Rice University Brockman Hall for Physics

Houston, TX

Building and landscape are woven together in a seamless composition, extending lively and inspiring conversation outside of classroom walls.

The Brockman Hall for Physics is an 111,000-SF facility housing classrooms, laboratory space, lecture halls, and administrative offices for the Physics Department as well as physicists from the Electrical and Computer Engineering Department at Rice University in Houston. Driven by Rice University's belief that some of the most important moments on campus are instances of informal discussion and debate outside of the classroom, the design of the building and landscape seeks to provide a multitude of spaces for lively and inspiring conversation.

Sheltered from the sun by the building overhead, a ground-floor courtyard features a reflecting pool, raised ipe terrace, and enhanced plaza with movable furniture. OJB was also asked to redesign the "Courtyard of Science," an interstitial space between the wings of Brown Hall to the south. A grove of honey mesquites organizes the space and intimate decomposed granite courtyards with movable furniture create a number of social spaces.

Client

Rice University

Size

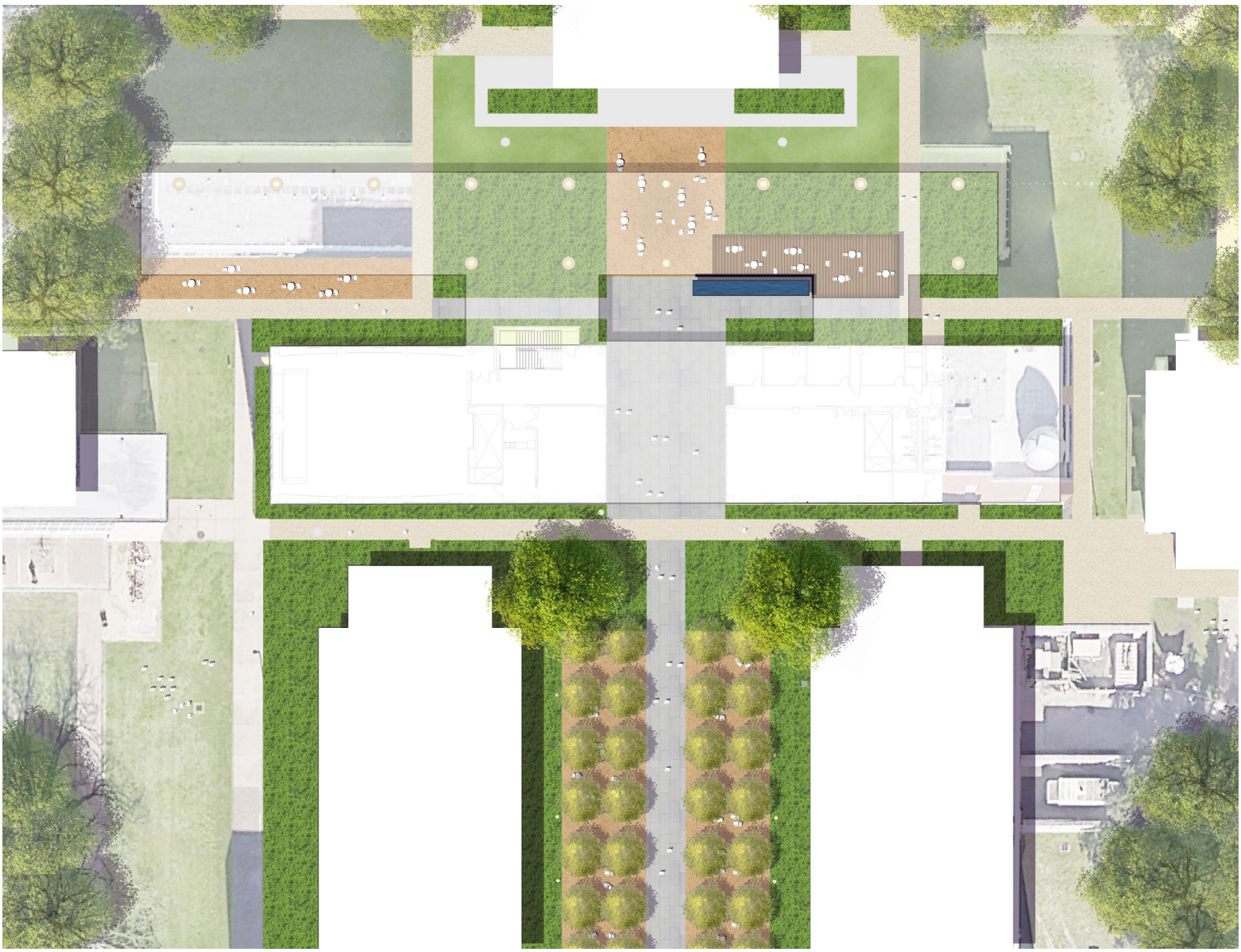
110,000 SF

Team

Kieran Timberlake Associates
Walter P. Moore
Haynes Whaley Associates
CCRD Partners

Awards

SCUP / AIA-CAE Honor Award, Excellence in Architecture for a New Building 2012, AIA Houston Design Award 2012



Sustainability

The project uses regional materials. The shaded canpoy and fountain cool the outdoor space in the Texas heat.

LAND

The historic context of the site was considered, as the project is positioned in the middle of a prestigious uniformed campus. The landscape helps unite the architecture.

The design protects floodplain function, lifting the building high up off the ground and allowing for a landscape amenity below.

14,000 square feet of open space was offered to the campus with landscape by raising the building off the ground.

PLANTING

17 trees were planted.

Fertilizer and pesticides were minimized.

SOCIAL

The project provides optimum site accessibility, safety and wayfinding.

Outdoor fitness, academic classes and educational tours take place on the landscape surrounding the pavilion.

CARBON, ENERGY & AIR

The shaded canopy and fountain can cool the outdoor space by 10 – 15 degrees Fahrenheit.

The project uses regional materials.

Exposure to environmental tobacco smoke is minimized with prohibited smoking on-site.

*The tree average for water interception is 500 gallons. American's use an average of 100 gallons of water per day (EPA's water trivia facts).

**120 pounds of CO2 per tree annually (This number is based on an average from the National Tree Benefits Calculator) One car produces an average of 8,320 pounds of CO2 per year (The Code of Federal Regulations - 40 CFR 600.113).