



MISSISSIPPI STATE UNIVERSITY

EXTENSION SERVICE

Catfish Row Children’s Art Park

Vicksburg, MS

Project Highlights:

- One-and one half acre urban park
- Features gardens, interactive fountain, stage, observation decks, play area, and art walls
- Connects to riverboat landing and flood wall murals

Greyfield Reuse



Steamboat light poles playfully mimic riverboat stacks of the adjacent river dock

Project designers:

Edward L. Blake, Jr., The Landscape Studio, landscape architect

Robert Poore, consulting landscape architect

Neel-Schaffer, Inc., planning and engineering

Canizaro, Cawthorn, Davis, architects

Context: park, urban

Project Overview

Catfish Row is a historic area that once was part of an extensive wharf in the 1800’s and was one of the centers of trade on the Mississippi River. As new ports were built elsewhere and river traffic declined, this riverfront area became little used and was a dumping site for refuse. Attempting to capitalize on its riverfront heritage, the city of Vicksburg wanted to create an entertainment district and to turn the face of the city back to the river. Redevelopment included the addition of a riverfront casino, a historic museum, public art and a small park.

Smart landscape features and practices

Greyfield Reuse. Greyfields are land terms used by developers and planners to describe properties that have been previously developed but are outdated, run down, or abandoned. It is always preferable to rehabilitate these lands for redevelopment than to utilize natural landscapes or agricultural land. Funded through the City of Vicksburg, Catfish Row Park was the beginning of revitalization for the derelict area, which was most recently a gravel parking lot. The resultant park space is a triangular wedge defined by a floodwall and railroad track to the west, a train depot to the north, and the looming river bluff to the east. As the project designers first approached the site, they found remnant pieces from the famous riverboats that once plied the muddy waters. Once such behemoth weighing more than 20,000 pounds was called the Sprague, and was one of the world’s great sternwheelers. Known as “the Big Mama of the Mississippi,” she was victim to a tragic fire in the 1970’s and for decades lay broken adjacent the site. The designers decided to work this local legend back into the fabric of the park. Parts of the original ship, including cleats, vents, and capstans, are included as play or focal features. An abstract interactive ‘Sprague’ steering wheel and prow play structure is located at the south end of the park.

The Sprague’s capstans were reused into the new park.





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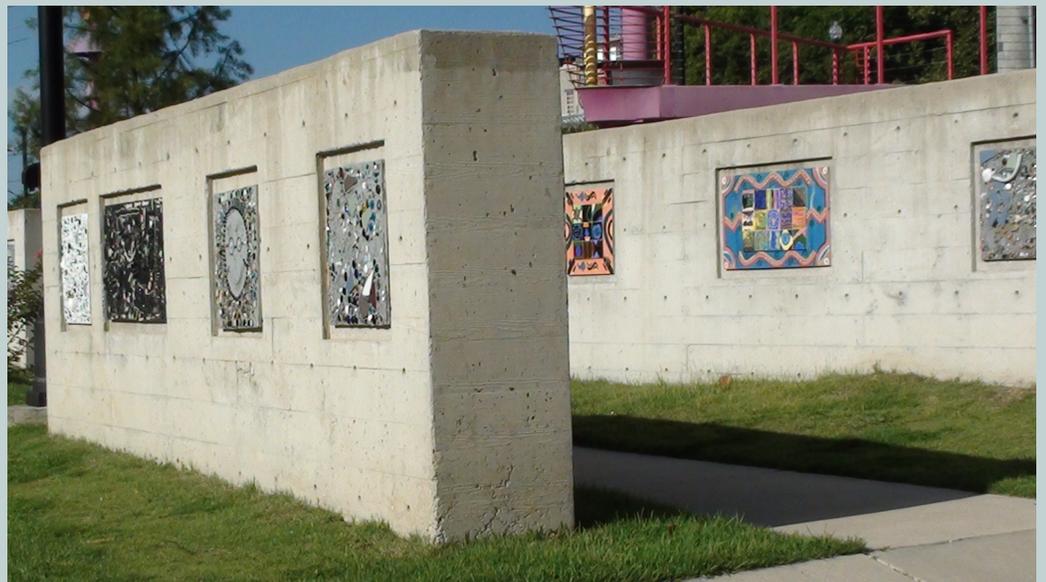
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A series of murals by artist Robert Dafford were painted on the floodwalls of the adjacent river edge. The murals display past and present vignettes of the City of Vicksburg, and its commerce, culture and history.



Art walls provide spaces for local schoolchildren to display their talents.



Written by Robert F. Brzuszek, Associate Extension Professor, The Department of Landscape Architecture, Mississippi State University. All photos were taken by Robert F. Brzuszek.