FRI-B07 GROUNDBREAKING: Design excellence and the GSA’s new focus on performative landscapes.

The General Services Administration is working with landscape architects to change the Federal real estate portfolio from the outside in. Representatives from the GSA and RCH Studios describe the agency’s evolving landscape emphasis, profile a project using the SITES certification framework, and discuss how landscapes are re-created, re-purposed, and re-interpreted.

Speakers:
Christian Gabriel, ASLA, National Design Director for Landscape Architecture at GSA’s Office of Chief Architect in Washington DC.
Mark Rios, FAIA, FASLA, Founding Principal, Rios Clementi Hale Studios,
Samantha Harris, ASLA, LEED AP: Senior Associate, Rios Clementi Hale Studios

Learning Objectives
- Learn about policy, programs and projects at the GSA to promote sustainable landscape design.
- Explore how the SITES design process can be leveraged to renew a sustainable and visually evocative landscape.
- Understand approaches to translating sustainable elements into larger urban design context and local cultural / historic expressions.
- Examine innovative methods for strategic demolition and material reuse on an existing site.

Outline

1. GSA’s commitment to Design Excellence and Site Sustainability. (GSA)
   A. A quick overview of the agency structure; and where landscape fits in.
   B. Making the case- Why here and why now?
   C. Using the project site as a bridge between Washington DC and the “Regions”.
   D. Operating “close to the ground”, with facility staff and tenants to build goals and support structure to receive the landscape.
   E. Withstanding value engineering by proposing multi-layered and multi-purpose sites.
   F. Phasing and Future Projects
   G. Creating cover for design innovation.

2. Case Study: A Designer’s Perspective: Pete V. Domenici US Courthouse – Sustainable Landscape Retrofit – Albuquerque NM (RCHS)
   A. Overview of Project: Physical/ Cultural Context, Developing the Landscape Program and Common Goals.
   B. The Big Idea: A series of sustainable interventions add up to tell the story of a new rich, contemporary, landscape design for the Courthouse and Downtown Albuquerque.
PERFORM/TRANSFORM: Linking sustainable interventions with design to produce a new site narrative, including:

a. Lawn Removal  ➔  Garden Creation
b. Hardscape Removal  ➔  Harvested Site Walls
c. Cistern addition  ➔  Sustainable water story
d. PV’s & efficient LED’s  ➔  Site lighting / security

C. The Idea Realized: The Construction Process

D. Quantitative Performance and Documentation- SITES Pilot Program. Does the new design pay off?

3 Landscape For the Future- The GSA Looks Forward (GSA & RCHS)

A. Project Summary and Future Projects

Speaker Bios:

**Christian Gabriel**, ASLA, National Design Director for Landscape Architecture at GSA’s Office of Chief Architect in Washington DC. At the GSA he works to set design standards in the realm of public space, site security and sustainability. Additionally he reviews and approves design proposals, serves on team selection panels, assists on special projects, and advocates for innovation. Prior to joining the GSA he practiced as a senior design associate in the offices of Thomas Balsley FASLA, and Ken Smith FASLA, focusing on project types with direct application to the issues, contexts, and clients associated with the GSA portfolio. His work has been published widely and he has served as a design critic at Columbia University, Pratt Institute, and City College of New York.

**Mark Rios**, FAIA, FASLA, Founding Principal, responsible for the overall firm direction and operation of Rios Clementi Hale Studios, which he founded in 1985. Since the establishment of this firm, he has directed the design of new building construction, renovation, landscape architecture, interiors, graphics and product design. Project types range from corporate offices, child care centers, parks, institutional and municipal projects to residential work. Mark provides overall leadership for the entire staff of creative professionals at Rios Clementi Hale Studios. Mark has lectured widely on contemporary architecture and landscape architecture. With his leadership, the firm has received over fifty design awards.

**Samantha Harris**, ASLA, LEED AP: Senior Associate, joined Rios Clementi Hale Studios in 1999. Her leadership within the office makes her an integral part of the firm. She has been lead Landscape Architect for various project types, including The Pete V. Domenici U.S. Courthouse, The California Endowment, W Hotel Hollywood and Glendale Chess Park. She was also instrumental in the development of **The Greening of Century City Plan** and **The G.S.A. Site Security Design Guide**, which sought to create a strategy for truly comprehensive site designs that would reduce security risks for Federal Projects.
HABITAT
The Domenici Courthouse plant palette is largely derived from the historic Rio Grande Floodplain Bosque ecology. This ecological zone represents a transition between the wooded mountains of the Colorado Plateau to the north, the hot dry Mojave Basin to the south, and the High Plains grasslands to the east. Specific plant information is included on the overall map.

ENERGY
On the second story roof, 1,879 square feet of solar panels have been installed. These solar panels will generate 45,279 kwh of electricity per year, enough to supply energy for 8 homes. Together with the highly efficient LED landscape light fixtures, these solar panels will generate all electricity for the site lighting and irrigation pumps used on site.

WATER
The sustainable landscape renovation is water-wise in three main ways.
1. In the main parking lot, surface runoff is directed to planted bioswales where chemical pollutants are broken down and removed, so that water that leaves the site into the Rio Grande is 80% cleaner than before the renovation.
2. Rain that falls on the roof, is captured and stored in 16,000 gallon subterranean cisterns which are used for landscape irrigation.
3. The removal of the extensive lawn areas and replacement with regionally-appropriate plant species mean that the landscape uses only 30% of the imported water than before the landscape renovation.

HISTORY
Prior to the completion of the courthouse in 1998, this site contained McClellan Park. The park sat along the original Route 66 and contained New Mexico’s Madonna of the Trail, one of twelve statues by the artist August Leimbach, dedicated in 1928 to commemorate the courage of pioneer women. The Madonna of the Trail is listed on the National Register of Historic Places, and relocated to the corner of 4th Street and Marble Avenue in 1998.

Prior to McClellan Park, the site was an orchard irrigated by an Acequia, a native southwestern canal. Contrary to the north-south grid of Albuquerque, the Acquias flowed parallel to the Rio Grande. The landscape redesign attempts to reinscribe the historical, hydrologic orientation with the city grid.

ART
The Lower Plaza contains four travertine block sculptures by the artist Doug Hyde. The stones were quarried in Belen, New Mexico and carved in Santa Fe. Doug Hyde was born in Oregon and is of Nez Perce, Assiniboine and Chippewa descent. At the age of seventeen, the artist moved to Santa Fe to attend the Institute of American Indian Arts and apprentice under the late Apache sculptor Allan Houser. After recovering from injuries suffered during his second tour in Vietnam, Mr. Hyde returned to Santa Fe to direct the Institute’s sculpture program. In 2003, Doug Hyde was awarded the New Mexico Governor’s Award for Excellence in the Arts.
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**RECYCLED**

To increase the amount of planting area throughout the site and to increase permeability of the ground, excess concrete paving was removed. The existing concrete was cut into 8”x16” blocks and used to construct landscape site walls. These recycled walls terrace and fold the ground surface, directing runoff and subgrade water to native plant Rain Gardens. Over 21,000 square feet of concrete paving was removed and used to construct the approximate 2,000 linear feet of recycled concrete walls and curbs.

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