# PLACES



## Awards for Place Design and Place Research

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# EDRA/*Places* Awards
# Place Design and Place Research



**Living Water Park**

*Place Design Award*



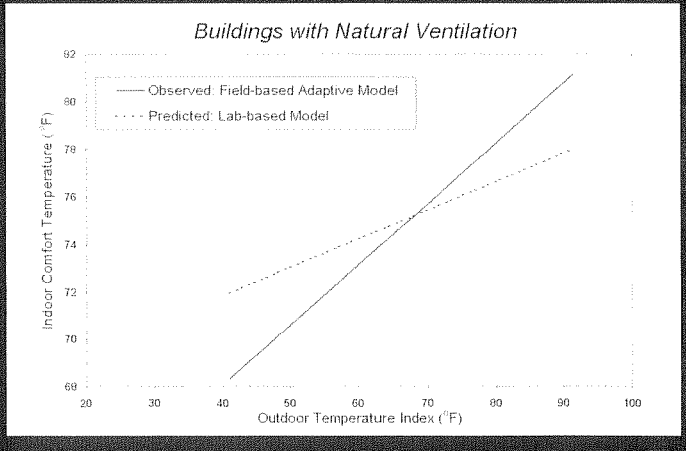
**Diggs Town**

*Place Design Award*



**From Yard to Garden**

*Place Research Award*




**Design for Comfort**

*Place Research Award*

**Photo credits**
***Top row, left to right:*** **Margie Ruddick; Urban Design Associates; Kim Wilkie Environmental Design**
***Bottom row, left to right:*** **Gail S. Brager; Susan Herrington; Rachel Kaplan**



**Thames Landscape Strategy**

*Place Design Award*



**With People in Mind**

*Place Research Award*

Six exemplary projects in architecture, planning, landscape architecture and urban design have been named winners of the 1999 EDRA/*Places* Awards for Place Design and Place Research. The winners were chosen from seventy-eight entries received from practitioners and scholars around the world—with nominations from six continents.

Details about the winning projects, along with jury commentary and analytical essays, follow in a special series of articles. (Reports on the winning projects and other submissions were written by Todd W. Bressi, from materials provided by award winners, unless otherwise indicated.) The winners were recognized at a banquet and symposium on June 5 at EDRA's annual conference in Orlando, Florida.

The EDRA/*Places* award program is in its second year. The purpose is to focus on design and research projects that contribute to excellence in human environments, and to highlight the relationship between place-based research and design. The program is open to practitioners and researchers from a wide range of design and social science backgrounds—including architecture, landscape architecture, planning, urban design, interior design, lighting design, graphic design, environmental psychology, sociology, anthropology and geography—as well as to public officials and citizens.







**Jurors (left to right)**

**Anne Vernez-Moudon, Professor of Architecture, Landscape Architecture and Planning, University of Washington, Seattle**

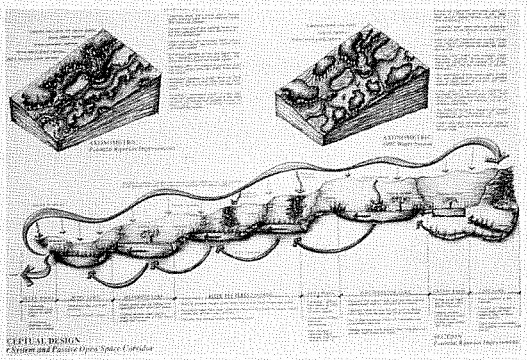
**Mark Francis, FASLA, Professor of Landscape Architecture, University of California, Davis**

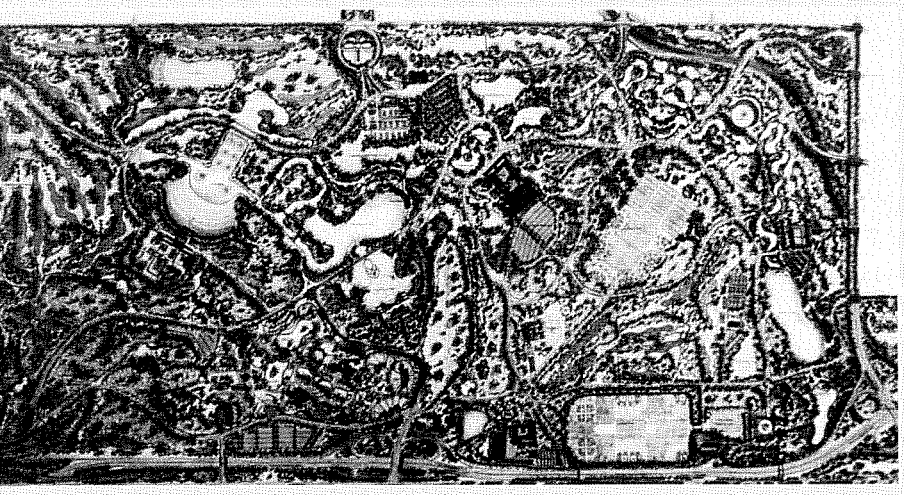
**Frances Halsband, FAIA, Principal, R.M. Kliment and Frances Halsband Architects, New York**

**Harvey Gantt, FAIA, Principal, Gantt Huberman Architects; former mayor, Charlotte**

**John Zeisel, President, Hearthstone Alzheimer Care, Boston**

# The 1999 Catherine Brown Award for the Landscape of the New Urbanism





Top: **The master plan calls for restoring a connected, linear waterway system and open space corridor.**

Above: **The Forest Park Master Plan, adopted in 1995, balances cultural needs, recreational needs and ecological concerns.**

Photos: **St. Louis Development Corporation**

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***San Francisco, CA 94103***
***415-495-2255***
***415-495-1731 fax***
***email: cnuinfo@cnu.org***

## Forest Park Master Plan

## Catherine Brown Award Winner

*Submitted by the St. Louis Development Corporation*

The Forest Park Master Plan, the first for St. Louis' 1,300-acre urban park since its conception in 1876, sets an important precedent for the reinvigoration of other historic urban parks. Restoration and preservation of the park and its cultural amenities are not enough, according to this master plan developed by the St. Louis Development Corporation; for long-term viability, the park needs to be rewoven into the social and ecological structure of the region.

The site of the 1904 World's Fair, Forest Park is home to the city's major cultural institutions, a regional recreation area, and a draw for more than twelve million annual visitors. Yet its condition had deteriorated over the years due to increased use, a decline in resources, deferred maintenance, and the social and ecological pressures of the region's 2.5 million people. Intended to guide the revitalization of this historic, cultural, and ecological asset, Forest Park Master Plan calls for the integration of the park into the local watershed, landscape restoration, the establishment of greenways and wildlife corridors, and a reconsideration of the urban structure of the park.

The plan is to be commended for the depth of its consideration to issues of historic preservation, its attention to the public realm, and its thoughtful integration of late-twentieth-century concepts of ecologically sustainable design into a landscape designed in the nineteenth century. The extent to which the public was engaged in the process is also to be commended; more than 1,000 individuals, groups, and institutions were involved in an unusually rigorous community planning process intended to update this park for the new society that will use and enjoy it.

**Forest Park, St. Louis**

City of St. Louis/St. Louis Development Corporation:
**John T. Hoal, Project Director; Gregg E. Calpino, Project Manager; Anabeth Calkins, Stephen Fagan and Dan Skillman.**

Consultants: **AAI/Campbell, Inc., Hale Irwin Golf Services, Kwame Building Group, L.E. Haefner Enterprises, Inc., O'Donnell Communications, Dave Tylka & Associates, D.R. Felton & Associates and W.E. Seffens & Associates.**
Client: **City of St. Louis Department of Parks, Recreation, and Forestry**
Date: **1995**

## Master Plan for the Redevelopment of the Orlando Naval Training Center

### Catherine Brown Award Winner

*Submitted by the City of Orlando*

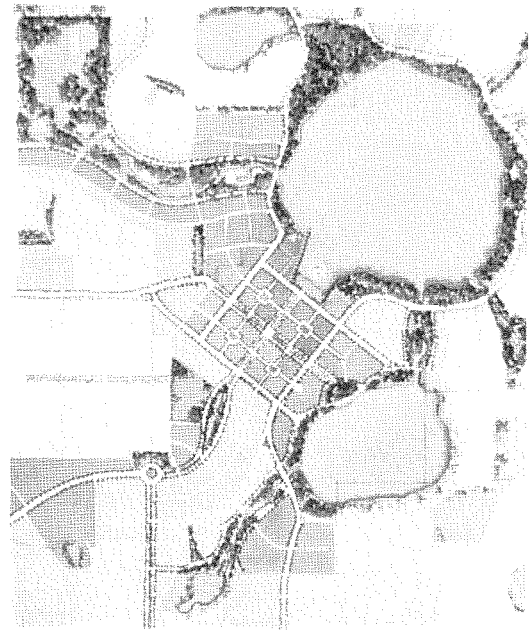
For the City of Orlando, the closure of the Orlando Naval Training Center, a 1,100-acre site three miles from downtown, provided a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to rethink its development patterns. The document created to guide the redevelopment of this site is notable itself as a thorough, complex policy whose adoption and use should help bring New Urbanism into the mainstream.

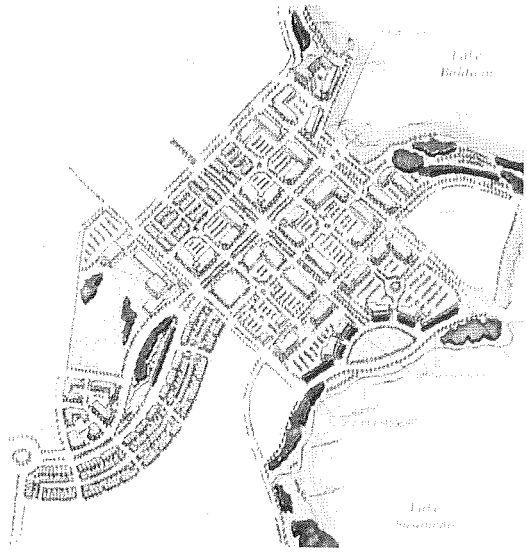
The Master Plan for the Redevelopment of the Orlando Naval Training Center is the work of a large team of designers and developers, with planning and urban design led by Skidmore, Owings & Merrill. Starting at a regional scale, the plan connects the area's lakes through a system of bike and pedestrian greenways and uses wetlands restoration and new watercourses to create educational and recreational opportunities. It incorporates hydrology and open space preservation as primary urban design factors, leading to site-specific forms and providing an alternative to the road system for knitting this site into the region. It also calls for the development of a mixed-use town center, pedestrian-scaled residential districts with distinct neighborhood centers, and a variety of housing, civic buildings, offices and commercial space. The plan establishes an extensive park and open space network and emphasizes connections to the surrounding neighborhoods.

The interdisciplinary quality of the project is distinctive. In the complexity of this master plan, the jury found evidence that some of the rifts between architects, engineers, landscape architects, and biologists are being overcome and that multidisciplinary planning concepts—thanks to leaders like Catherine Brown—are finally being incorporated into practice.

**Master Plan for the Redevelopment of the Orlando Naval Training Center**

Planning team: **Skidmore Owings and Merrill LLP; Cooper-Carry, Inc.; Miller-Sellen Associates, Inc.; Donald W. McIntosh Associates, Inc.; Ghyabi Lassiter and Associates, Inc.; Herbert Halback, Inc.**
Client: **Orlando NTC Partners LLP**
Date: **1998**





Top: **Redevelopment plan**

Bottom: **Detail of village center**

Graphics: **City of Orlando**

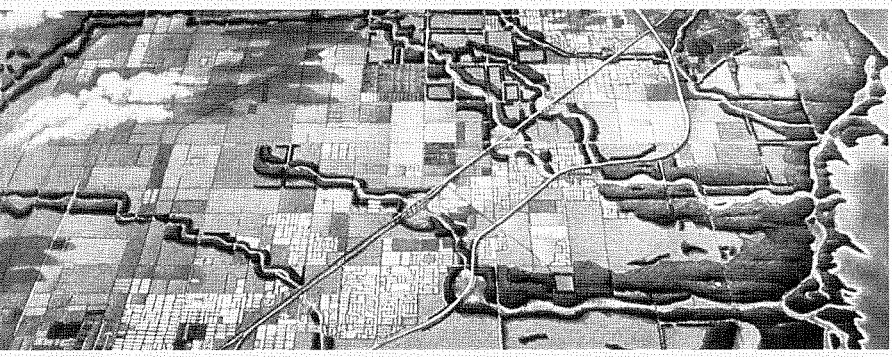
***The Catherine Brown Award***

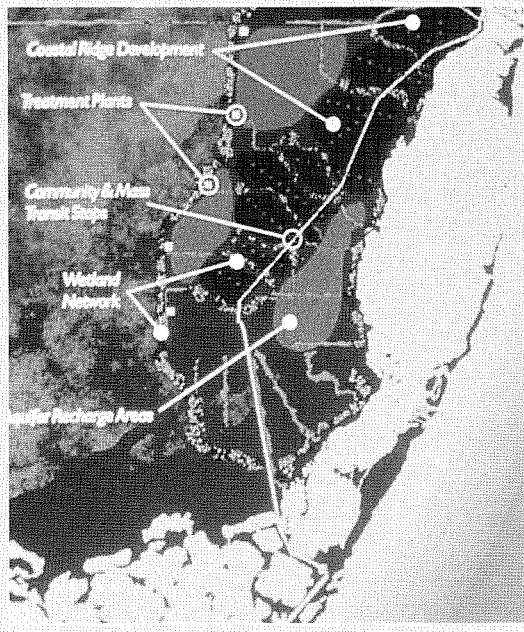
*The Catherine Brown Award is the first award program sponsored by the Congress for the New Urbanism. Created in memory of Catherine Brown, a CNU board member and landscape architect with a passion for community activism, the award recognizes a project or policy that represents the landscape of the New Urbanism and echoes Brown's own focus on community involvement.*

*After reviewing more than thirty submissions, the jury recognized two projects as winners: master plans for the redevelopment of Forest Park, St. Louis, and for the redevelopment of the Orlando Naval Training Center. Two other projects received honorable mentions: the South Dade Watershed Project and the Milwaukee RiverWalk.*

*The four projects demonstrate problem solving on many levels, yet skillful design and complete formal resolution were prerequisites. Three of the recognized projects are proposals for the rejuvenation of previously developed areas, and one is intended to guide immanent growth in an intelligent manner.*

*An element common to all the schemes was an emphasis on the connections between hydrologic and ecological systems that also accommodates principles of urban design. While much current urban design work respects and is influenced by local historic precedent, the jury has attempted through the selection of the following projects to make the point that much historic fabric can be redesigned to integrate working natural systems and better respond to the community's needs.*






Top: **An architect's green vision for South Florida that ensures a sustainable water supply**

Bottom: **The fifty-year regional smart growth plan shows development restricted to the higher ground of the coastal ridge, drainage canals replaced with a system of wetlands, and water treatment plants**

Graphics: **Daniel Williams**

## South Dade Watershed Project

## Catherine Brown Award Honorable Mention

*Submitted by Daniel Williams, Architect*

This planning document, prepared for the South Florida Water Management District, begins with a stark statement: "South Florida is running out of land and water, [and] the future of growth and development is clearly limited by the availability of both." As architect Daniel Williams contends, a rapidly-growing region faced with this dilemma must act quickly to analyze the relationship between water and land use, develop consensus among regional stakeholders, and establish planning criteria that will ensure a sustainable water supply while improving urban, agricultural, and natural systems. His project is a regional growth plan for South Dade that is based on water resource geography and pays particular concern to flood plains, stormwater issues, aquifer recharges, and other hydrological concerns.

This planning document goes beyond simply incorporating hydrologic factors into urban and regional design; it acknowledges that, especially in sensitive environments like south Florida's, these issues should precede growth policy and inform it. The South Dade Watershed Project anticipates natural disasters and long-term global warming by restricting development to high ground in areas prone to flooding. It also proposes exchanging narrow single use drainage canals for wide drainways that can do triple or quadruple duty for wildlife, people, flood control and water recharge. The jury recognizes that the multiple-use concept of infrastructure is a key principle that needs to be applied to every new urban design project and every element of infrastructure.

**South Dade Watershed Project**

Design Team: **Daniel Williams, FAIA, Christopher Jackson, Mark T. Brown, Erick Valle, Manuel Fernandez-Novia**
Client: **South Florida Water Management District**
Date: **1994**

## Milwaukee RiverWalk

### Catherine Brown Award Honorable Mention

*Submitted by Ken Kay Associates*

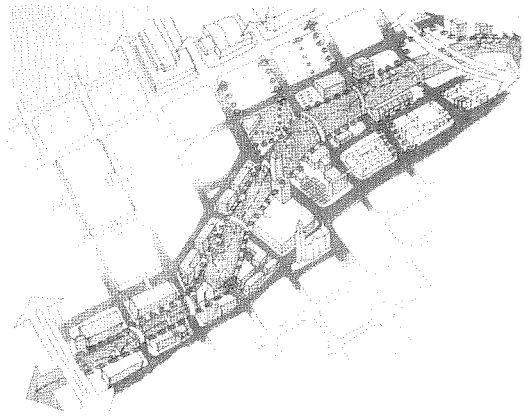
It is unusual that an extensive section of a downtown riverfront should be renovated and redesigned as thoroughly and successfully as Milwaukee has renovated and redesigned its riverfront. Six years ago, Milwaukee's neglected post-industrial waterfront became a catalyst for downtown revitalization after a major infrastructure project dramatically increased the river's water quality and a "four-month charrette" drew together citizens, designers, merchants, developers, and public agencies. The result was a pedestrian walkway system designed by landscape architect Ken Kay that reasserts the river as a focus of downtown activity.

The fifteen-block RiverWalk emphasizes pedestrian access and a mix of activities along both sides of the waterfront. Lined with retail and commercial uses and connecting major public open spaces, it is woven into the city fabric in a way that ensures its continued use and success.

Since the project's completion in 1996, the newly-designed connections from the downtown to the river have contributed to the revitalization of downtown, making it attractive for the new housing necessary to draw services and amenities and to ensure long-term health. This project also demonstrates the importance of the partnership between design and political leadership. The jury recognizes that this award is as much for the citizens and leaders of Milwaukee as it is for its designers, since their involvement has insured that the project's impact will go far beyond the river's edge.

**Milwaukee RiverWalk**

Design Team: **Ken Kay Associates and Eppstein Uhen Architects**
Client: **Milwaukee Riverwalk District, Inc., and City of Milwaukee Department of City Development**
Date: **1996**





Top: **A map of the RiverWalk showing pedestrian circulation and the integration of the RiverWalk into the surrounding street network.**

Above: **The RiverWalk incorporates public space at the edge of a downtown park.**

Graphic and photo: **Ken Kay Associates**

***Jury:***

*William Morrish, Design Center for the American Urban Landscape*

*Elizabeth Moule, Moule & Polyzoides, Architects & Urbanists*

*Daniel Solomon, Solomon Architecture and Urban Design*

*Mia Lehrer, Mia Lehrer and Associates*

*Gary Strang, Gary L. Strang Architecture and Landscape Architecture*

American Institute of Architects
Committee on Design

Wendy Feuer
Ralph Steinglass, FAIA

# Observations on Collaborations

*Collaboration: 1) The act of performing work or labor together 2) The act of cooperating with the enemy*

What would possess about fifty architects from around the country, of varying ages and from different types of firms, to hole up for an entire spring day in a windowless room at the University of Cincinnati architecture school? A design challenge, of course. But more than that was involved; it was also a challenge of collaborating with people whose ideas and style may differ greatly from one's own.

Why test the idea of collaborations? Architects have always worked with other disciplines. But as more complicated projects have come along, requiring expertise from different disciplines, and as new voices are demanding to be heard, the process of design itself has changed.

The American Institute of Architects Committee on Design used its recent visit to Cincinnati to organize a charrette that generated ideas for the city's Downtown Gateway program—which celebrates civic history, provides visitor orientation and helps create a unique urban identity. Participants were asked to do this under an interesting set of conditions that tested different ideas for working collaboratively. They worked as part of assigned teams and used a schedule that segmented the day into modules based on milestones. With the pressure of time, it was felt, specific milestones would help organize the teams towards a final product. Further, the effort would take place under the watchful eyes of observers. The goal was to pull people out of their traditional way of working and thinking to provide them with a better understanding of how one method of working collaboratively works.

**Team Formation** At registration, participants received a cartoon illustrating a round table at which various characters were seated. Each character had a role: leader, devil's advocate, imagineer, philosopher, pragmatist, story teller, seconder and advocate for the common man. Participants were asked to check the role(s) they felt best suited their professional persona. The charrette planning team took this information and created ten teams of five people, based not only on their experience and skills, but also on personality characteristics that might influence the roles people assume in a group—hoping for a reasonable balance of personalities on each team.

In addition, each team included an observer who would watch the interactions and convene two discussions about the process (not the product), reporting on what he or she observed and urging team members to discuss what they were experiencing. The planning team assigned students from the University of Cincinnati and Ball State University to play this role; they could be relied on to be neutral, objective and active listeners, while being least intrusive.

**The Kick-off** The morning of the charrette began with remarks from the planning team. This included a brief overview of the relationship between art and architecture, a review of different ways in which artists and architects have collaborated on recent projects, a description of a program in which architects, students and communities collaborated on socially relevant projects, and a discussion of the darker side of team work—the resistance and competition between team members that make working together a challenge.

The planning team then reviewed the charrette schedule, described the role of the student observers and presented guidelines to help focus participants on the tasks, improve communications and encourage collaborative design. Each team was asked to assign functional roles to its members: scribe (to record the interests, ideas and goals), timekeeper (to help track and monitor the scheduled work intervals) and spokesperson (to make the final presentation). Finally, a representative from the city manager's office described the Gateway program and presented the design challenge of creating a major entrance to the city from a six-lane highway with an intersecting bridge that connects Ohio and Kentucky.

**Beginning the Work** Teams varied in how they responded to the guidelines. In most cases, introductions were made, but only a few groups actually assigned the roles that had been identified. Leadership was taken up informally in some cases, not at all in others. A few groups designated a leadership position

AIA

The Committee on Design's 1999 program began with a three-day meeting this spring in Cincinnati and continues this fall with a meeting in Los Angeles. For information about these and other upcoming AIA programs, contact AIA at 800-242-3837.

**The AIA Committee on Design charrette planning team comprised: Frances Halsband, FAIA, committee chair; Ralph Steinglass, FAIA; Anthony Costello, AIA, and Wendy Feuer**



Left: **Workspace in atrium of Cincinnati's College of Design, Architecture, Art and Planning**

Below: **Stages in the collaborative process**
**(1) Working on proposals**
**(2) Ralph Steinglass, FAIA, in discussion with student observers**
**(3) Preparing for presentation**

and tried to follow the consensus-building approach described during the opening remarks. Initial team brainstorming covered a wide range of issues, from concern about local conditions to broader urban concerns. Most teams took the trouble to develop goals, though some required prodding from facilitators to do so. One team rebelled and refused to follow any of the suggestions. Teams struggled with the tension of having to deal with multiple egos, which resulted in some flare-ups, some heated exchanges and even withdrawal for those who preferred to avoid conflict.

Student observers noted various behaviors during the initial brainstorming period:

- not listening to each other's ideas
- controlling the outcome by keeping secret notes
- taking physical possession of the drawings
- using drawing instruments to vehemently emphasize critical points
- splitting off into sub-groups.

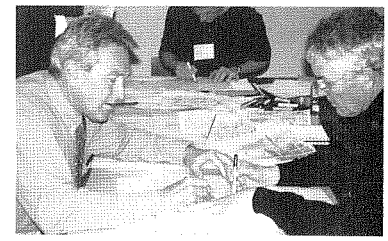
**Observations at the First Break** Some teams had to be reminded, or even coaxed, to stop work during the first scheduled break at which the student observers were to provide feedback on the process. Most of the teams listened to what their observers had to say for a few moments, but a few resisted even that and continued to work. It became apparent that it would be difficult for the observer to stay in role because of the pressure to get involved in the activity, or even act as a mediator.

The planning team decided to meet with the observers to learn in more detail about how the teams were working, provide them with support in carrying out their roles and get feedback on their experience. This generated an unanticipated dynamic among planning team members, student observers and participants; participants became curious about what the students and planning team were saying.

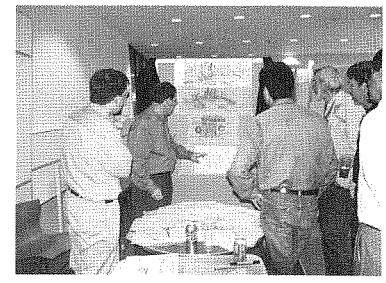
Following are verbal sketches of the first part of the charrette as reported by the observers:

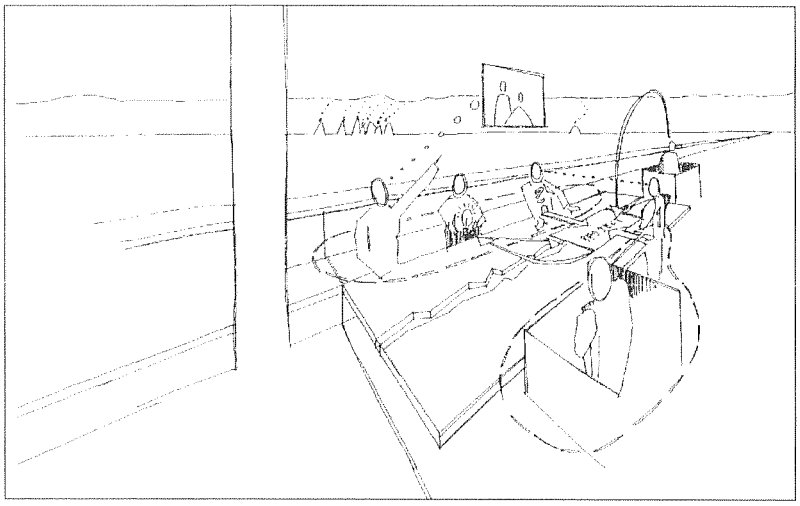
- no organization or delegating of tasks,
- no leader emerged, until the last five minutes before the process break,
- spent a half hour on introductions; several participants showed signs of being authoritative; student acting as facilitator,
- started drawing first thing, then realized they had no leadership or direction,
- there were no introductions, only the woman on the team reached out to everyone,
- the mission statement was ignored; suddenly the team realized one member was from Cincinnati,
- putting up the drawing helped focus their energy,
- there was no leader, and the scribe took notes for himself, a secret scribe, and
- went around the table with introductions, picked roles, including assigning formal leader; two others played leadership roles as well, despite this, there were no (overt) clashes.

**The Final Stretch** As the day wore on, the atmosphere changed from tentative collaborative efforts to a more productive presentation mode. Roles were delegated to individuals or to small groups. Someone took advantage of the library to research Cincinnati's history; some groups began to work together testing ideas; others began to work seriously on drawings in groups or in pairs.









The discussion around pin-ups and other presentation materials was animated. Sometimes one person took on a leadership role; in other groups the leadership was more fluid, shifting back and forth, depending on the issue being discussed. It was decision-making time. There was pushing and pulling, circling around, spinning off, breaking up, walking away. Teams were struggling to find common ground, but running out of time. By 3 p.m., nearly all the teams were moving towards a presentation mode. All except one team appeared to be working collaboratively. This team, unable to resolve differences, had split and different people eventually presented three schemes without a common theme.

As 4 p.m. approached, the scheduled time for the second observation break, teams were working feverishly. Resistance to breaking was high. The planning team walked from table to table reminding teams to stop and listen for a few minutes. Half the groups finally did pause and listen to their observers' feedback; they wanted to know "how we're doing."

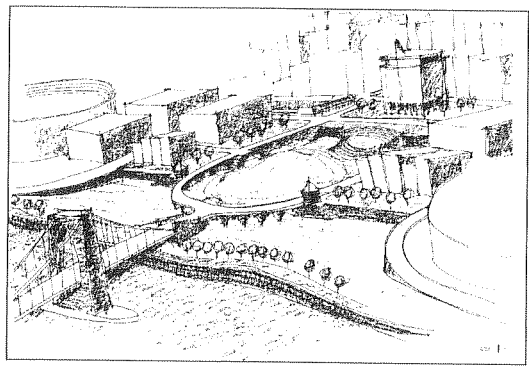
**Presentations** At 6 p.m. teams set up their presentations in the building's main atrium space. Cincinnati's economic development director, the representative from the city manager's office and a local planner who was also a professor at the architecture school were present to listen and respond.

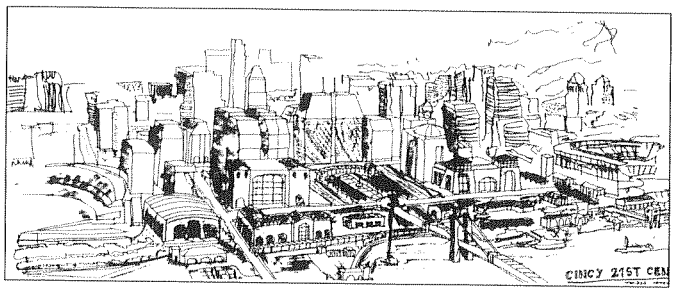
Each team was asked to make three points about its proposals. It was difficult to keep the presenters to three points, but the groups became self-regulating, with participants humorously calling out when presentations went on too long. The ideas and recommendations ranged from the imaginatively pragmatic (such as detailing the lighting and street furniture and respecting most of the planning criteria) to bolder schemes that partially or totally ignored such criteria, focusing instead on concepts that challenged the city to come up with bigger ideas that addressed the need to link the downtown with the river in substance, not just symbolic form.

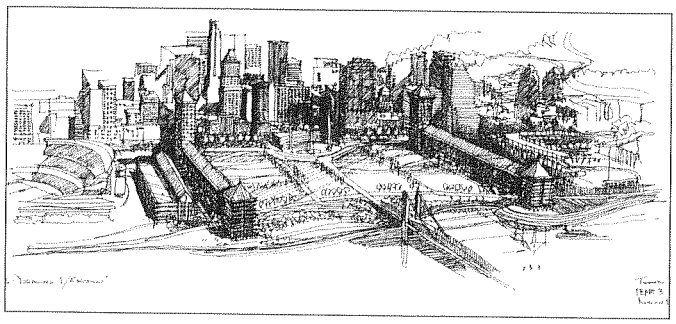
**Lessons Learned** The workshop was not intended as a scientific test. It was meant to allow participants to observe themselves, as well as be observed, in a structured process. The following observations were culled from the planning team and student observers' discussions and notes:

- A team needs people not only from different disciplines, but also with different personalities, to work collaboratively. It is not surprising that the team with four imagineers had the most difficulty developing a common scheme.
- At times flexibility in roles, such as changing leaders at different stages of design development, can be beneficial to the creative process.
- Imposing a rigid schedule may have had a negative effect, causing teams to truncate the conceptual phase of the design and make decisions prematurely.
- Requiring teams to come up with a mission statement helped them to focus more effectively on a common approach.
- Successful collaboration is not something that necessarily happens by accident. Those teams that subsumed the product to the process—that is, they consciously followed the guidelines for effective communications (most importantly, active listening)—came up with a product that was equal if not superior to those groups that acted more independently.

Collaboration may not be for everyone and may not be the right process in all situations. The fear that designing by committee results in watered-down solutions is very real. However, as we saw in Cincinnati, getting the right group together, and working with set guidelines, can be invigorating and produce a whole that is greater than the sum of its parts.





It is impossible to know if any of the ideas that came out of the charrette will be adopted by the City of Cincinnati. This, perhaps, is less important than the lessons that participants may have learned and brought back to their practice, influencing not only who participates in the design process but also how the work is actually done.

*Wendy Feuer is a New York City-based consultant who manages public art, urban design and planning projects.*

*Ralph Steinglass, FAIA, is founder and principal of Teambuilders, Inc., an organizational development firm in New York City.*

## Charrette Schedule

11:25–11:55 a.m. Introduction of team participants; includes brief descriptions by each of their background, unique strengths, and interests.

11:55 a.m.–12:30 p.m. Development of team's Mission Statement; based on a brainstorming session, listing of three major goals/objectives for the Gateway program, three goals related to the process and three goals related to the products. (A standard format sheet was provided for each team on a flip chart, with instructions to post it near each team's table.)

12:30–1:45 p.m. Working Lunch. Conceptual design: teams, either together, or in sub-groups, or individually, explore conceptual approaches.

1:45–2 p.m. Process Review/Report #1. Each student observer shares field notes and then engages the team in discussion.

2–2:15 p.m. Work plan. Teams plan their work for the rest of the day, including periods for finalizing a conceptual approach, developing the design, and deciding on task assignments.

2:15–4 :30 p.m. Design Development; Teams do the work as planned above.

4:30–4:45 p.m. Process Review/Report #2. Student observers share field notes.

4:45–5 p.m. Presentation Planning. Teams make plan for final presentation.

4:50–5:50 p.m. Presentation Preparation. Teams proceed with final prep for presentation, including oral presentation rehearsal, finalizing executive summary, and preparing presentation drawings.

5:50–6 p.m. Studio clean-up, set-up for presentation.

6–7:20 p.m. Presentations to other teams and government representatives from the City of Cincinnati.

Opposite page: **Conceptual diagram of interaction among team members, drawn by a student observer.**

Graphic: **Todd Wendell**

Left: **Proposals for Cincinnati's Gateway**

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# Places, and the concept of place need continual renewal.

# Renewal takes place through the reinvestment of thought.

Places in our cities — the spaces that we hold in our minds and that lend structure to our lives — are renewed through human actions. People take part. They reinvest in places through cycles of maintenance, through the discovery of new uses for existing forms and through the generation of fresh information that prompts us to see things differently.

Places are renewed by the people who inhabit and use them, as well as by those who alter structures and add equipment, signs and furnishing, or those who build anew to take advantage of perceived opportunity. The economic value of goods and activities fluctuates, creating a dynamic, often relentless, pressure for reconsideration of the places they define.

Places change, too, through the daily, seasonal and cyclical actions of the climate. The inexorable alteration of materials over time and the organic growth of vegetation change how places appear and affect how they endure. The types of control exercised over these forces often sets the perceived quality of places — decay induces flight; care begets care.

To turn inevitable change into renewal requires the investment of thought. It requires thinking, during the conception of buildings, about how forms and materials will accept the transformations of time and the dimensions of human use. It requires being alert to changing circumstances and being able to accommodate the unexpected. It requires having the courage to welcome change and the ingenuity to direct it in ways that will contribute to, rather than destroy or discard, existing characteristics that are valued. Often, it requires the political will to resist frivolous change, to articulate multiple interests and enduring values, and to give them creative force.

Places are changed by how we think about them. This issue reports on the Place Design and Place Research Awards that we sponsor jointly with EDRA, the Environmental Design Research Association. It demonstrates the range of thought that pertains to place — illustrating research that is especially well conceived and executed, showing the results of ingenious and attentive design thought that has been applied to places in various parts of the world and at differing scales and uses.

In accordance with the rules of the program, the jury selected only three awards for design and three awards for research. They are presented here, and jury comments on each have been included. There were many more projects submitted that were worthy. Indeed, the collection of seventy-eight entries from more than twenty countries gives compelling evidence of the care and insightful attention that has been instrumental in the renewal of many places throughout the world. Short essays by two jurors and an observer reflect on some of the issues that are raised by this array of projects. With all this, our second issue reporting on the EDRA/*Places* awards program is an encouraging and stimulating survey. We look forward with eagerness to the results of next year's awards program, with its deadline posted for February.

The additional articles, dispatches and forum pages in this issue provide reports on other competitions, discussions and exploratory design research, as well as an account of the patient, persistent (and sometimes political) efforts that are necessary to bring the fruits of design research into the body politic of the city. The portfolio offers points of meditation about the manifestion of concerns for safety, security and territoriality in our urban environment.

Together the elements of this issue reveal the varieties of disciplined thought and creative exploration that are so badly needed for the renewal of places. If we are to turn the spaces of our world into good places, places that support community and enliven experience, we must foster the proliferation of vigorous thought.

— *Donlyn Lyndon*

# Unconvincing Places

*Anne Vernez Moudon*

The concept of place is rich and complex, extremely difficult to define in a few words. Indeed it has been the subject of many books, articles, works of art, etc. In architecture and the environmental design arts, place has become a subject of scholarship relatively recently — over the past thirty years researched from such different perspectives as Donald Appleyard's, Christian Norberg-Schultz's and Dolores Hayden's.

Yet in spite of its complexity and the related difficulty to articulate its dimensions, place is an entity or an attribute that is easily recognized. It was relatively easy for the jury to select the winners. Naturally, views diverged and arguments ensued during the selection process, but over the course of the day, discussions quickly turned into decisions, with most awards made on a unanimous basis.

Reflecting on the jury process, we were surprised to see only a few of the architectural projects survive the final cuts. To the jury's dismay, many worthy projects — innovative office buildings, old people's homes, educational facilities, etc. — ended up on the out table.

I believe the reason why these projects failed to rally the interest of the jury lies in the way in which they were presented. The overwhelming use of standard presentations devised for architectural and real estate audiences failed to sway the jury because they failed to capture the sense of place and the complexity of purposes and qualities embedded in the projects. Photographs of shiny buildings, only a few of which showed humans (posing in selected spots), permanently blue skies or groomed trees and shrubs only bring the place qualities of a project to their lowest common denominator.

Projects were first reviewed by the jury based on written abstracts as a required element of all submissions. Because these abstracts were composed specifically for the Places Award Program, they addressed, albeit succinctly, the projects quality of place. In the few words submitted, it became clear to the jury that many of the projects had come out of rich approaches to design and building: they involved professionals as well as users, working in consort to achieve complex objectives, including high levels of sustainability, multiple organizational structures, respect for people as well as for setting, a diversity of needs , adjustments to tight budgets, adaptation to difficult sites, etc.

The abstracts indeed kept most of the architectural projects in the pool of potential awards. However, in the second step of the process, which involved reviewing the background documentation that was submitted, the jury encountered mostly public relations brochures and glossies typically used in architectural magazines. No matter how much the jury deliberated the place quality of the projects hinted on in the abstracts, it could not find the evidence necessary to prove that these qualities actually existed — that, for example, the project did indeed fit and add to a historical context, that the place created was indeed cherished by the local population, that the project helped people in their everyday work.

In the end, it became clear that the same documentation or presentatithat will convince a banker to make a loan or the same documentation that will win an architectural prize just cannot persuade a jury interested in place. Short of visiting the project sites and spending time there, our jury remained too uncertain about the uniqueness of many projects to make awards.

In contrast, the winning entries transmitted well the projects' complexities. They showed aspects of the process that led to the final product. They documented (some exhaustively) how the places were assumed by people and how they became part of everyday life. They showed harmony between this everyday life and both the natural setting and the previously built context. The presentations suggested feelings and states of being which could be easily grasped by the jury — in spite of its obvious, and necessary remoteness.

Future places design and research will continue to depend on entries which can convince of the place qualities of projects submitted. A special effort must be made by those submitting their work to document convincingly the special qualities of the places they have produced. This is not so much hard work, as it is deep thinking about ways to communicate the complex, diverse, multiple qualities of a project.

# Living Water Park

## PLACE DESIGN AWARD

*Design director:* Betsy Damon. *Project manager:* Todd Damon. *Landscape master plan:* Margie Ruddick. *Microbiologist–hydrologist:* Huang Shi Da (City of Chengdu). *Architect:* Alice Choy.

*Project director:* Zhang Jihai, FuNan Rivers Renovation Bureau. *Team leader:* Huang Cher Chen (City of Chengdu Office of Landscape Architecture).

*Regional landscape and local environmental values are embedded in a park that demonstrates natural processes for cleansing water and provides a city with new access to its river.*




Location of Sichuan and Chengdu in China
Graphic: Margie Ruddick

The Fu and Nan rivers have brought life and prosperity to the people of Chengdu, capital of China's Sichuan province, for nearly two thousand years, and Chinese culture have long incorporated an understanding of the connection between water quality and life. But in recent decades Chengdu's rivers have become degraded as a result of the region's rapid industrial and population boom. People's daily connection to the river, once a place for fishing and washing laundry, has disappeared (along with fifty-four species of fish that had lived there).

Living Water Park is part of a massive effort by Chengdu, a city of nine million, to reclaim its rivers. In 1992 Chengdu started the China's largest comprehensive water quality initiative, constructing flood control and waste treatment facilities, relocating 100,000 residents to new, modern housing, and creating about fifty miles of new public waterfront with gardens and parks.

Within this open space system, Living Water Park serves as an educational and inspirational model, demonstrating how water can be cleansed through biological means. It also manifests the Chinese spiritual connection to water in an urban place, providing new ways to get to the river itself.

The park design centers on filtering polluted river water through a series of aeration surfaces, constructed wetlands and water features that enable people to observe how these natural processes can remove pollutants from the river. Visitors can step down to the river along terraces that also allow the river to flow into the park; they can stroll along the riverbank or sit in an amphitheater on the river edge.

The project was a collaboration between visiting designers and designers, scientists and engineers from Chengdu. It was conceived by Betsy Damon, an American environmental artist, at the invitation of Zhang Jihai, director of the Fu-Nan Rivers Renovation Bureau. Damon directed the design and worked closely during construction with city staff and contractors. Damon's son, Jon Otto, was project manager, physicist and translator, and Margie Ruddick, a Philadelphia landscape architect, developed the schematic landscape plan. The $2.5 million park was completed in 1998.

Damon had been visiting China since the early 1989 as part of her research on sacred water sites. After meeting Chinese artists with similar interests, she took part in an environmental conference in Chengdu. That led to directing a project that brought artists, scientists and community members together to address water quality issues (one event involved washing white silk in the dirty river water). Eventually she was introduced to Zhang, who wanted to create a permanent place for expressing ideas about water, and to whom she proposed the idea of a living water garden.



Damon and the people in Chengdu she was working with wanted to establish a spiritual connection to the water in the city and create references to the Sichuan landscape — "that is where we met very beautifully," she said. The park is designed with an abundance of vegetation, including rare species from Mt. Emei in northern Sichuan (one of five sacred mountains in China and a source of healing waters), and is embellished with sculpture, carvings and mosaics.

The main element is a system that filters river water through natural means and runs the length of the park (about 1,500 feet). Water is pumped in and emerges through a fountain into a settling pond, courses along a series of flow forms (sculptures that aerate water and spin off toxins), drains through constructed wetlands and fish ponds, and returns to the river. The system tells about the river basin's original landscape character, the consequences of pollution and what can be done about it: People can see particulate matter in the settling pond, monitor the water as it is cleansed in ponds and filtering channels, and watch it return to the river.

Ruddick says that when she began to lay out the programmatic and technical aspects of the park, the site plan began to resemble a fish, which excited the city landscape architects with whom she was working: "They thought it was very appropriate, because a fish is a symbol of good fortune and health, and it will help people understand that this is a place where the river is being healed." The eye of the fish is where the water is pumped up from the river; the fish ponds are shaped like scales.

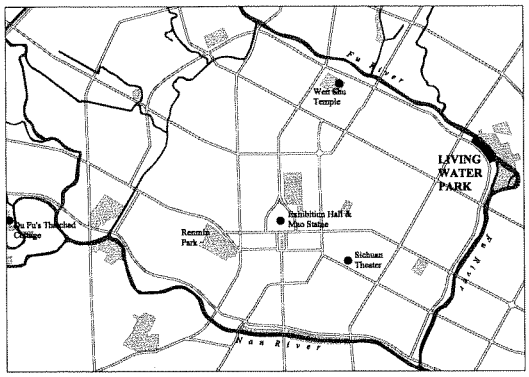
Several aspects of the design reflect local traditions. The fish ponds drain into a stream with a bridge over it; wooden walkways are part of a tradition of small-scale public space design. The water wheel is modeled on ancient structures of that type (though it is not operational). Other elements were controversial: city staff originally thought the river terraces wasted space that people could have used in other ways.

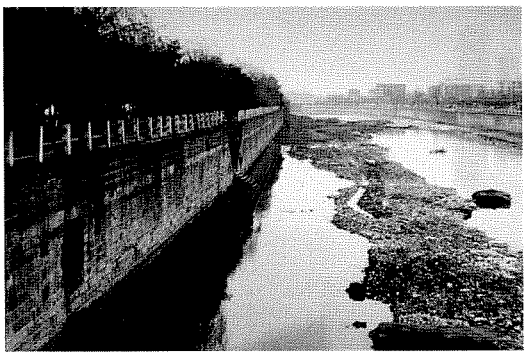
Damon's desire to design features as organic connections is reflected in various details. The fountain sur-

Above: **Aerial view of park**
Below: **Constructed wetlands**

Photos: **Margie Ruddick**





Top: **Map locating park along the Fu River in Chengdu**
Photo: **Margie Ruddick**

Above: **The river channel, drained during project construction**
Photo: **Margie Ruddick**

Below right: **Site plan**
Graphic: **Betsy Damon**

face is designed from a microscopic photograph of a drop of water. One of the flow forms evolves into the shape of a bird, suggesting that water grows life, and another recalls the shape of a ginkgo leaf, which is the symbol of the city. Damon worked with Chengdu sculptor Deng Le on these pieces. "My role was to bring forward what is innate in Chinese ontology and build a contemporary language related to water cleaning," she said.

The project involved an unusual collaboration between the designers, city staff and officials from the Fu-Nan Rivers Restoration Bureau — complicated by language and cultural barriers and the fact that city designers had already completed plans for the site.

After Zhang invited Damon to design the park, she returned to the U.S. to raise funds, undertake further research and interview landscape architects. Damon and Ruddick returned to China in March, 1996, and were asked to develop a program, pick a site and sketch a conceptual plan — all in about three weeks. Ruddick saw merits in this level of collaboration: "I pointed out that because I was there did not necessarily mean they would be acquiring a so-called Western design. I would be helping them figure out how to organize these technologies within the framework of their own landscape architecture, and the design development is something I think they should be very proud of."

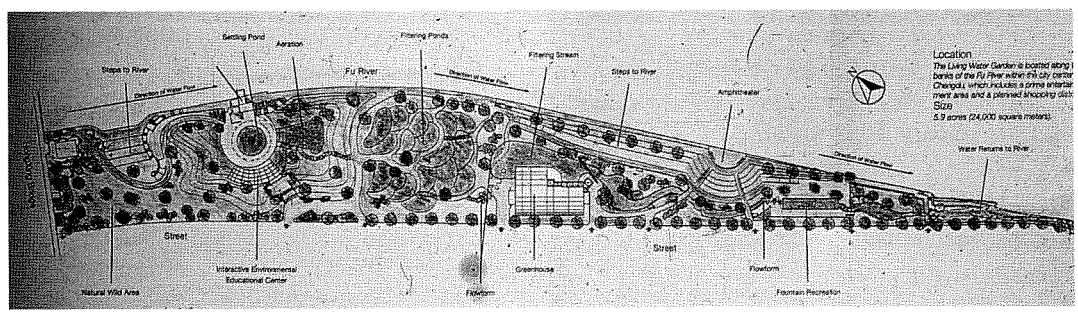
Damon left to do more research, then returned for a year to see the details of the design through. "I developed the rhythm of the park, the flow of the paths, the connectors and how the flow forms would go," she said, along with sculptural elements like the fountain and a nautilus. A local scientist, Huang Shi Da, designed the wetlands, selecting plants and fish for the treatment ponds (Huang had already been cultivating test plots to study how plants could metabolize local water). City staff designed elements like the bridges and stone walkways.

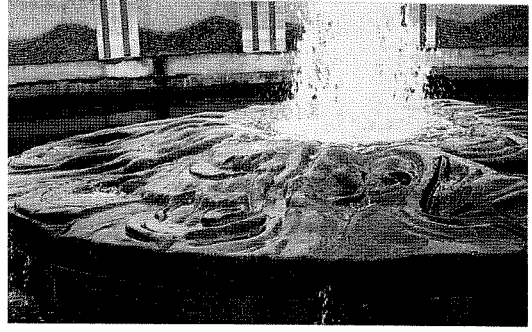
Damon and Ruddick credit Zhang's vision and persistence for launching the project when a design for the park had already been completed and seeing it through even though people didn't understand how it would work. "It mobilized all these people who were doing this work separately around the city, artists doing installations, a microbiologist and engineers looking at water quality. Now everyone in the whole city knows about this park," Ruddick said.

### Jury comments

HALSBAND: This is an amazing public works project. What this does in terms of bringing people to the river..., there are some places that are designed for kids to interact with water. We actually learn something from this, by following through the spaces.

ZEISEL: The water moves into a settling pond whose design is patterned on a microscopic drop of water.



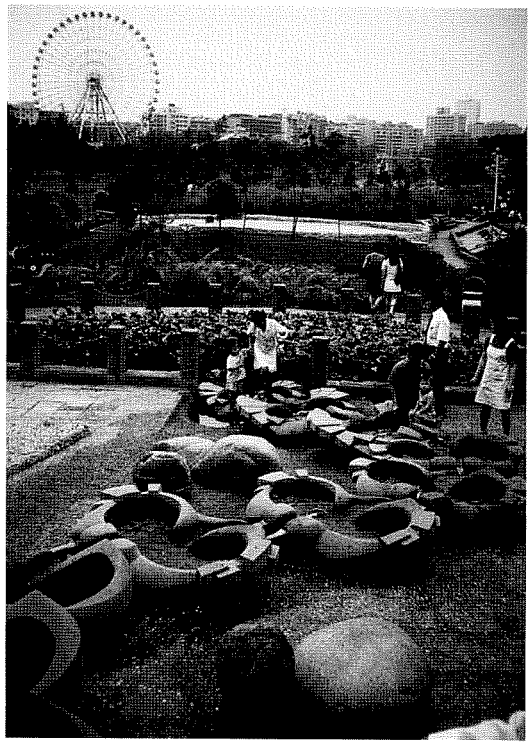


1



Left: **Terraces that allow visitors descend to river level.** Photo: **Fu-Nan Rivers Restoration Bureau**

Right: **Four stages in the progression of water through the treatment system.**
**(1) Fountain from which water emerges.** Photo: **Fu-Nan Rivers Restoration Bureau**
**(2) Flow form that connects various wetlands**
Photo: **Margie Ruddick**
**(3) Fish pond, with walkway for pedestrian access**
Photo:**Margie Ruddick**
**(4) Flow form that returns water to the river.** Photo: **Fu-Nan Rivers Restoration Bureau**



2

HALSBAND: It transforms from a very formal garden into this wonderful, very loose space.

VERNEZ-MOUDON: People are going to be using it. This is not a luxury.

FRANCIS: What's interesting to me is that it's a wonderful example of merging ecological design with social design.

VERNEZ-MOUDON: And urban engineering.

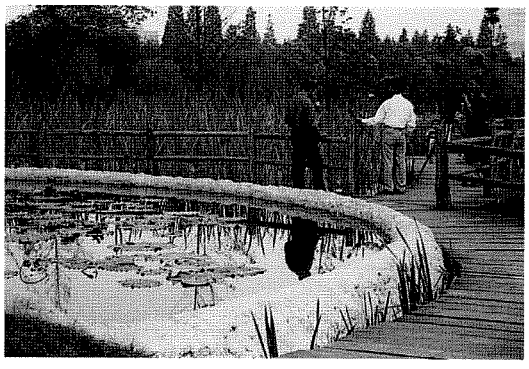
GANTT: It has absolutely superb design details. We don't like those architectural shots that are nothing but the details of a building, but I don't want to suggest that the details are not important.

VERNEZ-MOUDON: Those are important in context, not by themselves.

GANTT: I think we can have well-designed places that also have those elements of design; I think they add some life. That is why this project rises to the top.

ZEISEL: Seeing what had to be done by the city with that wall and the backfill and moving the canal you also realize that it is a collaboration of the whole city.

FRANCIS: If you only look at the plan, you would think that this would never be published anywhere as an example of great design, based on its geometry. It's not one of these great axial unities, it's very organic. But when you get to it as a place, it really is designed as a series of experiences.



3



4

# Diggs Town

## PLACE DESIGN AWARD

*Designer:* Urban Design Associates, Pittsburgh; CMSS Architects, Norfolk

*Sponsor:* Norfolk Redevelopment and Housing Authority

*Funding:* U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, Comprehensive Improvement Assistance Program

*A public housing project is remade by inserting streets into the site plan and using architectural and landscape strategies that help residents take ownership of open space.*




Above: **Location of Diggs Town in Norfolk**

Right: **Site plan before and after the renovations**

Graphics: **Urban Design Associates**

Diggs Town Public Housing involved the redesign and redevelopment of a public housing project built in the 1950s. Though it preceded the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development's HOPE VI program, it has provided a model for the many public housing reconfiguration and redesign projects that have been launched in recent years.

Diggs Town was built in an institutional style: 428 units in low-rise barrack-type structures that were deployed over large superblocks. The structures lacked any expression of individuality; outdoor spaces were difficult for residents to use and for the housing authority to maintain. Like many projects of this sort, Diggs Town had become plagued with serious problems of unemployment, crime, drugs and decay. Residents feared for their lives and their children's safetyy. They felt they had lost control of their community.

In 1990, the Norfolk Redevelopment and Housing Authority (NRHA) initiated a $17-million redevelopment of Diggs Town, using HUD funds, along with a series of educational and crime prevention programs. The NRHA commissioned this urban design plan as a demonstration project to coordinate physical design changes with social programs enabling public housing residents to create a safe, stable neighborhood and to increase their economic mobility.

The design, produced in working sessions with residents, designers and staff from the NRHA and city, focused on elements that would establish the structure of a traditional neighborhood and enable residents to create a community. These included defining the front and back yards of individual units with through addition of front porches, back patios, front and back fences and storage units. Buildings are grouped around communal backyards that are secured by fencing and the configuration of the buildings. Ultimately,

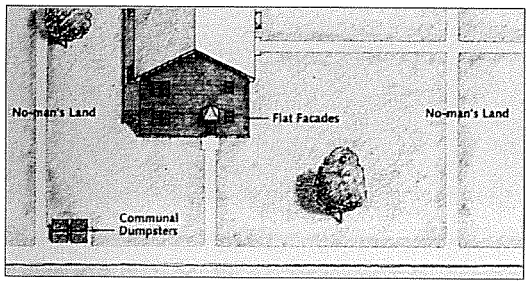


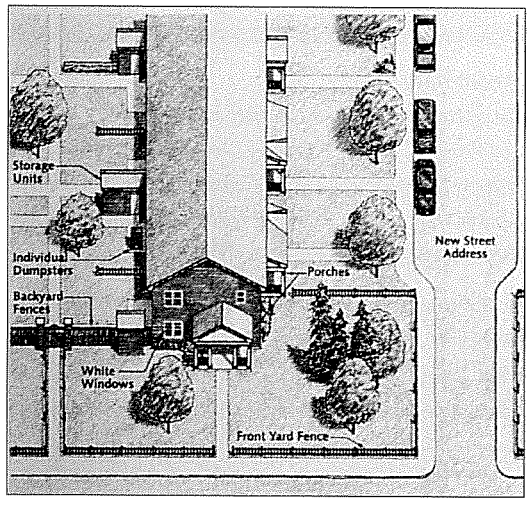


Above: **Residents say the design changes have improved the opportunities for socializing.**

Below and right: **Before and after sketches show how the open space was transformed into yards that are maintained and can be observed from the housing units.**

Photo and graphics: **Urban Design Associates**




community gardens and play areas will be incorporated into these areas. Other improvements included lighting, landscaping and utility upgrades.

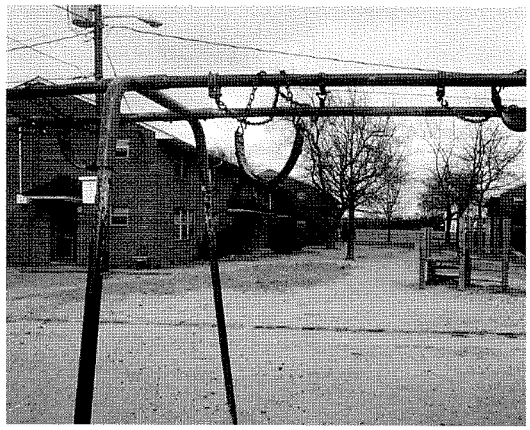
The new pattern of streets and open spaces links Diggs Town to its surroundings. By changing the image of the buildings to resemble the house in a typical neighborhood, psychological boundaries are disappearing, and nearby parks, schools, churches and institutions are now part of residents' daily lives.

In addition, the Diggs Town Economic Empowerment Demonstration project involves 199 participants in 174 households. It includes family self-sufficiency planning, employment and education counseling, and family and personal counseling. Participants work intensively with case managers to set goals and ensure they receive necessary services.

Since the completion of the project in 1994, residents have begun to plant and embellish their yards and porches in numerous ways. Diggs Town also features resident-initiated mixed uses: one resident opened a snack shop in her apartment and a day-care center is flourishing.

There have been measurable decreases in the local crime rate, increases in homeownership preparedness, and more participation in education and job programs. Residents and community police officers report a dramatic drop in crime and an increase in self-esteem and community pride. After three years of occupancy, social programs document substantial increases in the imcome of residents, employment and participation in education and job training programs. the project is now being studied by a team of sociologists who will document the impact of the physical changes on social conditions.







Above, opposite page: **Typical houses and yards in the renovated development.**

Right: **Residential and community areas before the renovation. Since the design of the open space was not related to any of the homes, the space between the buildings was a "no-man's land."**

Photos: **Urban Design Associates**

## Preliminary Evaluations

*Excerpted from Stephanie E. Bothwell, Raymond Gindroz and Robert E. Lang, "Restoring Community through Traditional Neighborhood Design,"* Housing Policy Debate *9:1 (1998), 103–108. This copyrighted material is used with the permission of the Fannie Mae Foundation.*

Six months after Diggs Town's redesign was complete we began our evaluative process. Although a much more rigorous evaluation is underway to confirm the value of concepts that drove the redesign, we nonetheless found good preliminary evidence of a positive community impact. A flavor of this change is evident in our field notes:

*...there is a community police officer whose post is in one of the units. It is on a street that still had problems after the changes. Drug dealers lived in the middle of the new street. Our putting in the new street, unfortunately, gave them the opportunity to conduct a brisk drive-through business.*[1]

*Once the officer's post was in place, the customers disappeared and the drug dealers moved off the block. Most important, the officer is a part of the neighborhood and knows everyone and their families. The result is that police calls have gone down from twenty-five to thirty a day or two to three per week. ...*

Evidence ... demonstrates the importance of a decent-looking home in improving a resident's self esteem and sense of connection to the community. We interviewed a group of Diggs Town church-goers who, prior to the redesign, felt anxious arriving at services from an unsightly public housing project. Once Diggs Town had been redesigned to resemble a typical Norfolk subdivision, the same church-goers were comfortable in engaging the community outside the project. In addition, attendees of the same church who lived outside Diggs Town reported feeling more comfortable with the Diggs Town church-goers after the redesign. ...

The NRHA is conducting an ongoing evaluation of the Diggs Town project. ... The first-year evaluation ... suggests that, though there remains much difficult work ahead for residents to reach the goals they have set for themselves, significant changes have occurred in the social, economic and physical quality of life of the community. Those who participated in the [Diggs Town Economic Empowerment Demonstration, a self-sufficiency program,] showed the greatest gains in all categories. Those residents received the highest incomes, moved off welfare rolls more often and saved more.

Thirty-nine participants enrolled in an education program during the first two years, and 86 enrolled in skills training of some kind. Thirty-three participants had sufficient income to move off welfare in the first



two years of enrollment. ... Despite improvements over the last two years, Diggs Town still contains a heavy concentration of low-income families with inadequate opportunities for social mobility. ...

The problem for us in assessing the impact of physical design alone is that Diggs Town's revitalization came packaged with a host of social interventions. Certainly we understand and support a comprehensive revitalization effort; however ... it would have been easier for us to gauge the importance of physical redesign in the absence of other program initiatives. ...

[This case study] is only a first step in a broader evaluation of housing projects redesigned using TND [Traditional Neighborhood Design] principles. Subsequent studies should employ a more formal social scientific evaluation. ... For example, there has yet to be a deep ethnographic study of a TND community of the type Herbert Gans undertook in his classic work on Levittown. An ethnography would yield a wealth of information about whether individual components of the built environment (e.g., front yards) facilitate greater interaction, leading to a better sense of community.

### Jury Comments

GANTT: This came out of HUD's modernization projects. In a prototypical way, it started dealing with issues of territoriality and defensible space.

FRANCIS: This takes a very simple idea—pushing out and doing things with porches and gardens—and applies it to public housing. These photographs are staged, but it looks like a very successful environment.

GANTT: With relatively simple additions to the facade, they started to create space and place. The public investment and social side is that there is a huge amount of public housing that we are trying to restore. We are trying to understand the principles that help people go from living in the project to having an address on the street, a process that is embodied in this work.

VERNEZ-MOUDON: The first project of this sort was done in Cambridge, fifteen years ago. This project is not innovative in that sense, but it's pretty substantial.

ZEISEL: Twenty years ago when we were started to think about this problem, and projects like this weren't being done, we would have jumped on a project like this and said, "Look how great this is." Now that there has been a lot of good work, we can say, "This is the way to do it." But that doesn't mean we shouldn't give this an award.

VERNEZ-MOUDON: I gave this my highest score; I think these projects need more help. The Cambridge project included shopping; this one doesn't.

GANTT: I think it's well designed, simple, follows research principles in a very nice way. It has applicability to other projects and, in fact, has been applied in a lot of ways. It makes sense for us to give it an award for the creation of space in a desolate environment.

HALSBAND: Just following the rules doesn't produce a winner. We've seen many things that have followed these same rules and failed. This seems to be a wonderful place.

### Note

1. The open-street design inherent in TND may facilitate some crimes that rely on easy access to neighborhoods. However, we believe that this potential problem is offset by the improved community social controls that come from people better knowing one another.

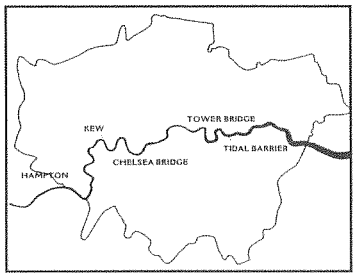
# Thames Landscape Strategy

## Hampton to Kew

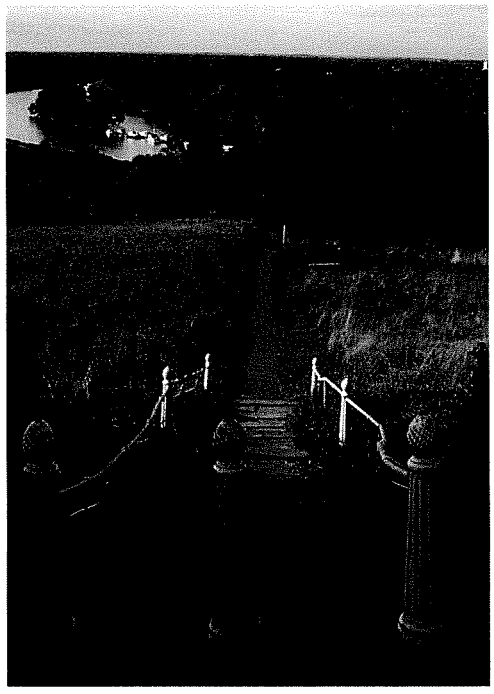
PLACE DESIGN AWARD

*Landscape design and planning:* Kim Wilkie Environmental Design. *Sponsor:* Thames Landscape Strategy Steering Group (The Countryside Commission, the Garden History Society and the London Borough of Richmond on Thames).

*A landscape vision gives new focus to a segment of the Thames River and becomes a force for coordinating the actions of grass-roots groups and local, regional and national agencies.*




The Thames River is one of the most important natural and cultural assets of greater London, embodying both the region's ancestry and its capacity for renewal and evolution. But like many regional landscapes, its future has been fragmented among many agencies, and its sense of place has been disrupted.



The Thames Landscape Strategy is an endeavor to refocus the planning, development and management priorities of a host of local and national agencies to reflect the river basin's cultural and landscape heritage, as well as its evolving economic role. The project, which began as a visionary landscape proposal five years ago, has emerged as a hundred-year vision plan for an eleven-mile section of the Thames River, between Hampton and Kew, in southwest London.

The Strategy is as much analysis as a plea for action, for creating identity of place that supersedes local political boundaries, and a demonstration of the many interconnected decisions that must be made to ensure that the river and the places along it thrived.

The plan analyzes the character of the river landscape and relates it to strategic planning issues — proposing more than 180 policies, projects and management practices. These proposals have been incorporated into the development plans of local authorities and are guiding the work of both national agencies and grass-roots community organizations. The strategy's steering group has become a body for maintaining a focus on the river as a regional place, organizing research, publications, public events and volunteer work.

The initiative for the strategy came from a 1991 exhibition of ideas for the London segment of the Thames, organized by the Royal Fine Art Commission. As part of the exhibition, environmental planner and landscape architect Kim Wilkie showed how the Hampton–Kew segment of the Thames is linked by a network of historic landscape vistas that provide a visual and civic a structure for that part of the region.

The ideas caught the imagination of local groups and coincided with a growing concern about finding a way to carry the special character of the river into future conservation and development plans. Gradually, the project evolved into looking at how the river corridor

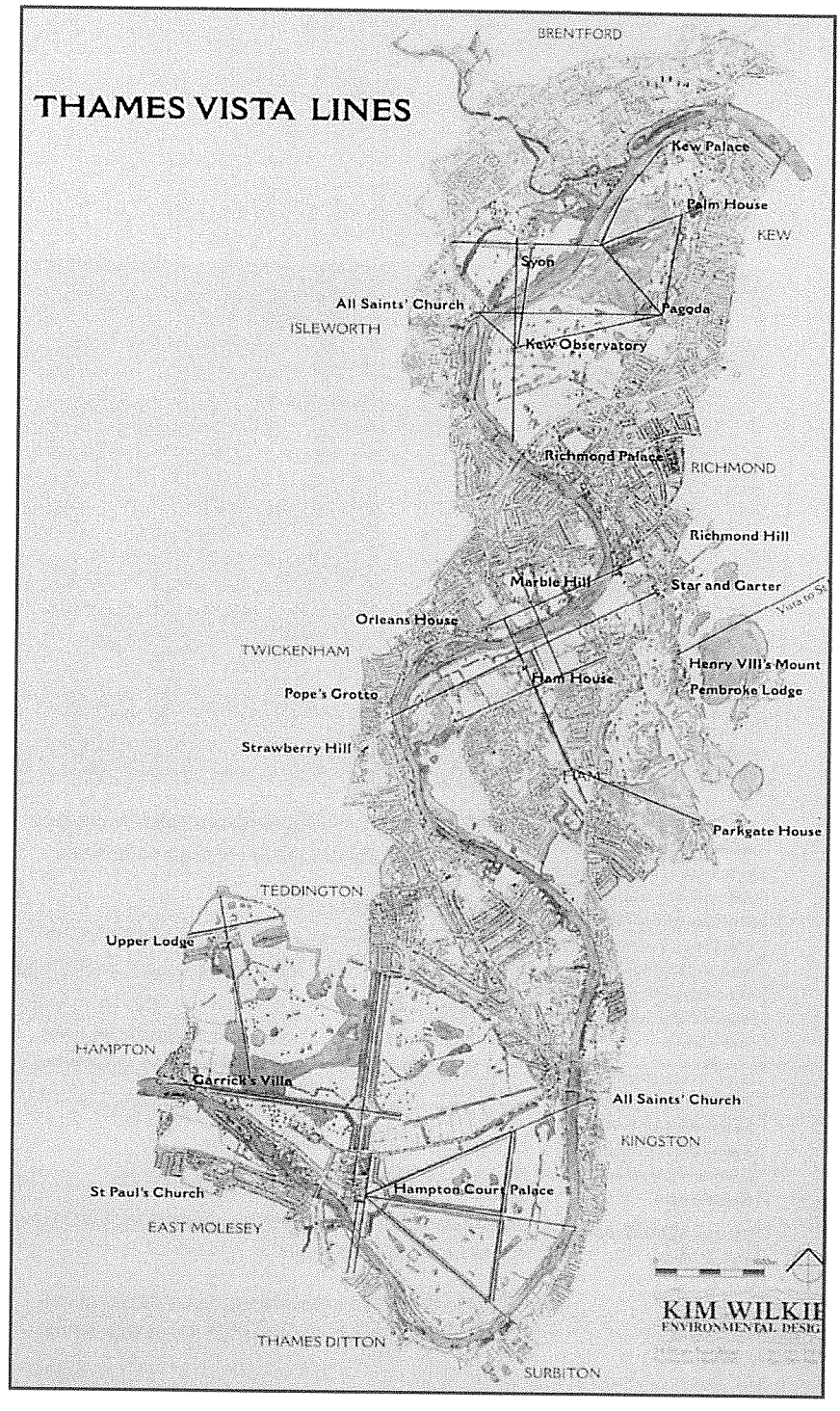
as a whole could be enhanced, reinstating parts of the natural and historic landscape to work with today's uses, and Wilkie was retained in 1992 to draft the hundred-year landscape management strategy.

The strategy, which was completed in 1994, operates at two levels. At the subregional level, it analyzes the structure of the landscape, examining how geological, social and political factors have influenced the way in which the river has been settled and suggesting policies for conservation, recreation and tourism. At the local level, the study identifies twelve reaches, or areas of local character and identity. It describes local history, townscape, nature conservation and public access networks, and offers proposals for development plans and land management practices.

The study and subsequent actions have been guided by the Thames Landscape Strategy steering group, a joint body of local and national authorities, and informed by consultations with national, regional and local organizations. The study was funded jointly by various national agencies, such as the Countryside Commission, English Heritage, the Royal Fine Art Commission, English Nature and the National Rivers Authority, as well as private benefactors. The Strategy is guided by a full-time coordinator, whose position is funded through sponsorship and contributions from steering group members. A national bank has assigned one of its staff members to work full-time as a project assistant for two years.

Already, the Strategy has inspired a range of planning, design and organizing initiatives. Design projects have included the restoration of an eighteenth-century temple and lawn, reconstructed towpaths, improved riverfront access in conjunction with a new housing development project, and initial steps with residents to create a new riverside nature reserve.

Locally based follow-up studies include a landscape plan for Old Deer Park (owned by the English royal family), a landscape master plan for a riverside park known as Radnor Gardens, and a nature conservation and management plan for woodlands on Eel Pie Island.




Grassroots projects include "walkabouts" held with local residents to assess possible improvements to the waterfront in Brentford and Isleworth, and numerous trash clean-ups supported by businesses and local communities.

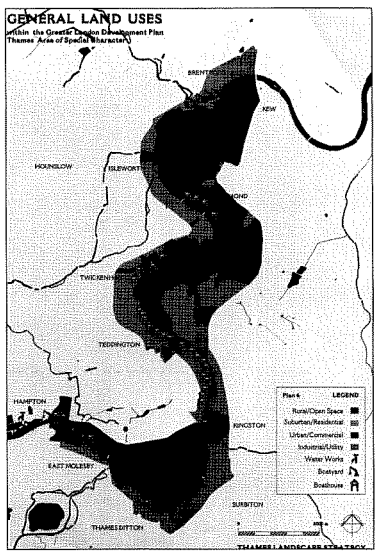
The Thames Landscape Strategy is being used as a model for a similar project covering the next downstream section of the Thames, from Kew to Chelsea. This approach to developing a long-range strategy and

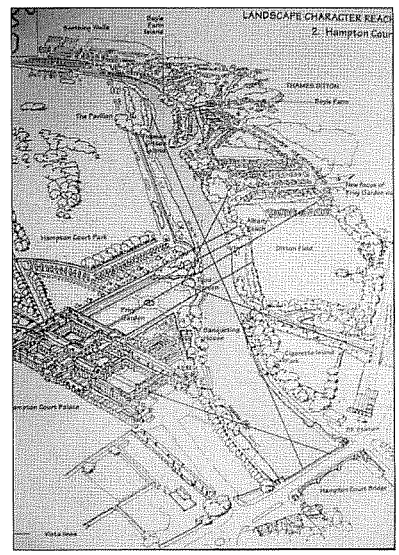
Above: **Diagram of sightlines and vistas along the river, an early phase of landscape analysis**

Opposite page: **Location of Hampton–Kew river segment in the London region**

Opposite page, lower left: **View from Richmond Hill, which helped inspire the English landscape movement**

Graphics and photo: **Kim Wilkie Environmental Design**




Left: **The landscape strategy was based on documentation of a range of physical factors and activities, such as general land uses (shown here), tidal zones, geological and topographical conditions, archaeological and cultural features, and nature conservation areas.**

Right: **The strategy subdivided the river segment into twelve reaches, presenting a more detailed landscape analysis and recommendations for each.**

Graphics: **Kim Wilkie Environmental Design**

implementing it could be applied to other landscapes that fall under the jurisdiction of many authorities.

### Jury Comments

FRANCIS: This is an example of design at a regional scale—a vision for a large-scale ecological and cultural landscape. There is a lot of research—it even includes overlay maps about where poets and painters lived and worked in the landscape. But it is done with the purpose of guiding the future of this landscape. It's a management–design plan.

VERNEZ-MOUDON: I agree that they've put in a lot of resources, but the question is, where does it go? How does it serve as a model?

HALSBAND: This is galvanizing a population of millions of people into understanding that this river that has been their dismal back door is actually a wonderful place and they should get themselves behind it and do something about it.

The fact that every section has twenty or thirty proposals, and the pictures of people cleaning trash and weaving new willow edges and handicapped people trying out paths to see if you can get wheelchair access, makes me feel that we're looking at community action on an enormous scale. Not just for poor people but for all people. We have newsletters that show the beginning of successful projects.

FRANCIS: I would equate this to Ian McHarg's plan for the Valleys, which put forth a framework that had an enormous impact on that place and on the minds of other places. What makes this better is the cultural layer.

VERNEZ-MOUDON: I'm uncomfortable. Where is the social stuff? Where is the jurisdiction? Who is going to make the decisions? I see it as a nice study, complete but not at all a breakthrough.

FRANCIS: That this is exactly the kind of landscape work that we need to be doing in this country.

VERNEZ-MOUDON: We do thousands this way. The approach is being revived now, but nobody does a thing with these studies.

FRANCIS: The problem with the studies from twenty years ago is that they were unidimensional. This one take a much broader approach. It's talking to communities, to get them to do little actions that add up to a larger thing.

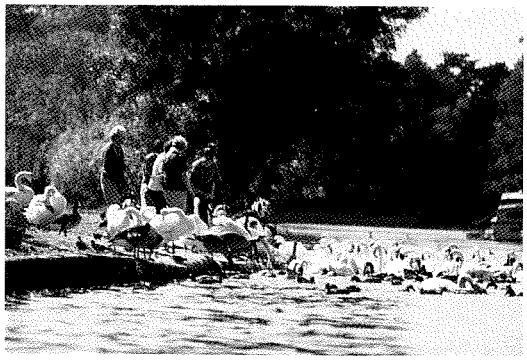
GANTT: It's like the McMillan plan for Washington, a framework for how you go forward. There are at least a million decisions that have to be made politically by citizens.

FRANCIS: There are so many design ideas in here, proposals, images—subtle ones, not big, not urban redevelopment, little actions that will add up.

VERNEZ-MOUDON: There are not very many master plans that have led to placemaking. They are always lacking the implementation.

FRANCIS: Here is a nature reserve project, a waterfront walkabout. This looks like a pretty active implementation process. This plan may be changed every ten years, but that's OK. The point is that they are looking at using a river as a way of organizing the future of the region.

HALSBAND: They've identified forty or fifty existing statutory bodies that have authority over pieces of this. So they have researched which groups have jurisdiction to do which things to make this start happening.



ZEISEL: They built a coalition of people who control implementation and they will keep that going with newsletters and so forth.

GANTT: If the river smells and things are trashy and dirty, little incremental changes are not going to change that.

FRANCIS: They see the river as a framework for taking action in the local environments along it that will somehow will add up to more than they would if they were just small, local actions. The impetus for this is that the river has become as abused. The only way to do that was to get people involved, having a sense of ownership over it.

VERNEZ-MOUDON: It's not a watershed or a bioregion. The plan doesn't tell us about the people; are they poor, are they rich? We have to understand the larger landscape. We have to look at waterways and mountains.

HALSBAND: This project is about maintaining a visual corridor and a greenway, a natural corridor. You have to start somewhere. The project doesn't depend on a social dimension. It doesn't matter whether this person is rich or poor.

ZEISEL: In the past there used to be royalty; they are trying to democratize this river place. They are trying to define it as a cultural landscape.

FRANCIS: So it's being defined in a cultural and historical ways, rather than a biological way.








Upper left: **The strategy suggests enhancing people's connection to the natural landscape and local species of plants and wildlife.**

Upper right: **New development beside Richmond Bridge**

Above: **Tourist barges under Kingston Bridge**

Right: **The working landscape at Eel Pie Island, Twickenhan**

Photos: **Kim Wilkie Environmental Design**

# From Yard to Garden

## Interventions in the Landscape of Play

PLACE RESEARCH AWARD

*Researchers:* Susan Herrington, assistant professor of landscape architecture, Iowa State University; Kenneth Studtmann.

*Changes to the design of a pre-school play yard expand the range of children's activities and enrich their developmental opportunities.*





**Stepping-stone paths encouraged children to take meandering routes and to explore new areas of the play yard; previously they had taken the most direct route to their destination, often a piece of play equipment.**

Photos: **Susan Herrington**

Millions of pre-school children in the U.S. are in out-of-home care settings, such as institutional or commercial child-care facilities. But while child-care- center playgrounds have become surrogates for the backyards and open spaces known to previous generations, they often provide children with little contact with nature, denying them the developmental and emotional benefits that outdoor play spaces could offer.

The outdoor environments of child-care centers typically consist of isolated pieces of equipment placed in monocultures of grass. This equipment-based design approach to playgrounds does not speak to the experiential qualities of being outdoors; landscapes that evoke emotions, passion, beauty and wonder are rarely encountered. Moreover, play equipment primarily addresses children's physical development, while social, emotional and cognitive developmental needs are largely ignored.[1]

This project focused on how to work with a typical play area that would expose children to the unique aspects of being outdoors and support their various developmental needs. It was conducted in two outdoor play yards at Iowa State University's Child Development Laboratory, one for pre-schoolers and one for kindergartners. The research spanned approximately two years and entailed both temporary and permanent interventions of natural materials; children's activities were observed before and after the interventions. The

project was directed by Susan Herrington and Kenneth Mark Studtmann with support from the director of the school.

The research sought to expand knowledge about how natural materials (such as plants, stones and earth) could be incorporated into an existing outdoor play area to support children's social, emotional, physical and cognitive development.[2] The project employed landscape design principles like ordering systems, spatial sequences and sense of place to guide the composition and shaping of outdoor play areas. These principles are derived from a range of theoretical and applied research in landscape design, geography and environmental psychology.

The permanent design interventions focused on using natural materials to create various types of enclosure and promote certain paths of movement. In the preschool yard these included a sixteen-foot diameter "sensory–motor" circle, plantings next to a bridge and other play equipment, a patch of unmown lawn and plants installed in cut-outs in the asphalt. In the kindergarten yard these included two four-foot by four-foot rooms defined by three-foot high vegetation — one room with a grass surface and one room with boulders arranged on the grass.

The results suggested that the simple landscape elements introduced into these yards did, in fact, broaden the children's development. A series of stepping stones expanded the children's physical use of the space and altered their cognitive understanding of the space; vegetative rooms transformed the social structure of the kindergarten class and gave children better opportunities for controlling their environment and establishing places of significance. The results also suggested that the "landscape-based" design approach was useful in helping designers understand how to structure the children's cognitive understanding of the yards.

### Spatial–Cognitive Awareness

Prior to the interventions, children in both yards ran from the classroom exit doors directly to the play structures. Outdoor play was oriented towards the use of the existing prefabricated playground equipment. Most of the children's time was spent moving from one play structure to the next.

Each district supports various activities and developmental stages.

| Sketch of District | District | Activities | Development |
|---|---|---|---|
| | 1. Porch | Time out<br>quiet play<br>line up | emotional<br>emotional<br>social/ emotional |
| | 2. Asphalt area | ridding tricycles<br>bouncing balls | physical<br>cognitive/ social |
| | 3. Wooden Deck (lab A) | quiet play | emotional |
| | 4. Play structures | climbing<br>swinging | physical<br>physical |
| | 5. Sand | digging,<br>building | cognitive, physical<br>social, cognitive |
| | 6. Shed | getting toy | social/ physical |
| | 7 Climbing tree | climbing,<br>imaginative play | physical, cognitive<br>social, emotional |
| | 8. Beyond fence | viewing out | cognitive |
| | 9. Hill/ mounding | running up/down hill<br>viewing out | physical/ emotional<br>cognitive |
| | 10. Vegetative rooms<br>(phase II intervention) | imaginative play<br>fantasy play<br>play with plants<br>movement through plants | social/ emotional<br>social/ emotional<br>cognitive<br>cognitive |

**Researchers tested a range of design interventions to determine their impact on the development of preschoolers.**

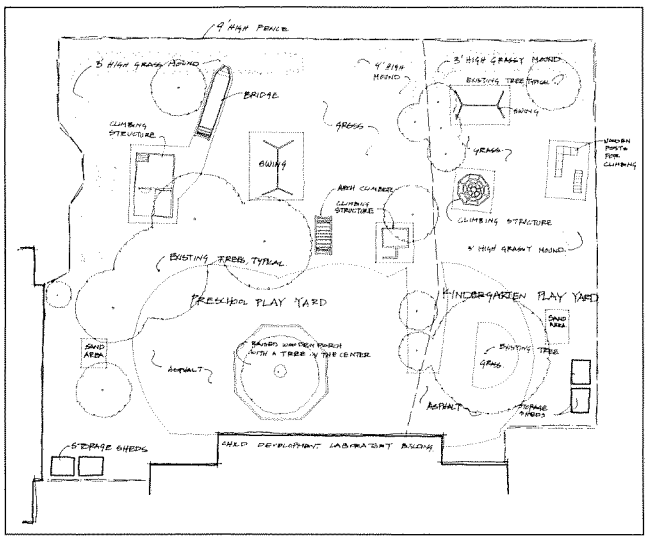
Graphic: **Susan Herrington**

Stepping stones were placed in both yards to provide a different path of movement; the stones in the preschool yard were placed in a meandering line and wove through typically unused spaces. After the stones were installed, the children followed them, even into the formerly unused spaces, in which they eventually stayed and played.

The meandering path modified the children's spatial experience and understanding of the yard because it offered a continual line of movement that was distinct in character. The material, texture, color and overall form of the stones was different from the existing surface. The stepping stones were also effective because they led somewhere, through a sequence of grassy open spaces to connect to different play structures and land forms.[3]

### Social Structure

Prior to the permanent plant interventions, play structures were the primary location of activity in both yards. In the kindergarten lab, the play structures helped create a social hierarchy based on physical prowess: children who were stronger, faster and able to climb higher became social leaders.




Left: **Preschool play yards before design changes**

Right: **Preschool play yards after design interventions**

Graphics: **Susan Herrington and Kenneth Studtman**

The use of the vegetative rooms in the kindergarten lab changed the hierarchy of the class by de-emphasizing the use of the play equipment. The vegetative rooms became the prime area for socialization and fantasy play. Children tended to use these rooms more frequently and for longer duration than the equipment. Eventually, the social hierarchy became based on a child's command of language and creativity in imagining what the space might be. Hence, the social hierarchy was now directly linked to cognitive, social and emotional skills.

### Naming and Place Learning

The kindergartners invented specific names for the two vegetative rooms in their yard, "Princess Palace" and "Eagle's Nest." The names denoted specific activities and genders: "Princess Palace" was utilized by primarily girls for quiet fantasy play while "Eagle's Nest" fostered active adventure play for both boys and girls.

Significantly, the children named these two rooms with no encouragement or direction from teachers or researchers. The conscious naming and continual reference to these vegetative rooms as "Princess Palace" and "Eagle's Nest" by the children describes how the children are attempting to control their environment through language and the power of place.[4]

### Conclusion

Contact with natural elements in outdoor play environments is a vanishing childhood experience.[5] With children spending as much as fifty hours per week in institutional, commercial and other out-of home care situations, the play yards associated with these settings could become a primary place where young children can gain experiences with nature. Careful landscape design, moreover, can address a fuller range of developmental goals and milestones than simple play equipment can.

This research suggests a number of processes that can other child-care centers can use to address the conditions typically found in outdoor play environments. Because the study involved installing plants and other landscape elements as part of the existing yard and equipment, this approach could be transferred easily, and at low cost, to other child care locations. The strategy of making small, incremental changes to the physical environment and observing how children react to them enables centers to test which changes would be most meaningful to the children they nurture.

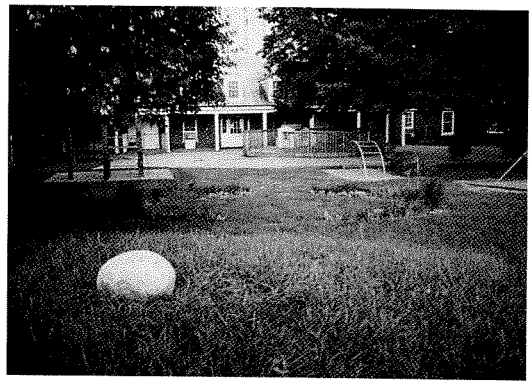
### Jury Comments

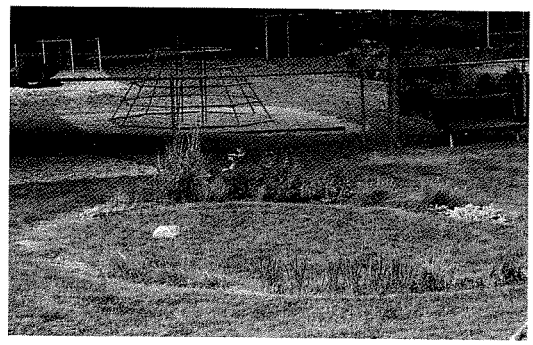
HALSBAND: This is a great presentation format: talk about reaching America.

GANTT: The significance of this socially is that day-care centers are, increasingly, becoming the social space for the development of our children. More children find themselves at one or two years old in day-care centers with play yards...

ZEISEL: The researchers took two groups, they intervened, they checked it out, they learned something. The presentation format is very intriguing, and that is related the conciseness of the idea and the thinking. The design of the package has a lot to do with the information that is in it. They said "We took a little plot. We did this, we checked it with little people, this is what we found out and we should do that again." It's very clear. You can easily read the entire thing.







**Vegetative rooms replaced play equipment as the primarily play areas. Social relationships were based on language and creative processes, rather than physical prowess.**

Photos: **Susan Herrington**

FRANCIS: The new ground that this research breaks is that there have been many studies about kids and play and playgrounds and play equipment. This research says let's take the natural environment and use it in a new way; make it the focus of the play environment in a very thoughtful way. This is the best project that I've seen that combines design with some empirical research.

ZEISEL: And communication.

VERNEZ-MOUDON: I think it looks interesting and it's neatly packaged and going in the right direction, but objectively, it's lacking the kids' opinions.

HALSBAND: No, because they measured how many kids used which stones, then they came back and moved the stones, then they counted again to see which kids jumped on them.

GANTT: I'm not sure whether that kind of testing really tells us as much as we think it does.

VERNEZ-MOUDON: When you do a project, you want to know about the people you're doing it for. It doesn't mean that you represent the children.

ZEISEL: It may not, but if you are talking about a stone and where it sits ... this research is not making a huge thing of a small item. It is matching the level of design to the level of intervention to the level of what we are asking about.

## Notes

1. J. L. Frost, "Play Environments for Young Children in the U.S.A., 1800-1950," *Children's Environments Quarterly* 6:4 (1989),17.

2. T.D. Wachs, "Toys as an Aspect of the Physical Environment. Constraints and Nature of Relationship to Development," *Topics in Early Childhood Special Education* 5:3 (1985), 31-46, and Robin Moore, *Childhood's Domain: Play and Place in Child Development* (1986).

3. This underscores research by Donald Appleyard that people mentally organize space through topological and positional methods. See Donald Appleyard, "Humanscape: Environments for People," in Stephen Kaplan and Rachel Kaplan, *Styles and Methods of Structuring a City* (Ann Arbor, MI: Ulrich's Books, 1982), 80. The uniform spacing of the stones may be pertinent as well. Lynch in his cognitive studies of Los Angeles found that "...once a path has directional quality, it may have the further attribute of being scaled: one may be able to sense ones position along the total length, to grasp the distanced traversed or yet to go." See Kevin Lynch, *The Image of the City* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1960), 55. Although Lynch was referring to scaled markers in a city (such as urban blocks), the uniformly spaced stepping stone may also provide a similar scaling tool for understanding space.

4. Yi-Fu Tuan writes: "The right to name and have the name stick ... is empowerment," Yi-Fu Tuan writes. Yi Fu Tuan, "Language and the Making of Place: A Narrative-Descriptive Approach," *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* 81:4 (1991), 685, 684.

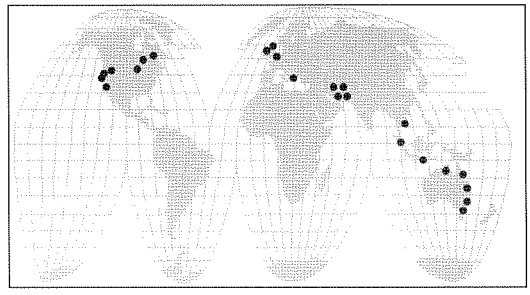
# Design for Comfort

## PLACE RESEARCH AWARD

*Researchers:* Gail Brager, Professor of Architecture, University of California, Berkeley; Richard de Dear, Professor of Environmental and Life Sciences at Macquarie University, Sydney.

*Sponsor:* American Society of Heating, Refrigerating and Air-Conditioning Engineers

*Re-evaluation of thermal comfort research demonstrates that workers in naturally ventilated buildings are satisfied with a wider range of climatic conditions.*



Locations of research studies whose data was re-evaluated for this project.

Graphic: Gail S. Brager

Climate is one of the most critical ways in which people experience place, and it is no coincidence that an appropriate response to climate has formed an expressive feature of almost every great building tradition.

For example, the lifestyles of people who live in tropical regions have for many years inspired distinctive climate-responsive architecture. Using such devices as covered porches, high ceilings, fans and large open windows, tropical buildings were able to provide a sense of comfort, delight and connection to environment and culture. Other architectural features were designed to maintain comfort in cold climates.

In the modern era, however, advances in mechanical heating and cooling have largely undone this connection between place and built form; the pleasures of such place-based design have been eclipsed by sealed structures. This is especially evident in the design of modern office buildings, where the relation of exterior form to place has become almost entirely cosmetic. Workers inside these buildings may find it impossible to tell if they are in Anchorage or Riyadh.

A major link in the chain of events that severed place-based ties between architectural form and climate was the establishment of universal standards for thermal comfort. These standards, derived entirely from laboratory tests, are published by agencies such as ASHRAE and ISO.[1]

Today, in nearly all but residential-scale buildings, designers wishing to employ natural strategies for thermal control must collaborate with engineers whose professional obligation is to adhere to these one-size-fits-all standards.[2] While engineer and designer may agree that natural strategies are more healthy, energy-efficient and aesthetically pleasing, engineers often have no choice but to veto natural approaches because they cannot consistently maintain the same performance as artificial mechanical systems.

This research sought to break the dominance of universal thermal comfort standards and to facilitate a return to a more person-centered approach to building design and environmental control that is healthier, better connected to place and more sustainable. The project was directed by Richard de Dear, Professor of Environmental and Life Sciences at Macquarie University, Sydney, and Gail S. Brager, Professor of Archi-

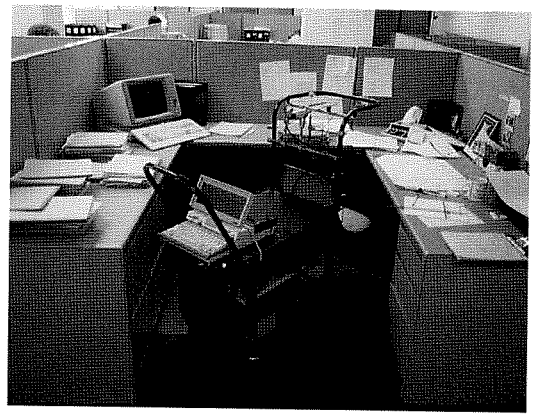


tecture at the University of California, Berkeley, and was sponsored by ASHRAE.

The project's initial assumptions were that strict reliance on laboratory-based standards ignores important cultural and social differences in what makes people comfortable, and that the standards discourage design innovations that might allow people to have a greater degree of interaction with, and connection to, their environment. The study proposed that people who had control over their thermal comfort would be more comfortable in a wider variety of conditions than people who were forced to accede to a single climatological setting that they could not control.

The research focused specifically on workers' experiences in office buildings. The researchers assembled a database from existing thermal comfort field experiments involving 21,000 observations in 160 buildings on four continents. The extensive sampling was needed to attain the level of scientific rigor required to propose modifications to thermal comfort standards. Data included information about the buildings and their occupants, the indoor and outdoor climate, and opportunities for personal control (such as operable windows, curtains or blinds, local heaters or fans, etc.), as well as responses to questionnaires about thermal conditions and preferences.

Among its many findings, the project demonstrated that while universal standards do produce comfort in situations where centralized climate control is the only option, occupants were quick to complain when temperatures deviated from the narrow, constant conditions to which they were accustomed. In contrast, occupants of naturally ventilated buildings were comfortable across a wider range of temperatures that more closely reflected the patterns of the outdoor climate.



Top: **Operable windows on the facade of a San Francisco building, an example of how ventilation strategies affect architectural character**
Photo: **Chris Benton**

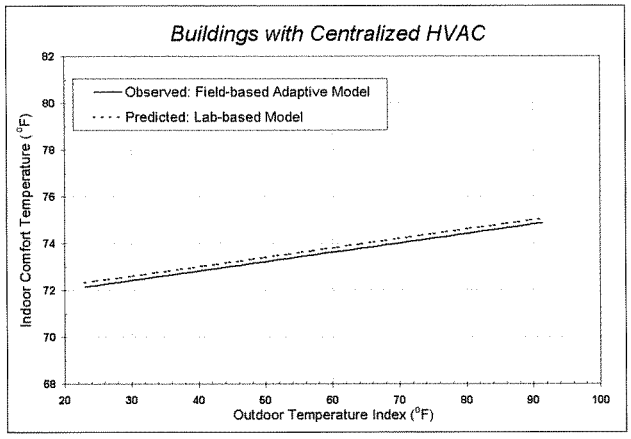
Above: **Instruments for measuring thermal conditions in work environments**
Photo: **Gail S. Brager**

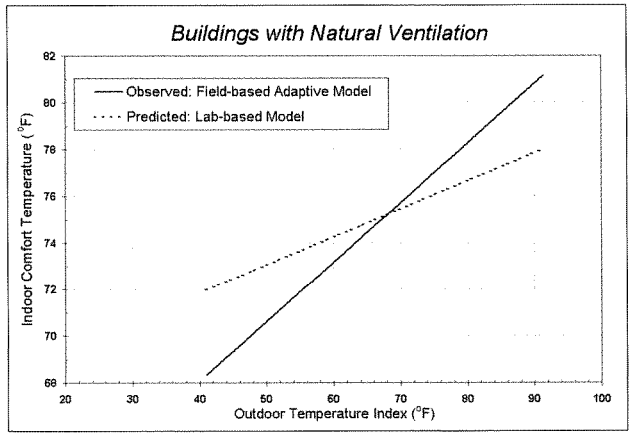
By comparing observed and predicted comfort responses, the researchers were able to explain these results both in terms of behavioral adjustment (the extent to which people are able to modify their clothing, open windows, turn on fans, etc.), and psychological adaptation (comfort in the naturally ventilated buildings was derived, in part, from local climactic expectations and higher levels of perceived control).

This research represents a fundamental shift of view in terms of the relationship between people and their thermal environment. The central premise is that people can be instrumental in creating their own thermal preferences through interactions with the environment, modifications of behavior and changes in

expectations. This approach considers people active agents, rather than passive recipients, of optimized conditions. Such a view is critical to re-establishing place-based values for thermal design.

As a result, ASHRAE has acknowledged that its existing standards may not be applicable across all building types, climates and populations, and the organization is considering ways to incorporate this research into the next round of standard revisions. One outcome could be the establishment of an alternative standard for naturally ventilated buildings, which would link recommended indoor temperatures to the climactic context of place. This would free heating and cooling engineers to collaborate with architects in the design of new, innovative, natural systems.




**Charts comparing user preferences in climate-controlled and naturally ventilated buildings. The data compares preferences predicted by standard models and the preferences people actually expressed in surveys. Workers in naturally ventilated buildings reported being satisfied in a wider range of temperatures. Also, the standard model did a better job of predicting preferences in climate-controlled buildings than in natually ventilated buildings.**

Graphics: **Gail S. Brager**

### Jury Comments

GANTT: It is very big. In the hundreds of buildings that I have designed, the most common complaint after "The roof leaks" is, "We are not comfortable." A lot of what engineers adhere to are these ASHRAE standards, and this research suggests that we have to look for ways to make buildings more comfortable.

VERNEZ-MOUDON: On the down side, I don't see any comprehensive paper on how the standards should be changed. What is the next step, how do you implement it? That would be the missing link.

ZEISEL: The problem with doing really excellent research is that it takes a lifetime and a lot of money. These researchers have taken their lives and done that. It's not exciting, it's not cross-disciplinary. But it's the only way you get this kind of stuff done.

VERNEZ-MOUDON: For once you have pretty standard engineering research that has a high-level goal; it's not just trying to crank numbers. I like the findings, which are quite interesting, that people prefer and can adjust to places that they can modify. The results may seem obvious to us, but this research proves them. We could also highlight the fact that this researcher is working from the bottom up to change an institution that is very hard to change.

So it's very interesting because it is using traditional research methods for non-traditional advocacy. This is presenting long-term framework; it is not point of intervention research.

ZEISEL: It says that ASHRAE's standards don't work for different cultures—that you want a standard that takes culture into account. And when you can open the windows, you feel better about the temperature.

VERNEZ-MOUDON: It attacks a significant problem, which is controlled environment within buildings.

GANTT: Do we know enough about the data itself to give this an award?

ZEISEL: They never asked anybody a question. They are doing secondary analysis using other people's research.

GANTT: What about places? Is it a place?

VERNEZ-MOUDON: The comfort issue is essential to place. This is a way of reaching out to people who are really constraining in a bad way the place-making process.

## Notes

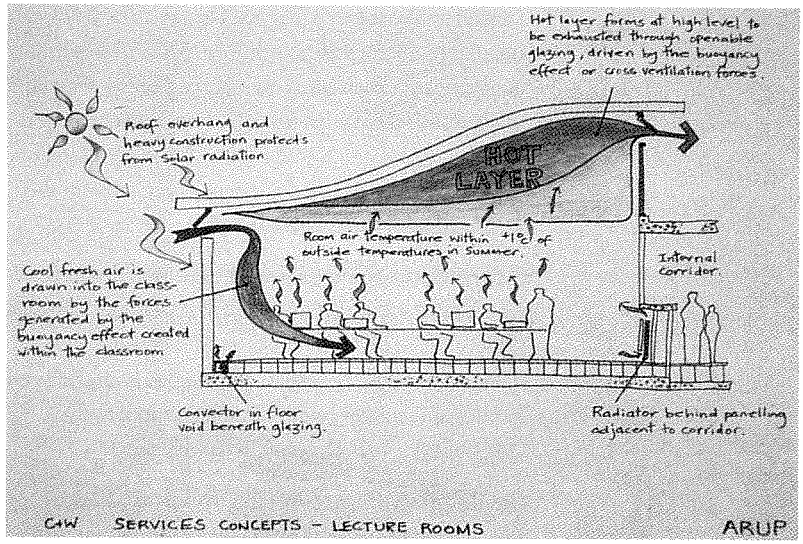
1. ASHRAE is the American Society of Heating, Refrigerating and Air-Conditioning Engineers, an international society with more than 75,000 members. Its scope also includes aspects of human response and energy-efficient building design.

   ASHRAE issued its first comfort standard in 1938. It was replaced in 1966 by "Standard 55: Thermal Environmental Conditions for Human Occupancy." Standard 55 was subsequently revised in 1974, 1981 and 1992. The standard is currently in its next round of revisions, which will include the results of this research.

   ASHRAE's standards have been adopted by many countries and serve as the model for standards developed in parallel by ISO, the International Standards Organization.

2. The standards specify combinations of environmental and personal factors that will produce thermal conditions that occupants will find acceptable. To apply the standards, designers must use information about local temperature, thermal radiation, humidity and air speed, and make assumptions about the type of activity and clothing levels appropriate for the occupancy. There is no direct distinction made for the type of building involved, cultural preferences or outdoor climate.






**Cable and Wireless College**
**Coventry, England, 1993**

Design: **MacCormac Jamieson Prichard**
Photos: **Ove Arup and Partners**

**The wave-shaped roof of this building was strongly influenced by the requirements of buoyancy-driven natural ventilation in a deep-plan space. Air enters through low windows on the south, rises above the occupied zone as it is warmed by the heat gains from people and equipment in the classrooms, and is exhausted through high-level eaves on the north.**

# With People in Mind
## Design and Management of Everyday Nature

PLACE RESEARCH AWARD

*Authors:* Rachel Kaplan, Stephen Kaplan and Robert L. Ryan.

*Publisher:* Island Press

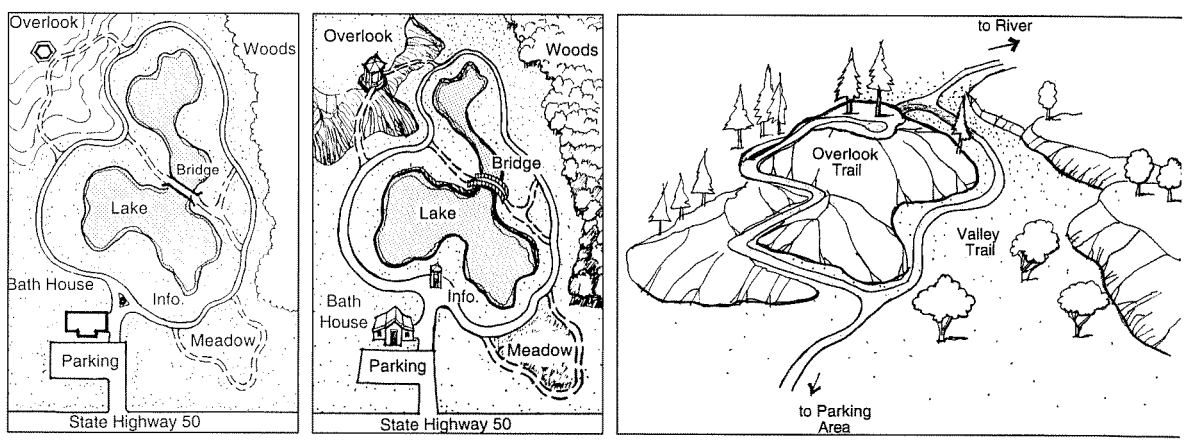
*Decades of research on the design of natural space is organized into a framework that designers, public officials and citizens can use to design or evaluate local open space.*

Considerable research over the last few decades has pointed to the surprisingly powerful role that natural environment experiences can play in fostering people's physical and mental health. This research, conducted by scholars and practitioners in a wide range of fields, has produced relatively consistent findings about the relationships between people and nature.

A particularly striking aspect of these findings has been that the natural environment experience does not require grand and remote places, nor even prolonged duration in a natural setting. Nearby areas, and natural landscapes experienced in everyday situations, can contribute powerfully to people's well being.

But designers' track record in turning this research into successful places is much less consistent, according to the authors of *With People in Mind: Design and Management of Everyday Nature*. They argue that this has happened, in part, because the intuitions of designers, park managers and the public do not always work – and are not always in accord. Yet it has been difficult for people to access the more carefully considered experience embodied in research literature and translate it into recommendations they can use.

*With People in Mind*, authored by Rachel Kaplan, Stephen Kaplan and Robert L. Ryan, identifies and integrates research that addresses aspects of human perception and experience of natural environments. It compiles research on the design and management of everyday natural settings – such as parks and open spaces, corporate campuses and vacant lots, fields and




**Several patterns consider the issue of making maps that can be easily understood. Graphics: Robert L. Ryan**



**The pattern "coherent areas" discusses how to make places whose scale and function are clear to people. Hedges, fences and ground covers create a small number of areas that define this casual picnic spot.**

**Photo: Rachel Kaplan**

forests — and presents it in a pattern-based format that distills essential lessons for a range of potential users.

The book is geared towards park designers, managers and the public. The authors argue that designers should be more aware of how their efforts can affect people's comfort in and enjoyment of natural settings, that park managers need a clear and readable translation of environmental design research, and that the public must see the role it can play as participants in the design and management process.

The project began by surveying the vast research literature that addresses the relationship between people and the natural environment — providing a bibliography of more than 300 citations on a wide range of research topics, such as landscape preferences, citizen participation, map design and defensible space.

The authors then organized the material into themes that are related to the ways in which people respond to spaces and nature — such as "fears and preferences," "wayfinding" and "restorative environments." Additional material is organized by landscape element, such as "gateways and partitions," "trails and locomotion," "views and vistas" and "places and their elements."

Each theme and landscape element is explicated through patterns (there are forty-five in all) that are based on common design issues and derived from research on that topic. The patterns are not meant to be formulas or recipes, but to suggest relationships between aspects of the natural environment and how people experience or react to them.

In a chapter on the design of trails, for example, the authors propose the pattern "Points of Interest," explaining that: "Stopping points along the way can provide opportunities for resting and observing." The pattern argues that trails should provide access to vista points or interesting features, or at least have comfortable stopping points.

The patterns are simple and focused, sufficiently concrete and intuitive that they can become part of the designer's way of analyzing problems and seeing possibilities. In explaining the use of patterns, the authors evoke Christopher Alexander's writings in *A Pattern Language*: "Each pattern describes a problem which occurs over and over again in our environment, and then describes the core of the solution to that problem, in such a way that you can use this solution a million times over, without ever doing it the same way twice."[1]

The patterns also constitute hypotheses for future research. The final pattern, "Small Experiments," encourages responses that are modest in scale, appro-





Above: **One pattern, "view through the gateway," describes how to design views into a setting that encourage visitors to imagine what will unfold as they move ahead.**

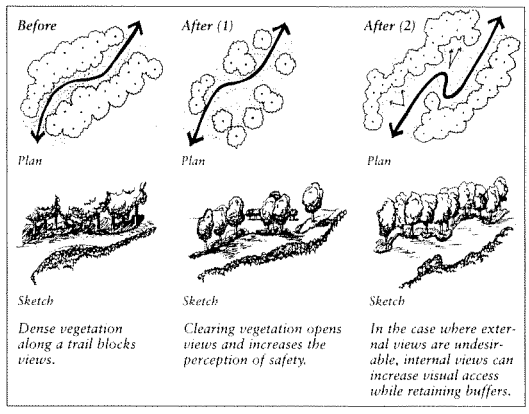
Below: **Another pattern, "visual access," discusses views and people's perception of safety.**

Photos: **Rachel Kaplan**
Graphics: **Robert L. Ryan**

priate to the location and informing; and that elicit useful input from people who use natural spaces and provides opportunities for citizens and experts to work together. Often such experiments are crafted to deal with a problem, rather than test a research hypothesis, but ultimately they may contribute to the growing body of environmental design knowledge.

The authors also acknowledge that there are some significant research questions that have not been addressed adequately, such as whether spending aimed at reducing crime be offset by increasing the attention to the design and management of everyday nature.

Finally, the authors propose four overarching themes that designers and managers might consider in making meaningful and satisfying natural environments: places should foster understanding of one's environment, they should invite exploration, they should be restful and enjoyable, and their design and management should involve meaningful particpation.




## Jury Comments

VERNEZ-MOUDON: This is poetic and pedagogically nice, but it seems the material has already been written about. I would like someone to convince me.

ZEISEL: This is a well established book in this field. It is a generic book; it's not about a specific place. It's about how to do research. I don't know it well, but it's referred to in everything else. I think we need to decide whether or not we want to give prizes to textbooks.

HALSBAND: Is it really a textbook? I read it when it first came out, but discovered that I had read it all before. But maybe this is reaching a whole new body of people who haven't read it before.

FRANCIS: There is a body of research behind this that is huge and that has been well published in books and journals. The authors took the material they and others had done, but was buried in academic journals and only known by a few people, and organized it into an accessible volume that can be very easily used.

ZEISEL: It's a methodology.

FRANCIS: You can look at each principle and integrate it into your design.

GANTT: I liked it because it was very understandable and worth reading. But in some ways it got to be a little simplistic and recount principles that we already know.

ZEISEL: Did they just present research or did they say this is an important typology that we've invented?

FRANCIS: I would characterize this as a pattern language. It's modest, not a huge thing, but it is a contribution to designing for people and nature.

HALSBAND: I'm very interested that you are using this as a textbook already. There are plenty of books that you may not be using as textbooks.

FRANCIS: That's because it's easy for students to start doing things that they like thinking about rather than not thinking about it.

ZEISEL: I think it's useful as a teaching tool, but the question is are we giving it an award because they wrote a good book or because this is good place-related research work?

FRANCIS: It's a book trying to translate research into some guidelines that can be used by practitioners. They are very clear about that.

HALSBAND: The authors claim that this is a compendium of existing research but that they are putting it together in an accessible form so that park designers, managers and the public can make use of it.

## Note

1. Christopher Alexander, Sara Ishakawa, Marc Silverstein et. al., *A Pattern Language* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1977).







**The pattern "sense of enclosure" discusses how to make places distinct and comforting.**

Photos: **Rachel Kaplan**

# Planning in Place:

## Region, Landscape and Place

*Mark Francis*

I was struck by the substantial number of region-scaled plans and projects submitted for this year's EDRA/*Places* Awards Program. My first thought when examining these was that our consideration of place research and place design should be limited to individual places designed at a human scale. Yet there were a number of intriguing and even compelling entries that spoke to the regional landscape as a place.

We have known for some time that regional thinking is important in environmental design. The work of Michael Hough (*Out of Place: Restoring Identity to the Regional Landscape*, 1992), Ian McHarg (*Design with Nature*, 1969), Kevin Lynch (*Managing the Sense of a Region*, 1976) and Gary Snyder (*A Place in Space: Ethics, Aesthetics and Watersheds*, 1996) all remind us that place making at the scale of the region or watershed is critical.

Nevertheless, this year's bumper crop of large-scale planning submissions raised a dilemma for the jury, which was charged with identifying excellence in place research and place design. How should we treat them? As design? As research? Or invent a new category of plans? There were simply too many, and they were of too good a quality, to ignore. Our concern turned to determining the effectiveness of the relationship of the plans to research and design.

Examples of large-scale plans or studies of cities or entire regions submitted included a vernacular study of an Alpine valley, a pattern book for a well-known New Urbanist community and a city design for a Middle East oil company town. In addition, there were a number of entries that organized research information in a way that could be used for regional thinking or planning. These included design and planning responses to disasters such as floods in North Dakota and earthquakes in California, a citywide "Experiment in Democratic Action" for Buffalo, and a forty-year update of research on visual forms of communities completed since Kevin Lynch's seminal *Image of the City* study was published in 1960. One project even used the entire American West as its study area, documenting the vernacular landscape from a J. B. Jackson perspective.

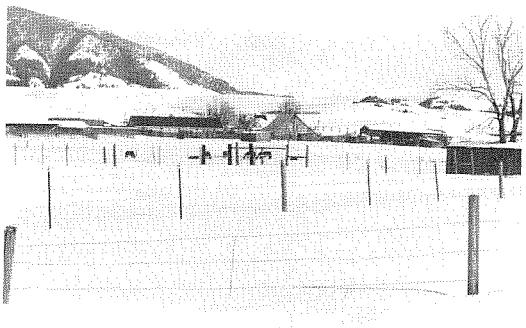
A number of these entries made effective links to the research and design processes, utilizing innovative methods of studying or designing regional landscapes. For example, one study assessed people's sense of rural place using a combination of techniques including observation, interviews, mapping and detailed case studies. Another used emerging electronic technologies such as web sites as a participatory tool for a "Community Vision Survey" for a town in New Jersey. Still another used focus groups, on-site surveys and in-depth interviews with more than 5,000 stakeholders to examine the relationship between communities and the Chicago River along a 150-mile-long corridor stretching from Lake Forest to Lake Calumet. Color simulations were used in another visual assessment study, which was used to develop a management plan for the White Mountains of New Hampshire.

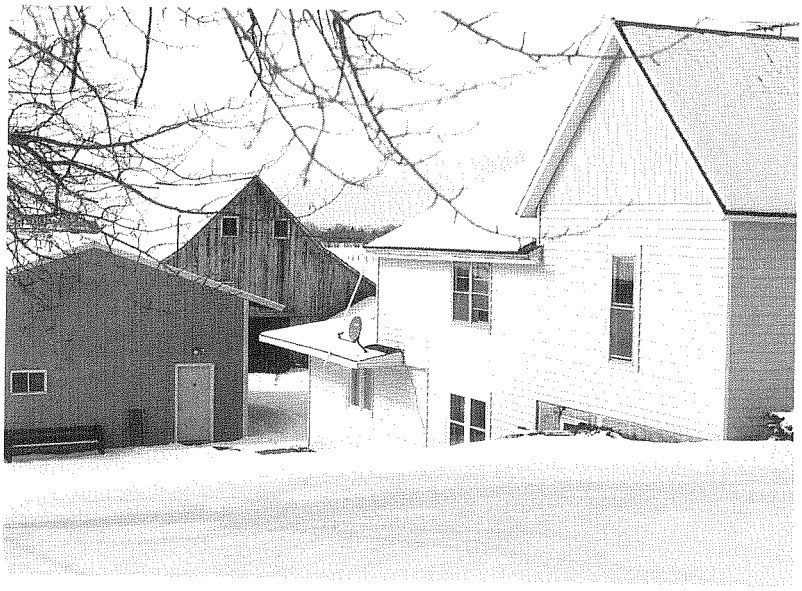
One of the design winners, the Thames Landscape Strategy, was particularly successful in organizing research into actions useful for place management, planning and design. The strategy established a new form of regional thinking and design for a twenty-nine-mile-long corridor of the Thames River between Hampton and Kew in southwest London, establishing a new framework for countless public and private research and design initiatives.

Another design winner, Living Water Park, located along the Fu River in Chengdu China, was a more direct case of generating local form from regional analysis, incorporating regional landscape patterns into the site design for a waterfront park. Chengdu's modernization program included the construction of a new sewage treatment plant and several parks along the reclaimed rivers; this park is a wonderful example of integrating social and natural systems, too often separated in ecological planning today.

Taken together, this work represents an emerging and impressive body of place-based design and research at the citywide or regional scale. These projects show clearly that designers and researchers are proactively

# A Rural Way of Knowing





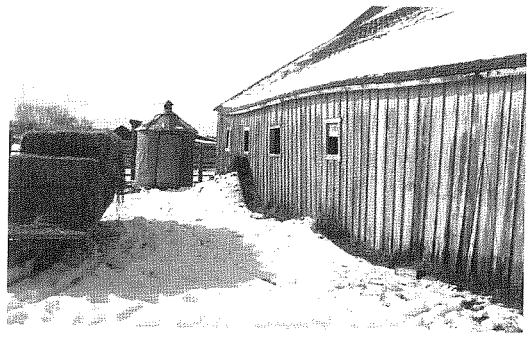
How do people learn about the landscape in which they live, and how does that understanding influence their approach to caring for that landscape? This study used a range of research approaches to learn how third- to fifth-generation ranchers in rural Gallatin County, Montana, gathered and applied knowledge about their environment.

The project, by Montana State University architecture professor Máire O'Neill, found that the most prevalent place-related perceptions were shaped by haptic experience (tactile and motion related) and social narrative. Knowledge gained through visual, spatial understanding seemed to play a small role in people's understanding of the locality.

Essentially, the ranchers understood the natural and built landscape through physical labor and local folklore. The demands of working on and moving over the terrain made them acutely aware of its character; stories about family history, local events and ranching practice—accumulated over generations of experience—helped them understand their place on the land.

O'Neill suggests that designers who understand these modes of perception and learning can better address the concerns people have when faced with planning for new development. She also notes, however, that this information is most useful in situations where the affected population is not displaced by new development.

This research has urgency in Gallatin County, where a quarter of the agricultural land has been subdivided in the past twenty years. According to Derek Strahn, a preservation official in Bozeman, it sheds light on "methods of adaptation and cultural survival, factors motivating important decisions to subdivide or preserve traditional farmlands, and the reciprocal nature between cultural and environmental change."



Upper left: **McIlhattan farmstead, settled before 1868 on Churn Creek and the East Gallatin River**

Upper right: **Farmhouse from 1890, added onto seven times, with dairy barn and new machine shed.**

Above: **The old barn, still used for harnessing draft horse teams, with hay sled after morning feeding.**

Photos: **Máire O'Neill**

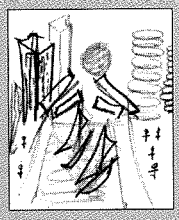
Project: People, Memory and Haptic Experience: A Rural Way of Knowing

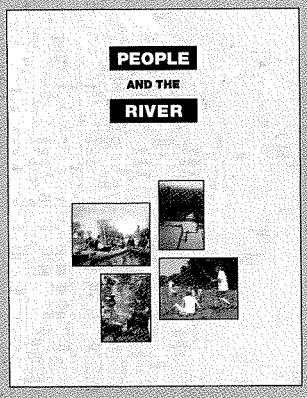
Researcher: Máire O'Neill, Montana State University

engaged in their regions, providing fresh insights into place making that may in fact add up to a cohesive system of designed and natural places.

These landscape-scale plans and studies provide a useful lesson for place making. They show that planning, when done well, can inform both research and design. While not all planning involves fresh or rigorous research, most that results in successful place making does. Good planning, like good research and good design, requires rigors of thought, method and execution. Similarly, good planning demands an understanding of place and design. Planning in place is not only about the making of future visions, it involves the construction of attitudes, processes and understandings that enable design actions. Good planning can be good design.

## People and the River






Project: **People and the River, Perception and Use of Chicago Waterways for Recreation**

Principal Investigators and Volume Editors: **Paul H. Gobster, Lynne M. Westphal, USDA National Forest Service**

Contributors: **Charles Nilon, Scott Huckstep, University of Missouri–Columbia; Dan Stolze, Metro Chicago Information Center; Tingwei Zhang, University of Illinois–Chicago; Joan M. O'Shaughnessy, Chicago Botanic Garden.**

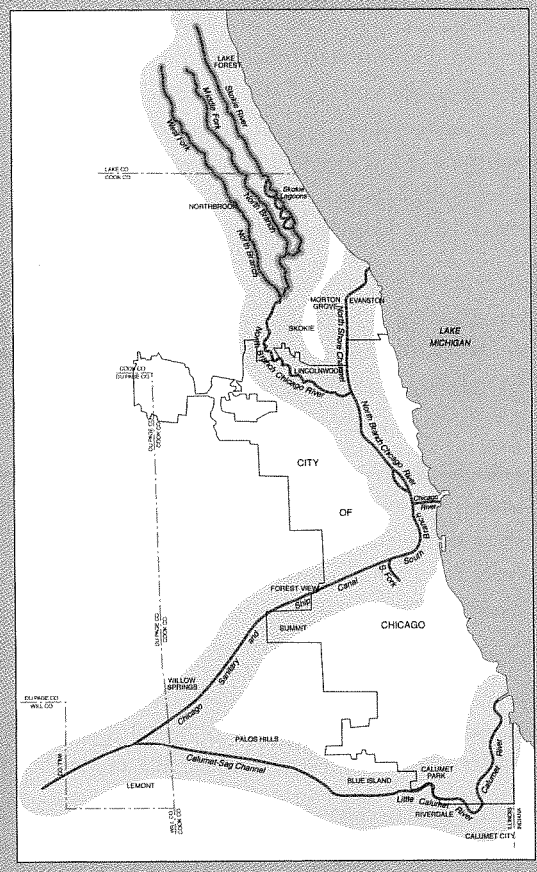
Chicago Rivers Demonstration Project: **Wink Hastings, Project Director, National Park Service**

The 150-mile Chicago River corridor offers a transect of metropolitan Chicago—from tony suburbs to gritting working-class neighborhoods, from pristine forest preserves to asphalt hardscapes, from vibrant business districts to dying industrial areas, from solid ethnic communities to multicultural neighborhoods.

Planners from the National Park Service and from Friends of the Chicago River, a local advocacy group, envisioned the river as a thread that could sew this diverse region together, and commissioned a study of the way various groups of people used, perceived and valued the river. The study team, led by Paul Gobster and Lynne M. Westphal of the U.S. Forest Service, conducted focus groups, interviews and surveys and collaborated with similar research being undertaken by others.

The findings of these diverse studies converged on a core set of issues and priorities that were held in common by various groups of people in various places—improve water quality, increase access, provide for appropriate recreational development, enhance visual and natural environments and increase public safety.

The findings resulted in specific implications for planning and management. The study demonstrated, for example, that although many river planning efforts aim at regional-scale initiatives like trail networks, most residents relate to the river through discrete places with individual personalities, problems and solutions. This finding reinforced the idea that a plan for the river should focus on locally defined and driven improvements.

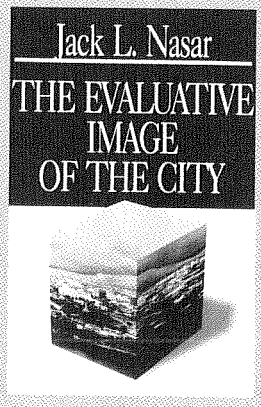



**Map of the Chicago River and its tributaries**
**Courtesy U.S. Forest Service**

# The Evaluative Image of the City

In 1960, Kevin Lynch wrote *The Image of the City*, which transformed the way design professionals and social scientists dealt with urban form and design. *The Evaluative Image of the City,* by Jack Nasar, follows on that work, introducing the concept of the "evaluative image," or "how the public evaluates the cityscape and what meanings they see in it." Nasar discusses two studies he directed of how people value elements of the city landscape, reviews similar projects elsewhere and explores how this evaluative image can be used to direct city design policy.

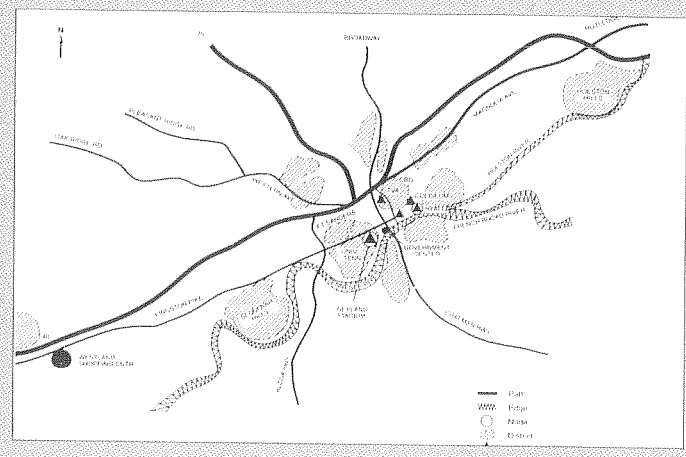
Nasar's team sampled 160 residents and 120 visitors at random in Knoxville, and interviewed 60 residents and 60 visitors in Chattanooga. Interviewers asked each person to identify areas they liked and disliked visually, and to give their reasons. The findings of each interview were translated to a map, and the maps were overlaid to create composite findings of likes, dislikes and reasons.Nasar suggests how the findings of such studies might influence city appearance policies. He also frames future research questions: How do meanings vary with time, or across cities with different physical and population characteristics? Can communities use the method to track the impact of design policies or development strategies?

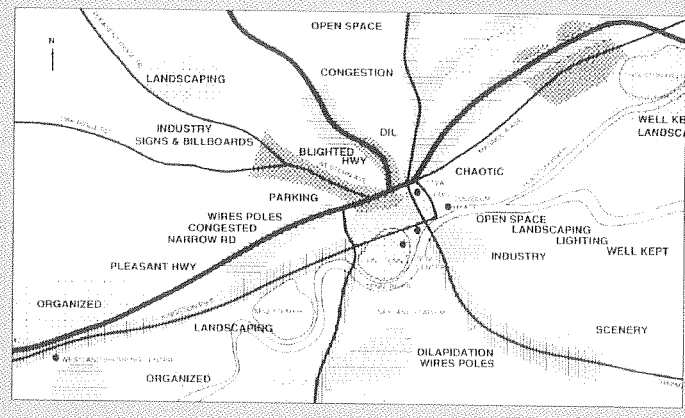


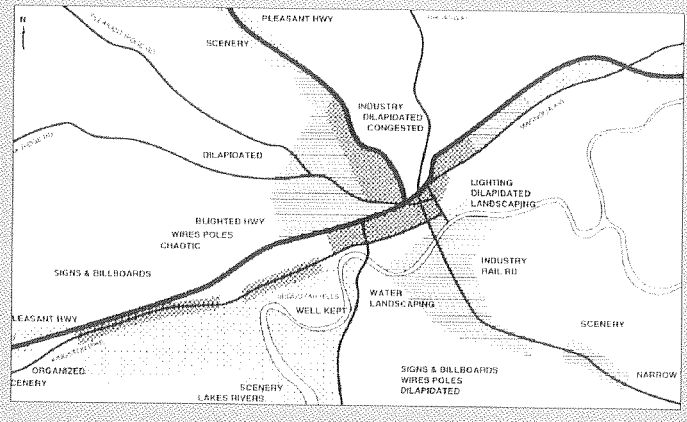

***The Evaluative Image of the City***

**Jack Nasar**

**Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 1998**






Top: **Physical form of Knoxville**

Center: **Evaluative map of Knoxville from verbal descriptions by residents.**

Bottom: **Evaluative map of Knoxville from verbal descriptions by visitors.**

Graphics: **David Miller**

# That Same Old Participation?

*Patsy Eubanks Owens*

As an observer of the EDRA/*Places* awards jury this year, I heard the jurors lament the use of the "same old participation" that they had seen for years. Several submissions, however, suggested new and useful directions to which future community participation projects should aspire. In these submissions, I discerned four themes that we should address when considering the role of community participation in making places. Changes in the demographics of the U.S. and advances in computer and communications technology are affecting the choice of techniques that might be used in a given situation. The increasing complexity of government and a shift from reactionary to visionary participation are changing the general landscape of participation.

### Demographic Changes

The U.S. population, particularly the balance of ethnic groups and the distribution of ages, is likely to change dramatically in the coming decades.[1] The Census Bureau estimates that black, Asian and Hispanic populations will increase at a faster rate than the non-Hispanic white population. In addition, elderly and youth populations will increase much faster than the middle-aged population. Many of the groups whose size is growing have traditionally been underrepresented in community participation efforts, yet the need to involve them will be increasingly urgent. More views must be gathered, and the methods for obtaining them must be responsive to the new participants.

Two submissions to the EDRA/*Places* awards frame some of the issues related to involving differing population groups. The West Main Street Urban Infill project in Charlottesville, Va.,[2] was faced with developing a collaborative vision with the predominately African-American residents and the predominantly white property owners. The important aspect of this project is that the two groups developed the vision collectively, rather than through a process that brought together independently formed visions or advocated one group's viewpoint over the other.

A second project, the Santa Ursula Public Lavandaria, exemplifies some of the dynamics of working with specific user groups. One shortcoming of many participatory efforts is that all participants are treated the same, although not all participants are comfortable with the same means of participation. The Santa Ursula project team, a class of landscape architecture students from the University of Washington, recognized the need for actively engaging the women of this rural Mexico community in their design efforts. They developed special strategies for approaching and involving women, who benefitted most from the project and were crucial to its timely completion and long-term success.

### A Role for Computer Technology

Technological advances continue to change what information people receive and how they receive it. As Internet access becomes commonplace, government agencies, local officials and planners will have a readily available mechanism for reaching their constituencies. Moreover, the use of technology to model and test ideas has great potential for altering how citizens evaluate and, possibly, generate designs.

Technology can provide citizens with more information about projects in their communities, but it also poses dangers. For example, most people do not have ready Internet access; depending on it as the primary means for conveying information keeps the information out of the hands of many citizens. There is also the potential for misleading citizens: Design simulations, like beautifully hand-rendered drawings, can create false impressions (intentionally or unintentionally) about the impact a project may have. When public expectations are built upon these simulations, subsequent citizen satisfaction can be impacted when the real project does not match the computer-generated version.

If the entries to the 1999 EDRA/*Places* awards are indicative of how technology is used as a design and communication tool, there is much work to be done. Few submissions effectively relied on or used technologically based approaches. One notable exception was the "Community Vision Survey" for the Township of Hillsborough, N.J.[3] This project integrated both the capacity of reaching a wide audience through the

Internet and the power of computer-generated visual simulations to obtain citizen opinions.

The "Community Vision Survey" focused on possible changes to the main highway corridor through the community. Respondents were able to select their preferred design alternatives. To ensure that all citizens had access to the information, five computer kiosks were located throughout the community (two at the library, and one at the library, firehouse and local cafe).

Three-fourths of those responding said they would be willing to pay additional taxes to implement the improvements they had selected. This overwhelming public support has prompted the township to move forward with burying overhead utility wires. Key properties along the corridor have been assembled and property owners have expressed unified support. The strong support of the plan by the community members, property owners and township officials is due in large part to the computer simulations, which enabled them to visualize and understand the proposed changes.

### Working with The Complexity of Government

Randy Hester, in "A Refrain with a View," argues for what he calls "cross-linked" participation.[4] This type of participation brings together the efforts of various local groups who would otherwise work independently. Government agencies could benefit from cross-linking as well: Today most projects today lie within the jurisdictions of multiple agencies, each of which has guidelines and regulations that control projects.

The Thames Landscape Strategy identified such a need for integrated policies for a segment of the Thames River. The resulting vision plan goes beyond

**Santa Ursula Public Lavandara**

Landscape, planning and design team:
**University of Washington, Department of Landscape Architecture, Design–Build Program**

Faculty: **Daniel Winterbottom**

Project manager: **David McGonigal, ADE**

Teaching assistants: **Patrick Doran, Nhon Truong**

Students: **Josh Atkins, Michael Cluer, Brabdon DeRosa, Malcolm Dole, Scott Eckley, Jody Estes, Brian Garrett, Scott Holsapple, Craig Oshkello, Theresa Pualson, Andrea Richardson, Janet Salsbury, Adnan Shiekh, Alvin Tang, Jake Woland**

## Santa Ursula Public *Lavandara* and Water Collection System

Santa Ursula is a small, rural village of ninety families in Morelos, Mexico. It lacks electricity, water and sewers, and the local ecology is increasingly threatened by the growth of the city of Cuernavaca, forty miles away.

Currently residents travel four miles on foot to the *barranca* to wash and to collect potable water. The trip is arduous and dangerous, especially for older and pregnant women; arthritis and nerve damage caused by prolonged exposure to the cold water are common. Along the path to the *barranca*, the soil is compacted and streamside vegetation is disappearing.



**Santa Ursula public *lavandara*, detail of roof and water conveyance system.** Photo: **Daniel Winterbottom.**

The community wished to capture rainwater and build a village *lavandara*, a social gathering place common to traditional villages of the region. Landscape architecture faculty and students from the University of Washington worked with the community and in nine weeks constructed a rainwater catchment system, 80,000 liter cistern, public wash facility, public plaza and a bio-filtration wastewater treatment and irrigation system for an adjacent orchard.

The project combines traditional and modern technologies to create sustainable solutions that improve the lives of villagers and preserve ecosystems. The project provides opportunities for increasing social cohesion through community washing, child's play, and celebrations and civic events in the plaza.

To involve community women in this effort, the students needed to gain their trust. Women students contacted them; since women traditionally defer to men in this society, they were more comfortable talking with other women. At the initial focus groups and large public meeting, the men of the community did the majority of the talking. But as the project progressed, the women became the active participants and the men stepped back.

Ultimately, one-on-one meetings with the women directly influenced the design of the facility. The women selected the colors for the structures and organized the construction work day. The women had the most to gain from the construction of the *lavandaria* and they were the ones to see it through.

*Todd W. Bressi, Patsy Eubanks Owens*

the typical statutory planning, articulating a link between central government, local authorities and grassroots efforts and providing a coordinated framework for river-related decisions. The strategy has been highlighted by the national government as a model for collaboration among agencies, and the process is being repeated along another stretch of river.

### From Reaction to Vision

Participation strategies can range from problem solving to vision setting, from reactionary to proactive.[5] Unfortunately, the National Environmental Protection Act and subsequent state environmental review regulations have promoted reactive participation. Instead of working toward community goals, community members are frequently responding to developer-proposed visions.

Several of the 1999 EDRA/*Places* entries went beyond this type of participation, growing from the desires of residents and visions of the planners. They embody a shift in the underlying purposes behind community participation. Instead advocating for certain populations or serving as a reactive response to previous proposals, they illustrate an approach toward longer-term, vision-oriented planning.

The Iraralai House–Museum–Classroom project[6] sought to recapture the spirit of the community and the culture. In previous decades, government policy had supported the modernization and assimilation of the indigenous Tawo. Monotonous concrete public housing projects had replaced the traditional architecture. In 1994, evidence of severe structural defects in these buildings opened the doors to island-wide protests. Pent-up desires for integrating traditional architecture with contemporary values led to village planning efforts and resulted in the completion of the housemuseumclassroom buildingthe first result of the ongoing grassroots effort to rebuild the local culture and to encourage the use of traditional architecture.

Participation by local residents in developing the design was critical. The design team lived in Iraralai for more than a year, getting to know and understand the daily patterns and activities of the villagers. They conducted interviews and held participatory workshops were held with the villagers, including Tawo youth and elders. The team developed design patterns for rebuilding the dwellings and used them in the design of this new, multi-purpose building.

The complex promotes and embodies the vision of reclaiming the Tawo cultural heritage in three ways. It provides a place where visitors can come and learn about Tawo culture, history and ecology; it educates youunger Tawo about their cultural heritage; and it establishes a model for housing construction that is more in tune with both present-day social patterns and traditional architecture.

### A Research Agenda

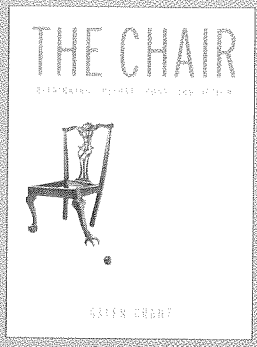
These projects illustrate some of the changes occurring in community participation; they also suggest areas of future research. We need research that identifies and tests various community participation methods and their appropriateness for differing populations. Survey design and meeting design are two examples of techniques that can be tailored to specific populations, and research can direct and refine those strategies. As designers increase their use of computer simulations to convey ideas to citizens, the impact of these simulations on long- and short-term user satisfaction should be explored.

Lastly, researchers need to examine why many citizens choose not to participate in planning decisions in their communities. We need to explore more fully some of our key suppositions — such as many that citizens are overwhelmed with career, children, and personal interests, and many persons live in places with which they have no personal attachment or understanding — so that they can be adequately addressed. Do community members want to abdicate decisions to designers? Do they want special interest groups in their community to represent them in the decision making? Appropriate community participation efforts can best be developed after we understand the reasons citizens have for not getting involved.

### Notes

1. See Patsy Eubanks Owens, "Community Participation in a New Cultural Context," in *1997 Annual Meeting Proceedings of the American Society of Landscape Architects* (Washington, D.C.: American Society of Landscape Architects, 1997), 123-127.
2. This project was conducted by The Design Resources Center, an independent community resource engaged in urban design, community organization, and innovative models of participatory planning.
3. The submission, "The Electronic Town Hall: The Use of Computer Technology to Facilitate Community Participation in Place Design," was conducted by Hillsboro Township.
4. Randy Hester, "A Refrain with a View," *Places* 12:2 (1999), 12-25.
5. See also Mark Francis, "Proactive Practice: Visionary Thought and Participatory Action in Environmental Design," *Places* 12:2 (1999), 60-68.
6. This project was conducted by a team based at National Taiwan University, Building and Planning Research Foundation (John C. K. Liu, Project Director).

# Resources



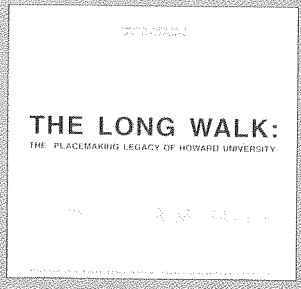

## A Brief (but Comprehensive) History of the Chair

This study considers the relationship between the design of chairs and the surprisingly complex human activity of sitting. It argues that the chair, where we spend much of our waking lives, is a very important place—both generic and specific, both an institution and unique for each person. But the chair has unintended health consequences, contributing to back, hand, shoulder and neck disorders.

Galen Cranz, an architecture professor at the University of California, Berkeley, leads readers through explorations of basic questions like: Where did chairs come from? Why do we continue to sit on them? Why do they look the way they do? And why do we take them for granted? Cranz also questions chair design, examining the interplay of notions of image, comfort and health.

The book presents historical and intrepretive social studies that examine the chair as a cultural construction, and it summarizes research findings from the fields of ergonomics, rehabilitative medicine and somatic disciplines that are concerned with the integration of mind and body. It concludes by suggesting how chairs might be reformed (including guidelines for chairs, perches and recliners) and how designers can move beyond exclusive reliance on chairs to rethink the design of interior spaces.

*The Chair: Rethinking Culture, Body and Design*
Galen Cranz
New York: W.W. Norton, 1998




## The Long Walk

Howard University, founded in Washington, D.C., in 1867, has grown from one building to one hundred in response to various institutional needs and circumstances. Three years ago, before embarking on a new master plan, Howard took a long look back—particularly at how the evolution of the physical campus and social activity have intersected over time.

The result is *The Long Walk*, a generous portrait of the places and traditions that have shaped the campus. It is also a careful study of how the campus's visual and spatial qualities have provided reference points for generations, and offer direction for the future. The study was prepared by Harry G. Robinson III, Howard's vice president for university administration, and Hazel Ruth Edwards, a special assistant to Robinson. Both are Howard graduates and from long-time Howard families.

Robinson and Edwards documented how distinct development periods in Howard's history are articulated through the campus's physical characteristics; they also describe architectural, spatial and social precedents that have remained meaningful over time. One of those is Howard's "Long Walk"—a main north-south path that was once lined by trees and is still, metaphorically, the center of campus. Their exhaustive visual and historical portrait is drawn from university and city records; personal records of architects, planners and others; maps, deeds, drawings, photos, yearbooks and plans; interviews and observation of campus use patterns.

The study was used as a basis for *Univercity 20/20: The 1998 Howard University Central Campus Plan*, which included a "re-placing" framework that directs the urban design intentions and historic integrity of the campus.

*The Long Walk: The Placemaking Legacy of Howard University*
Harry G. Robinson III, FAIA, AICP; Hazel Ruth Edwards, AICP
Washington, D.C.: Moorland-Spingarn Research Center, Howard University, 1996

# *Places* and the Environmental Design Research Association announce the third annual EDRA/*Places* Awards for Place Design, Planning and Research.

Place Design awards recognize completed projects that demonstrate excellence as human environments.
Place Planning awards recognize projects that establish future direction for the design, management or use of a place.
Place Research awards recognize projects that investigate the relationship between physical form and human behavior or experience.

We encourage nominations for exemplary design, planning and research projects from practitioners and researchers from any design or social science discipline. The awards will be presented in May, 2000, at EDRAs annual meeting, at which there will also be an exhibition and symposium about the winning projects. The awards will be published in the fall, 2000, issue of *Places*.

## PLACE DESIGN AWARDS

*What kind of places qualify?* Nominations can consist of individual structures, spaces or elements, or groups that work together as a unit. They can involve the design of something new or the reuse of existing resources. The scale could be large or small, ranging from a local street to a civic boulevard, a community park to a regional greenway, a single room to a cluster of buildings and spaces. Projects must have been completed within the last five years, but long enough to assess how well they function for inhabitants and/or users.

*What issues does the jury consider?* Places must be recognizable as distinct within a larger fabric of relationships – they should help improve their setting by advancing a larger plan, repair an unsatisfactory relationship, or add something that a previous design failed to provide. Submissions should involve a place that is meaningful to a community, consider an issue of social importance, or explore how design can be configured to serve a broader constituency. Submissions should address the relationship between design research and design outcomes.

## PLACE PLANNING AWARDS

*What kind of plans qualify?* Any plan that makes proposals for the future use, management or design of a place can be nominated – including (but not limited to) master plans, specific plans or elements, management plans, vision documents or charrette proposals.

Plans can operate at a range of scales, from a specific area, such as a campus or neighborhood, to a region. They can consider a variety of issues, such as urban design, land use, open space, historic preservation, environmental/resource management, capital projects, housing, public art, social services or economic development.

Plans must have been sponsored by an organized entity – such as a public agency, community group, or private business or institution. Plans should be available for public review, but they need not have received official approval.

*What issues does the jury consider?* Plans should address how specific places or activities operate within a larger fabric of spatial, functional and cultural relationships.

Plans should explain why the area they cover should be considered a place. They should involve places of public or social significance, consider issues of social importance, or be configured to expand the constituency for a place.

Plans should have a clear methodolgy. They should have effective strategies for participation and communication, involving affected constituencies in formulating the plan and conveying the plan's significance to those whose involvement and commitment will be necessary.

Plans should have demonstrable impact: They should result in specific design, management or policy initiatives; broaden or strengthen the consituency for the place; attract additional resources to the place; or shift the discussion about or perception of the place.

## PLACE RESEARCH AWARDS

*What kind of research qualifies?* All types of research about the design and use of places can be nominated – including (but not limited to) projects that document the form or perception of places or landscapes; evaluate the use or management of recent projects or established settings; or provide background for specific designs or plans.

*What issues does the jury consider?* Research projects should consider the relationship between physical form and human activity or experience. They should enrich our understanding of how people interact with places from a behavioral, social or cultural perspective; how people experience places; or processes through which places are designed, occupied and managed.

Projects should consider places of public or social importance – such as streets, parks and squares; campuses, religious or commercial facilities; or offices or special housing facilities. Projects should have broad applicability, informing design practice or teaching. The research methods, findings and implications should be clearly documented and communicated. Projects should be clearly grounded in the context of recent literature and practice; they can revisit previous research, confirming, extending or challenging earlier findings.

**Complete rules and entry forms are available by contacting:**

**Janet Singer, Executive Director**
**Environmental Design Research Association**
**1800 Canyon Park Circle, Building 4, Suite 403**
**Edmond, OK 73013**

**Deadline: February 18, 2000**



1

# From Eyes on the Street




2




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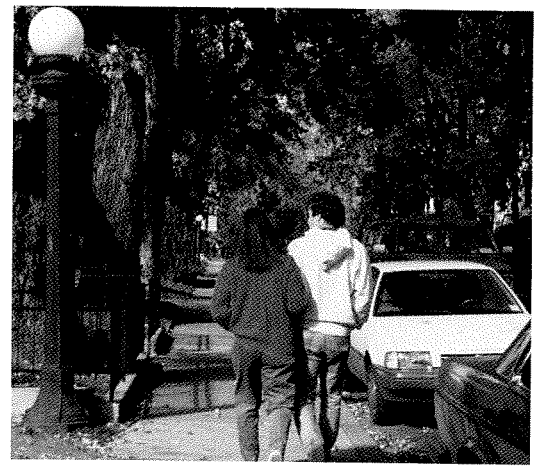

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**(1) Six-story apartment building in London includes transparent stairwell at front of building (2) Parking garage where symbols designate floors and lighting is enhanced (3) A "designated waiting area" on a Toronto subway platform (4) Retail strip in Toronto neighborhood includes housing above stores, fruit and vegetable stands, ethnic food vendors and restaurants (5) Educational campaign by City of Toronto Safe City Committee to prevent lesbian and gay bashing (6) Nineteenth-century pedestrian lighting in Toronto became the model for new pedestrian lighting that is also energy efficient.**

Photos 1, 2, 4, 5, 6: **Gerda Wekerle**
Photo 3: **Toronto Transit Commission**

# to Safe Cities

**Gerda Wekerle**



6

Many people invoke the phrase, "there must be eyes on the street," attributed to Jane Jacobs, to make arguments about the relationship between urban safety and design. Jacobs' views on urban safety were, in truth, far more complex and nuanced than this phrase suggests, and they were widely reviled and dismissed when her book, *The Death and Life of Great American Cities*, was published. Nonetheless, they have become the basis of a worldwide movement to foster safer cities.[1]

Upper right:
**A lone woman sitting at a Designated Waiting Area on a subway platform in Toronto. The waiting area includes enhanced lighting and an alarm button; a subway car with an attendant stops directly in front of the waiting area.**

Photo: **Toronto Transit Commission**

Jacobs made an important contribution to our understanding of cities by linking the fear of crime to urban design and acts of incivility in daily life. Instead of focusing on crimes against property, or on the perpetrators and victims of criminal acts, Jacobs was ahead of her time in arguing that we should be concerned about the everyday experiences of city inhabitants, and about the ways in which planning and design diminish or can enhance people's sense of safety.

Earlier than anyone else, Jacobs emphasized how not only crime but also fear of crime contributes to urban decline, writing:

*if a city's streets are safe from barbarism and fear, the city is thereby tolerably safe from barbarism and fear:... . The bedrock attribute of a successful city district is that a person must feel personally safe and secure on the street among all these strangers... . It does not take many incidents of violence on a city street or in a city district to make people fear the streets. And as they fear them, they use them less, which makes the streets still more unsafe.*[2]

Although Jacobs' comment about the need for eyes on the street is still broadly invoked, her many other recommendations, based on close observation of public spaces, have received scant attention. For Jacobs, eyes on the street came from stores and public places, including bars and restaurants "sprinkled along the sidewalks," street vendors and pedestrians. She recommended the installation of bright street light to "augment every pair of eyes."[3]

But Jacobs widened her attention to consider urban safety in general, including parks and public housing projects, and debunking the prevailing myths about good design and expected behaviors. Noting the veneration that planners have for neighborhood open spaces, she defied the conventional wisdom of the time and argued against more open space in cities, if it meant parks that were little used and dangerous. She argued that parks could be "volatile places," some of them downright dangerous. Instead of focusing merely on the green benefits of parks, she observed

that parks are successful when they encourage a range of activities and users.[4]

Jacobs' views on public housing were equally heretical. She noted that slum clearance projects that created high-rise towers with concentrations of poor people were often dangerous places that people with alternative choices avoided at all cost. Her critique of public housing design included a discussion of long, unwatched corridors, unguarded elevators, stairwells and courtyards that became settings for rape, theft and vandalism. She also noted that too often, public housing managers were more concerned with vandalism than danger to human beings.

Her recommendations to increase safety at public housing sites revolved around people, and on using design and management policies to foster interaction and commitment. She suggested reweaving public housing enclaves into existing street patterns and encouraging street activity by bringing in vendors and including stores and workshops in the buildings. She opposed fencing and security guards, which encouraged the creation of turf and insulated public housing residents from the wider community. She proposed removing income limits, to encourage public housing residents to make a long-term commitment to their communities. She even thought that women tenants might be hired as elevator attendants, to provide eyes on the vertical streets.[5]

### Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design

The critics and experts who reshaped cities through practices like urban renewal and expressway construction were predominantly professional men — architects, planners and engineers. They argued that Jacobs was discrediting their expertise, which would not only "mislead the uninformed " but also "destroy progress." They bridled at this amateur, this wife and mother, who had the chutzpah to challenge their projects and their paradigms, to substitute common-sense solutions based on lived experience, and to politicize planning by suggesting that ordinary citizens should have a say.[6]

In the 1970s, work by Oscar Newman and others built on Jacobs' insights into the relationship between urban design and crime and launched the new field of Crime Prevention through Environmental Design (CPTED). But they simplified Jacobs' vision, focusing on an approach that relied on experts (either design or security professionals) to define the issues and provide standardized solutions.

CPTED programs tended to ignore a key aspect of Jacobs' argument — the importance of fear of crime. Focusing initially on crimes against property and crime rates, CPTED programs tended to ignore crimes against persons and in particular the differences in fear of crime between men and women and between white and minority urban residents.

CPTED programs promoted target-hardening solutions, or hardware and design changes, rather than encouraging the presence of people and varied activities. Fences, buzzers, gates and traffic barriers were proposed to keep people out and to define territory, particularly in residential areas — contrary to Jacobs' injunctions against creating turf. CPTED largely ignored the more subtle elements of urban safety — such as a mix of activities and land uses that could attract diverse populations to streets, neighborhoods, housing projects, parks and civic centers — that Jacobs had suggested.

The evolution of high-security shopping malls illustrates this point. Following CPTED principles, shopping malls in high-crime areas in California have installed motion sensors on the periphery, centralized pan-opticon control towers that allow security forces to surveil the entire mall, and more visible security patrols.

In contrast, Dufferin Mall, in a working- and middle-class, ethnically diverse neighborhood in Toronto, has taken a community development approach to reduce crime rates and enhance profitability. The mall provides funding to youth theater, basketball and soccer organizations; it has established a youth internship program with mall merchants; it has provided rent-free space for youth services, a teen drop-in center, a program for high-school drop outs and a clothing exchange. These have brought a range of activities and users into the mall and reduced crime rates.[7]

### Feminist and Grassroots Responses

Jacobs' focus on fear of crime, on the predation of the poor and molestation of women and children in dangerous places, presaged research by feminist geographers and planners that linked women's fear of crime, violence against women and urban design. These researchers argued that fear of crime was real, not fictive, and had real outcomes for women. Serving as a

mechanism of social control and contributing to systemic gender discrimination, fear of crime limited women's life chances by constraining their access to jobs and education and their use of public spaces and recreation facilities.[8]

Feminist researchers also began to conduct empirical research on the relationship between women's fear of crime, their avoidance of specific urban places and how this might affect the vitality and life of places like parks, neighborhoods, city centers and college campuses. They found that women were twice as likely as men to report feeling unsafe, even though men are far more likely to be the vicitms of crime in public places. Researchers asked women about where they felt most fearful, what places they avoided during the day and at night and what defensive strategies they devised in their everyday activities. These exercises, which mapped the environments of women's fear in cities, were then fed back into the planning and design process.[9]

This approach built on Jacobs' insight about the significance of starting from the standpoint of daily practice, particularly the experience of women, and engaging "amateurs" who are experts about their own surroundings in diagnosing and taking action to improve the safety of urban spaces.[10]

Where CPTED approaches had relied on experts, technical knowledge and public and private security agencies, feminist scholars and activists made urban safety the focus for women's political activism in cities such as London, Amsterdam, Hamburg, Melbourne, Montreal, Toronto and Minneapolis. In these cities and others, women demanded that municipal governments and civic agencies improve the safety of transit systems, housing projects, shopping areas and urban parks to make them more responsive to women's needs.

Toronto is noteworthy for a mix of initiatives related to women's safety, including projects by both grassroots women's groups and municipal agencies. In 1982, the Municipality of Metropolitan Toronto set up and funded the Metro Taskforce on Public Violence Against Women and Children to make recommendations for policy and program changes; one subcommittee made recommendations on planning and design. The Metro government subsequently funded Metro Action Committee on Public Violence Against Women (METRAC), a research and advocacy group established to implement the task force's recommendations. METRAC also provided funding for Women Plan Toronto, another advocacy group, to research women's fear of crime and their avoidance of places identified as dangerous.

METRAC pursued its interest in women's urban safety and environmental design in 1987 by demanding that the Toronto Transit Commission undertake a women's safety audit of the transit system, which was conducted in collaboration with METRAC and the Metropolitan Toronto Police.[11] In this initial project, we established some key principles:

- We developed a participatory research tool, a women's safety audit, that helped us observe public spaces and record our responses.
- We insisted that ordinary citizens, women, are experts on daily life in the city. Women have important insights into how urban spaces work and how they might be improved that have been missed by professional experts.
- We demonstrated that women's advocacy groups could work in partnership with the city agencies to mutual benefit.[12]

Over several years, most of the audit's recommendations were implemented. TTC established a Security Advisory Committee, comprising representatives of women's organizations, to comment on designs for new subway stations at the earliest stages, and developed new training programs to help staff respond to sexual assault and harassment.

Continued feminist demands for municipal strategies to prevent violence against women resulted in the creation, in 1988, of the Safe City Committee, a committee of the city council.[13] The impetus came from the community. Barbara Hall, a city councillor, was asked by women in her ward to come out at night and do a safety audit of a local park. Subsequently, after wide consultation with women's organizations, Hall and five other councillors drafted a policy document, "Municipal Strategies to Prevent Violence Against Women." Council unanimously approved the recommendations and established the Safe City Committee, which comprised both politicians and representatives from groups working on preventing violence against women. Staff of key city departments were also involved.

Urban design changes have included new standards for underground parking garages, the installation of pedestrian-oriented lighting and park security plans. The Planning and Development Department provided half-day training sessions to all its staff on how to incorporate these concerns into day-to-day planning and design and produced a design manual that has become a model for other cities.[14] The city's Parking Authority and Housing Department have reviewed design and management practices; safety audits are also being used by police, housing agencies, park users, neighborhood residents and local universities as a way to think about how to improve urban safety and reduce fear of crime.

Most importantly, having a Safe City Committee at City Hall has given a focus and legitimacy to feminist concerns for urban safety in Toronto. It has brought women's groups, many of them with years of experience in working with battered women and victims of violence, into City Hall. The committee's membership also included school trustees, who brought forward issues on violence in the schools. The committee's work expanded into projects related to community safety in housing, along retail strips, and in immigrant, cultural minority, and lesbian and gay communities. The committee also established a community grants program of approximately $500,000 to fund community projects that were educational, directed at youth and immigrant communities.

During the decade in which Toronto's Safe City Committee was in existence, it engaged in ongoing struggles to sustain funding and staff, maintain a focus on preventing violence against women and continue supporting grassroots initiatives. After the amalgamation of the City of Toronto with five suburban municipalities in 1998, the Safe City committee was disbanded. A Task Force on Community Safety, co-chaired by two conservative male politicians representing suburban wards, held extensive community consultations and made recommendations in February, 1999, for a "Community Safety Strategy for the City of Toronto."

The recommendations reflected a strategic shift from a focus on women to an emphasis on crime fighting by targeting high-crime areas, community policing and sentencing, and neighborhood crime prevention. At the same time, the recommendations sought to strengthen initiatives pioneered by the Safe City Committee: a commitment to using safety audits, making public buildings and spaces safer through the use of safety and design guidelines, training city staff, incorporating community safety in the city's official plan, and expanding the community grants program.

### Beyond Eyes on the Street

Despite the homage paid to Jane Jacobs by CPTED practitioners, they do not follow in her footsteps. Their reliance on experts, hardware and controlling turf are precisely what Jacobs criticized. Instead, Jacobs' themes in *The Death and Life of Great American Cities* have been taken up by feminist planners, architects and geographers who continue to build on her legacy.[15]

I have suggested that Toronto's Safe City Committee, and the range of initiatives that preceded it, are natural descendants of Jacobs' emphasis on the value of listening to the standpoint of ordinary citizens in order to create healthy and livable cities.

I would also argue that we have gone beyond Jacobs' vision. Although Jacobs identified the link between urban safety and healthy cities, she approached this as an outsider, a critic of urban planning and design practice, not as an organizer or political activist. Toronto's efforts are noteworthy because they are rooted in feminist scholarship and practice, effected through a partnership between grassroots organizations and local government, and linked to the international Safe Cities movement.

Our experience has been that physical design projects were often the starting point, and that community development strategies and more complex projects followed. As small groups achieved initial successes in making small physical improvements, they felt empowered to pursue longer-term, more complex changes.

Jacobs, by writing about her own experience of daily life in the city, and by urging planners to pay attention to how ordinary people actually use urban space, forced design professionals to re-examine their methods and assumptions. Drawing upon her experience as a wife, mother and resident of Greenwich Village, she arrived at a more humane vision of the city than the experts of the day did. Her concern about urban saftey was prescient, and her manner of looking at the city still offers a critical vantage for evaluating crime prevention and community safety strategies today.

## Notes

1. On "eyes on the street," see Jane Jacobs, *The Death and Life of Great American Cities* (New York: Vintage, 1961), 36. The passage reads: *...we seem to have here some simple aims: To try to secure streets where the public space is unequivocally public, physically unmixed with private or with nothing-at-all space, so that the area needing surveillance has clear and practicable limits; and to see that these public streets have eyes on them as continuously as possible.*

2. *Ibid.*, 30.

3. *Ibid.*, 36, 42.

4. *Ibid.*, 89-90, 102.

5. *Ibid.*, 43, 47, 399, 401.

6. On Jacobs critics, see Ivor de Wolfe, "The Death and Life of Great American Citizens," *Architectural Review* 133 (February 1963): 91:3. De Wolfe wrote: *For Mrs. Jacobs getting clobbered is a much more pressing danger than getting knocked down by a car. For her, it seems, the first thing the sidewalk user has to think about is how to avoid what is known in the States as a mugging; that is, being stood up in some dark corner and relieved of one's wallet by a cove with a club... . It is hard to believe that all American citizens go in fear of their life.*

   See also, A. Melamed, "Review: 'The Death and Life of Great American Cities,'" *Journal of the American Institute of Planners* 28 (May 1962). Melamed mixed his metaphors, describing Jacobs as "angry and crusading," "the enchanted ballerina of Hudson Street, with a chip on her shoulder."

7. Interview with David Hall, manager, Dufferin Mall, 1993 and June 1999. According to Hall, police statistics showed a reduction in crime of 39 percent over a five-year period.

8. For example, see Margaret Gordon and Stephanie Riger, *The Female Fear* (New York: The Free Press: 1989), which focused on how violence against women and rape served as a constant threat in urban areas.

9. For example, see E. A. Stanko, *Everyday Violence: How Women and Men Experience Sexual and Physical Danger* (London: Pandora, 1990); V. Ware, *Women's Safety on Housing Estates* (London: Women's Design Service, 1988), or Metro Action Committee on Public Violence Against Women, Women Plan Toronto and Faculty of Environmental Studies, *Women in Safe Environments* (Toronto: METRAC, 1987).

   Prior to these studies, feminist analysis tended to focus on the root causes of violence against women and proposed changes in the family, education and justice systems. The contribution of environmental factors to women's fear of crime was viewed with some ambivalence at first; feminists were concered such arguments would reinforce popular stereotypes that violence against women occurred primarily between strangers in public space rather than in the home, where, statistics showed, women were most at risk.

10. Feminist theorists articulate the concept of "women's standpoint" as "the presence and spoken experience of actual women speaking of and in the actualities of their everyday worlds." Women's standpoint, according to Dorothy Smith, begins in the local, everyday world and is rooted in time and place. It acknowledges that people are "the experts of their own lives and local practices." While Jacobs has never considered herself a feminist, her standpoint as a wife, a mother and, particularly, a woman living in Greenwich Village informed her critiques of contemporary planning practice.

11. The transit agency agreed, in part, to allay public fears about a serial rapist. The TTC had relied primarliy on mass surveys and modelling analysis, and was skeptical about using observational and experiential data collected through safety audits. He became a proponent when, as a member of an audit team, he saw the negative comments and fears of women users, which contrasted with his own experience of relative comfort.

12. On the project, see Toronto Transit Commission, *Moving Forward: Making Transit Safer for Women* (Toronto: Toronto Transit Commission, 1989). On the safety audit, see METRAC, *Women's Safety Audit Guide* (Toronto: METRAC, 1987, 1992).

13. The Safe Cities movement emerged in the Netherlands in 1985. Local governments received funding to prevent crime and fear of crime through projects that combined design and community development improvements in housing estates, city centers and transportation systems. National programs were started in France (1987), Australia (1988), Britain (1989), New Zealand (1992) and Canada (1993). Local women's groups often used Safe City funding to conduct research on women's perceptions of unsafe places or to create programs responsive to women's needs, such as special transport services. See Gerda Wekerle and Carolyn Whizman, *Safe Cities: Guidelines for Planning, Design and Management* (New York: John Wiley, 1995).

14. City of Toronto Planning and Development Department and Gerda R. Wekerle, *A Working Guide for Planning and Designing Safer Urban Environments* (Toronto: City of Toronto Planning and Development Department, 1992).

15. One of the most comprehensive books on Jane Jacobs' legacy is Max Allen, ed., *Ideas that Matter: The Worlds of Jane Jacobs* (Owen Sound, Ontario: Ginger Press, 1997).

*This account is based on the author's involvement as a community activist and research on various safe city initiatives. She was a member of the design subcommittee of the Metro Taskforce on Public Violence Against Women and Children, a consultant to METRAC in designing a study on crime prevention and design, and a member of TTC's Security Advisory Committee. She developed and ran training sessions for city planning staff, and co-authored guidelines on planning for urban safety. She also took part in various advocacy projects to generate support for the initiatives of the Safe City Committee.*

# Martha Stewart vs. Studs Terkel?

## New Urbanism and Inner Cities Neighborhoods that Work

*Michael Pyatok*




**In Hanoi, supposedly under the rule of a totalitarian regime, private entrepreneurship at the home base is allowed to freely pursue its interests more than in most democratic–capitalist countries.**
Photos: **Michael Pyatok**

We all recognize that urban infill and suburban sprawl are two sides of the same coin. But the task of urban infill development is Herculean because of many decades of systematic disinvestment in inner cities coupled with public–private collusion in the expansion of suburbs.

The investment in middle- and upper-income flight has resulted in very apparent physical disrepair and abandonment of buildings within older, inner-city neighborhoods. The lack of inner-city investment has, in turn, accelerated the flight of jobs and created chronic unemployment. Whole populations have been abandoned, with little ability to find or hold onto work; new generations have inherited this problem and carried it into schools, which are devolving from places of learning to places of fear and fortification.

When we discuss strategies for improving these older neighborhoods, upgrading the real estate, particularly the appearance of buildings, is too often deemed the first priority. This is because real estate renewal, difficult as it may be, can usually be accomplished more quickly and visibly than reshaping neighborhoods so they allow more economic activity, or more easily than revitalizing neighborhood schools. Some planners argue that physical fixes are important because employers avoid areas that show severe signs of disinvestment; but this assumes the only path to economic development is importing outside employers, rather than incubating home-grown or neighborhood-based businesses.

The latest efforts to refocus attention on the inner city — whether by the Congress for the New Urbanism, the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development or local redevelopment agencies — are showing signs of this tendency to quick, cosmetic, physical fixes.

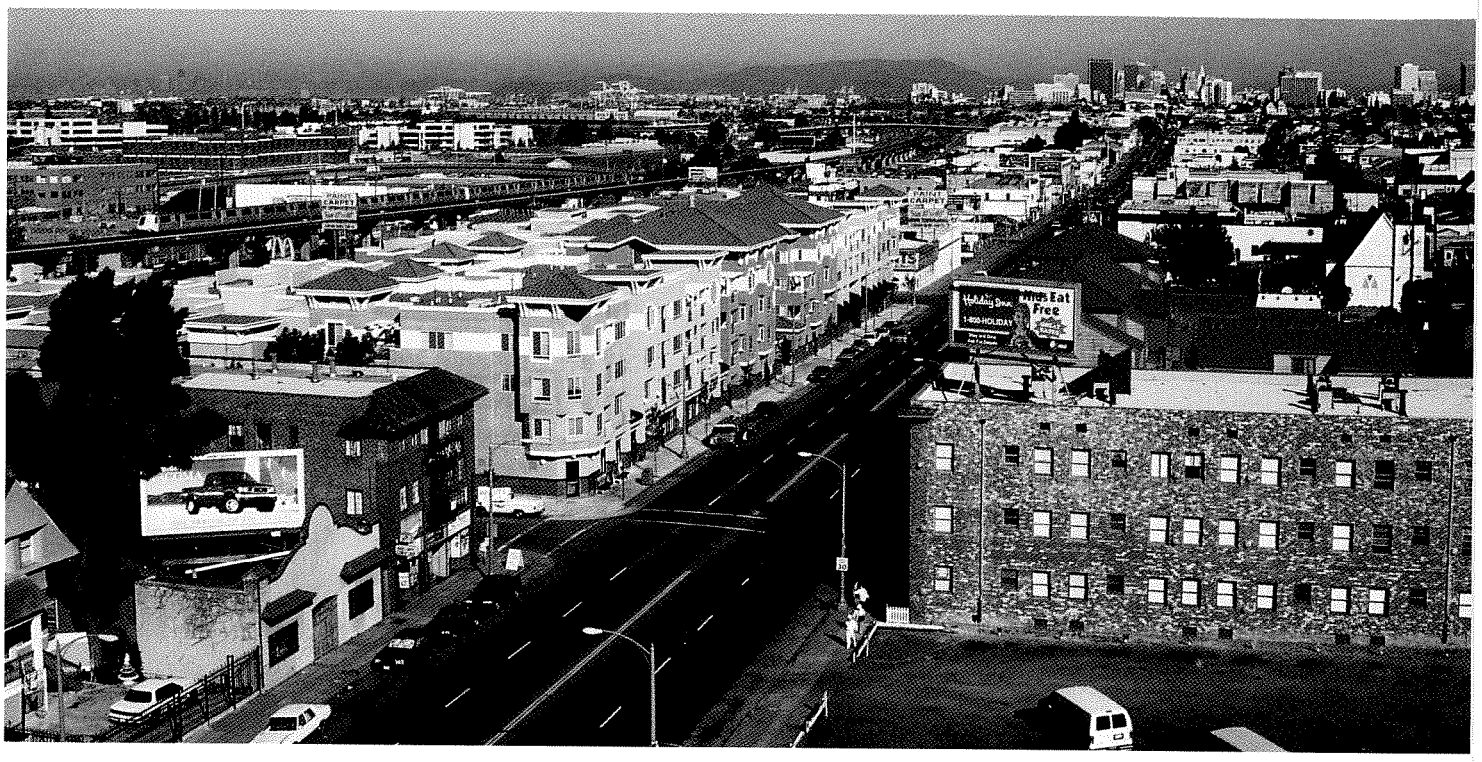
The cure mythology currently being promoted by these groups is to relocate poor people away from troubled housing projects, to rebuild the housing at lower density, and to import higher-income households, particularly homeowners, to live among the remaining low-income residents. The assertion is that mixing households with a range of incomes is healthier for a neighborhood than maintaining a homogeneous, low-income population.

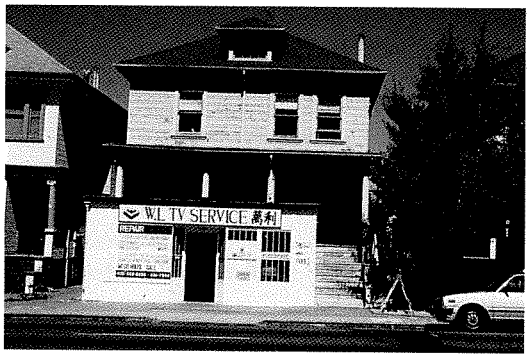
This social engineering has its drawbacks for the people who toughed it out during the lean years. Importing neighbors who already have jobs does little in the way of providing real jobs for the underemployed or unemployed people who remain as part of the new mix, or for those who must move on and be excluded from the mix.

Moreover, the strategies of relocating the poor with rent vouchers, as the HOPE VI program does, or of making one-time reimbursements for relocation in order to make room for people with stable and higher incomes, forces the same painful social and economic costs that people forced to move experienced under earlier forms of urban renewal. It was not too long ago, of course, that we learned that just fixing the real estate is not enough, and that wholesale removal of people and their neighborhoods is inappropriate.

HOPE VI sponsors make the requisite claims that their projects are attending to the economic and social needs of the low-income residents. But it is clear that the priority is fixing the real estate to lure in outside residents who already have jobs — not cultivating the local economy by importing jobs, providing job training or offering micro-loans for small, home-based businesses.

Just as this new, mixed-income social policy is flawed, so too is the architectural and urban design clothing in which it is dressed. The architects designing communities built under these policies are fixated on picturesque architectural qualities that will attract people




Left: **The traditional pattern of residential space above shops characterizes the portion of East 14th Street closer to downtown Oakland.**

Above: **Aerial view of East 14th Street looking toward downtown Oakland**

with more discretionary income, rather than on designing neighborhoods that promote economic opportunity for people who are already there.

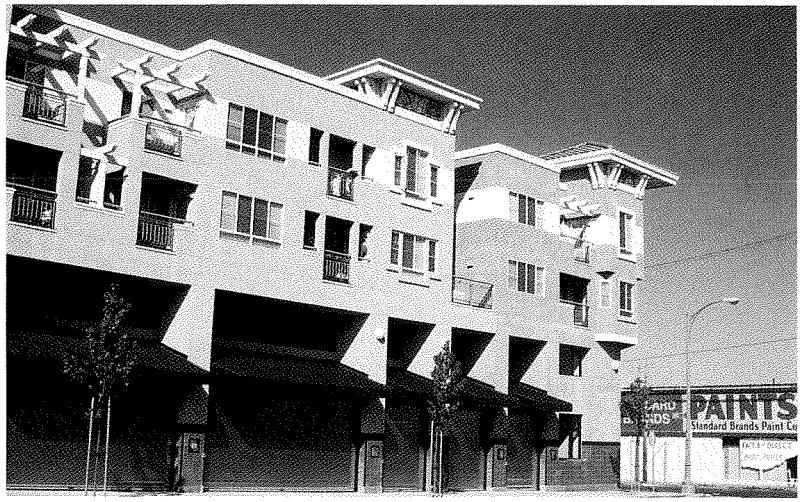
Apparently, the designers sincerely believe that unemployed or underemployed people need frozen, domestic stage sets from yesteryear that make them feel at home with their higher-income, employed new neighbors. Somehow, having a front porch is expected to catapult them into the middle class, which this kind of domestic imagery purports to reflect. In this sense, the Martha Stewarts of urban design are intruding on the lives of people like those that Studs Terkel documents — insulting their culture and ignoring their more significant economic needs.

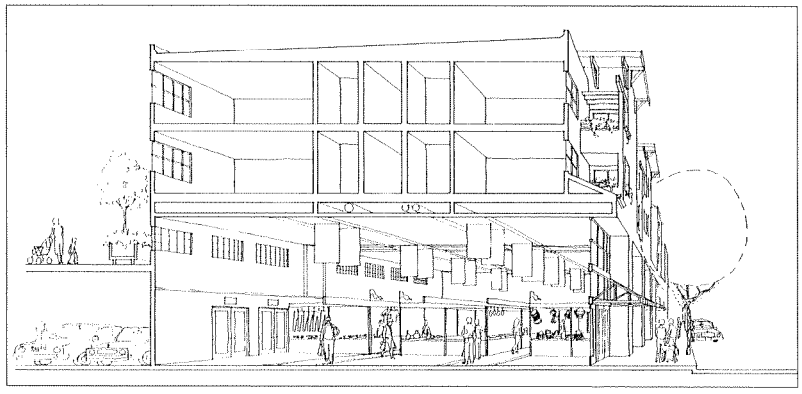
## Suggested Policy Corrections

These social and physical planning policies should be adjusted to accommodate the realities of life for those who must survive on modest incomes. The primary social and economic objective should be to encourage local entrepreneurial activity by existing residents — not architecturally repackaging neighborhoods or relocating people to other neighborhoods. A different set of architectural and urban design responses would facilitate this type of live–work community, responses that might seem downright grundgy to the Martha Stewarts of urban design.

*Design Issues.* Depending on parking requirements, it is possible for dwellings to be ground-related with both front sides and back sides at densities up to thirty-five or forty units per acre. This is a critical threshhold because a ground-related dwelling, with a back side that is not visible from the more public street side, offers a stage for untidy, home-based businesses that requiremanual labor, such as repairing autos or appliances, making clothing or furniture, or providing hair and nail cosmetic services. These are somewhat grundgy activities that affect the physical appearance of real estate, but are critical steps towards economic survival for many families.

Alleys, often promoted by New Urbanists, also offer an excellent opportunity to households that need to



**Hismen Hin-Nu Terrace**

Top: **Elevation of the Market Hall before opening**

Above: **Section through street-level Market Hall and upper-level residential**

Photo and graphic: **Pyatok Associates**

engage in these types of messier ventures without destroying the proper, middle-class street appearances so valued by nearby homeowners and policy makers.

All dwellings can be designed, without any appreciable increase in size, so that a portion of the unit can be cordoned off, either for a messy income-producing activity or for rental to a tenant (without necessarily adding a kitchen), which can provide extra income to the primary occupant.

We should not borrow from early twentieth-century, middle-class notions of domesticity, which envisioned neighborhoods as picturesque retreats from messy, industrial work zones and embraced fantasies of craftsman bungalows, mini-mansions and other miniaturized references to the lives of landed gentry. If we must look to the past for models, perhaps we should seek inspiration in the entrepreneurial neighborhoods of our pioneer and urban immigrant days; perhaps we should also look more carefully at urban settlements in today's Third World. We need not mimic or romanticize the conditions and images of struggling under poverty, but we should borrow from them with appropriate revisions to meet, within reason, today's health, safety and comfort standards.

*Codes, Covenants and Regulations.* Perhaps twenty-five percent of today's inner-city residents live under the same difficult economic circumstances early immigrants and pioneers did. But this population is prevented by modern zoning, building codes, lending practices, and insurance and property management policies from having the opportunities that had been available in earlier times – using the home as a homestead, using the block as an incubator of small manufacturing and repair workshops, using the neighborhood as a thriving, messy exporter of goods and services. Instead, these policies and practices regard the neighborhood as a bucolic setting for retreat and home-based escapist consumption, relying upon local, cutesy retail centers to distribute goods that are produced elsewhere.

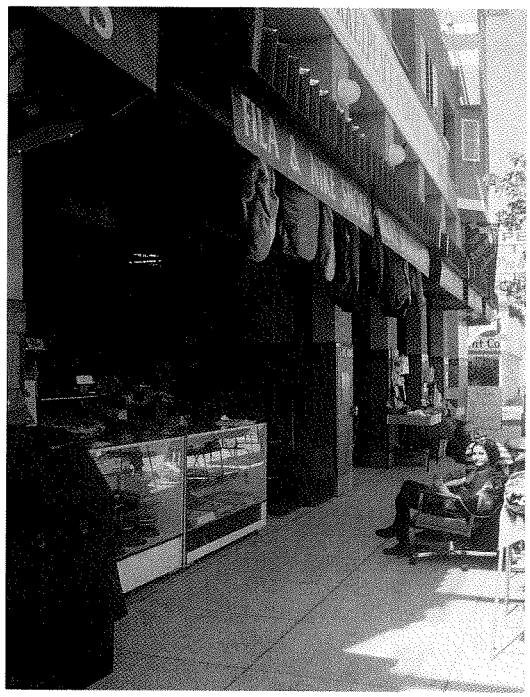
Zoning should be revised to permit small business uses, even those that might be considered light manufacturing, in inner-city neighborhoods. Rental property managers and lenders should recognize that those struggling up from the bottom are concerned less about the long-term exchange value of their dwellings (which produces income when the dwelling is sold) than they are about how their dwellings can be used to earn income now. Neighborhoods characterized primarily by working features (use value) and less by designed domestic re-sale features (exchange value) are less predictable and less tidy, but just as important economically.

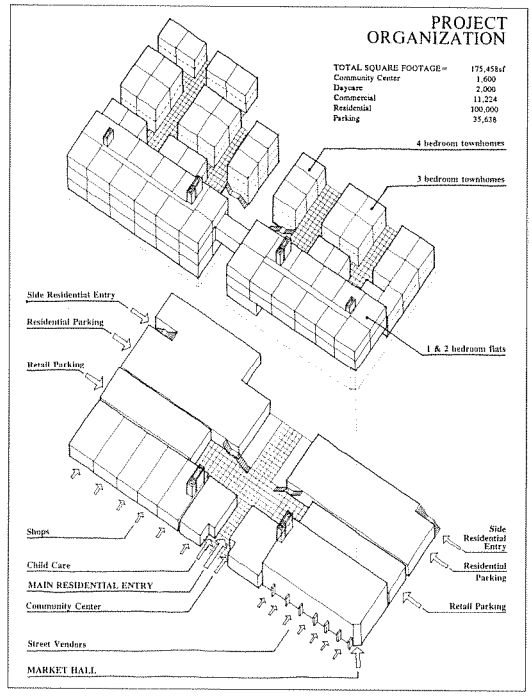
Those of us who produce domestic imagery should carefully scrutinize the bias of worshipping the exchange value of homes as opposed to their use value, a bias that promotes frozen design conventions. As professionals and solid members of the middle class, many of us personally and professionally matured long after the times when such diverse uses were integrated within neighborhoods, blocks and dwellings out of necessity, with little complaint or sense of impropriety. Those of us who matured in places with these conditions must remind our colleagues of the rich opportunities that once existed in such neighborhoods.

**Hismen Hin-Nu Terrace**
**Oakland, Calif., 1995**

Sponsor: **East Bay Local Development Corporation, San Antonio Community Development Corporation**

Architects: **Pyatok Associates, The Ratcliff Architects**






Far left: **Street vendor stalls**

Left: **Project organization**

Below: **Ground floor plan**

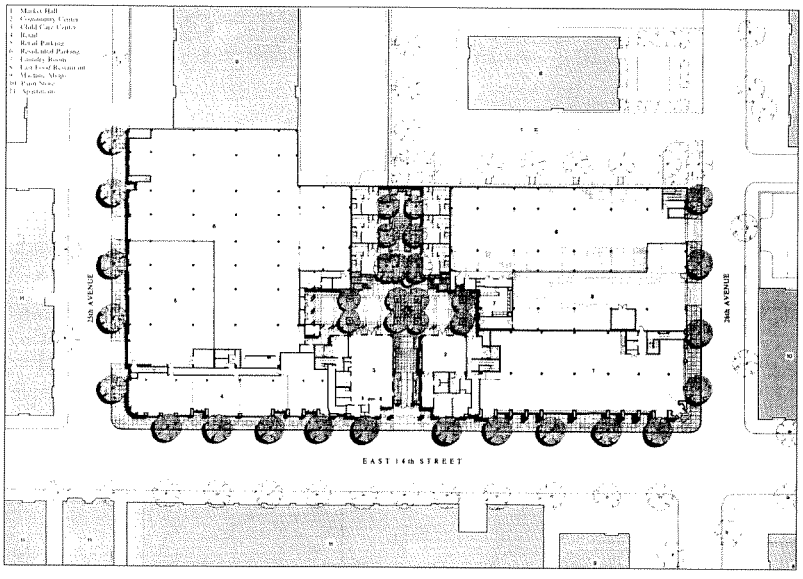
Photo and graphics: **Pyatok Associates**

## Designing Working Neighborhoods

There were good reasons, in the late nineteenth century, for muckrakers and social reformers to see factory districts as unhealthy, polluting and disease-ridden areas. But the gradual and systematic purging of places to earn a livelihood from our neighborhoods eventually became a means to separate classes and races. In the process of sanitizing the city, the poor were not only relegated to their own zones but also denied the opportunity to engage in economic activities that would help them get ahead.

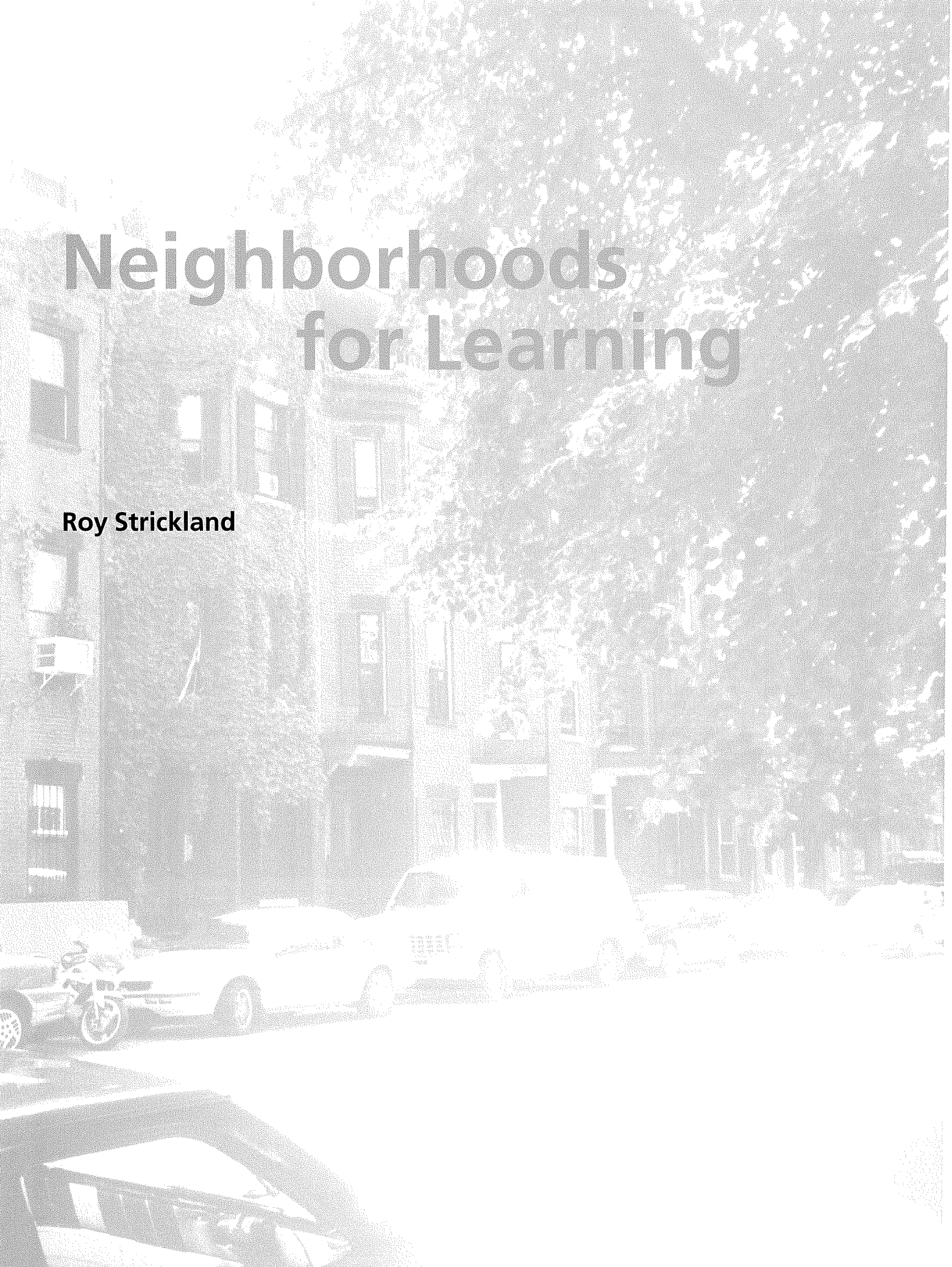
New Urbanists, colluding with HUD and HOPE VI in a quest to domesticate low-income neighborhoods, are not only perpetuating the tradition of displacing the poor but also imposing ever more restrictive architectural and planning straightjackets on those who are privileged to remain, preventing them from engaging in forms of economic self-improvement.

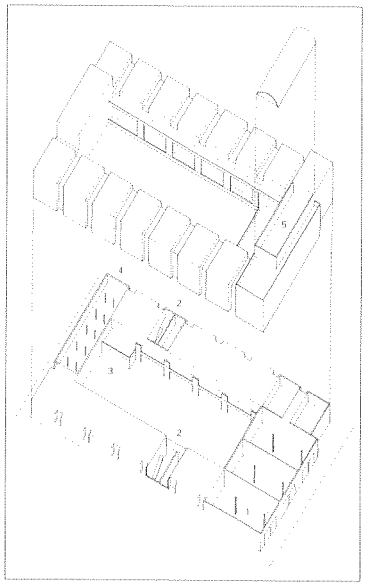
Inner-city redevelopment policies should reflect the cleaner means by which today's small entrepreneurs can produce goods and services manually, particularly at the micro-scales of the home, block and neighborhood. (It is ironic that current attempts to legalize or liberalize home-based work have emerged as a result of middle-class demands for the right to pursue clean, white-collar occupations from unobtrusive home offices.) In this way we may be able to reinstate a stable foundation for working-class communities to raise their families with dignity, confidence and more self-reliance.



# Neighborhoods for Learning

Roy Strickland







Left: One of several new building types developed in the "Neighborhoods for Learning" proposal. The bays of this workshop– classroom–residential building allow extensions and combinations of activities to vary with the site.

Graphic: MIT New American School Design Project

The U.S. government estimates that during the next ten years the nation must spend a minimum of $112 billion on capital improvements to public schools — not to mention the cost of building new schools to accommodate the anticipated increase in public school enrollments. This enormous investment presents an opportunity to improve not only schools but also the communities that surround them. By directing school capital projects toward the broader goal of creating "neighborhoods for learning" — a long-held ideal of school reformers — the theme of learning could become a powerful tool in urban design and place making.

Although the term "neighborhood for learning" comes from Ernest Boyer's 1991 book, *Ready to Learn: A Mandate for the Nation*, the concept is implicit in much educational literature. John Dewey, in the classic *School and Society*, presents diagrams showing the ideal school integrated with surrounding domestic, business and university life. More recently, Howard Gardner, in *Multiple Intelligence Theory*, calls for "contextual learning" coordinated by "school-community broker[s]" while Theodore Sizer, in *Horace's School: Redesigning the American High School*, proposes the school setting itself should be at the heart of education reform. He asks: "[W]hat sort of... community context is required for schools that graduate admirable young people?" As if in reply, Boyer proposes a neighborhood consisting of "spaces and places that spark the imagination," prenatal and early-childhood centers where high school students can provide services, pre-schools, parent education centers and proximity between schools and institutions like museums and libraries.[1]

But if educators have articulated an ideal, the actual form of neighborhoods for learning remains undefined. This issue is being explored through the New American School Design Project, at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology School of Architecture and Planning. This article describes two workshops that developed concepts for neighborhoods for learning. The first, an academic project for Boston's South End, establishes planning and design principles for such neighborhoods. The second, sponsored by the Union City, N.J., Board of Education, applies these principles to real-world conditions.[2]

### Programming the South End for Learning

The South End workshop was organized to develop a concept for a neighborhood for learning in a typical

urban community. Its goal was to establish program and design principles that could be translated for use in real projects, as would occur later in Union City.

The South End is a complex community of high- to low-income people, including African- and Asian-Americans, Latinos, whites, immigrants of different backgrounds. There are many children, especially in low- and moderate-income families. Such a population could use a neighborhood for learning in many ways, from acculturation programs to child-through-adult education to economic development.

Physically, the South End is also typical of many urban neighborhoods. It features row houses, tenements, apartments, post-World-War-II housing projects, industrial and commercial buildings, and abandoned lots and blocks where the elements of a neighborhood for learning might be inserted.

The workshop, fourteen weeks long, frequently visited the South End, interviewed local social, cultural and educational service providers, and analyzed census data. It developed a neighborhood-for-learning concept through four interrelated activities:

- identifying educational priority areas, or those neighborhood census tracts with high numbers of children and low-income families, where learning facilities would have the greatest benefit,
- developing an educational program from community resources of the type identified by Dewey, Boyer, Gardner, et al. (such as libraries, theaters, museums and work places where both children and adults can learn),
- shaping a network of streets and public spaces that would connect and highlight these resources, and
- proposing learning facilities in both existing and new buildings.

The workshop considered options for funding and managing such a project, although it depended on subsequent, real-world studies like Union City to explore these issues further.

In developing the project program, the workshop sought to provide learning opportunities to the broadest cross-section of people and to link, wherever possible, learning with neighborhood activity, economic activity and development. The program included:

*Arts and culture,* suggested by Tremont Street, the South End's major commercial street, and the adjoining Boston Center for the Arts, Boston Ballet Center, public library, galleries and artist housing. (Cohort: pre-schoolers through adults.)

*Business,* suggested by the entrepreneurial efforts found throughout the South End, from the shops, services and restaurants of Tremont Street to the start-up technology companies east of Harrison Street. (Cohort: grade schoolers through adults.)

*Horticulture and botanical study,* suggested by the residential squares and community gardens spread throughout the community. (Cohort: grade schoolers through adults.)

*Urban management,* suggested by the parks, squares and streets where the South End's diverse behaviors and tastes are exercised, leading to mediation, public safety and public-space maintenance and management as learning and career options. (Cohort: middle schoolers through adults.)

*Recreation,* suggested by community parks located primarily along Washington Street, including Washington Square, one of Boston's largest neighborhood squares. (Cohort: pre-schoolers through adults.)

*Technology,* suggested by the start-up technology companies east of Harrison Street. (Cohort: grade schoolers through adults.)

*Hands-on, vocational training,* suggested by the small-scale industries and service shops east of Harrison Street. (Cohort: middle schoolers through adults.)

*Health services,* suggested by the Boston City–Boston University Hospital campus, located in the South End's southeast corner at Massachusetts Avenue. (Cohort: middle schoolers through adults.)

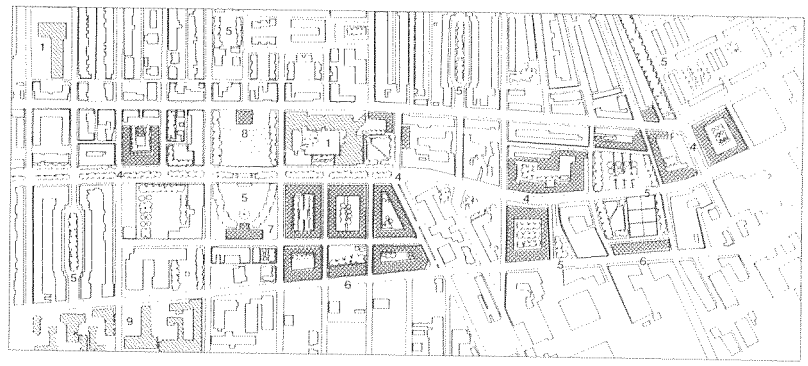
### The Street as Organizational Device

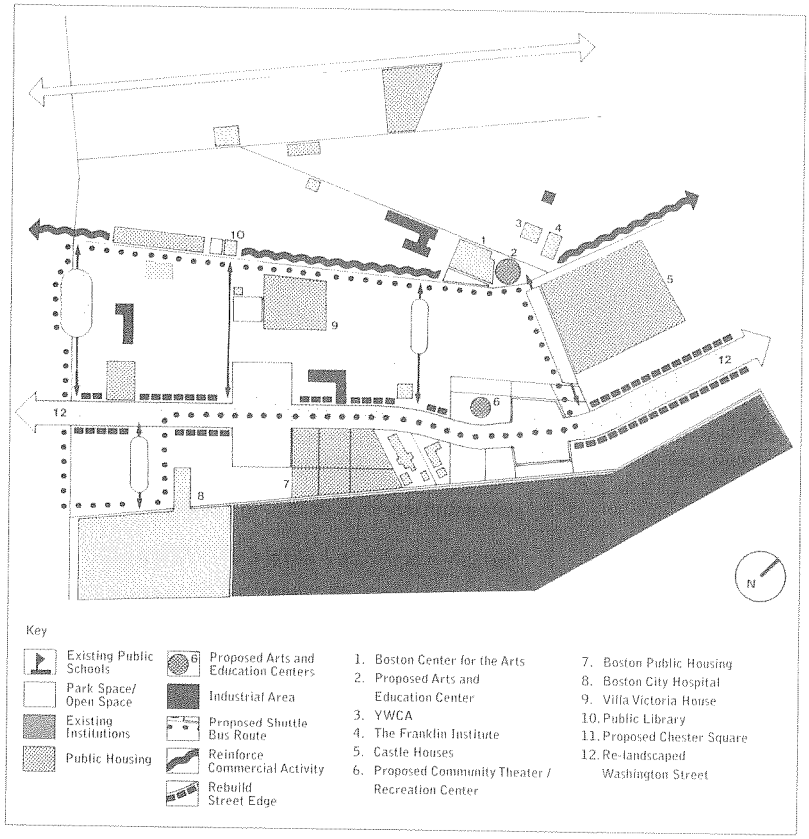
Because the project's educational elements were largely implicit and scattered across the South End, it became the workshop's goals to make them explicit and integrated. To accomplish this, the workshop used one of the South End's most powerful organizing features, its street system. If facilities such as the Boston Center for the Arts and Boston City Hospital could be considered among the neighborhood for learning's destinations or rooms, the street system would be their connector or corridor. The workshop exploited opportunities to reinforce educational themes through new rooms while strengthening and enlivening the corridor.

Along Tremont Street, this strategy suggested building an arts and education center on the empty lot adjacent to the Boston Arts Center, expanding the neighborhood library and converting selected empty retail shops into drop-in learning centers. Near the Boston City Hospital, the strategy suggested renovating empty buildings for health-service education centers. New loft spaces for vocational and technological training were proposed along Harrison Street. New parks and open spaces (which would also provide places for horticultural training and botanical study) were proposed along Washington Street. A shuttle bus would link these facilities by traveling along Tremont Street, Massachusetts Avenue, Washington Street and East Berkeley Street.

### Proposed Facilities

To accommodate new learning spaces, the workshop proposed both renovating vacant, available buildings and constructing new, mixed-use buildings. These buildings were identified and designed with three concerns in mind: making learning spaces visible and readily accessible from streets and public spaces; supporting safe and positive use of streets, squares, parks and public spaces through spatial and visual linkages to learning spaces; and integrating learning spaces with other uses, such as housing, workplaces and shops to encourage life-long learning.

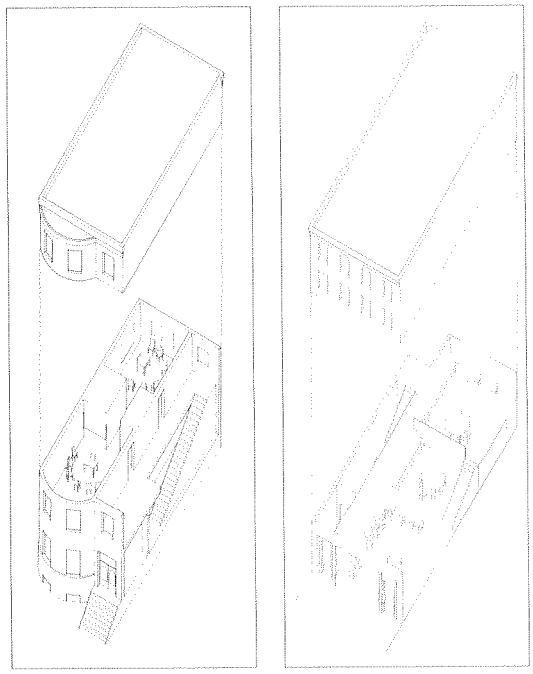





Top: Project plan. The South End's streets organize the components of the neighborhood for learning.

Above: Learning space network concept plan. Community resources, such as cultural facilities, schools and open spaces, shape the concept for infill development, street improvements and loop transit.

Graphics: MIT New American School Design Project



Row house. The South End's prevalent building type, it readily lends itself to classroom use.

Graphic: MIT New American School Design Project

Buildings to be renovated were:

*Empty row houses*, whose spatial flexibility, easy street access and integration with adjacent housing make them potential classroom facilities, day-care centers or combinations of classrooms and teacher housing.

*Vacant retail shops*, whose large windows on the street and flexible interiors make them suitable for drop-in study centers, computer work stations, exhibition spaces and day-care or meeting facilities.

*Partially-occupied loft buildings*, whose large, open spaces would accommodate classrooms, shop facilities, art studios, performance and recital spaces, recreation spaces, offices and housing to create mixed-use facilities.

Proposed new buildings were:

*Arts and education center.* The gateway to the project, this building would provide day care, arts instruction by resident artists, culinary arts and business training in a community restaurant, continuing education and health and counseling services that would be coordinated with Boston City Hospital and provide internships for local residents.

*Apartment–loft buildings.* These buildings would help knit together the South End's learning spaces by filling empty lots. The loft spaces would be suitable for education, job training, business and light industry. The apartments would serve as models for redeveloping public housing between Washington and Harrison streets.

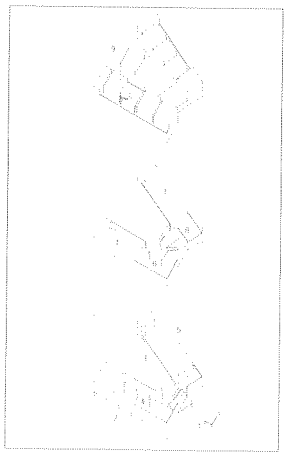
*Workshop–classroom–residential buildings.* These buildings, proposed for Harrison Street, were targeted for adolescents and adults, including teachers who wish to live where they work, and homeless or at-risk youth who need dormitory space. On the ground floor, the buildings feature shop areas with space for vocational and business training and for community services. Above, they include classrooms (on the second floor), apartments for resident teachers or "house masters" and their families (on the third floor), and temporary or permanent shelter for students (on the top floor).

## Public Spaces for Learning

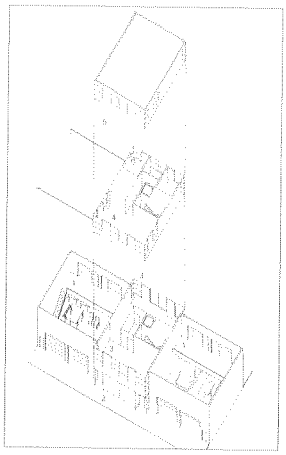
Public space was integral to the project. The uses near the South End's streets, squares and parks helped determine the neighborhood's educational program. By design, these public spaces would play an enhanced role in neighborhood learning.

The education program was related to public space in formal and informal ways. Because learning spaces were dispersed throughout the South End, public spaces were designed to serve as the connecting fabric and to make the movement of people among learning spaces a visible and integral part of neighborhood life. This visibility, coupled with the street-level transparency of the learning spaces themselves,[3] would turn South End streets and squares into displays for educational and career possibilities. Public spaces would be powerful agents in informal learning that would become formalized as children and adults selected among options.

The project also programmed public spaces themselves for learning. On Tremont Street, in front of the arts center, an open-air vegetable and flower market that sells produce from community gardens would offer small-business training. A restored Washington Square would provide a stage for outdoor performances and a greenhouse for botanical study. Community gardens and squares offering horticultural programs would be integrated with programs in public-space management and maintenance.









Above left and right: Arts and education center, organizational diagram and street view. Multiple uses—commercial, cultural and residential—are mixed in the building, sometimes on the same floor. The building completes the cultural triangle that includes the existing Boston Ballet Center and Boston Center for the Arts, and leads pedestrians into Tremont Street.

Left and right: Apartment–loft building, organizational diagram and street view. By combining housing with learning and work spaces, the building reveals academic and career options to residents. In this example, ground-floor commercial space helps support the community economy while upper-floor learning and work places are visible through large windows.

Graphics: MIT New American School Design Project

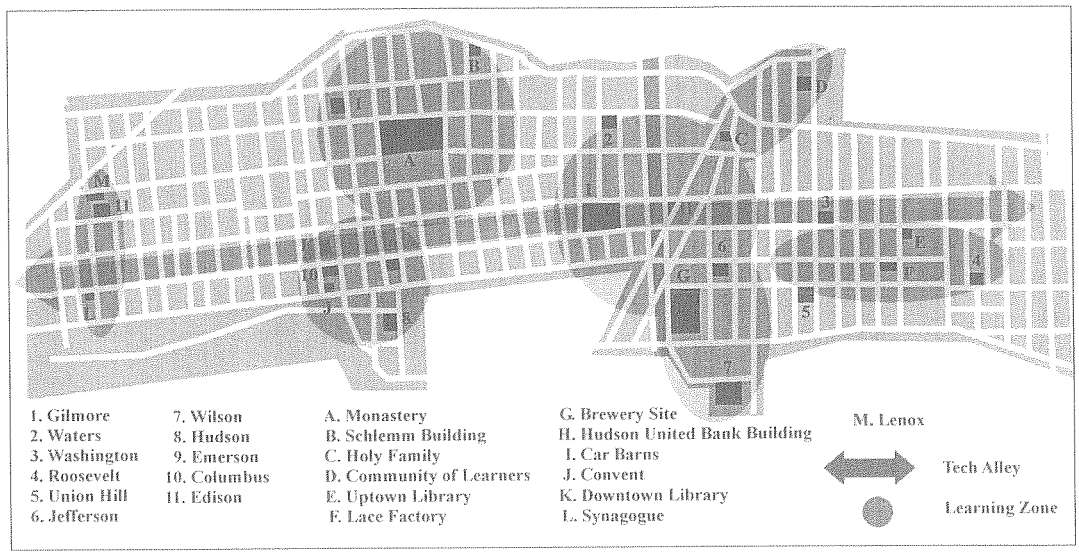
### Neighborhood for Learning Principles

The workshop identified funding and management options that might help turn the South End project, and similar proposals, into reality. For Boston, these included the city's $300-million capital budget for new and renovated schools and early childhood centers; existing private-development linkage programs that support construction of affordable housing on scattered sites throughout the city; the Department of Housing and Urban Development's proposed redevelopment of South End public housing under the HOPE VI initiative; and alternative, pilot and charter schools operating in the Boston area (often in non-traditional facilities).

These options, familiar to many American cities, could support a neighborhood for learning if they were part of a coordinated effort. Linkages among the funding sources would multiply the limited amounts of capital normally available for school projects and extend learning opportunities to all members of the community.

The workshop recognized that the specifics of any real project – the relative space allocated to various program elements, cost, phasing, management, etc. – would inevitably be subject to negotiation among community constituents, government agencies, institutions and developers. Nevertheless, the workshop established fourteen program and design principles for neighborhoods for learning. These were:

- Plan for life-long learning and encourage cross-generational relationships in learning.
- Integrate community activities into the neighborhood for learning's curriculum.
- Use the architectural and spatial characteristics of existing buildings to suggest the role they will play in the curriculum.
- Include learning spaces in new buildings of all types.
- Use public open space as places for learning.
- Make learning visible – as visible as neighborhood commercial and retail activity.




Conceptual plan for a "city of learning" in Union City, N.J.

Graphic: MIT New American School Design Project

- Mix uses — including housing, work places and learning spaces — so that they may operate synergistically.
- Encourage learners to participate in neighborhood activity and management as part of the learning process.
- Use technology to help distribute learning throughout the neighborhood.
- Make transportation part of the plan, but encourage pedestrian movement between learning places.
- Coordinate agencies, programs and funding sources that can contribute to planning and capital projects.
- Consider alternative management strategies for delivering learning.
- Make work visible to help learners identify career option.
- Integrate project stakeholders in the programming and design pro cess.

### The Principles Applied

One of our first opportunities for applying these principles has emerged in Union City, N.J.,which sought help in devising the concept for a state-of-the-art, 1,200-student elementary and middle school. As a result of our consulations with the Union City Board of Education (UCBE), charrettes with school stakeholders and community members, the city is exploring ways to become a "city for learning."

Union City, a working-class town of 60,000 people opposite midtown Manhattan, was a likely site for applying the concept. The public school system benefits from court-ordered budget increases that are helping it achieve funding parity with suburban districts. It had recently applied educational reforms and new technology to a failing school system, with noticeable effect, making it a model for urban school districts. And the school district is the largest agency, employer and landowner in the city.

Union City also enjoys a vibrant urban culture; it remains a first stop for many immigrants arriving in the U.S. and has a strong Latino community, primarily Cubans and Dominicans, that is integrating itself into most aspects of the city's life and governance. It is a small city, approximately one-and-one-half miles in size, so it is compact and easy to traverse on foot. And a strong, clear relationship exists between its street grid and building stock, which includes numerous handsome (although often abandoned) examples of industrial and institutional architecture.

Through site visits, discussions, charrettes with UCBE and public-school stakeholders, and analysis of UCBE's pedagogical philosophy, we concluded that an alternative to a large, 1,200-seat public school would be appropriate. Smaller schools would reinforce the district's child-centered learning approach. Dispersed schools would bring education closer to neighborhoods. New schools in formerly abandoned buildings would reduce the city's blight. Preserving all or part of the proposed school site as open space — the only major open space in the city — would enhance the quality of life for the city as a whole.

Now UCBE, together with NASDP, is developing a concept for not just a neighborhood but a "city for learning" that would use the schools $35 million capitalcost to renew several sites. By spreading the capital investment across several sites and combining it with other sources of funds — for day care, a new library and commercial street development — learning will become a

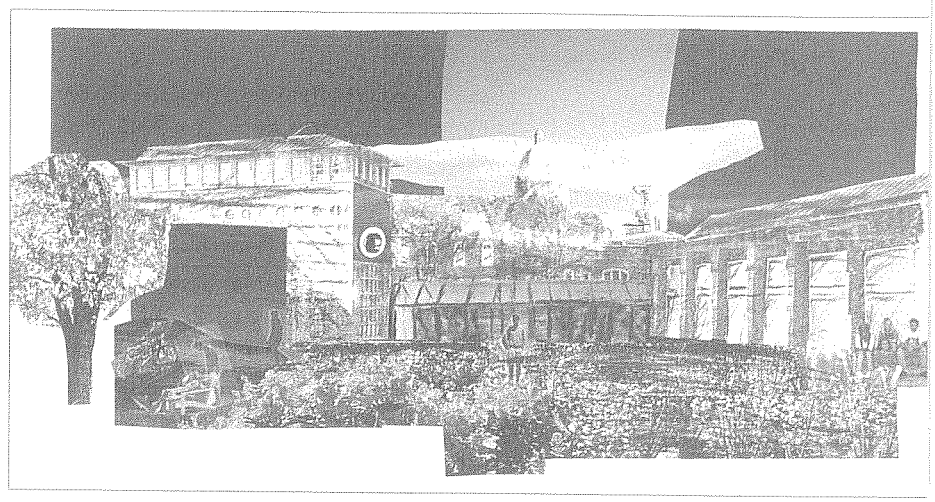
tool in the town's revitalization. Key elements of the concept include:

- Preserving as much of the original school site as possible for a learning and recreation park for the entire school system and city.
- Renovating underutilized or empty properties available for sale or lease to UCBE as schools and/or resource centers. These properties include a neo-Georgian funeral home, a Bauhaus-inspired factory building, a Victorian brewery, the upper floors of a neo-classical bank building and an historic trolley barn.
- Programming clusters of existing schools and new facilities as learning zones that offer early childhood, primary, secondary and adult education, job and technology training, and resources in the arts and sciences.
- Connecting learning zones with an arts and technology alley, where existing and new facilities would combine with Urban Enterprize Zone and Community Block Grant initiatives to reinforce private and commercial development along Union City's major avenues.

The Union City case study demonstrates the ability of the neighborhood for learning concept to adapt to real urban conditions. As part of NASDP's continuing work with the Union City Board of Education, the concept will be developed architecturally and presented to the State of New Jersey, which is committed to building new educational facilities for Union City.

## Conclusion

The South End and Union City projects may serve as examples for developing neighborhoods (or cities) for learning. Different urban conditions, such as location, morphology, physical resources and socioeconomic characterisitcs, will necessarily produce different plans that require varying levels of design intervention and capital investment. Nevertheless, as NASDP workshops demonstrate, learning may serve as a powerful medium for community design and place making as America confronts its educational challenges.



View of the school as a community center.

Graphic: MIT New American School Design Project

## Notes

1. See: Ernest Boyer, *Ready to Learn: A Mandate for the Nation* (Princeton: The Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Learning), 91-97; Martin S. Dworkin, ed., *Dewey on Education* (New York: Teachers College Press, 1959), 77-85; Howard Gardner, *Multiple Intelligences: The Theory in Practice* (New York: Basic Books, 1993) 68-80; and Theodore Sizer, *Horace's School: Redesigning the American High School* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1992), 12.
2. NASDP addresses an issue largely overlooked in the current, nationwide discussion of public-school reform: the design of physical facilities that will help bring primary and secondary education into the 21st century. Through graduate-level studios and workshops NASDP generates concepts for learning facilities which are made available for use by school systems and their architects. NASDP is underwritten by the A. Farwell Bemis and Ernest A. Grunsfeld Funds.
3. Examples include a drop-in study/computer station behind the window of the converted retail store, a community-restaurant kitchen and its culinary training visible through a plate-glass window on the ground floor of the arts center; an automotive service center and its instruction revealed by rolled-up garage doors, and a brightly decorated classroom behind the row house's windows.

South End Case Study
*Faculty:* Roy Strickland. *Students:* Samuel Desollar, Audrey Godwin, J. Van Lewis, Raj Singh

Union City Case Study
*Faculty:* Roy Strickland, William L. Porter. *Research Scientist:* Turid Horgen. *Students:* Singh Intrachooto, Ching-Yi Lin, Nilay Oza, Hector Perez, Geraldine Ramos, Rashmi Venkatesh, Akemi Yoo, Jing Yu

# Housing the Next Ten Million

## Visions for California's Central Valley

*Harrison Fraker*

Ten million additional people are projected to live in California's Central Valley by the year 2040. This is equivalent to adding the population of New York City or fourteen San Franciscos to the Central Valley—no trivial challenge.

"Housing the Next Ten Million," a competition sponsored by the Great Valley Center and the American Institute of Architects, California Council, solicited design and development concepts for accommodating this growth. It challenged entrants to envision solutions for sustainable development and responsible growth. That includes addressing issues of preserving farmland and protecting the valley's underlying ecosystem, and recognizing the valley's changing demographics and socio-economic realities. These challenges represent to an extreme the kinds of problems that are faced by many American urban regions.

While the magnitude of the problem produced bold proposals (such as high-rise biomorphic megastructures), the jury was attracted to solutions that focused on adding growth and value to existing communities, especially those that tried to maintain and enhance a local sense of place when considering develoment on such a huge scale. In such schemes, the existing landscapes of rivers, stormwater systems and canals provided a promising vocabulary of new civic amenities, strengthening local identity and a sense of place within the region.

The jury took a strong ideological stance by giving the first award in the New Growth category to a proposal (Daniel G. Parolek Urban Design, Berkeley) that places all new development within a clearly articulated growth boundary. Using Modesto as a case study, it shows how the boundary can be delineated by creating a dedicated open space—a park around the city at the location of important rivers—that provides a natural amenity between the city and preserved agricultural lands beyond.

Growth is concentrated in urban villages within the city—an intensification of Modesto's existing plan for residential villages. Each village is located near an existing neighborhood service center and allows modestly higher density and mixed-use development. The proposal converts the city's existing irrigation canal system into a green network of pedestrian and bike paths that connect the urban villages to each other and to the river systems around the city.

The winning Redevelopment proposal (Blackbird Architects, Santa Barbara) follows similar principles. The entry makes a compelling case that redevelopment at slightly higher densities, when designed well, can produce wonderful neighborhoods, and is one of the most attractive ways of accommodating growth without losing the small-town quality of the Central Valley.

The scheme takes a 300-block, underdeveloped area of Fresno and weaves it into a compelling mixed-use fabric that includes more than 6,000 new housing units. The backbone of the plan is a greenway organized around the restored creeks and ponds that substitute for storm sewers. A grid of residential blocks, streets and alleys is overlaid on the greenway. The streets tie back to the city grid and the alleys are transformed into a secondary open space system of pedestrian paths, orchards and natural drainage that connects to the greenways.

The winning Infill entry (Stephen M. Wheeler and Michael Larice, Berkeley) focuses on the building scale, proposing types that can be developed on individual lots within a grid of streets and blocks. The idea of infill—carefully adding duplexes, townhouses and garage apartments on selected sites within existing neighborhoods—is not new. But this scheme skillfully demonstrates how adding garage apartments can improve the safety, livability and potential of alleys, and how townhouses or duplexes can fill in vacant lots in ways that improve the physical fabric and scale of streets. It shows how increasing density can have a positive effect on neighborhood quality.

The winning entries in the Small Agriculture Community (Russell D. Naylor, Darren Barboza, Heddie Chu, Rafael Herrin and Wing Lee; Ai Architects, San Francisco) and the Housing Prototype categories

(Matthew Lamp, Lily Lim and Eric Zachrison, Chicago) illustrated simple, yet powerful, low-cost alternatives to common speculative house construction. The Naylor team proposal uses lightweight, pre-manufactured farm building components to make a simple, flexible, loft-type shelter that can be expanded to accommodate extended families. The units can be clustered around community facilities made from similar building components, creating a cohesive, supportive community. This has already been a successful model for farm workers in the valley.

By contrast, the Housing Prototype entry proposed a low-tech approach that uses site materials. It demonstrates this idea on a prototype urban block, constructing rammed-earth walls from the undersoil, using site-cast or locally manufactured hollow-core concrete panels for floors and roofs, and gathering topsoil to create community gardens in the center.

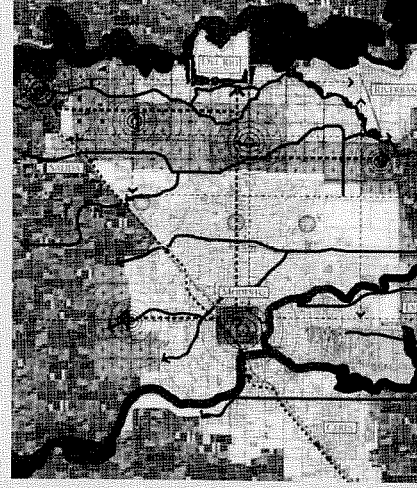
The plan proposes modest units on small lots, using principles of passive solar heating and natural cooling with outdoor gardens and patios that take advantage of the best aspects of the valley climate while limiting its liabilities. This concept can work for individuals or groups who want to pool their resources and share labor.

Both of these housing models demonstrate the economic value of applying building technologies that are place-based. By using local material, local labor (which has the added value of allowing significant sweat-equity by the homeowner and/or the community) and components manufactured locally, the internal economic benefit is multiplied many times over.

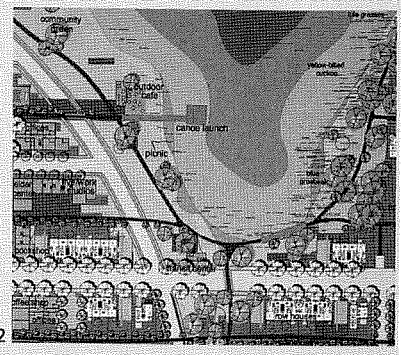
### Unanswered Questions

While the winning projects reflected the jury's consensus that solutions should focus on enhancing existing communities, several honorable mention projects raised questions about whether infill and redevelopment can accommodate the amount of growth projected.

One entry (Udo Greinacher, Kiril Stanilov) proposes a string of new towns along the foothills on either side of the valley. The new growth would avoid the most valuable farmland; in many areas it would follow the



1



2

**(1) Proposal for urban villages in Modesto**
Graphic: **Daniel G. Parolek Urban Design**

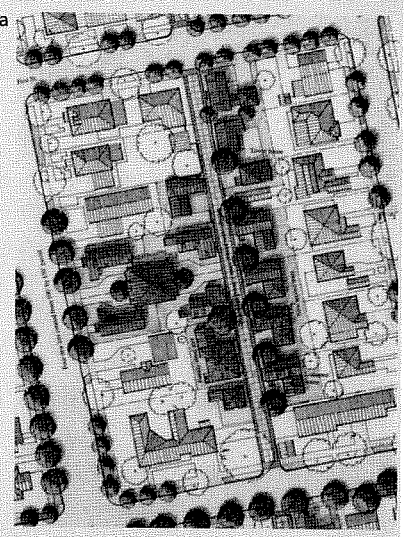
**(2) Proposal for redeveloping underbuilt blocks in Fresno; neighborhoods are organized on a greenway of creeks and ponds.** Graphic: **Blackbird Architects**

**(3a, 3b) Proposal for adding duplexes, townhouses and garage apartments in existing neighborhoods**
Graphic: **Michael Larice, Stephen Wheeler**

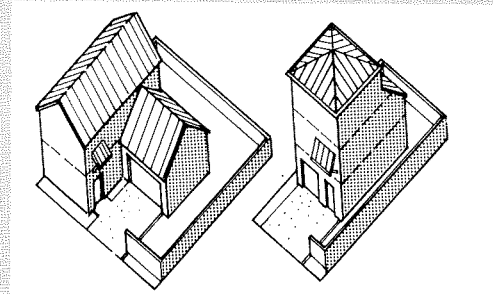
**(4) Proposal for building housing from site materials and locally made products**
Graphic: **Matthew Lamp, Lily Lim, Eric Zachrison**

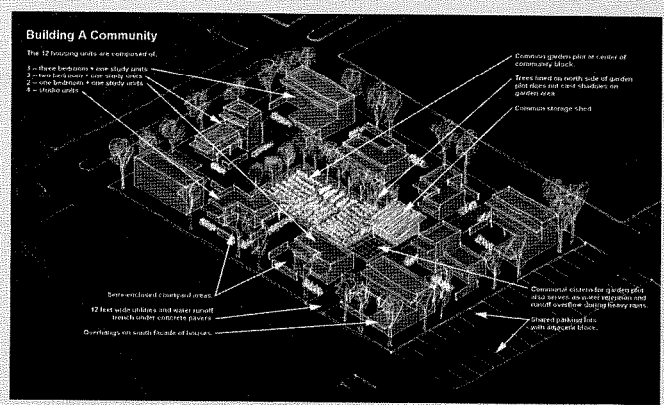
**(5) Proposal for building housing and civic buildings from lightweight, pre-made components.** Graphic: **Ai Architects**

3a

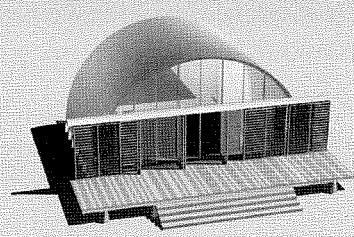


3b






4



5

already highly engineered landscape of major aqueducts, but it would require significant investment in new highways. The jury supported the compact development diagrammed for each town, but had difficulty understanding what created their need and location.

In contrast, the entry by (Zvonimir Prlic, Karmen Prlic) proposes significant urban growth on prairie farm land in the foothills east of the valley's major cities. The growth would be tied to stops on the proposed high-speed rail line from San Diego to Sacramento. This strategy seemed to tie new town and old town together, implying that new development and redevelopment can be managed for mutual benefit.

The competition revealed glaring weaknesses in our understanding of the problem of accommodating "the next ten million." The jury could not determine with confidence how much growth existing communities could actually absorb through infill, redevelopment and modest density increases. How much underutilized land is there? How much intensification and increase in density is appropriate? How many new towns are needed? How much expansion of existing urban boundaries is necessary?

There is very little understanding about where the pressure for residential or employment growth will actually occur, or what kinds of jobs will be created. Almost all the entrants focused on major communities, leaving hundreds of unincorporated towns, small villages and rural communities out of the equation.

In the end, the Great Valley Center's director, Carol Whiteside, got her wish. The competition raised the discourse about alternative solutions to current patterns of sprawl and big-box commercial and about creating a more robust civic fabric—one that kints communities together through a more livable public realm and increases density.

Throughout the jury process there was concern about how local politics would make it difficult to implement the winning design ideas. It is likely that effective proceses for community participation, collaboration among communities and regional planning will be more difficult to come by than promising design ideas. But the fact that remarkably diverse jurors could reach such a strong consensus about desirable design qualities and planning concepts suggests that when alternatives are carefully laid out, consensus can be forged.

# The Organic Approach

*Deborah Gans*

"Organic" is a word that one uses with hesitation. It conjures biomorphic forms confused with nature, undisciplined explorations confused with freedom and rhetorical analogy that overreaches in its admittedly humanistic goals.

Today, organic forms are seemingly present in the gorgeous folding surfaces that flow from our computers. They are accompanied by a discourse that offers their super-continuity of form as a compensation for cultural rifts they do not directly address. "The Organic Approach" was a search for critical tools that could overcome mere zeitgeist representation and confront the discontinuities in our cultural fabric among classes, places and infrastructures and their symptomatic conditions of megalopolis, ecological crises and warfare.

The name of the conference—with "organic" as the modifier of "approach"—was very much the point; we were searching for modes of exploration rather than a model of form. As Zehra Kuz traced in the nineteenth-century Germanic roots of this distinction, organic meant the finding of form (kuntsvinde) not the giving of it (kuntswollen).

The invited participants offered conflicting ideas about this concept, but they returned to a common set of concerns: the problem of democracy, the problem of technology and the problem of the city, most broadly framed as the relation of nature to culture.

### The Organic and Democracy

How can organic architecture facilitate, as well as represent, aspects of democracy? Gunther Behnisch described his forty-year attempt "to reduce constraints and enhance freedom" through a practice he considers collaborative in its process and non-deterministic in its objects. Describing buildings made from contingencies, layers and fragments, he simultaneously maintained the Modernist position that glass can achieve the desired transparency of democratic culture: through open interior space and permeable boundaries, this glass architecture attempts to merge building with landscape or the freedom of the street. His parliament in Bonn (under construction for 15 years and aban-

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doned when the German government moved to Berlin shortly after its completion) sets fragments of program in relation to a pre-existing city fabric, but has as its centerpiece the glass volume of the assembly.

Behnisch's contradictory dualism of transparent volume and non-systemic event echoes the debate between Mies van der Rohe's idea of universal space and Hans Scharoun's advocacy of idiosyncratic program. The conference traced a heritage in Scharoun, Hugo Häring and Alvar Aalto, whose desire to escape the dialectic of form and function might today be considered organic. Eeva Pelkonen stressed Aalto's interest in the psychological and vernacular aspects of function; Kuz discussed Häring and Scharoun's insistence on the vagaries of perception and the precision of daily habits in the making of architecture.

**The Organic and Technology**

The conceit of a democratic architecture resulting from the social forces that act upon it was challenged by discussions of change and continuity within the organic object. Speakers stressed the potential of computer technology to behave organically and the digital world to serve as an organic environment.

Haresh Lalvani showed geometric forms of increasing complexity that he generated from a digital "genetic code," provoking the question of how such virtual systems could become physical; what would the limits and determinants be in material, scale and time? John Johansen discussed nanotechnology William Katavolos described a chemical architecture where encoding of patterns occur on a molecular level; both suggested that habitable structures and landscapes might literally be farmed from a single cell or crystallized from a start-up molecule. The imagined merging of the natural and artificial also appeared as the digital modeling of materials and physical forces.

Mahadev Raman of Ove Arup rhetorically described how the fluid mechanics of the curved Kansai Airport (Renzo Piano) and the adamantly gridded U.S. Courthouse in Houston (Richard Meier) are equally sophisticated, either through their skins or shapes, in creating their own internal weather systems. Both are "performance buildings", as Johansen put it, characterized by "self-organization, sensors and responsiveness to environment and the user."

The value of both the performance building and the democratic building depends on interaction with its physical or cultural environment. Like organisms which survive through the exchange of substances with environment, the organic object cannot exist in isolation.

**Nature and Culture**

In the context of the conference, the blurring of built form and landscape in large-scale environmental earthworks seems to be part of a larger desire to overcome our dialectical framing of nature and culture. While Kenneth Frampton soberly questioned the ability of organic architecture to embrace the collective assembly and physical monumentality fundamental to urbanism, a certain utopianism pervaded the conference. There were calls for freedom (nature) and for place (culture) at the scale of building, city and time and space.

The freedom of "no place" was expressed most purely in John Johansen's Event City, constructed through an ephemeral tissue of individual and collective actions, and Todd Dalland's nomadic tent city, which has infrastructure hook-ups like tree stumps in a continuous landscape. The desire to ground freedom in place appeared in Volker Geincke's arboretum, in recurrent references to the vernacular and in Frampton's homage to Aalto's fusion of landscape and urban density.

Ahmet Omurtag, a mechanical engineer and philosopher of science, most precisely described the physical necessities that control the relation of nature and culture. He explained: *Organisms are entities who struggle to persist (live) in the condition of scarcity of substances and time. They struggle against each other and the fatal threat of indifference. The world is a fatal environment, not because it is malicious but because inanimate nature is indifferent and does not "care about" the complex arrangements that organisms need in order to live. One could say that organisms live in a disenchanted environment.*

While playing with the dream of an enchanted landscape, the conference searched for the insight needed to avoid the proliferation of indifference.

**"The Organic Approach," a three-day symposium sponsored by Pratt Institute's School of Architecture, was held in New York City in March. It included lectures and panel discussions among architects, engineers, computer graphic designers, scientists and historians from the U.S. and abroad. The symposium was based on a seminar taught at Pratt by Zehra Kuz, and organized by Kuz and Deborah Gans.**

## CONTRIBUTORS

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**Elizabeth Felicella** lives in New York and photographs architecture and urban landscape. She is presently working on a book project entitled "Idlewild: an Atlas of the Periphery of Kennedy International Airport."

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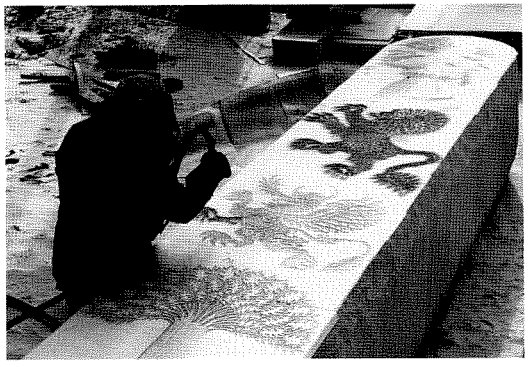
**Michael Pyatok,** FAIA, is a professor at the University of Washington and principal of Pyatok Associates, based in Oakland and Seattle. He is author of *Good Neighbors: The Design of Affordable Family Housing*. His practice serves non-profit organizations and private developers who are building affordable housing, mixed-use developments and community facilities. He studied architecture at Harvard and Pratt.

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# In Defense of Artists

*Ann M. Courtright*



**A master sand blaster creating one of the obelisks for the Radnor Gateways Enhancement Project.**

Photo: **William P. Reimann**

I am concerned that the otherwise excellent articles honoring the Radnor Gateway Enhancement Project (*Places* 12.2) seem to have minimized the work of the artist, William Reimann.

Reimann's work, from myriad sketches that indicated the use and placement of stones and objects, to the design of a town seal, and the ultimate proliferation of that seal's design components in various ways, should be more openly acknowledged.

An artist's work often is critical in the first stages of a project. Reimann's involvement began early in the Radnor project when, based on his experience and reputation as a sculptor in the private sector, he was engaged to inspect the highway site and the township and to propose design concepts and sculptural work that could be implemented successfully.

It was apparent early on that the construction of the highway was creating mountains of rock refuse that would have to be disposed of without negative impact on the site or its neighbors. Recognizing the significance of stones in the history of a town settled by people of Welsh and British ancestry, Reimann realized that many of the larger pieces of rock could be utilized in building a series of evocative works, such as cairns and other stone elements.

Reimann also developed a motif for the other aspect of the project, a design around which the project and townspeople could coalesce. Intrigued by the commercial seal used on police cars of Radnor Township, Reimann redesigned the seal as a work of art. The elements of that design—a lion, a Conestoga wagon, a sheaf of wheat, a griffin and the tree of life—are reflected on the unusually decorative sound barriers above two freeway overpasses, a large, carved obelisk and a remarkable stone griffin on a highway embankment.

Various elements are tributes not only to Reimann's artistic ingenuity but also to his involvement with the construction of the project. The griffin resulted from collaboration with the engineers who helped to position spawls of limestone within the pattern outline. Reimann also directed bulldozer and crane operators in the artistic placement of the stones that constitute the cairn so that they would be returned to the site in a uniquely apt fashion.

Perhaps, in the last analysis, we should applaud the project director, Ronald Lee Fleming, for having the vision and taste to choose artists of Reimann's stature in creating living space that becomes part of the collective conscious of residents and passers-by.

**Ann M. Courtright is a research assistant to William P. Reimann.**

# Uneasy Spaces

## Elizabeth Felicella

Uneasy Spaces is about the landscape of security—about how public places are divided and marked to be shared or protected. Although the project is in part a catalog of public space and recognizable security measures, such as lighting and fencing, ultimately it is more concerned with an emotional register of territoriality, security and even fear as it is manifested in our urban environment.

The survey comprises 140 photographs made in New York City in 1997 and 1998 with a large-format camera. Two problems I faced in organizing the project were how to survey a city as large and varied as New York and how to approach a topic, urban security, that is as much about collective and individual psychology as it is about the built environment. I needed a structure for producing images that was also a mode of inquiry—an experiment that would further push my observations on the subject as well as my own sense of security.

I decided to approach the survey as a mapping project. Assuming that the will for security is a fundamental condition of urban existence, then every location can be viewed as a source of equally valuable information. I choose fifty locations according to a randomly drawn grid that was applied to bus maps from each of the city's five boroughs. I traveled to ten sites in each borough at two different times of year.

Rather than using photography to illustrate what I already knew about security, I was confronted with places that were not always recognizable as having been designed for security, or even as photographic subjects. At times this was itself an uneasy space that required me to expand my visual vocabulary, as well as to trust the process. In the end, just as I found many of New York's uneasy spaces to be its most compelling and also most dynamic, I was happily challenged by the uneasy relationship it forced within my work.

*Uneasy Spaces: Security and the Public Realm was made possible with a fellowship from the Design Trust for Public Space. The project is part of a larger initiative by the Design Trust to examine the problem of securing the city's parks and open spaces for the public without compromising their integrity as places belonging to the public.*





