Introduction: The 2007 Rudy Bruner Award

The Rudy Bruner Award for Urban Excellence (RBA) is a national award for urban places. Established in 1987, the award celebrates projects that are distinguished not only by quality design, but also by their social, economic, and environmental contributions to the built environment. The award seeks to promote fresh, innovative thinking about the kinds of projects that make our cities better places to live and work. RBA winners often transcend the boundaries between architecture, urban design, and planning, and they are frequently developed with such vision that they present creative solutions to some of our cities’ most persistent problems.

The RBA is unique among national awards because of its emphasis on multiple aspects of place, and on the complex process involved with urban placemaking. The award is focused on the ways in which each winner impacts its city or neighborhood, while understanding that every urban place grows out of complex layers of social, economic, aesthetic, and personal interactions.

The Rudy Bruner Award asks some important questions. What kinds of places make our cities better places to live and work? How do these places enrich the urban landscape? Do they contribute to the

Gold Medal award presentation at the Children’s Museum of Pittsburgh.
local economy? Do they create community pride? Do they build bridges among diverse populations or create beauty where none existed before? And perhaps most important, what can we learn from the creative thinking inherent in RBA winners, and how can that learning be applied in cities across the country?

The criteria for submitting an application for the RBA are intentionally broad, encouraging applications from a wide variety of projects. Many RBA winners represent new models of urban placemaking that have successfully challenged conventional wisdom about what is possible. Most are products of hard-won collaborations among diverse groups of people, often with differing agendas. And all RBA winners have contributed to the vitality of the cities and neighborhoods in which they are located. By celebrating their success, the RBA highlights the intricate and challenging process of urban placemaking, emphasizing the processes and values that produce significant urban places. By studying the stories of RBA winners, their histories, and their development, we can often discover creative ways to respond to some of our cities' most intractable problems.

THE SELECTION COMMITTEE
A new Selection Committee is named for each award cycle. To ensure lively and informed discussion, every selection committee is made up of an inter-disciplinary group of urban experts. Selection Committees always include the mayor of a major city as well as design professionals, developers, community organizers, philanthropists, and financiers. In their discussions, the Selection Committee members explore a wide range of urban issues and contribute to a broader understanding of the most critical challenges facing our cities today.

THE 2007 SELECTION COMMITTEE
• Mayor Manny Diaz, Miami, FL
• Reese Fayde, CEO, Living Cities: National Community Development Initiative, New York (Currently independent consultant)
• Reed Kroloff, Dean of Architecture, Tulane University, New Orleans (Currently Director of Cranbrook Academy of Art and Art Museum)
• David Perry, CEO, Great Cities Institute, Chicago
• Josephine Ramirez, Director of Planning, The Music Center, Los Angeles
• Robert Kroin, Chief Architect, Boston Redevelopment Authority, Boston

Reese Fayde, Bob Kroin, and David Perry review applications.
ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA
Since the RBA seeks excellence in places where it may not be expected, eligibility criteria are intentionally few. First, the project must be a real place, not a plan. It must be sufficiently complete to demonstrate its excellence to a team of site visitors from the Bruner Foundation, and it must be located in the continental United States.

THE SELECTION PROCESS
The Selection Committee meets twice - first to select the five finalists from a field of about 100 applicants. The Bruner Foundation then conducts site visits to each and reports back to the committee at their May meeting, when the committee elevates one finalist to Gold Medal status, a $50,000 award. The remaining finalists become Silver Medal winners and each receive $10,000.

Site visits are thorough and rigorous. Bruner Foundation staff visit each site for two to three days, exploring the projects and pursuing questions raised by the Selection Committee. The team members tour the projects, interview fifteen to twenty-five or more project participants (including community participants), take photographs, observe patterns of use, and collect secondary source documentation on the project.

This year’s site visit team was led by Richard E. Wener, PhD, associate professor of environmental psychology and chairman of the Department of Humanities and Social Sciences at Polytechnic University in Brooklyn. Other team members included Robert Shibley, Professor of Architecture and Planning at the State University of New York at Buffalo; Jay Farbstein, PhD, FAIA, president of Jay Farbstein & Associates; and Emily Axelrod, director of the Rudy Bruner Award.

2007 WINNERS

2007 Gold Medal
CHILDREN’S MUSEUM OF PITTSBURGH, Pittsburgh, PA

2007 Silver Medals
ARTISTS FOR HUMANITY Epicenter, Boston, MA
CROSSROADS PROJECT AND MARSUPIAL BRIDGE, Milwaukee, WI
HIGH POINT REDEVELOPMENT PROJECT, Seattle, WA
LA DESIGN CENTER, Los Angeles, CA
COLUMBUS CIRCLE, PUBLIC PLAZA, New York, NY

Josephine Ramirez, Reed Kroloff and Mayor Manny Diaz review applications.
2007 AWARD PRESENTATIONS

Award presentations offer an important opportunity to celebrate the accomplishments of each winning project and to raise awareness of the issues addressed by each of them. Past awards have been presented at the U.S. Conference of Mayors, the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, and in many of the cities in which winning projects are located. At the presentations, planners, community organizers, architects, and developers speak about their projects, and mayors are often present to recognize the contributions these projects have made to their respective communities.

This year’s Gold Medal award of $50,000 was presented to the Children’s Museum of Pittsburgh at an event attended by a wide range of community representatives and public officials. Silver Medal winners were each awarded $10,000 at events in their respective cities, with local press and elected officials present to recognize their achievement.

ABOUT THIS BOOK

As part of an ongoing effort to facilitate a national dialogue on the meaning and nature of urban excellence and to promote important new ideas about urban placemaking, the Bruner Foundation publishes a book containing case studies of the winners. These books are published in hard copy and online at www.brunerfoundation.org. Each book recounts the story of the winning projects, and the related dialogue and debate among Selection Committee members. Case studies are prefaced by a “project at a glance” section that briefly summarizes the project and the Selection Committee discussion. This overview is followed by detailed accounts of the history, character, financing, and operation of each winning project. In addition to describing the five winners, a concluding chapter identifies the most important themes recognized by the Selection Committee.

BRUNER FOUNDATION PUBLICATIONS

Bruner Foundation books are currently in use in graduate and undergraduate programs in universities across the country. The work of the Rudy Bruner Award and its winners has been recognized by the Mayors’ Institute on City Design, the U.S. Conference of Mayors, the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, and the Environmental Design Research Association. Recent articles on the RBA have appeared in Foundation News, New Village Journal, Architectural Record, Design Book Review, and Architecture magazine. See also the chapter on the RBA in Lynda Schneekloth and Robert Shibley’s Placemaking: The Art and Practice of Building Community (John Wiley and Sons, 1995), and in the McGraw Hill compendium on the state of the art in urban design, Time Saver

Bruner Foundation books, some of which are available from the foundation, include:


- Richard Wener, PhD, with Emily Axelrod, MCP; Jay Farbstein FAIA, PhD; Robert Shibley, AIA, AICP; and Polly Welch, *Placemaking for Change: 2001 Rudy Bruner Award for Urban Excellence* (Bruner Foundation, Inc., 2002).

An earlier Bruner Foundation endeavor revisited the winners and finalists from the first four cycles of the RBA to learn how the projects have fared over time. The book asks which places have continued to thrive, which have struggled, and why. Partially funded by a grant from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, teams of Foundation staff and consultants, HUD regional staff, and past Selection Committee members revisited 21 projects. The conclusions these observers reached can be found in:


### ABOUT THE AUTHORS

**Robert Shibley, AIA, AICP**, is a professor at the School of Architecture and Planning at the State University of New York, Buffalo. He is also a founding partner of Caucus Partnership, a consulting practice on environmental and organizational change. At the University at Buffalo, he is a former chairman of the Department of Architecture and now serves as the director of The Urban Design Project, a center in the school devoted to the study and practice of urban design.

**Emily Axelrod, MCP**, is the director of the Rudy Bruner Award for Urban Excellence. She holds a master’s degree in city planning from the Harvard Graduate School of Design and has worked in urban planning in both the public and private sectors in San Francisco and Boston.

**Jay Farbstein, PhD, FAIA**, is an architect by training. He leads a consulting practice in Los Angeles and San Luis Obispo, CA, specializing in helping public sector and private clients develop and document their requirements for building projects as well as in evaluating the degree to which their completed buildings meet those requirements.
Richard Wener, PhD is associate professor of environmental psychology in the Department of Humanities and Social Sciences at Polytechnic University in Brooklyn, New York. He has done extensive research on the effects of built environments on individuals and communities.

ACCESS TO OTHER RUDY BRUNER AWARD MATERIALS
Applications of award winners are also online. This archive of applications allows both perusal of original application material and the ability to select winner projects by keywords in seventeen categories including housing, historic preservation, art, land use controls, commercial development, and transportation etc. The University at Buffalo site is coordinated through The Urban Design Project, directed by Robert Shibley and developed by the staff at the University at Buffalo’s Lockwood Memorial Library. It is a valuable tool for students and others interested various aspects of the urban built environment.

http://libweb.lib.buffalo.edu/bruner/

The Bruner Foundation also maintains a website for the RBA. The site contains an overview and history of the award, summary material and visual images of all winners, biographical material on Selection Committee members and online versions of every Bruner Foundation publication. The website also contains information on how to apply for the RBA. The website address is:

http://www.brunerfoundation.org

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