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PREFACE

It is a great pleasure for me to introduce to you the winners of the 1999 Rudy Bruner Award for Urban Excellence, and through them, to celebrate some innovative thinking about urban placemaking. As an architect, I have had the opportunity to do some thinking about cities, about urban architecture, and about what makes an excellent urban place. Urban architecture at its best is not about buildings that flash their way to the covers of magazines, but instead deals with architecture as a multidimensional whole and with the complex relationship between process, place, and values. It is rooted in good design that balances opportunity with cost; shape with use; and past with future. It incorporates a myriad of social, political, corporate, community, environmental, and formal issues into an inclusive and multi-dimensional architecture.

Because of my belief in the importance of this balance in architecture, I founded the Rudy Bruner Award for Urban Excellence, which is designed to recognize and celebrate innovative thinking about urban places, and to promote a dialogue about the nature of urban excellence. The Rudy Bruner Award is based on the belief that excellence in the built environment is about quality places that reflect the successful integration of three critical elements: thoughtful process, meaningful values, and good design. Our winners are urban places that are not only excellent in their own

right, but relate in important ways to their urban contexts, and thus enrich the quality of urban life.

I have traveled the country over the past 12 years, visiting more than 35 Rudy Bruner Award winners and finalists. From these travels I can say unequivocally that this is a very exciting time in the history of American cities and urban architecture. For the first time in many years cities are included in – and in some cases are at the top of – our national agenda. Increasingly, resources are available to develop and revitalize some of our most neglected urban areas. And there are ideas out there! Yerba Buena Gardens represents the maturation of the urban redevelopment process. It has evolved into a rich mix of uses that serves a wide variety of constituencies with housing, cultural amenities, open space, and recreational and educational opportunities for San Francisco’s youth. The National AIDS Memorial Grove is one of a very few memorials of its kind in the country, and is unique in its successful effort to restore a neglected corner of Golden Gate Park into a living memorial to the thousands who died of AIDS and to those whose lives have been deeply affected by this devastating epidemic. Through a grassroots effort AIDS victims have been publicly honored, and those who have lost loved ones have created a living monument to their memory.

In Los Angeles a coalition of community activists have turned abandoned lots in the inner city into "art parks," created and "owned" by neighborhood residents who have cleared the sites and created dynamic art statements that reflect community cultural values. In Philadelphia, historic housing in one of the city's poorest neighborhoods has been painstakingly restored by a neighborhood resident who has used a combination of financial tools to create affordable housing and office space for critical social services supporting the local community. In Portland, Maine a farsighted philanthropist invested in "economic philanthropy," creating a new public market in a marginal neighborhood adjacent to the downtown. The Market has brought a handsome new building to the neighborhood, brought many constituencies together, and is providing an important retail outlet for Maine farmers through a careful selection of vendors.

Several of the 1999 winners are young projects, still very much in process. But like many past RBA winners they are the products of visionary thinking, dedicated leaders, and a strong combination of effective processes, meaningful values, and good design. They have taken new or untried ideas and put them to work in their respective cities to create places that improve the quality of life in their neighborhoods. We encourage you to learn from what they have done, to use their ideas and adapt them to your own urban areas, and to think beyond what you have seen in creating exciting new urban places.

We at the Rudy Bruner Award hope that these exciting urban places will provide you with some food for thought, and with some potential solutions to the problems facing your own cities. These projects, and many other Award winners, teach us how to identify strengths in even the most troubled urban settings, and to build on those strengths to create excellent urban places. They are examples of what can be done, and perhaps more importantly, of what you can do. We encourage you to use these winners as resources for the hard work of creating excellent urban places. Good Luck!

Simeon Bruner, *Founder*



Simeon Bruner at San Francisco Award Presentation

INTRODUCTION: MAKING PLACES, BUILDING COMMITMENT

Since its inception in 1987, the Rudy Bruner Award for Urban Excellence has occupied a unique position among urban design awards. Typically, such awards have examined design in the narrow sense, recognizing the quality of imaginatively conceived or elegantly constructed places. The Rudy Bruner Award takes a different approach: "architectural" in the most comprehensive sense of the term, it is dedicated to discovering and celebrating places that are distinguished not only by their quality design, but by their social, economic, and contextual contributions to their urban environments. Looking beyond form, the Award asks how projects fit into and improve their urban context on many levels. While this does not negate the importance of good design, it does alter the boundaries of what good design means, placing new emphasis on the complex processes of collaboration required to create an excellent urban place.

In its 12-year history, the Rudy Bruner Award has recognized 37 winners from across the country that have exemplified its broader idea of urban excellence – places that arrived at good design through a thoughtful process powered by varied and deeply felt values. The criteria for entering the competition are intentionally broad, and the winners have been a diverse group that have made very different contributions to America's cities. Many represent new models of urban placemaking guided by creative visions that have successfully challenged conventional wisdom. Most are products of hard-won collaborations between very different people with very different agendas. All have lent vitality to the neighborhoods in which they

are located. By celebrating their success, the Rudy Bruner Award highlights the complex process of urban placemaking, emphasizing the many elements beyond good design that produce urban excellence. Through studying the development and functioning of these projects, we can discover creative ways to respond to some of our cities' most intractable problems.

The Rudy Bruner Award also serves as a national forum on the nature of urban excellence. Rather than approaching projects with a set of preconceived standards, the Award seeks to flesh out its ideals through winners' own demonstrations of excellence. In essence, the Award hopes to find and understand, rather than to dictate, urban excellence. To ensure a lively process not dominated by any one perspective, each Selection Committee brings together a distinguished panel representing several different kinds of urban expertise, including architects, developers, community organizers, philanthropists, financiers, and the mayor of a major metropolitan area. As the Selection Committee discusses the project applications, they consider a wide variety of questions: What kinds of places make neighborhoods and cities better places to live, work, and play? How did these places come into being? What visions powered their creation? How did these visions become a reality? What obstacles had to be overcome? What makes a place important in its urban context? In this way the Selection Committee explores the dynamic nature of urban excellence and contributes to a broader understanding of the critical urban issues of the day.

ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA

The Award's eligibility criteria have been specifically designed to cast a wide net, so that even places not traditionally associated with "architectural" excellence can make their case. First, the project must be a real place, not a plan. It must exist and be able to demonstrate its excellence to a distinguished Selection Committee. And second, the project must be located in the United States. Site visits are integral to the award process, and it is not currently possible to conduct visits to international locations.

THE 1999 SELECTION COMMITTEE (in alphabetical order)

Curits M. Davis, AIA,
John Hancock Mutual Life Insurance Co., Boston

Lawrence Goldman,
President/CEO, New Jersey Performing Arts Center, Newark

Min Kantrowitz, AICP, MArch,
President, Min Kantrowitz and Assoc., Albuquerque

Rick Lowe,
Founding Director, Project Row Houses, Houston

Frieda Molina, MCP,
Manpower Development Resources Corp., San Francisco

Hon. Tom Murphy,
Mayor, Pittsburgh



Curits M. Davis



Lawrence Goldman



Min Kantrowitz



Rick Lowe



Frieda Molina



Mayor Tom Murphy

THE SELECTION PROCESS

The Selection Committee dialogue is at the heart of the Rudy Bruner Award. Each Selection Committee includes a mayor of a major American city and a diverse group of urban experts. Because there are no pre-established criteria for evaluating applications, the expertise and experience of the Selection Committee members are critical to the selection process. Each applicant must demonstrate what it considers to be its urban excellence, but it is Selection Committee members who discuss the projects and search for those aspects that make each case convincing. In so doing they create a framework within which all the projects can be judged, and they become part of a national dialogue on what constitutes an excellent urban place.

A new Selection Committee is appointed for each award cycle. The Committee meets twice: first to select the five winners from a field of about 100 applications, and then to select the Gold Medal Winner. Between these two meetings, Bruner Foundation staff research the finalists and then visit each one for two or three days, exploring the project and pursuing questions raised by the Selection Committee. These site visit teams serve as the Committee's eyes and ears. They tour all parts of the project, interview between 15 and 25 key participants (including "unofficial" participants and project opponents), take photographs, and observe patterns of use. Some of these activities are arranged by the project organizers, but the team members also pursue their own agenda in order to investigate the Selection Committee's questions and concerns. This year's site visit teams were led by Robert Shibley working with different co-authors



Mayor Murphy and Frieda Molina at the January meeting.



Lawrence Goldman and Curtis Davis review applications.

on each of the sites including Emily Axelrod, Jay Farbstein, and Rich Wener with Simeon Bruner as chief photographer.

After the site visits, the teams prepare site visit and reports and slide shows for the Selection Committee to digest when it meets again to review the five finalists in depth. With the site visit team leadership on hand to answer additional questions, the Committee then debates the merits of each project to decide upon a winner. In doing so, they explore the issues facing urban areas and come to a deeper understanding of the kinds of processes and places that embody urban excellence.

THE 1999 WINNERS

Gold Medal Winner

Yerba Buena Gardens, San Francisco, CA

Yerba Buena Gardens is a mixed-use development located in San Francisco's South of Market District. It includes an open space network with a 5.5-acre park, several high-profile museums, subsidized low-income and market-rate housing, a convention center, active commercial and entertainment complexes, and a wide variety of youth-oriented cultural and recreational facilities. By successfully integrating cultural, social, and economic development agendas, Yerba Buena has created not only a new destination in a formerly ailing part of San Francisco, but also a thriving neighborhood whose residents reflect the city's own diversity. Collaborative management practices bode well for the sustainability of this extremely complex enterprise.

Silver Medal Winners

ARTSCorpsLA, Los Angeles, CA

ARTSCorpsLA is a volunteer organization that has mustered the efforts of local inner-city Los Angeles communities to transform blighted parcels of abandoned land into public art places. The project includes three new LA parks and a series of murals throughout the city. It has creatively used art to involve many different segments of the community, particularly families and youth, and has used placemaking to strengthen connections between community members.

National AIDS Memorial Grove, San Francisco, CA

The AIDS Grove is a 7.5-acre park in the east end of Golden Gate Park. The Grove is a living memorial to the many thousands of victims of the AIDS epidemic in San Francisco. It is located in a formerly overgrown and derelict space known as the de Laveaga Dell, which it has reclaimed through volunteer labor and a unique public-private partnership. The AIDS Grove provides a much-needed place to publicly acknowledge and mourn losses from the AIDS epidemic, and for community building through monthly workdays and the ongoing maintenance program.

Parkside Preservation, Philadelphia, PA

Parkside Preservation is responsible for the restoration and re-use of dozens of elegant 19th-century homes bordering Fairmont Park in Philadelphia. Parkside has utilized creative financing tools to save the architecturally significant mansions, and has made historic preservation serve social needs by using the restored mansions as

affordable housing and for social service agencies that serve the local community.

Portland Public Market, Portland, ME

A gift from benefactor Elizabeth Noyes and her philanthropic Libra Foundation, Portland Public Market has introduced a fresh food market into the Bayside neighborhood of Portland, thereby providing an important outlet for struggling Maine small farmers and providing an important new economic generator in the city’s downtown. The attractive new building offers an inviting and transparent market environment that dramatizes the value of Maine agriculture, and draws in a variety of people from Portland and surrounding areas to shop, gather, and attend classes and events.

1999 AWARD PRESENTATIONS

Because the Bruner Award hopes to stimulate a national discussion of the nature of urban excellence in all its aspects, the Awards are presented in public celebrations designed to raise awareness of the winners’ successes. Past Awards have been presented at the US Conference of Mayors, the US Department of Housing and Urban Development, and in a variety of winner cities. Planners, community organizers, architects, and developers speak about their projects, and mayors of winner cities are often present to commend the contributions made by winning projects.

This year, San Francisco Mayor Willie Brown hosted a press conference at Yerba Buena Center, where he spoke about the importance of both Yerba Buena Gardens and the National AIDS



Helen Sause of the San Francisco Redevelopment Authority

Memorial Grove to San Francisco. In a related event, Simeon Bruner presented the Awards at an evening reception that honored founders and participants in both projects. In Philadelphia, Mayor Rendell hosted a press conference to applaud Parkside Preservation, and Simeon Bruner hosted a panel discussion in which local, state, and federal officials discussed the tools available for creating affordable housing in Philadelphia. In Los Angeles, neighbors and families of the ARTSCorpsLA parks gathered to hear the places they had created receive national recognition. And in Portland the President of the Portland Public Market and of the Libra Foundation hosted a community-wide reception in which the Foundation and the Market were recognized for their unique and outstanding contribution to the revitalization of Portland.



Director Thom Weyand, National AIDS Memorial Grove, with San Francisco Mayor Willie Brown



Award Founder Simeon Bruner with Philadelphia Mayor Ed Rendell

ABOUT THIS BOOK

In addition to the public Award ceremonies, the Bruner Foundation publishes a book containing case studies of the winners at the conclusion of each Award cycle. Each case study is prefaced by a "Project at a Glance" section that briefly summarizes the project. These overview sections are followed by detailed studies of the history, character, financing, and operation of each winner. In addition to describing the five winners, these case studies draw out the most important thematic elements that the Selection Committee recognized as constituting excellent urban places. Each case study thus recounts not only the story of the project, but the dialogue and debate the project provoked among Selection Committee members. After the five case studies, the contributions of each project to our understanding of urban excellence are then further explored in a conclusion that identifies and analyzes common themes.

From this year's winners, the Selection Committee derived a set of ideas and approaches that, when taken together, represent something larger than the sum of their individual parts. The elements listed below, all individually emphasized by the Selection Committee, were also considered to be part of a comprehensive, unified notion of "placemaking." Placemaking refers not only the physical construction and maintenance of places, but also to the quality of relationships between people and places as well as among the communities that make and use places. Its central premise is that making and caring for places – becoming committed to them – can be the basis for making and caring for communities. Excellence is achieved when good design comes out of a process that is

sensitive to (and inclusive of) the human relationships in which it develops, and that, like a good guest, leaves those relationships better than it found them.

The Selection Committee identified the following as representative of some of the more persuasive elements of urban excellence in this year's winners:

- A commitment to a place, for what it could be but also for both its history and for what it is;
- An inclusive process that involves affected communities in a meaningful way, and thereby helps strengthen (or even create) the relationships that will use and maintain the resulting place;
- Incorporation of youth as an integral part of the process of making and using place;
- An animating vision that is both inspirationally committed to key elements and flexible enough to evolve in meaningful ways as it develops;
- A creative response that turns challenges, hardships, conflict, and even crises into opportunities;
- An effort to create the best possible place, not simply the minimum required by necessity;
- A work in progress that does not end when the place has been built;
- Effective leadership that energizes inclusiveness rather than dominating the process;
- Public-private partnerships that reveal how communities of place can transcend the political, economic, and cultural boundaries that hinder effective processes; and
- Creative and disciplined attention to project economics.

ABOUT THE AUTHORS

Robert Shibley, AIA, AICP is a professor at the School of Architecture and Planning at the State University of New York at Buffalo. He is also the 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 Urban Design Project, a center in the school devoted to the study and practice of urban design.

Emily Axelrod, MCP, is the Executive Director of the Rudy Bruner Award for Urban Excellence. She holds a Masters degree in City Planning from 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, Ph. D., FAIA is an architect by training. He leads a consulting practice in San Luis Obispo, California which specializes 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, Ph. D., an environmental psychologist, is head of the Department of Humanities and Social Services at Polytechnic University in Brooklyn, New York. He has done extensive research on the effects of built environments on individuals and communities.

BRUNER FOUNDATION PUBLICATIONS

Bruner Foundation books are currently in use in graduate and undergraduate programs in universities across the country. In addition, the work of the Rudy Bruner Award and its winners has been recognized by the US Conference of Mayors, the US Department of Housing and Urban Development, and the Environmental Design Research Association. Recent articles on the Award have appeared in *Foundation News*, *New Village Journal*, *Architectural Record*, *Casabella*, and *Design Book Review*. The program is also the subject of a book chapter in Robert Shibley and Lynda Schneekloth's *Placemaking: The Art and Practice of Building Communities* (New York: John Wiley & Sons, 1995).

Books from previous Bruner Award cycles, some of which are available from the Foundation, include:

1987

Philip Langdon with Robert Shibley and Polly Welch, *Urban Excellence* (New York: Van Nostrand Reinhold, 1990).

1989

Neal Peirce and Robert Guskind, *Breakthroughs: Re-creating the American City* (New Brunswick, NJ: Center for Urban Policy Research, Rutgers, State University of NJ, 1993).

1991

Jay Farbstein and Richard Wener, *1991 Rudy Bruner Award for Excellence in the Urban Environment: Connections: Creating Urban Excellence* (Boston: Bruner Foundation, Inc., 1992).

1993

Jay Farbstein and Richard Wener, *1993 Rudy Bruner Award for Excellence in the Urban Environment: Rebuilding Communities: Re-creating Urban Excellence* (Boston: Bruner Foundation, Inc., 1993).

1995

Jay Farbstein and Richard Wener, *1995 Rudy Bruner Award for Excellence in the Urban Environment: Building Coalitions for Urban Excellence* (Boston: Bruner Foundation, Inc., 1996).

1997

Jay Farbstein and Richard Wener, *1997 Rudy Bruner Award for Urban Excellence: Visions of Urban Excellence* (Boston: Bruner Foundation, Inc., 1998)

A recent Bruner Foundation endeavor has been to revisit the winners and finalists from the first four cycles of the award to learn how the projects have fared over time. Which have continued to thrive and which have struggled, and why? Partially funded by a grant from the US 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 has also been published, in a book available through the Bruner Foundation:

1987-93

Jay Farbstein, Robert Shibley, Polly Welch and Richard Wener, *Sustaining Urban Excellence: Learning from the Rudy Bruner Award, 1987-1993* (Boston: Bruner Foundation, Inc., 1998)

ACCESS TO OTHER RUDY BRUNER AWARD MATERIALS

All Rudy Bruner Award applications have been recorded on microfiche and are available through the Interlibrary Loan Department of the Lockwood Memorial Library at the State University of New York at Buffalo, Amherst, NY 14260 (Phone: 716-636-2816; Fax: 716-636-3721).

An abstract and keyword identification has been prepared for each application and can be accessed through two major databases: RLIN/Research Library Information Network and OCLC/First Search.

The State University of New York at Buffalo maintains a website with complete 1995, 1997 and 1999 applications for the Rudy Bruner Award:

<http://wings.buffalo.edu/libraries/projects/digital/bruner>

The work on this site is ongoing.

The Bruner Foundation also maintains a website on the Rudy Bruner Award for Urban Excellence:

<http://www.brunerfoundation.org>

The site contains an overview of the Award, visual images and summary information on all past winners, a list of past Selection Committee members, publications, information on how to apply for the Rudy Bruner Award, and brief profiles of each of the 1999 winners.

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