

The Park at LAKE SHORE EAST: A PLACE TO STROLL, LINGER, AND PLAY

As one of the emerging landscape architects of our time, Jim Burnett, FASLA, has a strong passion for creating meaningful landscapes that are active, creative, and have a timeless sensibility to them. Whether it's a corporate headquarters, a hospital, or an urban park, The Office of James Burnett (OJB) strives to create environments that people use and enjoy on a daily basis.



Case Study: The Office of James Burnett

Since the firm's founding in Houston in 1989, and the 2003 opening of a second office in Solana Beach, CA, OJB has garnered more than 50 state and national awards for projects consistently cited for design excellence. The firm's landscapes have a strong practicality to them and often relate to the rhythm of the architecture while weaving in unforgettable sensory experiences with a creative and unique plant palette. This dialogue enables OJB to create environments that are stimulating and fresh no matter how many times you visit or what time of the year.

"We're lucky that our clients believe in the value of quality design," says OJB's Principal and Landscape Architect Kyle Fiddelke, ASLA. "We are brought on at the very beginning of the project to generate ideas with the architect on how the landscape and the building will interface. Having a strong, seamless dialogue between the two disciplines creates so much value for the project."

Connecting to the Outdoors

Fiddelke joined OJB in 1997, when the firm worked primarily on large healthcare projects. Designing restorative gardens was meaningful work because of the physical and mental healing effects on patients who utilized the spaces. As the years passed by, the firm's work expanded into other areas, including academic, urban design and planning, parks and gardens, office, and residential—with an ever-present passion for high-quality design while maintaining the positive effects learned in healthcare design.

The Park at Lakeshore East, located in Chicago where the Chicago River meets Lake Michigan, was one of OJB's first notable projects built outside of Houston. The property had taken on several identities over time, including an Illinois Central railroad freight yard and terminus, and, more recently, a par-three, nine-hole golf course. OJB got involved on the project through its existing relationship with the internationally recognized, Chicago-based design firm of Skidmore, Owings & Merrill LLP (SOM). The project's developer had hired SOM to develop a master plan for the 28-acre, mixed-use project, which included a park as the focal point of the development.

A \$4 billion plan was set in motion to create a high-density residential community in the heart of downtown with a six-acre park that would

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The Office of James Burnett*



The six-acre Park at Lakeshore East functions as the neighborhood's focus, connecting the surrounding hi-rises and commercial and retail spaces encompassing the broader, 28-acre, mixed-use project.

function as the neighborhood's heart. This park connected the master plan's varied components, including hi-rises for 4,950 residences, 2.2 million gross square feet of commercial space, 1,500 hotel rooms, and 770,000 square feet of retail space. OJB's task was to examine the master plan and program a high-end, residential open space. "We didn't think this project was going to become a reality as swiftly as it did, but the developers wanted to move as quickly as possible, and we were retained to take the park to the next stages of design and construction," says Fiddelke.

The park's design and installation occurred early in the development process to entice potential homeowners and businesses to the area. "Chicago places a high value on green spaces, so the park had to be the first thing built before the City would issue a certificate of occupancy of any of the Lakeshore East buildings," says OJB Vice President Nathan Elliott, ASLA, LEED. "And because of the park's prominence, we had a wonderful opportunity to set the tone for the project."

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The goal was to create a front yard for the development rich with materials and program, so the residents saw the space as an extension of their homes. They used Vectorworks® Landmark software from start to finish in the design process to create a powerful and intriguing design.

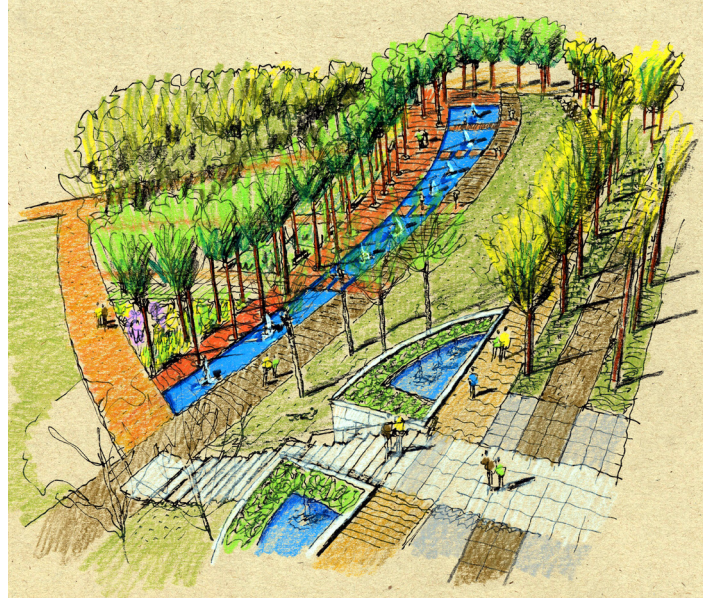
Today, hidden among the towering skyscrapers, The Park at Lakeshore East contains hundreds of trees and more than 100 different varieties of perennials, grasses, and flowers. A great lawn stretches from one end of the park to the other, offering recreational opportunities and a place to hold farmers' markets and festivals on the weekends. Arching walkways intersect the park, creating rooms for botanical gardens, sparkling water features, a children's playground, and even a dog park. The resulting experience is just as dazzling to the senses as it is to the eyes.

"Interestingly enough, developers thought the hi-rise units facing the lake would be the most valuable and sell the fastest, but the reverse happened once prospective buyers saw the park," Elliott adds. "The park-facing units sold out first, forcing a swift change in marketing and pricing strategies to bring the development to full occupancy. That was great to see."

Award-Winning Design Enhances a Community

Prospective buyers weren't the only people wowed by the park. In fact, the project has received numerous awards since its 2005 dedication:

- 2008 American Architecture Awards - The Chicago Athenaeum Museum of Architecture and Design
- 2008 Mayor Richard M. Daley's Landscape Award for Specialized Gardens
- 2006's Best New Park - *Chicago Magazine*
- Best New Open Space award - Friends of Downtown
- Best of the Best 2005 award - *Midwest Construction* magazine
- 2005 American Society of Landscape Architect Award

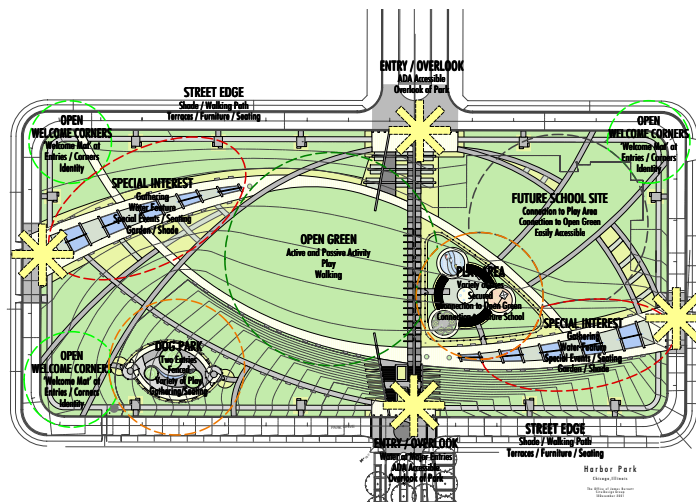


Designers began the creative process by hand sketching their ideas on paper before exploring those ideas in Vectorworks software.

"We've won a lot of awards, but our greatest satisfaction is in seeing people use the spaces we've designed," comments Fiddelke. This sentiment is felt throughout both OJB offices, which can be characterized as energetic environments where everyone wears multiple hats. "We learn together and everyone chips in," says Elliott. "No one is pigeon-holed, and staff members bring a nice mix of cultural and educational backgrounds to the table, ensuring the ongoing vitality of our work."

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– Kyle Fiddelke, ASLA, Principal and Landscape Architect,
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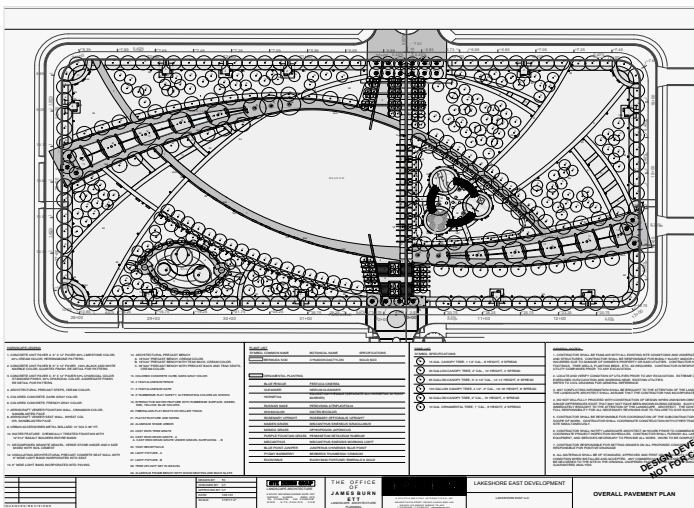
The software enables designers to diagram design concepts and readily adjust them throughout the creative process.

Elliott describes the staff as being very dedicated. "No one sees this as a nine to five job," he says. "That's not to say we're workaholics; rather, it says we're passionate about our work. We strive to make sure the projects we do are publishable, will make a difference in peoples' lives, and are something we would be proud to take our kids or parents to enjoy."

The firm is eager to keep looking toward the future and is actively engaged in several exciting projects. "Every year when we think we can't do something bigger or better, something new comes along," teases Fiddelke. We can't wait to see what comes next out of this inspirational firm. We'll certainly be watching.



Active lawns and walkways connect the hundreds of trees and more than 100 different varieties of perennials, grasses, and flowers featured at the park.



The embedded plant database within Vectorworks Landmark software allows designers to apply different plant materials to their site designs.

OJB Gets Technical

When Kyle Fiddelke joined OJB in 1997, the firm was a studio of five people who worked out of a small office above a Houston restaurant. The space may have lacked frills and inspiration, but that didn't stop the team from impressing clients with their designs. At the time, OJB's graphical toolkit relied exclusively on hand drawings, but employees would soon leap into applying a new workflow based on Vectorworks Landmark software to create and document their memorable landscapes.

Today, the firm's landscape architects and designers use the program to help them through the process of making their visions a reality.

"I work through designs in Vectorworks; it's how I'm wired," notes Fiddelke. "Some of my industry peers still hand sketch on trace paper, but I go right into Vectorworks. In that workspace, I can easily manipulate, overlay, and enlist our custom library of preferred plant symbols and color palette to achieve each design. I know the way my plan is going to look when I'm done, and that gives me great comfort."

That OJB style Fiddelke speaks about is enhanced with a series of customized shapes the firm set up within the software that gives its plans a personalized look. "We try to keep our palette simple because we want plans that are easy to understand," he adds.

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For The Park at Lakeshore East, the firm set its own schedule and deadlines and created all project drawings using the software. It documented the entire park in the Vectorworks Landmark program all the way to construction documents before turning them over for final documentation and administration by a local team in Chicago. "Our role was to establish the design intent, so the Vectorworks technology worked perfectly. It did exactly what we needed it to do."

Senior Associate Ryan Harrison, ASLA, confirms Fiddelke's assessment, drawing attention to two tools, in particular, that speed his workflow. The first is the Select Similar tool, which lets him identify similar object types in one simple click, regardless of layer or class. The shortcut is particularly useful for master plans and identifying tree counts, and avoids an otherwise laborious shift/click process.



Clean, crisp graphics are a hallmark of the Office of James Burnett's site plans.

Harrison also enjoys the ability to create and measure a new polygon based on the inner boundary of existing geometry. He does this using the program's 2D Polygon tool and the Inner Boundary (i.e., "paint bucket") mode. Harrison uses the tool regularly because he can get the geometry or square footage of an area immediately without having to trace it for the purpose of material takeoffs.

Such built-in graphics techniques are a timesaver for the OJB team. "The speed at which we can produce scalable drawings and rendered plans of a landscape is invaluable," Harrison says. "I also appreciate being able to go from illustrative schematics to construction documents—all in one program—and I'm thrilled my concepts do not look like construction documents."

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