

# The Connecticut Landscape Architect

SPRING 2020



Women in  
Landscape  
Architecture

## Abigail Adams: Embracing the Genuine Me

**M**aking the decision and taking the final steps to create and build my own company in late 2014 was one of the best decisions I ever made. You may ask “why?” Entrepreneurship and managing your own firm comes with a plethora of “stresses”: where will my next big job come from, where do I spend my minuscule marketing budget, can I actually spend the extra money to hire a professional photographer (can I afford not to?!), did I reconcile my QuickBooks properly this month, and will I remember to invoice Mr. Jones’ account for that postage and handling at the end of the month? These may seem silly for the larger, more established firms out there, so bear with me for a moment, but as we all know, the struggle is real. However, these little

stresses are all minutia in the day-to-day operations. The all-important and driving factor, one which I was able to discover when I was finally on my own, was that running my own company allows me to embrace the genuine me, an independent, female, professional, landscape architect.

All of the qualities that may be considered as “feminine” are some of the qualities that I attribute to my success. Being gracious, sensitive, adaptable, and kind are traits that should not be considered negative in a male-dominated field. In fact, they are some of the words that I use to describe myself, and while there are some who would consider these to be qualities that should be avoided in the conference room, on job sites, or in negotiations, I feel the opposite. They should not be thought of as

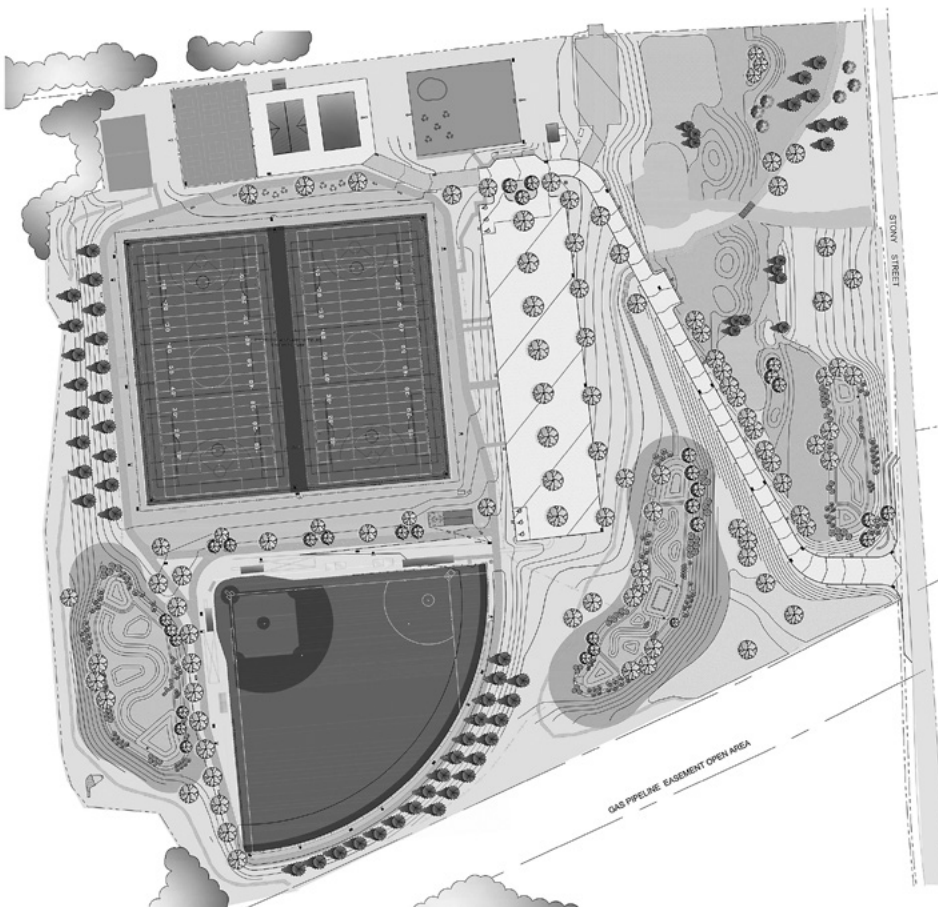


negatives. In my opinion they are assets and have served me well not only in my personal life, but in my professional one.

I’m a wife, mother, children’s book author, and a landscape architect. It is very rare that I consider myself to be a “woman LA.” I’ve always believed that women can solve the thorniest of problems just as well as their male counterparts. We all come from different backgrounds with varying perspectives. I have found that having a diverse team of designers, engineers, and other consultants creates a win-win situation, not only for the owner, but for the project as a whole. Utilizing attributes historically considered to be female have served me well.

Sensitive, thoughtful women, who often hold back on jumping right into the conversation, may on occasion be perceived as weak. I am definitely that woman, but I pride myself on these characteristics that contribute to me being an active listener. It is my goal, on all of my projects, to incorporate an approach that utilizes a combination of listening to all involved parties, taking time to process the information being provided, and then to help identify

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Granite Knolls Sports & Recreation Complex, Yorktown, NY, a Westchester Municipal Planning Federation Award-Winning Project.

## Abigail Adams cont'd

opportunities and solutions for the particular situation. As a mother I am pretty well versed in time constraints, coordinating my daughter's activities and evening meetings, making sure everyone is where they need to be when they need to be there. Working in timelines and listening are underutilized and underrated skills that I attempt to put into practice every day, in all situations.

In addition to listening to my clients and design team members, I listen to the sites themselves, because, as we know, they all tell their own story, and often times the site, not the owner or the designer, is in the driver's seat. Some of my most inspiring and fun projects began with obstacles and constraints that at first seemed insurmountable. However, being thoughtful, sensitive to the situation, and "listening" to what is happening around me — essentially, being present — helps me to reframe things, look at them

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from a different perspective, and see the possibilities so that we can develop solutions. So, all in all, not so bad to be a sensitive and thoughtful woman.

I do find it important to be a strong female role model for all young women, not only my daughter. One way I can do this is by actively participating in The Kiwanis Club Foundation of Greater Danbury's Bringing Up Grades (B.U.G.) program. This is a fabulous program that we have been doing for several years now (I am the current President of the Chapter). It introduces the 5th grade classes at the South Street Elementary School in Danbury, CT to a variety of professions that they otherwise would never have

even heard of. This program encourages each student to set goals to raise at least one of their grades by implementing some of the skills they learn from the guest speakers. It is a very rewarding experience to be around eager minds who love to learn about new experiences and expand their horizons.

*— Abigail Adams, ASLA, is the founder and principal of A2 Land Consulting, LLC of New Fairfield, CT. She is licensed in NY, CT, and most recently MA, with projects spanning the residential, commercial, and retail markets. You can reach her at [abigail@a2land.com](mailto:abigail@a2land.com) and follow A2 Land on Facebook and Instagram.*



Orthopaedic & Specialty Surgery Center in Danbury, CT.