

Service Summary

Urban Wilderness Gateway Park



Scope:

A new multidisciplinary artist studio on a secluded 90 acre site 2 miles from downtown Knoxville.

Size:

5 artist residency cabins, 1 gateway building, 1 caretaker residence, 2 studios on 100+ acres

Client:

The City of Knoxville

Schedule:

Design, Summer 2014-Winter 2019;
Construction, Fall 2015 - Spring 2020
(All projects)

Budget:

Cabins - Cabins + Site, \$5,000,000.00;
Gateway Building, \$5,241,721.00; Artist Studios, \$1,485,156.00

Photos:

Keith Issacs

The Baker Creek Preserve Pavilion is a small project catalyzing BIG vision. The pavilion sits at the nexus of Knoxville's urban growth and its "Urban Wilderness", a network of greenspaces and trail systems that seeks to equitably re-connect the city through collaborations between City leadership, grassroots organizations and local residents.

In 2013 the mayor of Knoxville worked closely with a collection of land conservation and cycling organizations to successfully cease the further extension of the James White Parkway, which had been constructed from the city center, across the Tennessee River, and several miles into South Knoxville. This agreement was the culmination of a years-long struggle with the Tennessee Department of Transportation to end the construction of an expressway that would cut through the heart of land preserves that are now established as the city's Urban Wilderness initiative. The mayor announced an agreement with TDOT that transferred control the terminus of the Parkway to the City. With the acquisition of this property, the City envisioned the transformation of this "Highway to Nowhere" as a celebrated Gateway into a natural resource so many had worked tirelessly to protect.

Shortly after, a multi-disciplinary planning team was selected by the City of Knoxville including architects, landscape planners, traffic engineers, ecological consultants, and a graphics team. The team established a phased plan to extend The Baker Creek Preserve to the terminus of the James White Parkway, establishing a celebrated gateway to Knoxville's Urban Wilderness. The planning team, however, introduced a much larger and bolder vision through a delightful irony: the James White Parkway, originally constructed to expedite vehicular traffic out of the city's center, would be transformed into a greenway, folding the Urban Wilderness all the way back into the urban core of the city through a radical adaptive re-use of TDOT infrastructure! This proposed vision framework was embraced by the City of Knoxville in August of 2017.

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