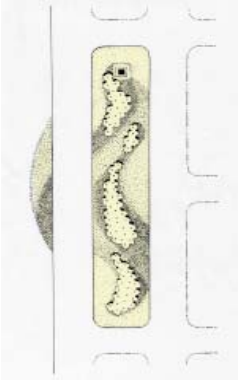
living memorials project

After September 11, 2001, people gathered in our public parks and public spaces to begin the healing process, and many efforts were undertaken to plant trees in honor of the lives lost. The urban forest provided a special refuge for rescue and recovery workers at ground zero in NYC, as well as for individuals throughout the country who found nature a rejuvenating companion. The Living Memorials Project seeks to sustain and enrich these efforts by building on community momentum and offering trees as an investment in our communities.

university design exhibition

The design and creation of a living memorial is meant to be both a symbolic, healing event in the wake of tragedy and disaster, as well as an investme nt in the physical fabric of our communities. There is historical precedence for memorializing events with trees and engaging the natural environment in times of crisis. Nature helps to heal the spirit and to reconnect people. Trees are also a powerful symbol of life and renewal, and serve to honor the spirit of community for generations to come. Although designers cannot literally create community, they can design physical settings that bring people together, and they can also facilitate a process that cultivates the bonds that unify people. Participation in the design process brings self-esteem, joy and personal investment in our home places.

During this year's project stage, applicants had the opportunity to request design assistance from graduate-level university students. Landscape architecture design studios from **City College of New York, Cornell University,** and **Virginia Polytechnic and State University** expressed interest in teaming up with community partners to develop living memorials. This collaboration benefits participating communities by providing design assistance from leading academic institutions, and giving students an opportunity to apply their skills in a professional, public setting. The engagement between students and citizens also yields meaningful lessons, as community members gain insight into the memorial design process and students learn about the personal experiences of people affected by the tragedy.



Facilitated by landscape architects Theodore Eisenman and Matt Arnn, each university studio class was partnered with a community group: City College with **Groundwork Yonkers**; Cornell University with **Open Road NY**; Virginia Tech with **GreenSpaces for DC**. Each partnership was tasked with creating a new site or modifying an existing site. Professors and students had flexibility to determine how they engage their respective sites, and the project encouraged a participatory design process consisting of an initial site visit, a design workshop (charette) with local citizens, a mid-project review, and a final presentation to the community. The designs displayed here are the results of these partnerships.

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