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A New Look for Urban Utility Structures.

As hiding eyesores gets harder, there's more need to get creative with utilitarian facilities and integrate them with their surroundings

Utility and public-works structures in cities traditionally have a pretty uniform reputation: They're ugly.

But a new generation of projects are being designed to weave infrastructure into cities' social fabric, offering amenities and standing as works of public art.

More than half of the world's population lives in urban areas, and by 2050 almost two-thirds of people will be city dwellers, according to the World Health Organization. As cities become more densely populated and land becomes scarcer, it's harder to hide eyesores.

So, there's more impetus to get creative with utilitarian facilities and integrate them with public spaces and neighborhoods.

"Development pressure in American cities today doesn't allow for continuing the old model of single-use infrastructure that isn't designed to be compatible with other uses," says Marie Law Adams, principal architect in the Boston firm Landing Studio and a lecturer in the department of urban studies at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. "There's not only less space available as old industrial edges of cities become redeveloped, but there's also more of an expectation that infrastructure projects...also contribute to a better public realm experience through their design."

Here's a look at some of the new projects.

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By Barbara Sadick

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