




- Placemaking for Better and Sustainable Environments
- Ways, Sites + Icons

The 'Green Edge' in Landscape Architecture and Site Design

by Sharmane Quinto





Landscape architects and site designers in the technical sense build places for people. Symbolically, they build so much more than walls and rooms. With the emergence of more builders focusing on urban planning, green architecture, and sustainable engineering, the new spaces constructed by architects and engineers now serve a much higher purpose.

The Philippines, in particular, is privileged to house a team of young and dynamic professionals who came together to work towards sustainable design, which they described as an “indispensable instrument for nation-building.”

Green Edge Environmental Design and Consultancy, conceptualized some five years ago, is a firm that pioneers in building spaces for a higher purpose. The team behind it describe themselves as a company of citizens “with the consciousness of duty to serve the country through mastery of skills and competence in their profession.”

They first started working with local government units (LGUs), providing studies and design recommendations for various environmental development projects. Some of these outputs were even presented in international conferences in Japan and in China.

Since then, their group evolved into a design and consultancy firm now known as Green Edge which, true to its name, is currently engaged in promising greening projects. Today, it continues to advance in terms of organizational structure, service delivery, and niche market.

The Constitution Monument, Kuwait.
Design competition commemorating the founding of Kuwait's constitution. Encoded in this environmental art are gematria and symbols related to this founding.

Green Edge is proud of its team's hands-on experience in both humid and arid tropics, which they say brings together "the synergies of resource conservation, a rich understanding of cultural and historical contexts, urban-rural dynamics, and code-compliance."

Couple these with the clients' corporate branding and market positioning plus a considerable sensitivity for environmental concerns, and you get a design delivery squeezed into three notable descriptions: relevant, timeless in appeal, and inclusive.

Green Edge is also backed up by its principals' 35 years of collective practical experience in a wide range of upscale high-end projects, commissioned both locally and overseas. Long before LEED (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design) had been a trend, their works have since been grounded on sustainable design.



*Julai'a Resort,
Kuwait*



The complex was designed with a novel co-location of land uses mixing retail with levels of government offices. This strategy activated a large 60-hectare development for almost 24/7 use within a new planned community in Jahra. Greenroofs of planted islands both indoors and outdoors provide welcome relief for workers and visitors.



Munting Paraiso Hotel:
An infinity pool looks out to commanding views of the seafront, featuring lounging coves and laplanes.



“By mediating the indoors with the outdoors, landscape design adds value to projects, creating the ambiance and empowering space with a character that makes places marketable.”



Bravo Hotel:
Wrapped along room balconies, emerald-green water terraces designed with infinity edges drop into a series of pools. Bird sculptures in various flight postures populate this water world alongside aquatic plants.



Bayugan Rotunda:
An events destination for locals, this facility's park and amphitheatre fills a niche for laid-back small-city leisure and tourism adjacent to a retail zone.



Cabadbaran Public Park,
Agusan del Norte



Bayugan Rotunda



Bravo Residence



Bravo Residence
Dr. and Dra. Petrarch Bravo (Client) and Arch. Eric Dalalo (Building Architect)



First row (L-R): Sharron S. Azuela, Marianne M. Balbuena **Second row (L-R):** Christopher S. Partolin III, Mariane R. Eusebio, Ronaldo D. Traballo, Abiel Arianne B. Laman, Charlotte B. Lingcopines, Bryan C. Castillo

This “dream green team” includes the likes of Cecilia Herras-Tence, managing director; Sharron Silverio-Azuela, studio director; Rick Hilario II, technical services; Christopher Partolin III, studio design director; Marianne Balbuena, studio and technical director; Ronaldo Traballo, chief financial officer; and Gracelyn Arquisola, director for business development.

Green Edge’s services, meanwhile, include site and land planning, landscape, architecture, urban design, permaculture, environmental art, and plan and design reviews.

Its mainstream service is landscape architecture design, which covers all phases of the design process—from conceptual designs to tender-quality, bid-ready design documentation.

Asked about what attracted them to landscape architecture, the team notes that among the design professions, it offers a “unique placemaking position” that bridges the gap between the “mechanistic disciplines of architecture and engineering and the life-sustaining natural processes.”

“By mediating the indoors with the outdoors, landscape design adds value to projects, creating the ambiance and empowering space with a character that makes places marketable,” the team stresses.

For Green Edge, landscape architecture does a lot in influencing the identity and emotion of a place and its people.

“Primarily being a placemaking endeavor, landscape architecture is much sought-after for the ambiance and character it empowers space to whatever scale. The ability to brand a space as unique has the transformative power for creating appeal as a ‘go-to’ destination, and ultimately, in economic terms, its marketability.”



The projects closest to their hearts are sites that have been radically transformed into their “highest best use and potential” as assets in green infrastructure. For instance, they are presently assisting the Bataan local government in a project that aims to transform its garbage dumpsite into a park from its original brownfield function.

“Almost everyone claims to (practice) sustainable design, which has become rather numbingly cliché.

Nevertheless, we consider some mutually reinforcing

cornerstone principles as basic to good site design: walkability, water-wise and resilience,” the team cites.

Asked which trends in the industry they are currently keeping an eye on, Green Edge particularly notes farm tourism, which they say opens up the quaint countryside and regional cultures to placemaking. Another related area they mentioned is the boutique hospitality sector, with a demand for one-of-a-kind branding.

“A futurist’s view on landscape architecture’s global prospect in connected cities includes its inevitable close merge with urban design and transport planning,” the team says.

Judging by the looks of it, the country could use quite a revamp. Walking along the metropolitan streets suggests a dire need for governments and organizations to consider rekindling lost connections with nature. Initiatives of firms such as Green Edge play a part in this venture. They do not just build empty spaces, but spaces that serve a purpose. Much like their projects, Green Edge is a refreshing pocket of nature within the majorly concrete juncture of architecture and building designs. ^A



Christopher Partolin III, Ronaldo Traballo, Sharron Azuela and Marianne Balbuena