

# UC Berkeley

## Places

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## Waterworks Gardens

Waterworks Gardens is admired by all who see it but has yet to fulfill its recreational or educational potential. Fortunately, those in charge recognize the fact and are taking steps to change it.

Bill Burwell, in charge of operations at the King County East Division Reclamation Plant, acknowledges that the park is only "fairly well used" but says the use is increasing. Principal users are workers in the many nearby office parks who lunch in Waterworks Gardens in good weather. The path through the park is connected to regional trail systems so it is also well traversed by joggers.

There are no organized tours of the park. Periodically it is visited by University of Washington landscape architecture and other classes. Since the plant has remained under construction the presence of young children in the park has not been encouraged.

A tale Burwell tells with glee is that several couples have approached him about getting married in the park, although none has followed through. "Imagine telling your grandchildren that you were married in a sewage treatment plant." Occasionally there will be a visitor from outside of the region drawn by articles on the park in the professional press and magazines such as *Sunset*. The park has also received highly favorable attention in Seattle area newspapers. The Renton parks department's only involvement with the park so far has been to help with maintenance but there is talk of the city playing a more active role.

Carol Valenta, who heads the King County office of cultural resources, feels the need for more programming of Waterworks Gardens but points to severe limitations of time and resources. Valenta was a virtual partner of Lorna Jordan in the realization of the park, and is especially anxious to have it widely used by elementary and high school students. She hopes to have curriculum materials prepared by the next school year. "It would be an ideal destination for field trips," she points out.

She gets a steady stream of requests for information and slides of Waterworks Gardens from around the country. Jordan is impressed by the breadth of the requests. "They come from engineering and parks people, not just artists and landscape architects."

Both believe that "Waterworks Gardens can serve as a model for other infrastructure projects" and cites five reasons: "habitat has been created, water is being treated, an aesthetic place has been made, regional trail linkages have been incorporated and a strong connection has been forged between the community and the reclamation plant."

No direct use has yet been made of the prototype but it has influenced the city of Seattle to incorporate public art in a water treatment project now underway. And Jordan has since been appointed artist in residence at Seattle Public Utilities.



*left: The Release, the fifth and final garden room, where cleansed water flows from the last stormwater treatment pond to the enhanced wetland and then to Springbrook Creek.*

*Photo: Lorna Jordan*