are connected in Houston and Harris County.” The report describes how Houston, the largest city in America without zoning, reduced minimum lot size requirements in the late 1990s, laying the framework for developers and builders to subdivide large lots into townhouses or multi-family apartments.

Critics have called townhomes “harbingers of gentrification that threaten neighborhood character and affordability”; proponents argue that “greater residential density [is] a way to stabilize increases in home prices in the long term, in addition to being a more climate-friendly housing model.” For Donna Kacmar (now FAIA) and two of her friends, all at the start of their architectural careers in the late ’90s, collaborating on a set of townhouses brought into reach the goal of building homes close to downtown, something none of them could afford individually.

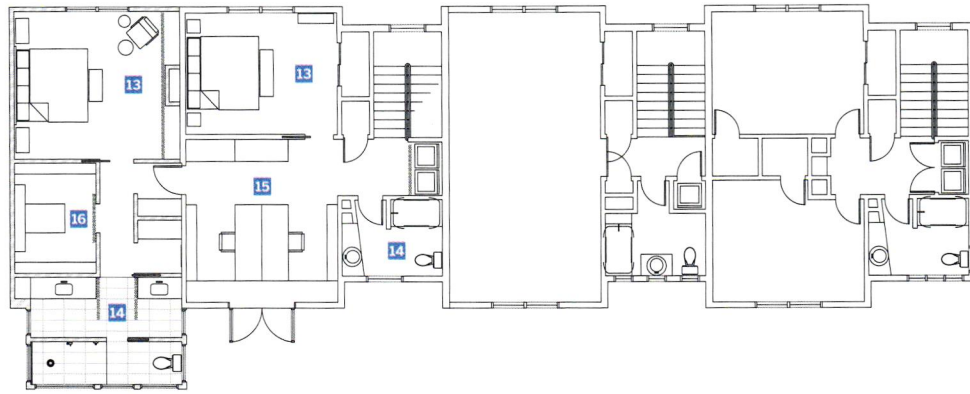


Facing A 1,025-sf addition to the 23-year-old townhouse in Houston's Rice Military neighborhood intentionally engages with the streetscape amid the new norms of living and working from home during a pandemic.

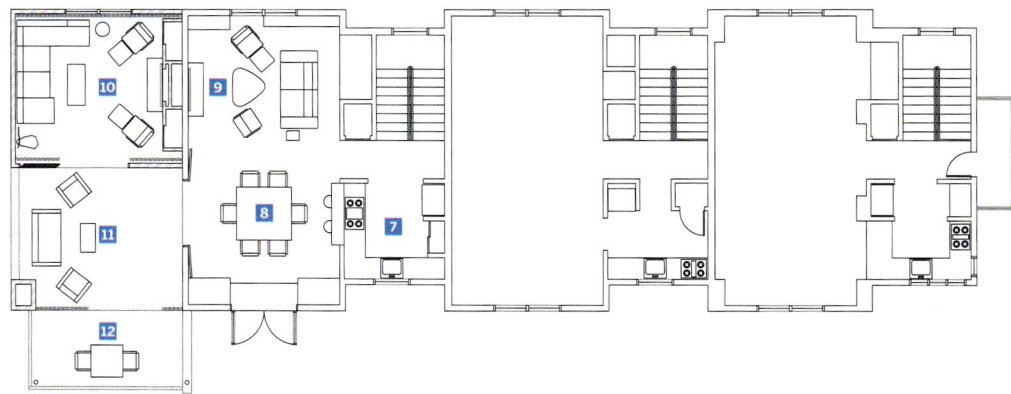
Left The 15-ft-wide extension respects the alternating bays of the existing structure and plans for street flooding with a permeable footprint on the ground level.

Facing top *The third floor provides the highest level of privacy from the street and includes a protective extension over the deck to shield from sun and rain.*

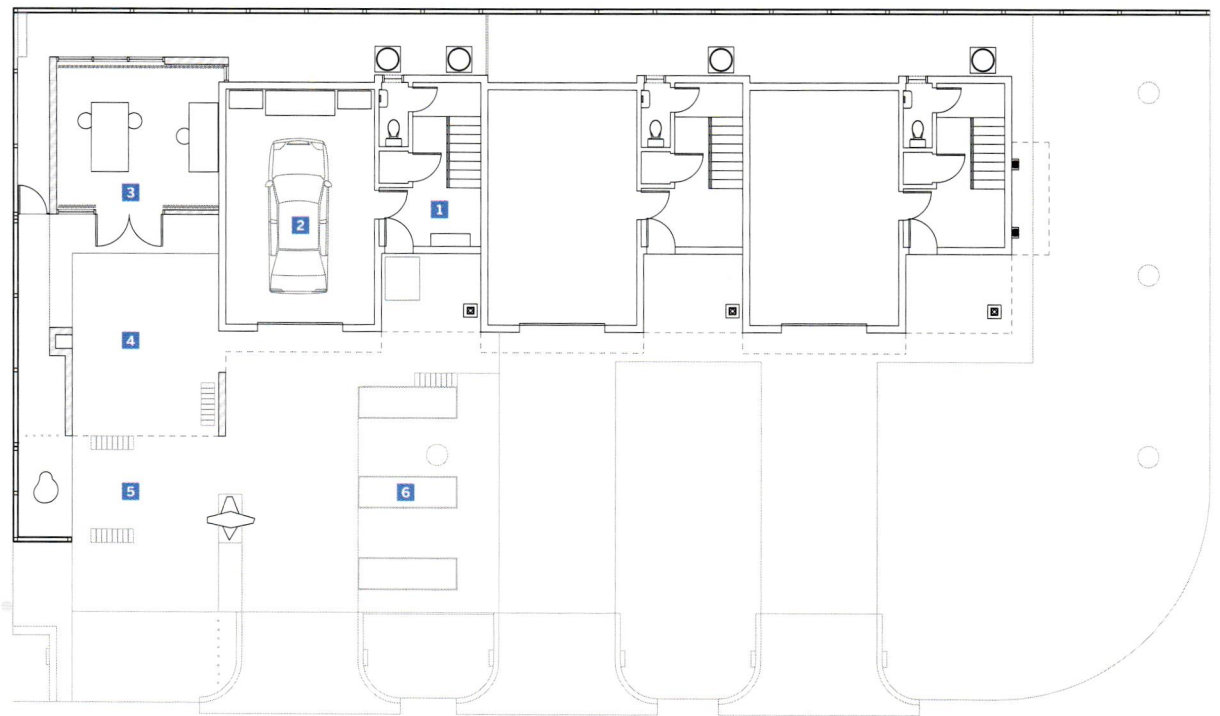
Facing bottom *All three levels are connected by a vertical volume for a future elevator addition to prepare for aging in place.*



THIRD FLOOR



SECOND FLOOR

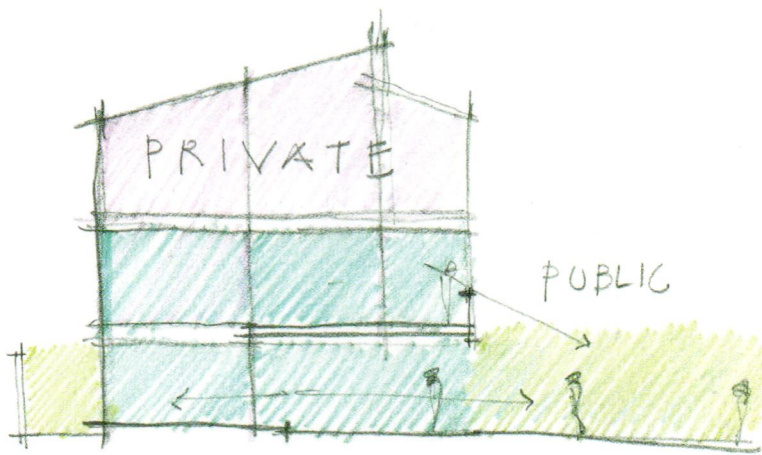


GROUND FLOOR



SITE AND FLOOR PLANS

- 1 ENTRY
- 2 GARAGE
- 3 STUDIO/GALLERY
- 4 PORCH
- 5 ART COURTYARD
- 6 VEGETABLE GARDEN
- 7 KITCHEN
- 8 DINING
- 9 LIVING
- 10 SALON
- 11 LOUNGE
- 12 DECK
- 13 BEDROOM
- 14 BATH
- 15 STUDY
- 16 CLOSET



The three friends purchased a 5,600-sf lot in Houston's Rice Military neighborhood, subdivided it, and constructed a set of three contiguous townhomes, mostly identical on the exterior, individualized on the interior, and focused on affordable solutions each step of the way (see the January/February 1998 issue of *Texas Architect*).

Rice Military was originally composed of bungalows and shotgun houses on tree-lined streets. Most of those homes were long ago demolished and replaced with single-family two- and three-story structures, condos with artists' warehouses, and folk art houses, such as the Beer Can House on Malone Street or the shimmering, ribbed metal Tin Houses, which, along with the catalytic design of the Rice University Media Center a few miles south, ushered in the city's tin house movement. The Rose/Knox Townhouses, clad in Galvalume, cementitious fiberboard, and load-bearing concrete masonry, fit right into the diverse neighborhood.

Twenty years later, Kacmar decided to expand her home, located on the eastern end of the property, with a 1,025-sf addition designed by her and her husband, Jonathan Myers, AIA. The newlywed duo embarked on the project in the post-Hurricane Harvey building boom in Houston and finished it in October 2019 — just five months before the pandemic shutdown of 2020 would transform how they lived and worked from home.

Back in 1998, Kacmar requested that the city record a prevailing setback at 17 ft instead of the 10-ft norm other builders came to adhere to for lot lines. This proved problematic for the extension. "We had to get neighbors to sign and rescind the setback. It threw the project off by a couple months. My idealistic 30-year-old self was holding back my 50-year-old self from building beyond the prevailing setback of the now no longer extant 1940s-era bungalows," Kacmar says, laughing.

But those extra seven feet were critical to the house's expansion and connection to the neighborhood. A ground floor rock garden became their al fresco dining room for intimate dinners. The light footprint on the first floor maximized permeable surface drainage. A glass-enclosed studio provided space for Kacmar's practice and became her lifeline to her University of Houston students when the school transitioned to digital space.

The architects used corrugated metal on the addition, along with other humble and industrial materials (including Tyvek curtains) to

Right Donna Kacmar's glass box studio on the first floor connects to the neighborhood and allows her to virtually connect to students at the University of Houston, where she teaches.

Below The lounge/salon and adjoining deck complement the existing living room and act as an elevated front porch for the addition.

Facing Cyclists and pedestrians are to be found in this part of Houston.



blend the design with and respect the pre-existing environment. Metal, while seemingly cold, reflects the color of the sky and the landscape; it also outperforms most materials in Houston's unsparring climate.

Describing the massing of the expansion, Myers says, "It was important that we opened the unit to the street and reconnect." Inspired by the bungalow porches of the past, the 15-ft-wide addition features exterior and interior spaces offering varying levels of connection to the neighborhood. It also includes the pair's new third-floor bedroom/bathroom suite, a second-floor lounge/salon space for drinks and movie nights, and 657 sf of covered exterior space overlooking the trees and a neighbor's metal house designed by Val Glitsch, FAIA.

"Torus," a sculpture gifted to Kacmar by the artist, Eric W. Stephenson, greets passersby

along the ditch and culvert road, along with planter garden boxes that survived the freeze and have new sprouts of parsley, rosemary, basil, and bok choy pushing through.

The design of the extension is practical, in touch with history, and elevates the house into sculpture for living artfully. Its openness to the street has kept the residents connected to outdoor life patterns — yes, pedestrians do stroll this Houston neighborhood — throughout a time when isolation and distance have been the norm. This new iteration of the Rose/Knox townhouse does something rather rare among Texas residential developments: It seeks to invigorate the lives of its occupants and the community by recognizing that those seemingly dichotomous spheres can be mutually supporting.

Florence Tang is a journalist, designer, and project manager based in Houston.





Affordable Island

The Chalmers Courts housing project has provided homes for low-income Austinites since the Great Depression. An ongoing expansion will ensure a modicum of economic diversity through the current boom.

Architect Nelsen Partners

Client Housing Authority of the City of Austin; Carleton Companies

Developer and Contractor Carleton Companies

Civil Engineer Dunaway

Landscape Architect dwg.

Structural Engineer Connect Structural

MEP Engineer PHA Consulting Engineers

Sustainability Nelsen Partners

by Nkiru Gelles, Assoc. AIA

A leafy green courtyard stands empty, enclosed by weary-looking, one- and two-story semi-detached homes, each marked by unit number and a small, uninspiring pattern of tile. Flimsy back doors and concrete stoops facing into the courtyard are devoid of conversation and chatter. Most of these homes stand empty. One of the only signs that there are a few remaining residents in the old Chalmers Courts housing is a loaded provisional dumpster with a worn-out, old-fashioned patterned couch sticking out of it.

It's been 81 years since the first families moved into these modest accommodations on Chalmers Avenue, which offered a higher standard of living and hinted at the promise of a more prosperous future. Carved out from the southeast corner of what was once the Mason-town neighborhood in Austin, the original collection of 86 concrete-block residences was one of the first low-rent housing communities of its kind to be built in the United States, under the steam of President Franklin D. Roosevelt's New Deal. Adjusted for inflation, a home in a sleepy,



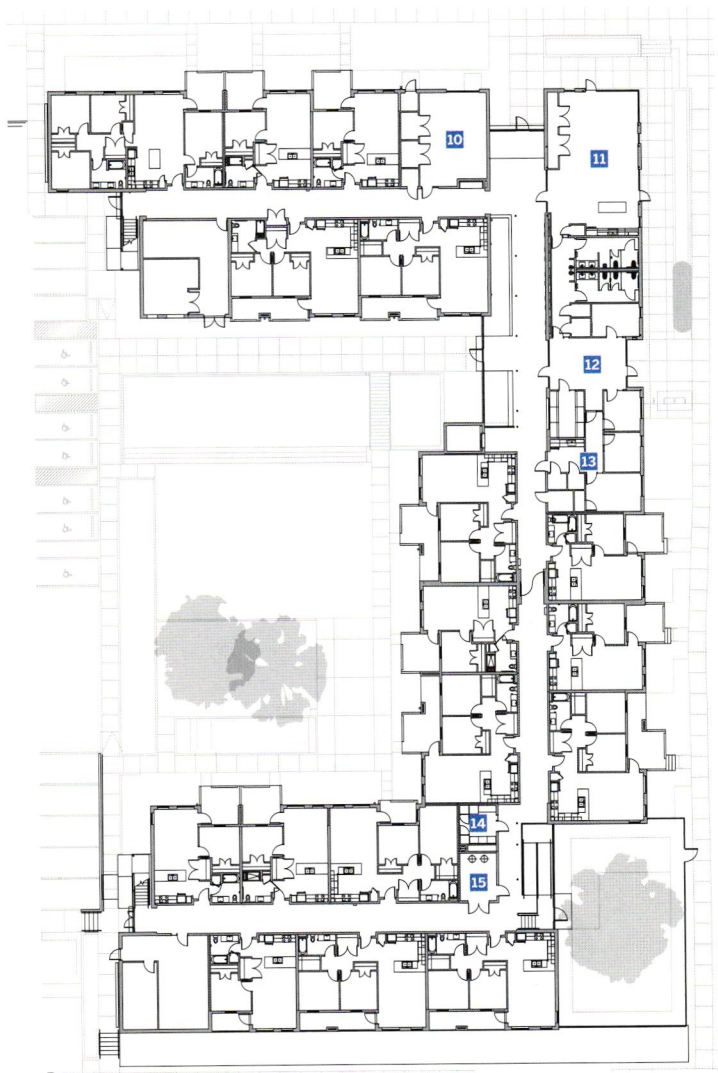
Facing Deep recesses provide shade to the individual balconies.
Left The bridge over the rain gardens at Chalmers South connects the playground to the main entrance.
Below The view east across the shared garden courtyard of the existing Chalmers Courts and future Pathways at Chalmers Courts West site.

post-depression 1940's Austin (population less than 100,000) would cost a working-class family, on average, the equivalent of \$30,000. Today, a teacher or health care worker earning \$38,000 a year has little hope of buying a home inside the city limits when Austin's current median home price is over half a million dollars and climbing.

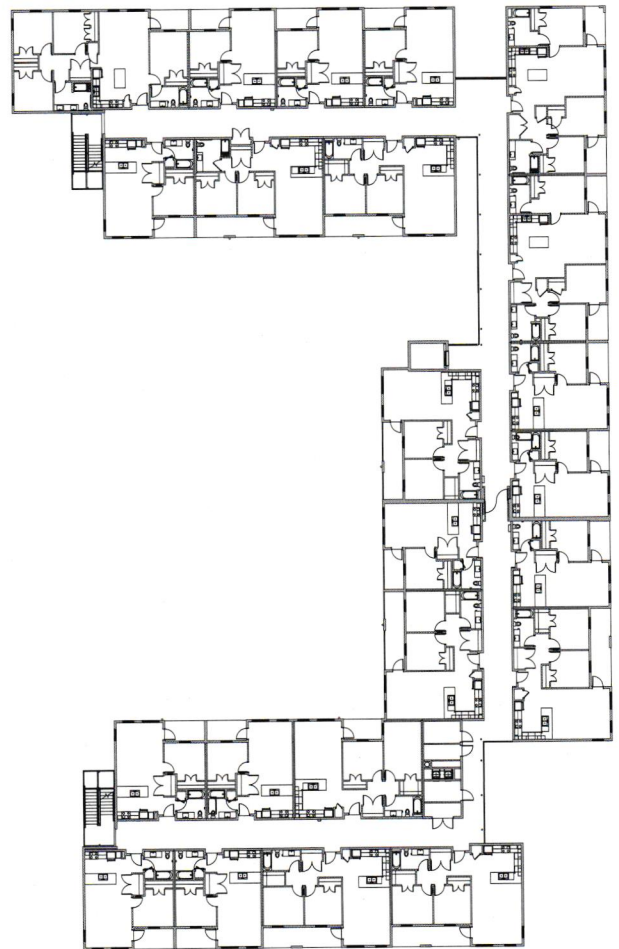
A unique government-led funding mechanism, put in place to funnel private investment to local agencies specifically for the purpose of constructing low-cost rental housing, led the fledgling Austin Housing Authority, now the Housing Authority of the City of Austin (HACA), to oversee the construction and management of 19 low-rent housing projects across Austin since 1937. When a recent Housing and Urban Development program presented HACA with the opportunity to redevelop and upgrade their aging housing stock by privatizing its assets and becoming the owner of the properties it manages, HACA jumped at the chance.

They selected the design team of Nelsen Partners Architects and Carleton Companies, who,

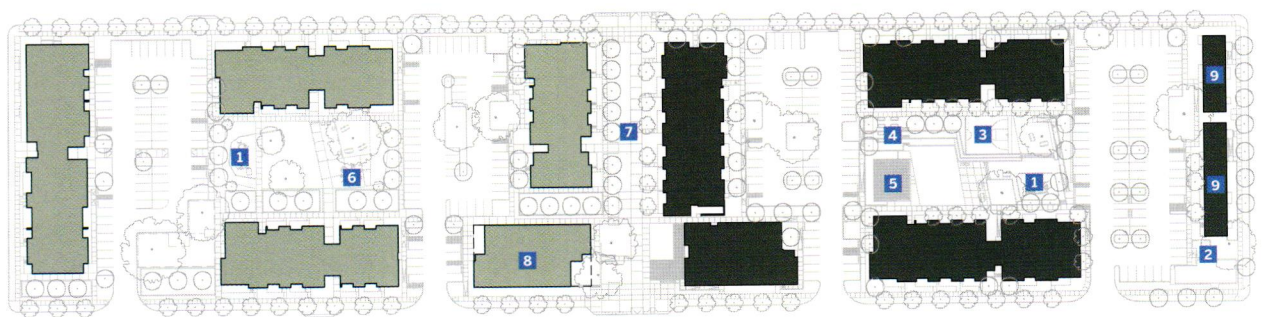




SOUTH GROUND FLOOR



SOUTH SECOND FLOOR



MASTER SITE PLAN

SITE AND SOUTH FLOOR PLANS

- SOUTH (PHASE I)
- EAST (PHASE II)
- WEST (PHASE III)

- 1 PLAYGROUND
- 2 DOG RUN
- 3 SPORT COURT
- 4 RAISED BED GARDENS
- 5 COVERED DECK
- 6 SPLASH PAD
- 7 PEDESTRIAN GREENWAY
- 8 COMMUNITY CENTER
- 9 CLINIC BUILDING
- 10 FITNESS
- 11 MULTIPURPOSE ROOM
- 12 ENTRY LOBBY
- 13 ADMINISTRATION OFFICE
- 14 LAUNDRY
- 15 TRASH

Below *The design team consulted directly with future residents to inform patterns used across the project.*



through careful planning and consideration, negotiated the redevelopment of Chalmers Courts' existing 158 dilapidated units into 396 brand new rental apartments, ranging from one to four bedrooms, with space for sports courts, shared gardens, and multi-age playgrounds. Right from the very beginning, the team worked closely with existing residents, meeting regularly to listen to concerns, share ideas, and present proposals.

The first step in the multi-phase development began in 2018, with HACA moving out of its on-site offices and community center, a complex of one- and two-story office buildings located one block south of Chalmers Courts. Once the site was cleared and rezoned from commercial to multifamily, it became available for the construction of Phase 1, Pathways at Chalmers Courts South, an 86-unit apartment building completed in 2020. The families of the original Chalmers Court residences were able to move into brand new homes right across the street, avoiding displacement and maintaining existing support networks within the community.

A tight rhythm of single- and double-wide windows, coupled with deep balconies, repeats across a crisply rendered facade grounded on a recessed base of warm brick that meets the sidewalk. The new four-story volume begins mid-block and wraps to the east, west, and south, forming a neat horseshoe around a shared courtyard, where landscaped Lueders stones terrace down to lushly vegetated rain gardens. Voices coming from the playground and benches under a number of preserved large oak trees on the southwest corner carry across the green lawn toward a single-point entry gate punctuated by a tall, brightly colored metal screen. The warm yellow panels climbing up across each level of the building's open breezeway are perforated with a pattern that was inspired by the existing live oaks and selected by the new residents. Peering through the perforations from the fourth floor you can see clear across East Austin to the blue-glass high-rise towers springing up downtown.

Originally reserved for whites only, Chalmers Courts segregated its residents from their Black and Mexican-American neighbors until it was made illegal in 1968. Today, application to Pathways at Chalmers Court South is restricted only by an income threshold: Households must be at 60 percent or below the area family median income to qualify. Fifty-five percent of residents are Black, 45 percent are Mexican, and there is a small but growing Middle Eastern population.

Right Carleton Companies maintains a constant presence and manages services on the site.

Below The new apartment homes are larger than the original Chalmers Courts residences.

Facing Chalmers Courts South wraps around the community courtyard garden, playground, and shaded grill area.



HACA supports the most vulnerable Austinites currently living in poverty, including seniors, transitioning homeless, and single-parent families. It serves the needs of over 19,400 individuals daily through several programs and organizations, such as Helping the Needy and Disabled (HAND), Ascend Center for Learning, and Austin Pathways — a residential support program operating across all HACA-owned housing communities that promotes the education and welfare of low-income tenants in subsidized housing through services ranging from school supplies to wellness and nutrition classes.

“We’re so excited about being able to actually increase density and serve more families in need because we all know the affordability crisis is only getting worse in Austin,” says Sylvia Blanco, HACA’s chief operating officer.

The development team maximized the efficiencies in the project by putting forward an appeal to the city to include it in the Plaza Saltillo Transit Oriented Development zone, which is tied to the new red line train station stop and nearby commercial center. Height restrictions were increased, and setbacks typically required by the city’s development code were reduced, allowing for better use of the available land. Further efficiencies were tapped into following the approval in 2019 of the Affordability Unlocked ordinance, a development bonus program that waived parking minimums and neighborhood compatibility restrictions in favor of unit increases.



Phase 2, Pathways at Chalmers Courts East was completed earlier this year on the site of the first vacated Chalmers Courts residences. All but two of the original 1930s structures were demolished to make way for 156 new units and shared amenities, including large meeting rooms and a computer resource center, which reinstating some of the community spaces lost from the HACA-vacated site and the Housing Authority’s ability to provide the community with local support. The two original buildings that were retained are located along Chicon



Street and were restored to provide community services, medical offices, and a dental clinic for the entire neighborhood.

“Our intention,” says Matthew Beaton, AIA, of Nelsen Partners, “was to leave those pretty well intact so that if you’re going down the east side of the Chalmers project, you would see [something] familiar within the neighborhood, a kind of recall to remember those forms that have been a part of people’s lives.”

Phase 3, Pathways at Chalmers Courts West, is set to begin construction later this year. To comply with City of Austin requirements for vertical mixed-use projects on a major street, it will include a stretch of retail along the west edge. When completed, the development will have increased the total number of units from 86 to 398, 13 percent of which will go for market-rate. Overall, the new units are larger than the previous Chalmers Courts accommodations.

“Things have to adapt and develop,” says Philip Crisara, AIA, of Nelsen Partners. “You

can see that now this is an opportunity for more people to have that same benefit, an opportunity to not only create additional affordable housing, but deeply affordable housing in a neighborhood that’s rapidly gentrifying.”

The new Pathways at Chalmers Courts complex is a unique piece of public space-making in Austin, where shared community amenities connect directly to the street. The three corners of the east, west, and south blocks at the intersection of Chalmers Avenue and 3rd Street form the center for the new Pathways community. A new north-south greenway connecting to the Lance Armstrong Bikeway will eliminate vehicular access at Chalmers Avenue and enhance public pedestrian and bikes paths while allowing families to move safely between Chalmers East and Chalmers West. The largest heritage oak on the site shades an open wood deck and outdoor spill-out room for a corner multifunction space anchoring the east block’s all-brick building. This new public plaza and

gathering space connects the greenway to an internal spine and east-west pedestrian activity corridor along 3rd Street leading to the adjacent neighborhood park and Zavala Elementary.

Part of the conditions of the newly available funding is a Land Use Restriction Agreement (LURA) maintaining the low-income requirement for at least two decades. After that period elapses, if there are no additional restrictions in the LURA, the owner organization can recapitalize the asset property and convert the units to market-rate rentals. However, such a change is not currently in HACA’s vision. In the words of Blanco: “HACA’s mission has always been to serve the most vulnerable families in our community, and so it would remain our mission beyond the 20-year period to continue to serve the Chalmers East and Chalmers West developments. Our mission is to maintain that affordability in perpetuity.”

Nkiru Gelles, Assoc. AIA, is a project designer at Michael Hsu Office of Architecture in Austin.



Mirror, Mirror

Dallas' iconic Fountain Place office tower finally has the sibling promised by its original 1980s master plan, and — surprise! — it's residential.

Architect Page

Interiors Page

Client AMLI Residential

Contractor Archer Western

Structural Engineer IMEG

MEP Engineer Page

Branding and Graphics Page

Landscape Architect Talley Associates

by Michael Malone, FAIA

Architects don't do large, pure geometric statement buildings often anymore. Fountain Place Residences, in downtown Dallas, is a decided throwback to a time when glass-clad, minimally articulated shapes, at large scale, were an exciting area of formal study for architects. Some of the resulting buildings were famous, such as John Portman's Peachtree Plaza Hotel or César Pelli's Pacific Design Center, where the glass framing was kept to the bare minimum so the form could be as uninterrupted as possible. These buildings were meant to be viewed and understood as abstract sculpture on the skyline. The movement advanced the modern idiom of the glass and steel skyscraper to its logical final step: no steel; only glass. These types of buildings depend on context for their urban presence and to give them something to reflect (or refract) in their crystalline, mirrored surfaces. Somewhere in the late 1970s and early 1980s, postmodernism led to a different expression for high-rise buildings: stone, brass, and historical references. Fountain Place, perhaps

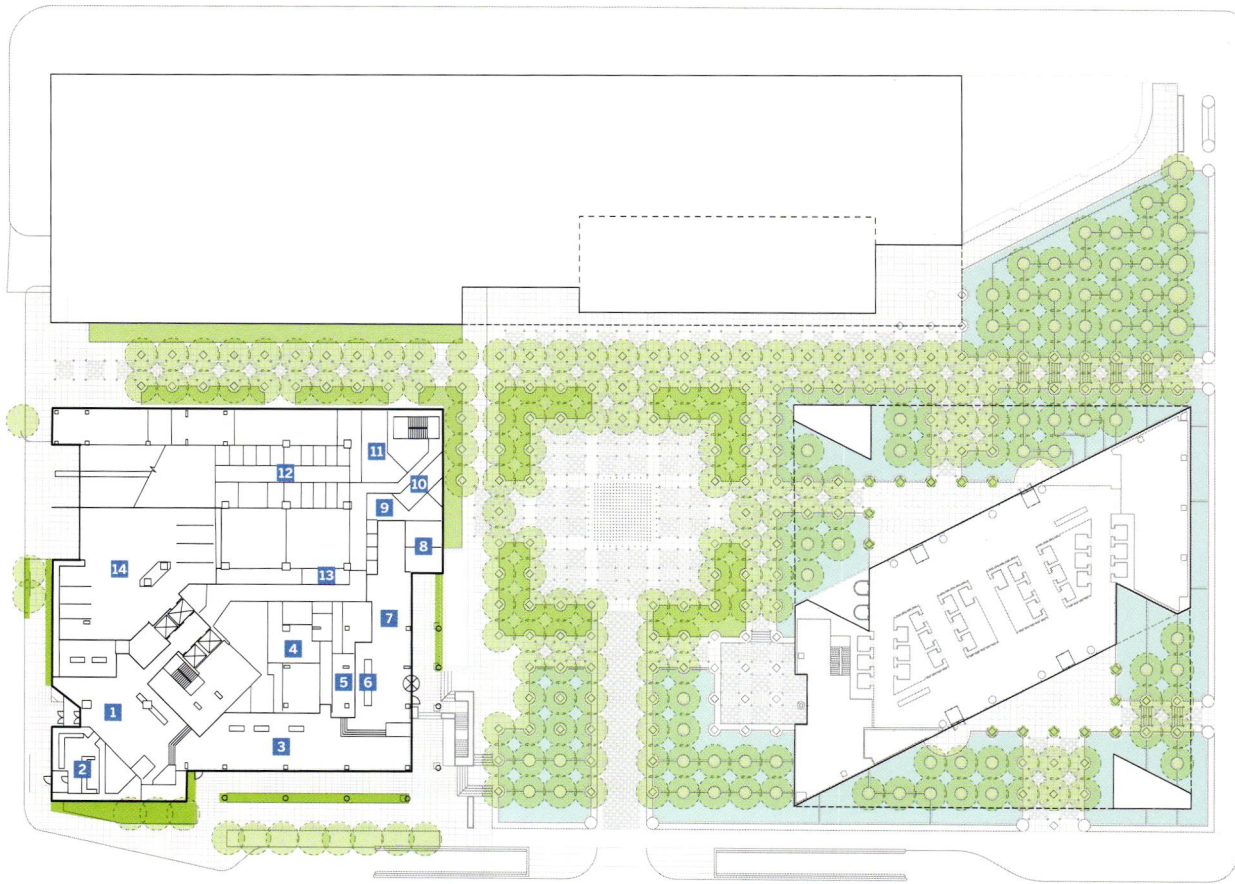
the most refined and carefully wrought of the pure geometry buildings, completed as it was in 1986, is valedictory for the style, the literal end of an era.

The original Fountain Place master plan was conceived by the late Henry Cobb, FAIA, principal of Pei Cobb Freed (PCF). It proposed two towers, only one of which was completed. It is coolly elegant, visually arresting, innovative, and inscrutable. Like many of the buildings designed by PCF during this period, it is a testament to relentless resolution and refinement of a seemingly simple and straightforward design paired with complex detailing and cutting-edge technology. The master plan featured another departure from the tower-in-a-plaza model: The building rose from a complex and verdant water garden, replete with 172 choreographed fountains set in a bosque of cypress. People loved this garden, designed by Dan Kiley and Peter Ker Walker. It became the tower's most popular feature, drawing visitors in large numbers and making it one of downtown Dallas' most traf-



Facing *Fountain Place (left) and Fountain Place Residences (right), as seen from the Dallas Museum of Art.*

Left *Fountain Place Residences (left) and Fountain Place (right), as seen from the Perot Museum of Nature and Science.*



- SITE PLAN**
- 1 RESIDENT LOBBY
 - 2 COFFEE BAR
 - 3 LEASING
 - 4 WORK ROOM
 - 5 CATERING
 - 6 BAR
 - 7 CO-WORK LOUNGE
 - 8 CONFERENCE
 - 9 MAKER SPACE
 - 10 DOG WASH
 - 11 GOLF SIMULATOR
 - 12 RESIDENT STORAGE
 - 13 BICYCLE STORAGE
 - 14 RESERVED GUEST PARKING





Facing *The lobby features sophisticated spaces in a variety of scales and functions.*

Left Section: *Residences on parking.*

ficked public spaces. In 2011, the Texas Society of Architects recognized the building with its 25-Year Award.

After the ownership of Fountain Place changed, the opportunity to build a second tower on the site recently became possible. But, rather than adding another office building, market conditions suggested a residential building would be the best bet. Long a commercial center that emptied out at night, much of downtown Dallas' older commercial building stock has been successfully converted into residential property, and new towers are being constructed in earnest to house the ever-growing number of Texans interested in living an urban life. AMLI was selected to develop the tower, and Page as the architect. The two entities have a history of working successfully together on other projects and a shared belief in good design.

The new 45-story tower rises from a plinth that matches the footprint of the PCF build-

ing. Page felt this was a design "given," the key to allowing as much of the Kiley and Walker gardens to remain in place while completing the original master plan. This decision realized the well-defined and gracious plaza, first envisioned more than 35 years ago. It is a wonderful space; the combination of water and now very mature trees is arresting and strikingly un-Dallas. Refined and kinetic, the fountains create an audible as well as a visual experience, unusual in an urban setting. The residential tower is set diagonally on top of the plinth and is oriented to create a sympathetic dialogue with the older structure. It also allows its narrower footprint to have the same visual heft as its much larger sibling. Because you rarely see the two towers simultaneously, their visual presence is well balanced — no easy trick with such different programs. Page experimented with a variety of standard available glass colors to find an approximate match to the existing tower's

reflective green glazing. They even installed test panels in the original tower to identify the most sympathetic option.

The public interiors of the building are a counterpoint to its cool glass skin. These are designed to be more inviting, warm, and, frankly, residential, though they feel more like an upscale hotel in character. The lobby, a far cry from that of a typical apartment, features sophisticated spaces, in a variety of scales and functions, beautifully furnished and oriented to the plaza with its fountains and gardens. The art program, like all of the interior appointments, was carefully curated by Page.

The units are spatially rich and well-detailed, clearly targeting an upscale tenant. The views are commanding, and the floor-to-ceiling glass brings downtown Dallas fully into the rooms. One forgets the power of full-height glazing and the sense of expansiveness that accompanies it. Some of the units feature walls of sloped glazing.

Right Some units feature sloping glass walls.

Below The original Fountain Place makes a stunning sight from this bathroom.

Facing top The interiors are outfitted for an up-scale tenant.

Facing bottom Floor-to-ceiling glass brings Dallas fully into the rooms.





The proximity to the original Fountain Place makes that building a strong visual presence for many residents. The new building departs from the original in several ways, but one of the most noticeable is the inclusion of balconies on the exterior — an owner requirement, to provide exterior access for the otherwise hermetically sealed units. These balconies create a texture on the exterior, but to be in them, with their glass handrails, is thrillingly vertigo-inducing, particularly on the upper levels. It is a nice gesture to have outside access, but it's a little scary to be out there.

As second acts go, this is a good one. Fountain Place Residences is a fitting last piece to a long-incomplete urban set, and it is pleasant to look at and be around. Working with their clients, Page has done a remarkable thing — created a suitable companion and robust counterpoint to a Dallas icon.

Michael Malone, FAIA is the founding principal of Malone Maxwell Dennehy Architects and president of the Texas Architectural Foundation.

Resources

Oklahoma Contemporary Arts Center, Oklahoma City, OK

Architect Rand Elliott Architects

Design Team Rand Elliott, FAIA; Bill Yen, AIA; Cody Pistulka, AIA

Contractor Smith & Pickel Construction Company

Consultants **STRUCTURAL:** Wallace Engineering-Structural Consultants; **CIVIL:** CEC; **MEP:** Alvine and Associates; **THEATER:** Schuler Shook; **ACOUSTICS:** Audio Video Designs

Resources **CONCRETE FLOOR STAIN:** Ardor Solutions; **NORTH TERRACE PAVERS:** Sunny Brook Pressed Concrete; **ALUMINUM FINS CLADDING:** Artform; **STEEL AND ACOUSTICAL ROOF DECK:** Vulcraft; **ALUMINUM COMPOSITE PANELS AT LANTERN SOFFIT:** Mitsubishi Alpolic; **CANOPY SOFFIT:** Dryvit; **TPO:** Firestone; **COMPOSITE INSULATING ROOF SYSTEM:** Elastizell (West Pro Construction Solutions); **METAL AND GLASS CURTAINWALL/ENTRANCE DOORS:** Kawneer; **GLASS:** PPG (Knox Glass); **METAL DOORS AND FRAMES:** CECCO; **WOOD DOORS:** Architectural Wood Doors; **OVERHEAD DOORS:** Haas (Sooner Overhead Door); **SECURITY GRILLE:** Cascade Guardian; **ACOUSTICAL CEILINGS:** Armstrong; **SUSPENSION GRID:** Armstrong; **CABINETY AND CUSTOM WOODWORK:** Wood Systems; **PLASTIC LAMINATE:** Formica; **SOLID SURFACE:** Corian; **FLOOR AND WALL TILE:** Daltile, American Olean (Bryan's Flooring); **RESILIENT FLOORING:** Roppe Rubber Tile (Bryan's Flooring); **PAINT:** Sherwin Williams (Statewide Painting Contractors); **POLYCARBONATE PANELS:** Polygal; **ENTRANCE MATS:** Mats Incorporated; **SYSTEMS FURNITURE/PIXEL Y BASE MOBILE TABLE:** Knoll; **CUSTOM FIXED SEATING:** Plugge Upholstery; **SETU TASK CHAIR:** Herman Miller; **CHAIRS:** Hightower; **TABLES:** Southern Aluminum; **SHELVING UNITS:** Aurora; **SHELVING UNITS:** USM; **BICYCLE RACK/TRASH RECEPTACLES:** Landscape Forms; **TENSION GRID (BLACK BOX THEATER):** Inter America Stage; **ELEVATORS:** Thyssenkrupp Elevator Company; **FIREPROOFING:** Isolatak International (True Fireproofing Company); **FIRE SUPPRESSION:** Tyco; **TOILETS/URINALS/RESTROOM SINKS:** American Standard; **CLASSROOM SINKS:** Just Manufacturing Company; **DRINKING FOUNTAIN AND BOTTLE FILLER:** Elkay; **LIGHTING CONTROLS:** Lutron; **DOWNLIGHTS:** Lumium, Forum, Visioneering (Bell & McCoy); **LED:** KlusDesign (Bell & McCoy); **TRACK LIGHT:** Contech

(Bell & McCoy); **EXTERIOR LIGHTING:** LSI, Ligman (Bell & McCoy); **ELECTRIC STRIKES/HDI CARD READERS:** Rofu; **EXIT DEVICES:** Adams Rite; **PERFORATED METAL FENCE:** McNichols (Yankee Fence Company); **CHAIN LINK FENCE:** Yankee Fence Company; **DESIGN SOFTWARE:** Autodesk Revit, SketchUp, Autodesk AutoCAD, Enscape, Autodesk Navisworks

Kathrine G. McGovern Canopy Walkway & Visitor Pavilion, Smith Oaks Sanctuary, High Island

Architect SWA Group and SCHAUM/SHIEH

Design Team Natalia Beard; Matt Baumgarten; Andrew Gressett; Rhett Rentrop; Troy Schaum; Rosalyne Shieh, AIA; Andrea Brennen; Sheila Mednick; Ekin Erar; Zhiyi Chen

Contractor Millis Development & Construction

Consultants **ARCHITECTURE FOR RESTROOM/VISITOR CENTER:** SCHAUM/SHIEH; **STRUCTURAL/CIVIL ENGINEERING:** CSF Consulting; **MEP:** Hunt & Hunt Engineering; **METAL WORK (FABRICATOR):** Renfrow + Co Metalsmiths

Rose/Knox Townhouse Addition and Renovation, Houston

Architect Architect Works

Design Team Donna Kacmar, FAIA; Jonathan Myers, AIA

Consultants **STRUCTURAL ENGINEER:** Insight Structures; **MECHANICAL ENGINEER:** E&C Engineers & Consultants; **MATERIALS TESTING:** A&R Engineering and Testing

Resources **CONCRETE:** E. Gomez Ready Mix; **MASONRY:** Revels Block & Brick; **24GA GALVALUME ROOF PANELS:** VIP Construction Services; **COMPOSITE DECKING:** Cali Bamboo, Yosemite TruOrganics™ Composite Decking 100% Recycled Material; **THERMAL & MOISTURE PROTECTION:** Tyvek; **OPENINGS:** Western Multi-slide, RAM Industries S900 Casement, Awning, and Fixed Windows (RAM); **ALUMINUM DOORS + STOREFRONT:** CRL US Aluminum (AMS Glass); **CUSTOM POCKET DOORS:** Western Pacific Building Materials; **CERAMIC + PORCELAIN TILE:** La Nova Tile; **COUNTERTOP:** Caesarstone 4030 Pebble (OMNI SURFACES), KRION - LIGHT LUX - Green Light 4601 (Porcelanosa); **GLASS CLADDING, ZEN GREY:** Guardian Glass (AMS Glass); **PLUMBING:** Hansgrohe,

Infinity Drain (Ferguson); **HEATING, VENTILATING, AND AIR CONDITIONING (HVAC):** American Standard, Honeywell Thermostat; **ELECTRICAL:** Sonneman, Panasonic Exhaust Fan, WAC Lighting (Ferguson); **EXTERIOR IMPROVEMENTS:** Tree Service and Design; **DESIGN SOFTWARE:** AutoCAD

Pathways at Chalmers Courts, Austin

Architect Nelsen Partners

Design Team Philip Crisara, AIA; Matthew Beaton, AIA; Bob Newell, AIA; Jose Aparicio; Blair Vo-Le; Daniela Valle; Schuyler Costello, AIA; Johanna Spencer, AIA; Linnea Brudenell

Contractor Carleton Companies

Consultants **CIVIL ENGINEER:** Dunaway; **LANDSCAPE ARCHITECT:** dwg.; **STRUCTURAL ENGINEER:** Connect Structural; **MEP ENGINEER:** PHA Consulting Engineers; **SUSTAINABILITY:** Nelsen Partners

Resources **BRICK - DTP MOCHA IRONSPOT:** Acme Brick; **WATER JET SCREEN PANELS:** Aqua Jet; **VINYL WINDOWS - SERIES 1500:** Plygem; **151.24 KW DC ROOF MOUNTED SOLAR ELECTRIC SYSTEM:** Lighthouse Solar

Fountain Place Residences, Dallas

Architect Page

Design Team Talmadge Smith, AIA; Wendy Dunnam Tita, FAIA; Daniel Brooks, AIA; Eric Kuehmeier, AIA; Brent Cutshall, AIA; Sergio Botero, AIA; Will Butler, AIA; Kaitlin Jones; Tamara Toon Wadell, AIA; Alex Goldberg, AIA; Shelby Blessing, AIA; America Alva, AIA; Cami Martin

Contractor Archer Western

Consultants **INTERIORS:** Page; **STRUCTURE:** IMEG; **LANDSCAPE:** Talley Associates; **MEP:** Page; **BRANDING + GRAPHICS:** Page

Resources **CONCRETE:** Archer Western; **BRASS HAND RAILS:** SteelFab; **ARCHITECTURAL WOOD MILLWORK:** Wood Haus; **METAL - GATES, FINISHING, SHELVING, MILLWORK PANELS:** Astro; **BANQUETTE UPHOLSTERY/FABRIC ACOUSTIC CEILING FINS:** AEC; **CURTAIN WALL:** Wincon; **LAVASTONE TILE:** Daltile; **MOSAIC WALL TILE:** Porcelanosa; **BAR BACKSPLASH:** Voguebay (Daltile); **LINEAR WOOD CEILING:** Rulon; **TERRAZZO FLOORING:** American Terrazzo; **WALL COVERING:** FilzFelt (AEC); **DEMOUNTABLE PARTITIONS:** Muraflex

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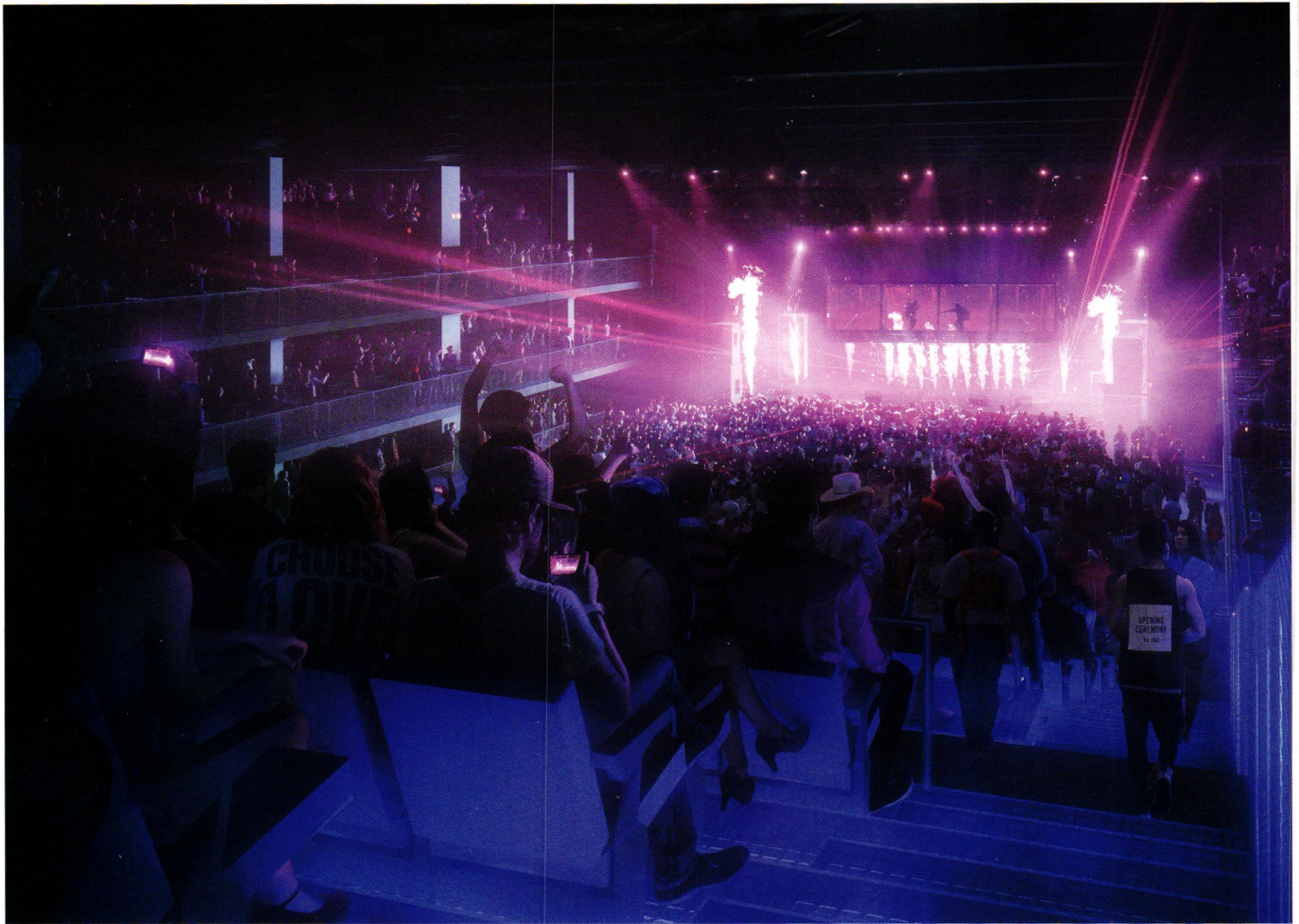
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The Terminal at POST Houston by OMA

OMA has unveiled The Terminal, a 5,000-capacity Live Nation performance venue slated to open in November. The project is sited at the eastern end of POST Houston, the 550,000-sf historic redevelopment of the 1962 Barbara Jordan Post Office in downtown Houston that, upon completion, will also include restaurant, retail, and office space as well as a five-acre rooftop garden. Developed by Lovett Commercial and designed by OMA's New York office in association with local firm Powers Brown Architecture, the project has been underway since 2019. The pandemic struck just as plans for the tri-level performance space were finalized, prompting a delay in

the release of a number of bustling, hazy, laser light-filled renderings.

As shown in the visualizations, the design focuses primarily on creating a vibrant experience for attendees. Raked seating hovers above a large, flat general assembly floor that allows for various arrangements and scenography. The fixed seats are clad in fiberglass grating to promote transparency between the performance space and the underside nooks created by the tribune. OMA partner Jason Long likened these social spaces to “hanging out under the bleachers during a homecoming game.” This is consistent with the overall ambition of the project, which is to enliven and activate every corner of the venue, rather than pool all the excitement within the performance space.

The design achieves this by filtering attendees through a series of tailored social spaces, each boasting unique industrial materials, bright color schemes, and lighting systems. The lobby

is laden with Texas references: Walls are lined with stainless steel grids, held in place by neon yellow cattle fence insulators to hang art and merchandise; a bar is wrapped in aluminized fabric heat shields, as a nod to NASA; and an old overhanging USPS spy tunnel (originally built above the mail-sorting floor to oversee operations) is lined with stadium-like lights reminiscent of high school football games. Beyond the lobby, a vibrant yellow stair shines through the translucent, double-height polycarbonate wall that separates the main space into two zones: circulatory, private, and intimate gathering spaces to the west, and the central void to the east. The stair connects at various audience levels and culminates in a hidden lounge with playful seating to facilitate more personal interactions. Come November, this funky set of secondary spaces will allow for a more varied live-event experience, which might serve as a nice stepping stone back into full-capacity life.