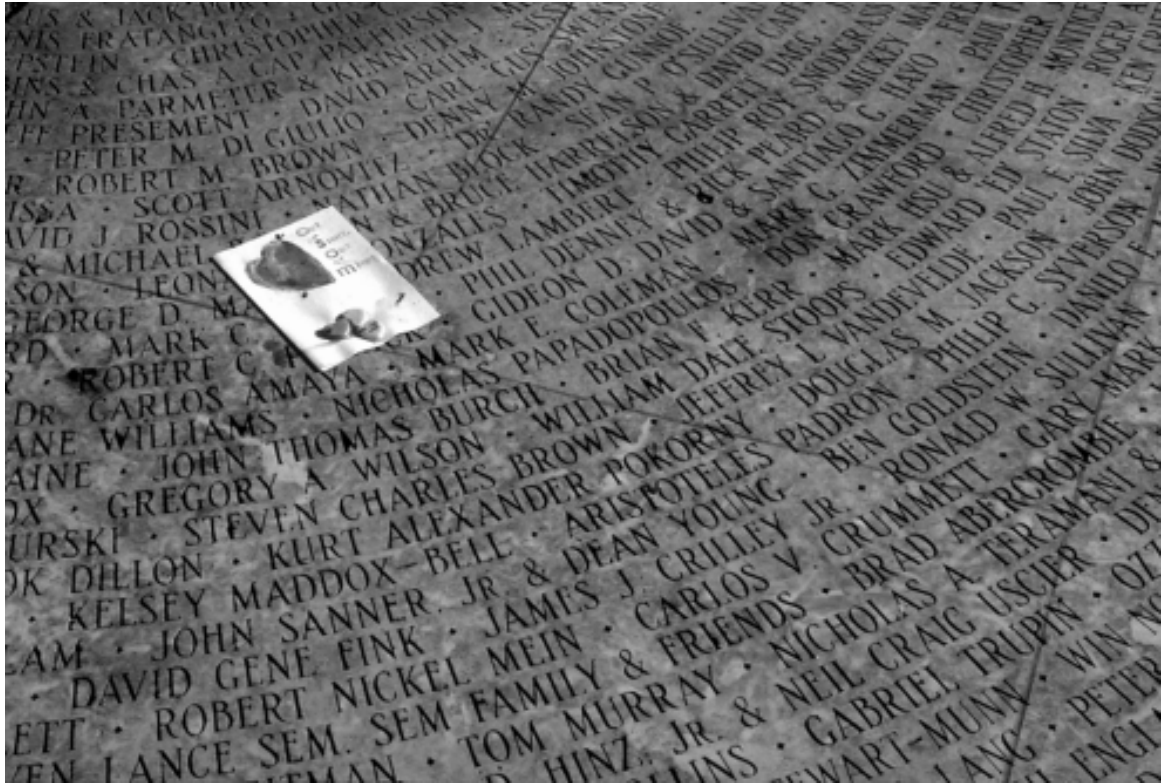


1999 Rudy Bruner Award

SILVER
medal winner



NATIONAL AIDS MEMORIAL GROVE

San Francisco, California

This is an excerpt from:

COMMITMENT TO PLACE:
URBAN EXCELLENCE & COMMUNITY

BRUNER FOUNDATION, INC.

ROBERT SHIBLEY

with

EMILY AXELROD, JAY FARBSTEIN, AND RICHARD WENER

1999 RUDY BRUNER AWARD FOR URBAN EXCELLENCE

Graphic Design:
Caronchi Industries
14 Sullivan Street
Charlestown, MA 02129
www.caronchi.com

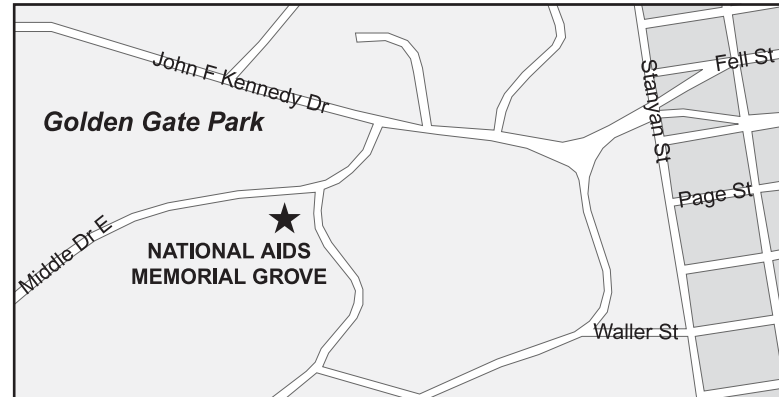
Library of Congress Catalog Card Number: 99-76056
ISBN: 1-890286-02-8

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SILVER MEDAL WINNER

National AIDS Memorial Grove



NATIONAL AIDS MEMORIAL GROVE AT A GLANCE

WHO MADE THE SUBMISSION?

- National AIDS Memorial Grove; Thom Weyand, Executive Director.

WHAT IS THE NATIONAL AIDS MEMORIAL GROVE?

- A living memorial for the use and benefit of the public and especially of all people whose lives have been touched by the AIDS epidemic.
- A 7.5-acre dell in the east end of Golden Gate Park, formerly derelict and unused, which has been restored and re-integrated into the Park for enjoyment by the public.
- A venue for monthly volunteer workdays that bring together many communities to build and maintain the Grove, to remember those who have died by participating in a monthly ritual, and to provide comfort and support to the living.
- A national memorial of the loss caused by AIDS in San Francisco and around the country.
- A public-private partnership that has secured public parkland on a long-term basis, that has generated ongoing community stewardship, and whose maintenance is intended to be funded in perpetuity.



NATIONAL
AIDS
MEMORIAL
GROVE

CHRONOLOGY

- 1988**
Small group convenes to discuss creating a living memorial for those who have died of AIDS.
- 1989-1990**
Discussion begins with Golden Gate Park about designating an appropriate space.
- 1991**
De Laveaga Dell, an overgrown, neglected 7.5-acre space in the east end of the park, is selected. Cleaning and weeding begins at groundbreaking, launching monthly volunteer workdays. Capital campaign (Circle of Friends) begins.
- 1994**
A 99-year lease agreement signed with San Francisco Recreation and Park Department. An endowment to cover the gardener's salary and maintenance becomes a goal.
- 1996**
Congress and the President confer national status on the Grove (the only AIDS memorial so designated).
- 1998**
Phase II of endowment campaign (Ensure Remembrance) commences.

KEY PARTICIPANTS

Individuals who were interviewed are marked with an asterisk [*]

Grove Administrative Staff

*Thom Weyand, Executive Director, NAMG

Board of Directors

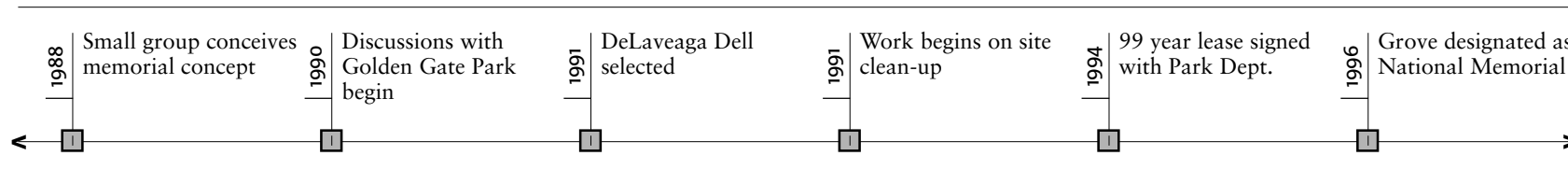
- *Alice Russell-Shapiro, Board of Directors
- David Linger, Founding Chair, Board of Directors
- *Jack Porter, Board of Directors
- *Larry Colton, Board of Directors
- *Gina Gatta, Board of Directors
- Mike Kurokawa, Board of Directors
- *Len Weise, Board of Directors

US Government

*Hon. Nancy Pelosi, Congresswoman

City of San Francisco

- *Deborah Learner, Park Planner, San Francisco Recreation and Park Department
- *Joan Vellutini, Gardener, San Francisco Recreation and Park Department
- *Mark Leno, Supervisor



Designers

- *Michael Boland, Designer, Past Board Member
- *Ira Kurlander, Designer, Board of Directors
- *Connie de Laveaga Stoops, Architect, Past Board Member
- *Clare Cooper Marcus, early participant
- Michael Enguidanos, Project Manager, hardscape installation
- William Peters, Past Board Member

Volunteers

- *Elaine Shen, Volunteer
- *Carlin Holden, Volunteer

Fiscal Agent

Justin Probert, The Tides Center (fiscal agent)



Pink umbrellas decorate the grove for National AIDS Awareness Day.

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

HISTORY

“It was an idea born out of desperation. We all felt the need for a place where people could find solace, solidarity, and hope—and the sense of renewal that is inspired by nature.”

Alice Russell-Shapiro, Co-founder and Board Co-chair.

The AIDS Memorial Grove grew out of the response of a small group of people to the overwhelming devastation wrought by the AIDS epidemic on the San Francisco gay community. Early participants included Alice Russell-Shapiro, Isabel Wade, and Nancy McNally, all of whom had worked with urban environmental groups including the Trust for Public Land, Friends of the Urban Forest, and other organizations. They were joined by landscape designer Stephen Marcus (who was then afflicted with AIDS and knew he did not have long to live), David Linger, and Jim Hormel. This initial group conceived of creating a place that would memorialize those who had died, increase public awareness of the crisis, and be a beautiful public space for remembering and reflecting. They wanted to create “something organic, something life-affirming” to counteract the ravages of the epidemic. Meeting informally in 1988 and 1989, the group originally envisioned a “gingko grove,” with a tree planted for each AIDS death. As the proportions of the epidemic grew, and as the group gained knowledge and sophistication, their vision of the grove evolved into

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National AIDS Memorial Grove

a public open space that would allow for quiet contemplation, gatherings, and remembrance not only for those affected by AIDS but for the general public as well.

In 1989, the Committee began searching for a site. Negotiations with the San Francisco Recreation and Park Department started in earnest that same year. After reviewing several options, the group selected Golden Gate Park because of its national stature, accessibility, and familiarity to the diverse communities affected by the AIDS epidemic. In addition, a Golden Gate Park site would increase the chances of the Grove gaining the kind of visibility the group was seeking.



The AIDS Memorial Grove in the east end of Golden Gate Park

Golden Gate Park planners were skeptical at first. Proponents of the Grove, however, had gained credibility through their planning and fundraising, and promised not only to reclaim a significant area in the park but to fund a gardener to maintain the area in perpetuity. On the strength of that commitment, the Park authorities accepted the proposal and identified six possible sites. De Laveaga Dell, at the east end of the Park, was ultimately selected.

De Laveaga Dell, given to the park by the de Laveaga family in the 1890s and landscaped in 1921, was one of the oldest developed parts of Golden Gate Park, but it had been seriously neglected since the early 1980s due to budget cuts. As family members who had been saddened by this neglect recall, the policy seemed to be “If you can’t see it from the car, it doesn’t matter.” The Dell was prominently located on a major park drive, but occupied a low-lying area separated from the road by embankments overgrown with brambles and berries. Drainage problems in the meadow below had resulted in frequent flooding. Due in part to its lack of visibility from the road and pathways above, the Dell had become a haven for the homeless and for drug users, and was considered one of the most dangerous areas in the Park.

The 7.5-acre site offered the kind of topography, size, and location the AIDS Memorial Grove advocates were seeking. The de Laveaga family’s enthusiasm for the proposal was an added bonus. The family was eager to see the Dell revived, had lost a family member to AIDS, and felt sympathetic to the aims of the Grove. A further

coincidence was that Connie de Laveaga Stoops, a great-niece of Jose Vicente de Laveaga, who had given the Dell to the City, was then an architecture student who was willing to become involved in the project. An informal agreement to use de Laveaga Dell was reached in 1991.

September 19, 1991 marked the first workday and is considered the birthday of the Grove. Two hundred people attended that day, inaugurating many months of labor-intensive weed, tree, and bramble removal. These early workdays were recalled vividly by participants like Congresswoman Nancy Pelosi, Supervisor Mark Leno, and the Board members. Everyone agreed that the state of deterioration of the site was in some ways an apt metaphor for the impact of the AIDS epidemic – reclamation seemed a daunting prospect.

In 1994 the AIDS Memorial Grove officially leased the de Laveaga Dell from Golden Gate Park for 99 years, promising in return to maintain the site, and ultimately to fund a full-time gardener in perpetuity. The funding process began with a significant personal contribution from each member of the newly formed Board and a seed grant from the Columbia Foundation, and continued with campaigns to pay for construction and to endow the gardener position by offering opportunities for donors to inscribed names on tasteful monuments in the Grove (See “Finances” below).



Workday volunteers build and maintain the Grove



Workday volunteer

VISION

The Grove and the volunteer workdays that built and maintain it have been guided by a central vision that speaks in important ways to the nature and purpose of memorials. To begin with, the Grove was intentionally designed with local conditions and communities in mind. Renewing the abandoned Dell and providing a place for all San Franciscans touched by the AIDS epidemic were the original concerns; national status came later as an unexpected addition. As Representative Nancy Pelosi pointed out to the site visit team, San Francisco is a particularly appropriate location for an AIDS memorial because the city's tolerance and openness have long made it a home for the nation's gay and lesbian communities. As such, it

has not only become an important symbolic and organizational center for those communities, but it has been one of the cities hardest-hit by the AIDS epidemic. As a result of San Francisco's important role in gay and lesbian life, the Grove was able to build on an already existing grassroots network of support and participation. This vision of serving a local community has been crucial to the Grove's success in attaining broader recognition.

A second element of the Grove's animating vision is the concept of a *living* memorial, one that renews and rebuilds as well as remembers. At its most basic level this is evidenced by the choice of the neglected Dell: as the Dell needed to be restored, so too did those affected by the AIDS epidemic. The acts of organizing, volunteering, and creating the Grove were, and continue to be, part of the healing process, creating a living testimony to renewal. In the words of Michael Boland, "The community's role in the act of creation was a critical part of the Grove's healing function. Although the Grove is for the most part 'built' in the conventional sense of the word, it continues to be *created* as a result of community activity at the site." Representative Nancy Pelosi added that the clearing of the Grove was a metaphor for dealing with AIDS: it seemed a hopeless task in the beginning, but as they made progress, they brought light to the Grove and also to the subject of AIDS. Not coincidentally, the end result of these life-affirming activities is itself a living thing, composed of plants and animals that will also continue to grow and mature over time; meditation and remembrance can take place at the memorial without a funereal atmosphere.



Old Live Coast Oak overhangs the path to the Fern Grotto

Related to the Grove’s status as a living memorial is its role as a facilitating site for activities and organizations working on AIDS issues. It is a venue for delivering AIDS policy statements, and nonprofit AIDS organizations use it for receptions and fundraising. It annually hosts the pre-eminent World AIDS Day event in the Bay Area. It also serves as an educational forum for teaching about a wide range of AIDS issues, particularly since its adoption by schools and youth volunteer organizations as a site to send young volunteers. Thus the Grove remains dynamic in its creation and composition as well as in its ongoing affirmation of life.

ORGANIZATION AND LEADERSHIP

The Grove’s formal organization consists of a 14-member Board of Directors and an administrative staff that includes the Executive Director, the Volunteer Program Manager, and the Office Manager. Technically the Board is an advisory body, inasmuch as nonprofit status is held by the Tides Foundation, which serves as fiscal agent for the Grove. Thom Weyand, hired in late 1997, is the second Executive Director, and comes to the Grove with an impressive background in fundraising for nonprofit enterprises. He also has significant experience working with the gay community, including service as Development Director of the AIDS Memorial Quilt.

The original plan for the organization was to build the Grove, fulfill the fundraising obligations contained in the Golden Gate Park agreement, and then disband. Many original Board members remain involved and active, however, and are still committed to the early goals. As the functions of the Grove become more complex, the need for an ongoing organization is becoming clearer.

Efforts are underway to increase the visibility of the Grove. Nine new Board members include professionals in the field of marketing and communication who have produced a new plan for increasing awareness of the Grove (see “Future Plans” below). Other issues such as nonprofit status, evaluation and direction of maintenance and design, and administration of workdays suggest the need for continued administration of the Grove by an advocacy organization. These issues and others were the subject of an April, 1999 Board retreat, which established a Long Range Vision committee to study future organizational needs.

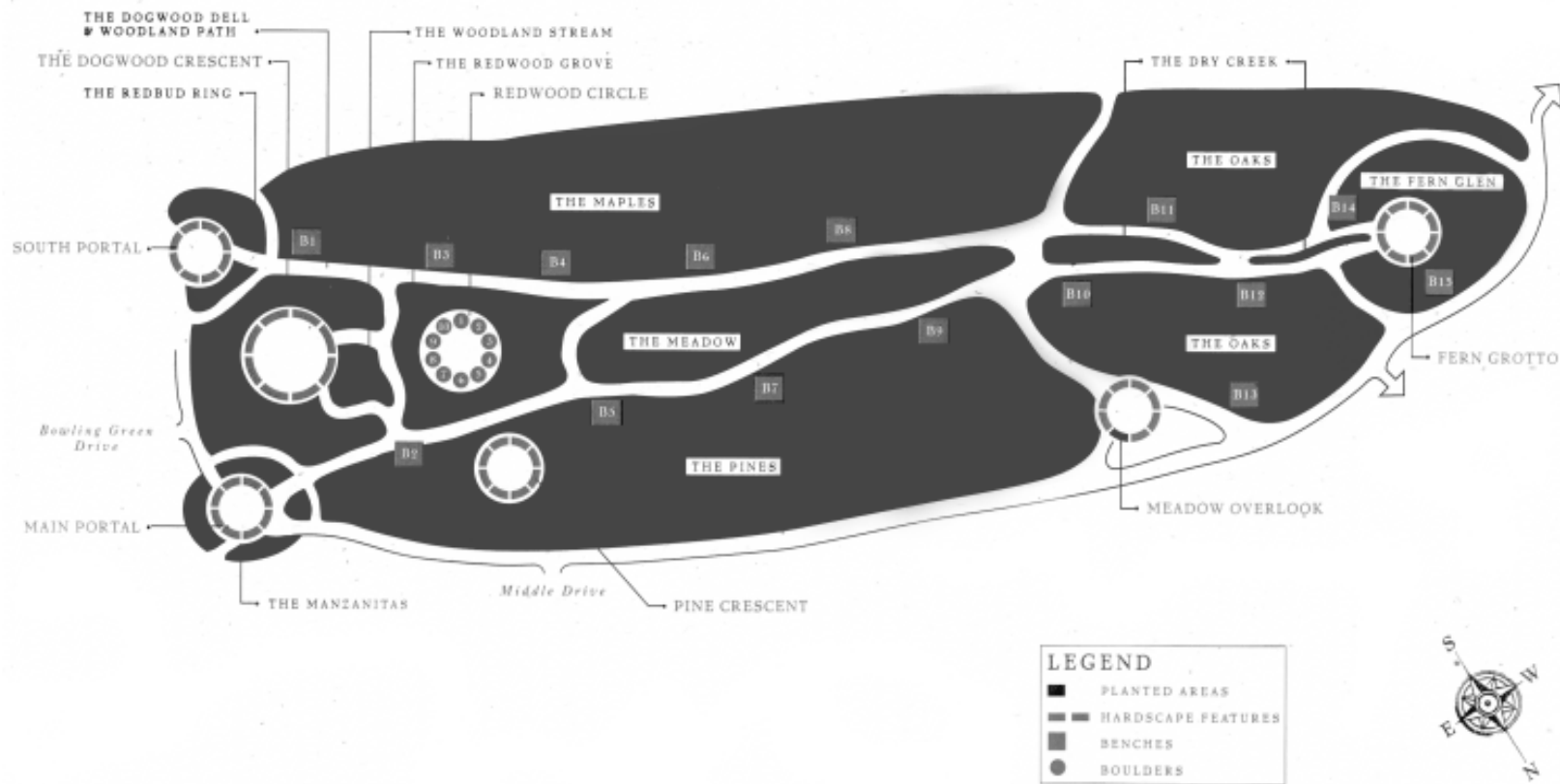
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National AIDS Memorial Grove

AIDS MEMORIAL GROVE

At the de Laveaga Dell, Golden Gate Park

DIAGRAM OF GIVING OPPORTUNITIES



The site plan for the Aids Memorial Grove reveals a longitudinal form and a range of small and large spaces.

DESIGN

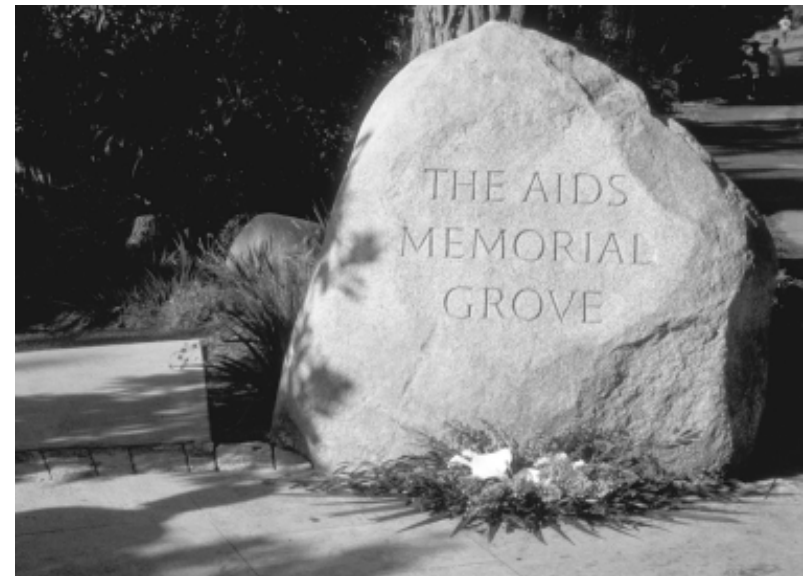
Many of the original Grove founders were practicing architects and landscape architects. Among them were Michael Boland, a landscape architect who became the designer of record; Ira Kurlander, an architect who remains on the Board today; William Peters, a landscape architect and former Board member; Todd Cole, a landscape architect; and Connie de Laveaga Stoops, also an architect and former Board member. Clare Cooper Marcus, a retired professor of landscape architecture at UC Berkeley, ex-wife of the late Stephen Marcus (one of the original Grove founders), also participated in the early design charrettes. In addition, local designers such as Garrett Eckbo and Rod Freebairn-Smith participated in the design process and brainstormed about the form the Grove might take.

The original design group divided itself into three teams so that several different alternative plans could be considered. Each of the teams worked to develop a preliminary design that would embody the ideas that the group had been discussing for the past year or so. These early charrettes were part of a lengthy and, in the words of the designers, “organic” design process that incorporated new ideas into an overall vision that was robust enough to absorb changes without becoming derailed. For example, the original gingko grove idea became a more elaborate park, and fundraising challenges were met with design changes that permitted more naming opportunities.

A Journey Through the Park

Two central themes emerged from these early design charrettes, forming a conceptual framework for the final design. The first of

these was the idea that a journey through the Grove should be a metaphor for the struggle with AIDS by both victims and survivors. The journey begins with the descent from the light and activity of the street into a secluded and shadowed area, and then moves through darkness and shadow – isolation – to eventual re-emergence into the light. The second theme is the Grove as a sacred and silent space for reflection apart from the city. With portals to define entrances, the longitudinal form of the bowl, and the inclusion of gathering spaces as well as places for solitude, the Grove is a kind of cathedral, its quiet yet powerful aura underlying the spiritual experience. Both of these design stories incorporate a vocabulary of round and broken round forms – circles, a Board member explained, that get broken when people die.



A large boulder marks the east entrance to the Grove.

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National AIDS Memorial Grove



Dry creek bed leading out to the meadow

Balancing these very serious thematic concepts are a variety of elements designed to make the Grove feel welcoming and peaceful. The meadow at the center, clearly visible from the sidewalks above, creates a tranquil and safe place for children and other visitors. The beige Minnesota flagstone selected for the Circle of Friends at the east entry, for the Fern Grotto at the west entry, and for the Pine Crescent near the center of the Grove was chosen for its light and warm color. These hardscape elements are penetrable by pathways from several directions, and form “destination” points at either end of the Grove. Movement is further facilitated by granite curbstone (donated by the city) used throughout the park, serving as erosion-control barriers and as pathways. Wide stair-like pathways lead up and down from the sidewalk above into the Grove itself. Plants are a combination of native flora such as Redwoods (whose numbers have risen thanks to volunteers); the Coast Live Oaks that form the central showpiece of the Fern Grotto pathway; native Sword Fern; Clivea; and other plants that are prominent around Golden Gate Park. Infestations of several pests are threatening the Monterey pines, so other more resistant varieties are slowly being introduced. Plant species have been selected with an eye toward having something in bloom throughout the year.

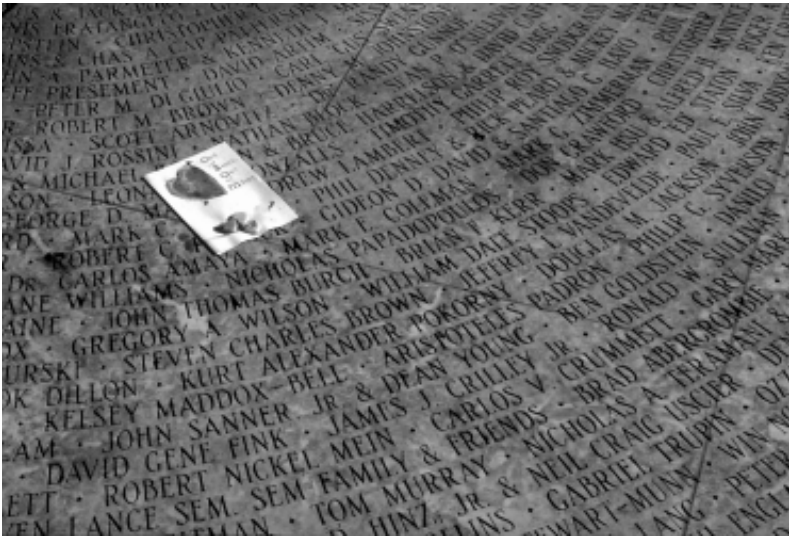
Above and beyond design considerations, the group faced the challenge of creating a memorial that communicated the magnitude of loss from the epidemic, yet did not feel like a graveyard. It strove to be life-affirming in the face of the terrible losses, and to give a sense of hope and community amidst the crisis. In that respect, it

was important that the names in the Circle of Friends remain muted, almost pattern-like. The names were intended to communicate a strong but subtle presence, there for those who come across them, or who are looking for the name of a loved one, but not dominating the space, which was intended for use by the public as well. The significance of the names is announced tastefully at the entrance to the Circle, in a poem-like message engraved on the small bridge: “Circle of Friends / Lives Touched By AIDS / Donors To The Grove / Those Who Have Died / Those Who Loved Them.” The site visit team and Selection Committee agreed that the Grove successfully avoided the feel of a cemetery, both because of the site’s usage patterns (especially the workdays) and the relative subtlety of the name placements and explanation. However, the Selection Committee wondered whether this subtlety might be a two-edged sword. In the future, a Committee member asked, when AIDS has been cured, will the memorial aspect of the Dell be obvious to visitors?

The site visit team felt that the Grove achieved its goal of creating a place with a tangible sense of spirituality. It is, they reported, a contemplative place that can provide a platform for many kinds of commemoration and remembrance. Clare Cooper Marcus, for example, showed photographs of a leaf design that she and her children created on the trunk of the Coast Live Oak at the west end of the Grove. She described it as an ephemeral memorial, something she creates yearly with her children in memory of their father. For her, these kinds of highly personal gestures are appropriate and meaningful for connecting with the cycle of life, death, and rebirth.

Other personal gestures were evident at the site visit – bouquets left at the Circle of Friends, for example, or a stone adorned with a first name left in the former creek bed. It is just such simple, small-scale rituals for which the Grove was designed; as designer Ira Kurlander explained, their goal was not to “dazzle everyone with our virtuosity” but to create a subtle, humble place that would facilitate without interfering.

The site visit team also reported some disappointments in the Grove’s design. The Selection Committee agreed that the Grove presents locations of striking beauty but also houses areas of lesser quality. Additionally, when viewed as a whole, the Committee felt that the Grove did not appear as inspiring as some of the details



Names carved in the Circle of Friends

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National AIDS Memorial Grove



Stone carving identifying the site of the Circle of Friends.

could lead one to expect. They raised questions about the placement of and relationships between hardscape and organic elements, and also noted the lack of a central monument – something that has been debated among the Grove’s own designers as well. Michael Boland, for example, has voiced a lingering frustration that the Grove does not make a stronger statement about the numbers lost to AIDS; he would have liked to “turn up the volume” and create something that more effectively communicates

the enormity of the crisis. The Selection Committee agreed with Boland, remarking that the lack of a “signature statement” of some sort added to the Grove’s tendency towards over-subtlety, robbing it of the strength and evocation of other national monuments like the Vietnam War Memorial. Consideration is still being given at the Board level to introducing some sort of “marker” near the west end of the Grove, to further commemorate those lost to the epidemic.



The Dogwood Crescent



Ephemeral, personal memorials can be as simple as this small rock sculpture.

Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)

The Grove and its designers have some ongoing issues with respect to ADA, a law created for indoor spaces and not yet fully interpreted in its application to the outdoors. At one of the east entrances, the Grove has designed and built a handsome, winding wheelchair ramp that leads to the Dogwood Crescent. Designers and Grove Board and staff are sensitive to the need for the Grove to be fully accessible, as many visitors are sick or wheelchair-bound. At the center of the Grove, however, the Pine Crescent, reached by a pathway and a stepped path, is not fully accessible. Similarly, the Fern Grotto at the western edge of the Grove is reached from somewhat steep paths on the meadow side, and stairs on the sidewalk end. Some kind of ramp or lift will be required to make the Grove accessible from this edge, and designers are currently struggling with this issue. In addition, Grove designers have used stepped terraces edged in granite block as erosion control devices at the sloped entry points and at the Pine Crescent. These terraced pathways also serve as stairs but are of questionable accessibility, because they do not meet the ADA stair riser/tread requirements. As the interpretation of ADA with respect to outdoor space continues to be refined, the NAMG will resolve these issues.

Ecology and Maintenance

Joan Vellutini, a Golden Gate Park gardener for 22 years, specifically requested the full-time Grove maintenance position. She showed obvious pride in the state of the Grove today, emphasizing the deplorable condition of the Dell prior to its rebirth. When the clearing began, Vellutini and other gardeners would frequently find



Erosion control stairs also serve as a rustic entry to the Grove.

used needles and syringes in the Grove; indeed, these would frequently be stuck into the hoses in an apparent gesture of protest. The entire meadow area was frequently under water before work on the Grove began. Since then, drainage tanks underneath the meadow have been repaired and improved, allowing for planting of grass. (As in other low-lying places in the Park, water is collected in the tank and pumped up to adjacent roadways, ultimately finding its way to the west end of the Park. Despite a recent \$72-million bond issue that will provide funds to overhaul the antique infrastructure of Park irrigation systems, the Park is, and will remain, largely hand-watered.)



Meadow Overlook sketch

Workdays: Planting, Maintenance, and Community Building

Originally conceived as an expedient way to involve people in the Grove and take advantage of much needed volunteer labor, workdays have become an important cornerstone of the memorial. Since 1991 thousands of volunteers have given more than 40,000 hours of their time at monthly (except in winter) workdays. This volunteer labor, together with the full-time gardener, keeps the Dell planted and maintained. There is unanimous agreement that workdays remain central to the meaning and strength of the Grove.

In the early 1990s workdays were attended by a core group of volunteers, many of whom were gay men, either HIV-positive or already suffering from AIDS. As the word spread about the Grove, others joined the effort, and the workdays grew and expanded. Over the years, as the Grove has become more fully built and treatment for AIDS has improved, the crisis nature of the epidemic has diminished and workdays have changed. Recent workdays have welcomed students, corporate groups, and youth volunteers from all over the Bay Area. Several corporations have played a particularly active role, including Charles Schwab and Company and the McKesson Corporation, joined by others such as the District Attorney’s office and UC Medical Center. Many of these organizations have sent volunteers in memory of staff who died of AIDS. Others, like Levi Strauss, Bausch Chemicals, and Pacific Bell, have added “corporate volunteer days” to their financial contributions. This steady expansion of the Grove community is facilitated by the organization’s quarterly newsletter, which as of our site visit had a circulation of 14,000.

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Over the years, workdays have developed a predictable schedule and routine which provides not only the necessary labor, but also allows for moments of silence and sharing, giving deeper meaning to the experience. Volunteers arrive in the morning, are given a donated breakfast, and are organized into teams headed by experienced volunteers and sometimes by Golden Gate Park gardeners, several of whom donate their time to workdays. The volunteers work for several hours, then join the “circle of healing,” a mid-day ritual described with obvious emotion by everyone who spoke about it. In it, organizers acknowledge volunteers for their efforts and accomplishments, poems or songs are shared, and community-related announcements can be made. Often Director Thom Weyand speaks briefly, and many have commented on his articulate and meaningful statements. The ritual is concluded with a short ceremony in which people are invited to “throw names into the circle.” These names may be of loved ones lost, or persons suffering from or touched by AIDS. After each name there is a period of silence, and after the last name the group often plants a tree to commemorate their day. Finally, a generous lunch (also donated by local food businesses) is served before continuation of the work and cleanup.

Another important element of the workdays is their potential to broaden the base of understanding about gay and lesbian as well as AIDS issues. Elaine Shen, former Youth Volunteer Coordinator at the Volunteer Center of San Francisco, has sent youth groups to the Grove and other venues across city. The Grove, she maintains, did a good job of working with them, giving them important and

productive work with visible results, and helping them to participate in something that made a difference. Even more notable, however, was the Grove’s impact on the homophobia that Shen says “runs rampant” through this age group. Direct exposure to gay people and to people sick with AIDS has made a lasting impression on the attitudes of many young volunteers. The memorial provides one of the few venues available for young people of that age to get involved in working for an end to the epidemic. Many of Shen’s youths have been inspired, she reports, and have become workday regulars.



The Grove’s volunteer work days feature a mid-day ritual in which names of people to be remembered are “thrown” into a ceremonial circle.



Workday volunteers such as Congresswoman Nancy Pelosi have given literally thousands of hours to the Grove.

Perhaps the most intriguing aspect of the workdays is their power to foster community building. San Francisco, Shen explained, is a very “self-segregating” community despite its diversity. Workdays have been tremendously successful in bringing different racial, ethnic, and gender components of the community together, in part because AIDS recognizes no such boundaries. People who have lost siblings, children, and partners come together in workdays and have built strong and lasting bridges between those who might not otherwise have crossed paths. Shen was particularly impressed by the Grove’s ability to attract young people of color, who she thought rarely felt connected to Golden Gate Park. It requires three bus transfers for many of them to get there (e.g., from Chinatown); without a structured opportunity they might not venture to that part of the city.

FINANCING

*Walker within this circle, pause.
 Although they all died of one cause,
 Remember how their lives were dense
 With fine, compacted difference.*
 Composed for Fern Grotto
 by Thom Gunn, San Francisco poet

The Grove has been privately financed through a two-part fundraising campaign. The original capital campaign, Circle of Friends, funded the initial construction of the Grove. Its successor, the present-day Ensure Remembrance campaign, is focused primarily on raising an endowment. Co-chairs for the campaign include Ayse Kenmore, Alice Russell-Shapiro, Larry Colton, Jay Morton, and Christine Pelosi. The Circle of Friends was jump-started by five committed Board members who each donated \$40,000 to the Grove. According to Board members, this initial financial commitment emboldened them to ask for larger donations from major philanthropists in the Bay Area, and provided adequate seed money to begin the clearing and building process.

To this end, the Board successfully raised \$1.2 million for site improvements including the installation of eight flagstone gathering spots, 14 specially designed benches, a mobility access path, numerous Sierra granite boulders, two cobbled stream beds, and 17 individual planted areas. Private professional contractors were hired for the heavy construction, but volunteer workdays have

supplied a significant portion of the labor (with an estimated value of \$200,000). In addition, the City of San Francisco contributes significantly to the Grove by providing maintenance and some plant materials until the endowment goal is reached.

In the late 1990s, as AIDS treatment improved, and the crisis nature of the epidemic lessened somewhat, it became more difficult for the Grove and for other AIDS-related causes to secure needed funding. The new Executive Director, Thom Weyand, identified the need for a new approach to fundraising, and for a new capital campaign (Ensure Remembrance) to raise \$1.7 million to fund the gardener position and any ongoing administrative functions required to sustain the Grove. The first \$475,000 was raised relatively quickly through allowing larger corporate names to be inscribed in the outer circle of the Circle of Friends. Weyand has argued strongly, however, for the expansion of naming opportunities within the Grove to meet the campaign goals. Although this approach has been controversial, Weyand’s arguments have been persuasive, and many new opportunities have now been identified (See “To Name or Not To Name,” below).

The Grove has also completed a feasibility study for the second phase of the campaign, and those involved are “quite certain” that they can reach their goals on schedule. Current prospects have been identified and the Board is “cautiously optimistic” that many on the list will provide significant donations in 1999. The findings of the feasibility study support this conclusion and make some additional recommendations such as completing the campaign in the near

future; raising the public profile of the Grove with innovative planning; continuing to clarify the audiences the Grove wishes to serve; and maintaining the commitment of strong and diverse leadership.

The annual distribution of income from the permanent \$1.7 million endowment will be as follows:

ANNUAL DISTRIBUTION OF INCOME	
\$50,000	ANNUAL GARDENER SALARY AND BENEFITS
\$25,000	ANNUAL MAINTENANCE AND UPKEEP
\$15,000	ANNUAL REPAIRS AND REPLACEMENTS
\$90,000	(6% OVERALL ANNUAL YIELD)

As the Grove has grown, so have management costs. The initial volunteer group has grown to include a small professional staff that runs the project full-time. Their tasks include project management, fundraising, workday and outreach coordination, planning, and special events. Costs are reflected in the Project Management Budget.

A brief financial summary as of close of fiscal year 1998 is as follows:

OVERVIEW OF NAMG FINANCES (12/98)

GROVE CONSTRUCTION	\$1,455,000
RAISED TO DATE	\$1,340,000
REMAINING	\$115,000
ENDOWMENT	\$1,500,000
RAISED TO DATE	\$675,000
REMAINING	\$875,000
FINAL PHASE PROJECT MGT	\$1,075,000
RAISED TO DATE	\$555,000
REMAINING	\$520,000
TOTAL PROJECT COSTS	\$4,030,000
TOTAL FUNDS RAISED	\$2,570,000
TOTAL TO BE RAISED	\$1,135,000

The Board has recently discussed applying for federal money under various programs. It has been a central part of the Grove's mission to avoid competing for any funds that might otherwise be available to AIDS service organizations (ASOs). By the same token, the Grove has historically been excluded from many funding opportunities that are geared only to ASOs. The Grove's

NAMG STATEMENT OF ACTIVITY FOR YEAR ENDED 12/98

SUPPORT AND REVENUE:

HARDSCAPE FEATURES	\$40,169
PLANTED AREAS	\$145,000
BENCHES AND BOULDERS	\$62,633
CIRCLE OF FRIENDS	\$213,335
INVESTMENT INCOME	\$96,191
OTHER REVENUES	\$69,821
CHANGE IN PLEDGES RECEIVABLE	(\$25,143)

TOTAL SUPPORT AND REVENUE **\$602,036**

EXPENSES:

WAGES AND BENEFITS	\$149,790
FUNDRAISING	\$82,382
EDUCATION/OUTREACH	\$30,883
OTHER EXPENSES AND OVERHEAD	\$91,627

TOTAL EXPENSES **\$354,682**

designation as a national memorial may ease the situation by making it eligible for funds dedicated to the development and maintenance of national memorials.

Consistent with its initial plan of dissolving the organizational structure when financial goals were reached, the Grove has not yet

secured an independent nonprofit status. At the April retreat, however, it was decided to go the nonprofit route after all. In the meantime the Tides Foundation will remain the fiscal agent for the NAMG.

To Name or Not to Name?

The central controversy in the development of the Grove has been the creation of “naming opportunities” for fundraising purposes. Initially, names were intended to appear only in the Circle of Friends, a circular limestone plaza near the east entrance to the Grove. In the Circle, names could be inscribed for a donation of



Memorial benches are simple wood and stone constructions.

\$1,000 and represented not only those who had died of AIDS, but other individuals who donated to the Grove in recognition of the crisis. The Circle of Friends has space for 2,200 names. Nine hundred and nine names are currently either inscribed or committed, including such well-known people as Tom Hanks, Elton John, Ryan White, Robin Williams, and Dianne Feinstein.

When Weyand joined the Board in late 1997 he felt strongly, based on his experience with the AIDS Memorial Quilt and other related efforts, that additional giving opportunities – particularly in the range of \$5,000 to \$25,000 – must be provided to achieve the campaign goals outlined by the Board. Many people initially opposed the idea. They felt that prominently featuring additional donor names would erode the inclusiveness of the Grove and elevate those with the means to provide major donations. Despite resistance from some Board members, in the end the argument to provide naming opportunities was persuasive, and the new campaigns are now well underway. The NAMG brochure offers naming opportunities from \$1,000 to \$200,000 in such locations as the Fern Grotto (\$200,000), South Portal (\$100,000), and Redwood Grove (\$35,000).

The Bruner Selection Committee felt that the naming controversy was a particularly difficult one: if the names weren't subtle, the Grove might feel like a cemetery, and it might seem inappropriate to single out an economically defined group for memorialization. If, on the other hand, the names appeared *too* subtly, their purpose might not be clear in the future. If a significant central monument

were to be constructed, this dilemma would be even more intense – should names go on such a monument? If so, whose? The Committee was sympathetic to the dilemma of the need for fundraising opportunities, but expressed concern about the impact of these fundraising approaches on the Grove.



Large boulder memorial.

PUBLIC AND PRIVATE PARTNERSHIPS

“This public-private partnership has been exemplary in that the objectives of the Recreation and Park Department, i.e., restoring and maintaining an area of Golden Gate Park, have been upheld and merged with the objectives of the Grove in creating an area of peace and reflection honoring those who have lost their lives to AIDS,”

Deborah Learner, Park Planner



Dogwood Crescent boulder memorial

The City of San Francisco

In 1994, in an unusual private-public partnership, the Grove entered into an agreement with the City and County of San Francisco, acting through the Recreation and Park Department. The agreement provides for the Grove to arrange for and to fund site improvements, and to make annual payments to Golden Gate Park for a gardener salary. It requires Golden Gate Park to lease the property to the Grove for a period of 99 years; to maintain the Dell in good condition through a work program subject to annual review; to identify the site as the National AIDS Memorial Grove on signs and maps; and to permit the area to be used for purposes consistent with its dedication, including the ongoing involvement of volunteers.

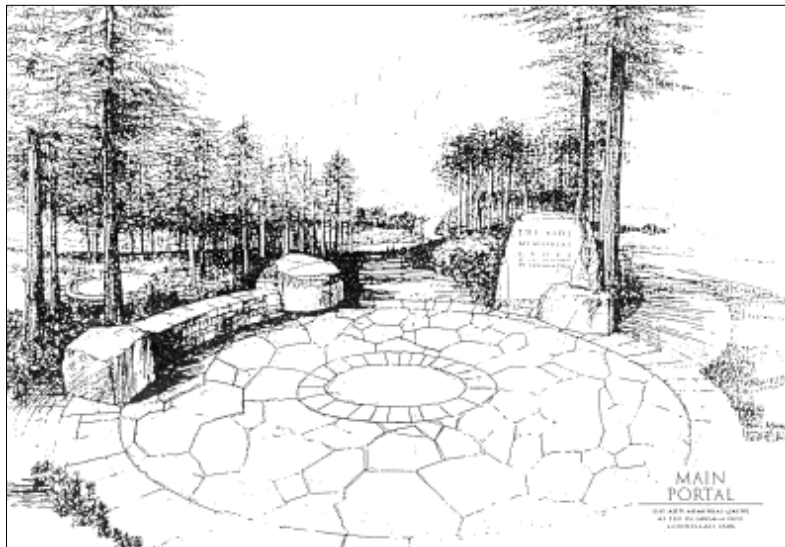
In addition, the design underwent a lengthy approval process that included reviews by the Site Committee of the Grove Board of Directors, the San Francisco Recreation and Park Department, and the Board of Supervisors. The designers all agreed that the approval process provided a valuable reality check for their work, as it introduced important practical operational considerations. The central elements of the design, however, remained intact throughout the approval process, thanks in no small part to the harmony between Grove’s goal of subtlety and the Golden Gate Park’s own understated simplicity.

The only ambiguity in the agreement pertains to the acreage involved. The agreement defines the site through a photographic

attachment, which was variously described to the Bruner Foundation as a 15-acre and a 7.5-acre site. For practical purposes, the useful area of the Grove is about 7.5 acres. However, Grove designers and management have incorporated some edge areas into their work to ensure the availability of attractive entries into the Grove as well as a seamless border with the Park.

Overall, the City has been pleased with how the Grove has developed. At the most basic level, the expected friction between municipal union gardeners and volunteers has not appeared; indeed, the power of the Grove has been such that a number of City employees actually come to workdays, or even rearrange their

schedules so that they can participate in or help out with activities in the memorial. This kind of support can also be found at the political level, where Supervisor Mark Leno is a close ally. Leno was active in the Grove before he was elected to the Board of Supervisors, and continues to be an enthusiastic supporter. Like many others, he came to the Grove to remember a loved one; his partner of 10 years died of AIDS and is memorialized in the Circle of Friends. He took part in early formative discussions about the Grove and has served as a workday volunteer on many occasions. As he stated simply to the site visit team, “If I’m in the Park, I’m in the Grove.”



Concept sketch for the Dogwood Crescent



Concept sketch for Pine Crescent

Golden Gate Park

Golden Gate Park planner Deborah Learner admitted that Park officials needed some convincing in the beginning, as they regularly receive requests for special memorials of different kinds, and promises of maintenance and upkeep have largely gone unfulfilled. In addition, the Park staff was cautious about the presence of large donors, who often want to control the space with which they are associated. Moreover, large donations have historically led to concomitant reductions in General Fund allocations to the Park. These issues, the site visit team noted, are still to a certain extent unresolved: for example, if Park funding is cut, the gardener endowment could be used as an excuse to cut funding to the Park as a whole. Nonetheless, the goal of rehabilitating a truly derelict section of the park, and the powerful cause served by the Grove, convinced the Park that the benefits outweighed the risks.

Ms. Learner expressed concern that volunteers have planted areas that are technically beyond the original boundaries, adjacent to the east entrance; she felt that the gardener position and endowment work should be resolved before acreage is added to the Grove.

The Federal Government

One of the vital roles that the Grove serves is as a touchstone for the grieving process. This is important not only for those of us who have lost loved ones to AIDS, but for everybody; we all have been touched by loss.

Dianne Feinstein, US Senator

Congresswoman Nancy Pelosi

Nancy Pelosi, a San Francisco native, represents the 575,000 people of the 8th Congressional District. This population was particularly hard hit by AIDS in the late 1980s, when it lost more than 15,000 people to the epidemic, as she puts it, “one person at a time.” Many of Representative Pelosi’s personal friends died, and many more remain HIV-positive. In part because of her personal involvement in the cause, she has been an active supporter of the Grove: she was an early volunteer, played a role in forging the agreement with Golden Gate Park, and was instrumental in attaining the Grove’s national designation. With a busy schedule in Washington, Pelosi continues to participate in workdays about twice a year, and her daughter, an attorney who works with her, now serves on the Board of Directors.

Rep. Pelosi’s involvement with the Grove is part of her larger commitment to AIDS issues in Congress. Hers is the lead office in the House of Representatives for AIDS advocacy, she is a vocal advocate for AIDS funding on the House Appropriations Committee, and she is also sponsoring the first housing bill for people with AIDS. While the seriousness and importance of funding for AIDS research is clear to many, she reports, it continues to be an ongoing fight at the congressional level. Partly to help further this larger AIDS battle, Pelosi felt strongly that the Grove should be a national memorial. In the end the national designation was appended to other legislation she was sponsoring relating to the disposition of the Presidio in San Francisco. Passed in 1996, the legislation and the national designation means that

the Grove will be included in federal directories of national monuments, and will likely continue to gain stature as a national destination for visitors. The designation brings with it other high honors; as Rep. Pelosi pointed out, First Lady Hillary Rodham Clinton, who visited the Grove in 1998, would probably not have come without the national designation.

FUTURE PLANS

Consistent with the feasibility study prepared for the Ensure Remembrance campaign, immediate plans hinge on increasing the visibility of the Grove on both a local and national level. New Board members Gina Gatta and Len Weise have been selected particularly for their expertise in marketing, and are eagerly making plans for events and relationships that will further this goal. Weise got involved through participation in a twilight donor appreciation event and was “awestruck” by the place. He commented to us, “The Grove is the best-kept secret in San Francisco.”

Together Gatta and Weise have forged a marketing and communications plan whose overall objective is “to increase visitation and utilization of the Grove by as broad a constituency as possible.” They want the Grove to be used year-round as a venue for AIDS-related events planned once or twice each month. Their strategy is to collaborate with AIDS-related and other organizations; local, state and federal elected officials; and others to promote use of the Grove for educational activities and announcements. Other groups they have targeted, beginning in the Bay Area and ultimately moving to a national basis, include healthcare, education,

environmental, arts, and religious organizations. They have also recorded a major public service announcement by actor Tom Hanks, who has been a supporter of the Grove. It was to be aired in major television markets in late 1999.

Several major events are slated to become annual affairs, including the recent highly successful World AIDS Day (December 1) and Arbor Day. The Grove welcomes various uses of this kind, and was pleased when Mayor Brown brought a contingent from the US Conference of Mayors to the Grove in June 1997. Longer-term plans are less clear. The original goal of disbanding when the endowment is secure is very much in question. Newer Board members see a need for an ongoing organization to oversee the maintenance of the Grove, to continue the tradition of workdays, which have become an important programmatic element in the community, and to continue to organize major events that call attention to the AIDS struggle.

A Board retreat in April 1999 addressed mission and purpose, reviewed strategies for soliciting gifts to meet the 2000 endowment goal, and discussed the future of the Grove – what Board members want it to be and what organizational structure is required to achieve that goal. Out of this retreat the Long Range Vision committee was formed.

ASSESSING PROJECT SUCCESS

HOW WELL PROJECT MEETS ITS OWN GOALS

- *To create a living memorial to those whose lives have been affected by AIDS, and a new paradigm for remembrance and renewal.*

Certainly the Grove is a memorial to those who have been affected by AIDS. It is tranquil and welcoming, and provides a metaphorical journey through its woodlands, meadow, and groves. As the first national memorial of its kind, it will increasingly be visited by people from around the country and will doubtlessly inspire similar places throughout the nation. The long-term impact of the place remains to be seen, as it has only recently been completed.

- *To memorialize the scale of devastation wrought by AIDS in San Francisco, an epicenter of the AIDS epidemic, and to raise awareness of the ongoing crisis.*

The nature of the Grove, the design, the Circle of Friends, and other memorial aspects of the Grove are powerful reminders of the tragic losses suffered in the community. The Selection Committee, like some Grove Board Members, noted that the memorial lacks a more dramatic statement or marker that would be a stronger physical evocation of the magnitude of loss. The Board discussed this issue at its most recent retreat.

Other ongoing activities will continue to call attention to the AIDS crisis. Use of the Grove by organizations, especially for public



First Lady Hillary Clinton visits the Grove—a new National Memorial

events and announcements, is now actively being solicited. A new public service announcement featuring Tom Hanks will receive national promotion. The Board will continue to focus on increasing visibility of the Grove.

Despite these successes, the Selection Committee felt that the Grove does not yet live up to its billing as a national memorial. While it may be too much to ask that every memorial achieve the power of

the Vietnam War Memorial, national status does invite such comparisons, and the Committee felt that some design weaknesses and the lack of a central monument lessened the power of the Grove and kept it from truly measuring up to the level of other national memorials.

- *To create a public place where those who have lost friends or family, those currently afflicted with AIDS, or others can reflect and remember in solitude or can make connections with others.*

The Grove in general, and the workdays in particular, have more than accomplished this goal. The nature of the space allows for individual or collective experiences, and the workdays have been highly successful at helping people make connections they would otherwise not have the opportunity to make. During the site visit team's stay they saw people pausing at the Circle of Friends, and others who were using the Grove as a recreational destination. The Selection Committee affirmed the Grove's quality as a living memorial, a place that seemed to say, "don't feel sorry for me, take action!" This distinguished the site from a cemetery, and also emphasized the importance of process in memorializing and remembering loss.

- *To transform a derelict, 7.5-acre park site into a botanical highlight using an innovative public-private partnership between the City of San Francisco and the nonprofit National AIDS Memorial Grove.*

The Grove appears to have been highly successful in this endeavor. Once an overgrown and dangerous corner of the park, it has been

cleared, drained, replanted, and re-designed as a memorial space. Entrances to the Grove are well marked, and invite entry. Good visibility from the street above and from both entries contribute to its inviting aspect and to its safety. Although the memorial spaces are spread throughout the Grove, they do not dominate the experience of moving through it.

From what is known by the site team and the applicants, the design and scale of the Grove are unique in the country if not in the world. Although other communities have inquired about creating similar memorials in their communities, few venues compare to San Francisco in terms of its role in the epidemic and to Golden Gate Park as a nationally known destination. The national designation can only add to the park's ability to attract national constituencies.

- *To develop a vehicle to generate ongoing community stewardship of the Grove and to fund its maintenance in perpetuity.*

This aspect of the Grove is nearly complete. The agreement with the Park secures the site for 99 years with an option to renew the lease. The endowment campaign, which shows every sign of reaching its goals by 2000, will provide for care and maintenance on a permanent basis.

OTHER MEASURES OF SUCCESS

Impact

The impact of involvement on individual participants is undeniable; everyone the site visit team spoke to gave powerful and moving personal testimonials about the effect the Grove had had on their lives. Reportedly, the Grove is visited by a variety of residents and visitors, especially in the summer tourist months. Since the Board does not keep statistics on the number of visitors, it is difficult to tell how many have been touched by it. It is safe to say, however, that as a national memorial with a growing reputation, it will continue to attract more people.

The Grove’s newsletter currently reaches about 14,000 people, and the number is growing. In addition, the Grove has put together a “how-to” guide in response to the numerous requests it receives from across the country for tips on how to create similar memorials in other communities. Deborah Learner also reports a constant stream of requests for information about what many consider to be a model of site-specific stewardship in parks. In the best case, the key ideas of the Grove will be adapted to a variety of different settings, and not simply replicated. This kind of adaptation would be the best testimonial to the impact the Grove experience has on visitors.

Finally, the Grove’s workdays have fostered strong community building and educational experiences. As described above, the kinds of personal experiences attributed to the workdays by survivors,

those who are HIV-positive, youth who had little experience with AIDS, and people who represent different ethnic and racial segments of the community all attest to an important social function being served.

Values Reflected in Development Process

“Just getting it built is not the only reason to do something: the festival of creating the Grove is part of the reason for the place.”

Ira Kurlander, Board member

The central value embodied in the Grove’s development is the importance of process. In gathering together, organizing, and working towards a meaningful goal, San Franciscans whose lives have been touched by AIDS have strengthened – and in some cases, created – community ties, performed needed ceremonies of healing and remembrance, and educated others about AIDS-related issues. That these actions can be considered a memorial in themselves, independent of the place they produce, is a provocative statement not only about memorials but about placemaking in general.

At the same time, however, some of the most important values relate very concretely to notions of place. One key lesson the Grove has to teach, for example, is (in the words of Clare Cooper Marcus), that “people care for places that they take care of.” In other words, while the workdays might be both inexpensive labor and a living memorial, they are also activities that bind people to the Grove itself, teaching them to care for and about it through active involvement.

A second value embodied in the workdays is their power to draw people across social, ethnic, and racial boundaries. As Elaine Shen remarked, “Working on a place can be a great mediator of difference.” As people learn to care about their places, they may also learn to care about each other. While it may seem obvious, there are profound lessons to be drawn from the simple fact that a *place* can be the basis for, or even the generator of, a community. The Selection Committee affirmed that the Grove was a fine example of placemaking, where people’s active participation fosters new dialogues and community ties. One site visit team member, remarking on how the Grove literally constructs social relationships, felt the strong pull of the community herself: the park, she explained, “teaches us that we all have AIDS and we all have work to do.”



Young volunteers at the close of a workday

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION

Jane Turner Hart, *Innovations in park and open space stewardship: Case studies and examples in urban park and open space management*, (San Francisco: The Trust for Public Land, 1996). *The first chapter of this book focuses on NAMG, describing the project’s background, surveying the volunteer ethic, identifying key design elements, analyzing the structure of the public-private agreement between San Francisco and the NAMG group, sorting through the project’s legal and political resources, and investigating funding. It also includes drawings and design sketches.*

Notes From the Grove [newsletter]. *This quarterly serial presents Grove events and donors.*

Harriet Heyman, “A healing landscape: SF designers honor people with AIDS,” *Garden Design* (August / September 1998). *Interviews with key individuals, lovely color photographs, and a description of the Grove.*

Related Rudy Bruner Award Winners

(For full bibliographic cites, please see Introduction)

Harlem Meer Restoration, New York, New York (1995 cycle).

Although not a memorial, this Finalist resembles the Grove in that a nonprofit organization and volunteer labor restored 17 neglected acres in northeast Central Park.

The Stowe Recreation Path (1989 cycle). A blacktop path winding through eleven bridges and 5.3 miles of community back yard. Maintained by volunteers and used widely by residents and tourists.

SILVER MEDAL WINNER

National AIDS Memorial Grove

Contact

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The National AIDS Memorial Grove is located near the eastern end of San Francisco's Golden Gate Park at the corner of Middle Drive East and Bowling Green, across from the tennis courts and just east of the California Academy of Sciences.



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