Puzzling out a park

The story: In a year or so, a 16-acre park will begin to emerge in the space between the Music Center and City Hall in downtown Los Angeles. It will be part of a major new redevelopment plan called the Grand Avenue Project. Developers and politicians, led by billionaire Eli Broad, solicited public input and are pushing forward with tentative plans. The plot twist: Without an invitation from the official park maker, USC's Norman Lear Center put out a call for more ideas. Schoolchildren cranked up pictures, design students turned in class projects and professionals poured out models and pointy-headed ideas for what some think could — and should — be this city's signature public space. Today's section looks at some of these ideas, brilliant and crackpot, as it explores the process and philosophies of park making.

1. More than a few guests think good parks, including Los Angeles', should somehow embrace a city's soul. For the folks behind this design, water is key — and so what if the vision reflects a famous public space in another city?

2. Park designers like people. They fear they've failed if their transformed spaces remain empty. And if whimsy is in a dream, some will give it a try — honor this wind tunnel bridge meant to whip out electricity and energize visitors.

3. Another breed of park maker recoils at anything smacking of toehold-gimmickery, preferring untroubled nature in which people can score a semblance of the landscape that was here before humans arrived.

4. A sprawling tangle of green space would lend itself to the flexibility that many urbanologists find essential to a diverse city's changing demands.

5. Deeds, formal or uncharted, are a part of any park, and if those paths can fuse the green to other parts of gray downtown, well, cool.

6. If those paths also reflect an ironic element of modern L.A. (see D, above, still, these park-as-freeway fans say).

7. But don't forget the park. A few out-of-scale, old-fashioned buildings in the midst of all this concrete could bring a note of grace and dignity back to a place that once had an abundance of both," argues a devotee of historic Bunker Hill.

8. Finally, even landscape visionaries must confront the hard reality of slopes, soil composition and lot size, in this case by constructing splendid cascading terraces.
I know what I want for the new park that will soon blossom in the heart of downtown Los Angeles. But first, I need to find a developer. The idea started a few years ago when I, Norman Lear, decided that LA needed a big, bold, beautiful civic project. A park. A center. A place for all to gather and reflect. And I knew that the developer of the South Block Grand Avenue project, Related Cos., was the right choice. They have the experience and the resources to make this happen. And, just as important, they are willing to listen to the public and work with us to create something truly special.

The park will be a place for all ages, from children to seniors, to come together and enjoy. We want it to be a place where people can relax, have picnics, and take in the beauty of nature. It will be a place for the community to gather, for events, and for celebrations. And, of course, it will be a place for the arts, with opportunities for performances and exhibitions. We are working with world-renowned architects, landscape designers, and urban planners to create a park that is both beautiful and functional. We want it to be a place that people will be proud to call their own.

The park will also have a significant economic impact. It will bring in revenue for the city and the surrounding area. We are working with local businesses to ensure that the park is a destination for visitors and residents alike. And we are committed to making sure that the park is accessible to everyone, regardless of their income or background.

In short, the South Block Grand Avenue project is a vision for a better future for LA. It is a vision for a city that is open, welcoming, and inclusive. And it is a vision for a park that will bring people together, time and time again, for generations to come. Thank you, Related Cos., for helping us bring this vision to life.
People brainstormed

While left dwellers tend to leave downtown for leisure activities, the low-income community stays downtown. Our "Anti-Park" offers to the needs of the boom, providing entertainment, leisure, learning and dining facilities that build the Green Street.

CHARLES PARK, JACOBSTEIN NAYER, ALONOS ROBERTS, ROBERT NUGENT, and RAY PEDERSON (University of Southern California architecture students)

Living as we do in a city that is among the world's most world-class cities, a major infrastructure disaster of world-class citizens - viewed in a shared public experience that has been limited in terms of the magic of the movies - would go a long way to bringing about such differences.

SDN PEABY, Founder of the Silver Lake Film Lab, "The People's Noise Project"

How about building an "Olin Court" somewhere in the park? Olin is commonly referred to as "the haloeffect player for Nefertiti Americans." (James)

Thomas "The Olin Court"

It would be great to build a children's playground that illustrates the principles of physics. There are lots of ways to teach play equipment - such as swings, merry-go-rounds and teeter-totters - to maximize awareness of the physical world.

SUZAN HODA

Keep the politicians away from the project.

SUZAN HODA

A series of bold, terraced landscapes that link the cultural spine of Grand Avenue with City Hall. Landscape designers: David PATTNER, J. J. H. H. R. and CHRISTOPHER ALEXANDER, MIA LEHRER and ALFRED ISRAELSON

Imagine water running down the sides of Disney Concert Hall or streets above propertied on nearby skyscrapers...

SUNN INC

A mobile recording studio could capture the whiteness of LA.

JAY LEEDE, National Public Radio in the present proposal.

The theme: made of red objects that project image of pacemaker on the plaza floor. Designed by TUXON NAU (landscape architect) and PAULA GUARDINO

Imagining a physical connection between the heart of the city and its original life source.

MICHELLE LANTOS and MARK LANDERS (landscape architect, landscape architect)

Boat-powered motorcar- eauxes could have "great walk... that attract wildlife.

JENNY WILDE, ANTHONY PENNISAL, MARION FORSYTH, MARK PENNISAL, TUNIAE TAN and LAU YIN WONG (LCA)

Rilaku, a skate park, a Sizzler... and a jail.

TRAVIS HODA, a sliding sidewalk and neighborhood.

What if every region in L.A. had its own space in the park? Just as the city has hundreds of neighborhoods, we would subdivide within the park. Each geographic region of neighborhood would have its own opportunity and responsibility to create and maintain its own space. Imagine — for the first time in our history — one place would contain a piece of every part of our vast, sprawling city.

We propose an electronic glass wall that allows people within to contribute photos and text via cell phones and laptops. Offerings just the creative pool of citizens, evolving into a conversation about meaning, place and person.

NANCY HO, TON FUK-vector, DON McCRADEN, "Digital Berlin"

An acoustical barrier keeping out the sounds of the city

A park for Christopher Jaynes, "Roxa Dodgers".

A pedestal promenade

A rain forest projected on skyscrapers

A perfect model of an urban oasis already exists. We need only learn from it and keep our creation simple. It's Hyde Park in London. Tell the trend-setters to retreat to the Westside, please.

MICHAEL LINK, "Central Park"

Stop looking around and love Robert Irwin to you.

HARLAN LEE

You want trees for this boulevard... why not make the new park the Homeless Park. There's already a huge fountain to use in — you've heard about those Porta-Potties. Columnist Dan Layzer not lead the parade of homeless to their new encampment, the vast majority of which can at eat across from the front door of Times Mirror Mirror. It's a win-win.

SCOTT RABENSTEIN

If you wish to see vulgar, various, experience and useless public space is Los Angeles check out Pershing Square. It is a barren on its way to becoming.

ANDREW STANFORD, BEVERLY PROJECT

The "Not a Central Park" experiment with a temporary planting of rows of trees in the future lakes park, east of Directors woods walking. Lake: Lake Venice. Christo and Jean-Claude installation of soft-envelope gates in Central Park earlier this year. "Not a Central Park" demonstrates that it is possible to stimulate public interest in a urban spaces to emphasize the temporary rescaling of a city. By driving by a parkette or small park, how you take it.

MICHAEL E. WU, other passive places, self-taught LA.

Avoid existing models. There is too much fashion now in urban park design.

Landscape Committee: MARK PENNISAL

The current master plan calls for dressing up an already small space into a series of landscape cliches: the "great lawn," the "lawn", "river plaza" and so on. The developers, after all, require so more than decorative sets to enhance the value of their buildings. The situation needs to be re- visited. The landscape must become the institution. Not simply the setting for various "events" and commercial enterprises.

Landscape, art: ERIC KOBER

A skate park and a Sizzler!

A treetop walkway

Creating a living urban village

Keeping up the sounds of the city

A seminar and a cloudburst erupted
Some Grand Interventionists

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