

## **Strategy: Provide adequate access to space and place**

### **Concept overview for Campus as Spiritual Garden**

#### Introduction

Dean Robert Timme of the USC School of Architecture provided a brief overview document on “The Campus as Spiritual Garden” in answer to the committee’s request for a review of campus parks, plazas and fountain areas as contemplative spaces. His overview and commitment to pursue this request was submitted to the task force in December of 2002. That document was made a part of the presentation to the entire task force and is included in the first report by the task force. It can be viewed in its entirety at [http://www.usc.edu/advancement/foundations/fj/outside\\_spaces.htm](http://www.usc.edu/advancement/foundations/fj/outside_spaces.htm).

**According to Dean Timme, “Campuses like gardens deal with transformation, mutability, memory, and faith... A University campus without a clear definition of life, meaning, and character in its outdoor spaces would be judged impoverished, flawed, and incomplete. If people at different times and places have had very different ideas about the way to organize their campuses and campus life, it is largely because they have made very different assumptions about human needs.**

**Campuses that were established as outgrowths of monastic training precincts tended to build spaces that were more spiritually charged. The sacred grove, the refectory pool, the labyrinth, the cloister, the garden pergola, all had a sense of spirituality, of contemplation.**

**Campus design and its supportive landscape design in the second half of the twentieth century concentrated on movement and instruction. Fed by the modern movement, the model for new campuses shifted from monastery to office park. It is important to realize that the USC campus redefined its external character during this period of time, and as such, lacks many of the types of spaces that encourage and support either the collective and sometimes ritualistic acts of spirituality or individual reflection, meditation, contemplation, or prayer.**

**The Director of Landscape Studies in the School of Architecture, Mark Rios, has agreed that this is an important area of investigation for our program. He is interested in conducting an investigation of other universities’ campus plans to determine the type, nature, age, and condition of exterior spaces that could be referred to as “spiritual” as well as spaces that fulfill other human needs such as recreation and instructional. This work should be conducted during the spring of 2003. It is hoped that the results will help inform campus planning projects in the future.**

### Results of Class Assignment:

This assignment was actually taken on by Chris Aykanian, faculty member who recently received a community award for “teaching without boundaries,” and five graduate students in Architecture 590. It has not yet been completed. According to Professor Aykanian, the subject was so rich with possibility that exploring the definition of terms such as “contemplative” and questioning the role of “sacred” spaces led them in many directions. The task could not be completed in one semester. Currently, he is considering making this project a School of Architecture Studio for next fall. He would like to see this Studio result in a master plan for the spiritual life of students and faculty.

This semester the students, three graduate Landscape Architecture majors and two Public Art majors of whom two were Buddhist, toured USC outside spaces. They concluded that the outside areas were focused on issues of circulation and efficiency. All else is secondary. The well being of inhabitants does not appear to have been an important part in decisions of roadways, fountains. Additionally, they observed that public spaces at USC have many distractions as they are used as “passageways.”

The students visited UCSD, which is considered according to Aykanian as a California paradigm for attributes of campus design. There, sculptors, groves and open spaces are built in rather than tacked on. “UCSD has magical groves,” says Aykanian. The Public Arts students are considering redefining how artwork could become a part of Bloom Walk in a project that is already funded.

Aykanian also attended a symposium at the University of Pennsylvania on French landscapes and gathered information on the garden in modern society.

Professor Aykanian has a meeting scheduled for the week of May 12, 2003 with Rabbi Jonathan Klein, member of the Infrastructure Committee. Aykanian is interested in interviewing other members of the task force and the university, in order to better define the fall class.

### Recommendations

1. Professor Aykanian should be encouraged to continue working on this subject.
2. The concept of a Studio on this subject should be supported by the Task Force report.
3. The information provided by the Studio should be reviewed for adoption into the report at the end of fall semester 2003.