From the President

by Patrick Gay, ASLA

Happy New Year to all! I hope your holidays were peaceful and full of good family time. If you haven’t seen it yet, there is a nice recap (with photos) of 2009 for our Chapter in the December issue of Landscape Architect and Specifier News. We now look forward to a productive and fun year with the New Mexico Chapter of ASLA. We have many exciting events planned including our annual Earth Day/Landscape Architecture Month celebration on April 24th, our annual summer golf tournament, a fall exhibit of New Mexico landscape architecture at UNM, and a special late winter trip to the central part of our state for some history and nature tourism. I hope to see many of you at these upcoming events throughout the year.

Our November excursion to southern New Mexico was a great success. Approximately twenty of us climbed on the “disco” bus and traveled to the Mesilla Valley Bosque State Park for an afternoon of educational sessions, historical talks, and a tour of the southern bosque. Thanks to Mary O’Connell for a very interesting session on the chemistry of native medicinal plants. Steven Cary of NM State Parks shared his research (and some amazing photos) on New Mexico butterflies and their habitats. He has a book out on the subject if you missed the talk and are interested in the subject. Alex Mares took us on a tour of the facility, gardens, and the native landscape and wetland areas. Alex is a great storyteller and weaves his stories into the tours like a master.

Rick Davis from Rainbird was at the event and we are grateful to Rainbird for their primary sponsorship. Also thanks to Joni Gutierrez and the Victor Stanley folks for being our lunch and dinner sponsors. Heck, my mom even showed up! We capped off the trip with an evening visit to the Mesilla plaza and a rowdy dinner at La Posta. For those of you that missed the fun, I anticipate the Q4-2010 will be a similarly exciting and educational event. Please make plans to join us for that one as well as all the other great activities we have planned.
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for 2010. If you are interested in participating in or helping organize any upcoming events, just let us know.

Here’s to a great 2010!
Cheers, Pat

To comment on the President’s message, please email responses to Pat:
pgay@sites-sw.com
Ambassador Edward L. Romero Park
by Bob Oberdorfer, ASLA

Place one established neighborhood, one new residential subdivision, and a large alfalfa field into a large mixing bowl. Divide one UNM design studio into three equal teams, add an ASLA national student design award, and stir into the above ingredients. Set aside for approximately one year. In a separate bowl, combine one public agency, a design consultant, and a supportive County Commissioner. Add budget constraints, a stingy state legislature, and several County bond cycles; set aside for a couple more years, turning periodically and seasoning with occasional public inquiries (“When are we gonna get our park?”). Finally, combine the above ingredients, add a capable contractor, and stir just enough to blend thoroughly without destroying the identities of the first two ingredients. Place everything under a broiler for six or eight months, garnish with the namesake ambassador, and serve.

That’s the short version of the recipe for Bernalillo County’s Ambassador Edward L. Romero Park. Situated on roughly four acres of former agricultural land in Albuquerque’s South Valley, the park was intended as a good-will gesture to assuage hard feelings between the surrounding established neighborhood and the new development. As such, the park was situated at the effective rear of the new development, surrounded on three sides by back yards of the new homes, but facing the older residences across its only access road. However, in a somewhat less altruistic gesture, the park site also serves to collect all of the surface runoff from the new subdivision in a full retention capacity, meaning that there is no outfall to other storm drainage facilities; the park must accommodate the full 100-year storm runoff volume from the surrounding development. The developers accomplished this by digging a sizeable pond at one end of the park site, which was
fenced off and overgrown with “weeds,” in the eyes of the neighbors. In 2002, the Bernalillo County Parks and Open Space program manager sought the help of UNM’s MLA program to come up with ideas for developing the site into a functional park that met the needs and desires of both the new and long-time residents. The park site became the subject of a UNM Landscape Architecture Graduate Design Studio in which three student teams spent a semester getting to know the area and its residents, developed three master plan concepts for the park, and presented them to the community. (One of the resulting plans was ultimately submitted for consideration for the ASLA National Student Design Awards – and won.) All three of the plans were summarized in a booklet and accompanying CD, which were presented to the County at the end of the studio. Enter Resource Technology, Inc. (RTI/now Weston Solutions). In 2004, the County issued an RFP for a consultant to be tasked with combining the three disparate plans into a cohesive design that would not only keep the neighbors happy, but also respect the thought and creativity that went into the original student designs. RTI was ultimately selected for the project, due at least in part to the fact that we happened to have one of the former student participants on staff at the time, and thus had a great deal of familiarity with the work that had gone before.

From our earliest involvement, it became apparent that this would not be a typical “turf and playground” park. As student designs are wont to be, each of the plans was highly stylized and idealistic – in some cases replete with accompanying poetry – with nary a soccer field to be found in the lot. In early and frequent conversations with the County, including soliciting the support of the local County Commissioner, we confirmed that they wished to carry the process through as a high-concept, showpiece park. While that decision led to a long and circuitous course to completion (with several near dead-ends), it has ultimately resulted in a very unique, and in some ways groundbreaking, park for the Albuquerque area. The nature of this project led to a decidedly different design process than is the norm for a neighborhood park. There was very little programming, site analysis, or public involvement early on, as that had been undertaken, and fairly well documented, by the student teams. Instead, we began with an analysis of the three designs themselves.
...it became apparent that this would not be a typical “turf and playground” park.

After scratching our heads for a while and wondering how to pick and choose among the many and varied features represented in the three concepts, we finally began by trying to find common threads or complementary patterns among the designs. A “gestural analysis” was completed by ignoring any specific features, and focusing instead on the most basic forms apparent in each plan. In short, one of our designers was tasked with placing yellow trace over a scaled copy of the three designs and scribbling out a simplified version of each. Those gestural sketches were then overlaid, and a composite sketch created combining the key graphic elements that worked best together. This served as a template for the eventual design.

Within that framework, and taking cues from various aspects of the student designs, RTI designed a storm water management system in which runoff is spread across the site into a series of broad, shallow areas, allowing the retention basin fence to be removed and water to infiltrate over a wider area. Water entering the site through numerous drainage easements around the perimeter is channeled into shallow bio-swales and diffused across the site to help irrigate park vegetation. The swales were comprised of a “reservoir” blend of gravel, compost, and native soils, and capped by stepping stone-like pieces of broken concrete slab. The slabs serve a dual purpose of minimizing evaporation of the harvested storm water, as well as providing a secondary, informal path system through the park.

Broken concrete was also identified as a possible candidate for much of the erosion control system utilized in the park. Since a large quantity of soil was removed to accommodate spreading of the retained storm runoff, significant slopes were created adjacent to some of the homes around the perimeter of the park. Some of you may recall an article in an earlier edition of this newsletter wherein I described my initial foray into recycled slab use (“EXPERIMENTAL ALTRUISISTIC UNAUTHORIZED PUBLIC LANDSCAPING,” NMASLA News, Summer 2004) in, or just outside of, my own back yard. Following that successful trial installation, we decided that Romero Park offered a perfect opportunity to implement it a much larger scale -- except for one minor problem: there was no existing concrete on site to recycle. However, we did have a concurrent streetscape project underway, not too far away, which would be producing copious amounts of broken sidewalk slabs. And the City of Albuquerque has a pretty much perpetual sidewalk replacement process going on. We identified both of those, along with several other potential sources of the requisite building blocks, in the contract documents and pushed on.

Water that did not infiltrate into the bio-swales would
ultimately end up in what was the original retention basin at the southwest corner of the site, which is at, or very near (depending on the time of year) the elevation of the local water table. And it turned out that the “weeds” cropping up in the original retention basin in fact contained numerous volunteer cottonwoods, willows, sedges, and other important wetland vegetation. This was identified for protection and incorporated into the earliest conceptual designs.

In order to reduce the amount of runoff generated within the site itself, porous concrete was used to pave the parking spaces, and a permeable brick paver system was used to surface the entry plaza. While porous concrete has been around for a number of years in other parts of the country, and has even been used in other parts of New Mexico, it had never been approved for use in Albuquerque, until this project. The project also features Albuquerque’s first public, outdoor climbing wall – a fact confirmed by the amount of legal wrangling and red tape we had to go through to get it approved by the County, the play equipment manufacturer (for the two sliding apparati attached to it), and playground auditors.

Then, just about the time plans were nearing completion, a little thing called the “subprime mortgage crisis” was also shaping up. One thing led to another, and in short order, state funding for the construction was cut. The project languished for several years while the County once again evaluated its priorities, fought unsuccessfully to win new, scarce, state dollars, and eventually dug deep and reapportioned money from its own budgeting process to carry through with its earlier commitment to the project. Phase 1 was completed in the spring of 2009 and was received enthusiastically by the neighborhood. Phase 2 is set to go to construction in early spring, 2010.

The park features native and xeric plantings as well as low water use hybrid turf in limited areas. The design incorporates agricultural and environmental themes including a stylized “orchard” of crabapples and flowering cherries, and native bosque plantings which are sustained in low areas by periodic inundation and the shallow water table. The park is also slated to be one of the first sites on line to tap into the non-potable re-use line being planned to extend from the sewage treatment plant into the south valley and southeast heights. As such, all piping and equipment are designed to “dirty water” standards, and incorporate the telltale purple piping and valve covers. Other features include a semi-circular steel shade structure patterned after the old farm windmills, basketball and sand volleyball courts, a “play mound” bisected by the aforementioned climbing wall, and a Spanish/Moorish entry plaza honoring
the namesake ambassador’s ties to Spain and neighboring Andorra.

Project Credits:
Landscape Architect: Resource Technology, Inc. (Weston Solutions)
Irrigation Design: Irrigation Services, Inc.
Electrical Design: Sonalysts, Inc.
County Project Manager: Clay Campbell
Contractor: Mountain West Golfscapes

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Resurge is an alternative proposal for a planned surge pond on the west side of Albuquerque, New Mexico, in the East Amole watershed just north of Interstate 40. It is surrounded by an undeveloped parcel plotted for residential development and an office park. The Albuquerque Metropolitan Area Flood Control Authority (AMAFCA) originally proposed a traditionally engineered surge pond on this site to protect Albuquerque’s South Valley from flooding in the event of a catastrophic rainstorm. The pond is required to detain up to 300 acre-feet of floodwater from the neighboring West Amole watershed before it is conveyed to the Rio Grande River. The site is adjacent to a protected, scenic escarpment and an old landfill. As the land adjacent to the site is developed, the surge pond will become a dominant view and a significant part of the adjacent open space.

Goals defined by the team members include: creating a sustainable alternative to typical flood control structures, using the construction of the surge pond as an opportunity to heal the degraded landscape, creating a space that will function on multiple levels, and meeting AMAFCA’s requirements for the surge.

The team replaced conventional planar slopes with landform grading. The resulting complex topography adds an aesthetic component to the site, by mimicking the natural hillsides in the surrounding area, and maintaining existing hydrological patterns. The fill removed during excavation will be used to cap the adjacent landfill. The site’s sandy soil makes it a natural aquifer recharge point. Flow and sediment control techniques, including one-rock dams and check dams, were proposed to help improve water quality and maximize infiltration. The proposed material for the structures is concrete rubble from the adjacent landfill, referencing the cultural past of the site. This material will be used consistently throughout the site to create a continuous language of built form and will clearly reflect the contrasting scales of intervention necessary to slow water coming from a hillside arroyo and to dissipate the energy of the piped flow coming from the West Amole.

In contrast to the AMAFCA proposal, the ridge running through the middle of the site will not be completely excavated, but cut straight through to preserve most of the ridge while still giving the flood waters access to the next valley. This allows viewers to make a visual connection and imagine the ridge as it originally was. The thirty-foot vertical walls of the “pinch” will be reinforced.
Site Context

With concrete rubble-filled gabion baskets, creating a dramatic intervention that will remain after much of the site has faded back into its surroundings. The use of a formalized re-vegetation scheme, with shrub and grass mixes planted on east and west facing slopes respectively, will initially provide a dramatic visual effect, contrasting the naturalistic slope form of the future surge pond and revealing the scale of human intervention in the landscape. Over time the shrub and grass species will intermix and thicker vegetation will concentrate along arroyos. The wide species selection will act as a seed bank for the surrounding over-grazed landscape, blending the boundaries of the intervention.

The construction of the East Amole surge pond will affect several user groups: residents and employees of the future development, motorists driving on I-40 and local wildlife. The proposed design will transform the surge pond to an aesthetically pleasing landscape, function as a user-friendly open space with trails and recreation opportunities, and provide wildlife habitat by restoring ecological function. The team chose to act as consultants for AMAFCA and delivered a project that had the...
potential to be implemented. Scale models and a booklet were produced. The proposal was accepted by the AMAFCA board, spring 2009, who also decided to continue the proposed grading and vegetation patterns on the fill-dirt used to cap the landfill.

Three team members; Anthony Fettes, Kristina Guist and Elaine Stevens traveled to Seattle to present the design at the annual CLARB convention on September 11, 2009. CLARB noted that this group did a number of firsts for the Wayne Grace Memorial Student Design Competition: first group to win first place, first to present their design before CLARB, first winning project to be slated for construction.
Chapter Events

NMASLA Poster Competition
Date/Time: Deadline – end of March
Theme: “Design in the Desert”
Size: 18”X24”
Prizes: 1st Prize $250, 2nd Prize $50
Sponsor: TBD
Note: Entering is FREE so get those creative juices flowing! Select entries will be displayed at the 2010 Q1 event in the spring.
For more information, contact: Susan Corban – scorban@mrwnm.com

AIA Santa Fe Lecture Series
Marc Treib/UC Berkeley Department of Architecture
Date/Time: March 12, 6:00 PM
Location: New Mexico Museum of Art’s St. Francis Auditorium
Note: Marc Treib, professor of Architecture Emeritus, University of California Berkeley, is a noted landscape and architecture historian and critic. Treib has published numerous books on architecture and architectural landscape. All lectures are free and open to the public.
For more information go to: http://www.aiasantafe.org

Q1 Event
ABQ BioPark w/ Nick Kuhn
Date/Time: April 24, 2010
Location: ABQ BioPark
Note: Save the date for our Q1 event celebrating Earth Day and National Landscape Architecture Month. More info coming soon!

Sole Practitioners Roundtable
Date/Time: January 18, 2010
Location: Hello Deli, 3401 Candelaria, Albuquerque, NM
For more information, contact: Danny Mitchell (505) 385-0279
danny@mitchellassociatesllc.com

LARE Multiple Choice Workshop
Date/Time: January 22-24, 2010
Location: YMCA Point Bonita Conference Center, Golden Gate National Recreation Area, California

Texas ASLA 2010 Annual Conference
Date/Time: March 11-12
Location: San Antonio, TX
For more information go to: https://www.texasasl.com/

School to World
Date/Time: Saturday, February 27th
Location: Albuquerque Convention Center
For more information go to: http://www.schooltoworld.org/

Membership & Address Changes
Please email Amy Duckert: aduckert@mrwnm.com

Newsletter
The NMASLA newsletter is produced by students in the MLA program at the University of New Mexico School of Architecture and Planning. Please submit articles, news, photos, corrections, etc., to the editor: Ryan Anderson ry.anders@gmail.com

Website
Have you visited the NMASLA Website?
Please check it out: http://www.nmasla.org/
Want to show off your projects?? We are requesting project images or landscape images that anyone would like to have posted on the website. Please include a note with a brief description (name of project/landscape, location…anything else to explain the image). Now is your chance for Fame !!!!

Mountain West GolfScapes, Inc.
Design requirements:
1. Design should reflect the theme *Design in the Desert*.
2. Design may include a quote.
3. Design must include the following text:
   - *Design in the Desert* - 2010
   - NMASLA as text or NMASLA logo
   (email scorban@mrwnm.com for pdf logo)

Size & format:
Submit a **PDF of 18” x 24”, minimum 300 dpi resolution** on a CD or DVD.
*Label* your disc “Poster Competition 2010” and your name.
Include a completed **entry form** with each design.

Prizes:
First place **$250.00** & NMASLA will print **500 copies** of the winning entry
Second place **$50.00**
Select entries will be **displayed** at an NMASLA-sponsored event and chapter website.

Deadline: March 26, 2010

Submit to:
Will Moses or Susan Corban
Morrow Reardon Wilkinson Miller
210 La Veta NE
Albuquerque, NM  87108

Note:
1. NMASLA reserves the right to add *sponsor logos* to printed posters.
2. You must be an *ASLA member* to enter. There is no entry fee.
   You may submit **more than one** entry.
3. Entries will be **juried** by the NMASLA Executive Committee and by attendees at the NMASLA Q1 event. (date to be announced)
4. If you have **questions**, please email Susan Corban, scorban@mrwnm.com or Will Moses, wmoses@mrwnm.com.