

A (green) rose grows in Guadalajara

With help from sister-city association, Guadalajara taps into Portland-area landmarks and expertise to create a sustainable park in Bosque Colomos

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Like Washington Park locally, Bosque Colomos in Portland's sister city Guadalajara, Jalisco, is a natural preserve within a city. The two cities also share a nickname, 'The City of Roses,' as well as a signature flower.

And by 2011, the cities will share a garden, thanks to an effort between the Portland Guadalajara Sister City Association and Portland planners, architects and city officials.

In late 2006, the city of Guadalajara gifted the association with one acre of park space in Bosque Colomos to celebrate the 25th anniversary of Portland's sister city relationship with Guadalajara. The space would be used to create 'Jardin Portland,' a garden that would represent the aesthetics, as well as the spirit, of Portland.

The PGSCA approached Portlander Ron White of Probity Builders to offer program and project management services for the project.

"I looked at that bare piece of land and said, 'That looks fun,'" White said. "After showing a little bit of interest, they put me in charge."

In February 2007, members of the PGSCA and White went to Guadalajara to come up with a plan for the park. The delegation talked to government officials, university students and other residents to find out how the park would best serve the community. The end result of those talks was a draft that would create miniature versions of Portland-area landmarks such as Multnomah Falls and Pioneer Courthouse Square.

After spending time in Guadalajara, however, White realized the garden was missing something.

"I talked to a group of 150 design and architecture students and asked, 'How many of you have been to Bosque Colomos?'" White said. "Almost everyone raised their hand. I said, 'How many of you have experience with environmental design?' There was very little response. I asked the head of department, and he said they



Courtesy of Ron White

University students from the local Universidad Autónoma de Guadalajara receive instructions prior to planting nearly 500 plants during the completion of Phase I of the Jardin Portland project in Guadalajara.

get very little training on it."

White knew then that the park should focus on Portland's commitment to sustainability.

"This project will share not only what the park would look like but our intellectual property in terms of environmental sustainability and green practices," he said

White then set to work with two Portlanders – landscape architect Glendon Smith of Mainline Design and electrical engineer Kirk Davis of Glumac – to create a plan focusing on green design.

"Glendon did the master plan and made the design off of video and photos I took of the site," White said. "His first time on site was this month after the plan was drafted."

The plans, which were approved by Guadalajara officials on a recent delegation trip in mid-February, will include a learning center built to resemble the Crown Pointe Vista House, which looks out onto the Columbia River Gorge in east Multnomah



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County. The building will have a runoff system to educate locals on the reuse of stormwater.

“They only get rain a few months a year and there is a lot of flooding,” White said. “We want to demonstrate ways for them to adapt and reuse some of the environment, rather than paving everything and washing it away.”

The building itself will be a model of sustainable design. Though an architect hasn’t been chosen, the project has a commitment from Davis to provide mechanical and electrical design for the center. Davis suggested building the center off of the power grid. An existing greenhouse will be incorporated into a visitor center to explore flora and trees and learn about different planting techniques.

“It will be a learning lab, something akin to an (Oregon Museum of Science & Industry-type) display with wind- and solar-power stations,” White said.

A park in three acts

The project is divided into three phases, the first of which was completed this past February. A delegation that included PGSCA President Maria Alanis, Portland Mayor Tom Potter and his wife Karin Hanson; Portland Police Bureau Commander Mike Reese and Portland Fire Chief Dave spent two weeks in Guadalajara to celebrate the city’s 466th anniversary and to plant a rose garden in the park space.

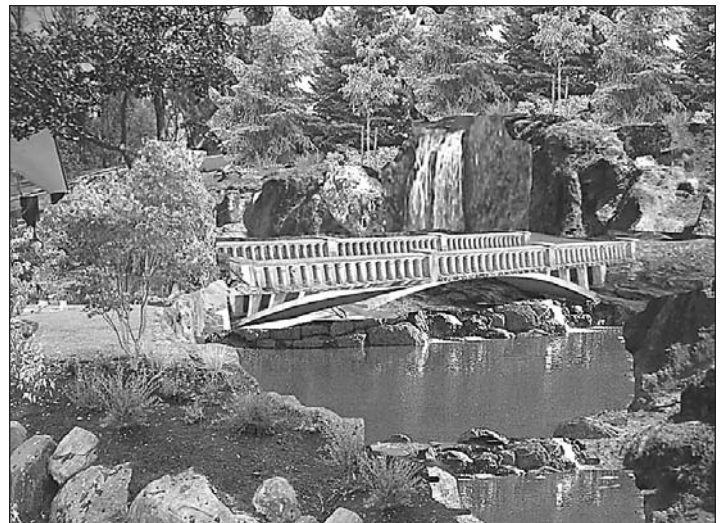
“We wanted to get something simple yet substantial in the ground to demonstrate our commitment,” White said. “We installed a 200-foot path with gravel and planted 500 plants in three days. The Bosque Colomos folks were extremely supportive and did a lot of the labor themselves.”

The second phase, to be completed in 2009, will include constructing a replica of Pioneer Courthouse Square and a Multnomah Falls replica with a pedestrian bridge, and decorating an existing picnic shelter with local flora. The third phase will



Courtesy of Ron White

An old lagoon in Guadalajara’s Bosque Colomos will become a mini-replica of Multnomah Falls, complete with a pedestrian bridge for park visitors to observe birds and other wildlife. The project is expected to be complete in 2011.



include building learning and visitor centers and installing Portland art and an interactive fountain.

The cost of the remaining project totals \$1.5 million, all of which will be obtained through fundraising. White hopes the sustainability aspect of the project will make it enticing to potential corporate and individual sponsors.

“It’s all going to be fundraising,” White said. “There truly is a huge market – 5 to 6 million people – in Guadalajara. That’s an incredible amount of opportunity for sponsorship. This is a project worth getting attached to.”