

## New Park Concept for Queens Botanical Garden, New York

Our societies are becoming more and more complex. But in the urban homogeneity and anonymity of the melting pot, is there space for true identity?

Queens is a New York City borough topped and tailed by New York's two busy airports, JFK and La Guardia. There are 142 officially registered spoken languages in the borough. Ethnic richness is readily visible in the bustling high street, a world market of faces, fruits and foods. Queens Botanical Garden is much beloved by local residents. It offers a quiet corner for morning Tai' Chi, beehives for a Russian bee keeper, facilities for a Korean flower exhibition and a romantic setting for an elaborate Hispanic wedding. Its general state of dilapidation was completely unreflective of its significance to local residents.

Queens Botanical Garden offers encounters not only with the plants of the world but also with its peoples. A public workshop invited residents, local businesses and users to get involved in the design process for the new park concept right from the start. Water was identified as a key theme which, through its essentialness for life, bonds people and cultures and the environmental reality of the Garden itself.

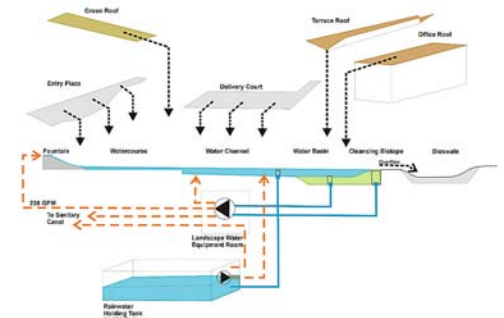
A master plan was developed taking into account new programming needs. The stormwater management plan is interactive, actively dealing with soil contamination management, new infrastructure, restoration of existing garden elements and siting of the new water gardens. These water gardens are thematically expressive of cultural identities and functionally active elements of the stormwater management system.

Funding for Phase 1 allowed for construction of a new green parking lot, and a new administration building. The green parking lot has contoured fingers of park which extend in from the Garden

and define the parking lanes. They are naturally planted and act as stormwater retention swales. A large area of meadow has a special soil substrate and under drainage to accommodate overflow parking for big events. The new administration building melts into a surrounding landscape of native North American plants. A green roof, and rain and grey water systems demonstrate quite conspicuously how principles of green building can be put into practice. The administration building and landscapes received a LEED Platinum rating, not least because of the advanced water concept.

The typical role of water for functions like cleaning, transport and waste disposal reduces the interplay of water in our lives to simplified and imprecise images. Sustainable water resource management combines aesthetic appeal and technological transparency while making a significant 'green' space contribution to our urban environments. At Queens Botanical Garden Atelier Dreiseitl went a logical step further by proposing a design that looks to express dynamic synergies between the environmental importance, cultural traditions and spiritual practices of water. Queens Botanical Garden contains ideas for a neighbourhood garden thinking on a global scale.

Administration Rainwater System Overview July 2003



The water management concept is revolutionary for New York City and was a major aspect of the platinum LEED Certification of the project. Individual gardens are based on different cultural water themes and offer space for activity and relaxation. Water design and integration with the park were key design criteria for the new administration building.



World cultures are an intrinsic part of New York City's borough Queens. Public workshops engaged local residents playfully and contributed to the overall park concept. Water experiments made participants more sensitive to design issues.

