

Gulf Coast Green 2024 Student Competition

Committee on the Environment
an AIA Houston Committee



2024 Gulf Coast Green Student Competition Brief

OVERVIEW

Gulf Coast Green has paired its conference theme with a student competition for the last 17 years. This year, the Gulf Coast Green 2024 committee, partnered with the Houston Zoo, invites current students studying architecture, landscape architecture, planning, urban design or any related curriculum or study to **participate in an open innovation challenge for the conceptual design of Parking Lot G at the Houston Zoo**. This year's conference, **Wild by Design**, aims to explore the connection between design and nature, both inside and outside of buildings. Participants are invited to submit innovative designs, based on the theme of Wild by Design, for a space to complement the **Houston Zoo's mission of connecting communities with animals, inspiring action to save wildlife**.

BACKGROUND

It all started with a Bison named Earl. Founded in 1922, a fence was erected around a plot in Hermann Park to house Earl and a few other animals. This plot would grow into what is today the Houston Zoo. Boasting the second most visitors for a zoo in the United States, the Houston Zoo has exhibits for over 6,000 animals and 900 different species. Most notably, Houston Zoo supports more than a dozen conservation projects in Texas and across the globe to help endangered wildlife survive. Located in Hermann Park, the Houston Zoo sits at an opportune location. The Zoo is surrounded by a free family park on 3 sides, abuts the Houston Medical Center, and is walking distance from a train line and Rice University. However, currently McGovern Lake and a sea of parking separate the Zoo from the northern part of the park.

BRIEF

The members of Gulf Coast Green challenge students to provide a **graphic site plan** that addresses the connection from the Houston Zoo to Hermann Park through a public park at Parking Lot G.

The goal of the park is to offer a greenspace that compliments the Zoo by offering a park that allows the Zoo to host pop-up style events aimed at promoting the Zoo's program and mission at a more intimate scale in a public setting. The proposed site for the Parking Lot G Park is approximately 2.3 acres of surface parking for approximately 200 parking spots. The site can be accessed either from Parking Lot F, or from Hermann Park Dr. Existing impervious cover is roughly 95%. **Student teams should provide any additional documents or models to best support their concept**, left to their discretion, including but not limited to sections, elevations of any site elements, renders, physical models, or inspirational pieces.

Design considerations are as follows:

- Consider verticality in their park to meet program requirements.
- Provide an estimate of impervious cover on their site plan.
- Maintain existing parking count.
- Provide space for families to picnic and rest. Sizing is up to the teams.
- Provide a designed exterior space that is a minimum of 10,000sqft for zoo related pop-ups. Space can be covered or uncovered.
- Consider sustainable design elements including but not limited to renewable energy, water harvesting, and embodied carbon, and urban heat island effect.
- Create a sense of place through design concepts.



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ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENTS

Participants may submit as individuals OR as teams of up to four. All team members must be (A) currently enrolled students, or (B) students enrolled during the 2023-2024 academic year in a college degree program. Both undergraduate and graduate level students are eligible for participation in this competition.

SUBMISSIONS

Students and teams interested in participating are asked to submit their Site Plan and a vision statement to the committee by **March 15th, 2024 at 11:59 PM CST**. A group of 6-8 finalist teams will then be selected to present their concepts and designs to a jury of industry leaders in person on **March 22nd** at Gulf Coast Green 2024 at the Houston Zoo.

Minimum Submittal requirements:

- Vision statement summarizing design values and influences (max 250 words)
- Site Plan Board reflecting the team's design (36"x24" digital PDF)
 - You may provide additional boards as needed to present your ideas
 - Email submissions and questions to Benjamin_peace@gensler.com
 - If you need assistance transferring large files, please reach out to Ben Peace

DEADLINES

- Design Submission due: **March 15th, 11:59pm**
- Finalist Selection Announcements: **March 18th**
- Presentation to jury in person at Gulf Coast Green Conference, March 22, at Houston Zoo.
 - *Complimentary conference registration included for finalists*

DAY-OF JURY AND AWARD ANNOUNCEMENTS

- Finalist requirements: In Person Presentation
 - Finalists will be required to present their designs to a Jury Panel for 10 minutes maximum. Students will need to bring their Site Plan Board, plotted physically, and any additional work teams need to support their design. Finalists will begin presentations at 1:30pm with awards being announced at 5:00pm.
- Award announcements
 - Winning team to be announced during closing remarks of the conference at 5:00pm

AWARDS

Cash prizes will be awarded to the top three Finalist Teams, determined by the Jury panel, and one Audience Choice Award determined by the Conference Attendee. Prizes will be awarded per team as follows:

- 1st Place (Grand Prize): \$500
- 2nd Place: \$250
- Audience Choice: \$100



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REFERENCES

- https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Houston_Zoo
- https://www.archdaily.com/1010027/opera-park-cobe?ad_source=search&ad_medium=projects_tab
- <https://lynnwyattsquare.com/>
- <https://www.archdaily.com/962374/little-island-park-heatherwick-studio>

PROJECT SITE

