



BOSTON CONGRESS FOR THE NEW URBANISM PUBLIC LIBRARY

Charter Awards

2017

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Mixed-use, walkable neighborhood development, as defined by the Charter of the New Urbanism, promotes healthier people, places, and economies. The members of CNU and their allies create positive change in communities all over the world. They design and build places people love.

The Charter Awards, administered annually by CNU since 2001, celebrate the best work in this new era of placemaking. The winners not only embody and advance the principles of the Charter—they also make a difference in people's lives.

The Charter identifies three major scales of geography for design and policy purposes. The largest scale is composed of regions. The middle scale is made up of neighborhoods, districts, and corridors. The smallest scale is composed of blocks, streets, and buildings.

Charter Awards are given to projects at each scale, and special recognition is reserved for the best projects at the professional and student levels. Honored by the world's preeminent award for urban design, winners set new standards for placemaking and community building.

Stephanie Bothwell

THE JURY

STEPHANIE BOTHWELL, JURY CHAIR

*Principal, Stephanie Bothwell Urban
and Landscape Design, LLC.*

JENNIFER HURLEY

Principal, Hurley-Franks & Associates

MARGIE RUDDICK

Principal, Margie Ruddick Landscape

DANIEL SOLOMON

Partner, Mithun

SCOT SPENCER

*Associate Director, Annie E. Casey
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AMY WEINSTEIN

Architect, Gensler

JUNE WILLIAMSON

Associate Professor, City College of New York

After visiting my parents' gravesite at the bottom of the hill, I sometimes go to the top of Arlington National Cemetery to visit that of Pierre Charles L'Enfant, the designer of the Washington, DC plan. Last week, looking north along Memorial Bridge to the city, I wondered what L'Enfant would have thought about the events that took place in Washington's public spaces the week of the Charter Awards jury. Within a 24-hour period, we witnessed both the peaceful transition of power in the inauguration of a new President and also the greatest gathering of women in our country's history and perhaps in the world's. I was proud to join in the Women's March along with the great New Urbanists Shelley Poticha and Elizabeth Moule, as well as many others.

That the spaces L'Enfant planned more than 250 years ago came alive in unimaginable and exhilarating ways helps remind us of CNU's place, after 25 years, in the story of urban design and planning. My colleague Dan Solomon shared his perspective of these events and their significance for our movement:

It was impossible not to see these extraordinary spectacles and New Urbanism as deeply related. There could be no grander expression of the value of public space for civil society and the role of architecture in the shaping of public space; Washington does this at all times, but never more heroically than on that memorable day of the Women's March.

The themes of the march—an egalitarian, cosmopolitan and integrated society, equal rights for all, and environmental stewardship together with the overriding spirit of civility of the march resonate all through the Charter of the New Urbanism. On the days following, the Charter Awards jury had the pleasure of seeing its ideals and those of the march reified in a generation of noble projects.

This year's jury, Jennifer Hurley, Margie Ruddick, Scot Spencer, Dan Solomon, Amy Weinstein, June Williamson, and I gathered in CNU's new DC headquarters. Over the course of three days, we reviewed a broad range of projects. The ideals of the Charter could be found at all scales. These ideals were not so much expressed in grand gestures but more in the designers' efforts to be gracious neighbors, responsible caretakers, prudent resource managers, and careful observers. They had tried to allow the ordinary to become extraordinary by letting beauty and resiliency shine through even as they sought to prepare places to participate equitably in the public realm.

Each juror brought a unique perspective on the events of the week, CNU's 25-year history, and the significant themes that sprang up in our discussions of the submittals. Again, I will let one of my colleagues, this time, June Williamson, speak for me and for us all:

I found many of the projects we selected for awards extraordinary in their emphasis—nay, insistence—on enhancing urbanist qualities of the ordinary. At the regional scale, the Placemaking for Mobility plan for Boston smartly identifies a range of tools for use in diverse neighborhoods throughout the city, by both bottom-up and top-down actors. The small-scale interventions in Nebraska, Tennessee, and Colorado each inventively insist on creating places for people to gather and really use our public Main Streets. The selected projects at the building and block scale were each generous in their way to the public realm: opening up a forbidding blank street wall, providing and preserving views, conserving historic structures for new uses, and combining playful housing type design with the provision of beautiful, affordable places to live.

Affordable and public housing have often featured in Charter Award discussions. This year, Scot Spencer kept reminding us of the necessity of equity in the building of successful communities:

There is an inherent beauty in equity. The idea that, despite an uneven set of circumstances that may exist, we design for places which offer all people the same opportunity to experience quality spaces, dignified settings, and accompanying human enjoyment. Equity of experience can be in the public realm and the ability to witness—by sight or touch—the building in the context of its environment or the ability to engage in public discourse about the future of your community. In the private realm, the equity of experience means that the individual experience of place, in addition to offering respite from a sometimes raucous world, affords a person with light, color, texture, and volume that elevates our humanity.

In this year's award recognitions, we considered the role of equity in these and other dimensions as an important element of what makes for quality urbanism. It's reflected in the transparency of the interaction between the public and private, the indistinguishable elegance of housing without seeming regard for the economic status of its residents or the ability of a small town to reclaim its charm from the pressures of development.

Equity is a value worth espousing, exploring, celebrating, and continually challenging ourselves to achieve. The continuing evolution of new urbanism, through the CNU Awards program congratulates these expressions of equity and encourages further exploration into this realm.

As the jury discussed the successful projects, we thought about the inherent qualities that set each one apart, held our attention, and challenged us to see their potential. Margie Ruddick had this to say:

The projects that rose to the top were those with a special sense of place, a resonance and a reason for being that was a step beyond the ordinary and might stand the test of time because they addressed so many layers of concerns and ideas.

We are drawn to projects that are, quite simply, beautiful. What attracts us can be the formal elegance of the urban design studies, or the poetry of the execution—a pure plane of water hovering low over a traditional town square, the rich textures of the paving stones taking on different hues when dry or wet, for instance. On a jury such as the CNU Charter Awards jury, projects that appeal on a purely formal level float immediately to the surface; if they do not engage deeper issues, conditions, or processes, however, they tend to float right back down. Attractive projects that rise above others aim to solve problems. Providing workforce housing, reinventing a strip mall, somehow changing urban conditions to create a more livable, inclusive and resilient city, all of the points on the CNU Charter, give projects meaning, and make the inherent beauty of a scheme more lasting.

Within the CNU as well as in the design professions in general, the issue of resilience has shifted to the foreground in recent years. The individual LEED requirements for sustainably managing storm water, using native plants, and conserving energy, for instance, have been subsumed within the urgent need to address flood waters, rising sea levels, and other large-scale disturbances. One definition of human resilience suggests that it is “the creation of meaning in life, even life that is sometimes painful or absurd, and having the courage to live fully despite its inherent pain and futility.” Projects that offer a vision of life lived fully, in the face of immense challenges, stay in one's mind long after the initial, visceral impact of a beautiful scheme has faded. It's not just the formal skill of a project that makes it beautiful. It is the richness of life you can see in this new place that is emerging.

And finally, it became clear during jury deliberations that we were no longer in the same spot where we began 25 years ago in terms of urban design, architecture, landscape architecture, planning, and the ideals expressed in the Charter. Amy Weinstein's thoughts about current design excellence in the

creation of urban fabric buildings grew into a debate that Dan Solomon summarized below extending his praise for what is now considered the unexceptional:

25 years ago CNU came together around the singular idea that almost everyone had forgotten almost everything about making cities. More than anything, we lamented the debasement of the ordinary; American towns and cities were truly “in de basement.”

The revolution we set out to fight was a reformation of the normative, but awards are by their nature recognition of the exceptional. In the Charter Awards marking 25 years of CNU, much of the ordinary excellence we once hoped to achieve was not awarded precisely because it was no longer exceptional—a weird form of collective triumph.

The few schools that consistently teach the techniques of doing urbanism well, and the firms that provide opportunities for well schooled graduates to do it well are the best hope for American cities, even more than the exceptional, imaginative, poetic projects the Charter Awards recognize for expanding the scope of New Urbanism. So, as we honor the exceptional, let us also celebrate the solid achievements submitted for award of sturdy, livable, sustainable, equitable city fabric as well as the generations of students now equipped to produce them. This is what we dreamed of 25 years ago. Let's make more.

My sincere thanks go to all those who submitted and to all of you who work to bring the Charter to life and to the CNU staff that makes the Awards possible. Also my deepest gratitude to my colleagues on the jury for their collective wisdom, talent, keen eyes, and thoughtfulness, and for sharing their thoughts about our time spent together, the Charter Awards, and the future of CNU. Happy Anniversary CNU!

Stephanie Bothwell



GRAND PRIZE

Boston Public Library

Community-oriented redesign for brutalist landmark building

BLOCK, STREET, AND BUILDING
BOSTON, MASSACHUSETTS – WILLIAM RAWN ASSOCIATES

This 156,000 square foot renovation transforms the inward-facing 1972 wing of Boston Public Library's central location into an inviting urban building that engages the street and forms an outdoor room with community gathering spaces. The renovation honors a landmark building while adapting the library to 21st Century needs.

The brutalist modernism that rose to popularity in the 1960s and 1970s is often forbidding to passersby, with blank walls that pay scant attention to pedestrians. The renovation has proven that such buildings can be reformed while respecting the style and culture of that era. A 40-year-old "architectural challenge" has been resolved with the new design, notes library president David Leonard.

Furthermore, the library's updated wing rejects the notion that our major public buildings need to be walled off in the 21st Century. After the September 11 attacks, many US buildings were turned into virtual fortresses, often at the expense of public life. This building makes the statement that our society is open and accessible—a particularly poignant message in Boston, the site of a terrorist bombing in 2013.

"It's a place where anyone can learn, can develop skills, and can access an incredible universe of resources. It is welcoming,

inclusive, and dynamic space—just like our City ..." says Mayor Martin J. Walsh. "It opens the library up to the street like never before. Now the connection between them will come alive."

The renovation has changed the library into a "space for civic and community gathering," notes Michael Coford, Director of Library Services. "Even with ample seating, there are many times when every seat is taken and visitors need help finding a place to sit. People are drawn to this new space, and once there, they want to spend the entire day." He calls it a "democratic space, a comfortable space, an aesthetically-pleasing space ... a communal space."

The transformation fills a new public room with light and extends the library into the newly-defined shaded public plaza, with tables that encourage passersby to linger. The programming of the redesigned space was carefully considered to address 21st Century library patrons—from toddlers to adults. The doubling of collection circulation and visitor counts since the opening of the renovation highlights the patrons' positive response to the new programming and redesigned space.

"The design is compassionate," says juror Daniel Solomon. "This is not about rejecting the previous generation. It's adapting."



RETURNS

BOOKS

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CHARTER AWARD

Blue Water Workforce Housing

Innovative design for affordable housing

BLOCK, STREET, AND BUILDING
TAVERNIER KEY, FLORIDA – DPZ

Dignified affordable housing that matches the quality and character of market-rate housing—without breaking the bank—is desperately needed across America. One of the most acute shortages is found in the Florida Keys, where restrictive growth management has resulted in very few affordable units being built despite a strong need. The Keys' limited supply of land creates demand for density, which clashes with the low-rise scale of its typical single-story buildings—requiring sophisticated design solutions.

Using a patented system of interlocking single-story courtyard homes, the 36-unit Blue Water Workforce provides a compact, durable, and fully accessible alternative for low-income housing tax-credit units, with rents ranging from \$556 (one bedroom) to \$1,143 (four bedrooms). At 13 units per acre, Blue Water is the “missing middle” of housing density, able to fit comfortably in a neighborhood of single homes.

Only three individual concrete-pad foundations were used, reducing construction costs to \$109 per square foot. Even at this cost, the rhythm of the carefully composed facades gives each home a sense of individuality.

The 2.7-acre plan includes attractive community spaces, such as a triangular green on the north side that doubles as a stormwater retention basin in heavy rains. Even the modest central parking lot has the feel of an outdoor room that is bounded on four sides by residential units.

The design contributes to community surveillance and livability. “I feel totally safe letting my kids play outside,” notes a resident. “It is so easy to watch them out the window.” A community building with laundry, mailboxes, a library/computer lab, and an ample porch with benches and plaza serves as a social hub for residents.

The surrounding community was initially suspicious and even hostile to the new neighbors—but attitudes changed as the project took shape, says architect Eduardo Pardo Fernandez. “As the project went from conception to reality, it was interesting to witness the evolution of neighborhood opinion. Initial ‘fear of the other’ and concern about lower-income, mostly migrant renters bringing real estate values down became admiration for the dignified housing that emerged—superior in quality to many surrounding houses, and the realization that the new residents—teachers, restaurant and hotel wait staff, and service workers—were merely those individuals who make the local economy run.”



CHARTER AWARD

St. Joseph's Redevelopment

Harmony of old and new is a gift to the city

BLOCK, STREET, AND BUILDING
OAKLAND, CALIFORNIA — VAN METER WILLIAMS POLLACK, LLP

A rare combination of National Historic Landmark buildings and infill affordable housing, the St. Joseph's Redevelopment transforms a dilapidated former convent and convalescent home into a mixed-use asset for a distressed city neighborhood.

The unique character of St. Joseph's provides a strong sense of place in Fruitvale, Oakland. Five historic buildings, dramatic trees, and the rumble of the nearby trains contribute to a cohesively designed site that includes new construction, landscaping, and restoration. The neighborhood thoroughfares surrounding the 3.3-acre block are vastly improved, with new entrances, new uses, and more people offering "eyes on the street" at all hours of the day.

St. Joseph's was built in the early 20th Century as a small campus of well-constructed Georgian Revival buildings surrounded by a perimeter masonry wall. When the facility was reused for offices in the 1970s, the design was compromised: The main entry stairs were torn down and the entire site—excluding buildings—was paved for parking. Streets became automobile-oriented and lifeless while the offices sat inactive at nights and on weekends.

Today, the redevelopment provides 146 affordable homes for senior citizens and families, 3,200 square feet of commercial space, and two indoor community spaces. Furthermore, the development adds

much-needed density—approximately 40 units per acre—on a transit corridor.

The main building was healed with a rebuilt entrance. The resilience of the historic structures is proven by their affordable regeneration into new and unexpected uses. This is exemplified by the small, freestanding, brick guardhouse—which was converted into an art room next to the children's play area.

The new building architecture is purposefully understated. A simple massing with punched openings neither conflicts with nor detracts from the historic structures. The design preserves views of, and lines up with, historic buildings. The scale is modulated with entries, modest balconies, simple cornice lines, and enough rhythm and variety to capture the interest of passersby.

The old perimeter wall has also been restored, sometimes even forming the base of new buildings. It becomes a unifying element to the design—but never a barrier to the surrounding neighborhood.

"This ground-breaking development is expected to trigger redevelopment in the community while also providing affordable housing for seniors and the families who will reside in this transformative, multi-generational housing campus," says US Rep. Barbara Lee, congresswoman from Oakland.





CHARTER AWARD

Boston Public Realm Plan

Reclaiming streets for people

METROPOLIS, CITY, AND TOWN
BOSTON, MASSACHUSETTS – STANTEC

When fragmented development and neglect for civic spaces leads to the loss of “organic community,” the situation calls for a public realm that creates a new generation of “third places.” Thanks to an innovative new Guide to Placemaking for Mobility, Boston can accomplish that across the more than 800 miles of roadway maintained by the Boston Transportation Department (BTD).

The Guide to Placemaking for Mobility, a public-private initiative adopted by BTD as part of the city’s Go Boston 2030 plan, offers a matrix of strategies and community-driven activities to reclaim streets for people.

As the guide points out, Boston’s streets comprise hundreds of thousands of acres of publicly owned open space, many of which can be improved to make a real impact on neighborhoods. Sidewalks, plazas, and incidental excess space can often be transformed into vibrant cultural and civic places.

The guide connects “infrastructure and transportation funding with projects and design initiatives that do more than just incrementally help people get around—we’re empowering ourselves to extend the impact of our investments into the city’s social, cultural, and civic vitality of our citizens and visitors,” says Chris Osgood, a member of the mayor’s cabinet.

The tool ascribes a high value to places that encourage social exchanges and connections between people, cultural expression, and accessibility are valued by the new tool, which provides metrics to analyze success (e.g. does this place feel inviting, does it encourage social interaction?).

While a wealthy city, Boston has lower-income neighborhoods that have often been overlooked. This plan allows communities of all kinds to decide what placemaking tools are right for them. The guide also offers a menu of tactical approaches to test ideas quickly.

“This tool will enable us to implement as many as three major tactical urbanism projects this year that tap local creative talent, reflect our City’s great diversity, and serve as a global model for innovative design and urbanism,” notes Vineet Gupta, Director of Policy and Planning for BTD.

Widely recognized strategies like streetscape improvements, new plazas and greens, and traffic-calming techniques are bolstered by less well-known amenities including public games, workout stations, public art projects, community events, and pop-up elements like “parklets” and seasonal installations.

Above all, the plan commits to a vision of streets in cities as public spaces, rather than just pipes for mobility. This citywide guide empowers citizens and officials with the tools to knit together a large and diverse city.

CHARTER AWARD

San Cristobal City Hall

Grand new plaza highlights history

BLOCK, STREET, AND BUILDING
SAN CRISTOBAL, CHIAPAS, MEXICO — C CUBICA ARQUITECTOS

A dilapidated former municipal building, embodying decades of history in the historic Mexican city of San Cristobal, has been converted into a civic museum complete with an elegant and dignified new plaza.

“Making the City Hall a museum was an extraordinary shift,” says Susana Utrilla, cultural delegate in San Cristobal. “Once closed to the public and deteriorated by misuse, the building was in desperate need of a revival. Today, I can bring my grandchildren and show them the greatness of our culture, and be proud of our legacy as inhabitants of this great place.”

When government offices were moved in 2014 from the 1885 neoclassical City Hall to a new building, the change was controversial—but it created an opportunity. The public space in front of the building was designed as a private garden, but it cried out to be a grand plaza.

The restoration of the plaza named “Parque de los Heroes” was crucial to the success of the project. Such central public spaces are key to Mexican cities,

and they play a central role in commerce and recreation. The revival of the plaza highlights the former City Hall as a cultural and historical monument.

The plaza is appropriate to the scale of the building and makes an entrancing entrance. The play of the fountain with the building in the background is magical at night and during the day as well. A gossamer glass appendage, which houses a new staircase, mixes modern design with the classical building gracefully. That contrast is carried over to the clean modern lines of the fountain and plaza.

The Tuscan and Roman Doric former municipal building was used for years without proper maintenance and suffered earthquake damage—leading to the decline of its original splendor. Renovations over the years did not respect the architecture, including the disappearance of the original plaster tone and the construction of staircases that obstructed the portico corridor. The restoration brings back the grandeur, and that careful design is carried through to the details of the interior, including the furniture choices of the city history museum.





CHARTER AWARD

Plaza La Reina

A timeless and artful building

BLOCK, STREET, AND BUILDING
LOS ANGELES, CALIFORNIA — MOULE & POLYZOIDES,
ARCHITECTS AND URBANISTS

The timeless and artful mass of Plaza La Reina, with its wide steps opening onto the street corner like a gift to the neighborhood looks like it should have been part of Westwood Village from the beginning. Los Angeles Mayor Eric Garcetti referred to it as an “architectural jewel in Westwood’s crown.”

“The courtyard, sheltered from the street, serves as an outdoor living room to savor the mild Los Angeles climate,” notes Laura Lake, co-president of the neighborhood organization Save Westwood Village. “The rooftop terrace and banquet room provide a romantic venue for social events with a view of the lights of Westwood twinkling below. This is true placemaking.”

Using stepped-up height and massing, the new hotel creates a graceful transition from two-story residential on one side to a modern high-rise office building on the other. While the western part of the building pulls back from the street slightly to match the residential units on the next block, the eastern half continues the mixed-use street wall of taller buildings at the center of Westwood.

Plaza La Reina is within a block of the planned METRO Westwood station. It meets the goals of SB375, a California state law aimed at reducing greenhouse gas emissions, by intensifying land use around transit stations. Lindbrook Drive is part of the city’s Great Streets program, and the building adds to the appeal and unique character of the thoroughfare.

The two-building massing, and the complex roof profile, are complemented by a ground floor design that encourages experiencing the building close up. The entrance to the hotel, classical details of the shopfront, and remarkable steps to the courtyard contribute to the unique pedestrian-scale character of the neighborhood.

Westwood Village is a pre-World War II development that was built in the form of a neighborhood. While the residential areas remain intact, the center has been disfigured by the construction of too many large-scale buildings due to the adjacent UCLA campus. Plaza La Reina is designed to offer a new model that respects the character and local architecture—while still providing density and mixed-use as appropriate to the location near transit.

Keeping History Above Water

Harnessing civil engineering for placemaking and preservation

NEIGHBORHOOD, DISTRICT, AND CORRIDOR
NEWPORT, RHODE ISLAND – UNION STUDIO ARCHITECTURE
& COMMUNITY DESIGN

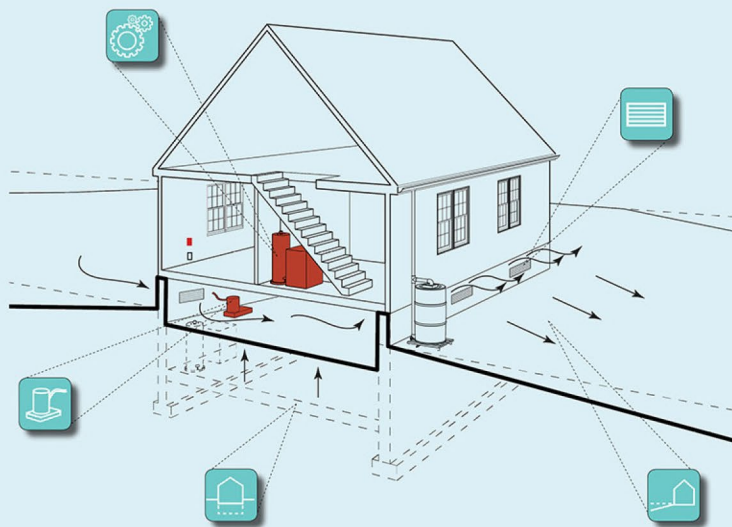


DECREASE PRESSURE USING STRATEGIES AT RESIDENTIAL LOTS

- Install rain barrels
- Install cisterns
- Create rain gardens
- Install dry wells

STORMWATER NEXT STEP: DEVELOP STORMWATER BEST PRACTICE GUIDE FOR HOMEOWNERS

- Calibrate techniques and details for implementation in historic districts
- Coordinate techniques and implementation with district-wide design guidelines



In Newport, Rhode Island, the tide is rising. Local sea levels at high tide have risen eight inches in the past 75 years, threatening neighborhoods like The Point, which has a combination of history, charm, and walkability that is unique and irreplaceable. Neighborhoods in Newport's flood zones generate more than half of the tax revenues for the city.

Keeping History Above Water examines short-, mid-, and long-term solutions for low-lying neighborhoods that could be achieved through a combination of policy changes, design standards, sensitive architectural intervention, and innovative engineering. Using both The Point and a recently acquired historic house as case studies, the plan explores small-to large-scale interventions that harness civil engineering in the service of placemaking. Strategies for the house include:

- Filling the basement approximately three feet, bringing the floors above current high tide levels.
- Ventilating the new crawl space to prevent moisture damage.
- Raising electrical wiring and outlets above flood levels.
- Elevating the kitchen wing to the elevation of the main house.
- Regrading the site so that flood waters drain away from the house.

Many of the lessons can also be applied to less wealthy coastal communities throughout Rhode Island and other states.

A significant portion of this study revolves around the management and treatment of stormwater in the neighborhood. Much of the flooding that plagues Newport results from shortcomings in stormwater infrastructure. This proposal suggests the adoption of integrated, native, landscape-driven "passive" stormwater management as a way to decrease pressure on the existing infrastructure.

The study brought together architects, engineers, planners, landscape architects, historians, and preservationists, along with city staff, a nonprofit preservation organization, citizens, and members of a neighborhood association. Together, they participated in an innovative design and policy charrette to develop strategies dealing with sea level rise and the increasing frequency of storm events.

"Thousands of Rhode Island's historic resources are at risk from increased flooding and sea level rise," notes Edward Sanderson, executive director of Rhode Island's Preservation and Heritage Commission. "Keeping History Above Water: Planning for Sea Level Rise in Newport's Historic Point Neighborhood has helped our State's Preservation & Heritage Commission and affected communities better understand the problem and evaluate potential solutions."

CHARTER AWARD

Park Van Ness

A gift of nature and architecture

BLOCK, STREET, AND BUILDING
WASHINGTON, DC — TORTI GALLAS + PARTNERS

This beautiful Art Deco building is a striking addition to a major urban thoroughfare, terminating a vista at the end of a cross street with a grand, two-story archway that leads into a 5,000 square foot public plaza overlooking an important urban park. The six-story, 271-unit apartment Park Van Ness building, which features ground-floor retail, even sits near a transit stop on Connecticut Avenue in Washington, DC.

The building acknowledges the vista with a view of nature framed by architecture that makes the pedestrian experience more interesting by breaking up the large building into two halves. The street-level view of the park's magnificent tree canopies, highly visible because of a drop in grade, is a gift to the community.

The archway and plaza added considerable expense—because the building required two elevators—but developer BF Saul and the design team decided the community benefits outweighed the cost.

Connecticut Avenue is a major thoroughfare through Northwest Washington leading downtown, lined by residential buildings and mixed-use districts with stops on the DC Metro's Red Line. The Van Ness urban node is

close to Rock Creek Park—but prior to this building's construction, Connecticut Avenue in Van Ness had no visual connection to the urban green space.

Options for walking, bicycling, and transit are plentiful—as is on-street parking—and so Park Van Ness includes fewer than one parking space per unit. A courtyard faces the primary thoroughfare.

“CNU recognizes good urban architecture, and this is some of the best that I have seen—it's a big urban gesture,” says architect and jury member Daniel Solomon.

Neighbor Justin Wood appreciates the contribution to place. “The Art Deco styling of the building feels like it's been in the neighborhood for a much longer time than a few months. It feels natural mixed in with other older buildings.”

Great care was given to maintain the “art” in the Art Deco language. Numerous custom decorative pre-cast panels throughout the main facade evoke themes from the adjacent park. Additionally, two custom sculptures were commissioned which bookend the archway into the park. Custom paintings, also inspired by the park, are placed throughout the public spaces.





CHARTER AWARD

Parsons Alley

Building on the past, looking to the future

BLOCK, STREET, AND BUILDING

DULUTH, GEORGIA — KRONBERG WALL ARCHITECTS/PLANNERS

As downtowns and urban neighborhoods thrive across America, city managers outside city centers have begun to ask, “How do we reinvent the suburbs?” Building on that extensive body of knowledge, Parsons Alley, the public-private redevelopment of an infill site, offers answers in a small suburban city 10 miles northeast of Atlanta.

In addition to its handsome design, Parsons Alley activates abandoned properties, creates a popular and lively new public place, and attracts businesses that appeal to young professionals.

The project reuses a 1904 bank and a circa-1940 church and preacher’s home, and it built new structures on the scale of former warehouses to create an entertainment district that fits the character of Duluth. The development is the culmination of a fifteen-year planning process for the former railroad town overtaken by suburban growth in the 20th Century.

“Parsons Alley is serving as a true a catalyst for redevelopment and has already sparked over a hundred million dollars of private residential projects within the downtown core,” notes James Riker, Economic Development Director for the City.

The 3-acre infill site has seen many uses, including an active retail and distribution businesses that died after a mall was built

in the 1980s. The municipality occupied the church as a city hall from the 1970s to 2008, when the offices were moved. The city purchased nearly all of the properties a decade ago and has since been landlord and then master developer. One proposed mixed-use project fell through in the housing crash of 2008.

Duluth leaders had a vision of a mix of old and new buildings that retain the scale of historic buildings on the site—with the goal of creating an exciting destination with quality restaurants. To achieve this, the city sold commercial lots and retained ownership of the public realm. That led to a partnership with Vantage Realty and Fabric Developers, who hired the winning architecture and urban design team.

The project includes six commercial buildings—including a barbecue restaurant, chocolatier, brew pub, and other shops—grouped around a new square. The town previously lacked such a public space. Now, because of the design, children can roam freely without parents fearing for their safety.

“In Duluth we recognize the aspect of urbanism that reflects local culture and encourages social interaction,” says Mayor Nancy Harris. “Places that are culturally and regionally authentic almost always appeal to the local population and visitor alike.”



CHARTER AWARD

Westside Atlanta Plan

Revitalization rooted in place

NEIGHBORHOOD, DISTRICT, AND CORRIDOR
ATLANTA, GEORGIA – THADANI ARCHITECTS + URBANISTS

The Land Use Action Plan for Atlanta's Westside builds on the history and tremendous potential of Atlanta's Westside. While remaining appropriately critical of past planning decisions that have isolated this sector, the Westside Atlanta Plan is rooted in the history of a place that was a cradle of the civil rights movement.

Five Historic Black Schools and Universities have their campuses in the Westside, which was home to Martin Luther King Jr., Julian Bond, and other civil rights leaders. Yet the area now claims the worst statistics per capita in Georgia for drug use, illiteracy, teenage pregnancy, high school dropout rates, domestic violence, murder, and deaths by overdose. These once thriving neighborhoods have seen disinvestment, destruction, and depopulation.

For the Westside Atlanta Plan, the goal is to regenerate 1,700 acres of blighted historic urban fabric less than one mile from downtown while also enhancing a sense of place—and building affordable housing.

The plan envisions 3,250 new housing units, more than half of them affordable—including 20 percent earmarked for residents with incomes from zero to 30 percent of area median income. Subsidized housing is made possible through private enterprises that are underwriting the financing gap.

Streets are crucial to placemaking, and Westside's have been systematically severed from downtown. The Action Plan requires the City to repair 20 percent of the streets in the sector with dedicated capital funds. The main east-west corridors, Martin Luther King Jr. Drive and Joseph E. Boone Boulevard are already budgeted for improvements. The recent closing of MLK Jr. Drive to build the new \$1.6 billion football stadium was an egregious mistake, the plan notes.

Westside Atlanta proposes a roundabout to move traffic to the south of the stadium and reestablish a downtown link. The roundabout is the focus of mixed-use development that will serve as a gateway to the Vine City neighborhood and the Atlanta University Center.

Additionally, Westside neighborhoods flood regularly due to past engineering and development choices. The plan shows how to improve stormwater management through complete streets and new parks. A new form-based code would preserve neighborhood character and ensure community-oriented development.

"Thomas Edison once said that 'Ideas without execution are a hallucination. The Westside Future Fund will now champion the execution of the great ideas embedded in the Land Use Action Plan,'" said John Ahmann, Executive Director of the Westside Future Fund.

CHARTER AWARD

Plan NoBe

Building on local assets for resilience

NEIGHBORHOOD, DISTRICT, AND CORRIDOR
MIAMI BEACH, FLORIDA – DOVER, KOHL & PARTNERS

For the Miami Beach, FL neighborhood of North Beach, climate change, historic preservation, affordable housing, and walkability are all interrelated issues. Now, Plan NoBe has provided a blueprint for new development grounded in existing culture that showcases what is great about the community.

In late 2016, as a direct result of the 1,100-acre Plan NoBe, more than 300 historic structures— including stellar examples of the “Miami Modern” style built between 1930 and 1960—were protected through the creation of three historic districts.

Miami Modern is a unique, regional style of modernism, standing in stark contrast with the uniform International Style that prevailed over much of the world. Its protection is justified on cultural grounds, but the issue transcends architecture. More than 5,000 units of workforce housing, threatened with demolition, were also saved as part of that effort.

With accelerating tidal flooding in Miami Beach, rising seas pose both an immediate and long-term peril. Plan NoBe sets the stage for higher construction standards to withstand sea-level rise—while strengthening defenses like sea walls, mangrove islands, and barrier beaches.

Unlike South Beach, NoBe lacks a walkable center. Regulatory changes, including form-based standards and higher height limits, were adopted to allow for mixed-use development and a new town center. The plan paves the way for a walkable, human-scale street and has led to immediate proposals for new development.

One key to success of the plan was strong public engagement. “Having worked in government for over 25 years, it was incredible to witness the level of public involvement in the Plan NoBe effort,” says Jeffrey Orvis, Miami Beach Director of Economic Development.

The Charter of the New Urbanism is addressed in five key ways. A new town center will serve as the heart of the community. Residents and tourists will have more choice in transportation. Neighborhoods will be protected and enhanced, while public lands will be better utilized, including adaptation of existing civic buildings and conversion of an underused parking lot into a park. And equally important, new buildings will be built to last.

“The Master Plan is a visionary and an aspirational statement,” says Philip Levine, Mayor of Miami Beach. “I am excited for this incredible vision.”





MERIT AWARD

The Storefront Theater

Local innovation makes Main Street a town square

SMALL-SCALE INTERVENTIONS
LYONS, NEBRASKA — MATTHEW MAZZOTTA

In the small town of Lyons, Nebraska, Main Street has suffered indignities not unlike those seen in many communities across America: closed shops, lost customers, declining population, and distant big-box stores.

In 2015, thanks to the ingenuity of a conceptual artist and the work of local craftspeople, The Storefront Theater was installed in a vacant brick façade. First, the wall was modified with two hydraulic pump arms. A false front and awning were installed to fold down over the sidewalk with the push of a button, providing seating for 100.

Typically, a movie screen is pulled into the middle of the street with a tractor to complement the seating. In the process, Main Street becomes the town square, a focal point for the community once again—a fitting sight in this prairie settlement, population 851, about 50 miles from Omaha.

Since the opening, the catalytic theater has hosted movie screenings, video game nights, an anti-bullying event, and music concerts. The new energy brought by the venue has inspired another Lyons native to purchase the empty building next to the theater and turn into an art gallery that had its first show in 2016.

The project was conceived when Matthew Mazzotta, the recipient of an Artplace America grant, placed an “outdoor living room” on Main Street to capture stories and ideas from residents, who fondly remembered a once-thriving downtown and expressed a strong desire to revive community life. One participant pointed out a downtown building that was only a storefront—a wall with no building behind it. That spot became the project site.

As the community pulled together to build the retractable theater, a local retired postman and amateur filmmaker volunteered to make a documentary on the history of Lyons’ downtown for the venue’s opening night. More than 100 people in Lyons volunteered to take part in the film, donning period costumes and driving their own vintage cars.

“Too often we think that you have to go to the big city to get your arts and culture fix. This project is about demonstrating that we can and do have interesting arts and cultural infrastructure in small towns,” said Brian Depew of the Center for Rural Affairs. “If we can do this in Lyons, Nebraska, it can be done anywhere.”

MERIT AWARD

Small Town Tactics

Test-driving a road diet

SMALL-SCALE INTERVENTIONS
AVON, COLORADO — DESIGN WORKSHOP

Seeing may be believing, according to the old adage, but doing can be even more instructive. That's the idea behind Small Town Tactics, a set of temporary streetscape improvements undertaken in the mountain town of Avon, Colorado, where the primary commercial street suffers from overly long crossing distances, wide travel lanes that allow cars to speed, and a lack of street trees and bike lanes.

Founded as a tiny railroad village, Avon has grown since 1980 into a modern ski resort destination with mostly suburban-style streets. On Beaver Creek Boulevard, a major east-west corridor typical of the area's network, three quarters of the right-of-way is devoted to automobile travel.

In visioning exercises, citizens of Avon have pictured the thoroughfare as a more walkable and bicycle-friendly street with reduced vehicle speeds to support public life in the town center. For Small Town Tactics, a team built a walkable streetscape almost overnight. Using temporary landscaping, tubular markers, and color paint designs, the team narrowed travel lanes, reduced the size of intersections, created bulb-outs, and provided dedicated bike lanes and on-street parking.

The test was carried out during the summer of 2016 and followed by a September meeting to get public feedback. Nearly every resident in Avon was aware of the

project. The public was engaged with signage, walking tours, meetings, public comment emails, and digital preference voting. In civic environments where change is often met with opposition, temporary small-scale interventions can help evaluate the validity of design ideas and build momentum for catalytic change.

Already, the project is gaining momentum with local developers. A new infill project is planned along the corridor that will increase density and eliminate unnecessary surface parking. In addition, the Town is carrying out an economic plan with form-based design guidelines to attract additional development and further activate the street.

"I believe the new layout will positively impact the speeds and safety along Beaver Creek Boulevard," said one Avon resident. "If we complete the landscaping islands and redesigned curbs, the look of our 'next to Main' Street will be incredible."

By painting the developed alternative first, all users of the street could experience the proposed changes, says Virginia Egger, town manager. The town learned critical information to adjust the design for final implementation—for example, back-in angle parking was eliminated due to unpopularity.

In the summer of 2017, Avon plans to break ground on permanent streetscape improvements.



MERIT AWARD

Envision Broadway

Better 'honky tonk' urbanism

SMALL-SCALE INTERVENTIONS

NASHVILLE, TENNESSEE — METRO NASHVILLE PLANNING DEPARTMENT

Lower Broadway in Nashville is a major arterial in the heart of the famous “honky tonk” district, with restaurants and bars offering live music. Many modes of traffic, including cars, delivery trucks, buses, taxis, Ubers, and Lyfts, mix and compete with pedestrians, who have inadequate sidewalk space.

The Envision Broadway Demonstration Project tests playful and colorful streetscape features that take space away from vehicles and share it with people outside of cars—all while gauging public interest in permanent improvements to the public realm.

The first six-week demonstration, between First and Second Avenues, expanded the “people space” on both sides of the street, including a 17-foot-deep plaza on the south side of the block with colorful café tables, picnic tables, Adirondack chairs, benches, bike racks, and umbrellas. The dingy gray asphalt was painted bright blue.

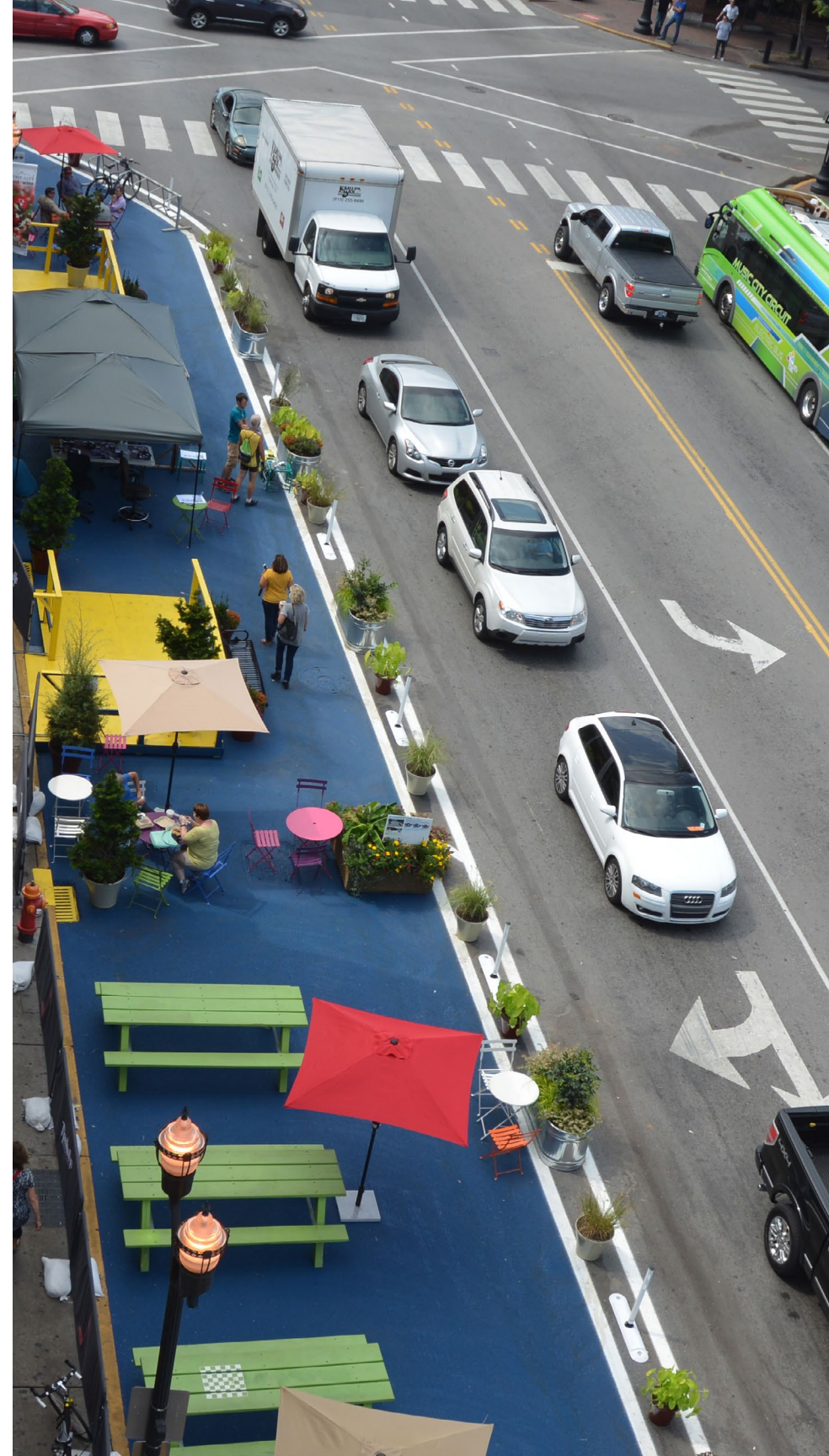
The transformed block still featured four lanes of traffic, so adequate vehicle space was maintained—but the allocation of the public realm was more balanced, reflecting the abundance of pedestrians on Lower Broadway. A two-foot strip of

landscaping with heavy planters and tubular markers protected the diners, loungers, and pedestrians, all while maintaining a sense of openness to the street.

Envision Broadway is one step in a long-term plan to permanently transform the thoroughfare. The low-cost, phased approach presents low risk while potentially offering a high reward. With a short-term commitment and realistic expectations, planners, elected officials, and citizens can experience a simplified version of a larger vision.

“The redesign has the added benefit of improved placemaking,” said one local resident. “The softening of the space though the redesign will make it far more attractive than its current state and Lower Broadway becomes a better experience and destination in and of itself.”

The city is now evaluating a permanent shared space design. “Lower Broadway is at the heart of our city both physically and culturally,” says Mayor Megan Barry. “It’s where the music plays and where people want to be. It’s one of the busiest streets for pedestrians that you’ll find anywhere, and it needs to be fun, safe, and easy to navigate for everyone.”



Student Awards



STUDENT GRAND PRIZE

Ubuntu in Umbumbulu

Renewing hope from house to village

NEIGHBORHOOD, DISTRICT, AND CORRIDOR

ETHEKWINI MUNICIPALITY, KWAZULU-NATAL, SOUTH AFRICA

ANDREWS UNIVERSITY, SCHOOL OF ARCHITECTURE & INTERIOR DESIGN

When a student at Andrews University returned to his native South Africa to design a low-cost house for a needy family, his journey sparked an eight-day public charrette and design process in eThekweni Municipality—about 25 miles from the city center of Durban.

The student's classmates and university joined the effort, which ultimately yielded an 80-acre whole-village plan in collaboration with the local Zulu tribal authority, municipal representatives, a nonprofit organization, high school students, and citizens. An authentic vision that respects local culture, the community-oriented design connects deeply with the villagers. "Now I get it! A house is not an island. It is all interconnected," said one Umbumbulu African National Congress counselor who participated in the charrette.

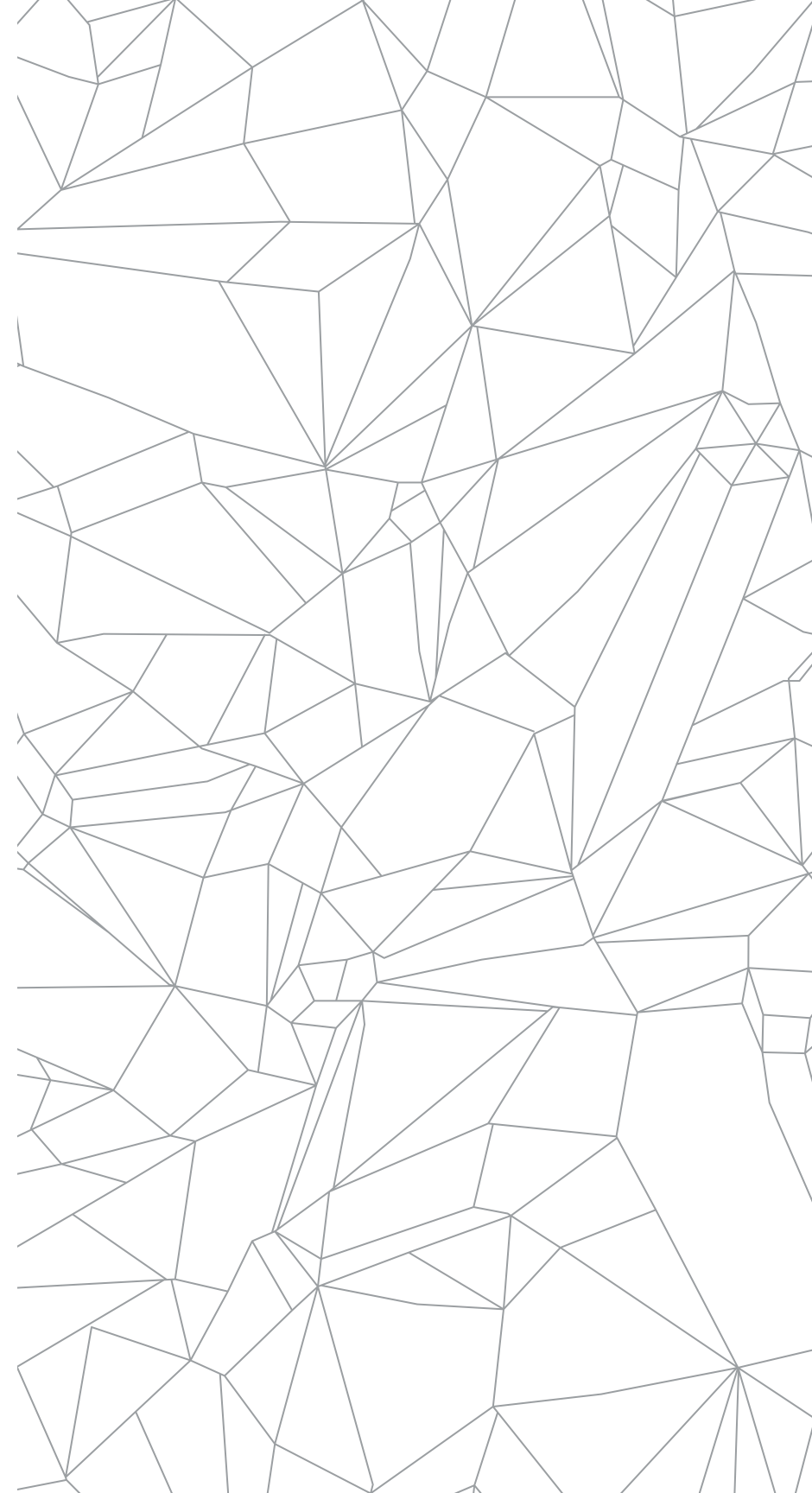
Engagement by a diverse array of Umbumbulu residents—including the poorest, youngest, oldest, and weakest—imbued the design process with clarity, understanding, and a full awareness of the possibilities, according to the team. "The Umbumbulu high school students especially impressed our team with their ability to explain how the curb radius of the highway impacted vehicle speed and therefore the quality of life and economic activity in the community," the report authors said.

The live-work Ubuntu house is a kit-built structure that uses traditional Zulu crafts and building techniques, is adjustable for diverse urban conditions, and enables future growth, outdoor life, and entrepreneurship. By placing the house closer to the street, the students enabled better use of the lot and "eyes on the street"—a Jane Jacobs concept that struck a chord with villagers.

The team created a design for a village square that is inspired by historic Zulu kraals and positioned to connect with local agriculture, ecotourism, education, and tribal authority. The place with the best views in the village is designed as a much-needed soccer field, a new library, meeting hall, and church ministries.

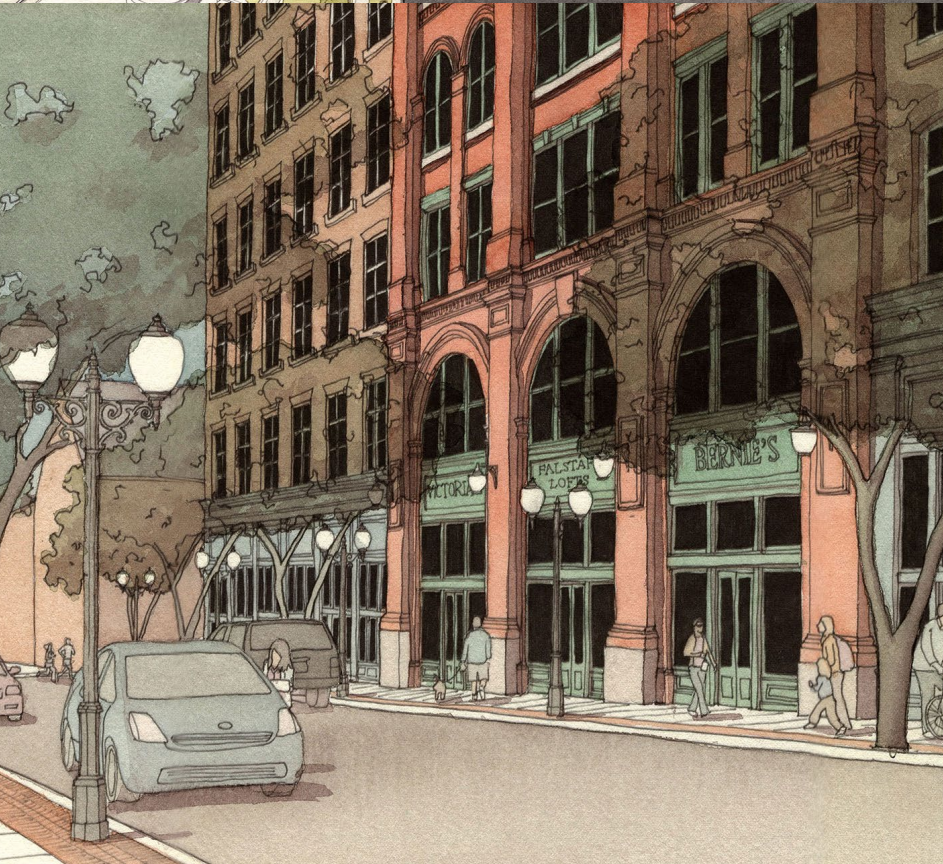
The historic main thoroughfare suffers from car-oriented engineering, but the plan shows how it could be realistically transformed as a place for people, social connections, and revitalized retail.

Existing government facilities are currently fortified with inhospitable fences, creating blank walls on the street. A new strategy would activate these walls with vendor stalls, tuck shops, and seating—providing a more humane frontage.









STUDENT MERIT AWARD

Building Durable Wealth

Redeveloping in-city freeway corridors

NEIGHBORHOOD, DISTRICT, AND CORRIDOR
PROVIDENCE, RHODE ISLAND – THE UNIVERSITY OF NOTRE DAME
GRADUATE URBAN DESIGN STUDIO

An extraordinary example of student work in a real-world context, Building Durable Wealth addresses two areas in Providence that were impacted by freeways: The 195 Redevelopment District, the site of a former in-city freeway, and the 6/10 Connector, the site of an existing freeway through Providence's west side that borders multiple neighborhoods.

The 360-acre plan promotes walkable, mixed-use neighborhoods with a range of housing types and price points at densities that will support better transit service. The plan also shows how new incremental development could provide parks and retail to serve existing residents and 1,500 to 2,000 new homes.

Like many cities in the mid-20th Century, Providence built limited-access highways through its historic center. As these highways come to the end of their useful life, Providence must decide whether to rebuild them at great expense or tear them down and re-urbanize their rights-of-way to reconnect urban neighborhoods.

Nine years ago, the portion of I-195 freeway that separated Downtown Providence from The Jewelry District was demolished. Since then, the state-authorized I-195 Redevelopment District Commission has recovered 26 acres of prime urban land in 22 irregular blocks, for which they have arranged developer-friendly financing to attract big-ticket construction projects.

The commission has targeted institutions engaged in medical and scientific research and development, but the development programs involve block-sized buildings with large floor plates, lots of exterior glass, and "gizmo-green" technology. An out-of-state developer recently made a break-all-the-rules proposal for three downtown residential high-rises on one of the parcels—including a tower more than twice the height of the tallest building in Providence.

The 6/10 Connector provides irregular opportunities for development. Due to topography, a boulevard is not feasible, the team found—so, instead, the plan recommends a 35 mph parkway that features better street and bridge connections, helping to link neighborhoods on both sides. The parkway would allow recreational amenities and mixed-use development to be built in strategic locations.

The artfully illustrated context-sensitive approach of Building Durable Wealth represents a return to the building and finance techniques that created the most beloved parts of historic Providence. This is achieved through subdividing the new blocks into smaller lots and encouraging updated versions of durable "background building" types that are based on the city's best building traditions—adapted to modern institutional programs.

Guadalupe Hirian

New town of timeless urbanism

NEIGHBORHOOD, DISTRICT, AND CORRIDOR
HONDARRIBIA, SPAIN – UNIVERSITY OF MIAMI



In Guadalupe Hirian, a historic fort near the France–Spain border forms the site of a proposed new town—an extension of the City of Hondarribia. This outstanding student plan explores how to establish a town that responds to local history and builds on sound urban practices.

The proposal of a compact, 35-acre mixed-use “village on a hill” adds to the sense of place and celebrates the Basque history of the region. The principles of timeless urbanism as described by Camillo Sitte and Leon Krier are the means to that end.

The defunct fort, Fuerte de Guadalupe de Hondarribia, is a tourist destination. The City is interested in enhancing the already existing historical site by adding a museum. Because the site is picturesque and the changing local culture is better understood through the proximity of living and working inhabitants, Hondarribia has proposed to develop the location as a city extension.

The new town relates integrally to an existing medieval context, including:

- A range of pedestrian-oriented destinations.
- Views that lead to each public space.
- Public spaces strung together.
- Irregularly shaped spaces rather than very formal geometric spaces.
- A flexible master plan to accommodate incremental growth.

The study of historic Hondarribia yielded precedent in block sizes, street networks and sections, and public space design. Also, existing city buildings and the design of the fort itself provide design inspiration. The new town design incorporates an understanding of the urban spaces that establish the appropriate scales and architecture that engages the history and context while allowing for the innovation of contemporary lifestyles.

Ultimately, Guadalupe Hirian’s new town plan surrounds the historic fort in a way that appears organic to the site and is respectful of culture and history.



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