



BY STEVEN PRESTON

Gathering Among The Greenery

*Plaza provides community space at
UMMC's School of Pharmacy*

While traveling through downtown Baltimore, it might be easy to miss the plazas and spaces that dot the city. However, by taking some time and walking through The University of Maryland, Baltimore Campus, a unique urban oasis is revealed, with a rich palette of hard-scape and plant material. Situated on 75 acres in the city's Central Business District, the campus houses an array of elements, including The University of Maryland Medical Center (UMMC), as well as the seven University of Maryland Schools of Medicine. The School of Pharmacy, one of the seven schools, is situated at the western edge of the campus.



Over time, because of its success and growing enrollment, the School of Pharmacy expanded its operations throughout the campus. A surface parking lot serving the existing pharmacy building was chosen to consolidate research and classroom activities, to tie into existing utilities, and to enhance the urban character of the campus by providing exterior amenity space.

The building addition and associated landscaping are situated between Fayette Street to the north, Baltimore Street to the south, Pine Street to the east, and Martin Luther King Boulevard to the west. The final design creates a space for students and faculty from the School of Pharmacy to interact with each other, as well as with the estimated 20,000 people who populate the campus daily. A mixture of pavement types, plant materials, and site amenities form a space that responds to the inner functionality of the building, while extending the site's use outward into the university campus and adjacent community.

The Plaza

The focal point of the design is a terraced plaza at the main entry to the building along Pine Street, consisting of retaining walls with a thermal-finish, pink granite face, and a Pennsylvania Bluestone cap. The upper area of the plaza was designed to extend the interior of the building into the outdoor space. In order to accomplish that, a custom pattern was created involving Pennsylvania Bluestone with an edge treatment of black-and-white granite

cobbles; the effect creates continuity between design elements within the plaza. Tables and chairs placed in the plaza facilitate an interactive space for gatherings over lunch, between classes, or while travelling across the campus. A planted wall between the upper and lower plaza provides

additional seating, while allocating extra space for planting.

A wide flight of stairs transitions from the upper plaza to the lower plaza. Railings on the stairs are sleek and contemporary, complementing the architecture of the building. The stairs offer an added space for gathering as occupants of the building move between spaces on campus. An adjacent ramp installed along the façade meets the standards of the Americans

with Disabilities Act, providing access to the upper terrace and building. Staggered bluestone caps serve as seating along the wall between the ramp and sidewalk below, and a planted strip provides an opportunity to interject green within the hard surfaces.

The lower plaza serves as a transition space between the upper-entry plaza and the street. Paving materials consist of a band of clay brick pavers along the road edge, and a band of gray 18-inch x 24-inch concrete pavers beyond, which unifies the newly constructed space with the overall campus design. The existing utility infrastructure presented unique design challenges to the addition of plant material in the lower plaza.

Trees And Landscaping

Underground steam lines in the area limited the use of street trees, which would normally create a more "human" scale, in contrast to the taller campus buildings that surround the

Benches

For Any Location



From sophisticated streetscapes, to public parks and trails, to malls and patios, to recreational and athletic facilities, to golf courses, to rustic campsites ...

Pilot Rock has a bench for any location.















Pilot Rock
PARK · STREET · CAMP
SITE PRODUCTS

RJThomas Mfg. Co., Inc. • Cherokee, IA 51012
P: 800-762-5002 • 712-225-5115 • F: 712-225-5796
pilotrock@rjthomas.com • www.pilotrock.com

ENTER READER SERVICE #509

Gathering Among The Greenery



community. This highly visible space offers an additional opportunity to incorporate plant material into the design, softening the hard edges of the building and pavement.

The focal point of the space is a curvilinear promenade aligned with the façade of the building addition. The walk is constructed of concrete pavers, with a clay-brick paver border at the outer edge. This contrasts nicely with the green lawn planted between the walk and the boulevard. Boston Ivy on a grid trellis system is attached to the building façade along the walk. The green face introduces plant material into the urban-campus setting, and benches placed along the walk provide points of rest for those travelling across the campus or for residents enjoying the promenade.

site. The solution involved using insulated 4-foot x 5-foot planters along Pine Street, creating a green edge between the street and plaza space. This enabled plantings to be incorporated along the street, while working within the allowable budget and framework of the site.

Often, when designing within cities, creating space for plant material can be challenging; however, the final design for the School of Pharmacy presented a lush mixture of greenery. A planter

wall between the upper and lower plazas doubles as a divider, while introducing plant material into a space otherwise dominated by hardscape material. Due to durability within an urban context and limited watering requirements, green roof plantings were used in this wall, and the wall running parallel to the ramp leading between the upper and lower plazas.

This supports the sustainable initiatives of the School of Pharmacy addition, ultimately resulting in LEED Gold designation for the building and site.

Bamboo planted in a custom planter adjacent to the building entry softens the transition between the upper plaza and building façade. The

planter-bed design keeps the bamboo contained in the allotted space and limits future maintenance issues. Once established, the bamboo will give verticality to the space between the building and upper plaza, creating an additional scale for those enjoying the seating area.

The public area created along Martin Luther King Boulevard serves as an important transitional space between the University of Maryland, Baltimore campus and the adjacent

The final design of the School of Pharmacy serves as a prime example in redeveloping urban spaces to better connect and reflect adjacencies. The plazas and promenade created for the site offer opportunities for students, faculty, and residents to interact. The main entry plaza reflects the prestige associated with the School of Pharmacy, presenting an opportunity for interaction with other institutions on campus. The promenade along Martin Luther King Boulevard is a highly visible space, serving as the edge of campus, and a connection to the adjacent urban fabric of Baltimore. Commonality between the spaces is drawn from the rich palette of materials used, both hardscape and landscape, creating spaces to be enjoyed for years to come. ■

Steven Preston has his bachelor's and master's degrees in Landscape Architecture from The Pennsylvania State University, and is with Site Resources, Inc., a landscape-architectural and civil-engineering firm in Baltimore, Md.

