Transformative Open Spaces in the United States, Spain and China Selected as Finalists for the Urban Land Institute’s 2018 Urban Open Space Award

Five transformative public spaces in the United States, Spain and China have been selected as finalists for the Urban Land Institute’s (ULI) 2018 Urban Open Space Award, a global competition that recognizes outstanding examples of vibrant public open spaces that have spurred economic and social regeneration in surrounding communities. This year’s finalists are Levy Park in Houston, Texas; Madrid Rio Park in Madrid, Spain; Baxi River Forest Island in Changsha, Hunan Province, China; Quequechan River Rail Trail in Fall River, Massachusetts; and Ricardo Lara Park in Lynwood, California.

WASHINGTON (PRWEB) July 26, 2018 -- Five transformative public spaces in the United States, Spain and China have been selected as finalists for the Urban Land Institute’s (ULI) 2018 Urban Open Space Award, a global competition that recognizes outstanding examples of vibrant public open spaces that have spurred economic and social regeneration in surrounding communities.

This year’s finalists are Levy Park in Houston, Texas; Madrid Rio Park in Madrid, Spain; Baxi River Forest Island in Changsha, Hunan Province, China; Quequechan River Rail Trail in Fall River, Massachusetts; and Ricardo Lara Park in Lynwood, California. The winner will be announced at ULI’s 2018 Fall Meeting, set for October 8-11 in Boston. A $10,000 cash prize will be awarded to the individual or organization most responsible for the creation of the winning open space project.

The selection of the finalists was based on overall project design and how each affected or revived their surrounding areas. “Submissions for this year’s competition reflected the impressive creativity that is evident worldwide as more and more cities seek to offer appealing space that serves as a focal point for relaxation and recreation, and which provides a sense of community and inclusivity,” said Urban Open Space Award Jury Chairman and ULI leader Stuart Ackerberg, Chief Executive Officer of ACKERBERG in Minneapolis. “Each of the finalist entries draws people in and encourages them to stay and actively participate, enlivening their neighborhoods and tightening the fabric of their cities.”

The finalists:
- Levy Park, Houston, Texas (Project Owner; Upper Kirby Redevelopment Authority; Designer: OJB Landscape Architecture; Size: 5.9 acres) As one of the only public greenspaces in Houston’s Upper Kirby District, Levy Park has been reimagined from an underutilized open space into an active, vibrant civic destination. The 5.9-acre public park includes a 40,000 square-foot children’s garden, a 7,500-square-foot rain garden, as well as a 43,000-square-foot event lawn and 2,500-square-foot multi-purpose performance space. The park emphasizes environmental and social sustainability, most notably demonstrated in its ADA-accessible (conforming to Americans with Disabilities Act standards) tree house platform shaded by live oak trees preserved from the original park site. The $15 million investment in the park catalyzed the development of office, residential and dining space adjacent to the space.
- Madrid Rio Park, Madrid, Spain (Project Owner: Madrid City Council; Architects: Burgos & Garrido; Porras & La Casta; Rubio & A-Sala; West 8; Size: 360 acres) Madrid Rio Park was made possible by burying 25 miles of urban motorways that had separated Madrid’s 6 million residents from the Manzanares River, which flows through the city. The park now occupies 360 acres of green space, with trails and urban beaches sharing space with art centers, playgrounds, and cafes, providing a link between city and river, and between the urban...
ecosystem and vast river basin. The $3 billion project, which began in 2005, has helped knit the southern and northern parts of the city together, benefiting some of Madrid’s most disadvantaged neighborhoods and improving the city’s urban fabric.
- Baxi River Forest Island, Changsha, China (Project Owner: Changsha Xian dao Land Development & Construction Co., Ltd.; Designer: SWA Group; Size: 156 acres) The Baxi River meanders through the city, hosting water flows that have created 15 scattered islands. With the two-mile long, 156-acre Baxi River Forest Island, the local government has mitigated flooding by embracing the Baxi River ecosystem, creating a new park that is helping both nature and people thrive. The river’s flows and fluctuations were used as the design catalyst, and strategies for land stabilization, water purification and ecological revitalization were integrated with experiential and educational design elements. The park is able to withstand 18-foot annual river level fluctuations with carefully calculated grading, terraces, and plantings. It has transformed an island disturbed by flooding, erosion and loss of habitat into a resilient and ecologically diverse park with vibrant gathering places that reconnect the people of Changsha to their river.
- Quequechan River Rail Trail, Fall River, Massachusetts (Project Owner: City of Fall River; Designer: Brown, Richardson + Rowe, Inc.; Size: 15 acres) The Quequechan River Trail, built on an abandoned rail right-of-way, offers public access to the Quequechan River, serving as a community amenity, improving water quality, and creating valuable wetland habitat. The trail, which opened in 2016, is an integral part of a long-term regional plan to connect Providence, Rhode Island to Provincetown, Massachusetts by bicycle. Made possible with an alignment of multiple stakeholders and funding partners, the trail has been transformational for the community, with residents reporting an increase in daily activity, and a greater sense of safety and pride in their community.

- Ricardo Lara Park, Lynwood, California (Project Owner: City of Lynwood; Designer: SWA Group; Size: 5 acres) The Ricardo Lara Linear Park is built on a vacant five-acre stretch in Lynwood, linking neighborhoods divided by the I-105 freeway. Opened in October 2015, it features five activity zones that offer different amenities including a community garden, shade pavilion, dog park, children’s play area, adult fitness area, and bioswales and basins to treat runoff and also acts as flood prevention. The park was realized in part through a $5 million grant from the State of California Department of Parks and Recreation’s Proposition 84 Fund. Completed in 18 months, it serves as a space that advances social equity, improves environmental health, and offers recreation options for all ages.

ULI’s Urban Open Space Awards Competition reflects the inspiration for the 10-Minute Walk Campaign, a joint effort by ULI, The Trust for Public Land, and the National Recreation and Park Association to advance the bold idea that everyone in urban America should live within a ten-minute walk of a high-quality park. In keeping with the spirit of the campaign, the Urban Open Space Award recognizes open spaces—including parks, plazas, squares, parks, memorials, linear parks and trails, or other non-traditional park and open space formats—that have been instrumental in promoting healthy, sustainable, and equitable outcomes in communities.

In addition to Jury Chairman Stuart Ackerberg, other Urban Open Space Award Jury members are: Lynn Carlton, Vice President and Regional Leader of Planning, HOK, Kansas City, Missouri; Antonio Fiol-Silva, Founding Principal, SITIO architecture + urbanism, Philadelphia; Glenda E. Hood, Cofounder, TriSect, Orlando, Florida; Mehul J. Patel, Chief Operating Officer, Midwood Investment and Development, New York City; Mitchell J. Silver, Commissioner, City of New York Parks and Recreation, The Arsenal, Central Park, New York City; and F. Karl Zavitkovsky, Drever Capital Management, Dallas, Texas.

About the Urban Land Institute
The Urban Land Institute is a nonprofit education and research institute supported by its members. Its mission
is to provide leadership in the responsible use of land and in creating and sustaining thriving communities worldwide. Established in 1936, the institute has more than 40,000 members worldwide representing all aspects of land use and development disciplines. For more information, please visit uli.org or follow us on Twitter, Facebook, LinkedIn, and Instagram.

For more information, contact Trish Riggs, 202-624-7086; trisha.riggs(at)uli.org
Contact Information
Trisha Riggs
Urban Land Institute
http://uli.org
202-624-7086

Online Web 2.0 Version
You can read the online version of this press release [here](http://uli.org).