

# Steve Austin

## Land Design

For over 30 years, I've been fortunate to be able to combine my passions for design, community, and the environment into the creation of authentic places. I've worked at a wide variety of scales and contexts, and I've always been committed to practicing inclusive, creative problem solving.

Perhaps my primary value has been in translating client and community desires into results that do three things:

- respect environmental and fiscal limits;
- respond to social and environmental context in meaningful, expressive ways; and,
- create lasting beauty which lends dignity and humanity to individuals and communities.

I accomplish these results by:

- using local materials;
- working with artists and craftspeople;
- working for habitat creation and ecosystem restoration by thinking beyond the artificial boundaries of site; and,
- using design techniques to connect people to each other and the earth.

My work in land design has been only a part of my contribution over my career. I have extensive experience in community planning and neighborhood development, community organizing, and teaching. That work is reflected in my other portfolios.

This portfolio reflects examples of the range of my work on:

- Gardens
- Trails
- Urban Design
- Residences

Hopefully, I've been able to bring joy and meaning to the people who have experienced my work.





# GARDENS

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1987-2018



## Yuko en on Elkhorn

This Garden commemorates the sister-city relationship between Tahara Cho, Japan and Georgetown, and reflects the importance of Toyota Motor Manufacturing to both cities. "Yuko en" literally means "Friendship Garden."

I've studied Japanese gardens in Japan and the U.S. and I was responsible for the design of the five-acre Garden and for conceptualizing all structures. My concept was to combine traditional Japanese design principles with native Kentucky materials. I took much of my inspiration from the Zen poet Hanshan, who's Cold Mountain set of poems to me described both the process and result of designing the Garden.

The Garden is used extensively by individuals, school children, and for public events such as the International Kite Festival.

Georgetown, Ky

*The moss is slippery though there's been no rain  
The pines signs, though there's no wind  
Who can leap the world's ties  
And sit with me among the white clouds?*

Hanshan



## Yuko en on Elkhorn

I created a series of watercolor paintings to guide the development of the garden. In doing so, I wanted to create a sense of what the garden should be, and felt that too strong of a two dimensional plan would be counterproductive; the Garden would help with it's own creation. Prints of these paintings were later sold to raise funds for the Garden.

I was inspired by the Chinese Buddhist Poet Hanshan's series of poems describing



## Georgetown, Ky

"Cold Mountain" which is a metaphorical journey. Reading those poems provided me a set of scenes the garden could reveal. Those scenes are found in the following pages.

Very briefly, the guiding principles I developed for the Garden were asymmetry and contradiction, sequential experiences – never seeing the whole -, simplicity and restraint, multi-sensual and evolving.



## Yuko en on Elkhorn

Georgetown, Ky

This gate was inspired by the main gate at the Portland, Oregon Japanese Garden, where I spent an entire day studying only the gate. I incorporated a Kentucky sensitivity to the structure with simplicity and honesty of materials. I had two goals for the entry sequence: one, to help people leave "the world" behind, and two, to create a sense of anticipation of entering the Garden by ensuring that no views were revealed.

*My door blends with the color of the peaks  
Hanshan*



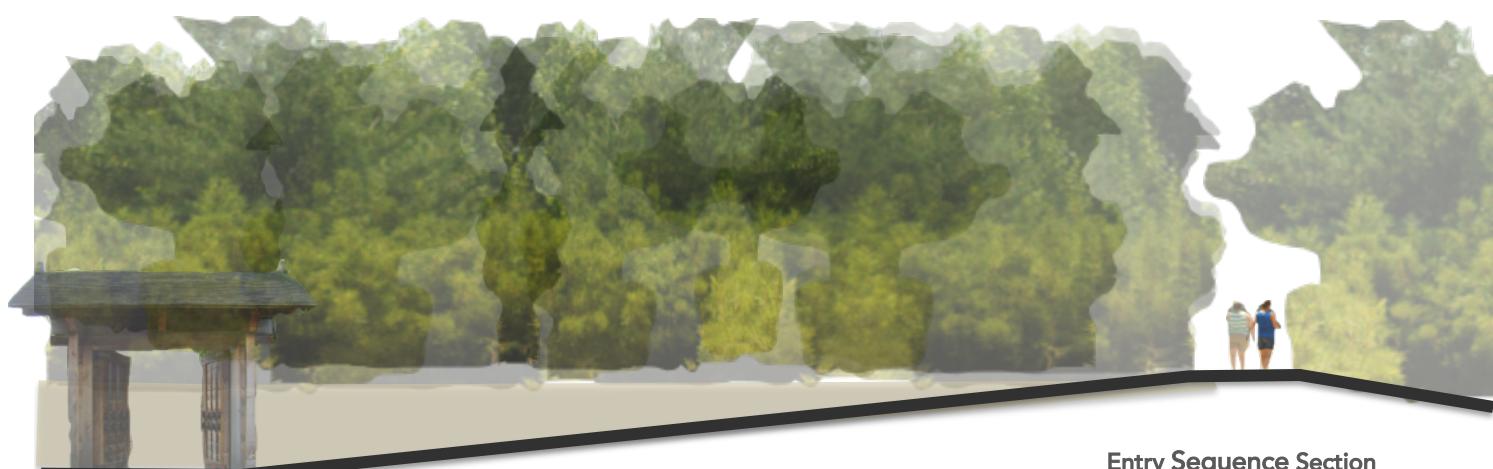


## Yuko en on Elkhorn

The entry sequence is key to setting up the Garden experience. Visitors enter the gate at a low point and then follows a shrouded path upward – a spiritual sense - and having at no point any other view of the Garden. Once at the top, the path turns to reveal glimpses of the Garden.

Georgetown, Ky

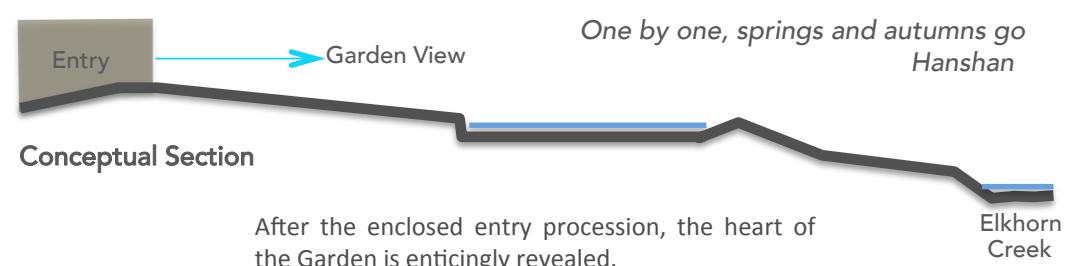
*There are roads but they do not reach the world*  
Hanshan



Entry Sequence Section

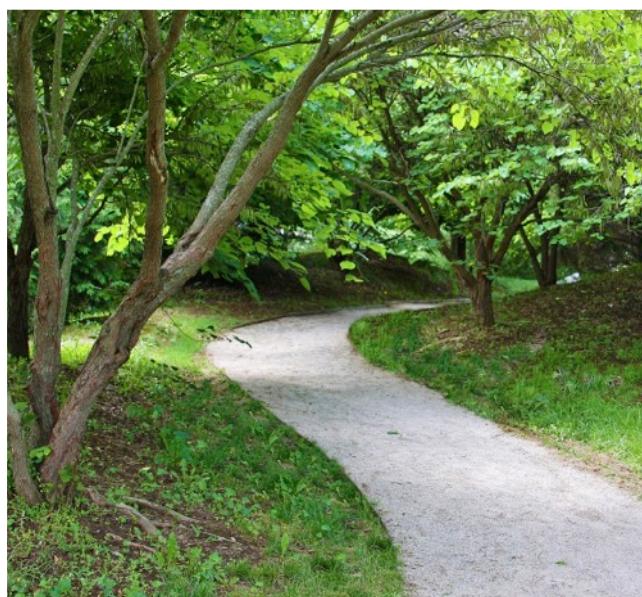


## Yuko en on Elkhorn Georgetown, Ky





## Yuko en on Elkhorn

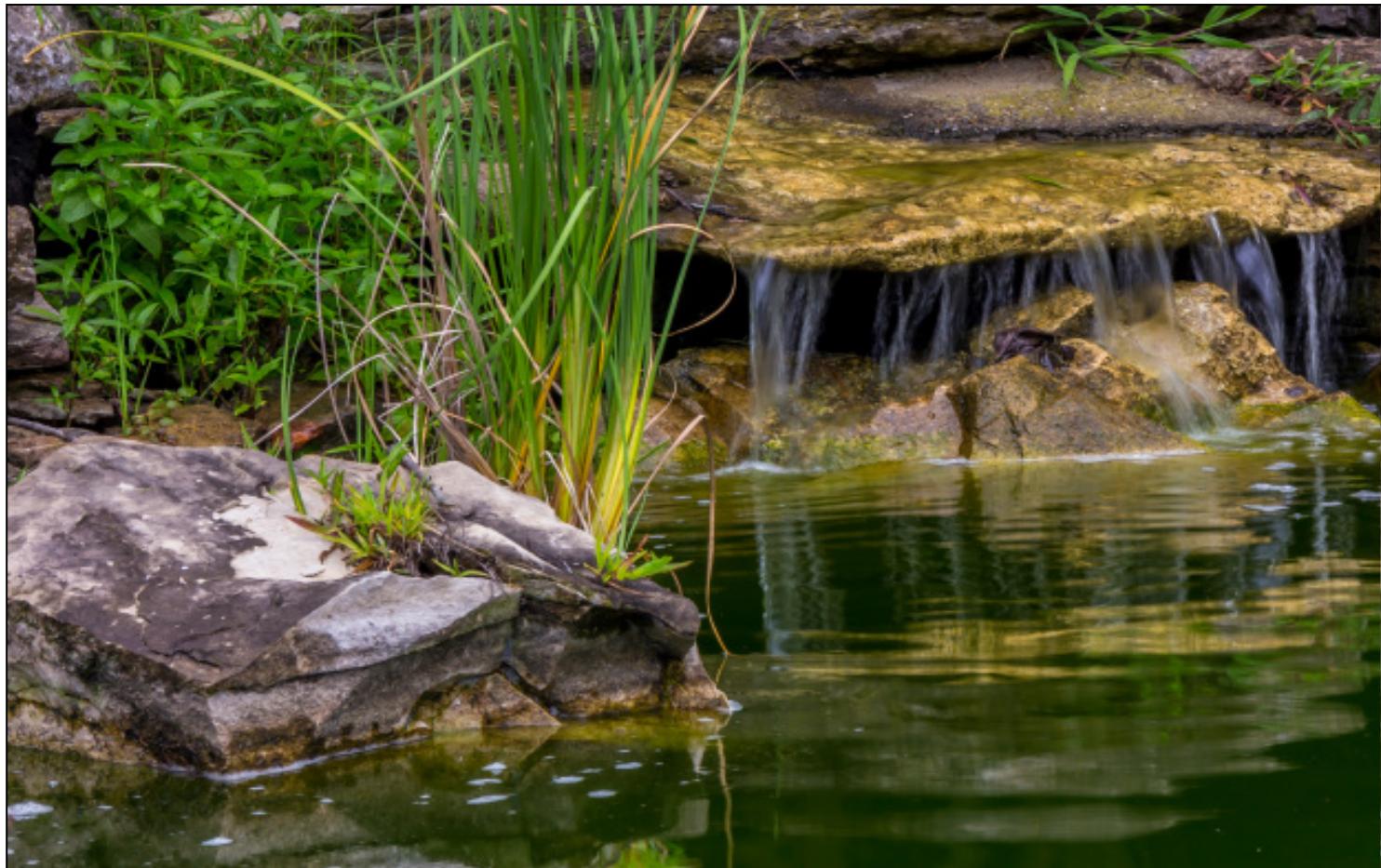


## Georgetown, Ky

*I followed the emerald stream  
Explored a thousand tiers of green cliffs...*

*...Happy to pillow my head on the rock  
I leave heaven and earth to endless change  
Hanshan*

These passages suggest that the Garden should provide invitations to journey, physically and otherwise. The idea of never being able to see the whole in this Garden enhances that.



## Yuko en on Elkhorn

Georgetown, Ky

*Dig a pond and lead a trickle from the brook  
Hanshan*

This passage invites us to commune with water, an essential part of existence and another way to add life and joy to a garden.



Yuko en on Elkhorn

Georgetown, Ky

*Tigers and deer , re my companions*  
Hanshan

This passage reminds us to design for all life, not just humans. We are not complete otherwise.

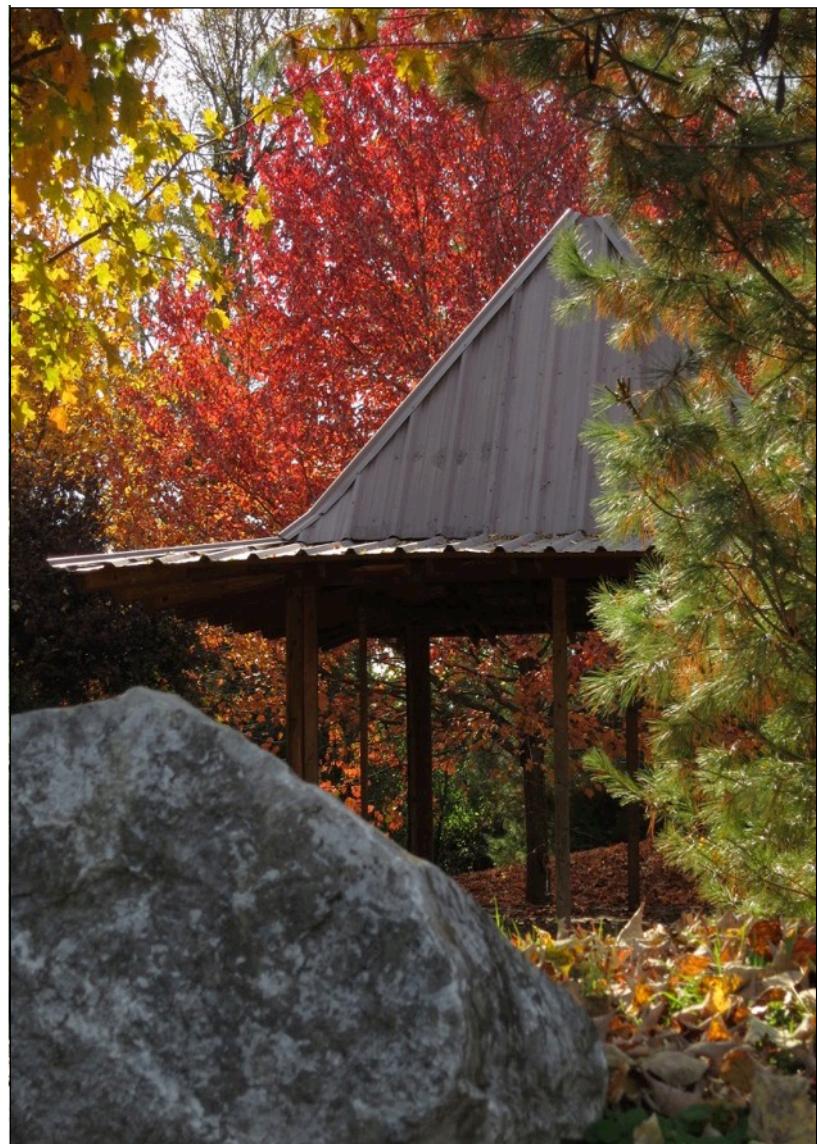


Yuko en on Elkhorn

Georgetown, Ky

*Wandering free I roam the woods and streams  
Lingered to watch things be themselves*

Hanshan

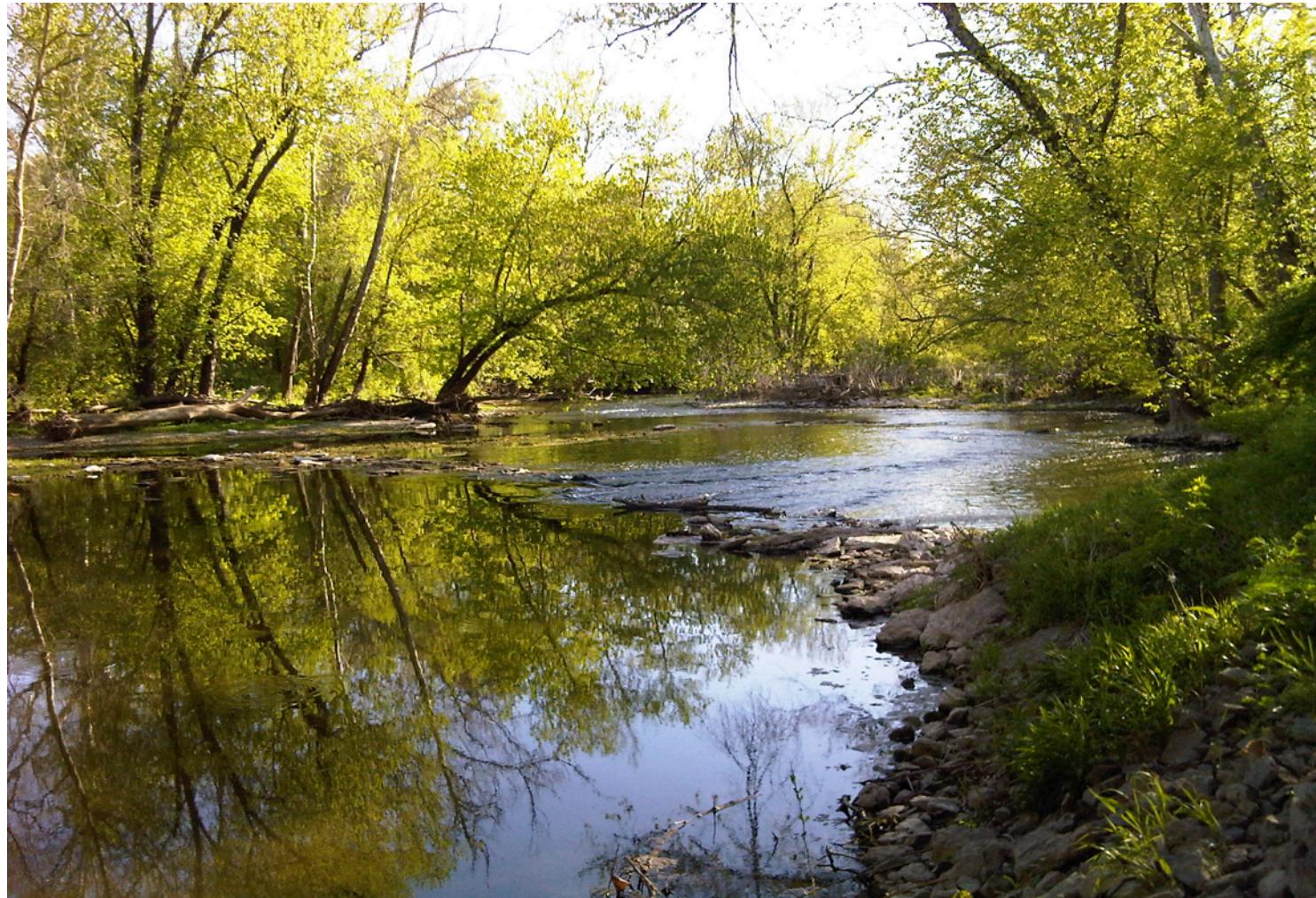


## Yuko en on Elkhorn

Georgetown, Ky

I conceptualized these structures: (clockwise from top left):  
maintenance and craft building, "tea house," and "Hermit's  
Hut," which is built without nails.

*I gather leaves and thatch a hut among the pines*  
Hanshan



## Yuko en on Elkhorn

Georgetown, Ky

The Elkhorn Creek drains much of the world-famous Bluegrass region. The "Hermit's Hut" overlooks the Creek and a path winds down along the bank.

*The Cold Mountain trail goes on and on:  
...The wide creek,  
the mist-blurred grass...*

*Hanshan*



## Isaac Murphy Memorial Art Garden

Lexington, Ky World Equestrian Games Legacy Project

The Isaac Murphy Memorial Art Garden is the first park in the United States to honor the earliest African American professional athletes – the Thoroughbred jockey. Fittingly, the Garden is located on land once owned by Isaac, in the predominately African American East End of Lexington. I managed the community design and art process; part of the \$25m in community improvement projects for the World Equestrian Games, for which I was responsible.

Isaac Murphy was the first jockey to ride consecutive Kentucky Derby winners, as well as the first three-time Derby champ – a record he held for 54 years. He still holds the record (44%) for the highest percentage of racing wins ever. His struggles and ultimate triumph as one of the very first African Americans in professional sports resonates across the country.

The Garden is the originating trail-head for the Legacy Trail, which leads to Isaac's burial place at the Kentucky Horse Park, the only human accorded such an honor.



## Isaac Murphy Memorial Art Garden

Lexington, Ky World Equestrian Games Legacy Project

The story of this Garden is about building community. I organized a community gathering attended by hundreds of residents to gather thoughts as to how the Garden should be developed. I then led a charette for neighbors that came up with the design concepts for the

Garden. The resulting plan includes prominent places for permanent and rotating art displays, a formal forecourt as the trailhead of the Legacy Trail, and a spiral amphitheater to be used for community events.



## Isaac Murphy Memorial Art Garden

Lexington, Ky   World Equestrian Games Legacy Project

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The evolution of the spiral amphitheater, the centerpiece for the Garden. The space is used for community events including music performances, storytelling, and as an outdoor classroom. The spiral arms are native limestone crafted by local stone artisans.



## Isaac Murphy Memorial Art Garden

Lexington, Ky World Equestrian Games Legacy Project

I ensured that local kids involved in making art for the Garden. For example we helped kids create designs that were then cast in concrete that are used as pavers. We also helped them create Christmas decorations for the Garden tree, one of four official trees in the entire city.



## Isaac Murphy Memorial Art Garden

Lexington, Ky World Equestrian Games Legacy Project

In addition to art, this Garden is about education. This Garden is located on the site of Isaac's house, the remains of which were documented by a professional archeological exploration. Neighborhood children were also invited to explore the remains. The foundation stones of Isaac's

house were incorporated into the Garden. Numerous artifacts were discovered and are now displayed at a museum in the neighborhood. Educational signs, authored by a local African American historian, are also displayed throughout the Garden.



## Isaac Murphy Memorial Art Garden

Lexington, Ky World Equestrian Games Legacy Project

I led the public art process, which included a national competition to develop signature pieces of sculpture for the Garden through which to reflect both Isaac's life and the African-American experience in the neighborhood.



# Isaac Murphy Memorial Art Garden

Lexington, Ky World Equestrian Games Legacy Project

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## Veteran's Memorial

The goal of this Memorial is to create meaningful and lasting gratitude and respect for our veterans and to honor their memory. This is accomplished through the **experience** of visiting the Memorial. A hedge-lined walkway leads from the parking lot to Memorial Plaza; this walkway is punctuated with panels that remind us why veterans served: **duty, honor, country**.

The limited views created by the hedge-lined walkway will ensure a visitor's focus on those values. Once in the Memorial Plaza, a visitor can study the Memorial Wall, participate in services, and visit the Veteran's Columbarium. A walkway leads from the Plaza through a restored and peaceful native plant meadow. The Honor Grove is planted with white and red spring flowering trees, to represent our Flag's stripes.

Pullman, Wa



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## Legacy Trail

Lexington, Ky

\$15m trail from downtown Lexington to the Kentucky Horse Park, developed for the 2010 World Equestrian Games, the first ever held in the USA. The Legacy Trail is the first in Kentucky to link a large urban area to the surrounding countryside.

The 12 mile Trail is a linear park through the world famous Bluegrass landscape. I was responsible for project implementation including fund raising, community engagement, as a member of the design team, and for promotion and marketing.



Legacy Trail

Lexington, Ky

As part of the design team, I "translated" in to images community desires for public art, land preservation, environmental quality, and education to ensure they were included in the project.



## Legacy Trail

Lexington, Ky

I directed the public engagement efforts - participants numbered in the thousands - led the design team in walking every foot of the 12 mile trail, established the Legacy Trail Public Art Program to highlight local artists' contextual work and orchestrated the Trail's "Premiere" with over 10,000 guests attending.



## Elkhorn Creek Greenway

Scott County, Ky

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First Greenway in the Bluegrass of Kentucky. Greenway links neighborhoods and schools to the Creek for recreation and education. Portions of the trail were used to buffer harmful effects of cattle grazing along the stream banks.



## Born Learning Trail      Lexington, Ky

In conjunction with the United Way of the Bluegrass, I planned and led the implementation of the first Born Learning Trail in Kentucky. The Trail is a series of interactive signs and activities that offer fun, active learning opportunities for young children and their families. This Trail is located at an elementary school in the center of a Hope VI neighborhood.



## Outer Bluegrass Greenway

Grant County, Ky

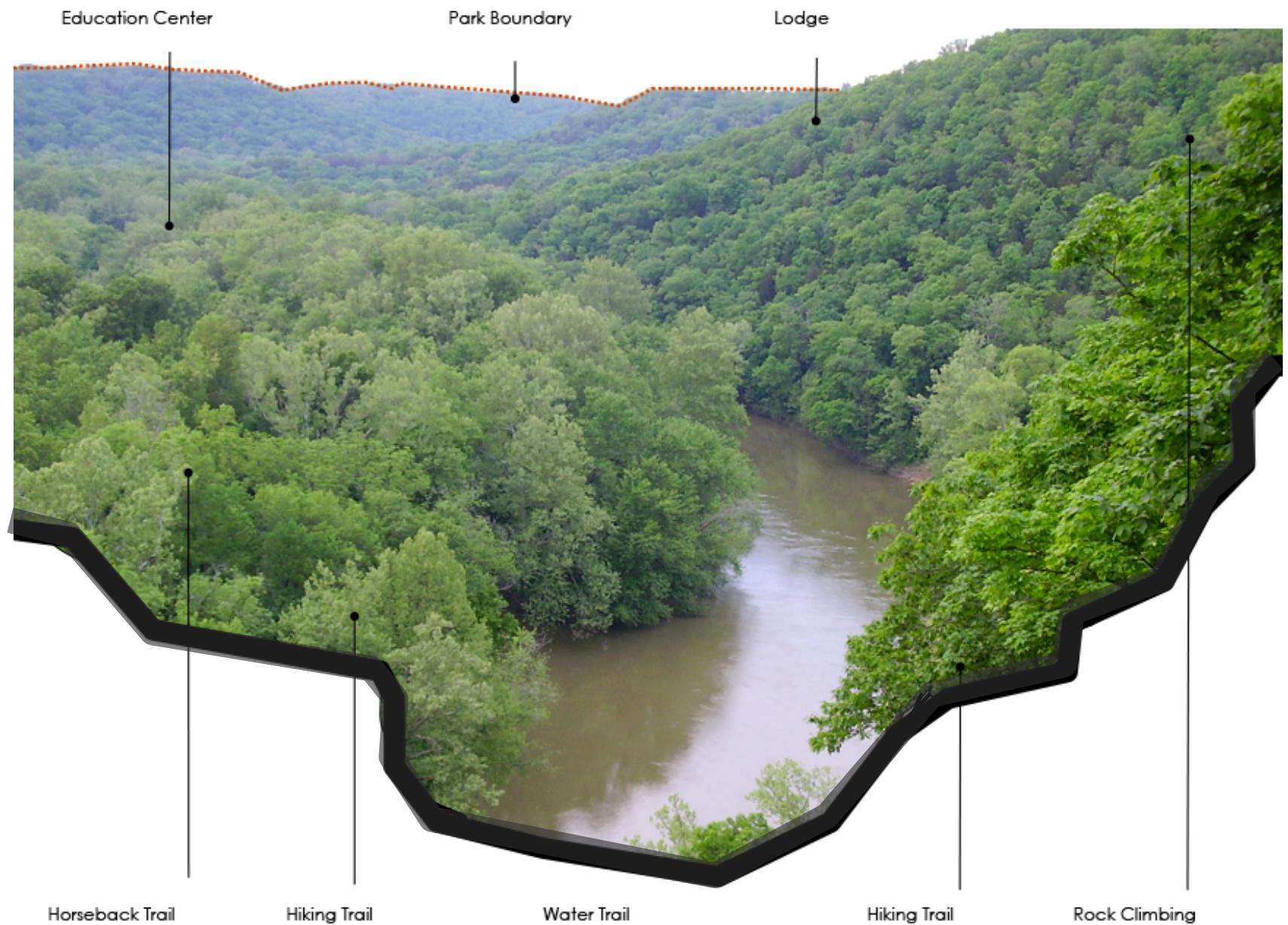
Proposed 48 mile, \$21m multi-use trail system incorporating new parkland, camping areas, land preservation. I was responsible for route planning, trail design, and extensive community engagement. This Greenway will connect some of the fastest growing communities in Kentucky in the southern part of the Cincinnati Metro area.



PARKS

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## Green River Regional Park

Greensburg, Ky

Significant proposal from my work creating the Greensburg, Kentucky Comprehensive Plan. Working with a citizen oversight committee, I developed plans for regional cooperation to create a proposed 4,000 acre Green River Regional Park. This Park would incorporate

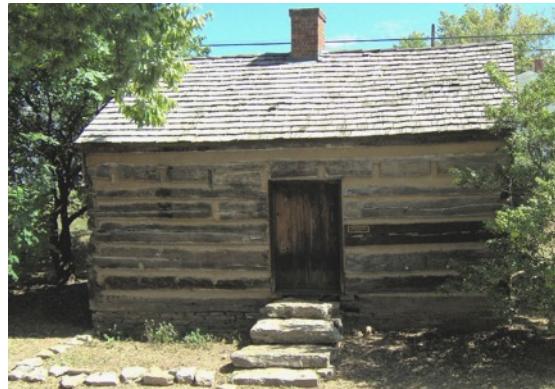
recreational activities and tourists services designed to attract thousands of visitors annually. As importantly, it would protect significant flood prone areas from being developed..



## Royal Springs Park

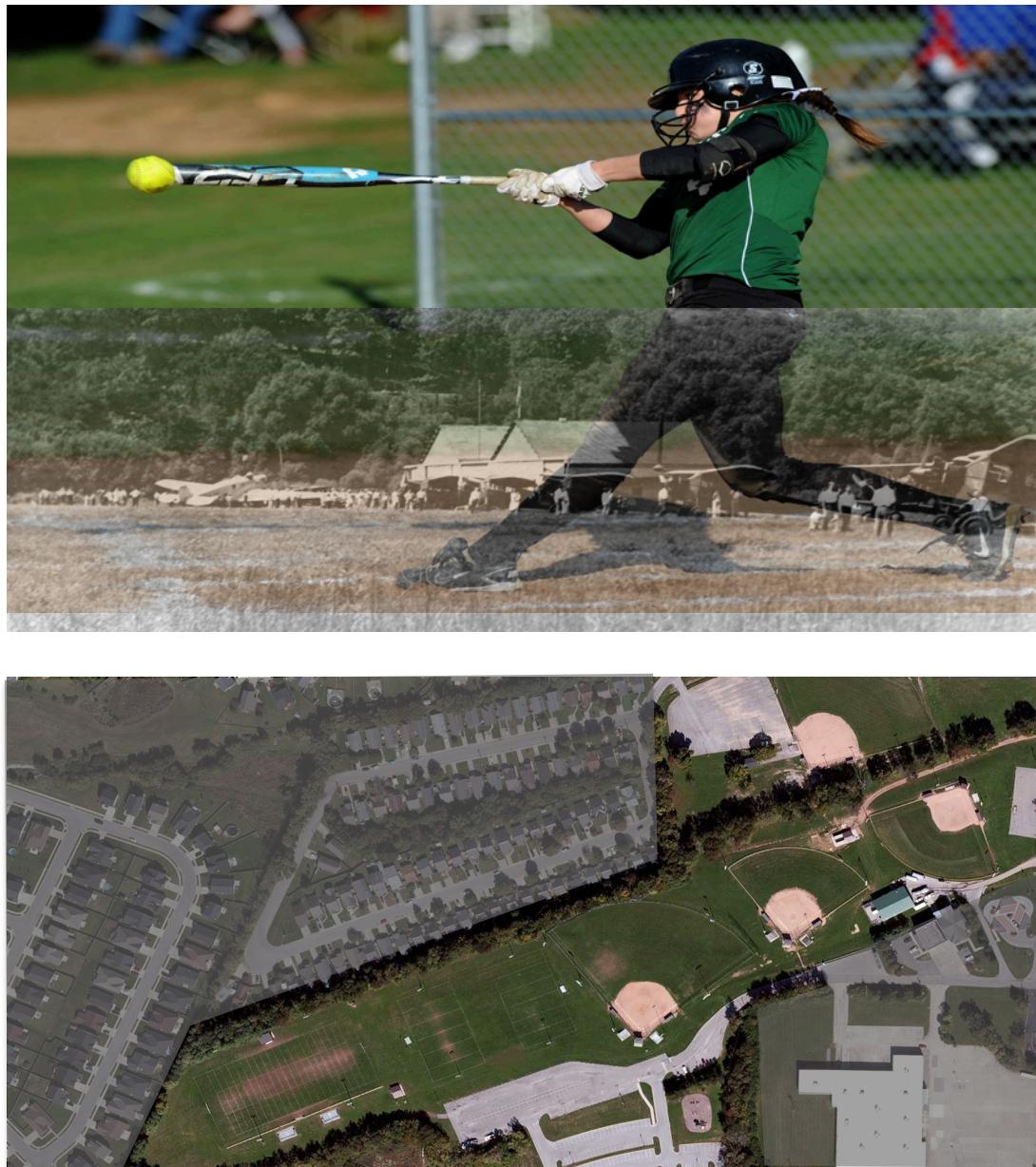
Royal Springs Park is not only the source of Georgetown's drinking water and site of its founding, but it is also the birthplace of Bourbon Whiskey. The site was used for many years as a municipal water company storage area and dump.

My plans created a total transformation of the area, including the restoration of former slave Milton Leach's 1874 cabin as an interpretive museum, an accessible fishing deck above a stream with a new dam and restocked with trout, and a re-creation of the Baptismal steps used in



## Georgetown, Ky

the earliest days. For the first time in over 100 years, citizens could see the mouth of the springs and learn about the Bourbon history of the site. The project received an award as one of *America's Best Public Landscapes* from *Landscape Architecture Magazine*. In 1994. In 2016, the park was the site for the first ever public PRIDE celebration in the community.



## Marshall Field Park Georgetown, Ky

As Executive Director of the community planning commission, I designed and supervised the conversion of the community's former airport into an active recreational complex. After the cessation of flying activities, the site seemed a perfect choice for redevelopment as a park. The

existing grades made it simple to transform the runway into athletic fields. Today, this park is surrounded by urban development making it a very walkable destination in the city.



## Great Crossing Park

Great Crossing is so named because it was the site where enormous herds of buffalo once crossed the Elkhorn Creek along their migratory paths around what became Kentucky.

The County government purchased this property and I was tasked with creating a master plan for its development. Program elements

Scott County, Ky

included a boat ramp, children's play area, and a trailhead for the Elkhorn Creek walking trail that I implemented. The existing dam complements the park by providing a picturesque spot for simple relaxation.



# URBAN DESIGN

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## Town Branch Commons Lexington, Ky

The Lexington Metro Council appointed me chairman of a task force whose charge was to determine the feasibility of creating a park along one of Lexington's most historic, yet dismal streets - Vine Street - which covers the creek which was the site of Lexington's founding in 1774.

My task force recommended the creation of a linear park along the length of Vine Street. In 2013, SCAPE Landscape Architects won a design competition to move the project forward.



## Main + Rose Plaza

Lexington, Ky

Centerpiece of \$25m mixed use development. In what typically would be nothing more than a grassed island in a parking lot, instead a small oasis.

The large stones are repurposed limestone foundation stones from the original building on the site. The finely textured plant materials contrast with metal, rock and buildings – and add color on a gray day. A narrow path of

limestone weaves through the small space, providing access to welcoming shady seating spots on limestone blocks. A local artist's sculpture represents the symbolic gateway to a new downtown that this project represents.



## Streetscape Master Plan

Georgetown, Ky

\$12m renovation of historic downtown. I was responsible for relocating utilities to underground, sidewalk enhancements, developing sign ordinance and façade restoration guidelines, building rehabilitation grants for upper floor residential uses, and a public art project to restore historic signs.



## Mill Street Promenade

Lexington, Ky

Proposal to pedestrianize a block-long section containing Lexington's last collection of cross-facing historic buildings. A pedestrian zone in this location will complement the growing dining and entertainment scene in the surrounding area.



## Living Streets Plan

Totnes, UK



Totnes is a 1,000 year old market town in southwest England. The town is a haven for progressive thought yet the pedestrian environment is not welcoming, being dominated by cars. I developed a plan for consideration by community leaders to transform the town into a much more people friendly place.

The main bridge (above) spans the river Dart and connects both sides of the town. Pedestrians are shunted to the narrow and dangerous foot path on heavily travelled bridge. This is a proposal to create pedestrian bridge along side historic one.

The town high street (left) is devoted primarily to cars. Pedestrians are shunted to small sidewalks on either side of the travel lane. My proposal was to a shared space. Small rain gardens are placed at drain inlets to filter stormwater that drains to the river.



## Scott County Courthouse Plaza

Georgetown, Ky

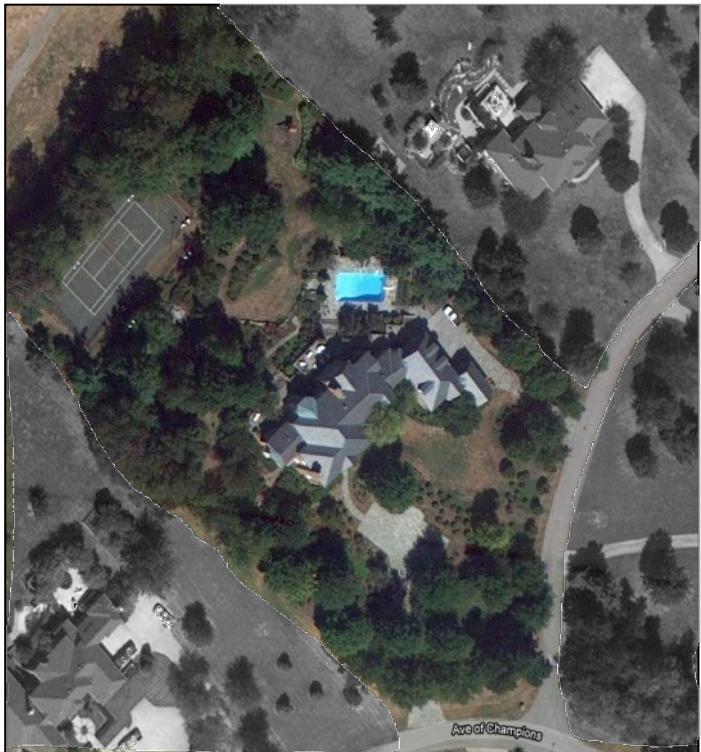
Responsible for redesign of public space around 120 year old structure. Site is now home to local farmer's market.



# RESIDENCES

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## Residence

Jessamine County, Ky

In order to meet both the demand of the client for a large building footprint while protecting significant features of the five-acre site, I created an integrated design of house and garden. In order to realize the vision, I was responsible for the site design, including placement of the house, all site construction, and plantings.

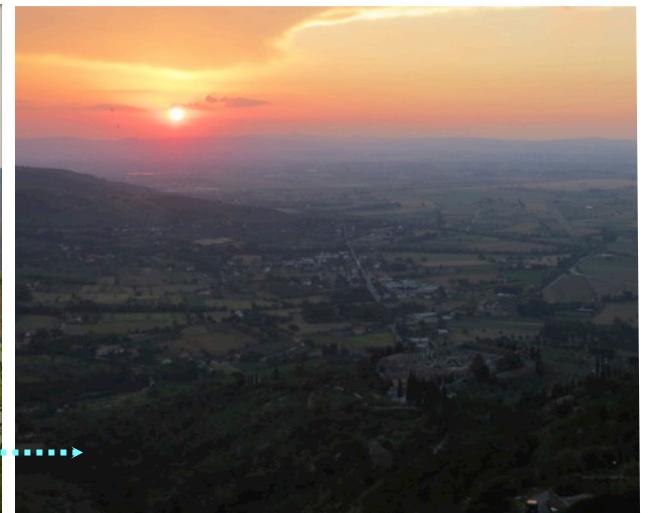


## Residence

Pullman, Wa



The opportunity here was to use a severe slope as a "canvas" in order interpret the client's favorite piece of art (left) in three dimensions. I was inspired by, and tried to express, the painting's depth, colors, forms, and textures.



## Residence

My client challenged me to create a resort-like experience on her small vacation rental property outside the Tuscan city of Cortona. My response was to create intimate spaces for appreciation of the landscape within a working vineyard.

Cortona, Italy