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MAY/JUNE 2015



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CLOCKWISE FROM ABOVE
Brooklyn Bridge Park's Pier Two has been converted into a recreation hub with an in-line skating rink. The Element chandelier, from Corbett Lighting, took design cues from molecular structures. Quick Crete Product Corp. has introduced cast-concrete planters by artist Cliff Garten.

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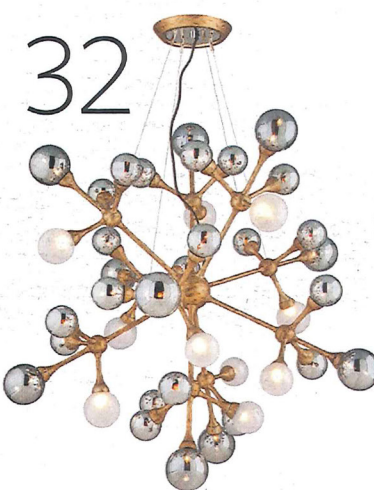
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PUBLIC SPACES



The Great Outdoors

Three formerly inhospitable waterfront sites take on new life as urban oases. BY SHEILA KIM

PUBLIC OUTDOOR SPACES BENEFIT communities in manifold ways, offering diversion, broadening opportunities for social and physical interaction, and stimulating the senses as well as the local economy. In short, they promote well-being.

"When we shut out the busyness of our day and reflect on the nature around us," says David Oakey, "it's like meditation, and we feel good." A board member of the Biomimicry Institute, the founder of David Oakey Designs has been championing biophilia by incorporating its principles in products he created for flooring giant Interface and by writing and speaking on the subject (before it became more mainstream). He points out that for urban dwellers to connect with nature, greenery isn't always the bottom line: "It might be the blue sky overhead, the sound of waves, or the sun's warmth on your skin."

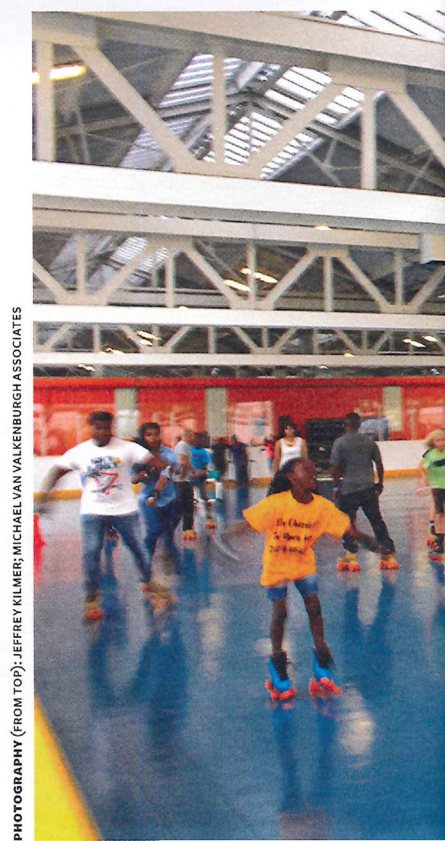
RECREATION STATION

Brooklyn Bridge Park's Pier Two, a former industrial site that's been

converted into a massive urban playground, delivers on all of the above. In planning the New York City project, **Maryann Thompson**, whose namesake firm designed the pier in conjunction with **Easton Architects** and **Michael Van Valkenburgh Associates**, envisioned a beautiful "toy box of sports."

The team kept the existing 174,000-square-foot warehouse structure, reinforcing it with new **PPG**-painted trusses and replacing roofs with corrugated metal from **Flexospan**. **Extech Exterior Technologies'** skylights, which utilize **Gallina USA** polycarbonate, run down the ridges to provide natural light in the covered areas, though supplemental fixtures from **All Lighting** and **Cooper Lighting** can also be switched on.

For the area's many basketball and handball enthusiasts, courts were fashioned from original patches of concrete. Elsewhere, tiles by **Mitchell Rubber Products** soften landings under swing sets, turf pads an open-play field, and an interlocking sheet floor forms an

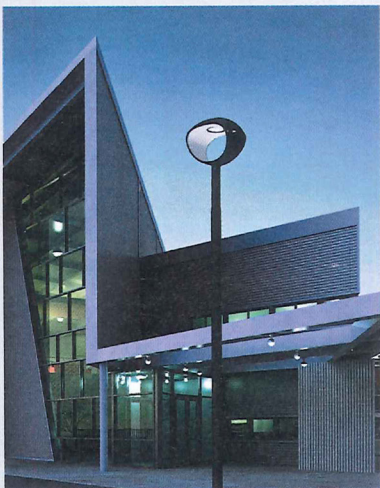


PHOTOGRAPHY (FROM TOP): JEFFREY KILMER; MICHAEL VAN VALKENBURGH ASSOCIATES



GET OUT(SIDE)!

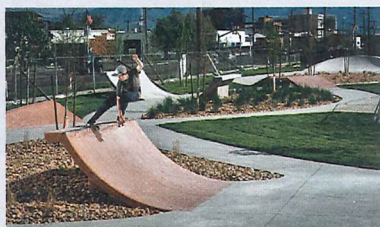
COME RAIN OR SHINE, THESE OUTDOOR COMMERCIAL-GRADE SOLUTIONS WILL FEND OFF THE ELEMENTS IN STYLE.



NERI

The playful eye-like head of the Hydra outdoor light post, designed by Makio Hasuike, casts LED illumination. The steel and die-cast aluminum fixture comes with a black finish certified to last upwards of 1,500 hours despite salt, fog, and UV-ray exposure.

[NERI.BIZ](#)



SPOHN RANCH

This L.A.-based design-build firm specializes in skate parks, such as the 24,000-square-foot, world-class Provo Skate Plaza in Utah where it utilized tinted concrete by Barkman for the ramps.

[SPOHN.RANCH.COM](#)



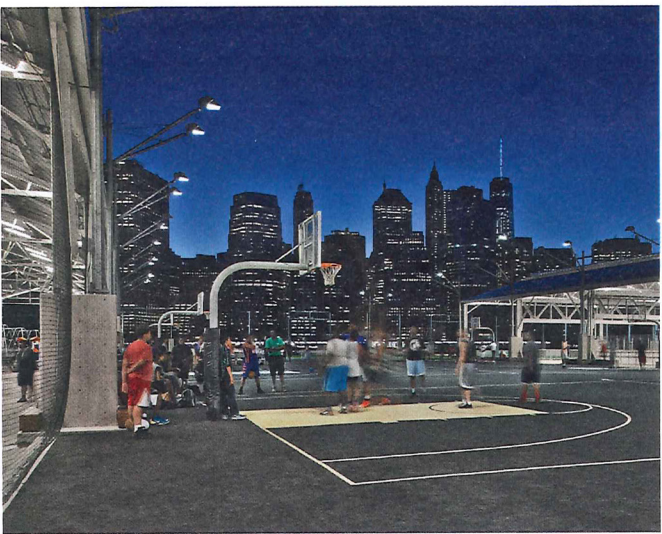
BISON

Constructed of responsibly harvested ipé, Cumaru, Garapa, or massaranduba woods, Westile pavers come in 2-foot-square and 2-by-4-foot formats. They're best used with Bison's fastening kit and deck supports, which allow for quick installation and single-tile removal.

[BISONIP.COM](#)

FUN FOR ALL AGES

At Brooklyn Bridge Park's Pier Two (opposite), zones are carved out for activities like bocce ball, basketball (left), swings (below), in-line skating (bottom), handball, and picnicking.



PHOTOGRAPHY: ELIZABETH FELICELLA

in-line skating rink. Bocce ball courts were added to attract a more mature set. And the views from the picnic tables are pretty nice, too.

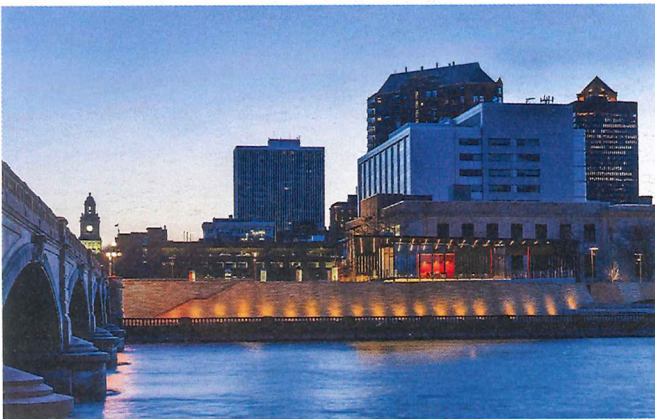
Roofing was removed from the central portion of the pier's water- and skyline-facing side, Thompson explains, leaving a U-shaped covered area. "It gives the sense you're in a huge outdoor room," she says, "with arms hugging, and directing your view to, lower Manhattan."

ART IN THE HEARTLAND

Though not skyscrapers, five monumental ceramic sculptures by Omaha-based artist Jun Kaneko command attention along an embankment, as does a bold pavilion of glass and black-zinc planes. The scene could be a hip gallery in a coastal metropolis, but it's actually a public amenity and rest stop in downtown Des Moines.

Designed by **Substance Architecture**, the site is part of the larger Principal Riverwalk development. Before the transformation, earthen levees mainly defined the decidedly pedestrian-unfriendly stretch. Today, thanks to a master plan by **Wallace Roberts and Todd**, it's inviting, with grassy knolls, a garden, promenades, staircases, a new footbridge, and paved paths linking previously unconnected Central Iowa trails.

"There was a break between the Meredith and Dorian trails," explains Substance principal Paul Mankins. "Cyclists had to know the system and use city streets to get from one to the other." Des Moines, like most urban hubs, Mankins points out, is undergoing a downtown housing renaissance of sorts as people return to live there. The River-



TRAIL MIX

Principal Riverwalk (top left) in downtown Des Moines consists of a pavilion (top right), paths that link existing Central Iowa hiking/biking trails, and a pump station (above) featuring a backlit artwork by Jun Kaneko.

walk allows residents access to the river and trails, and the pavilion provides plaza space, public toilets, and a café.

The washrooms and Riverwalk Hub café occupy the site's main building, whose **VMZinc** triangular roof creates generous overhangs on two facades; on the west side, the zinc folds down to become a louvered wall. The resulting vertical fins offer glimpses up the river while shielding the interior from sun. In the café, the glazed elevations are framed in a steel-sash system from **Hope's Windows** that maximizes light and views.

Insight Lighting's slot-shaped recessed LED fixtures dash across the ceiling and soffit, animating the pavilion even after the sun has gone down. Meanwhile, an adjacent pump station just to the south was designed by Substance Architecture to complement the main building and to conceal equipment used in flood events, something the city is sadly no stranger to. Black zinc wraps the station, too, save for the single facade featuring an illuminated glass mural, also a Jun Kaneko creation.

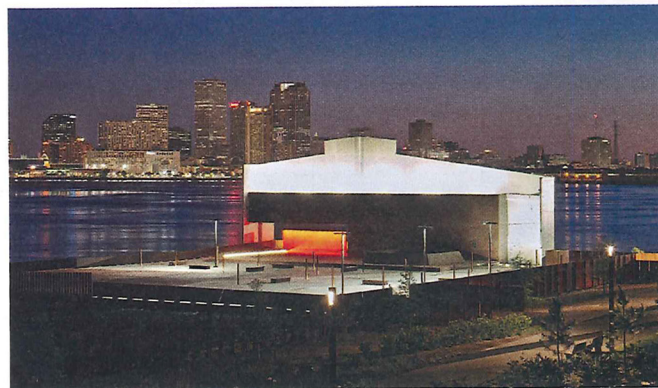
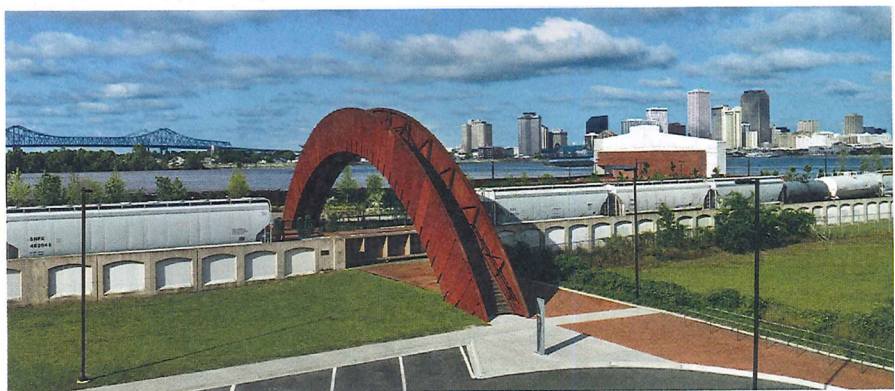
DOWN BY THE RIVERSIDE

New Orleans, all too accustomed with floods, is also reclaiming its waterfront for public use. Led by **Eskew+Dumez+Ripple** (EDR), a consortium consisting of **Hargreaves Associates**, **Michael Maltzan Architecture**, and **David Adjaye Associates** developed 1.4 miles of brownfield on the Mississippi River into Crescent Park. The main attractions are green space, bike and pedestrian paths, a dog park, footbridges, and industrial structures adapted as future venues.

On Piety Wharf, the 1800s shed may be gone, but its firewall remains intact. "We call this a port relic," says Amanda Rivera, an EDR

associate. The design team cut away a portion of the wall to frame views of the city, inserted a tinted-concrete support wall, and placed a concrete platform in front, creating a dramatic backdrop for future events. (Construction on the park's Mandeville Wharf, still under way, will include a covered performance space.) Says Rivera, "Rather than erase the memory of old arced rail lines that ran through the site" in front of Piety Wharf, "we organized the planting, benches, and walking paths around those arcs." Meanwhile, other tracks and the city's floodwall can be traversed over the Piety footbridge, a massive Cor-Ten arch conceived by Adjaye.

The park side, which is mostly lined with native plantings and paths of granite cobblestone, brick from **St. Joe**, and permeable asphalt, is illuminated by sleek LED pole lights from **Hess America**. A variety of benches provide rest stops on both the park and wharf sides: slatted-wood-and-steel units from **Urban Art Project** (which also supplied bike racks and bollards), custom precast concrete, and custom granite. The granite benches serve double duty as street markers to help orient parkgoers; etched with the corresponding road name, they, as Rivera puts it, "bring the fabric of the city into the park." ■



ON THE WATERFRONT
New Orleans's Crescent Park returned the waterfront to the public, incorporating green space, pedestrian paths, a massive footbridge (above), and an event venue on a former industrial wharf (left).