

Texas Architect

Texas Society of Architects: The Voice for Texas Architecture



2016 Studio Awards

The Texas Society of Architects Studio Awards Program recognizes real or theoretical unbuilt projects that demonstrate excellence in design. Submissions from students and practitioners are judged on equal footing, and projects of all types are considered together. Each year, the jury sifts through the entries looking for standouts that embody strong ideas critical to contemporary practice, resolve them thoroughly, and present them clearly.

The 2016 Studio Awards jurors met on Wednesday, August 17, at the New York City office of Diller Scofidio + Renfro to deliberate 45 entries representing a wide swath of project types — everything from bathhouses to prison complexes. The jury comprised three DS+R architects:



Charles Renfro
AIA, principal
DS+R, Rice School of
Architecture alumnus,
native of Baytown



Brian Tabolt
associate DS+R, assis-
tant professor adjunct at
Cooper Union, visiting
critic at Syracuse NYC,
and a 2009-10 Peter
Reyner Banham Fellow



Sean Gallagher
senior associate,
director of sustain-
able design DS+R,
and faculty Columbia
University Graduate
School of Architec-
ture, Planning and
Preservation

A Word from Charles Renfro:

It was a pleasure and honor to jury the Texas Society of Architects Studio Awards. As a Texan and Rice alumnus, I keep close tabs on the work being done in the state and have been pleased to see the Texas architectural scene emerging on the world stage. I also remember, growing up in the 1970s in Houston, the absurd ambition of many of the projects that surrounded me. The Astrodome — an air-conditioned stadium. How amazing! Its neighbor, AstroWorld — an air-conditioned amusement park. Who woulda thought?!

These may not be the most environmentally or urbanistically sensitive projects, but they made the mythology of Texas real. While we have paused to understand how our work fits into the ecology of our cities and our world, I encourage architects in Texas (a distinction I include myself in) to keep the myth of Texas alive. There are few places in the world that can claim as much diversity, education, capital, land, ambition, and pride as Texas. This stew should give rise to some of the most compelling architecture and urbanism of the 21st century. The following projects are examples of such an ambition. Congratulations to the winners.



Confluence Park, San Antonio

Lake|Flato, San Antonio

From the Jury:

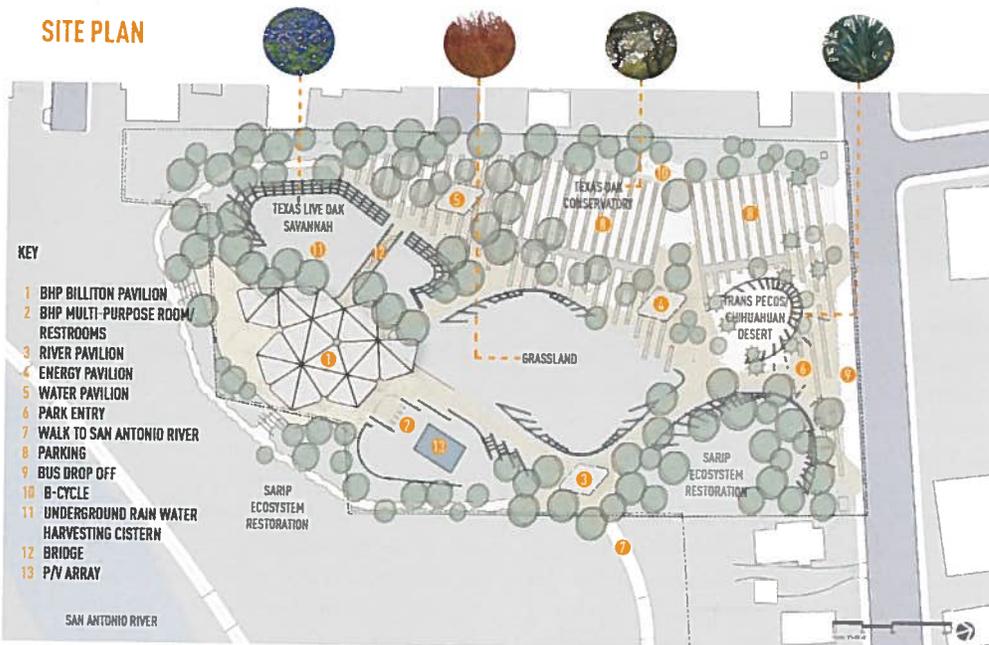
The fluid shapes of these pavilions have been with us since the height of postwar Modernism, but they are unexpected in a public park. Parks are places that should be architecturally aspirational to introduce great design to a broad swath of the population.

Confluence Park provides a unique opportunity to celebrate the ecology of the South Texas region, demonstrate the value of natural resources, and foster environmental stewardship and education in a traditionally underserved area adjoining the San Antonio River.

With education as its core purpose, Confluence Park is an intricate teaching tool that will inspire our community to become more involved with the river and practice sustainable habits while gaining a greater understanding of Texas ecotypes. At every corner, visitors will find an opportunity to learn through observation, engagement, and active participation. Play areas are designed for learning and exploration. A photovoltaic array provides 100 percent of the energy use for the project on a yearly basis. A site-wide water catchment system collects rainwater and feeds it into an underground water storage tank. The BHP Billiton Pavilion provides shade and shelter while simultaneously helping visitors understand both the cycle of water at Confluence Park and how this cycle relates directly to the San Antonio River Watershed. The pavilion speaks of the confluence of water systems and is oriented to point directly toward the junction of the San Antonio River and San Pedro Creek.



SITE PLAN



Programmatic elements and educational features include opportunities to experience and learn more about five ecotypes that occur in the region: the Grassland ecotype, the Trans Pecos / Chihuahuan Desert ecotype, the Texas Oak Conservatory ecotype, the Texas Live Oak Savannah, and the San Antonio River Improvement Project (SARIP) ecotype — the species of plants to be used along the river as part of the San Antonio River Authority's ongoing restoration project.