

GSA DESIGN AWARDS

2010

ADMINISTRATOR'S MESSAGE

The U.S. General Services Administration is proud to present the 11 honorees of the 2010 GSA Design Awards. These projects exemplify the high-quality design, art, and construction that GSA produces for America's federal civilian agencies.

The portfolio is diverse—ranging from the United States Land Port of Entry in Warroad, Minnesota, to the United States Courthouse nearing completion in San Diego, California—and embodies the design values that are the hallmark of GSA's high-performance buildings. Each of these projects is an innovation laboratory that provides best value to our client agencies and to American taxpayers. As GSA works to ensure a sustainable future, these projects also move us toward our Zero Environmental Footprint goal and improve our design, construction, and building-management expertise across the board.

The winners of the 2010 GSA Design Awards set new benchmarks for the agency's future efforts. I congratulate them and thank all who submitted entries.

MARTHA N. JOHNSON
ADMINISTRATOR
U.S. GENERAL SERVICES ADMINISTRATION

COMMISSIONER'S MESSAGE

The GSA Design Awards and this monograph are a celebration. They celebrate the best of our recent projects, the continuation of a legacy of federal buildings whose architecture expresses the values, openness, and, yes, the free spirit of our democracy. They celebrate best practices and pathways to future excellence. They celebrate the commitment of our federal-agency clients to innovation, with a special focus on sustainability and the stewardship of resources. They celebrate our projects as investments in the communities where they are located. Finally, they celebrate individual talent—the energy and creativity of all those people on the various private design teams, and the public-buildings public servants of GSA, who have worked tirelessly to deliver outstanding and lasting quality and value. As Commissioner of GSA's Public Buildings Service, I am very proud and delighted that we can share these accomplishments with you in this handsome volume.

For the 2010 round, we honor 11 buildings. Demonstrating the breadth of our commissions and the fact that quality can be achieved in any building type and with modest means, one winner is a thoughtfully detailed parking garage in San Juan, Puerto Rico. There is a preservation award for the restoration of the United States Courthouse in Cedar Rapids, Iowa, and another for the renovation and expansion of the Historic District of Columbia Courthouse, one of the oldest buildings in the nation's capital. The modernization of the Peter W. Rodino Federal Building in Newark, New Jersey, receives an engineering citation for a proposed sustainable envelope that will reduce energy consumption by 32 percent. Two on-the-boards projects—the modernization of the Dr. A.H. McCoy Federal Building in Jackson, Mississippi, and the new U.S. Courthouse in San Diego, California—are highlighted for their urban design strategies. And you cannot help but notice the five land ports of entry honored in 2010. The Department of Homeland Security's Customs and Border Protection is an important customer and project collaborator. These designs are notable for their sophisticated

responses to architecture, transportation, sustainability, landscape, and security mandates. They use diverse materials and engage regional context and art as part of their design solutions. Their footprints are small, but, as we simultaneously secure our borders and make citizens and visitors welcome, the land ports of entry offer many lessons for dealing with complex design challenges.

This brings me to one last point. We have processes in place—Design Excellence, Construction Excellence, Art in Architecture, and Good Neighbor, to name just four—that support our commitment to quality and innovation in meeting customer needs and community interests. But it is not the individual elements that really matter. Our ultimate goal is integrated design that engages all stakeholders and experts as part of a dialogue that results in a cohesive project outcome. Our designs must balance functional workplace requirements, sustainability and the stewardship of resources, site and community issues, symbolism, innovation, and flexibility. I think this integration is evident in many of our award winners. That is perhaps our most significant achievement in 2010.

Design Awards is a moment I truly look forward to. I know that our jury has recommendations that will make our portfolio of future projects even better. I want to thank the jury members for their time, interest, and dedication to our shared goal of creating buildings worthy of the American people. I also want to express my gratitude to those who worked on the projects and participated in the awards program. Your energy, talent, and enthusiasm are the sources of our success. My congratulations.

ROBERT A. PECK
COMMISSIONER
PUBLIC BUILDINGS SERVICE

JURY REPORT

THE EVENTS OF HUMAN LIFE, WHETHER PUBLIC OR PRIVATE, ARE SO INTIMATELY LINKED TO ARCHITECTURE THAT MOST OBSERVERS CAN RECONSTRUCT NATIONS OR INDIVIDUALS IN ALL THE TRUTH OF THEIR HABITS FROM THE REMAINS OF THEIR MONUMENTS OR FROM THEIR DOMESTIC RELICS. | HONORÉ DE BALZAC

Every two years professionals come together from the worlds of art, construction, design, and engineering to jury GSA's portfolio of recent projects. On behalf of my fellow jurors, we are delighted to have been invited to join the 2010 panel.

This year's jurors considered every submission, formulating our first impressions by ourselves and then clarifying our opinions in a series of lively roundtable discussions. We thought of our group as a sounding board—not only assessing the new construction, renovations, and other projects in the GSA portfolio individually, but also grading the effectiveness of the agency's Office of Design and Construction on regional and national levels. The jurors' backgrounds and professional disciplines made for various perspectives, yet the collegial assortment allowed every viewpoint to be expressed. Together, we defined what constitutes a superior federal workplace, and gave awards to the projects that met those high standards.

The members of our group did not champion a particular style. Rather, we established principles of excellence, such as the importance of clarity. Although modest in scale or character, winning projects communicated their functions explicitly and made their symbolic meanings accessible to a wide audience. Another principle was that the work be related to the qualities and conditions of the site. The planned land port of entry in Van Buren, Maine, for example, appears to emerge from a stand of local trees, and its landscape references historic Acadian landforms; the United States Land Port of Entry completed in Massena, New York, uses the vocabulary of highway architecture and transportation signs to celebrate the act of travel.

The jury rallied around submissions in which all those principles work in concert. The most honored project of the 2010 GSA Design Awards, the United States Land Port of Entry located in Warroad, Minnesota, demonstrates such orchestration.

The Warroad Land Port of Entry addresses multiple site-specific problems with a cohesive vision. Consider how the project team responded to wetlands on the site: It worked closely with structural and geotechnical engineers to stabilize the marshy soil in a way that permitted long spans in the interior; it also specified geothermal heating and cooling, which performs better and more cost-effectively in high-moisture conditions; finally, it inserted permeable surfaces and sculpted swales to reduce stormwater runoff in this delicate ecosystem.

The setting informed architecture and landscape-design concepts, as well. The land port has a long, low profile that both complements the wide-open wetlands and prairie and expresses its gateway function. Variations in plantings and hardscape subtly direct travelers toward, through, and away from the facility. The building's black- and auburn-stained cedar skin evokes the bark and heartwood of felled logs, which resonates with regional industry and again guides vehicular traffic. Small inflections in the building geometry improve the sight lines of U.S. Customs and Border Protection officers working inside, and canopies connecting the port's components lessen the sting of winter wind and summer sun for their colleagues performing inspections outside.

The caliber of the land ports was high in general. The United States Land Port of Entry at Calais, Maine, also draws meaning from the landscape. Its innovative outer building skin—an aluminum mesh faceted to resemble common glacial deposits—camouflages the internal workings of the port, improving security for officers. Boulders placed in its courtyard demonstrate a sustainable way of dealing with construction debris. Additionally, for the Mariposa Land Port of Entry, blocks of red, white, and blue on the long-span entrance canopy will celebrate one's arrival in America while performing wayfinding and surveillance functions for travelers and officers, respectively. A decade ago the land ports were considered no-frills structures. But, as part of its responsibility to Customs and Border Protection to improve security on America's northern and southern borders, GSA has turned these vital facilities into functional yet meaningful civic buildings.

During jury deliberations, we noted that GSA is beginning to effect that transformation on other building types. We premiated the Federal Parking Garage in San Juan, Puerto Rico, a Recovery

Act-funded project, in support of the agency's continued efforts to elevate a modest building type and address it with the same care as its iconic structures. Another Recovery Act project has few precedents: The modernization of the Peter W. Rodino Federal Building proposes the fabrication of a second building skin yielding a 32 percent reduction in energy consumption.

We also commend GSA for having a holistic view of what constitutes sustainable design. As the carefully detailed expansion of the Historic District of Columbia Courthouse and the restoration of the United States Courthouse in Cedar Rapids, Iowa, prove, thoughtful preservation is the height of sustainability. Knitting a property into its urban context is yet another way to be sustainable, since it encourages pedestrian activity and the redevelopment of central business districts. The design of the new security pavilion at the Dr. A.H. McCoy Federal Building and of the new United States Courthouse in San Diego, California, are illuminating case studies in engaging the street and energizing a city.

The jury praises GSA for aspiring to achieve quality architecture. We also challenge you to do better, and the award-winning entries featured in this book show how. With further effort, GSA will carry on the remarkable turnaround it has staged in the last 16 years—creating federal architecture that embodies the values of our time and provides Americans with quality workplaces and enduring public spaces. It is a vital responsibility, and it leaves no room for missteps.

BILLIE TSIEN
PRINCIPAL, TOD WILLIAMS BILLIE TSIEN ARCHITECTS
2010 GSA DESIGN AWARDS JURY CHAIR

TOP ROW, LEFT TO RIGHT:

Jeremy Strick, Robin Perkins, Walter Hood, Jaime Velez

BOTTOM ROW, LEFT TO RIGHT:

Craig Schwitter, Billie Tsien, Vishaan Chakrabarti, Karen Gordon, Deryl McKissack



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MANY LAND PORTS OF ENTRY DEMARCATÉ SIDES. THE WARROAD DESIGN'S LOW-SLUNG GEOMETRY AND REFERENCE TO BARK AND HEARTWOOD REMIND US THAT WE SHARE A COMMON PIECE OF LAND, WHICH EXISTS OUTSIDE A POLITICAL FRAMEWORK. THAT'S VERY POWERFUL. | VISHAAN CHAKRABARTI

UNITED STATES LAND PORT OF ENTRY | WARROAD, MINNESOTA

The Julie Snow Architects-designed Warroad Land Port of Entry is located on the border of Minnesota and Manitoba, replacing a 2,000-square-foot brick-clad land port constructed in 1962. Although that facility was expanded in 1988, it was never intended to house more than four officers. Due to efforts in the last decade to tighten security at the border, Warroad's mission-critical staff has increased by a multiplier. The new building, measuring approximately 25,500 interior square feet, accommodates the most up-to-date security technologies and procedures, and the U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) officers required to employ them.

The land port was designed, moreover, to improve operations. It is divided into three program-specific buildings—housing a main officer work area and separate passenger- and commercial-vehicle secondary inspection facilities—linked by canopies. The volumes are arranged in an approximate T shape, and two primary inspection booths are installed under the canopy linking the main administration and secondary commercial components. That allows a CBP officer to access one primary inspection booth directly from the main office, while both canopies protect outdoor inspections from the harsh elements of the Minnesota winter. In another example, inflections in the building geometry optimize sight lines between the various workspaces. The secondary commercial volume turns slightly inward to provide a better view from the main officer work area to those loading docks. The office also features an angled north-facing wall of glass that maximizes visual exposure to all U.S.-bound vehicles.

In integrated design, a single decision yields multiple solutions. To that end, the Warroad Land Port of Entry's configuration and shape enhance functionality and infuse the facility with symbolic meaning. For example, the T-shaped plan emphasizes an east-west axis in parallel to the borderline, about which Walter Hood said, "The building is becoming part of the larger geography." Yet this gateway does not appear as a fortress, Robin Perkins added. "As you approach from Canada, you see the building folding down to the horizon. And then, suddenly, you're in a warm place."



HONOR AWARD
ARCHITECTURE

ARCHITECT
JULIE SNOW ARCHITECTS
MINNEAPOLIS, MINNESOTA

GSA OFFICE
GREAT LAKES REGION
PUBLIC BUILDINGS SERVICE



A GROUND SOURCE HEAT PUMP MAKES PERFECT SENSE FOR RURAL BUILDINGS. THIS PROJECT IS LEADING THE WAY IN GEOTHERMAL SYSTEMS. | CRAIG SCHWITTER



02

HONOR AWARD
ENGINEERING

ENGINEERS
JACOBS ENGINEERING GROUP
MINNEAPOLIS, MINNESOTA
KEY ENGINEERING
MILWAUKEE, WISCONSIN
MEYER BORGMAN JOHNSON
MINNEAPOLIS, MINNESOTA
SEBESTA BLOMBERG
ROSEVILLE, MINNESOTA

ARCHITECT
JULIE SNOW ARCHITECTS
MINNEAPOLIS, MINNESOTA

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UNITED STATES LAND PORT OF ENTRY
WARROAD, MINNESOTA



EXCELLENCE IN CONSTRUCTION IS NOT JUST TROUBLESHOOTING A PROJECT, BUT REALLY WORKING WITH
A DESIGNER TO ACHIEVE A VISION. | WALTER HOOD

CITATION
CONSTRUCTION



CONTRACTOR
KRAUS-ANDERSON
CONSTRUCTION COMPANY
BEMIDJI, MINNESOTA

ARCHITECT
JULIE SNOW ARCHITECTS
MINNEAPOLIS, MINNESOTA

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UNITED STATES LAND PORT OF ENTRY
WARROAD, MINNESOTA





THE INTERIOR SPACE IS OUTSIDE. THESE WOOD ROOMS ADDRESS COMFORT AND SCALE IN THE MANNER OF THE BEST INTERIOR DESIGNS. | JAIME VELEZ



To be sure, Julie Snow Architects conceived the low-slung building as a complement to its site, a vast landscape of marsh and native meadow prairie. And in response to the nearby Northwoods, the building's outward-facing surfaces are clad in certified cedar planks stained a somber black, while vehicle inspection areas and public spaces feature those cedar planks finished in auburn: The two tones were inspired by the contrast between the bark and heartwood of felled logs.

The color contrast demarcates the canopy-covered inspection areas as portals, about which Jaime Velez observed, "The interior space is outside. These wood rooms address comfort and scale in the manner of the best interior designs." The heartwood-colored cedar clads the inward-facing building envelope as well as the public lobby's interior surfaces, which confuses indoors and outdoors. "I don't know where you draw the line between core and shell," Billie Tsien concurred. Yet the two-tone material also serves a pragmatic wayfinding function, by directing drivers—especially those contending with blinding snow conditions—to the inspection areas. In this example of integrated design the cladding expresses the gravitas of border crossing, evokes regional landscape and economy, eases officers' work, and enhances travelers' navigation of the site. As Tsien stated, "We perceive the knitting together of disciplines."

Cedar is an unusual material for a federal building. "Cost control in a rural setting is much more difficult than with urban projects, especially with specialized materials, and especially when you don't have much repetition of elements," Craig Schwitter added. The cladding is just one notable feature of the Warroad Land Port of Entry's construction. "The project is extraordinarily complex," Deryl McKissack observed. Wetlands forced crews to mount steel pipe-supporting piles through the waterlogged soil and into bedrock, and the building features a slab that effectively floats on the piles. Because the risk of differential settlement under these conditions is so high, plumbing also was suspended from the bottom of the structure, and it can move independently as the port shifts with the soil. Conversely, the wetland conditions favor closed-loop geothermal heating and

CITATION

INTERIOR DESIGN

ARCHITECT

JULIE SNOW ARCHITECTS
MINNEAPOLIS, MINNESOTA

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UNITED STATES LAND PORT OF ENTRY
WARROAD, MINNESOTA





THE LANDSCAPE IS DIVIDED INTO PERFORMATIVE SPACES. THEY'RE NOT FOR RECREATIONAL USE. BUT YOU HAVE TO UNDERSTAND THAT WITH THIS PROGRAM, IT'S NOT ABOUT PEOPLE MOVING THROUGH PUBLIC SPACE, IT'S ABOUT PEOPLE IN CARS MOVING THROUGH PUBLIC SPACE. | WALTER HOOD

cooling. The Warroad Land Port of Entry features one of the first such systems in GSA’s real estate portfolio, with 108 wells drilled to a depth of 410 feet. “The contractor really had to understand the spirit and intent,” McKissack summarized. “The project could only be exemplary, architecturally, with the assistance of a good builder.”

In its treatment of nature, yet again the Warroad Land Port of Entry’s whole is greater than the sum of its parts. In addition to the geothermal system, the 13.3-acre site deploys techniques for managing stormwater. Sedum-planted gaps between slate flagging form a semi-pervious surface for moisture to seep more slowly into the ground, and two bioswales retain excess water. These “performative spaces” are not for travelers’ recreational use, Hood noted, “But you have to understand that with this program, it’s not about people moving through public space, it’s about people in cars moving through public space.”

In fact, the landscape expedites movement. For example, like the portals, the transition from ‘soft’ to ‘hard’ landscape directs traffic toward and through the land port: As inbound vehicles approach the facility, they pass a large swath planted in prairie grasses; after completing primary inspection, drivers and passengers will note the slate flagging; the departure from the facility is characterized by traditional paving. Rows of trees flanking the circulation zones accentuate axes of movement. Hood concludes, “The landscape and the architecture form a seamless expression.”

“As lines that you cross, land ports of entry can make very powerful statements,” Vishaan Chakrabarti noted. “In a time when immigration has become such a divisive issue, it was wonderful to see a project that showed a real understanding of the landscape of a place, the ecology of a place, which we share with our friends across political boundaries.” And Perkins observed that, instead of statements of pure sovereignty, “the port talks about our values as Americans.” The Warroad Land Port of Entry design values functionality, embraces humility, communicates welcome, and advocates for the environment.

CITATION
LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE

LANDSCAPE ARCHITECT
 COEN + PARTNERS
 MINNEAPOLIS, MINNESOTA

ARCHITECT
 JULIE SNOW ARCHITECTS
 MINNEAPOLIS, MINNESOTA

GSA OFFICE
 GREAT LAKES REGION
 PUBLIC BUILDINGS SERVICE

UNITED STATES LAND PORT OF ENTRY
 WARROAD, MINNESOTA





THE USE OF YELLOW CLEVERLY REFERS TO THE VOCABULARY OF DRIVING, AND OFFERS A JOLT OF ENERGY THAT MAKES THIS PORT OF ENTRY FEEL FRESH AND POSITIVE. | BILLIE TSIEN

UNITED STATES LAND PORT OF ENTRY | MASSENA, NEW YORK

The Massena Land Port of Entry processes commercial and passenger traffic entering New York from Ontario and expresses “industrial ruggedness,” in Chakrabarti’s words.

Located on the St. Lawrence River, the 57-acre site formerly included a mid-20th-century traffic circle as well as 4.8 acres of disturbed and low-quality wetlands. Smith-Miller + Hawkinson Architects remediated this environmental condition, improving existing wetlands and adding bio-retention areas, dry-swales, created stormwater wetlands, and new mitigation wetlands over an area of 14.1 acres. Port operations are distributed into a main administration building, non-intrusive and secondary inspection facilities, a port facilities building, and canopy-covered inspection plazas in a clustered configuration that does not interfere with this greatly enhanced landscape. Moreover, the design team decided against finishing roadways with curbs, so that paved areas shed stormwater in a more uniform and gradual manner.

Drawing inspiration from interstate architecture, Smith-Miller + Hawkinson selected regionally available glass, polycarbonate, concrete and concrete block, corrugated steel siding, and standing-seam roofing for the individual buildings. Treatment of those materials evokes their vernacular usage. For example, the exterior of the port facilities building integrates a fire tank reservoir within the envelope, and polycarbonate punctuates this structure’s cloak of corrugated steel and concrete in skinny bands and larger diagonal-edged expanses. Similarly dynamic slashes of polycarbonate mark the side of the main administration building.

Color treatment of the land port makes additional reference to the transportation sector. Yellow paint is applied to circulation surfaces in broad swaths and pulled behind the polycarbonate sheath that obscures the Canada-facing elevation of the main administration building. The liberal use of yellow eases wayfinding for travelers crossing from Canada into the United States, and Tsien noted that the color provided “a jolt of energy that makes this port of entry feel fresh and positive.”



CITATION
ARCHITECTURE

ARCHITECT
SMITH-MILLER + HAWKINSON ARCHITECTS
NEW YORK, NEW YORK

GSA OFFICE
NORTHEAST AND CARIBBEAN REGION
PUBLIC BUILDINGS SERVICE



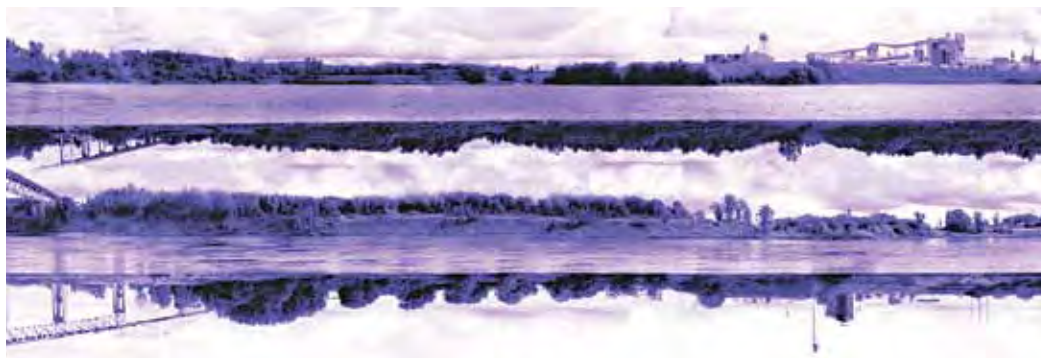
VISITORS AND THOSE WHO WORK IN THE BUILDING ARE UNITED BY *THIRD BANK OF THE RIVER*. IT SPEAKS VERY SPECIFICALLY TO THE HISTORY OF THE PLACE AND THE FUNCTION OF THE BUILDING. IT INFLUENCES THE BUILDING'S MEANING, AND CHANGES ONE'S EXPERIENCE OF IT. | JEREMY STRICK

The Massena Land Port of Entry also was recognized in the art category, for the piece *Third Bank of the River*. The art glass installation was conceived by Alan Michelson, a New York artist and Mohawk member of the Six Nations of the Grand River. Franz Meyer fabricated it in 10 parts, each measuring 50 by 69 inches. The renowned Munich-based glass studio silkscreened purple ceramic pigment onto the panels and then sandblasted the glass through a dot-matrix foil.

Third Bank of the River portrays Three Nations Crossing—the international bridge that alights in Massena. Michelson photographed both Canadian and American shorelines from the St. Lawrence River, assembled them in opposing pairs, and rendered the scene in purple and white hues. The composite image references wampum belts, tourist panoramas, and contemporary art simultaneously, intimating, among other things, how the Akwesasne Mohawk Nation overlays the border between the United States and Canada.

The way in which Michelson’s work was mounted inside the land port’s main administration building also gestures to sharing. It is placed within a partition overlooking the facility’s interior lobby, where processing of non-commercial travelers takes place. A second-floor open workroom for U.S. Customs and Border Protection staff is located behind it. Illuminated by a combination of daylight, LEDs, and fluorescent lamps, it is visible both to travelers and to federal officers. “Land ports of entry seem fairly utilitarian, but using artwork as a physical divider elevates the workspace,” Velez said. Jeremy Strick also noted that the project is visible from outdoors and, blurred by the building skin, “it works as a strong, abstract element, adding complexity and color to its architectural setting.”

Observing that public art is not usually accessible to all building users equally, Strick concluded, “Visitors and those who work in the building are united by *Third Bank of the River*. It speaks very specifically to the history of the place and the function of the building. It influences the building’s meaning, and changes one’s experience of it.”



CITATION
ART

ARTIST
ALAN MICHELSON
NEW YORK, NEW YORK

ARCHITECT
SMITH-MILLER + HAWKINSON ARCHITECTS
NEW YORK, NEW YORK

GSA OFFICE
NORTHEAST AND CARIBBEAN REGION
PUBLIC BUILDINGS SERVICE

UNITED STATES LAND PORT OF ENTRY
MASSENA, NEW YORK



THE IDEA OF ENTRY INTO OUR COUNTRY IS FILLED WITH SO MUCH MEANING. IT IS THE BEST KIND OF CHALLENGE TO USE ALL THOSE LAYERS TO MANIFEST SOMETHING DIMENSIONAL, SOMETHING THAT STANDS FOR OUR DEMOCRACY. | ROBIN PERKINS

UNITED STATES LAND PORT OF ENTRY | CALAIS, MAINE

The 106,000-square-foot Calais Land Port of Entry services the eighth busiest passage between Canada and the United States. Located on 53 acres in an industrial district south of downtown Calais, Maine, and at the highest point of its site, the facility expresses what Tsien called “a quiet strength” appropriate to border crossing. The monumentality is not overpowering, however. Robert Siegel Architects bifurcated inspection facilities into non-commercial- and commercial-vehicle volumes: The two halves are linked by a glazed passageway concealed from the Canada approach by a grassy berm, so that incoming travelers also see open landscape as they approach the border. Although the state-of-the-art building is significantly larger than its predecessors, its separation into two volumes lessens their visual impact, making them seem closer in scale to older land ports.

This siting enhances visual surveillance for officers of U.S. Customs and Border Protection. In addition, the separation of volumes creates two courtyards between the passenger and commercial volumes, on the Canadian and American sides of the glazed passageway. The courtyards provide officers with a secure place for respite, and the overall layout diminishes the distance they have to travel between interior workspaces.

Paying homage to the landscape, the design team placed excavated granite in one courtyard. It also clad the glazed volumes in expanded aluminum mesh stamped with a creased profile. The material reflects changes in weather and season, and the craggy surface makes subtle reference to the glacially deposited granite. Transparent from within and opaque from outside, the metal skin also enhances border officers’ surveillance without compromising their safety.

The design team valued sustainability as highly as security. In addition to the reuse of excavated granite, green strategies include minimal paving, the creation of bioswales that remove 80 percent of total suspended soils in rainfall, daylight penetration whose glare is controlled by the metal skin, and interior air supply via both courtyards rather than from the space above the roadway.



CITATION
ARCHITECTURE

ARCHITECT
ROBERT SIEGEL ARCHITECTS
NEW YORK, NEW YORK

GSA OFFICE
NEW ENGLAND REGION
PUBLIC BUILDINGS SERVICE





GIVEN LOCAL HEIGHT RESTRICTIONS, EXPANDING A BUILDING IN WASHINGTON, DC, CAN BE EXTRAORDINARILY DIFFICULT. HERE, THE DESIGNERS FOUND A WAY TO MEET PROGRAMMATIC NEEDS WHILE RESPECTING THE HISTORIC FABRIC. | KAREN GORDON

HISTORIC DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA COURTHOUSE | WASHINGTON, DC

Designed by George Hadfield in 1820 and completed in 1849, the Historic District of Columbia Courthouse is one of the oldest public buildings in Washington, DC. The District of Columbia municipality vacated the national landmark in 1998. Four years later GSA selected Beyer Blinder Belle Architects & Planners to restore Hadfield's design while updating the building to meet all the needs of a modern courthouse.

A World War I-era renovation had stripped the courthouse of its original north-facing portico. Its reintroduction in this project as a security pavilion boldly rendered in steel and glass is its most public gesture. A two-story volume, the pavilion spans the center bay of the northern elevation and leaves its third-story windows unobstructed, paying deference to the proportions of Hadfield's scheme. "The program of the building has changed since 1820; adding the pavilion to fit new uses keeps it relevant," Karen Gordon said of the reversible action. The project restored the colonnaded southern entry without any visible alterations to it.

In order to keep all such alterations to a minimum, the design team located an additional 42,000 square feet below grade. These enhanced facilities include a ceremonial courtroom, reception and exhibition rooms, and administrative space. Mechanical systems have been modernized and ADA compliance achieved with equal inconspicuousness, and two original courtrooms as well as preexisting finishes and circulation routes were restored.

By expanding the building beneath the south portico, the designers avoided substantial digging inside the foundation. Completion involved other progressive construction measures, such as the installation of a secant pile system to maintain the integrity of existing foundations and shotcreting the below-grade foundation and tunnel walls to reduce the overall excavation footprint. "Adding on to any building in DC is complex, but they navigated that terrain and solved programmatic needs," Gordon said of the project's team members. "And all within a short walk to a Metro stop, which is tops from a sustainability perspective."



CITATION
PRESERVATION

ARCHITECT
BEYER BLINDER BELLE
ARCHITECTS & PLANNERS
WASHINGTON, DC

GSA OFFICE
NATIONAL CAPITAL REGION
PUBLIC BUILDINGS SERVICE



IT IS AMAZING THAT THEY WERE ABLE TO DO THIS IN SUCH A SHORT AMOUNT OF TIME. KEEP IN MIND THAT IT'S NOT JUST THE BUILDING THAT REQUIRES A RESPONSE, BUT ALSO ALL THE INFRASTRUCTURE IN AND AROUND IT. | DERYL MCKISSACK

UNITED STATES COURTHOUSE | CEDAR RAPIDS, IOWA

Not every preservation project is executed according to a longstanding plan. Sometimes nature simply demands such an undertaking. In the flood of June 2008, for example, the Cedar River crested well beyond the 500-year flood plane—rising approximately 4 feet above the first floor of the United States Courthouse in Cedar Rapids as water spread over an area of 10 square miles. The 1933 building’s basement, which contained major mechanical and electrical equipment, was completely submerged, and the courthouse lost power, potable water, and municipal steam.

“You could have walked away from it,” Gordon mused. But GSA’s Heartland Region and the design studio Substance restored building operations, installing energy-efficient equipment where necessary, repairing systems, and conserving and replacing damaged finishes. “In flood situations, the faster you can respond, the better,” McKissack said, “You want to get the water out and launch a plan of action quickly.” With general contractor Neumann Brothers and construction manager Jacobs Engineering Group, the project team accomplished its Herculean restoration in a mere 13 months.

In stabilizing and dehumidifying the stately building, approximately 64 million gallons of water were pumped out of the structure. Debris and waterlogged equipment and other materials followed. New mechanical and electrical systems were running three months after the flood, eliminating the need for temporary services thereafter. Restoration encompassed exterior work as well as replicating interior trim and marble panels, refinishing interior paint treatments according to the original color scheme, and patching original plaster walls, coffered ceilings, and coves. Since most of the building’s historic mailboxes had been removed over the decades, the remaining three bays of boxes were relocated opposite the cast-iron vestibule to restore symmetry to the lobby.

When the painstaking effort was completed, GSA turned over the courthouse to Cedar Rapids to become an annex to City Hall. Gordon noted, “Making the building available for any use exemplifies government’s leadership role in historic preservation, and in sustaining communities.”

CITATION
PRESERVATION

ARCHITECT
SUBSTANCE
DES MOINES, IOWA

GSA OFFICE
THE HEARTLAND REGION
PUBLIC BUILDINGS SERVICEW





THE PARKING GARAGE IS ONE OF THE MOST COMMON PARTS OF ALL AMERICAN CITIES, AND ONE OF THE MOST OVERLOOKED. THIS WAS A THOUGHTFUL ATTEMPT TO MAKE A PARKING GARAGE THAT WAS MORE THAN SIMPLY EXPEDITIOUS. | BILLIE TSIEN

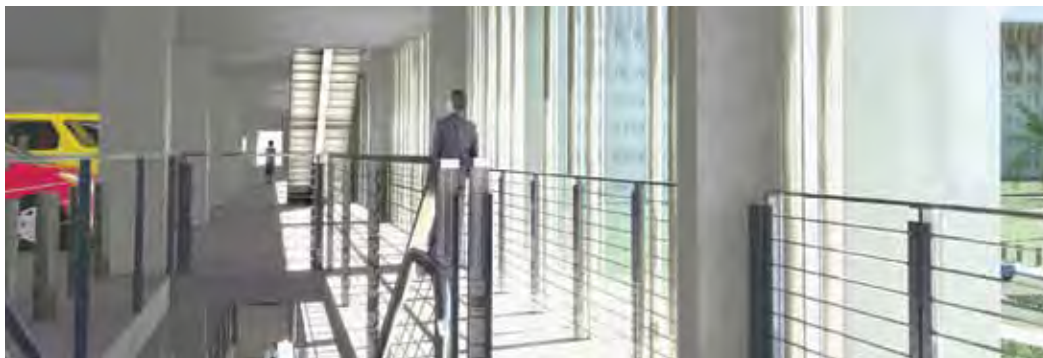
FEDERAL PARKING GARAGE | SAN JUAN, PUERTO RICO

“Parking garages form a major part of the fabric of American cities, and generally people don’t care about them—they’re about utility,” Tsien said. For the Federal Parking Garage to be constructed in San Juan, Puerto Rico, Gruzen Samton Architects has devised an elegant complement to an existing federal campus.

Currently the 26-acre site, located in the Hato Rey area of San Juan, includes office and courthouse buildings designed in the Brutalist manner and completed in 1975, as well as a one-story childcare facility constructed in 2002. The voids between buildings have been devoted largely to surface parking. Gruzen Samton created a new master plan for the campus prior to starting work on the parking garage, and as part of its larger scheme the design team successfully proposed moving the daycare center to the opposite end of the property. The new 500-space parking garage will be erected in its place, in line with the existing 6-story office, which arcs in plan.

The garage is a long rectilinear form with a central inflection that will complete the arcing gesture. The front, western elevation of the parking garage includes a system of vertical resin fins that emulates the concrete fins of both Brutalist predecessors. “They’re trying to keep it quiet,” Tsien said, with Perkins adding, “To see GSA addressing a garage with the same attention as a courthouse or border station—you know it can become something great.”

Such attention has yielded other unique features. The design team positioned double-ramp vehicular circulation in the rear of the garage, a move that allows the floor plates along the building’s west side to remain level and better coordinate with the federal office visually. In addition, the resin fins and an aluminum screen will attach to the garage’s other facades to ensure a consistent appearance. Finally, abiding GSA’s sustainability criteria, a rooftop shade structure also will provide a mounting surface for a 190-kilowatt photovoltaic array, producing more energy than required by building operations.



CITATION
ON THE BOARDS | ARCHITECTURE

ARCHITECT
GRUZEN SAMTON ARCHITECTS
NEW YORK, NEW YORK

GSA OFFICE
NORTHEAST AND CARIBBEAN REGION
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THEY DERIVED THE CONCEPT FROM LOOKING AT THE LAND HOLDINGS, THE LOT PATTERNS, THE FOREST, AND SOME OF THE BUILDING TYPES IN THE AREA. THEY WERE ABLE TO CREATE NOT A MATCHING LANDSCAPE, BUT A LANDSCAPE AND BUILDING THAT MERGE WITH THE EXISTING CONTEXT. | WALTER HOOD

UNITED STATES LAND PORT OF ENTRY | VAN BUREN, MAINE

For the forthcoming Van Buren Land Port of Entry, regional inspiration yielded a highly functional design that will warmly welcome visitors and returning citizens.

The facility, on a narrow, more elevated site, replaces a 40-year-old land port that was damaged in a 2008 flood of the St. John River. Various inspection facilities will be connected by canopies and configured in a Z form that allows different threads of traffic—passenger vehicles, commercial trucks, and outbound snowmobiles—to flow through the property smoothly. Also, the buildings will include large expanses of glass. Together, planning and the intelligent use of materials establishes clear sight lines for the small staff.

The design team took great care with water management at this new location, which follows the bluff line of the St. John River. The 2,000-foot-long property will feature a series of low mounds that directs surface water into a stone-lined major swale, an underground sedimentation chamber, and a small wet pond to retain and filter stormwater. The port's landscape architecture also creates cohesiveness between itself and the region, as the mounds refer to historic Acadian lot divisions and agrarian landforms conceived for cultivating potatoes and controlling runoff.

The land-port design takes other aesthetic cues from the surroundings. Repeating joints in the aluminum-and-glass building skin recall trees in a forest. The glass features an analogous pattern with a forest camouflage superimposed on it: This silkscreen admits daylight while controlling glare for U.S. Customs and Border Protection officers working inside; at night, when the building is illuminated from within, it will obscure staff activity. “The landscape imagery is very important,” Tsien noted. Hood concurred, observing that the building skin “almost disappears” into the landscape. “The port was designed to look as if it is emerging from the forest.” In that spirit, the Van Buren Land Port of Entry will include numerous sustainability technologies, such as geothermal heating and cooling, biodiesel boilers, solar hot water, and LED light fixtures. In all it is projected to achieve a 48 percent energy reduction over comparable buildings.

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CITATION
ON THE BOARDS | ARCHITECTURE

ARCHITECT
JULIE SNOW ARCHITECTS
MINNEAPOLIS, MINNESOTA

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NEW ENGLAND REGION
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ARCHITECTS AND DESIGNERS WORKING ON THE MEXICAN BORDER ENTER A DIFFICULT CONVERSATION ABOUT WELCOMING PEOPLE TO THE UNITED STATES. YOU HAVE TO FIGURE OUT HOW TO COMMUNICATE THE BORDER, AND I LIKE THE CELEBRATORY STATEMENT OF THIS COMPONENT. | ROBIN PERKINS

MARIPOSA LAND PORT OF ENTRY | NOGALES, ARIZONA

Of the land ports of entry submitted to the 2010 GSA Design Awards, the jury identified key differences between facilities adjoining the Canadian and Mexican borders. Northern ports, like this competition's lauded Warroad and Calais facilities, express landscape and geological features common to both sides of the border. The buildings that inspect returning citizens and visitors from Mexico are usually located in more urban places.

Jones Studio's design of the Mariposa Land Port of Entry marries the welcoming symbolism of the northern designs to the unique conditions of the Mexican border. Under construction on 53 acres of high desert surrounded by expanding industrial and residential development, the 280,000-square-foot facility is conceived so that passenger-occupied vehicles traveling from Mexico bear left to undergo primary inspection, while trucks veer right. Pedestrians travel up the middle of this fork.

A large canopy will cover cars' and trucks' primary inspection zones, traversing the pedestrian entrance to do so. The shading element is punctuated by a series of color blocks in shades of red, white, and blue to demarcate private-vehicle inspection, pedestrian entrance, and truck inspection, respectively. These 15-foot-tall south-facing panels in powder-coated perforated steel and ranging from 7 feet to 10 feet in width will help visitors navigate the complex circulation of the facility according to the universally recognizable colors of the American flag.

"You have to figure out how to communicate the border, and I like the celebratory statement of this component," Perkins said of the panels, which also will be attached to the trusses underneath the canopy. That the Mariposa land port expresses this gateway quality in a non-verbal way, too, transcends language and cultural difference. Yet it also will disguise a catwalk positioned 17 feet above ground on which U.S. Customs and Border Protection officers perform patrols, thereby acknowledging the exigencies of border security in an understated way.



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CITATION

ON THE BOARDS | COMMUNICATIONS

ARCHITECT

JONES STUDIO

PHOENIX, ARIZONA

GSA OFFICE

PACIFIC RIM REGION

PUBLIC BUILDINGS SERVICE



THIS INTERESTING TECHNICAL SOLUTION NEEDS TO HAPPEN WITH FEDERAL BUILDINGS AND OTHER STRUCTURES FROM THAT ERA, BECAUSE THE BUILDING ENVELOPE IS CRUCIAL TO PERFORMANCE. | CRAIG SCHWITTER

PETER W. RODINO FEDERAL BUILDING MODERNIZATION | NEWARK, NEW JERSEY

The Peter W. Rodino Federal Building was constructed in Newark in 1968, and the tower now displays significant wear. It also consumes much more fossil fuel than do comparable buildings finished recently. The Rodino building's pending modernization, conceived by Dattner Architects with Richard McElhiney Architects as the associate firm, promises to set standards for GSA as it updates other buildings in this significant portion of its inventory.

Funded by the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act, this project features an exemplary combination of retrofitted sustainability strategies. It includes installation of a photovoltaic array, introduction of rainwater harvesting, and energy-efficient upgrades to mechanical and plumbing systems. The design's most notable characteristic in this regard is a new building envelope that will be placed over the existing facade in order to improve the thermal barrier.

As designed, the over-clad curtain wall will be suspended from a perimeter "crown" beam attached to cantilevered steel beams at the roof level; the curtain will then connect to the existing precast-concrete cladding. In the space between old and new, ventilation will take place via natural convection, with warm air escaping from operable glass vents positioned every two stories. In the summer, this ventilated zone will reduce solar energy intensity incident on the existing precast-concrete facade by 70 percent and, in winter, it will act as a thermal pillow to increase occupant comfort at the building perimeter. The project team estimates a 32 percent reduction in energy consumption overall.

Schwitters noted, "This interesting technical solution needs to happen with federal buildings and other structures from that era, because the building envelope is crucial to performance." The jurors' citation of the Rodino building is intended to celebrate the fact that GSA is addressing this class of buildings. As architects are only beginning to consider aesthetic strategies for retrofitting over-claddings, GSA deserves praise for attempting the innovative application.



CITATION

ON THE BOARDS | ENGINEERING

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NEW YORK, NEW YORK

RICHARD MCELHINEY ARCHITECTS
NEW YORK, NEW YORK

ENGINEERS

ROBERT SILMAN ASSOCIATES
NEW YORK, NEW YORK

WSP FLACK + KURTZ
NEW YORK, NEW YORK

GSA OFFICE

NORTHEAST AND CARIBBEAN REGION
PUBLIC BUILDINGS SERVICE



THE SECURITY PAVILION TAKES A BUILDING THAT WAS DEFENSIVE AND TURNS IT TO THE STREET—GRABBING THE CORRIDOR HUMANIZES THE ORIGINAL DESIGN. | VISHAAN CHAKRABARTI

DR. A.H. MCCOY FEDERAL BUILDING MODERNIZATION | JACKSON, MISSISSIPPI

To modernize the Dr. A.H. McCoy Federal Building in Jackson, Mississippi, Schwartz/Silver Architects grappled with an unfriendly charge: The tower is rotated 45 degrees to Capital Street and to the urban grid generally, its western elevation is mostly windowless, and the plaza that separates the building from the sidewalk is bland. Changing these major features fell outside the scope of work of the designers, who decided to focus their efforts on the circulation system within McCoy's deep floor plate. The primary element of the team's strategy, the addition of a 3,000-square-foot glass-shingled security pavilion, is a double achievement. It clarifies movement and humanizes the perception of the original structure.

The security pavilion's geometry is based on a series of 1944 Mississippi River Commission drawings showing the river's oxbows, tributary branches, and other meanders: The roof plan comprises several dramatic curves, and individual shade canopies diverge from and reunite with the building skin like ribbons. The structure will be erected in weather-resistant aluminum, clad in glass shingles held by aluminum quills. Schwitter noted, "The solution offers an aesthetic contrast to the original McCoy structure." Rolling landforms covered in native flora like jasmine and vinca will surround the undulating entryway, replacing the sparse plaza conceived in the 1970s.

Functionally, the pavilion will draw the visitor through the entry sequence more gracefully. By housing all screening operations, it will eliminate the multiple entrances to the original building. Its entry canopies will curve outward to welcome pedestrians from the site's primary circulation points and reestablish the edge of Capital Street. And the glass wall will continue inside the original McCoy lobby, demarcating various areas and efficiently directing users toward the elevator bank.

"Even though it has all the security apparatus in it, it still feels friendly and light-filled," Chakrabarti said of the pavilion. "It makes the building much more inviting; it extends an arm that mitigates the harsh scale of the building and the plaza and the sidewalk. Building a banal box is a choice the design team consciously rejected."



CITATION
ON THE BOARDS | URBANISM

ARCHITECT
SCHWARTZ/SILVER ARCHITECTS
BOSTON, MASSACHUSETTS

GSA OFFICE
SOUTHEAST SUNBELT REGION
PUBLIC BUILDINGS SERVICE



THIS DESIGN REALLY ENGAGED THE IDEA OF A CIVIC BUILDING, DESPITE AUTOMOBILITY. IT CREATES A SERIES OF PLANES TO INVITE THE PUBLIC IN. | VISHAAN CHAKRABARTI

UNITED STATES COURTHOUSE | SAN DIEGO, CALIFORNIA

Richard Meier & Partners Architects' 16-story United States Courthouse in San Diego will be the third such building produced by the firm for GSA. The courthouse is rising on 100,000 square feet fronting San Diego's main east-west thoroughfare, Broadway, next to the 1976 Edward J. Schwartz Federal Building and U.S. Courthouse. Because the forthcoming building occupies 20 percent of the property and hews closely to the sidewalks of both Broadway and perpendicular State Street, the design team has allotted a significant amount of open space for a plaza between the old and new structures.

A ramped entry, stairs, and other architectural elements will segment the plaza into human-scale zones that also include gardens, a water feature, and pedestrian paths. Chakrabarti noted the rigorous solar-orientation study that was conducted for this project: It analyzed shadows cast by adjacent buildings, and guarantees that sun will shine on jurors, visitors, and Department of Justice employees as they experience each of the outdoor spaces. (It also ensures that east and west daylight will penetrate every courtroom.)

The courthouse's public gestures were partly motivated by a plan by Centre City Development Corporation, a nonprofit organization that implements downtown development efforts on behalf of the City of San Diego. The group had concluded that a new federal courthouse, designed appropriately, could contribute to downtown's burgeoning residential community. In addition to satisfying unmet demand for public space, Richard Meier & Partners tailored the courthouse architecture for these residents. Upper floors are cantilevered to meet the streetfront, and massing is articulated at a more pedestrian scale, for example. Chakrabarti also noted that "the building's goings-on are displayed to the neighborhood" through large expanses of glass, particularly the conjoined indoor and outdoor jury assembly areas, which look out over the plaza. "That adds up to a potential reading of these few blocks as a real district. It is a very traditional role for a federal courthouse to play."



CITATION

ON THE BOARDS | URBANISM

ARCHITECT

RICHARD MEIER & PARTNERS ARCHITECTS
LOS ANGELES, CALIFORNIA

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NOGALES, ARIZONA

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JUROR BIOGRAPHIES

Billie Tsien is principal of New York-based Tod Williams Billie Tsien Architects, which she founded with Tod Williams in 1986. The American Folk Art Museum, Neurosciences Institute in La Jolla, California, and Skirkanich Hall at the University of Pennsylvania are among the firm's most celebrated works; recently it won the commission to design the new home of the Barnes Collection. Currently Tsien also teaches at Yale, with Williams, as a Louis I. Kahn Visiting Professor of Architectural Design.

Jeremy Strick joined Dallas's Nasher Sculpture Center as director in March 2009. For a decade prior to assuming his current post, he directed the Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles. During his tenure at MOCA, the museum achieved international renown for its ambitious and wide-ranging exhibition and publication programs, and significantly expanded its permanent collection. In addition to a number of landmark shows, Strick's achievements at MOCA include the opening of a satellite gallery at the Pacific Design Center, focusing on architecture and design, and the dramatic growth of the museum's membership.

Robin Perkins is cofounder of Selbert Perkins Design, a multidisciplinary design studio founded in 1994. The firm is particularly well known for large-scale public artworks and branded environments. Representative projects include gateway design and wayfinding for the LAX Beautification Project for the Los Angeles World Airports master plan, environmental communications and sculpture for the Pacific Design Center, and master plan, wayfinding, and public art for the Port of Los Angeles and the City of San Pedro, California. Perkins also is a member of the Board of Directors of the Architecture + Design Museum, Los Angeles.

Deryl McKissack is president and chief executive officer of McKissack & McKissack, which ranks among the top architecture, interior design, program management, and construction management firms. Significant design and management projects include the Martin Luther King, Jr. National Memorial, DC McKinley Technology High School, Washington Nationals Major League Baseball Stadium, DC Public Schools stabilization and modernization project, and O'Hare International Airport modernization. Prior to 1990, McKissack worked for Howard University, Turner Construction, and Dames & Moore. She serves on numerous boards, including those of the DC Building Industry Association, Living Classrooms Foundation, and the Miami Art Museum.

Craig Schwitter has more than 20 years of experience in the engineering design and master-planning of complex buildings and large-scale developments in education, culture, sports, transportation, and the public sector. He founded the first North American office of Buro Happold Consulting Engineers in 1999, and it has since expanded to include multiple offices and to offer a full suite of engineering arts. With a focus on integrated engineering and the use of appropriate technology, Schwitter has played a hands-on role in Buro Happold's breakthrough innovations. Under his direction the firm has developed the Adaptive Building Initiative and G. Works, industry efforts that address critical issues in low-carbon and high-performance building design.

Jaime Velez heads the interiors group in the Chicago office of Skidmore, Owings & Merrill; he joined the firm in 1987 and was named a principal in 2001. Velez's work spans four continents, and several of his award-winning interiors are the Chicago Architecture Foundation museum CitySpace, the conversion of the Renaissance Center into the headquarters of General Motors, and the London offices of Kirkland & Ellis.

Walter Hood is a professor at the University of California, Berkeley's landscape architecture department, and his Oakland, California-based studio has been engaged in architectural commissions, urban design, art installations, and research since 1992. Hood Design was responsible for the gardens and landscape of the De Young Museum. The firm recently won competitions at the University at Buffalo, the California African American Museum in Los Angeles, and the Jackson Museum of Wildlife Art in Jackson, Wyoming. Earlier projects located in Oakland, such as the Lafayette Square and Splash Pad parks, are regarded as transformative designs for the field of landscape architecture.

Karen Gordon has served as the City of Seattle's historic preservation officer since 1984. Prior to her position in Seattle, Gordon worked with the Office of Public/Private Partnerships at the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development and with the U.S. National Park Service's National Register Program; she also served as president of Don't Tear It Down in Washington, DC. Gordon was a member of the National Trust for Historic Preservation Board of Advisors and currently she teaches preservation planning as an adjunct assistant professor at Goucher College.

Vishaan Chakrabarti is an architect and the founding principal of Vishaan Chakrabarti Design Collaborative, as well as the director of the real estate development program in the Columbia University Graduate School of Architecture, Planning and Preservation. From 2005 to 2009 he served as the executive vice president for design and planning for the Related Companies. Prior to that he directed the Manhattan Office of the New York City Department of City Planning, where he exercised considerable influence in the transformation of Manhattan's Far West Side, including the High Line, and oversaw the city's design response to the reconstruction of Lower Manhattan after 9/11.

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PUBLIC BUILDINGS SERVICE
OFFICE OF THE CHIEF ARCHITECT
DESIGN EXCELLENCE AND THE ARTS
1800 F STREET NW
WASHINGTON, DC 20405
202.501.1888

