

Belt Collins – Achievements

Belt Collins' achievements are multitudinous. They are:

- (1) skilled **leadership**;
- (2) **sensitivity** to local cultures and customs;
- (3) **transformations** of many unused or degraded sites;
- (4) **seminal studies** that have had considerable economic and cultural impacts;
- (5) and many, many **design awards**.

Examples of achievements in each category follow.

(1) Leadership. Belt Collins has always searched for and successfully hired the most talented professionals available. It is a point of pride for the firm that every major landscape architectural program in the United States and Canada continues to send some of their most promising candidates to the firm.

The width and depth of the firm's talent pool has meant seamless succession over the years. This has happened because Belt Collins' leadership has made a strong commitment in two important areas.

First, young, talented landscape architects are mentored, encouraged to further their education and then are moved up. In a professional services firm, succession is a vital process for stability. A special effort is made to search out local talent wherever Belt Collins operates.

Second, Belt Collins has always been gender blind. Talented women and men have equal opportunities at the firm. A good example is Anne Li Mapes who serves as President of Belt Collins.

Belt Collins looks for talent in many areas. As an example, one of its senior leaders has a keen sense for real estate beyond his professional skills, and as a result of that additional talent, the firm owns its quarters and other valuable real estate. This has provided additional stability for the firm.

Belt Collins' leaders are deeply involved in the community and in its professional associations. A good example is the firm's Chairman Emeritus, Tom Papandrew, FASLA, AIA, who served as national president of ASLA from 1993 to 1994.

(2) Sensitivity to local cultures and customs. Belt Collins was engaged to plan and provide landscape architecture for an isolated, tree covered spur of land with beach frontage at Koh Samui, Thailand. The design concept for Le Royal Meridien Resort was sensitive to the site's existing vegetation density and character, incorporating the conservation of six acres of indigenous shrub and woodland, plus numerous rock outcroppings. In addition, 200 trees and a 12-acre wetland were preserved. Cultural elements, such a sculpture and art pieces crafted by Thai artists, were used as focal features within the gardens.

Goa, India benefits from a fascinating combination of traditional Indian and Portuguese Colonial influences. For the Taj Exotica Resort in Goa, the firm worked side by side with the project architect to create a landscape theme of a Goan Village.

In 1981, the firm designed the Tanjong Jara Resort and Rantau Abang Visitors Center at Kuala Terrenangan, Malaysia, based on a tourism study the firm prepared for the Malaysian government. The landscape plan for this resort was specifically designed to incorporate and reflect the indigenous culture and environment of Malaysia's northeast peninsula. A botanical garden and craft bazaar that showcased local arts and crafts were among the facilities Belt Collins incorporated into the project. In 1983, the project received the prestigious Aga Khan Award.

(3) Transformations. Several landscape transformations have been mentioned previously in other contexts—Kaanapali Resort on Maui, the Kohala Coast on the Big Island of Hawaii, Discovery Bay in Hong Kong Harbor, Subic Bay in the Philippines and Laguna Phuket Resort in Thailand.

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There are many others. A derelict, polluted tin mine, the world's oldest dating to the 13th century, was developed into the very successful Sungei Besi Community in Malaysia. Belt Collins provided master planning and landscape architecture for this 1,300-acre development. This reclaimed tin mine site is a fine example of the firm's skills in creating diverse communities. Sungei Besi includes residences, hotels, golf courses and shopping areas sited around major recreational lakes that were once the open pits of the tin mine site.

Aberdeen Marina in Hong Kong was once a rundown shoreside village where 2,000 fishing junks jostled for space. Belt Collins transformed the area so that today it is a marina of great respite where members and guests berth their yachts, swim in two sparkling pool, play tennis and enjoy several restaurants.

In the Philippines, simmering Pinatubo volcano erupted in 1991 and dumped barren ash all over the original golf course at Clark Air Base. Belt Collins discovered the lahar was an excellent source of potash, and instead of having to haul away tons and tons of the ash, used it successfully for mounding and the landscape rehabilitation of the 27-hole golf course.

(4) Seminal Studies. Preparation of tourism planning studies is among one of many of Belt Collins' proudest achievements. Until Belt Collins became the lead contributor to the Visitor Destination Study for the State of Hawaii in 1960, this kind of planning had not been done before. This early work led to the firm's preparation over the years of similar studies for such diverse areas as Ayers Rock in Australia, American and Western Samoa, Sri Lanka, India, Fiji, Malaysia, Guam and Taiwan.

The Kohala Coast on the Big Island of Hawaii has benefited in a large way from the firm's work on the original Hawaii Visitor Destination Study. Creation of resorts along this coast where there was once barren lava has created a beneficial economic impact that is considerable.

For instance, Mauna Kea Resort, Mauna Lani Resort, Hualalai Resort, and Waikoloa Beach Resort together now employ 7,000 people with an annual payroll of \$170 million. The taxes generated are substantial: nearly \$9 million annually in property tax for the county and \$40 million in general excise tax for the state.

(5) Awards. If one were to list the design awards the firm has won, it would cover multiple pages. On those pages would be over 250 local, national and international awards for a wide range of projects that include destination resorts, golf courses, restoration projects, parks, schools, high-rise condominiums, infrastructure, and hotels. A few examples appear below.

Because the firm is based in Hawaii, awards were given for several distinctive projects that are well worth mentioning.

The attack on Pearl Harbor during World War II still stirs emotions among many. With that in mind, the Battleship Missouri, where the Japanese surrender took place, is now tied up in Pearl Harbor as a companion to the very moving Arizona Memorial. Belt Collins has received three environmental awards for its work for the relocation of the Battleship Missouri and design of its surrounding facilities.

Outrigger canoe paddling is a distinctly Hawaii sport. Thousands of paddlers and spectators annually use what is called the Ke'ehi Lagoon Canoe Complex. The firm's landscape architectural design work won a distinguished design award for transforming an underutilized, polluted lagoon near Honolulu's airport into a very popular venue for colorful competitions among Hawaii canoe clubs.

On a national level, Belt Collins is very proud to have received Awards of Excellence from the Urban Land Institute for both Mauna Kea Resort and Hualalai Resort on the Big Island of Hawaii. All of the Belt Collins projects along the West Hawaii coast have been honored with awards, including the original West Hawaii Corridor study, which was prepared in the late 1960s, and the Kohala Resort Master Plan, completed in the early 1970s.