

# UC Berkeley

## Places

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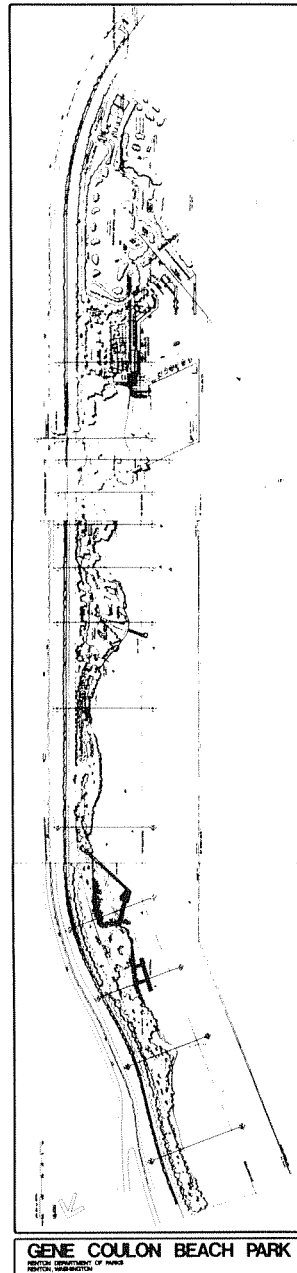
Peer reviewed

# Gene Coulon Beach Park

## Jury Comments

Many landscapes are seen primarily as places for meditation and only secondarily as fields of action. Coulon Beach is a welcome exception to this pattern. Its multiple levels, interweaving paths and differently constructed edges are all transformations of the landscape that are intended to accommodate diverse people and age groups as they swim, boat, walk, romp, wait and watch. Its forms merge the tin echoes from industrial sheds of the working world with exuberantly unrefined seaside pavilions.

The park exemplifies strategies of contrast and merger. Like many urban parks throughout the country, it is constructed on industrial land that has become obsolete and is now reclaimed to add coherence and amenity to the community. The program for the park spaces was influenced by consultation with the community and special user groups. It is a year-round park, consisting of a carefully composed series of formal and informal landscape areas linked by prominent landscape elements, such as open meadows, contoured land forms and groves and avenues of trees.



A



B

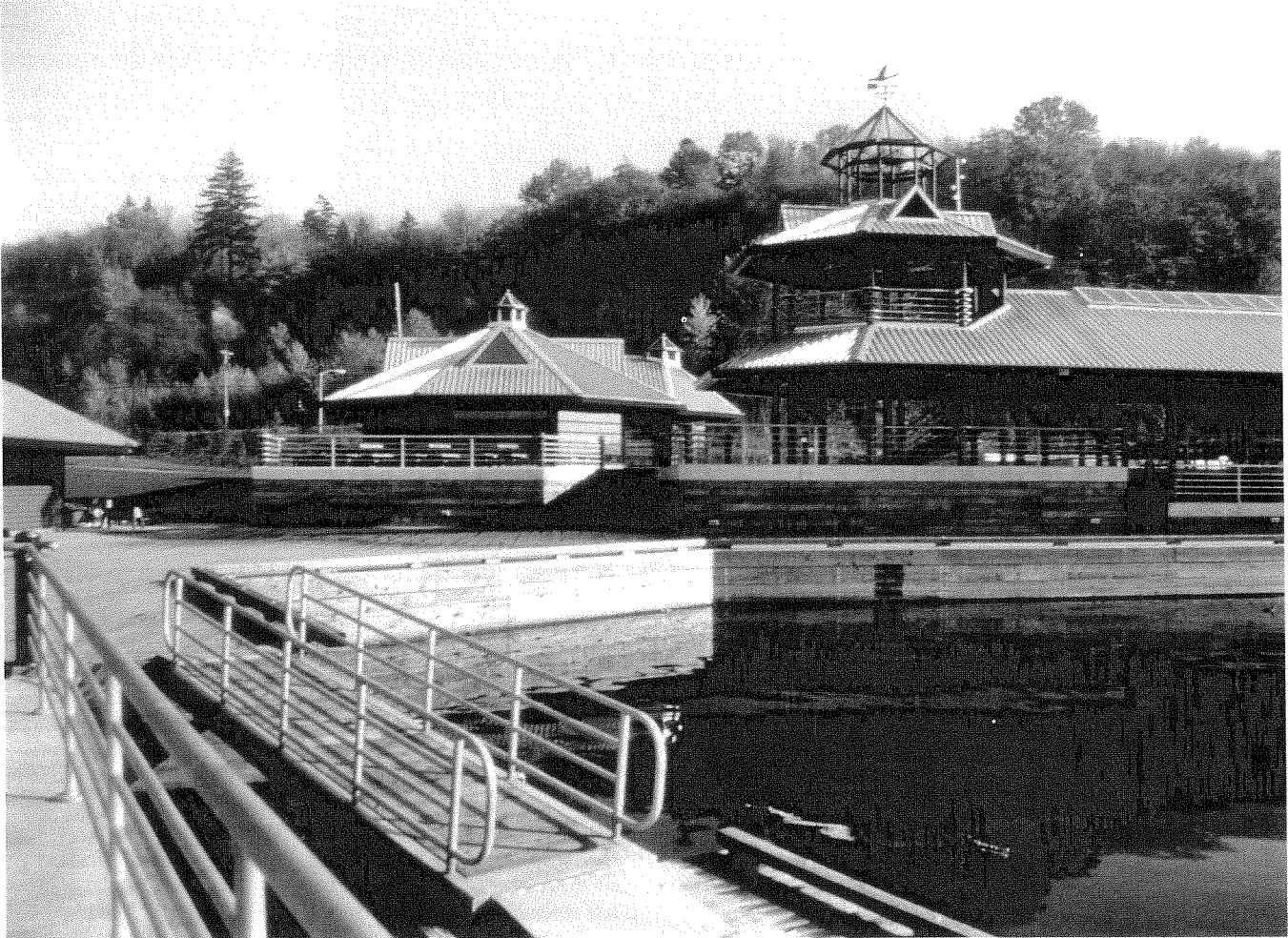
## Architect's Statement

The purpose of the overall project, completed in 1982, was to develop a 57-acre city park on over one mile of Lake Washington shoreline. The site is significant historically because its past industrial uses reflect the region's development from the late 1800s through to the 1950s, when the long, narrow property was declared surplus by the railroad.

Originally the site of a horsedrawn coal barge loading dock for the nearby mines, the waterfront property had been used for log dumping, shipping, a

sawmill, wartime ship fitting and surplus ship storage. The subsequent revitalization of this industrial shoreline was the result of fifteen years of visionary planning and effort to acquire the property and obtain voters' support for a \$7.8 million bond issue for its adaptive reuse as a public park.

The design of the structures took into consideration the historic nature of the site, and the building style recalls the traditional forms of turn-of-the-century waterfront architecture. The buildings are placed in a carefully composed series of formal and informal landscape areas linked by strong features



C

such as contoured landforms, open meadows, and groves and avenues of trees.

The architect and owner developed the building program together, assisted by extensive involvement by both the community-at-large and various special user groups. One of the primary goals was to create an

activity space for informal use by individuals and families that would also accommodate large groups and civic events. By combining the multipurpose picnic and group shelter with the restaurant and boating structure, the designers have provided this flexibility, and also created a park that can be used year-round.

**A Gene Coulon Beach Park,**  
site plan

**B Gene Coulon Beach Park**  
Photograph by Jones & Jones

**C Gene Coulon Beach Park**  
Photograph by Randy L. Shelton