



design
matters

A VISUAL GUIDE INTO THE LIFE OF EDSA

- _LIFESTYLE RESET**
HAPPY, HEALTHY PLACES FOR PEOPLE
- _HOSPITALITY TRANSFORMATION**
ENHANCING THE GUEST EXPERIENCE
- _FROM PEN TO PIXEL**
BLENDING ARTISTRY WITH SCIENCE
- _THE GREAT OUTDOORS**
RECONNECTING WITH NATURE



**Design Matters.
It's what we do.
It's what we believe.
It's what we stand for.
It's the business of who we are.**

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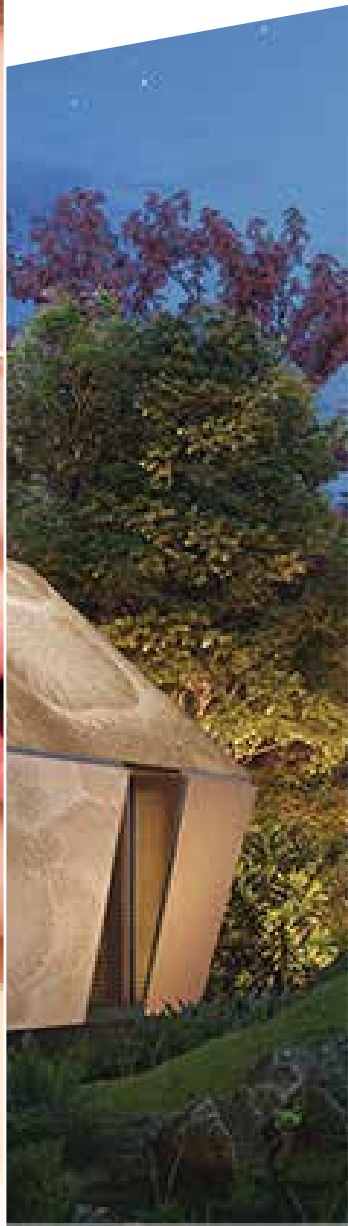
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Never a Straight Line

Life is full of challenges and how we respond, adapt, and power through defines who we are as individuals and designers. It is important to embrace evolution, and every obstacle that comes along with it – pushing to be better and do better as a platform for thoughtful, intentional growth. At EDSA, we believe in providing people with opportunities to perform their best and engage in projects they find purposeful.

Over the last few years, our world has certainly changed. But from that, we have discovered new approaches, passions, and in many cases, purpose. As a business, as a profession, as a society, we have remained nimble and resilient with a fluid mindset and an essential desire for ongoing improvement. A renewed sense of exploration has found its way into how we live, how we work, how we play, and ultimately how we engage with world around us. We are striving towards more positive outcomes in our work, furthering our commitment as leaders in our global community, and evoking innovative and inspiring change, while still making sure we have fun along the way.

Our founder Edward Durrell Stone Jr. was committed to progressively influencing the design profession, fostering relationships, spreading kindness, and creating places that reflect the needs of humanity. It is within this spirit that we endeavor to elevate our practice to address today's needs. With goals and objectives that propel us forward, our firm has raised the bar for how we engage with one another and the world around us. Rather than having concern for what we cannot control, we have shifted energy to what we can create. As designers, we have the

power to bring people together, uplift communities, and pave the way for social, economic, and environmental transformation. Our craft is critical, and if properly curated, we can serve to influence the future.

designmatters represents a snapshot of who we are at EDSA. We are a team of creators, storytellers, and innovators. We owe it to each other to encourage growth and excitement. To embrace new ideas and opportunities. To simply be better, more aware, more attuned, more informed – to exceed our own expectations and those of our clients, constituents, and users of the world's landscapes.

As CEO, my goal is to serve the firm and help create an environment in which we all work in unison to build upon the strength of our legacy, leverage the best of our talents, and continue to grow as an organization. Looking ahead, I am inspired by our creative team, dedicated clients, and collaborating consultants and the positive influence we have as designers. I am certain that together we can evolve, grow, and drive forward.

All the best,



B. Scott LaMont



Perceptions of what makes a house a home continue to change as we reprioritize and rebalance where and how we live.

Cities are transitioning from centers of business to centers of entertainment, education, and entrepreneurship. Once thriving urban cores are being reimagined to remain competitive with suburban towns that are welcoming families with abundant amenities and community spirit. And, as the pendulum continues to swing back from the great suburban exodus that began before the pandemic, mega-city dwellers are looking for metropolitan experiences with greater access, offerings, and flexibility.

Over the past three years, established cities like New York, Los Angeles, San Francisco, Chicago, and Boston have reportedly lost more than 1 million residents combined. Meanwhile Raleigh, Dallas, Phoenix, Tampa, and Denver have become magnet destinations for both people and commerce. So, is this the end of major metro areas? Is smaller town America the new dream? Not entirely.

From a planning, design, and economic perspective, lifestyle changes have opened the door to new opportunities that are reshaping the DNA of residential living. Given the newfound freedom that comes with remote working and the never-ending search for housing affordability, a broader range of residential locations are catching the eyes of both renters and potential home buyers.

VINHOMES CENTRAL PARK - HO CHI MINH, VIETNAM



THE WELL - NORFOLK, VIRGINIA

And, with people moving to these 18-hour neighborhoods, economic output and consumption tends to follow. Ryan Clifton, a Principal at EDSA, sees this shift as a good thing. “People are making decisions that align with their social, environmental, economic, and even political views, adding to a rebalance in neighborhood diversity.”

As such, firms like EDSA are orchestrating community change while addressing the very real concerns of affordability and neighborhood aesthetics. “The means by which ‘livability’ is measured has shifted to not only include statistical performance but qualitative evaluations like programming, people, prosperity, and place. Ultimately, a city’s economic stability, housing alternatives, amenities, social and civic capital, infrastructure, education, and healthcare are all weighed together in the decision to relocate or stay.”

“The means by which ‘livability’ is measured has shifted to include evaluations like programming, people, prosperity, and place.”

RYAN CLIFTON



Marc Hall, EDSA Principal, agrees as designers respond with a renewed neighborhood orientation and focus on social connectivity, environmental sustainability, and economic stewardship. “Access to affordable and diverse housing options via public transport, walking and cycling trails, local shops, public open space, community services, leisure and culture offerings – these are the essential ingredients for a livable community.” Hall continues, “People are drawn to well-planned, environmentally aware communities that offer the energy of city life but with lower density and access to nature. People aren’t interested in being ‘in the middle of nowhere’ nor do they want to be overstimulated. It’s about moving to an area that offers more social and recreational activities while keeping people active and engaged.”

So, while the suburbs experience a renaissance that is particularly appealing to those who work remotely and at a more affordable cost, many communities are of an age in which updates are necessary – to infrastructure, to real estate mix, to public space, and beyond. “It’s an opportunity to re-vision these neighborhoods, densify their cores, and fashion urbanity that appeals to current residents and new arrivals alike,” suggests Hall.

Walkable streets and linear parks along with village-style layouts and community amenities like those found in downtown Asheville, North Carolina, invite opportunities for exploration, activity, and conversation. In example, the Hill Street master planning effort is being developed in districts and integrates a mix of housing products and land uses with an interconnected pedestrian system that highlights regional offerings and establishes moments for social exchange. A community center, schools, and activity center are supported by 300+ multi-family units, retail, branded villas, and preserved open space that connects to natural areas.

“Today’s home buyers demand a true ‘sense of place’, so we’re creating communities where people can be visible, feel safe, and access the fabric of a city outside their front door.”

PABLO MASSARI



HILL STREET - ASHEVILLE, NORTH CAROLINA

“Today’s home buyers demand a true ‘sense of place’, so we’re creating communities where people can be visible, feel safe, and access the fabric of a city outside their front door,” says EDSA Principal Pablo Massari. “By focusing on the formation of critical mass elements such as town centers, entertainment areas, and public parks, design solutions break the urban grid monotony and reinforce a community’s rhythm and character while allowing people of all ages to share experiences and engage with nature.”

Over the next decade, ideas of community, connectivity, and resiliency are sure to evolve. “While we continue to design for the needs of now, we must collectively address the wants of tomorrow with powerful, smart statements of place and transformative feelings of wellbeing,” shares Massari. “Renters and homeowners alike have become accustomed to accessibility and connectivity to public parks, trail systems, natural areas, and closed city streets for socialization and recreation – a clear representation of society’s appreciation for the outdoors and longing for community spaces.”



LAKE NONA TOWN CENTER - ORLANDO, FLORIDA



BUENO BRANDAO RESIDENCES - SÃO PAULO, BRAZIL

While no one can predict the future, how neighborhoods are developed, designed, and marketed is changing. The strong demand for wellness programming requires the dedication of more physical space for outdoor activities, recreation, and encounters with the natural world. “The ‘users’ of our spaces – everyday people are looking for amenities and offerings that make their lives easier, more satisfying and, in many instances, the less is more principles of place-based site design are the answer,” suggests Clifton. Programming and access to outdoor spaces, reducing roadways, and finding pockets of enjoyment and interest reinforce safe human/nature connections in a functionally sound way.

For Bueno Brandao Residences in Brazil, it’s all about location, location, location. An important and iconic addition to the local São Paulo neighborhood, the higher-density apartments are within a 15-minute walk of Ibirapuera Park and 1.1 miles of Cicillo Matarazzo Pavilio. EDSA is developing a community amenity and creative use of exterior areas in support of multi-generational living for the two-tower residence.

Clifton explains, “In keeping with municipality codes, we are restructuring terraces, plazas, and natural features to a more human scale to encourage residents to get outside, gather, and interact. These ‘outdoor rooms’ coincide with less automobile-centric living, access to a thriving downtown core, and nearby health offerings.”

The demand for such neighborhoods isn't limited to a few global cities. Residents are placing a priority on lifestyle balance – and demonstrating it with how they spend their money. According to Zillow, the total value of private real estate ownership in the United States increased by \$6.9 trillion and 91 percent of suburban counties benefited from relocations last year alone. “This residential boom came in swiftly with heavy momentum and we have remained nimble in response to market moves and what they mean for real estate development,” shares Hall. “These include higher density or ‘micro-urbanist’ communities that incorporate a variety housing types within the same neighborhood and a preference for infrastructure that favors pedestrians over automobiles.”

In support, numerous consumer surveys reveal a design vernacular preference that prioritizes walkability, enhances common areas, and conserves natural resources. “Home buyer and renter demand aligns with our strong inclination for a healthy distribution and network of open spaces that can only be achieved with a logical framework and welcoming design aesthetic that accounts for site sensitivity, context, and conditions,” says Clifton. “We are guiding the design process for a variety of neighborhood components that essentially build value and maximize opportunities. For example, connecting residents to the surrounding topography and preserving natural features may not always fall within a developer’s vision but, it is the responsibility of the landscape architect to ensure these innate attributes are respected while creating a community narrative.”

Trends already underway are also reshaping and repurposing outdoor realms. New and existing communities will do well to minimize pavement and maximize green space. Meanwhile, existing golf courses are being reinvented as residents have repurposed on site courses to parks for picnicking and cart paths for walking and biking. These areas blend home and leisure and provide residents with activities that improve their mental and physical well-being.

According to Massari, “Creating spaces where people gather and have multiple experiences, both individually or as a group, is a designers ultimate reward.” From the micro simplicity of gently curved roadways, pocket parks, and carefully chosen site furnishings to tree canopies for soothing shade and multiple access points to amenities, the public realm must create a cohesive tapestry and non-vehicular intimacy for comfort.

Apart from planning and designing a community from the ground up, the repurposing of previously developed lands is gaining popularity. Inclusive of former commercial and industrial sites, these brownfields may have formerly been contaminated or have existing structures that will need remediation, modification and/or removal to develop usable and welcoming spaces. Reclaiming and repurposing the land has led to limitless opportunities within the residential and neighborhood planning realm.



GALLERIA MALL REDEVELOPMENT - FORT LAUDERDALE, FLORIDA



JOHN KNOX VILLAGE - POMPANO BEACH, FLORIDA

“People are drawn to well-planned, environmentally aware communities. It’s about moving to an area that offers more social and recreational activities while keeping people active and engaged.”

MARC HALL

The Well Norfolk in Virginia is an example which represents the transformation of a former mall into a welcoming mixed-use community with a central park-like amenity. A multitude of residences convert the focus from inward out with a meaningful landscape palette that gives equal attention to the regional heritage and story of resiliency. From entry roads lined with Live Oaks and grand lawns that frame a central lake, to trails that connect play spaces and outdoor gathering areas, the design addresses the current and future needs of multi-generational residents. A high-performing, productive landscape prioritizes long-term sustainability with ample food gardens, natural areas, and tree canopies that offset the carbon footprint and reduce water run-off. EDSA’s efforts have brought a sense of urban vibrancy to the community with enhanced offerings that are equally accessible and improve environmental quality.

Likewise, the re-imagined Galleria Mall in Fort Lauderdale, Florida is bringing new vitality to the downtown neighborhood by injecting entertainment, commercial, and retail within a multi-family housing lifestyle center. Focused on human scalability, plazas, trails, and seating nooks are linked by a

cohesive pedestrian system that makes socialization, relaxation, and shopping easy. A critical shift in how the new public realm will be programmed, the design creates a hierarchy of spaces that allows for personalized journeys within the multi-functional destination. In partnership with the architects, the scope of work reaches beyond the regional mall site to the surrounding right-of-way and public realm along major bisecting streets and corridors.

Much of what creates a sense of neighborhood is here to stay – a feeling of belonging, not only to physical amenities but with opportunities for self-improvement and an enhanced collective identity. Prioritizing pedestrians, adopting conservation strategies, and taking a wide lens view of connectivity and sustainability, neighborhoods can attract residents while contributing to long-term social and ecological prosperity.

“As designers we must continue to balance functionality and aesthetics with experiences and expectations. Designing places that are welcoming and inviting – those that draw people outdoors – add to the formula by which great neighborhoods are made,” concludes Massari. □



DESIGN SENSIBILITIES:

WHEN UNDERSTANDING MEETS IMAGINATION

From broad ideation to pixel level detail, the creative process appears to happen as if by magic – flashes of brilliance that spring forth effortlessly, ready to dazzle and delight. In actuality, design is more often the result of careful consideration and a disciplined development of ideas built on essential truths and intuition about the project at hand.

“At its core, design asks us to solve challenges in beautiful and unexpected ways,” shares Michael Batts, a Principal at EDSA. With a thoughtful understanding of why an idea makes sense and how it will respond under variables, Batts is quick to point out that good design extends beyond aesthetic execution and must consider factors related to people, place, and purpose.

“Successful design allows for an intuitive and frictionless framework where individuals can experience a place in their own way with deliberate detailing that evolves over time.”

Such real estate developments and outdoor spaces are created through a process that starts with a distinctive vision and stated intent – much before any graphics take form. “Some refer to this brand of place as ‘there’s there’ – created by humanizing spaces while leveraging accessibility, connection, and programmatic needs. Depending on the person and activation of spaces, the weights of social, environmental, and economic value will differ, but there will always be a balance and logic that provides for a sense of comfort and belonging,” explains Batts.

For the Fort Lauderdale Beach Revitalization in South Florida, EDSA applied a holistically balanced design formula – first in the early 1990’s and recently for the Las Olas Corridor. Recognized with a Florida ASLA Award of Excellence, the \$50-million project encompasses 9.5 acres of prime waterfront real estate that has been returned to the community as part of the Central Beach Master Plan. The latest improvements focused on connection and programming to create value for Broward County’s 1.8 million residents and nearly 14.2 million annual visitors.

EDSA’s highly functional design increased public green space with an oceanside park that now serves as a welcoming gateway to the beachfront with a tiered lawn, shaded event space, fountains, courtyard pavilion, and nearby parking garages – all of which work independently or together for year-round events. The visually pleasing public realm offers spaces that follow natural forms and patterns that mimic the iconic beachfront ‘wave’ wall.

While some projects seek to improve current standing, the elements of design are also routinely called upon in the creation of something entirely new. It’s up to the designers, who live at the intersection of engineered solutions and the creative arts, to be curious curators of history, their surroundings, and nature itself. “Each project presents the challenge and opportunity for a fresh canvas which ensures projects are unique and special,” says Danny Bulemore, EDSA Vice President. “It’s the notion of finding a ‘sweet spot’ – a conscious effort to enrich a space to its full potential while also knowing when to take a step back and not over-design.”

According to Bulemore, “A primary goal of great design is to make deliberate decisions that will have the biggest impact on the most users. It’s not about being perfect but being cognizant of people and usage.” He notes that downtowns offer a richness because they are an aggregate mix of ‘things’ – imperfections, variety, and hidden ingredients that serve a purpose and allow for activity to take place, yet not too rigid that it discourages engagement. “As canvas creators, we need to set the framework, add dashes of balance, and take design to a place from which others can create their own memories and see where it takes them.”



“As **canvas creators**, we need to set the **framework**, add dashes of balance, and take design to a **place** from which others can create their own **memories**.”

DANNY BULEMORE

Batts agrees. “Our greatest reward is seeing a space used in a way we never imagined possible. When places are too prescribed, it imposes limits and closes the circle on what people will make a space. My underlying respect and appreciation for the simplicity of great design is its ability to achieve meaningful outcomes – where visitors become the authors of place.”

Physical spaces that offer the unexpected thrive on a design aesthetic that encourages people to pause, connect, and observe. These spaces hold extended placemaking value that amplify existing features to create an unanticipated experience and make people feel like they should be there. “Design is intended to be an experience from the moment you step outside to arrival at your final destination,” suggests Jeong Park, EDSA Vice President. Cues and carefully crafted design elements along the journey help establish expectations and build excitement. “So, while those passing through may not be able to pinpoint why a space is special, they feel it – making every design decision that much more crucial.”



“Ultimately, what we **sense** in a space affects how we **feel** about ourselves and the people around us, so the design must exceed **expectations** for whom the space is intended and provide them with the best overall **experience**.”

JEONG PARK

GRAND XI BEACH - BUSAN, SOUTH KOREA

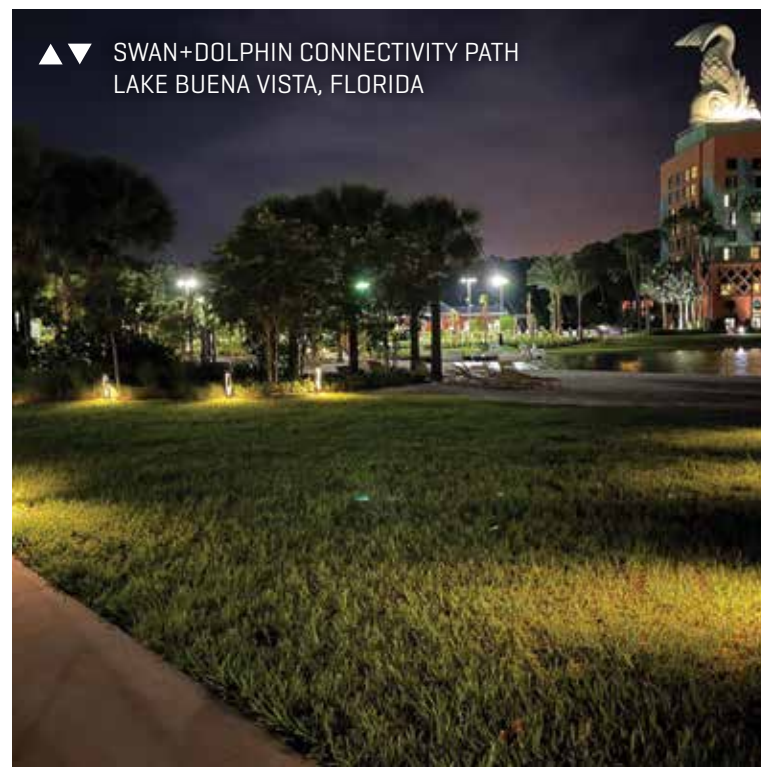
EDSA's design solutions for the recently completed pedestrian pathway between Disney's Swan and Dolphin Resorts and the new Swan Reserve Hotel in Orlando, Florida, provided the property with an immersive and seamless transition between properties that elevates the overall theme of the expanded destination. Overlooking the site's existing lagoon, the walkway is lined with oak trees that offer a noise buffer from the main road while an organic stone wall serves as a 'must see' element for visitors. "Something as simple as adjusting the lighting selection and recasting the shadows has created design magic for this 'in between' space," recalls Park.



Design is everywhere.

It's what drew you to the last piece of furniture you bought, earned Apple the most valuable brand status title, and influenced the purchase decision of your last car. Design has indeed become a mix of global cultures, thousands of years of history, technology, and a collaborative spirit that allows nearly every part of the planet to be experienced at any moment.

As such, the approach for any design assignment should begin with in-depth research and an understanding for what makes sense for the user, the environment, and quite frankly, what can be implemented. "From there we compile, process, and apply a series of intangible design sensibilities to ensure an emotionally appropriate response to a space such as, 'I want to go this way' and make it part of my lifestyle," shares Bulemore.



▲ ▼ SWAN+DOLPHIN CONNECTIVITY PATH
LAKE BUENA VISTA, FLORIDA

Park explains the process further, "As with any project, we look at how people will ideally use a space. What are the views? How much sun/shade is needed? What activities are available? Are there moments for decompression and heightened engagement? How does the space function at a conscious and sub-conscious level? Ultimately, what we sense in a space affects how we feel about ourselves and the people around us, so the design must exceed expectations for whom the space is intended and provide them with the best overall experience."

Adding depth to her explanation, she cites the Grand Xi development in South Korea. Taking cues from famous cherry blossom trees, the high-rise community showcases regional context by balancing human comfort and unique programming. Elevating the natural treasure in a 'blossom' concept, residences are supported by a series of open spaces, pedestrian trails, gardens, and recreation areas. Contrasting views of the evergreen forest and scenic ocean are framed by a canopy of trees and central park that form a green oasis and seasonal landscape experience.

A lighted teahouse and musical fountain adorn the canal walk with nodes for respite and event spaces. Natural elements act as a measure of coastal defense with an elevated, curvilinear beach wall and grasses that realign the waves' energy back to sea. A multideck pool, community farming gardens, themed play areas, retail plaza, and multi-purpose fitness parks support a renewed neighborhood orientation and defined focus on health, wellness, and environmental stewardship.





JUBAIL ISLAND - ABU DHABI, UNITED ARAB EMIRATES

Everything in design can be subjective, unless it is intentionally based in form and function. “Through skillful space arrangement and other visual cues, we were able to improve quality of life and human comfort. The design not only provided much needed shade and improved environmental resiliency, it also elevated the destination to a must-see while in the city,” explains Park.

So, apart from the practical considerations, what else should be taken into account when designing a space? Simply put, all of the peripheral elements that create sensory experiences. Things like lighting, color, comfort, balance, and unity as well as the appropriate use of textures, hues, shapes, and proportions in providing for a distinct experience that crafts a specific story.

“We’re experiencing a wave of change in the way designers engage with the world. Instead of aspiring to influence behavior from a distance, we increasingly want the spaces we design to have a more immediate impact through direct engagement,” shares Bulemore. In support of our ambition, much research by environmental psychologists have confirmed that one’s surroundings can and does have a significant effect on the way individuals feel. So, it stands to reason, that following a deliberate set of principles, which provide both tangible and intangible results, can foster a cognitive response towards imagination and emotional growth.

By capturing the spirit of each setting and understanding consumer needs and wants, EDSA designs are revered for the way they engage and integrate the human senses and ultimately influence behavior change. This is, perhaps, one of the firm’s most essential design principles – respecting and honoring the land and its people by creating spaces made to endure for generations to come. This mindset manifests itself in each new design, with no two outcomes ever alike.

“If we listen to the land, it will tell us what to do,” suggests Batts. Designing for regional and site-level assets leads to projects that are memorable, comfortable, and positively affect the moods, opinions, and behaviors of the visitors, residents, students, tourists, and patrons that interact with them. With scenic quality, natural assets, and human scale amalgamated among a mix of uses, projects can



not only bring aesthetic value but afford environmental gain. This is especially true in repurposing existing site structures and locally sourcing materials that are cradle to cradle certified, rapidly renewable, or made with recycled content.

In example, the Jubail Island development in Abu Dhabi preserves and harmonizes regional context with built elements to form a waterfront community where compelling experiences with nature and wellness are offered through high-quality parks, open spaces, scenic drives, and recreational resources. Enhancing and celebrating ecological view corridors, linkages with natural systems, public access and cultural heritage, the sustainable village framework places low rise, low impact residences among hotel, retail, and office park areas. Linked to landforms, climate, and the natural boundaries of the site, the landscape and its open space network create a comfortable micro-climate and a

“My respect and appreciation for the simplicity of great design is its ability to achieve meaningful outcomes – where visitors become the authors of place.”

MICHAEL BATTIS

refuge from the urban context. Additional amenities include a locally inspired souk, mosque, community center, clinic, nursery, and supermarket. EDSA’s design of the public realm established the first step towards protecting and conserving critical natural systems and resources with a series of high quality, human-scaled and visually interesting spaces. This includes multi-functional, flexible and climate responsive design solutions using locally-sourced materials.

In the end, design is intelligence made visible. It’s a melding of creativity, technology, imagination, research, intuition, and an artistry that brings qualitative being to a quantitative world. “There is not a single formula for great design – but being intentional on what something is supposed to be and for who is essential,” declares Bulemore.

On retaining that creative, imaginative, and out-of-the-box design thinking, Batts suggests to constantly ask yourself, at every stage, what would make this design better? Does it need more context? Or does it need less? Is it serving its community or intended audience? Has it achieved a sense of place and purpose? The answers to these questions and others like them not only reveal what’s next for a particular design, but also shape the individual designer’s ability to see solutions from the very moment they encounter a space. □



JUBAIL ISLAND - ABU DHABI, UNITED ARAB EMIRATES



From Pen to Pixel

Data-Driven Design

The metaverse, autonomous vehicles, and artificial intelligence are just a few of the many innovations transforming how we see and navigate the world. Whether purchased for entertainment, convenience, or social engagement, our investment in the latest technology has led to an increase in data consumption and information accessibility that continues to grow exponentially in terms of volume and variety.

Big data has become one of society's most powerful tools. How, when, and where it is utilized not only informs decision making but the way people operate on both a personal and professional level. Leveraging this phenomenon, EDSA continues to develop, explore, and incorporate technology and research in ways that are evolving their design process to better inform project opportunities, broaden understanding, and improve efficiencies.



“
Our in-house software
programmers + skilled
designers are stretching
software capabilities for
more efficient + effective
outputs.”
ERIC PROPEs

Rapid Experimentation

EDSA Chief Operating Officer Eric Propes suggests the team’s enhanced design process is crucial for the firm’s growth and future of the landscape architecture profession. “Technology and analytics can be a daunting, but we have adopted an approach that maintains the artistry of design, coupling it with intelligent digital platforms for a refined balance between data influences and designer intuition.”

Resulting in a Pen-to-Pixel model-based workflow, the refreshed approach streamlines the team’s design and delivery process while informing the development of creative outcomes. “Traditional modeling software such as Autodesk Civil 3D and Revit were initially created with engineers and architects in mind, but we’ve altered system performance to cater to our specific needs,” says Propes. “By pairing our in-house software programmers with our design teams, we’ve bridged the gap among standard processes and stretched software capabilities for more efficient and effective outputs.”

And, while Building Information Modeling (BIM) software has been at the forefront of design and construction for decades, neither Revit or Civil 3D are built for the undulating topography, dynamic hardscape spaces, or the twists and turns of the landscape environments. Serving as ‘the glue’ between disciplines, EDSA utilizes an additional set of 3D tools such as Autodesk InRoads, Grasshopper, and Rhinoceros 3D (Rhino) to assimilate digital builds of the architect and engineer, leading to a single, tangible model backed by data that allows for collaboration among all team members. Propes shares, “Making enhanced, faster decisions with the right information, our customization has allowed for flexibility



 CONCEPT SKETCH



 INFRAWORKS MODEL



 3D RENDERING

RAMHAN ISLAND - ABU DHABI, UNITED ARAB EMIRATES

and software integration that showcases transitions between streetscapes, buildings, and outdoor areas – along with every obstacle and amenity in-between.”

This approach has resonated for projects in the Middle East, where the planning of giga-developments are at an all-time high. “These large-scale, all-hands-on-deck assignments are ideal for our innovative techniques,” shares EDSA Vice President Devon King. “While time schedules are limited, there are few creative restrictions – incentivizing our team to push the boundaries of their imagination for highly-feasible, technically-powered solutions.” In example, custom scripting helped configure and calculate the population of 50,000+ trees along a winding corridor and evaluate them in terms of water demand, carbon sequestration, shade cover, and visual impact. “Not only did this save us time, but it allowed for cross-pollination between disciplines to ensure logical, sound, and aesthetically-pleasing design alternatives.”

That said, EDSA continues to approach each new project with research, creative brainstorming, and typically a site visit. “We still need to immerse ourselves in a place and understand the dynamics and data around it,” explains King. What are the environmental, cultural, or social aspects? Are there visible physical constraints? What sounds can be heard in the distance? What obstructions are there to elevation change? “There must be a blend between what the data tells us and the site itself in crafting design alternatives with meaning and purpose.”

By taking into account the many different analytic streams of information with an artistic overlay, designers see the relationships between statistical evidence and gain a deeper understanding to derive correlations. This undertaking informs decisions based on verifiable datasets which are no longer case study examples but inclusive of an entire layer, population, scenario, or narrative of a particular site or macro-climate.



Begin with the end in mind



BIM MODEL



3D RENDERING

ALINA RESIDENCES - BOCA RATON, FLORIDA

Future Shaping

Though it's no secret that good data builds the foundation of great design, confirming references and examining existing conditions are just the start of EDSA's approach to Evidence-Based Design (EBD), where the development of an environment is rooted in scientific research and relevant experiences. Basing decisions on benchmarked projects of similar climate, scope, and scale helps inform the team as to why certain designs will or will not function. "History is a remarkable teacher and has laid the foundation for many current concerns in dealing with nature and the built environment," says Propes. "By doing our research and assimilating proven realizations, our margin of error decreases immensely."

Extended beyond EBD are Research-Informed Design (RID) and Performance-Based Design (PBD), which pair credible research with site analysis to achieve environmentally driven design outcomes. "Right now, we're able to track sunlight, watersheds, hydrology, and elevation," says Jack Garcia, EDSA's Director of Virtual Design and Construction. "We continue to expand our proficiencies which include more logic-based investigations with tools that allow us to report on the conditions we are looking for, or trying to avoid."

And, while designers continue to expand datasets with opportunities to meld data, digitalization, and design, EDSA has broadened their in-house skillset through the addition of a Virtual Design and Construction (VDC) team. Assisting with BIM, immersive visualization, technical quality review, software programming, and application efficiency, VDC provides an enhanced design deliverable rooted in a research-based, virtual 3D realm. "Our goal is to heighten the team's design of immersive environments," shares Garcia. "Consisting of architects, engineers, modelers, and software experts, we help improve the firm's overall automation, legibility, and efficiency for easier execution and assurance that designs function as intended."

Skills of the VDC team were tapped into during the initial development of the Alina Residences in downtown Boca Raton. The team was tasked with providing conceptual design through

construction observation services for two of the site's three residential towers. With the client looking to achieve a wellness-driven, indoor/outdoor design vernacular, it was essential that all materials, layouts, and aesthetics put into play by the architect and interior designer – fluidly progress into alfresco spaces for a meaningful design narrative.

Enhancing open areas with green walls, rooftop pools, meditation gardens, and water features, EDSA's initial hand sketches were quickly refined and embedded into BIM and Revit models, allowing the multi-disciplinary team to collaborate on everything from exterior/interior transitions to site furnishings. "We were able to put all of our design ideas into an integrated system that encompassed all information," continued Garcia. "This included everything a client would need – from a 2D CAD model to a full, 3D view of the project backed by site specifications data and individual furnishing measurements."

“

There must be a blend between what the data tells us + the site itself in crafting design alternatives with meaning + purpose.

DEVON KING

1

Opportunity Assessment + Strategy

- Explore goals, assess feasibility + collaborate with other disciplines to define a vision.
- Determine predictable performance criteria + sustainable outcomes.
- Pinpoint what a project needs - socially, financially, ecologically + culturally.
- Become fully acquainted with the site - its physical, social + regional connections.

2

Visioning + Ideation

- Let go of judgment + allow limitless ideas to flow. Explore all that is possible.
- Rapid fire investigation, evaluation + testing of creative alternatives.
- Forge development strategies that possess an intuitive sense for what belongs.

3

Crafting + Refining

- Use the 'big idea' as a standard of measure while addressing how it should be executed.
- Ask, 'why would someone come here' + allow that context to influence the design.
- Synthesize concepts + form associations between elements, ideas, people + places.

4

Production + Implementation

- Illuminate the user experience + verify probability of design outcomes.
- Design with constructibility in mind. Great design is always artful, functional + implementable.
- Serve as Design Guardians of the original vision + project intent.
- Solutions should meet international standards + exceed design practice expectations.



conceptual sketches, the design team quickly moved into modeling software. During this stage, preliminary concepts were brought to life by utilizing 3D rendering tools such as Lumion and Enscape to establish overall aesthetics. Once the entire team was on the same page for design, layouts, and materials, EDSA was able to host the client in a Virtual Reality (VR) environment.

Used effectively, specifically during design development, VR depicts exactly what the project will look like and how it will be experienced. In the case of the Pool Club, the client was able to walk through the site, express concerns, and make informed decisions on things like the width of walking paths and height of landscape materials – while viewing simulations of morning and evening sun studies and alternate material selections. The team was then able to address comments in real-time and get buy-in from the client and design team, all in one meeting. This process allowed for a majority of decisions to occur at the early stages – saving time and money for all parties involved.

Progressing into detailed design, EDSA continued to collaborate through their model-based workflow with the project team to troubleshoot clash detections and outstanding issues before producing a final, high level of development (LOD) 3D model to guide contractors during construction. And, while projects can run into issues related to cost overruns, supply chain shortages, infrastructure delays, or unforeseen limitations, EDSA is able to troubleshoot problems immediately, with the design team and the contractor, providing efficient solutions before an element is built. This collaboration helps the team reach their ultimate goal of delivering the same immersive result as the client originally experienced in the VR world.

Creative Expression

EDSA regularly uses research, data, and automated solutions to digitally depict a client's vision. That said, there is still a strong need for designers to remain in the driver's seat of the creative process. "Technology and data can inform us early on if something is not feasible – visually, logistically, or financially," shares King. "But there is a need to balance efficiencies with aesthetics. The software can't feel the nuances of a space or anticipate the user's emotional response. That's why a designer's lens is crucial – we decipher the data for the best possible outcome."

Highlighting this process is EDSA's recent retrofit of the Pool Club at The Boca Raton in Florida, where the expansion set the tone for renovations of the originally built 1920's resort. Following initial



PARAMETRIC BRIDGE - MIDDLE EAST

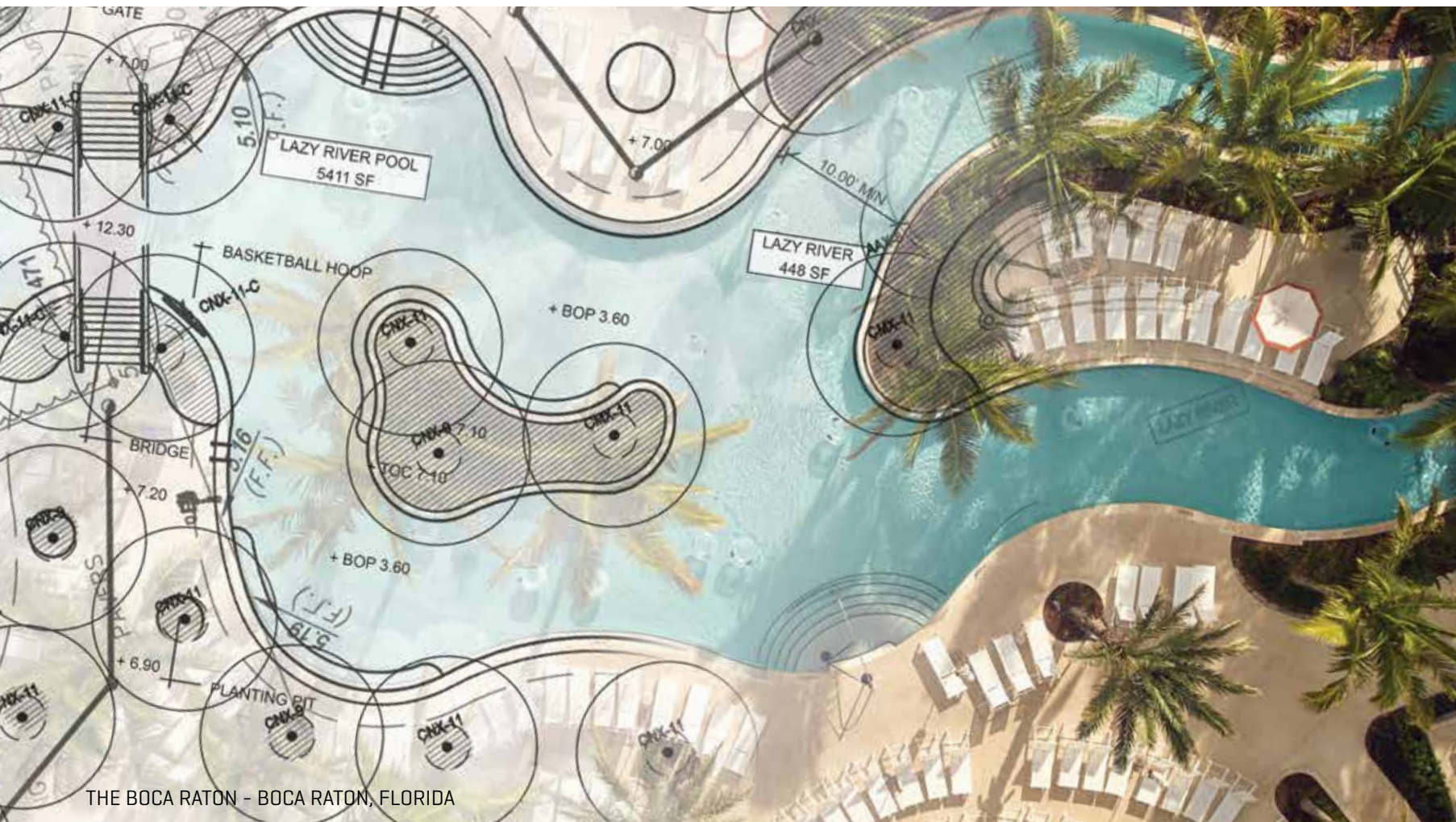


What's Next?

EDSA continues to explore their model-based approach by incorporating new creative tools and processes. In fact, the team recently began incorporating elements of Parametric-Design (PD), where a design is initially shaped according to algorithmic processes instead of being conceptualized from scratch. In example, EDSA developed a customized polymetric vehicular bridge, transforming the structure's traditional look and aesthetic into a futuristic design element. More than just a challenging visual study, the project was also on a tight schedule for execution and implementation.

To meet expedited deadlines, the firm coordinated with the structural engineer to create design modules in Revit, integrating the parametric model to be quickly manufactured off-site and applied to the physical bridge structure. "We have seen the applications of how data, construction, and art can come together," shares Garcia. "This type of application has encouraged us to improve the entire life cycle of design, exploring different ways to merge data that can be monitored and carried into the construction and maintenance of our built projects."

"It's inspiring to think about," shares an enthusiastic King. It's not just designers becoming smarter but the places and infrastructures in and of themselves. It won't be long before an every day public park and its amenities are able to record and store useful metrics such as rainfall, solar gain, circulation patterns, usability, and then physically transform and adapt to these metrics in real time. "This is all valuable information that we can utilize towards the design of healthier, more sustainable, and equitable places. We're going to be able to create a better user experience and a better world – which is what being a planner and landscape architect is all about." □



THE BOCA RATON - BOCA RATON, FLORIDA

“

Consisting of architects, engineers, modelers, + software experts, the VDC Team improves automation, legibility + efficiency for easier execution + assurance that designs function as intended.

JACK GARCIA

Holistic

Well

Being



Spiritual



Environmental



Physical



Emotional



Social

Hello. How are you?
I'm well, thanks.

This familiar exchange has become such a routine conversation that we rarely stop to think about what it means to truly be 'well'. For decades, we've looked at the concept through a scientific lens – evaluating physical health in terms of age, immune system, mobility, and dozens of other indicators that the human body is functioning as well as it should. But is this really an accurate measure of well-being?

The National Wellness Institute takes a more broad-minded approach, defining wellness as 'functioning optimally within the current environment'. This holistic point of view defines the concept as a journey – a conscious process by which people can optimize their lifestyles, mental and emotional stability, relationships, and the natural world around them. Resonating deeply with landscape architects, planners and designers have the unique ability to enhance these sought-after connections through the influential design of outdoor spaces.



NORTH RIVER RANCH - PARRISH, FLORIDA

According to the Global Wellness Summit, 2023 is shaping up to be a year of ‘radical’ shifts in the way consumers view wellness with emphasis on transitioning from individual gratification to community fulfillment. This observation comes as no surprise to EDSA Principal Doug Smith, who has seen this shift in real time through his residential community planning efforts. “Well-crafted, higher-density neighborhoods are more so on the rise now that attitudes are strongly shifting from me to we,” Smith explains. “There is an increased demand for physical and virtual community networks that connect people – to nature, to their neighborhood, and to each other.” From a design perspective, this means heightening opportunities for spontaneous social interactions through the provision of outdoor amenities such as walking trails, well-thought-out programming, and centralized green spaces within a framework that ensures safety and functionality.

North River Ranch in Parrish, Florida, for instance, was developed with wellness at its core. Featuring a ‘green spine’ that links all trail systems and neighborhoods, its intricate circulation weaves throughout the 5,800-home development while eliminating the need to run, walk, or bike along main roads. In addition, a village center acts as a gathering hub for residents with grocery and convenient stores, a coffee shop, and pizzeria. As a compliment, the village center also brings a major healthcare provider into the heart of the community with a 150-bed hospital, outpatient care, and medical offices. “The prototype for harmonious living balances social, emotional, and physical needs in a way that is easily accessible (within a 15-minute bike ride from most homes),” adds Smith. But good design is not the sole ingredient for wellness to resonate on a community-wide level.

“There is an increased demand for physical and virtual community networks that connect people – to nature, to their neighborhood, and to each other.”

- Doug Smith



GREEN WISE HEADQUARTERS ROOFTOP GARDEN - TOKYO, JAPAN



VISIONING WORKSHOP - LINCOLN, NEBRASKA

“The betterment of health and well-being starts and ends with the right education, alliances, and programming,” says EDSA Vice President Amy Harbert. “It’s about being part of the conversation – understanding first-hand the wants and needs of local residents and citizens, and then pulling the right team together to begin addressing the challenges.” From community outreach and consensus building to engagement in public-private partnerships, designers can get a pulse on current standings while gaining insightful perspectives from local constituents.

For recent public visioning workshops in Lincoln, Nebraska, EDSA collaborated with a team of local experts and city officials to enhance the downtown. During the discovery phase, the team leaned into the history and culture embedded within the community for insight and inspiration. They then conducted in-depth interviews and hosted open houses with local residents and business owners to gain clarity and refine feedback. Overarching concerns for safety, circulation, functionality, and comfort were validated and resolved by reimagining entry corridors, enhancing neighborhood connectivity, and providing for more walkable streetscapes. “Projects of this size and stature create a ripple effect throughout the community, so we needed to ensure people were not fearful of the process,” Harbert emphasizes. “That means taking on the issues of personal refuge, diversity, and equity head on – and allowing everyone to be a part of the solution.”

Complimenting local input, a series of informed decisions that promote healthy living, proper land use, transportation alternatives, and localized food production should be considered. Hands-on community gardens, well-lit pedestrian boulevards, and orchestrated social connectivity embedded amongst greenways and parks allow residents to be outdoors and interact with one another in a safe and inviting atmosphere. Harbert notes, “That’s really what wellness is all about, right? Ensuring everyone feels safe, happy, healthy, and included in their chosen environment.”



Farm to Table

Local food sourcing has evolved from a luxurious want to a human need with city gardens and farmers markets ensuring healthy food is accessible to all.



“People want to contribute to the well-being of our planet, give back to society, and spend time with people and in places that have the same sensibilities for furthering the greater good.”

- Marco Larrea

EDSA Principal Marco Larrea also advocates for the idea of empowering the consumer to choose their own wellness path. “With the flexibility to relocate, an entire new world of healthier lifestyle options has become available, and people are rethinking and reprogramming their mindset.” This ideology has quickly made its way into the travel sphere with individuals seeking extended vacation spots that reflect their moral compass and serve as extensions of their everyday, wellness-oriented lives.

With this mindful shift, many resort owners and operators are reevaluating and reconfiguring their properties to improve the holistic side of the guest experience. “It’s the age of the Digital Nomad – people can basically pack-up and work from almost anywhere,” shares Larrea. “Not only has this led to consumer-driven, conscious travel, but it has also reinforced the need for properties to extend health-based amenities beyond traditional spa and fitness centers towards more well-rounded, in-depth wellness experiences.”

For Naviva® a Four Seasons Resort in Punta Mita, Mexico, the hotelier consulted with EDSA to create a unique new take on a nature-oriented guest experience. Branded as a hidden oasis ‘where nature and life intersect’, the 40-acre property features 15 luxury tents meticulously nestled within the forest that overlooks the Pacific Ocean. Guided tours with local craftspeople, sunrise hikes, and beachside meditation sessions provide opportunities for reflection, environmental awareness, and socialization. Additionally, wellness seekers can partake in personalized temazcal ceremonies, shamanic sound healings, or guided programs of self-discovery. “From the initial arrival sequence and room placement to gardens and walking paths, every design decision was a conscious effort to engage the senses and introduce guests to something bigger than themselves,” shares Larrea.

NAVIVA® FOUR SEASONS RESORT – PUNTA MITA, MÉXICO



Blue Zones

Populations residing in these higher-than-average life expectancy communities contribute their success to plant-based diets, walks in nature, and work-life balance.



And, whether feelings of mental, emotional, spiritual, or physical ‘wellness euphoria’ are found through forest bathing, farm-to-table restaurants, coordinated excursions, or emotional escapes, Smith agrees that “it’s all about providing people with the ability to indulge in individualized, mindful experiences.” Taking it a step further, he notes how essential it is for landscape architects to achieve an equilibrium between self and the outdoors in a way that remains light and responsive to the land. “If we can utilize and emphasize nature’s beauty and its resources, while in some cases even repairing and enhancing compromised systems, it’s a big win for the site and the future of mankind.”






DELRAY BEACH REVITALIZATION - DELRAY BEACH, FLORIDA

Similarly, when considering the creation or retrofit of outdoor spaces and amenities, taking a step back to learn, observe, and understand the current state of the site is the most effective way to properly distinguish how to best enhance it. “Incorporating water reuse and green infrastructure, selecting resilient planting materials, and limiting our carbon footprint are just a few of the many planet-friendly ways our designs take healthy living into consideration,” Harbert suggests, “As citizens of earth, we must consistently try to improve the places we touch in ways that not only benefit people, but the land, animals, organisms, and ecosystems that must co-exist and thrive with us.”

EDSA utilized these approaches when revitalizing the 35-year-old pedestrian promenade and streetscapes in Delray Beach, Florida. In reestablishing the mile and a half of beachfront as a welcoming, eco-friendly destination, much of the team’s design strategy focused on enhancing the existing dune system and realigning road widths for biking and pedestrian movement. In addition to the incorporation of appropriate lighting, intermittent crosswalks, bike racks, and water bottle stations, more than 15,000 square-feet of dunes and native plant materials were restored to combat storm surge and reintroduce South Florida’s diverse tropical creatures. “In this instance, we were able to provide tourists and residents with the means to indulge in a healthier lifestyle while also demonstrating a higher-level of environmental responsibility,” says Smith.




 Social

 Environmental

 Physical

“As citizens of earth, we must consistently try to improve the places we touch in ways that not only benefit people, but the land, animals, organisms, and ecosystems that must co-exist and thrive with us.”

- Amy Harbert



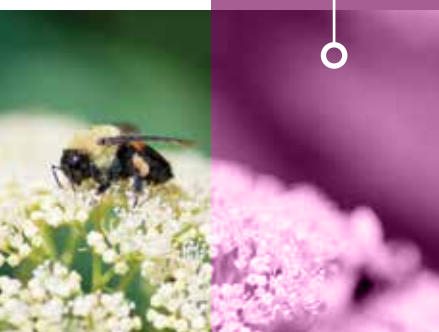
And while the creation of sustainable and resilient environments was once a novel idea, it is now a standard that society better understands in terms of our interaction with land and space. “People are really taking the time to understand their own global footprint,” offers Larrea. “They want to positively contribute to the well-being of our planet, give back to society, and know that their time is being spent with people and in places that have the same sensibilities for furthering the greater good.”

“This is why Performance Based Design is so important for what we do as landscape architects,” advocates Smith. “By providing a framework by which we can achieve measurable design solutions, we are all able to see the positive impacts of environmental, social, and economic well-being for communities and on Mother Earth in a way that is concrete and quantifiable.”

Taking into consideration enhanced site solutions such as green infrastructure, regenerative design, technology integration, and closed loop systems, EDSA’s Performance-Based methodology



Urban Biodiversity
 Sustainable practices such as recycling, rewilding, and composting help reverse the loss of living organisms in and around densely populated cities.



seeks to establish baselines and sets performance goals at the onset of a new project assignment. “Not only does this process allow us to achieve more thoughtful and innovative designs but it improves our sustainability ‘IQ’ in pushing new standards for regional development,” comments Harbert. “After all, if we don’t have a set plan and the ethics to heal and improve our surroundings, how can we expect to heal and improve ourselves?”

At this point in time, there is no doubt that the outdoors has become more than just a place to take the dog for a quick walk or indulge in a short spurt of exercise. People are more so seeking nature for emotional, mental, and moral refuge as they work to improve their collective wellbeing. While catering to society’s renewed approach to wellness may seem like a large undertaking, Larrea believes that it is the calling of landscape architects to help see it through. “Every person, every place, and every parcel of land has a unique wellness story, and it is our job to protect, preserve, and enhance these narratives.” □

Hospitality

TRANSFORMATION

DESIGNING FOR THE TRAVELER OF TODAY AND TOMORROW

Every year, billions of vacationers jet to different parts of the planet in search of new experiences and lands unseen – resulting in a \$10 trillion dollar tourism industry, millions of jobs, and thousands of attractions in every country around the globe. From adventure and romance to business and family travel, their ever-changing habits, preferences, and expectations continue to revolutionize the hospitality community.

“No longer looking for exquisite hotel rooms, travelers are pushing well beyond their comfort zones in seeking out new experiences and a warm, friendly place to stay when not at home,” suggests EDSA Principal Gregg Sutton. “It’s about alternatives and freedom to explore and discover on their own rather than a one-size-fits-all package.” Adding to the progressive ‘trippy’ evolution is a blurring of the lines between relaxation, adventure, and purposeful intent with morphing traveler profiles, hyper-local staycations, bleisure vacationers, wellness interpretations, and impact tourism taking center stage.



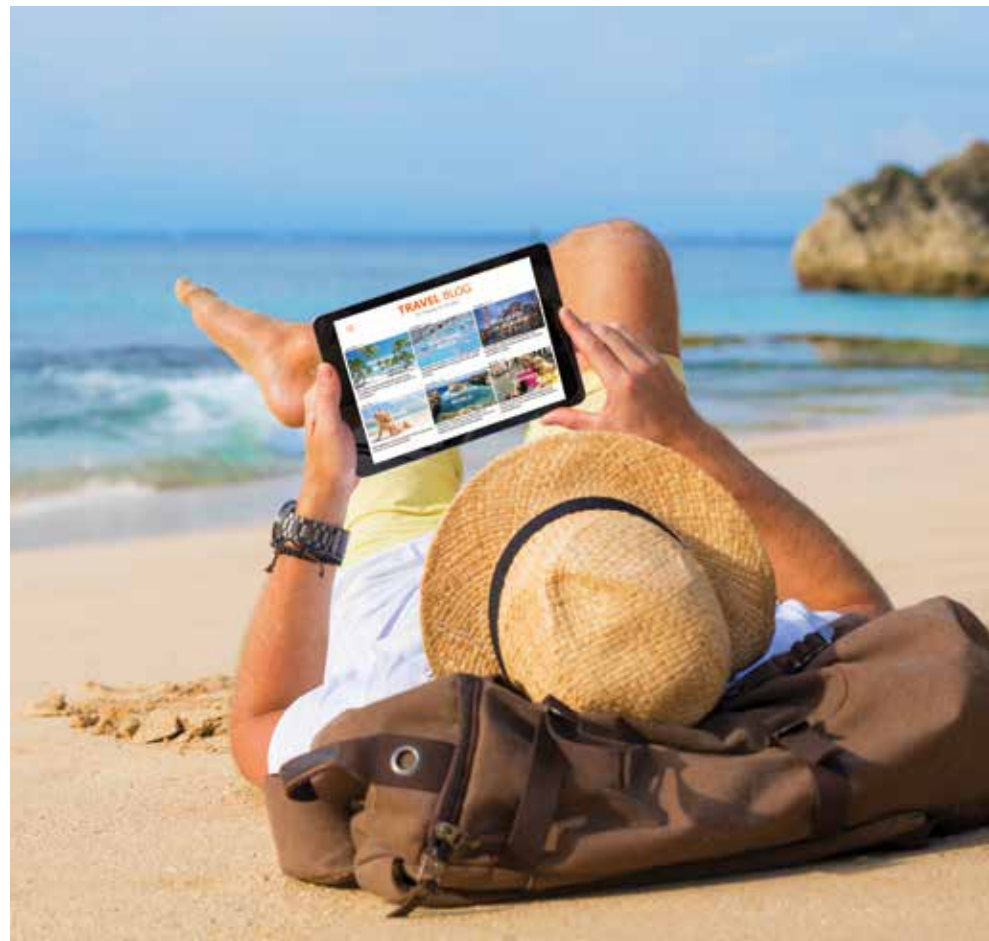
ETÉREO, AUBERGE RESORTS COLLECTION - QUINTANA ROO, MEXICO

For hospitality brands, the question has become how to not only capture success in today's market, but pave the way for growth and category leadership in years to come. "Vacations are memory makers and life enhancers – opportunities to disconnect and reconnect," explains Jeff Sugar, a Principal with EDSA. "Now more than ever, travelers want to know what they can do when they get to their destination. What's the journey? Where's the adventure?" This is a dramatic shift from a world that just a decade ago was largely content with sightseeing.

SO, WHY A CHANGE IN PRIORITIES?

Information availability. Most of today's travelers are building and booking their trips completely online. With a click or a swipe, an entire itinerary can be set days, weeks, or months in advance, and even managed via smartphone during the trip itself. According to Sutton, "Digital awareness and information accessibility has increased the need for brands to reconsider how they market. Websites and social media now overpower brochures with optimized content that is driving would-be visitors to find (and hopefully choose) a particular experience."

At the same time, hotels, resorts, and attractions must make sure their travel offerings have cache beyond self-generated marketing communications. Resorts are reframing their food and beverage outlets, room offerings, amenities, activities, events, and opportunities for local engagement to accommodate an ever-growing, ever diversifying audience of travel bloggers, photojournalists, online reviewers, and everyday vacationers. Sutton acknowledges the staggering impacts of 'sharing'. "Communal reactions are highly influencing family-centered, boutique, all-inclusives, and luxury brands to create more excitement with bespoke adventures."



WHAT DOES IT TAKE FOR BRANDS TO CREATE A MORE EXPERIENCE-BASED DESTINATION?

According to EDSA Principal Derek Gagne, the answer is simple, innovation. "Is it authentic, original, or first-of-its-kind? Or is it the same old thing being marketed in a new way? This is the question hospitality owners and investors must answer to satisfy those in charge of planning travel."

Gagne explains, "With an uptick in savings for leisure travel, we're seeing new generations come into their own as primary decision makers. GenXers and Millennials are reaching, or have reached, points in their careers where they have more discretionary income, more control, and flexibility over their vacation time – and they want to spend it with friends and family in a meaningful, memorable way."

Indeed, many former 'children of the suburbs' now eschew the idea of a daily commute in favor of city-centric living. Walkability and easy access to dining, shopping, entertainment, and recreation are prioritized over bigger backyards. "What you see in residential programming is a reflection of what people expect when they go on vacation," Gagne offers. "Residents who are used to having high-end gyms, rooftop swimming pools, and lifestyle amenities at home do not want to sacrifice those 'essentials' while traveling."

"Vacations are memory makers and life enhancers – opportunities to disconnect and reconnect."

- JEFF SUGAR



“It’s about creating a sense of relaxation and regional vibe with spaces specifically designed for being together or scaled appropriately for communal gatherings.”

- GREGG SUTTON



KIMPTON SEAFIRE RESORT+SPA - GRAND CAYMAN, CAYMAN ISLANDS

In fact, travelers have been showing they’re willing to pay premiums for those resort destinations who handle the ‘essentials’ exceedingly well and over-deliver on the big-picture experience. In example, the EDITION Red Sea Resort in Saudi Arabia is adopting a villa-like design tailored towards multi-generational travel with slice-of-life authenticity. Expected to open in 2023, hammock groves co-exist peacefully next to fully serviced pools and cabanas. Food and beverage offerings are activities unto themselves with venues placed sensibly and thoughtfully about the property to match the mood during different times of day.

Likewise at the Kimpton Seafire Resort + Spa in Grand Cayman, recreational amenities have been made more engaging with cycling classes outdoors and group yoga by the pool. In cities like Dallas and Miami Beach, properties are offering more localized interactions with food and beverage, live music, and spa experiences inspired by the surrounding landscape and culture. “It’s about creating a sense of relaxation and regional vibe with spaces specifically designed for being together or scaled appropriately for communal gatherings,” says Sutton. “It’s almost like being a guest in someone’s home. That’s the new frontier of hospitality.”

Adjusting to this new paradigm, properties must be planned for and evaluated through a multi-generational lens – balancing adult-focused amenities with activities that engage and entertain children. “A good place to start is by scrutinizing the guest profile and fashioning age-appropriate amenities based on findings,” advocates Sugar. “While it may be easy for a resort to focus on the 18+ year old guest and throw in a kid’s club, the current family trend of letting juniors influence travel plans demands a more holistic view.”



FOUR SEASONS RESORT NEVIS - CHARLESTOWN, NEVIS



CONRAD EVERMORE ORLANDO RESORT - ORLANDO, FLORIDA

THE IDEA THAT HOSPITALITY & TRAVEL ARE MOVING TARGETS IS NOT NEW

As children become adults, they want more than the vacation they took with their parents, even if they still enjoy the destination. Consider Orlando, Florida. Generations upon generations return, but the properties that have added new dimensions have a significant competitive advantage over those who did not. Realizing this, the Evermore Orlando Resort brought a renewed concept to the themed entertainment market with single-family vacation homes, flats, and villas – sharing an elite amenity experience with the 400+ key hotel.

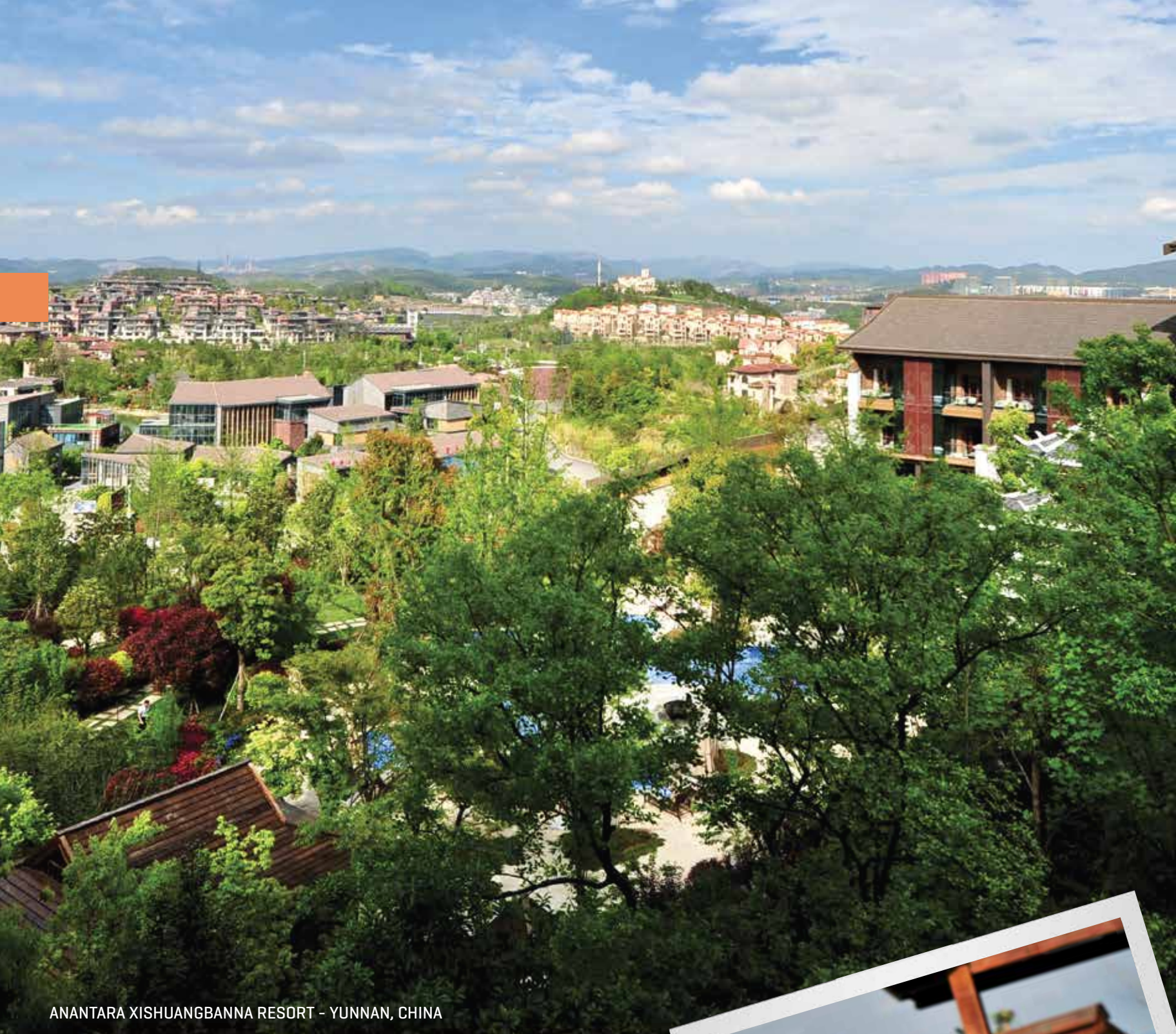
Secluded but central to regional attractions, the design designates thoughtful moments for connectivity to nature balanced against a modern aesthetic. The outdoor amenity program includes a large central courtyard and garden, resort pool area, and event lawn adjacent to the 8-acre proprietary Crystal Lagoon. “The amenities, offerings, and design define multi-generational travel at its best,” says Sugar. “Grandparents can take advantage of the many food and beverage outlets and modest recreation on campus while their adult children and grandchildren head to the parks and activities. Then, when everyone returns ‘home’ at the end of the day, parents can relax and enjoy a night walk and libations while younger and older generations share stories of the day’s adventures.”

Successful resorts are designed for the best possible use, with the best possible narrative, for the best possible guest experience. EDSA’s history of more than 150 resort destinations makes them experts on the non-negotiables for a fulfilling and meaningful guest experience. Sugar shares, “There’s no replacement for good, customized service – that’s the foundation for it all. However, an imaginative site design balanced with proper land use, programmability, and distinctive offerings can captivate a mix of audiences from morning to night. A richness in the story of place then elevates the strands of placemaking for an emotional connection between visitors and a fully executed concept.”



BOCA RATON BEACH CLUB - BOCA RATON, FLORIDA

Sutton agrees on the value of a storyline to capture and create a mood for a property. “There’s a big reason why ‘more is more’ works when developing and solidifying an authenticated design that encompasses every guest touchpoint.” People have come to enjoy planning for vacations as much as going on them as evident from Airbnb’s recent acquisitions (Rezy for restaurants and Trip4Real for activities). “Travelers enjoy finding off-the-beaten-path places to eat, shop, play, and relax, and smart hospitality brands have learned that they need to be a conduit.”



ANANTARA XISHUANGBANNA RESORT - YUNNAN, CHINA

“Being more aware of the innate value of Mother Nature and what truly works for a site from an environmental, educational, and social perspective is non-negotiable.”

- DEREK GAGNE



NEKAJUI, A RITZ-CARLTON RESERVE - NACASCOLD, COSTA RICA

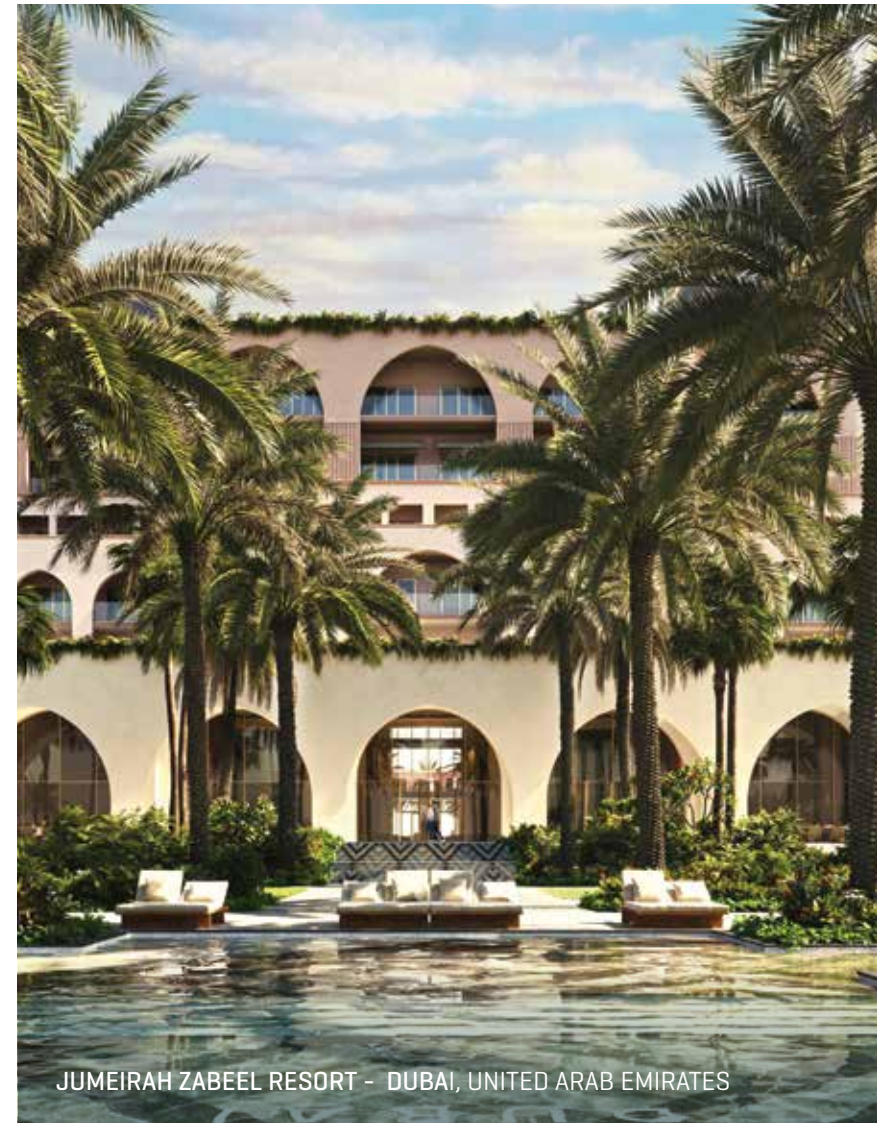
“The guest experience rules and as designers we must find a way to monetize it,” suggests Gagne. Ancillary revenue is a simple equation: the more you can offer a guest the better their experience will be – adding to more revenue generated. “By focusing on the lasting guest experience, not just the transactional check in and out, hoteliers can increase guest engagement and hotel performance.” From the obvious spa services, meeting space, food and beverage, to one-upped programmed activities like guided kayaking to uninhabited islands, personal submarine adventures, and hors d’oeuvres and champagne served waist-deep in the ocean at sunset, demand does not stop at lodging.”

This is true for new resorts as well as refurbishing existing properties. Shaping and informing the design of a successful property means maximizing a resort’s footprint in conjunction with amenities, operations, programming, and potential revenue sources. A successfully positioned property has the right balance of family-friendly offerings, active zones, health and wellness alternatives, flexible multi-functional spaces, and regional connectivity.

Based on target markets and growth plans, this reprioritization helped reimagine the Jumeirah Zabeel Resort. In a city known for its opulence, the design narrative focuses on a journey of discovery, iconic passages, and moments of reveal where program definitions are blurred. Spaces of relaxation, entertainment, engagement, and recreation are celebrated by desaturating major elements and emphasizing others as a means to balance nature, culture, and architecture. Spread across the resort landscape, a series of outdoor living areas are complimented by family, signature, and wellness centered poolscapes, verdant plantings, bold hardscapes, crafted and natural lighting, and purposeful gestures that reframe the resort with a layered design that maintains a sense of grandeur in combination with reinterpreted details, textures, and scales.

DOING MORE OF THE RIGHT THINGS

According to Wunderman Thompson Data, 79% of global consumers say they are interested in tips and advice from brands on how to live more sustainably. Conscious consumers have new eco-priorities that have travelers opting for more planet-first options. “The future of the hotel industry includes everyone doing more of the right things. Green principles are expected and being more



JUMEIRAH ZABEEL RESORT - DUBAI, UNITED ARAB EMIRATES

aware of the innate value of Mother Nature and what truly works for a site from an environmental, educational, and social perspective is a non-negotiable,” says Gagne. “If we can’t get that right, we’re not going to get anything right.”

Xishuangbanna, located in the Yunnan Province, was ranked one of the top three regions to visit in 2022 by Lonely Planet. Chosen for its topicality, unique experiences, ‘wow’ factor, and ongoing commitment to sustainable tourism practices, Xishuangbanna boasts the most intact tropical ecosystem in China. EDSA’s planning of the Anantara property is perfectly positioned to offer both adventure and tranquility in the unrivalled setting. Honoring the site’s holistic integrity, efforts focused on preserving the land and establishing an authentic cultural experience. Linking the site’s natural features, distinctive districts are situated along a circulation framework that prioritizes the use of alternative transportation and includes a tourism village hub, Cloud Valley (hotels, hilltop homes and villas), and Sky Lake (glamping/agro-tourism) alongside an adventure/education park.

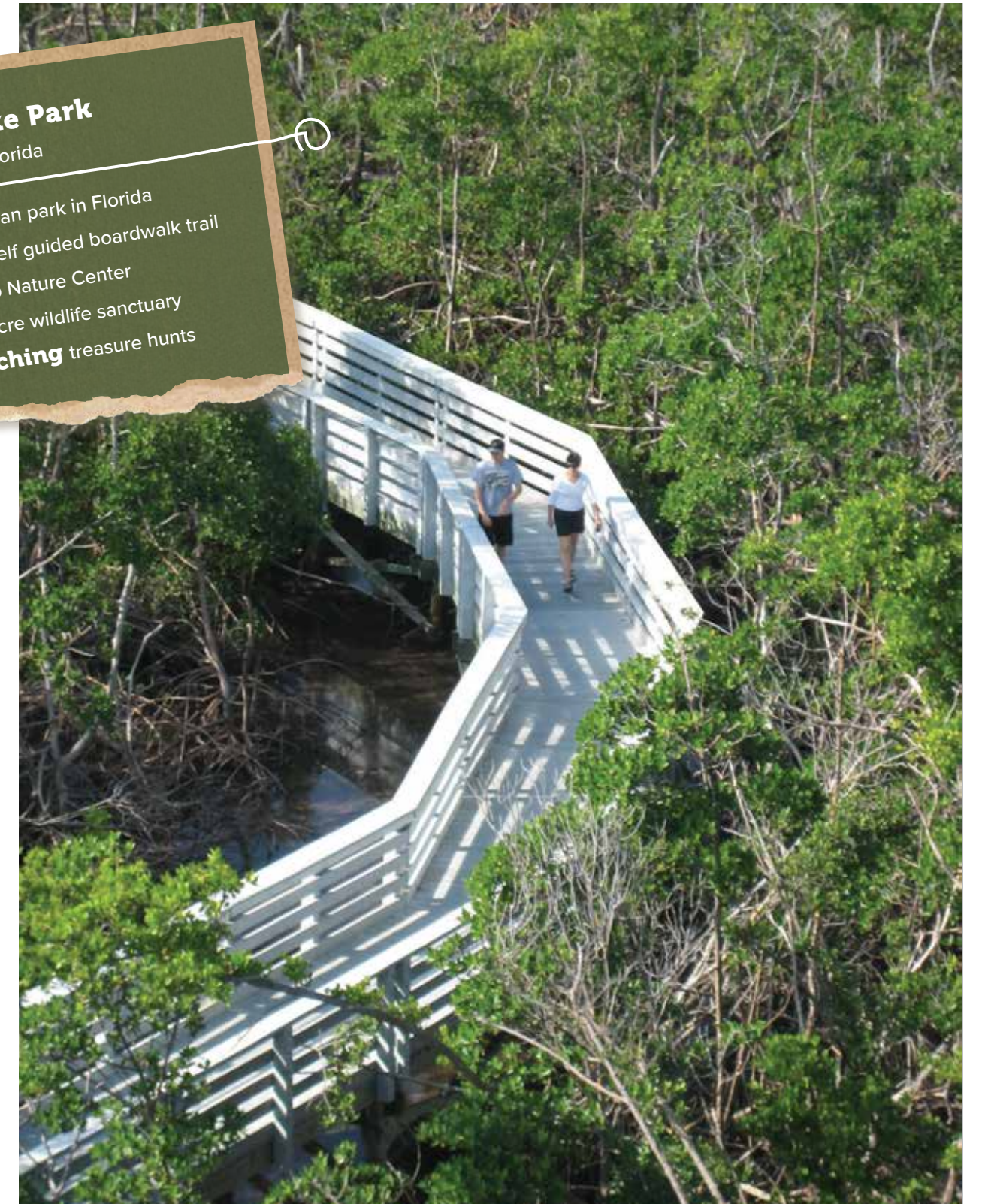
Though it has been said ‘the journey is more important than the destination’ the two cannot be separated. The quality of travel and memories made depend on the destination – what it offers and how it fulfills the expectations of guests and visitors alike. “Ultimately how and where we choose to vacation is a reflection of us, of our dreams and aspirations, it is a serious affair,” concludes Sugar. □

THE GREAT OUTDOORS

West Lake Park

Hollywood, Florida

- Largest urban park in Florida
- **3-mile** self guided boardwalk trail
- Anne Kolb Nature Center
- **1,500** acre wildlife sanctuary
- **Geocaching** treasure hunts



Exploring the Connection Between People and Nature

Is indoor entertainment replacing outdoor activity? A highly contentious question – debatable by the fact that most children today can identify one-hundred-plus corporate logos, and only ten plant and animal species native to their area. Even more staggering is a recently published article by the New England Journal of Medicine suggesting that for the first time in two centuries, the current generation of children may have shorter life expectancies than their parents.

“There’s a sense of curious freedom that comes from being outdoors,” suggests Kona Gray, a Principal at EDSA. “And while technology is remarkable, so too is the living environment including everyday nature with which we share our everyday lives.” However, this amazing aspect of the world’s wonders is becoming marginally experiential for many. When is the last time we worried about grass-stained knees on our children’s clothing, or had to stop our cars for a ball rolling into the street?

The Outdoors: Far from Outdated

Fortunately, over the past few decades, people have increased their passive and active association with the outdoors and that trend has accelerated with new preferences for the design and usage of open spaces. “While many have trumpeted increased home and property values with improved environmental connectivity and al fresco amenities, their greatest value lies in opportunities for recreational play, family bonding, fellowship with friends, and their collective impact on health and well-being,” offers Gray.

Today, some cities are activating communal spaces to best serve their multi-generational audiences with dining patios, waterfront promenades, and urban agriculture. In other cases, communities are allowing for a ‘rewilding’ of the land – restoring biodiversity and ecosystem health by protecting core areas. “For generations we have turned to the outdoors in pursuit of food, comfort, and joy and within those interactions our link to the land has been evolutionary, essential, and intrinsically part of human nature,” says Lianying Wang, EDSA Principal.

Recent global occurrences have elevated the reprogramming and reprioritization of opportunities and activities that offer flexibility and exposure to the outdoors. Adjusting to altered lifestyles, these spaces have become reflective of biophilic design practices, community wellness components, private nodes, and shared places. Wang advocates that “this is a welcome return to the restorative powers of spending time in the sunshine, breathing in fresh air, and a subtle sense of self-awareness that only nature can bring.”



Planning + Design Priorities

Tips for improving the daily interface between people and the outdoors:

- 1. Create Communal Spaces:** Gardens, playgrounds, dining terraces, multi-generational gatherings, seasonal accommodations
- 2. Suggest Lifestyle Programming:** Wellness trails, technology, adventure sports, active and passive uses, pocket parks, farmer's markets, deconstructed golf
- 3. Prioritize Preservation & Restoration:** Cluster development, bio-habitats, natural systems, regional context, drainage corridors, setbacks, topography
- 4. Plan for Calmainment:** Tree canopies, viewsheds, flexibility, water features, interactive elements, outdoor fitness, glamping
- 5. Design Welcoming Aesthetics:** Materiality, seating, surfacing, lighting, facilities, critical mass



“By understanding why people choose to be outdoors, we are better able to provide amenities, spaces, and programming that strengthens the bond between people and nature.”

- Courtney Moore



Designed By Nature

People are social beings and tend to embrace green spaces as fixtures in their memories where the sights, smells, and details in nature create positive, sensory feelings. This rise of ‘calmainment’ is bringing greater attention to the value of national parks, neighborhood public realm, and natural systems. According to Wang, “being present in nature allows for reflection, active recreation, contemplation, and letting the mind run wild.”

Courtney Moore, a Principal in EDSA's new Raleigh office agrees. “From the mass of a forested canopy to the unique pattern of a single leaf, nature’s presence is ever changing with remarkable variations and a timeline that can’t be rushed.” What one person sees as a place to play, another may see as a space for relaxation, while still others may find something unexpected or educational. “As designers, we can improve nature’s interface with people and create places that not only encourage interactions but provide reasons for people to stay and unleash their curiosity and sense of exploration and observation.”

Moore goes on to explain how regional context helps further guide the design process. In example, urban dwellers celebrate all kinds of green, open spaces – whether it’s pocket parks, hidden gardens, or lushly planted rooftops, playgrounds, and anything in between. As such, the programming and design of these outdoor spaces must mesh with everyday life, facilitate pedestrian connectivity, and offer alternatives that align with seasonal changes and weather patterns.

In contrast, those who live in the suburbs or rural settings have greater access to lakes, woods, mountains, and the countryside. It then becomes the job of landscape architects to preserve and protect these natural features while growing the intended audience by creating the unexpected. “By understanding why people choose to be outdoors,” Moore shares, “we are better able to provide amenities, spaces, and programming that strengthens the bond between people and nature.”

For the proposed Forested Trail Village in Raleigh, North Carolina, the community is looking to strike a balance between various outdoor perspectives by coalescing an urban setting, greenway connections, and proximity to William B. Umstead State Park into a united location. The land owned by Raleigh-Durham Airport Authority represents a unique opportunity to create a world class destination that highlights natural and cultural regional resources.

Nestled into the existing terrain, the conceptualized eco-recreation village prioritizes natural systems, intrinsic on-site amenities, and indoor/outdoor transitions. Focused on active recreation and community appeal, the development program could potentially add 50 miles of forested trails and four million square feet of commercial space to the metro-suburban area.



FOUR SEASONS - OKINAWA, JAPAN

RV Lifestyle/Glamping

- Estimated market value at **\$4.8 billion**
- Family and enterprise travel
- Nature destinations
- Amenities are a distinguisher
- In the last 2 years, **40 million** people took RV trips

From Good to Great

While much of the natural world is beautiful and compelling just as it sits, true stewardship requires a closer look at outcomes that protect, preserve, and restore landforms and ecosystems. According to Gray, “Pleasing aesthetics are only one aspect of a project’s success. Thoughtful and meaningful design should make communities more resilient, respectful of its constituents, and considerate of positive environmental, economic, and social impact.”

This intentional regard for form, function, and curious observation is well illustrated by the ecological town of Springwoods in Heyuan, China. Founded by Chinese entrepreneur, Deying Guo, the resort-like community is situated in a picturesque valley and designed to attract guests with similar philosophies towards appreciating nature.

A regional alternative to city life, residences are surrounded by a sequence of immersive outdoor encounters and varying levels of programmed trails that encourage spontaneous interactions. Allowing for a dialog with nature, the mountainous slope and stepped topography serve as a framework for housing density and placement of outdoor amphitheaters, viewing lawns, tea gardens, spiritual buildings, and art lounges that support a pedestrian network. The green infrastructure invites engagement with properly distanced stopping points, programmed events, and nodes for exploration and adventure. Wang comments, “The special ingredient is flexibility – allowing the interactions, behaviors, and habits of those using the space to transform and adapt it for their particular purpose.”



SPRINGWOODS VILLAGE- HEYUAN, CHINA

In a similar fashion, glamping destinations and RV Parks are introducing new ways for travelers to connect with nature outside of a traditional resort experience. These properties are capitalizing on their best resource – nature itself. Woven into the public realm, natural waterways and foot trails add to amenitized spaces without distracting from the authentic outdoor experience. “Campers need not sacrifice comfort to reconnect with nature. They simply have to shift to a ‘less is more’ perspective,” explains Moore. “These are one-of-a-kind opportunities to be totally immersed in the surroundings, so we pay attention to views, drainage corridors, setbacks, and renourished spaces – turning them into assets for activities, entertainment, socialization, and contemplation.”

Founded on three unique landmarks (Elkhorn Creek, Rolling Hills of the Central Bluegrass, and the Karst Geology), Elkwood Farms in Midway, Kentucky is being transformed into a tourist destination. With thoughtfully sited motorcoach sites and cottages along with locally inspired food and beverage offerings, an aquatic park, play and sports areas, amphitheater, extensive trail system, and challenge course, the local tapestry and culture will be incorporated throughout the resort. Inviting a level of uncertainty that leads to excitement, natural breezes, tree canopies for shade, spacious grounds for exploring, and technology for reliable connectivity, the property will capture the unique, regionally recognized landmarks within the landscape and showcase nature as a means to promote tourism and grow the overall economy.



ELKWOOD FARMS - MIDWAY, KENTUCKY

“Respecting and treasuring the outdoors is an exercise in taking the time to slow down, turn around, look behind you, focus on enjoyment, and absorb your surroundings.”

- Kona Gray

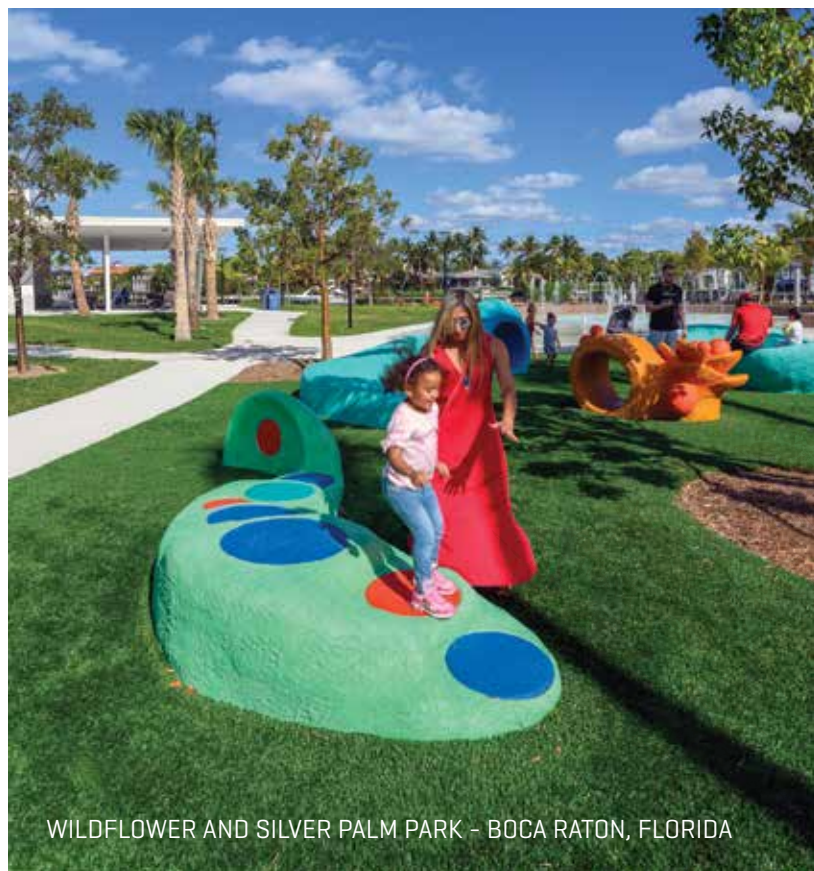


Seeing Beyond Green

Programming, flexibility, and authenticity are all important facets of a great outdoor experience, but they matter little without foundations in preservation. “Sustainability matters more than ever, and we must consider how we effect and impact the ecosystems of each site we touch,” suggests Moore. “You’ll see water conservation, re-use, and stormwater capture driving a lot of design decisions these days,” he shares. Additionally, habitat restoration, place-based design, and waste management are topics that cannot be ignored during the design process. Nor can the attributes of the site itself and the region’s natural resources, weather patterns, and micro-macro systems. “The ultimate goal is to reduce infrastructure cost by working with the land instead of against it. In doing so, we also improve resiliency for the entire area.”

In addition to awareness and responsibility, Gray suggests there must also be an appreciation for the natural world at its purest. “Respecting and treasuring the outdoors is an exercise in taking the time to slow down, turn around, look behind you, focus on enjoyment, and absorb your surroundings. Our role as landscape architects is to improve humanity’s interaction with nature in ways that honor the environment.”

Perhaps it is a community park for family picnics, soccer games, or where you’ll watch your children roast their first s’mores. Or is it a pond to fish in, open lawn for playing catch or building a fort? Maybe it’s a place to watch the birds, observe butterflies fluttering about, or getting dirty planting and tending a garden together. Or better yet, maybe it’s a teaching experience that ignites a passion to learn about the environment and nature’s precious resources.



WILDFLOWER AND SILVER PALM PARK - BOCA RATON, FLORIDA



El Portal de El Yunque

Rio Grande, Puerto Rico

- Encompasses more than **28,000** acres of land
- Interpretive and educational programs
- **200+** species of tropical trees and fauna
- Waterfall hikes and immersion trails
- **600,000** annual visitors



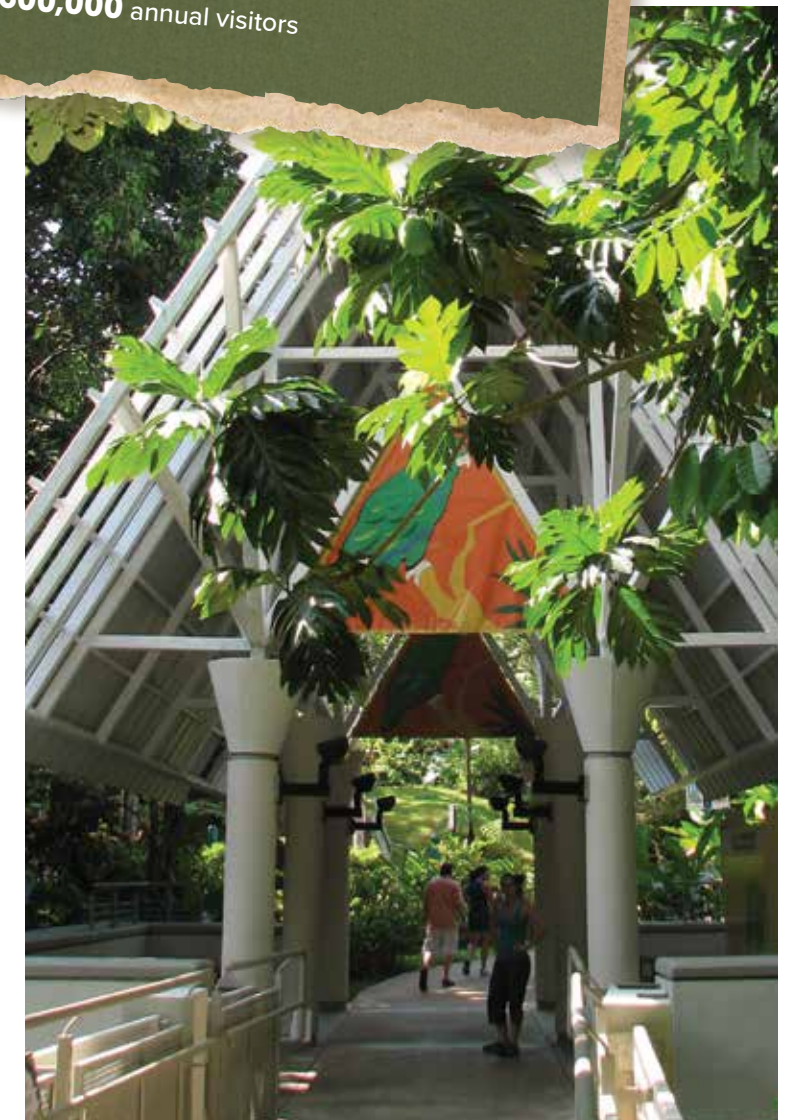
“Being in nature allows for reflection, active recreation, contemplation, and letting the mind run wild.”

- Lianying Wang

Educating others on the importance of conservation, stewardship, and proper use of our natural resources can be experienced every day as well as through interpretive centers. The El Portal Tropical Forest Center is a model headquarters for ecotourism and training. Built to educate those concerned about the well-being of the Caribbean National Forest and preserving the unique tropical forest heritage, the entry experience begins atop an elevated walkway that unites the facility with the surrounding forest and provides views to the mountain peaks, ocean, and reforested terrain. Contoured roadways were designed to save existing trees and lead visitors to a 9,000 square foot exhibit hall, classrooms, and laboratories.

Whether a neighborhood park or exploration of the vast landscapes of national forests and grasslands, there are benefits to be had when we step outside. Architect Frank Lloyd Wright said, “I go to nature every day for inspiration in the day’s work.” And we would do well to heed his advice.

“With a history beyond ourselves, we must appreciate the value of nature and how we choose to engage with it,” says Moore. Wang adds, “At EDSA, we have always focused on creating engaging outdoor spaces, but now see an elevated responsibility to diversify their functionality, increase utilization, and sustain healthy behavior.” And in closing, Gray recommends we all do our part, “Take on the challenge – smell, touch, and listen to the subtle yet complex harmony of our outdoor world and do so intentionally.”



COLLECTIVE BEING

- 10 - JORDAN CHIANG**
People! Those we work with and their variety of skills and knowledge, along with those who inhabit the spaces we design.
- 11 - LUIS LOAIZA**
Camaraderie. Sharing and listening to the thoughts of colleagues, friends, and experts opens a new window for great solutions.
- 12 - JEFF SUITER**
Family and friends!
- 13 - CARMEN BELMAR**
Team work and learning from others.
- 14 - EMMANUELLE TREVIÑO**
The people that surround me, colleagues, friends, and family.



12



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EXPLORATION

- 22 - MIHAELA ZAHARESCU**
Travel
- 23 - YUZHE ZHANG**
Open Maps
- 24 - JOANNA IBARRA**
Discovery

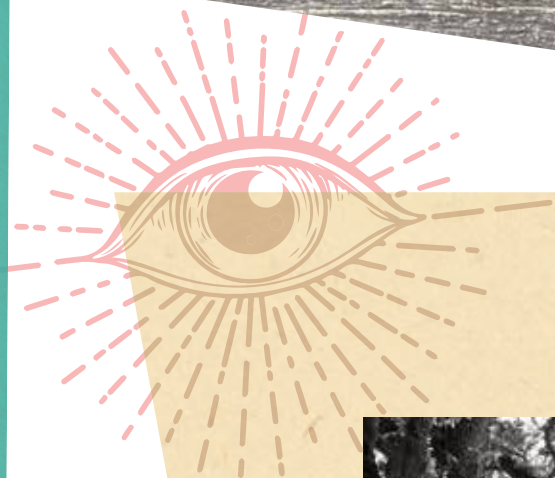


MUSIC

- 25 - PAUL TAYLOR**
Musical scores – they help me convey a story or a feeling when I'm designing. It just adds another layer to my creative mind.
- 26 - TOMAS JALIL**
Music inspires me on my journey towards design.

ELEMENTS OF DESIGN

- 15 - CATALINA FACUNDO**
Design inspires me! When I experience and understand a place and its relationship to the program at hand, it translates into an exciting design that incorporates geometry, shape, and patterns.
- 16 - YVONNE MAHER**
Fabric! I could spend hours in a fabric store or an online site looking at all the colors, patterns, and textures (and I don't even sew)!
- 17 - MATT YOUST**
Designing spaces that provide an emotional connection to people where they can create lifelong memories. It's the most rewarding and inspirational part of any project, and my career.



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HUMANITY'S LESSONS

- 18 - RABIA IMRAN**
The ability to say 'yes'! It lets me uncover new realities, gain new experiences, and expand my perspectives.
- 19 - GABRIELA PATOCCHI**
Gratitude. If you are grateful, you are happy. If you are happy, you can project it into your designs.
- 20 - SHUVO DATTA**
The notion of 'facts' and 'emptiness'. A 'fact', which turns to an 'artifact', makes our creative answers more rational and realistic. 'Emptiness' gives us the right space to think about best available tools to portray our thoughts.
- 21 - NAFE GENG**
Moments inspire me. As the designers and users of space, we seek the beautiful moments that make us feel something.



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A group of people are kayaking on a river. In the foreground, two people are in a green and grey kayak, paddling away from the camera. Another kayak is visible to the right. In the background, a dam is visible on the river, and the banks are lined with dense green trees and palm trees. The sky is blue with some clouds.

Many thanks to our amazing and incredibly hardworking EDSA family for their efforts in helping bring our magazine to life. We hope you enjoyed reading it as much as we did making it!

- The EDSA Marketing Team



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