

Green Trends Are Changing Nature of Landscape Architecture

DESIGN: Industry Event Expected to Draw 6,000 To Convention Center

By LOU HIRSH

Increasingly, landscape architecture is becoming a big bottom-line consideration, instead of an aesthetic afterthought, in the planning of construction and renovation projects.

Rising costs to supply and consume water in places like San Diego County, combined with government regulations aimed at keeping lawn chemicals and other polluting runoff out of waterways, are making developers and project architects much more cognizant of landscape considerations.

"People are bringing us into the planning process much earlier now, because they need to figure out how they're going to handle their runoff issues, and how they are going to incorporate the green elements and energy usage," says Brooke J. Pietz,



Brooke Pietz

an associate in the San Diego planning and landscape architecture firm KTU+A.

Pietz will be among several local professionals attending the annual national convention of the Washington, D.C.-based American Society of Landscape Architects, a global organization with more than 15,000 members. This year's gathering, running Oct. 30 through Nov. 2 and titled "Landscape Architecture Rising," is expected to draw more than 6,000 to the

LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE RISING

Keynote speakers: Urban design experts Charles Montgomery, Diana Balmori, Andres Duany, Laurie Olin and Charles Waldheim.

Date and place: Oct. 30 through Nov. 2, San Diego Convention Center.

Lead sponsor: American Society of Landscape Architects (ASLA).

Expected attendance: 6,000 to 6,500.

Event description: Annual convention of Washington, D.C.-based ASLA, which has more than 15,000 members worldwide.

San Diego Convention Center.

Organizers say the focus will be on the opportunities that lie ahead for the industry in the long run, as communities and builders become more focused on planning geared toward sustainability and quality-of-life elements. But there are also considerable challenges in the current economy, as landscape architects — like their counterparts in general contracting, engineering, general architecture and other building trades — struggle to find project work amid public and private-sector cost-cutting.

David Reed, founding principal of David Reed Landscape Architects in San Diego and president of the local ASLA chapter, recalls a recent meeting related to a city government project, where he found himself in a room filled with 80 other people looking to submit proposals geared to landscape architecture.



David Reed

Tough Business Climate

"It's probably the toughest it's been since 1982, and it's possibly rougher than that right now," said Reed of the climate, noting that he started his own firm in 1982 after being laid off by a larger company.

Industry consolidation puts continuous pressure on smaller firms to find work, he said, and local companies in the field continually have to adjust their staffing and recalibrate their mixes of public and private-sector marketing efforts. Many are looking beyond the San Diego region, with some finding work on projects overseas, especially in places like still-booming China, where they do government, resort and other commercial landscape architecture.

Jim Kuhlken, principal in the landscape architecture division of San Diego-based Rick Engineering Co., said his firm generally maintains a 50-50 mix of public and private-sector work.



Jim Kuhlken

While government and education projects continue to be among the steadiest, the private sector is increasingly incorporating the latest technology and design to be energy efficient and comply with government runoff and other environmental regulations, without sacrificing aesthetics.

"In the old days you could just see the runoff trailing into gutters," Kuhlken said. "You can't do that anymore."

He said recent local examples of better practices include the landscaping of Civita, a mixed-use development being built by Sudberry Properties in Mission Valley

where runoff prevention measures will be invisible to visitors; and recent exterior work done at the local offices of Sony and facilities built by various life-sciences research firms.

Significant Projects

Glen Schmidt, principal at Schmidt Design Group Inc. in San Diego, said landscape architecture increasingly influences projects in the downtown area, including the convention center expansion plan that calls for a rooftop park, as well as enhancements to the Embarcadero promoting walkability and green space.



Glen Schmidt

Local military bases and university campuses have also been a steady source of work, and new health care facilities under construction, such as Palomar Pomerado Hospital in Escondido, have elements like rooftop gardens and plant-filled balconies.

"The hospitals are really incorporating landscaping a lot more, because they're looking to improve the healing environment," Schmidt said.

While single-family housing work "has dried up," Schmidt said his and other firms are getting projects related to low-income housing and other types of apartments.

"Eventually the return on investment is going to reach the point where commercial building owners and homeowners decide it makes sense to re-do the landscaping to make it more water-efficient," he said.

Datron:

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Germany, France and Israel. Datron exports to more than 80 countries, including Afghanistan. Barter said the Indonesian army is one of its largest customers, having bought 10,000 of its tactical radios.

A new alliance with a Canadian company has it breaking into the market for small spy drones.



3-Pound Scout

Aeryon Labs Inc. of Waterloo, Ontario — near Toronto and Buffalo, N.Y. — makes a flying machine that looks like an insect. The Datron Scout weighs 3 pounds and is small enough to be carried around by one person. It flies with four helicopterlike rotors, and carries a camera underneath. It's easy to use, Barter said.

The Scout can hover 1,600 feet above the area it is monitoring. Previously, it was limited to altitudes of about 5,500 feet above sea level, but Datron reported this summer that with special propellers, it can hover in the thin air at 13,000 feet above sea level.

The drone recently went to work for rebels in Libya. Datron's website has a video clip taken from a Scout drone during the march on Tripoli, showing Libyan soldiers tending to and firing an artillery battery.

Datron's alliance with Aeryon Labs has the Canadian company providing the technology. Datron takes it to market using its sales contacts around the world.

The Vista company recently made a \$1 million investment in Aeryon Labs, Barter said, giving Datron a 2.5 percent stake in the Canadian drone-maker.

Company's History

Barter bought the Datron business for

The Datron Scout drone weighs 3 pounds and World Communications has teamed up with the to military and police markets all over the world

\$4.7 million from his employer at the time, Titan Corp., in 2004.

It was a tumultuous time.

For one thing, the radio company had \$10 million in revenue and was losing money.

Then there was the scandal.

Federal authorities were investigating Titan, including the Datron unit, for possible violation of the Foreign Corrupt Practices Act, which forbids bribes in exchange for overseas business. Investigators finally found a violation involving another Titan business unit, its wireless telecom arm, and the government of Benin. In 2005, Titan pleaded guilty to three felony counts and agreed to pay \$28.5 million in fines. The incident scuttled Lockheed Martin Corp.'s plans to buy Titan.

Barter's advice for anyone looking to export would be to learn two acronyms: FCPA, which is short for the aforementioned law, and ITAR.

"Get yourself a great FCPA attorney ... before you pay a dime to anyone overseas," Barter said. Even an inconclusive government investigation can generate crippling legal fees, he added.

Qualcomm:

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panies that dissect or "teardown" smartphones and a host of other electronic gizmos when the products go out for sale. Electronic device manufacturers and designers use the information to understand what competitors are doing, and make necessary modifications to new products.

For the Apple iPhones, the teardown was intensely watched because their phones are the hottest selling ones on the planet and set a standard that many others seek to match, Mielke said.

The most recent iPhone contains Qual-

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