



## **Conversations with Leaders in Landscape**

### **LPS#6: Role of Landscape Architects in Designing for Sustainability**

**August, 2010**

Leaders discuss the strengths of landscape architects and their evolving role in the integrated design process. Featuring leaders from: AECOM, AHBE, EDSA, Foster Conant & Associates, HOK, JJR, LAF, Millenium Park, Ten Eyck Landscape Architects, Texas A&M University, USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service, and ValleyCrest.

Well, by definition landscape architects design for natural processes, natural resources, and people. So if that isn't the basis for sustainability, then what is?

**- Barbara Deutsch, ASLA *Landscape Architecture Foundation***

You know, if you go back to, not only the goal of landscape architecture but also the processes that landscape architecture uses, sustainability has been embedded. It is not new.

**- Forster Ndubisi, ASLA, *Texas A&M University***

I think landscape architects have a natural instinct when it comes to the land and the values that we need to place on it. And that natural bridge between architecture and civil engineering – we've always filled the aesthetic values that need to be put in place and managed through a project.

**- Richard Conant, FASLA, *Foster Conant & Associates***

In terms of the role of landscape architects relative to landscape performance, you know, when I look to hire landscape architects, I look to not only their broad understanding of natural systems and ecology, but I look to how they think, how they think critically, how they think about how natural systems can solve our urban problems.

**- Calvin Abe, FASLA, *AHBE Landscape Architects***

I love it that landscape architects can in fact handle and communicate with so many different disciplines.

**- Robert E. Snieckus, ASLA, RLA, *USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service***

I just do think that our strength is our willingness to be collaborators and working with other design professionals to just create great outdoor places in our cities – they're so needed. And so that is my glimmer of optimism because I know how badly our cities need what we do.

**- Christy Ten Eyck, FALSA, *Ten Eyck Landscape Architects***

I think our role has really stepped up over the years because we're the people now that people are coming to first to really sit down with and see how the land best fits or can house buildings and things like that or how roads can lay out or parks can fit. Usually an existing site that you come to has so much value already to it that you want to be very careful in what you come in there and take out or mitigate.

**- Gregg Sutton, ASLA, *EDSA***

Well, what I've seen in my 30 years in the industry is the landscape architect has come from a place of designing a kind of a pretty landscape environment to be in to being an important part – an integral part – of the planning of a community, the planning of a place that will be durable for decades.

**- Tom Donnelly, ASLA, *ValleyCrest Development***

Clients find that when landscape architects are involved with projects that they're more sustainable, they're elegant, cost less and perform better.

**- Barbara Deutsch, ASLA *Landscape Architecture Foundation***

The role of the landscape architect is changing in relationship to the architect. As the older architects who've been used to doing things in a certain way are sort of are passing on to retirement and the newer, more recent architects are coming on board, there's certainly a sensitivity to sort of dealing with the landscape in a much more integrated way.

**- Edward Keith Uhler, FAIA, *Millenium Park, Inc***

I'd like to think that we now sit at the "adult table" – it's what I call the adult table. We're not marginalized, we're not like the elevator consultant on a team. I think we're sitting amongst the architects and the engineers on equal footing and, depending on the project, sometimes we're actually in the leadership role.

**- Dennis Carmichael, FASLA, *AECOM***

It's evolved quite a bit. I feel very fortunate that more landscape architects are being asked to lead these kinds of projects. Because of the collaborative nature, because of the sensitivity to natural systems, because of the, sort of, whole environmental movement, many of us are finding ourselves in leadership positions that we didn't used to be in.

**- Chip Crawford, FASLA, *The HOK Planning Group***

We take great pride in the amount of work that we do as the prime – we are the prime consultant. We don't often work with architect-led teams, so we're often the ones in charge of putting the consultant team together and pointing everybody in the direction to get the project done. And so you put all those great minds together to come up with great projects, with a multidisciplinary approach.

**- Deb Mitchell, FASLA, *JJR***

For the future of landscape architects being integrated more into this whole process of design, I think it's very good. And it continues to increase as cities, particularly urban cities, are realizing the value of landscape in terms of you know reducing the heat island, reducing the sort of pollution in the cities, and just providing an environment that's conducive to making a city great. There's certainly a new importance on the value of landscape in the city environment.

**- Edward Keith Uhler, FAIA, *Millenium Park, Inc***

I do believe that landscape architecture can have a leadership role in the 21st century in creating sustainable communities. And so I think that's our value proposition, that's what we could bring to allied professionals. And whether or not we are leading a team or simply a team member, I would like to think our leadership skills and our body of knowledge embeds itself profoundly in any built work in the 21st century.

**- Dennis Carmichael, FASLA, *AECOM***