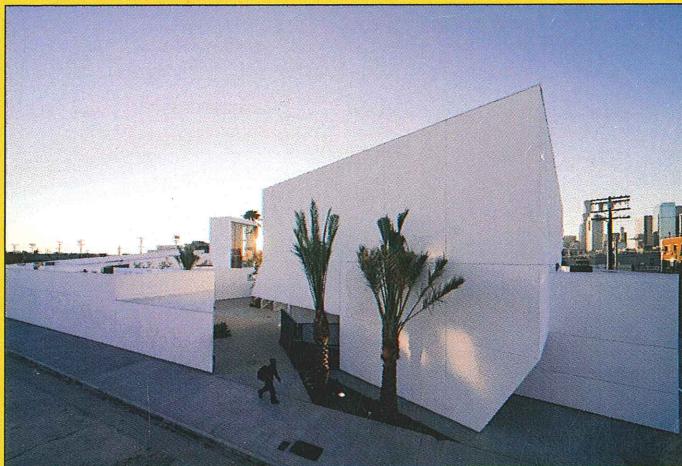
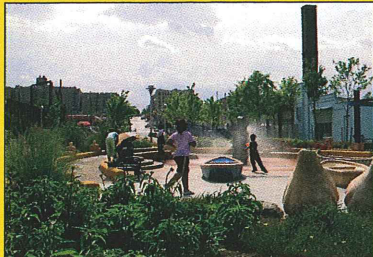
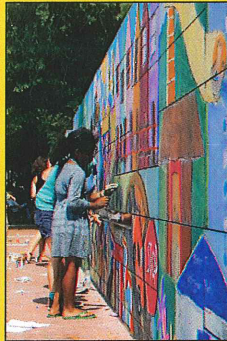
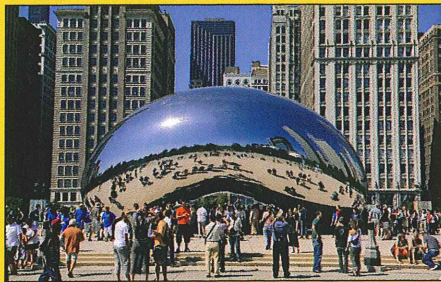


# Urban Transformation:

2009 Rudy Bruner Award for Urban Excellence



BRUNER FOUNDATION, INC.







# Urban Transformation

2009 RUDY BRUNER AWARD FOR URBAN EXCELLENCE



BRUNER FOUNDATION, INC.

Jay Farbstein, FAIA, PhD  
with Emily Axelrod, MCP; Robert Shibley, AIA, AICP; and Richard Wener, PhD



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## Introduction: The 2009 Rudy Bruner Award



**Top:** Executive Director Cynthia Harnisch accepts the 2009 Rudy Bruner Award Gold Medal

**Bottom:** Architects Rob Winstead (left) and Pete O'Shea (middle), with Josh Wheeler of the Thomas Jefferson Center

## THE RUDY BRUNER AWARD

The Rudy Bruner Award for Urban Excellence (RBA) is a national award for urban places that promotes innovative thinking about the built environment. Established in 1987, the Award celebrates urban places distinguished by quality design – design that considers form in conjunction with social, economic, and environmental issues.

The RBA is unique among design awards because it emphasizes the process of urban placemaking and multiple aspects of place. The RBA considers architecture in terms of the skill with which a design responds to its user, neighborhood, city and region. In exploring the story of each winner, the Award articulates how the place responds to the complex characteristics unique to its urban setting. In celebrating the winners, the RBA seeks to increase the visibility of each winner, and promote fresh thinking about the kinds of places that make our cities better settings in which to live and work.

With each cycle, the Rudy Bruner Award starts anew. Applications (more than 85 this year) are reviewed by a new Selection Committee. The Committee is challenged to identify places that achieve design excellence with nuanced responses to their users and urban settings. As they consider the applications, Committee members are asked to define their own criteria for urban excellence in light of their experience and expertise. In discussing the projects, they identify



the current challenges facing our cities, and develop a consensus on the kinds of urban places that make meaningful contributions to the built environment.

### ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA

Because the RBA seeks excellence in places where it may not be expected, the criteria for submitting an application for the RBA are intentionally broad, encouraging applications from all sorts of projects. The few limiting criteria are that the project must be a real place, not a plan; it must be sufficiently complete to demonstrate its excellence to a team of site visitors from the Bruner Foundation; and it must be located in the contiguous continental United States.

### THE SELECTION PROCESS

A new Selection Committee is named for each award cycle. To ensure lively and informed discussion, the Selection Committee is an interdisciplinary group of urban experts. Selection Committees always include the mayor of a major city as well as design professionals, developers, community organizers, philanthropists, and financiers. In their discussions, members of the Selection Committee explore a range of urban issues that relate to the most critical challenges facing our cities today.



The Selection Committee meets twice. In its January meeting the Committee selects five finalists from a field of about 100 applicants. A Bruner Foundation team then visits each of these sites for two to three days, exploring the projects and pursuing questions raised by the Selection Committee. The team tours the site, interviews fifteen to twenty-five or more project participants (including community participants), takes photographs, observes patterns of use, and collects secondary source documentation on the project.

Findings from the site team visits are presented to the Selection Committee at its meeting in May. The Committee discusses the relative merits of each project and awards one finalist Gold Medal status, a \$50,000 award. The other finalists are Silver Medal winners and each receives \$10,000.

Rudy Bruner Award winners are an exceptional group of urban places. Many winners are models for urban placemaking that successfully challenge conventional wisdom about what is possible. Most are products of hard-won collaborations among diverse groups of people, often with differing agendas. And all RBA winners have

*Left: Martha Welborne and Mary Houghton review applications  
Right: Mike Dobbins and Mayor David Cicilline review applications*



contributed to the vitality of the cities and neighborhoods in which they are located. They operate strongly in their own contexts, bridging the disciplines of architecture, urban design, and planning.

Rudy Bruner Award winners are never presented as models to be replicated or as formulas to be transplanted to other urban settings. Instead, their value to placemakers resides in the innovative strategies they have used to meet challenges, which can be adapted to fit the unique qualities of other cities and neighborhoods. Each Selection Committee places great value on the new models of placemaking represented in the winners.

## 2009 SELECTION COMMITTEE

The 2009 Committee included:

- MAYOR DAVID N. CICILLINE, Providence, RI
- MICHAEL A. DOBBINS, Professor of Practice, College of Architecture, Georgia Institute of Technology, GA
- MARY HOUGHTON, President, ShoreLine Bank Corp., Chicago, IL
- GRACE E. LA, La Dallman Architects Inc., Milwaukee, WI
- JAIR LYNCH, Jair Lynch Development Partners, Washington D.C.
- MARTHA WELBORNE, Former Managing Director, Grand Avenue Committee, Los Angeles, CA; Principal, Zimmer Gunsul Frasca, Los Angeles



## 2009 AWARD CYCLE

In 2009, the Award received more than 85 projects for consideration. From these, the Committee selected five projects: Community Chalkboard in Charlottesville, VA, Hunts Point Riverside Park in the Bronx, Inner-City Arts in Los Angeles, Millennium Park in Chicago, and St. Joseph Rebuild Center in New Orleans. These projects are distinct, yet are united by the impacts they made on their respective neighborhoods and cities, including:

- Transforming and activating underused public spaces
- Creating places that help underserved populations
- Building spaces that developed through complex community dialogue

*Grace La and Jair Lynch review applications*





## 2009 WINNERS

- **Inner-City Arts, Los Angeles, CA; Gold Medal**

Designed by architect Michael Maltzan, Inner-City Arts is a skillfully designed oasis for children in the Skid Row area of Los Angeles. Inner-City Arts provides art instruction and builds life skills for a large population of at-risk youth, and provides teacher training to LA public school teachers.

- **The Community Chalkboard and Podium: An Interactive Monument to Free Expression, Charlottesville, VA; Silver Medal**

The Community Chalkboard is an interactive monument dedicated to the First Amendment of the U.S. Constitution. Located adjacent to City Hall in a major downtown public plaza, the 54'-long slate chalkboard provides a venue for unedited written public expression. It has also created a new venue for public gatherings in Charlottesville, and stimulated an important public dialogue on the nature of free speech.

- **Hunts Point Riverside Park, Bronx, NY; Silver Medal**

Hunts Point is a new 1.7-acre park on the Bronx River. The Park grew out of a grassroots effort to reclaim the river for public recreation, and to create public open space for one of the most underserved neighborhoods in New York.

- **Millennium Park, Chicago, IL; Silver Medal**

Millennium Park is a new 24-acre park in downtown Chicago that provides dramatically designed indoor and outdoor venues for art, music and a wide variety of public events. Millennium



Left: An Inner City Arts entrance  
 Middle: Jefferson Muzzles Award drawing on the Community Chalkboard  
 Right: Children playing at Hunts Point Riverside Park  
 Bottom: Cloud Gate at Millennium Park



Park transforms an underused area in the heart of downtown Chicago into a public space that brings together Chicagoans and visitors from throughout the region and the world.

- **St. Joseph Rebuild Center, New Orleans, LA; Silver Medal**

St. Joseph Rebuild Center is a day center for homeless individuals in an industrial area of New Orleans. St. Joseph Rebuild Center is a well-designed semi-permanent facility that was built in response to the damage done by Hurricane Katrina. The Rebuild Center uses simple materials and creative architecture to provide a series of new spaces for homeless services. St. Joseph Rebuild Center provides a new model both for homeless services and for new space in disaster situations.

## AWARD PRESENTATIONS

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



## RUDY BRUNER AWARD BOOKS

Rudy Bruner Award winners are all real places in real communities, and each site has a complex story. These “back stories” involve struggle and perseverance, leadership and cooperation, tension and resolution. The winning projects are never simple, and for the most part, they come to fruition despite limited budgets, competing agendas, and political complications. The RBA has found that great urban places respond to challenges by enhancing the quality of design and extending the use of design beyond initial expectations.

In order to tell these stories, Bruner Foundation publishes a book that details the story of each winner and also includes a synopsis of the Selection Committee dialogue. All Rudy Bruner Award publications are available online at [www.brunerfoundation.org](http://www.brunerfoundation.org); most RBA books are also available from the Foundation in hard copy.

*Courtyard at St. Joseph Rebuild Center*



The books are part of the RBA's commitment to facilitating a national dialogue on the meaning and nature of urban excellence, and to promoting important new ideas about urban placemaking. They are a resource for placemakers, educators, policy makers, financiers, and community organizations who wish to use the creative thinking of RBA winners in their own communities. Bruner Foundation books are used in graduate and undergraduate programs across the country.

### THE RUDY BRUNER AWARD WEBSITE

The Rudy Bruner Award website has become a primary access point for RBA history and resources. The site contains case studies and images of every RBA winner, summary profiles, and links to winner websites. The site also includes profiles of Selection Committee members and news about ongoing RBA activities. It is also the location for the Rudy Bruner Award application, which is now offered only through the website, and no longer in printed form.

We encourage you to visit the website to learn from the experience of our winners, and to use their stories to create excellent urban places in your own communities.

<http://www.brunerfoundation.org/rba/>

### ACCESS TO OTHER RUDY BRUNER AWARD MATERIALS

A digital archive of Rudy Bruner Award winners is also available at <http://libweb.lib.buffalo.edu/bruner/>. The Rudy Bruner Award Digital Archive (RBADA) includes award winners' original application materials. Projects are searchable by keyword in seventeen categories including housing, historic preservation, art, land use controls, commercial development, and transportation. The University at Buffalo site is coordinated through The Urban Design Project, directed by Robert Shibley and developed by the staff at the University at Buffalo's Lockwood Memorial Library. It is a valuable tool for students, practitioners, and others interested in various aspects of the urban built environment.



*Award presentation at Hunt's Point Riverside Park, with Cmr. Adrien Benepe (center), Majora Carter (far right) and Hunts Point staff.*



## BRUNER LOEB FORUM

Established in 2001, the Bruner•Loeb Forum brings together two of the preeminent national programs dedicated to the urban built environment. In the Bruner•Loeb Forum, the Rudy Bruner Award partners with the Loeb Fellowship Program at the Harvard Graduate School of Design to present two forums per year in cities around the nation. The Forum is an interactive program, designed to apply the experience and expertise of RBA winners and Loeb Fellows to challenges facing our cities, and to create dialogue among a diverse group of stakeholders. In so doing, the Bruner•Loeb Forum fosters a national dialogue on the most important urban issues of the day.

For more information please visit: [www.brunerloeb.org](http://www.brunerloeb.org)

## RBA RECOGNITION

The work of the Rudy Bruner Award and its winners has been recognized by organizations across the country, including the Mayors' Institute on City Design, the U.S. Conference of Mayors, the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, the Environmental Design Research Association, and, *Partners for Livable Communities*.

Articles on the Rudy Bruner Award have appeared in *Foundation News*, *New Village Journal*, *Architectural Record*, *Design Book Review*, *Architecture* magazine, and most recently *Next American*

*City*. See also the chapter on the RBA in Lynda Schneekloth and Robert Shibley's *Placemaking: the Art and Practice of Building Community* (John Wiley and Sons, 1995), and in the McGraw Hill compendium on the state of the art in urban design, *Time Saver Standards for Urban Design*, published in 2003, edited by Don Watson, Alan Plattus, and Robert Shibley.

## ABOUT THE AUTHORS

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

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**Robert Shibley, AIA, AICP**, is a professor at the School of Architecture and Planning at the State University of New York, Buffalo. He is also a founding partner of Caucus Partnership, a consulting practice on environmental and organizational change. At the University at



Buffalo, he is a former chairman of the Department of Architecture and now serves as the director of The Urban Design Project, a center in the school devoted to the study and practice of urban design.

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2009 RUDY BRUNER AWARD: Gold Medal Winner

# Inner-City Arts

Los Angeles, California







*Aerial view of Inner-City Arts, looking toward downtown*

*Photo: Michael Maltzan Architecture*



# Inner-City Arts At-A-Glance

## WHAT IS INNER-CITY ARTS?

- ❖ The mission of Inner-City Arts (ICA) is to “use art education to positively affect the lives of inner-city children, improving their chances to lead constructive and successful lives by developing creativity, improving learning skills and building self-confidence.”
- ❖ Located in Skid Row, just east of downtown Los Angeles, ICA provides arts education to approximately 8,000 elementary and middle school students per year, drawn from over 50 public schools located mostly around downtown LA.
- ❖ ICA provides after-school and weekend arts programs to 10 high schools and social service agencies, as well as teacher-training programs.
- ❖ ICA serves children who are overwhelmingly from minority, immigrant, low-income families. Most qualify for free and reduced lunch programs. Some are homeless.
- ❖ The program has contributed significantly to improving children's academic performance and ICA uses evaluation results to shape its curriculum, teaching methods and training programs.
- ❖ The striking complex of modern white buildings, recently expanded, includes specialized studios for music, visual arts, ceramics, dance, drama, media arts, animation, and theater.

## PROJECT GOALS

- ❖ To partner with the Los Angeles Unified School District (LAUSD) in offering high quality arts instruction to children who would otherwise have little exposure to the arts
- ❖ To encourage exploration and self-expression as a vehicle for cognitive development and improvement of overall educational performance and, thus, to increase the likelihood that kids will stay in school
- ❖ To engage teachers, along with their students (as well as separately from their students), and to train them so they can take skills and methods back to their classrooms
- ❖ To contribute to the revitalization of the neighborhood
- ❖ To provide a safe, enriching and inspiring environment in an otherwise dull and distressed area
- ❖ For the facility expansion: to greatly increase the opportunities to serve students (including more middle- and high school students) with expanded programs and hours





## PROJECT CHRONOLOGY

**1985:** Bob Bates, an artist, moves into the area and begins to teach classes at a local elementary school.

**1989:** ICA is incorporated, rents its own facility, and starts its program.

**1991:** ICA must move out of rented space due to possible contamination from an adjacent factory. ICA moves into two bungalows provided by LAUSD on campus of local elementary school. ICA Board raises money to buy first building.

**1994:** ICA moves into converted classroom space at Kohler Street. Designed by architect Michael Maltzan, the converted space includes visual arts, music, dance/drama, and language arts facilities. Construction of ICA's first ceramics studio and tower, and its courtyard with palm and orange trees.

**2001:** Start of professional development program for classroom teachers.

**2003:** Second phase is built, including interior renovation of an acquired warehouse, for visual arts, animation, media arts, theater design studios, kitchen, and lobby/gallery.

**2008:** Expanded facility (Phase 3) opens, adding 23,000 square feet to the campus. This includes the library/resource center, black box theater, a new ceramics studio and second tower with covered kiln yard, and administrative offices. A rooftop parking deck is created and the outdoor garden is completed.

## KEY PARTICIPANTS INTERVIEWED

BOB BATES, Artist and Co-founder, ICA

CYNTHIA HARNISCH, President & CEO, ICA

BETH TISHLER, Director of Education and Community Programs, ICA

SUSAN EMERLING, Member of ICA Board

DOUG HINCHLIFFE, Member of ICA Board

BEA STOTZER, New Economics for Women, Member of ICA  
National Advisory Board

GISELLE ACEVEDO, President & CEO of Para Los Niños,  
Member of ICA National Advisory Board

MICHAEL MALTZAN, FAIA, architect & lead designer of ICA

NANCY GOSLEE POWER, landscape architect for ICA

RICHARD BURROWS, Director, Arts Education Branch,  
Los Angeles Unified School District (LAUSD)

RICHARD ALONZO, Superintendent, LAUSD, Local District 4

EUGENE HERNANDEZ, Principal, Frank Del Olmo  
Elementary School, LAUSD

RAYMOND REISLER, Executive Director, S. Mark Taper Foundation

JANIS MINTON, foundation management consultant (by phone)

ROBIN KRAMER, Chief of Staff, Mayor Anthony R. Villaraigosa,  
City of Los Angeles,

ESTELA LOPEZ, Executive Director, Central City East Association

JOSEPHINE RAMIREZ, Vice President, Programming and Planning,  
The Music Center

CHRISTOPHER HAWTHORNE, Architecture Critic, *Los Angeles Times*



## Inner-City Arts



Street scenes, Skid row neighborhood

## URBAN CONTEXT

Inner-City Arts is located just east of downtown Los Angeles on the edge of the area known as Skid Row. It is a highly mixed zone, predominantly light industry, with produce wholesalers and garment industry shops, among many other uses. Some housing, both apartments and shelters, is dispersed among the warehouses. The region's major concentration of homeless people, who live on the street or in shelters, is a few blocks away. There are many services such as privately run missions and public social service agencies that serve the homeless. Directly across the street from ICA is a depot where homeless people can store and access their possessions. As a result, many homeless individuals are drawn to the immediate vicinity.

Interviewees (and an article by Spivack – see References) describe the evolution of this area, which appears to have a long history of attracting socially marginal groups. In part, its mix of people and uses is the result of its being the terminus of the trans-continental railroad. In the 19th and early 20th centuries, mostly single males arrived, looking for opportunity; many were social misfits who had not succeeded elsewhere. Successive waves of immigration from the East were spawned by the discovery of oil, the growth of the film industry, and automobile manufacturing. At that time, the Skid Row area was home to single room occupancy (SRO) hotels, shops, restaurants, bars, brothels, and dance clubs. These establishments

served men who worked low paying jobs at the nearby rail yards, industries and warehouses, or who were on their way to other parts of town or state. Many were transients, and social issues consisted mainly of alcohol abuse and prostitution. As Spivack points out, “the area had the missions and the other social services for the population that began to cluster here during the Depression. To a large degree this population consisted of hobos, rail riders and others who migrated from place to place, some in search of work, some simply moving around because of restlessness. Many of these individuals were alcohol addicted, often they were unemployable, and several of the social service organizations focused on ‘saving’ such people.”

In the 1970s and 1980s, with the closure of the state mental hospitals, the failure to provide a substitute system of community mental health services, and the advent of crack cocaine, the nature of the Skid Row population – and its problems – changed. The area became a place where drugs could easily be obtained, drawing people with dual-diagnoses (mental illness and drug abuse). Crime and violence increased substantially. Many of those living on the streets either could not be accommodated in the shelters or chose not to stay in them.

In the late 1970s, the city established a redevelopment plan aimed at stabilizing the area, maintaining its stock of SRO housing, and encouraging social service agencies to locate or to stay there. As of

the late 1990s, there were about 6,500 dwelling units in the area, about half of which had been rehabilitated.

More recently, under pressure from civil rights advocates, the city and police have instituted changes in the area. Fewer people live on the street and more humane and professional treatment is offered to those who remain. A large homeless encampment was closed, but more social services were made available (including the storage depot mentioned above). In addition, the edges of Skid Row (toward downtown on one side and the Arts District on another) are beginning to gentrify, with many loft conversions and some newly constructed loft-like apartments. Still, estimates show that 1,500 to 1,800 homeless people live in the area. A high concentration of recently-released felons also lives in the area, including sex offenders (who, in California, must register their location under Megan’s Law).

Driving through the area during the day, one sees many people living on the streets out of their backpacks or shopping carts. Some of the homeless have created small encampments or shelters of cardboard or other provisional materials. Some are in wheelchairs or on crutches. Small pocket parks were filled with street people, some of whom appeared to be intoxicated. These local parks are not suitable for the use of neighborhood children. During part of the site visit, some homeless people were observed to be staying across the street from ICA. We were told that the ICA is, by and



large, spared from being vandalized, though the lower portion of the white exterior walls has an anti-graffiti coating and the security personnel from the local business improvement district (BID) move people off the street before the school buses arrive. Still, ICA has to sanitize the sidewalks every morning. It is clear that the area is not safe for the children who live there—thus, their parents tend to keep them indoors.

### DEMOGRAPHICS: SCHOOLS, CHILDREN AND FAMILIES

The schools served by ICA are drawn from a relatively large catchment area, but predominantly from LAUSD Local Districts 4 and 5, which surround ICA. Of the 53 elementary and middle schools that participated in ICA's programs between 1992 and 2008, 37 schools were drawn from these two districts. These two districts range from 78% to 94% Hispanic and 3% to 11% Asian. More than half of their students are "English learners," that is, English is their second language and they are still developing competency.

Consistent with the school data, the children who come to ICA are predominantly from lower income, minority families. 90% of their families live at or below the poverty line, and nearly all qualify for the free and reduced lunch program (that is, their families earn \$14,378 or less each year). A majority 81% is ethnically Hispanic and most are English learners, coming from immigrant families, mostly from

Mexico and Central America. Others are African-American (15%), Asian (4%) and a few are Caucasian.

Many families live in overcrowded apartments or houses shared by multiple families. Up to half of the children (or approximately 400) who attend the elementary school closest to ICA (9th Street School) are believed to be from homeless families. Of these, perhaps half actually live on the street or out of a car, and the other half relocates every 30 days under a voucher system that puts them up in shelters or hotels. ICA staff report that many of these children are at risk for physical or sexual abuse either from family members (in part as a result of the overcrowding conditions) or from sexual predators living in transient housing nearby.

Interestingly, observing class after class, the children were all dressed in neat and clean clothes, though some were clearly worn. It was explained to us that, culturally, Latino families put a high priority on their children and the way they appear in public and that the parents will sacrifice with respect to their own needs in order to allow the children to look presentable.

### HISTORY OF INNER-CITY ARTS

Inner-City Arts has evolved over more than twenty years. Its origins revolve around artist Bob Bates, who moved to the area because he was drawn by the availability of cheap studio space. In addition to

his own studio work, he began teaching kids as a volunteer with an area non-profit, Para Los Niños, and in a summer program at the local elementary school (9th Street). Bob reports that he literally “heard a voice,” which he felt was God’s, telling him to “get an art space for kids.” The vision was so compelling that Bob felt he had to pursue it.

He met a local real estate developer and property owner, Irwin Jaeger, credited as the ICA co-founder, who took an interest in his teaching and provided resources to help him expand it. They rented a large studio space and began to teach classes of students there.

Subsequently, they discovered that fumes from an adjacent factory that used harsh chemicals to acid wash jeans were penetrating the studio classroom. The building had to be abandoned. For a time, the program relocated to trailers on the 9th Street School campus. Fund raising then began in earnest and a lead gift was received from The Mark Taper Foundation, allowing purchase and renovation of the warehouse building that became the first structure of the ICA campus (see the next section describing ICA’s phases of expansion).



## FACILITIES

Facilities were developed in three phases. The original warehouse building, (now the Mark Taper Center), completed in 1994, was an old auto body shop building with a bowstring truss roof and long, clear spans that made the building easily adaptable to classroom space. Studios for dance/drama, music, and language arts were wrapped around a central visual arts and multi-use meeting space where classes, presentations, performances and group discussions take place. The original trusses were exposed and the ceiling was tall enough to allow the insertion of a mezzanine. The entire building is oriented toward a courtyard at the north, with large glass roll-up doors all along that edge. The space’s design promotes a strong physical and visual connection between the studio and the outdoor courtyard. Also added at that time were the original ceramics studio and its tower, as well as a fountain and orange and palm trees. The

INNER-CITY ARTS  
INNER-CITY ARTS

Left: Founder Bob Bates  
Right: ICA Classroom





Photos: Michael Maltzan Architecture

*Views of Inner-City Arts*



total area of the original converted shop and studio is about 16,000 square feet. Palm trees planted at that time are now fully grown and provide welcome shade during the summer months.

The second phase was completed in 2003 and consisted of the interior renovation of a warehouse adjacent and to the north of the original facilities. The space accommodates visual arts, animation, media arts and theater design studios, a kitchen, and an exhibition gallery adjacent to the lobby, totaling approximately 9,600 square feet. The media arts and theater design studios were constructed, but were not completely fitted out until later. When the second warehouse property was purchased, the additional adjacent site area for Phase Three was also acquired.

The most recent – and ambitious – expansion, completed in 2008, added 23,000 square feet to the original. It includes a black box theater, administrative offices, the library/resource center, a new ceramics studio with a second tower (which is a kind of beacon, lit from within and painted orange on the interior) and covered kiln yard, as well as a rooftop parking deck and expansion of the courtyard.

*Looking from classrooms into courtyard*



The expanded facilities are being utilized, but not yet fully. Timing of their completion coincided with the recent economic downturn and operational funding has contracted and is projected to shrink further. Full utilization of the space is planned for later this year (see Future Plans).



## DESIGN

The architect was Michael Maltzan (with Marmol Radziner and Associates during Phase One), and the landscape designer was Nancy Goslee Power. Both are well-known in the Los Angeles design world. Graphics were by PhD Studios. Professional principals worked *pro bono* and staff members were compensated at cost.

ICA's design makes a powerful statement – both in the neighborhood, where it stands out as an island of white in a sea of drab warehouses, with downtown skyscrapers in the middle distance – and to the children and teachers who come there. ICA is a shiny, modern place for art, clearly intended especially for them.

The formal design vocabulary consists of strong, angular, relatively stark forms created out of white stucco walls on the exterior. Interior spaces tend to have exposed structural, mechanical and electrical systems. Windows are strategically placed to provide abundant natural light and views of the landscaped courtyard gardens.

The architect has employed a number of formal gestures to add sculptural interest to the buildings. In addition to the sometimes



acute angles, these gestures include cantilevered overhangs, a tower with bulging walls, and low windows about 30" high placed along the ground in the ceramics studio. These ground level windows are intended allow children who are seated at the ceramic wheels to be able to look out into the garden while they work – however, they appear to provide only limited views out.

While largely contained and inward-focused, the design does open to the street with a number of gates that are perforated and allow visual access into the courtyards. The architecture is enlivened by the landscaping in the courtyards, especially where trees planted in Phase One have matured, and by the ubiquitous displays of children's artwork. In the courtyard, mosaics done by the children decorate the walls and encrust a mosaic fountain where students can clean brushes and wash up. A number of ceramic projects are displayed in the public galleries, as well in the library. Ceramic tiles and murals adorn the Kohler Street entrance outside the facility, signaling ICA's presence to the street. (It is worth noting that ceramics has played an important role in the ICA curriculum, and the ceramics facility forms what Bob has called the "heart" of the complex.) The monochrome color scheme is broken by the ceramics tower, which is partially glazed and painted brilliant orange on the interior. Graphics and signage are strong and also add color.

Landscape design incorporates a number of themes or concepts. One is to provide an oasis of shade in what can be a very warm and



intensely bright setting (especially as sunlight reflects off the white walls). Another is to introduce the children to growing food plants, similar to Alice Waters' "edible schoolyard." (Nancy Powers is committed to this idea, and has collaborated with Waters on other projects. However, the quantity of edible plants is very limited. A third is the introduction of a small-scale riparian habitat with a notional stream (that can flow only when it rains or when fed from a hose), boulders and trees. Generally, the plants are drought-tolerant natives or others well-adapted to the local environment.

Christopher Hawthorne, architectural critic for the *Los Angeles Times*, praised the design, focusing especially on its white color as a "blank slate" for creativity, which could invite taggers, but instead appears to be treated with respect. The exterior is further protected by an anti-graffiti coating up to about 8 feet. Hawthorne also praises ICA's urban qualities, particularly the way the design balances enclosure

*ICA students arriving in central courtyard*



for safety with substantial openings to the neighborhood and calling its towers “beacons.” He goes on to describe it as an “essay on the power of architecture to create community, and even a sense of wonder...” (*Los Angeles Times* article, December 15, 2008).

**PROGRAMS** *(This section was edited or paraphrased from ICA's program descriptions.)*

Classes during the instructional day serve 8,000 K-8th grade children annually from over 50 local elementary and middle schools with students attending one and one-quarter hour sessions twice per week for seven weeks. Classes are offered in visual arts, drama, dance, music, ceramics, digital photography and animation. During a typical school day, there are from seven to nine classes being conducted simultaneously.

Courtyard mosaic by ICA students

- ❖ ICA is a member of the Los Angeles Unified School District (LAUSD) Arts Community Partnership Network, serving at-risk English learners from 30 schools per year.
- ❖ Early Arts Learning Initiative (EARLI Arts) serves K-5th grades, directed to public school students with limited English proficiency (also a seven-week, twice-weekly program).
- ❖ Arts In The Middle (AIM) serves 6th through 8th grade students who are failing to meet minimum standards of literacy in their grade level by providing a specialized curriculum that addresses literacy in the context of the arts curriculum.
- ❖ A guest artist series brings performances and workshops from UCLA's Center for the Performing Arts, CalArts, The Music Center, The LA Philharmonic, the EAR Unit and others. Artists have included Itzhak Perlman, YoYo Ma, Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater, STOMP, Lila Downs, Aboriginal Dancers of Australia, and Jeffrey Kahane.



Student classroom and performance



- ❖ After-school programs serve over 600 students with workshops in visual art, drama, ceramics, dance, puppetry, music and animation. Students from Central City Community Outreach, Para Los Niños, Big Brothers and Big Sisters of Greater Los Angeles, A Place Called Home, and local social service agencies come to Inner-City Arts five days per week.
- ❖ Community Arts Partnership (CAP) is an animation program with workshops and classes twice per week for 12 weeks for elementary students, and once per week on Saturdays for 24 weeks for high school students. Workshops are led by faculty and graduate students of the Cal Arts School of Animation.
- ❖ Family events feature full day art experiences as well as attendance at class-culminating performances and exhibitions.
- ❖ Exhibitions and murals have been displayed at many museums and galleries, and throughout the community.
- ❖ The Annenberg Professional Development program supports teachers learning to teach more effectively by teaching in and through the arts. It is seen as a critical component that leverages the impact of the relatively brief exposure students have at ICA by developing continuity into their classroom experience. The program also extends the reach of ICA programs beyond the numbers who attend with

their teachers. Teachers who participate come to see their students differently and bring new strategies and methods of instruction back to their classrooms. The professional development program has a number of components:



Top: Mosaic at Kohler Street entrance  
Bottom: ICA class

- Arts in the Classroom/Possibilities and Pay-offs: Full-school in-service trainings at Inner-City Arts or at school-sites, engaging elementary teachers and administrators in arts experiences that introduce the creative process as a method for teaching all core subjects.
- Creativity in the Classroom (a two-salary-point LAUSD approved course): A five-day course of experiential learning where teachers learn strategies for addressing different student learning styles and classroom integration of the arts into all core subject areas.
- Bridges To Classroom Integration (a one-salary-point LAUSD approved course): A five-session series for teachers attending ICA with their students, providing them with tools to integrate what they are experiencing in the art studio into their classroom, across the curriculum.
- Visiting Scholars and Artists Series (a one-salary-point LAUSD approved course): A lecture series that presents research and best practices in arts education.
- AIM (Arts in the Middle) Training: Full-day workshops introducing middle school teachers in all subject areas to the merits of arts-based learning when working with low-achieving students.
- The Teachers Institute (with the UCLA Graduate School of Education and Information Studies): Two accredited UCLA courses that, each year, serve 150 new teachers who are enrolled in a two-year credential and M.Ed. program.

## APPROACH TO TEACHING ART

ICA's approach to teaching art is informed by its basic goal: to offer students a gratifying and developmentally appropriate experience in expression. ICA places importance on the joy in doing the work, the satisfaction in creation, and the heightened awareness of features like color, line and form (as well as the ability to find words to discuss them), rather than focusing on the "artistic merit" of the students' products. This intent permeates the techniques used by teachers, which include helping the children learn to observe carefully and find words to describe what they see in a non-judgmental manner.

ICA also has a sensitivity to, and understanding of, the issues confronted by its students, who are living among an often dangerous and dysfunctional population. The cultural background of ICA's students, their living situations, and the challenges they face are all addressed directly or indirectly in the design of their teaching program.

As ICA states their philosophy in their program brochure, they offer "arts programs where students can develop and explore their own creativity. The arts are vital for personal and cultural development and connect the individual to the larger world. Through creative exploration, the arts offer opportunities for these children to believe in who they are. This belief becomes the seed from which personal and academic growth explodes, allowing students to excel both creatively and academically in challenging environments." During our visit, we saw examples of teacher training materials posted on



the walls. They focused on a very simple approach to eliciting the children's comments on their experience using four steps, starting with the very concrete and moving to the more abstract and internalized.

- What tools or materials did you use?  
*("We used pages from a telephone book.")*
- What did you do with the tools or materials?  
*("I used a push-pin to make a hole.")*
- What did you learn?  
*("I learned to make several kinds of books.")*
- How did you feel?  
*("I felt proud of [or exhilarated or exhausted by] the experience.")*

Despite – or perhaps because of – the emphasis on process, we saw striking examples of the children learning to express themselves in a wide variety of media. In the classrooms we visited, students were fully engaged in their work, cooperative, and attentive. They were clearly enjoying what they were doing and were proud of the results.

ICA holds the strong belief, supported by research, that the children's experiences in the arts carry over to core curriculum when the students and their teachers are back at their home schools (see the section on Impacts). According to a description of the teacher-training program, "Student learning is enhanced in all core subjects

because students are actively engaged in their own learning. In each art form, the training curriculum promotes self-discovery, self-discipline, self-expression and connection to all areas of learning. Instruction provides participants with an opportunity to believe in their abilities and to believe in their potential as learners – that they can learn things that are not familiar and for which they may have no frame of reference."

## ICA STAFF AND EMPLOYMENT

ICA employs 22 full-time staff. The teachers are all practicing artists who are passionate about working with children and who receive on-the-job instruction and training in the ICA approach. There is a wide range in employment longevity, from a few months to 20 years; the average is over 7 years, indicating substantial stability. ICA pays its teachers on a scale similar to other non-profits and is able to offer employment benefits including sick leave of 6 days a year, vacation ranging from 10 to 20 days a year depending on longevity, 12 paid holidays a year, 100% employer-paid medical insurance, \$20,000 life insurance, a cafeteria plan, a retirement plan and dental insurance (the latter two are employee-paid).

## COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS

ICA is actively engaged in two types of partnerships: with the schools and with community organizations – both through the school's net-

work and on its own. For the LAUSD, ICA has a roster of over 50 elementary and middle schools served during the instructional day, and 10 high schools (plus social service agencies) with after-school or weekend programs.

ICA is also a member of the LAUSD Arts Community Partnership Network (ACPN) of the Arts Education Branch, serving at-risk English learners from 30 schools per year. To extend the limits of its resources, the District established a network of providers to coordinate arts services of authorized community-based arts organizations. Inner-City Arts is a primary provider within the network and, for many district schools, is a sole resource for specialized arts instruction and in-service training. ICA also works with the Cal Arts Community Arts Partnership Program (CAP), offering an animation program for high school students.

Bruner Foundation staff met with LAUSD representatives, including an elementary school principal, the local district superintendent for one of the two districts that contribute the most students to ICA, and the director of the LAUSD Arts Education Branch that serves the entire system. Each of them spoke very highly of ICA's work and explained how critical its contributions are to enriching the limited resources of the school district. In addition to the general provision of resources, ICA's responsiveness and child-centered philosophy were also praised.



ICA maintains a close liaison with the police, who regularly patrol the adjacent streets. Surveillance cameras are mounted at critical locations on the perimeter of ICA, and are monitored at the local police station. These measures are a prudent response to the situation in the surrounding area (as described in the Urban Context section), which is inhabited by homeless drug abusers, recently released felons, and registered sex offenders.

ICA also partners with local community organizations that focus on neighborhood improvement. The Foundation met with Estela Lopez, Executive Director of the Central City East Association (CCEA), which is an umbrella organization for three BIDs (business improvement districts) in the area. The BIDs provide services such as street improvements, cleaning and security. In the case of ICA, they take special care that homeless people who may have camped

Left: ICA classroom  
Right: Kohler Street entrance to ICA





on bordering streets overnight are not in evidence when the children are dropped off by their school busses. CCEA also operates the homeless storage depot across the street from ICA. The security measures – together with the positive local perception of ICA – appear to be succeeding in greatly limiting problems that might otherwise result from ICA's location.

*Mosaic on Kohler Street elevation*



## LEADERSHIP AND ORGANIZATION

ICA's leadership has evolved over time in ways that have allowed it to remain an effective organization. In the early years it was led by Bob Bates. Bob provided the vision (as described in the History section). His early connection with Irwin Jaeger offered a source of funding and fundraising for the program.

The organization and the board grew gradually and organically, responding to needs, opportunities and challenges (such as having to move out of their first, rented facility and find a more permanent home). ICA takes a strategic approach to appointing board members with competencies or "spheres of influence" that can contribute to the organization in a variety of ways. As a result of the 2003 strategic plan, a Board of Governors was added to assist with meeting strategic goals, but with no management or operational oversight responsibilities. ICA is still working to add more ethnic diversity to its board.

An interesting aspect of ICA's growth and evolution is its transition in leadership. What started as an artist's vision has become an effective organization, but getting there required substantial shifts in

*ICA class*

responsibilities and personnel. Initially, Bob Bates and Irwin Jaeger provided the leadership, along with a board of directors. Bob was responsible for teaching and for operations. As the organization grew, Beth Tishler, whose expertise was in program development, became the Executive Director. At a certain point, around 1999, the board realized that a more businesslike management structure was needed. Beth not only helped to recruit her replacement, but also created a job for herself that built upon her expertise, staying on as director of education and community programs after Cynthia Harnisch was hired as Executive Director (she is now President & CEO). Cynthia came from a background in museum management, and so had both knowledge of the arts and skills in non-profit business management. One can imagine that these transitions might have been difficult and resulted in uncomfortable relationships, but Bob, Beth and Cynthia appear to complement each other and to work in a cooperative, synergistic manner. To perhaps oversimplify, Bob continues to teach and to ensure that ICA remains true to its core values and evolving vision, Beth directs the educational program, and Cynthia runs the business.

One thing that impresses the foundations we spoke with, and that keeps them funding ICA, is that ICA has proven itself able to evolve and adapt successfully over a substantial period of time and that it has an effective organizational structure that will carry it forward through future transitions.

## FUTURE PLANS / STRATEGIC PLANNING

ICA has engaged in strategic planning for at least four cycles of its development. One was completed in 1991 (for 1991 to 1994), another in 1998 (for 1999 to 2003), a third one in 2003 (for 2004 to 2008), and the most recent one was essentially complete at the time of the visit (and covers 2009 to 2013).

In 2003, key issues included: whether to grow (it was determined that they could double their capacity once the planned expansion was complete); whether to continue to serve children from the downtown area or to expand (it was decided to continue the focus on local children); and whether to specifically include more programs for teenagers (this was not determined at the time). The plan called for the facility to be completed in 2006 and the number of students served to have doubled by 2008; these targets have been delayed.

By 2009, the context for strategic planning had changed. The facility expansion was complete, but the broad financial crisis threatened to curtail resources, possibly drastically. The response was to diversify “customers, markets served, and services provided” rather than relying on LAUSD for 95% of its “business,” and, in fact, ICA has recently started to serve two private, religious-based, schools. This would be accomplished by maximizing use of the campus, diversifying and increasing fee-based services, enhancing strategic alliances, diversifying funding streams, and increasing marketing (note the use of business-school jargon and thinking).

The “business vision” for ICA is: “to successfully evolve from an entrepreneurial enterprise to a broad-based institution that is well known locally and nationally and that is sustainable in its own capacity and not dependent on any one person or entity in order to thrive.” And the “big goal” for ICA is “to be THE indisputable source of programs, information and advocacy (based upon our work and research) regarding how the Arts make a healthy and sustainable difference in the lives of children and youth.” For each strategic goal, specific and measurable targets are identified. The targeted areas for program expansion include school-day programs in dance, media arts and animation; after-school programs in performing arts, visual arts, adult classes and summer classes; and professional development training.

## FINANCES

### ***Operating Costs***

The current (2009) budget for ICA runs to about \$2,250,000. Revenue sources include contributions, grants and fundraising from special events. Projected grants and contributions are reduced substantially from 2008, likely reflecting a realistic appraisal of the deteriorating economic climate. Janis Minton, a foundation management consultant who is a strong supporter of ICA and who manages foundations that provide ICA support, suggested that the real impact of reduced endowments will not be felt until next year. On the other hand, projected revenues from fundraising events

are substantially higher, perhaps reflecting added emphasis (and reliance) on these events.

By far the largest category of expenses is personnel costs, which run to about 60% of the budget. Other substantial expenditures are for independent artists and for professional services. Another major item is the in-kind contribution of bus services by the school district. At the present time, the district remains committed to continuing to provide these services, but if that changes due to budget restrictions it would have a major impact on ICA’s operations or funding needs.

### ***Construction Costs and Capital Program***

ICA has succeeded in attracting substantial capital funding support over its 20-year history. Its first facility was funded by a grant from The S. Mark Taper Foundation while the second phase was funded with Community Redevelopment Agency funds and proceeds from a Los Angeles school bond.

The cost of building the latest expansion was \$9.2 million. Special efforts were directed toward raising funds for it and support was received from many sources, including The W.M. Keck Foundation, The S. Mark Taper Foundation (which provided an unusual – for it – follow-on grant for the library/resource center), and the Rosenthal Charitable Fund, which contributed two million dollars for the theater. During the period when the expansion was built, costs



continued to escalate and more funding had to be found. One board member, Doug Hinchliffe, and his family, contributed a property that was sold to raise around a million dollars for the project. The board also agreed to obtain a line of credit, part of which was used for construction.

Other major sources of funding for ICA over its history have included The Ahmanson Foundation, The Annenberg Foundation, Bank of America Foundation, California Community Foundation, Dream-Works Animation SKG, The Eisner Foundation, J. Paul Getty Trust, The Hearst Foundations, The Streisand Foundation, and many others.



Signage at Kohler Street entrance

## IMPACTS ON THE CHILDREN: A RESEARCH-DRIVEN PROGRAM

ICA is one of the relatively few Rudy Bruner Award projects for which there is documented research on the impacts and outcomes of its programs. Much of this research has been conducted and published by Dr. James Catterall, a professor of education at UCLA (see References). Catterall has tracked children's performance following participation in classes at Inner-City Arts. In fact, ICA describes itself as "a research driven organization," with programs and pedagogical techniques developing and changing based on the results of evaluation studies. Research projects conducted at or with ICA include the following:

- ❖ A current evaluation study of Arts in The Middle (AIM) funded by the U.S. Department of Education. Current results show that when students are engaged in an extended and integrated arts program at ICA, their English language skills improve, compared with a control group that does not attend the arts program. This work informs current plans to expand service to middle school students, where risk of failure is apparent.
- ❖ In 2004, a Ford Foundation-funded evaluation of ICA students (conducted by James Catterall) demonstrated that participation in visual arts programs was associated with significant increases in children's sense of "self-efficacy" and improvement in their worldview, as well as what might

be an expected increase in the visual arts competence of participants. Teacher exit-interviews also indicated a shift in teachers' perceptions of their students' potential as learners after observing them as learners in their visual art classes.

- ❖ A five-year evaluation (from 1997 to 2002) involving 3,000 students, funded by the U.S. Department of Education and carried out by researchers at UCLA, provided evidence that classes whose children and teachers actively participated in ICA arts programs scored significantly higher on standardized tests in math, reading and language arts than control groups whose students did not participate. Results also showed that when teachers participated in 10 hours or more of professional development, students' Stanford 9 scores increased by 17.8% in reading, 8.3% in language arts and 25% in math.

It is clear that ICA has not only pursued evaluation studies, but has also evolved its programs in response to their findings. In particular, the study showing the benefit of increased teacher involvement led to creation and expansion of ICA's teacher training programs, funded by the Annenberg Foundation.

Supplementing and reinforcing the research findings are the powerful stories shared by teachers and administrators. They speak of children who use art to express deep and sometimes distressing



feelings that otherwise might not come out – and speak of finding them professional help in dealing with the problems. They also talk of the pride that children feel at achieving a degree of competence in using a medium or in creating a work that is appreciated. For both students and teachers, the experience at ICA is reportedly transformative, bringing enthusiasm for life and countering a potential loss of hope.

Two past participants have come back to teach at ICA and two others have become public school teachers.

*Students leaving ICA*

## IMPACTS ON THE NEIGHBORHOOD

ICA's white walls and towers and its landscaped courtyards stand out in contrast to the neighboring drab industrial buildings. While one could not expect this small project to transform Skid Row, it is a positive, clean, and attractive addition to a depressed and depressing area. (And it clearly has an important impact on its children, as documented in the prior section.)

## Assessing Project Success

### SUCCESS IN MEETING PROJECT GOALS

*1. To partner with the LAUSD to offer high quality arts instruction to children who otherwise would have little exposure to it.*

The partnership is strong and thriving. ICA is greatly appreciated and respected by the schools for substantially supplementing the arts education that would otherwise be offered and for the quality of its instruction. ICA has decided for strategic reasons to broaden its partnerships so that it relies less on the school district, recognizing that funding is vulnerable in difficult economic times.

*2. To encourage exploration and self-expression – more than technical competence – in part as a means of cognitive*

*development and improvement of overall educational performance and, thus, to increase the likelihood that kids will stay in school.*

This philosophy permeates all art classes and appears to be having the intended impacts, based on results of several evaluation studies.

*3. To engage teachers, along with their students as well as separately from their students, and to train them so they can take skills and methods back to their classrooms.*

Teachers come to ICA with their classes and receive special instruction in curriculum development and other methods they can take back to their own classrooms. There are also formal professional development courses, both for student teachers and as continuing education.

*4. To contribute to revitalization of the neighborhood.*

This contribution is seen as much in terms of the human capital of its children as in its physical fabric. ICA's message is: "we are here, we are staying here, and you (kids and parents) don't have to go somewhere else for beauty and other good things." While the campus does appear like a beacon or oasis in a bleak area, its impact is likely greatest on the children who come to it for art classes.

*5. For the facility: to be a safe, enriching and inspiring environment in an otherwise dull and distressed area.*

ICA's environment appears to meet these goals.



*6. For the facility expansion: to greatly increase the opportunities to serve students (including more middle- and high school students) with expanded programs able to be scheduled over more hours and days of the week.*

Given the scope of the expansion, ICA will be able to more than double its offerings when corresponding increases in operating budgets are achieved. Until then, the new facilities have allowed improvement or expansion for performing arts and ceramics, and also support expansion of middle school services in cooperation with Para Los Niños.

## OTHER MEASURES OF SUCCESS

There is also, always, the question of how applicable or replicable a project may be, and what others can learn from it. The intent is not to clone or transplant a project, but to look at how it was built in context and how it developed effective programs that address the issues of its setting. The Inner-City Arts project has many unique features involving its history, people, location and mission. As one interviewee said, “you can’t clone Bob Bates.” You also cannot simply build another ICA in a second location in LA or perhaps elsewhere (for reasons of limited human and capital resources, among many others). In fact, ICA formally decided, prior to its latest expansion, to stay in the Skid Row area rather than relocate to a “better” neighborhood, since this is in the center of the area of highest need. Likely, this commitment also helps ICA to raise

money, since funders are clearly impressed by the magnitude and depth of need in the area.

On the other hand, there is much to learn from ICA. Principal areas include curriculum and teaching methods, teacher training programs, commitment to conducting and applying research and evaluation, evolution of the organization, strength of leadership and strategic planning, and quality of the facilities.

## SELECTION COMMITTEE COMMENTS

The Committee chose Inner-City Arts as the 2009 Gold Medal winner because it excelled in all aspects of its endeavor, and because of its potential to provide a national model in design, art education, and organizational effectiveness. Moreover, the Committee felt strongly that ICA successfully addresses some of the most critical issues facing our cities today, including the need for quality design in all sectors of the urban built environment; the devastating impact of homelessness on children; the need to provide safe and beautiful open space for children; and the importance of effective art education in public school curricula.

The Committee commended Inner-City Arts and Michael Maltzan Architecture for the excellence of its architectural design. They noted the importance of the planted and safe courtyard as a sanctuary in this industrial area, and the free-flowing relationship

between interior and outdoor spaces throughout the project. The Committee felt the design was extremely effective in creating an oasis for children who live in dangerous, bleak urban environments and who have no access to safe outdoor space. The Committee observed that the landscape design and plantings lent beauty and dignity to the courtyard spaces and contributed to both educational and architectural efforts toward sustainability.

ICA was also selected as the Gold Medal winner because of its transformative impact on the lives of children who may be homeless or transient. The Committee applauded ICA for the number of children they reach. The Committee felt that ICA's approach, which brings classroom teachers along with their students to a safe and nurturing environment, and uses art training to teach a variety of life skills, is a valuable and important model that can be used in cities and educational systems nationally. They also placed tremendous value on the quality and breadth of the teacher-training program. This experience for teachers ensures that the ICA curriculum and "lessons learned" can be shared with other schools throughout the region. The Committee noted that, again, this is a model that potentially has very broad applicability to schools across the country.

The Committee also placed importance on Inner-City Arts' success at achieving significant longevity, and in adapting their organizational structure to meet changing program needs while staying true to their original mission. The Committee noted the value of having



the original founder still involved in teaching and directing the organization, as well as the longevity of many staff members, some of whom have played multiple roles in the organizational structure over the years. They also commended ICA for its ongoing evaluation of its programs, demonstrating outcomes, and building results into adjustments to its program to ensure ongoing excellence. The Committee felt that ICA provides an organizational model for non-profit organizations of all kinds throughout the country. 🐸

*Student ceramic work*

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2009 RUDY BRUNER AWARD: Silver Medal Winner

# The Community Chalkboard and Podium: An Interactive Monument to Free Expression

Charlottesville, Virginia





*Jefferson Muzzles Award artwork on Chalkboard*

## The Community Chalkboard and Podium At-A-Glance

### WHAT IS THE COMMUNITY CHALKBOARD AND PODIUM?

- ❖ A monument to the First Amendment of the Constitution of the United States
- ❖ A double-sided chalkboard fabricated of locally mined Buckingham slate. The chalkboard is designed in two sections, each 7.5' in height, and totaling 54' in length. An adjacent podium for public speeches is 18" high and 6' by 6' wide
- ❖ An interactive installation that is available for the unrestricted use of the public at all hours of the day and night
- ❖ An art installation that anchors and enlivens a new public plaza at the east end of the downtown mall in front of City Hall

### PROJECT GOALS (FROM THE APPLICATION)

- ❖ To create a place that celebrates and promotes the First Amendment right to free expression in an active and challenging way.
- ❖ To create a monument that is intellectually accessible to all people and that does not separate, segregate, or "self-select" a certain demographic of users
- ❖ To create a dynamic, interactive and civic place of public discourse
- ❖ To honor the intent of the First Amendment as a means of petitioning and challenging elected officials
- ❖ To enliven a formerly under-utilized area of downtown, and to anchor the east end of the downtown mall





## PROJECT CHRONOLOGY

**1996:** Thomas Jefferson Center for the Protection of Free Expression (TJC) creates the concept for a monument to the First Amendment.

**1997:** City Council approves proposal by TJC to form the First Amendment Monument Committee to oversee a design competition for the monument; architect Maurice Cox agrees to chair the Committee.

**1998:** TJC issues an RFP for design of the monument. Entry by architects Pete O'Shea and Robert Winstead selected as winner.

**1998-2000:** TJC works with designers to develop proposal. Project discussed at public meetings and exhibited in gallery.

**2000:** Completed design submitted to City Council for approval.

**2001:** Public hearing on proposed design held at standing room only meeting.

**2001:** City Council approves design by vote of 3 in favor, 1 opposed, and 1 abstention.

**2001-2006:** TJC designs and launches fund raising and outreach programs.

**2001-2004:** City Council plans extension of downtown mall to new public plaza outside City Hall. Wallace Roberts and Todd (WRT) hired to prepare urban design plan. O'Shea and Winstead work with WRT on placement of the monument in the new plaza.

**2005-2006:** Construction of Chalkboard

**April 2006:** Dedication of Chalkboard

## KEY PARTICIPANTS INTERVIEWED

### *Sponsor:*

JOSH WHEELER, Associate Director, Thomas Jefferson Center

### *Designers:*

PETE O'SHEA, Siteworks

ROBERT WINSTEAD, Architect (by phone)

### *City Council Members:*

SATYENDRA HUJA, Former Director,

Charlottesville Planning Dept.; City Councilor

HOLLY EDWARDS, City Councilor

BRENT CARAVATI, Former Mayor; City Councilor

### *Community Representatives:*

MAURICE COX, Former Mayor; Director of Design,

National Endowment for the Arts

JANICE JAQUITH, Radio Essayist

JOHN HERMSMEIER, Educator

DAHLIA LITHWICK, Journalist (Slate/Newsweek)

KRISTA FARRELL, Charlottesville Public Library

PEPPY G. LINDEN, Executive Director,

Charlottesville Children's Museum

LANCE HOSEY, Architect

JANE FISCHER, Executive Director,

Charlottesville Community Design Center

KATIE SWENSON, Former Director, Charlottesville Community

Design Center, Director, Rose Fellowship Program (by phone)

## The Community Chalkboard and Podium



View of Downtown Mall

### CHARLOTTESVILLE: A LIVABLE AND HISTORIC CITY

Founded in 1762, Charlottesville, Virginia is one of America's most historic cities. Charlottesville is well known as the home of three US Presidents – Thomas Jefferson, James Madison, and James Monroe – as well as for its spectacular natural setting in the foothills of the Blue Ridge Mountains. It is also the site of two of Jefferson's most important works of architecture: the University of Virginia's (UVA) "academical village," and his home at Monticello, located just a few miles from downtown.

With a population of 45,000, Charlottesville is a small city. For practical purposes, however, Charlottesville functions as the center of Albemarle County, with a population closer to 118,000.<sup>1</sup> Charlottesville's median age is 28, younger than the national median of 36 years, reflecting the large student population associated with UVA. The citizenry of Charlottesville is 68% white and 22% African-American, with the remaining population including Asian, Native American, Hispanic, Latino and others.<sup>2</sup>

The Charlottesville City Council, in its recent strategic plan, lays out the following vision for the city:

*City Council Vision 2025 calls for the City to be a leader in innovation, environmental sustainability, and social*

<sup>1</sup> [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Charlottesville\\_Virginia](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Charlottesville_Virginia)

<sup>2</sup> [http://www.city-data.com/county/Charlottesville\\_city-VA.html](http://www.city-data.com/county/Charlottesville_city-VA.html)





*and economic justice; to be flexible and progressive in anticipating and responding to the needs of the citizens; and to act as the cultural and creative capital of Central Virginia. There are eight main areas of focus: economic sustainability, lifelong learning, and quality housing opportunities for all, arts and culture, green city initiatives, healthy city initiatives, a connected community, and smart, citizen-focused government.*

Charlottesville has progressive goals, but it is also a southern city with a history of racial tensions. In 1954, in response to the Supreme Court decision *Brown v. Board of Education*, Charlottesville closed its public schools for several months rather than integrate them in accordance with the ruling. Other racially charged episodes include the demolition of Vinegar Hill, an African-American neighborhood that was razed as part of urban redevelopment in 1965. To the outrage of displaced residents and their supporters, the Vinegar Hill site sat vacant for 20 years until it was redeveloped into a mix of

uses that now form the western terminus of the downtown mall. Recently, the City Council initiated a series of meetings designed to establish a meaningful and action-oriented dialogue between its African-American and white citizens. In addition, like many cities across the country, Charlottesville suffers from a shortage of affordable housing, and homelessness is a growing problem in the city.

## THE DOWNTOWN MALL

The Downtown Mall is worth special mention. Designed in 1974 by nationally known landscape architect Lawrence Halprin, the eight block outdoor mall and its adjacent streets are an important center of business for the city. The Mall area hosts a thriving collection of local shops and restaurants, as well as important entertainment venues, including the historic Paramount Theatre and Live Arts. In its early years the Mall struggled somewhat, but in '96-'97 the Mall made a major turnaround when through streets were allowed to cross the Mall at four key points (before that time, it had been the longest continuous outdoor mall in the country). This alteration allowed controlled vehicular access to merchants, and began to animate the side streets with new development and shops.

Today the Mall is the centerpiece of a bustling historic district, which achieved National Historic Landmark status in 2007. Many of the buildings along the Mall are of historic importance and maintain a low four- to five-story height, making it a welcoming

*Presidents Madison, Jefferson and Monroe on Charlottesville City Hall*

and human-scale pedestrian environment. Restoration of historic structures continues, including a third theatre for use by a local opera company. The mild climate of Charlottesville allows many restaurants and cafes to have outdoor seating along the Mall, and a Children's Museum and other cultural venues face directly onto the space. The Mall is active and well-used throughout the year.

It is notable that many of the uses on the Mall are somewhat upscale, and patrons of the shops and cultural venues are largely white. This is especially significant because two African-American neighborhoods are located nearby, yet those residents do not appear to use it to a great extent. The possible exception to this observation is the Chalkboard, which is used by people of all races, ages and backgrounds.

The west end of the Mall, formerly known as Vinegar Hill, is anchored by the Omni Hotel, which was built in 1985, and a public skating rink. Both are connected directly to the Mall by pedestrian plazas and pathways. The east end of the Mall, long anchored by City Hall and a small public amphitheater, was for many years much less active than the west end, where the bulk of retail and commercial uses are located. Before the East Plaza was built in 2001, the east end of the Mall terminated in a confusing street pattern that allowed vehicular access to City Hall and the nearby amphitheater, but was unattractive to pedestrians.



In 2001 federal monies became available to build a combination visitor and transit center at the east end of the Mall across from City Hall. At the same time, City Council approved a proposal by a local music promoter to rent the amphitheater space and upgrade it into the Charlottesville Pavilion, a venue that could accommodate high-profile musical acts. The City Council, headed by then-Mayor Maurice Cox, saw an opportunity to connect City Hall, the Pavilion, and the new Visitor Center with a public open space. They hired Wallace, Roberts and Todd to design a plaza that would extend the Mall and connect the major public venues on its perimeter. This new plaza also became the location for The Community Chalkboard. Today the plaza serves not only as a connection between these important civic uses, but is also the *de facto* location for many kinds of public gatherings, including political demonstrations, non-profit events, and various public meetings.

*Charlottesville Transit Station and Visitors Center*



## HISTORY OF THE CHALKBOARD

The idea for a monument to free speech originated with Charlottesville's Thomas Jefferson Center (TJC). The Center is a non-profit institution devoted entirely to the defense of free speech "in all its forms." An independent and non-partisan organization, TJC's programs include education and involvement in legislative matters as they pertain to free speech. Recently the TJC and the Ford Foundation have joined together to create a program entitled "Difficult Dialogues," which focuses on threats to academic freedom at colleges and universities.

The Center also recognizes the many threats to free expression in the arts, engages in litigation around these issues, and hosts a variety of programs associated with protection of artistic expression. The TJC sponsors the "Jefferson Muzzles" award that identifies "particu-



larly egregious affronts to free expression." The TJC also recognizes people "who have shown extraordinary devotion to the principles of free expression" through its William J. Brennan, Jr., Award.

### ***The Competition***

In 1998 Josh Wheeler, Associate Director of the TJC, approached the Charlottesville City Council with the idea of installing a classically designed podium and landscaped space at the east end of the Mall as a monument to freedom of expression. The proposed design was something TJC had built at a park in Utah, and was interested in "franchising" in other locations. At that time the east end of the Mall was still a series of roadways that cut off City Hall and the pavilion from pedestrian access to the Mall. The proposed design placed the

*Empty boots anti-war installation at Chalkboard*

*Top: Jefferson Muzzles Award artwork on Chalkboard  
Bottom: Lady Liberty artwork on Chalkboard*



podium at a grassy area near City Hall, in a leftover space that was difficult to access due to the surrounding vehicular traffic.

While the City Council liked the idea of a monument to the first Amendment, they did not like the design that the TJC initially proposed. Then-Mayor Maurice Cox, who was also a professor of architecture at UVA, felt that the classical podium design was not architecturally suited to Charlottesville. The TJC then suggested that they host a design competition for the monument, with a selection committee made up of local citizens. Maurice Cox was asked to serve on that committee, and after its second meeting agreed to serve as its chair.

The call for submissions was intentionally broad, inviting “concepts for a design to commemorate the free expression guarantees of the First Amendment.” It was “open to anyone with an idea to share.” The only criteria were that it must be “anything that serves as a physical and symbolic reminder of the importance of the right of free expression,” and that it must be located east of the downtown mall. There was no entry fee, and no prescribed format for submissions. As Josh Wheeler stated, the objective was to solicit ideas not just from design professionals but also from a diverse group of laypeople, and from as many of Charlottesville’s citizens as possible. A cash prize of \$1,000 was offered to the winner.

The committee received 36 proposals. The entry by artist and landscape architect Pete O’Shea of Siteworks with architect Rob Winstead was a disarmingly simple presentation: a piece of black chalkboard, approximately 12” by 24”, with a chalk drawing on it. The drawing depicted a large scale, full-height chalkboard wall, on which the public would be invited to write with no restriction as to content. This concept captured the imagination of almost everyone in the group, and was the first choice of 9 of the 11 committee members.

### **Public Process**

Although the jury was enthusiastic in their choice of the Chalkboard, public review of the proposal in 2000 and 2001 generated a degree of controversy unprecedented in Charlottesville. The process, which included a series of public meetings and gallery exhibits designed to promote awareness of the Chalkboard, resulted in a major public debate. Some feared that graffiti, profanity, obscenity, and politically divisive language would appear on the wall.



*Original competition submission by Pete O’Shea and Robert Winstead*

Vociferous disagreements arose among citizens and politicians about the advisability of providing an outlet for such unedited public expression.

Reflecting on the controversy, some of those involved interpret the outcry as an indicator of long-held southern values, whereby unpleasant or controversial opinions were simply not expressed publicly. Others, including some of the older African-American residents of Charlottesville, feared that unvoiced racial tensions would be posted on the Chalkboard. Some public officials voiced concern that the location directly in front of City Hall would encourage criticism of elected officials. Notwithstanding these fears and concerns, in March of 2001 the City Council approved the design.

It is noteworthy that the public process leading up to the Chalkboard is still discussed as vividly as the Chalkboard itself, and the TJC maintains a file many inches thick of newspaper articles pertaining to the debate. Many feel that the dialogue was extremely important to the community and that the process itself served a community-building function and explored issues around freedom of expression.

As the city debated the Chalkboard, the City Council considered a plan for the redesign of the east end of the Mall. Federal funds were available for the new Visitor Center, and the Council realized that this provided the opportunity to create a publicly accessible eastern

terminus to the Mall. Since the new monument was expected to come on line concurrently, there was an accelerated effort to get the east end designed and under construction. In 2001 design of the public space was resolved, the location of the Chalkboard was finalized, and construction began.

## FINANCES

Once the Chalkboard was approved, O'Shea and Winstead proceeded with their final design. In the meantime, it fell to the TJC to raise the required \$200,000 to pay for the monument. Funds came from a variety of foundations and individuals:

### **FUNDING SOURCES:**

#### **Foundations/Non-Profits = \$157,150**

Planned Parenthood of the Blue Ridge  
Scripps Howard Foundation  
Center for Individual Freedom  
John W. Kluge Foundation  
Charlottesville-Albemarle Community Foundation Fund  
Foundation for Roanoke Valley  
I.J. & Hilda M. Breeden Foundation  
Bama Works (charitable giving foundation for  
Dave Matthews Band)

#### **Businesses = \$19,993**

SNL Securities  
Lexis / Nexis  
VMDO Architects  
New Dominion Bookshop

Barnes & Noble  
 C-Ville Weekly  
 Les Yeux du Monde  
 Silverchair Science & Technology

**Individual gifts ± \$50,000**

The TJC also received substantial discounts from R.E. Lee & Sons Construction and Buckingham Slate Co.

**CONSTRUCTION COSTS:**

**Pre-Construction Costs**

Design Fees & Community Outreach	\$62,417.37
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**Construction Cost**

Labor:	\$31,642	\$163,259.96
Materials:	\$129,783	
Misc.:	\$1,764	

<b>TOTAL CONSTRUCTION COST:</b>	<b>\$225,677.33</b>
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**Annual Maintenance Costs**

Cleaning, Supplies, Electricity, etc.	\$6,534.07
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## DESIGN

According to designer Pete O'Shea, the submittal to the monument competition was essentially done the night before the deadline, on a chalkboard hastily procured from K-Mart. Although O'Shea and Winstead had not worked out the details of the design, they were very clear that they wanted the monument to be highly interactive, and even confrontational, rather than purely symbolic.



The concept for the monument, as expressed in the RFP, was that it be “a fixed symbol of the right to free expression and an avenue for the exercise of that right.” For O'Shea and Winstead, the design challenge was to keep the design simple, and to avoid letting the design override the clarity of the intent. They wanted to create a “vehicle for expression,” rather than an art object for its own sake. The ultimate design solution reflects that intent. Although it is carefully proportioned and detailed, the Chalkboard does not attract attention to itself. Rather, it draws interest to the content of what is written on it.

Completed in 2006, the Chalkboard consists of two slate walls and a podium made of locally quarried Buckingham slate. The slate has significance in the area, as it has historically been used as a roofing material. Both sections of the Chalkboard are double sided, 7.5 feet in height, with stainless steel chalk trays integral to the design. The

*View of Chalkboard looking toward Charlottesville Pavilion*



shorter wall is 12 feet in length, and the longer one 42 feet. The sections are separated by a gap of 12 feet. They are illuminated with a subtle lighting strip below the top of the chalk tray. The wall is fabricated from a series of 1' by 4' and 2' by 4' slabs of slate attached to a concrete block wall that supports them from behind. The slabs are fixed by custom-designed stainless steel anchors—no mortar is involved. Next to the chalkboard walls is a slate podium, approximately 6' square and raised 12" off the ground.

There are inscriptions incised on each side of the Chalkboard and on the podium. These inscriptions were selected by Charlottesville high school students, who were given the opportunity to vote on which quotes were most meaningful to them. The permanent inscription on one side of the Chalkboard is from the First Amendment to the Constitution:

*Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press; or the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the Government for a redress of grievances.*

On the opposite side is a quote from U.S. Supreme Court Justice Thurgood Marshall:

*Above all else, the First Amendment means that government has no power to restrict expression because of its message, its ideas, its' subject matter, or its content. To permit the continued building of our politics and culture, and to assure self-fulfillment for each individual, our people are guaranteed the right to express any thought, free from government censorship.*



Views of Chalkboard from plaza

And on the podium is a quote from John Milton:

*Give me the liberty to know, to utter, and to argue  
freely according to conscience, above all liberties.*

The Chalkboard is oriented in an east-west direction on the central axis of the Mall, so that people walk by one side or the other when traversing the space. People passing in and out of City Hall, the Visitor Center, Transit Center, or simply cutting through the public space, pass directly by the Chalkboard. Similarly, when there are events at the Charlottesville Pavilion, hundreds of people queue up



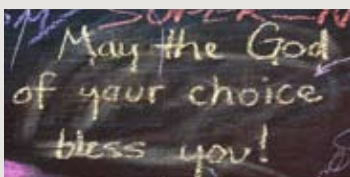
Diagram of Chalkboard location in plaza

in the square. There, they have the opportunity to read or write on the Chalkboard as they pass by. According to local residents, during the warmer months the plaza is jammed with people.

## USE AND SIGNIFICANCE OF THE CHALKBOARD

When the Chalkboard was first planned, the TJC assumed that they would maintain it by providing chalk and cleaning it off once a week. From the outset, however, the use of the Chalkboard has been so heavy and consistent that it is cleaned at least twice a week, and usually fills up within 4 to 6 hours of each cleaning. Observing the use of the Chalkboard over several days, the site visit team noticed its magnetic effect on passersby who stop to read what is written and often add their own messages. Every inch of both sides of the board was covered during the entire site visit, despite the fact that it had been cleaned at least once.

In terms of content, there is some obscenity and profanity on the board, as well as the predictable teen chat, but there are also comments about current political issues and more deeply felt human emotions, as well as drawings with a wide range of artistic merit. No erasers are provided and we saw no evidence that users had removed remarks. Interviewees report that users occasionally remove profanities and foul language, but that more often, a single line is drawn through a phrase or statement, and rebuttals are



written nearby. The wall is reportedly used more heavily at times of national or local crisis, and at times when contentious issues are at the forefront of public awareness. A current “highway vs. parkway” debate continuously appears on the wall, and sentiments related to a recent shooting are expressed as well.

Young people, in particular, make frequent use of the Chalkboard. Charlottesville youth are reportedly impressed that their city has a public place where they are actually invited to express their opinions and where writing on a wall is not rejected as graffiti. Dahlia Lithwick, a journalist for *Slate* and *Newsweek*, feels the Chalkboard provides a kind of “face-to-face” interaction that counteracts the isolation felt by many in our society. Lithwick thinks of the Chalk-

board as a physical representation of what we are losing in daily civil conversation, and that this form of public expression makes people feel they are truly being heard. Ms. Lithwick also points out that nothing on the Chalkboard is truly anonymous—someone might always be observing what is being written.

Lance Hosey, a local architect who walks across the plaza on his way to and from work, agrees that the Chalkboard’s purpose extends beyond its functional aspects. He feels that “monument” is too static a term to adequately describe the Chalkboard, because the installation dynamically engages the community. Hosey sees the Chalkboard more as an art installation, whose surface has an ephemeral quality that adds to its beauty. Hosey also observes that different color palettes are used in different seasons, and that the way the light strikes the wall makes it a changing object. He considers it quite beautiful in all of its manifestations: when it is filled with writing, used for art, or relatively blank when it has been cleaned.

Katie Swenson, Former Director of the Charlottesville Community Design Center, and current Director of the Rose Fellowship Program of Enterprise Community Development, feels that the Chalkboard occupies a unique niche, “at the intersection of art and community.” In her experience, the Chalkboard is used “all the time,” and has become a modern expression of Charlottesville’s historic identity, providing a contemporary lens on issues of freedom of expression and the spirit of the Constitution.

Top: Passerby writing on Chalkboard  
Left bottom: Typical Chalkboard expression  
Right bottom: School group in front of Chalkboard mural



Periodically, non-profit groups are allowed to use the Chalkboard to announce events and programs. In these cases it is cleaned for their use, and the groups set up tables next to it. Among the groups that use the Chalkboard regularly are the Charlottesville Public Library and the adjacent Children's Discovery Museum, which includes use of the Chalkboard in its programming for young children. The Chalkboard has also been included in educational programs as part of the study of First Amendment rights, and used by art programs such as the Summer Governor's School Art Program, whose students drew a series of creative self-portraits on the wall. During the time of the site visit, a picture of Thomas Jefferson was drawn on the Chalkboard in anticipation of the TJC's "Jefferson Muzzles" announcement.

Holly Edwards, an African-American City Council member, recalls that one of the most powerful uses of the Chalkboard occurred during a recent march in memory of a young African-American man who was shot. Members of the community joined together to walk to the Chalkboard, where they listened to speeches and wrote expressions of sadness and condolence on the wall. Edwards also noted that the Chalkboard and podium were the venue for a recent gathering marking the 50th anniversary of Brown vs. Board of Education.

The Chalkboard has an extended reach through the website run by the TJC, which keeps a running record of photos of memorable



sayings, expressions, poems, quotes, and artwork. In this way, some of the most significant moments at the Chalkboard are preserved and further disseminated. The website also provides a space where people can write virtual chalkboard messages online. The TJC website is an important adjunct to the monument itself, adding breadth and an online presence. <http://www.tjcenter.org/monument/>

The Chalkboard is maintained mostly by volunteers who live or work nearby, and who regularly clean the Chalkboard and refill the chalk trays. On some occasions, school kids have been hired to do the work, but overall the TJC and interested citizens have managed to provide the level of maintenance required.

Left top: Young Chalkboard user with school group  
 Right top: Chalkboard expression  
 Bottom: Chalkboard expression  
 Bottom right: Mural by school group

## IMPACTS

The Chalkboard is the animating focal point of the East Plaza. The Chalkboard attracts people who are passing through this public space, and serves as a venue for political gatherings and speeches of all kinds. Architect Lance Hosey states that the Chalkboard has turned the square into the “free market of ideas” proposed by the framers of the Constitution, and has created Charlottesville’s own “speakers’ corner.”

The dialogue that occurred prior to the approval of the Chalkboard became an important aspect of the project. The public debate about the monument’s design served an educational and civil purpose, acquainting citizens with the concerns and values of their neighbors. Josh Wheeler of the Thomas Jefferson Center characterizes the public review process as a major dialogue on the nature of free speech. This process resonated with the political and social intent of the monument.



*Chalkboard image to promote transit*

## FUTURE PLANS

Future plans for the Chalkboard do not involve any physical or design modifications. Rather, many feel that additional efforts are needed to elevate the level of discourse and the quality of artwork. Some suggest that the Chalkboard could be used to commission works of public art. As a venue for temporary art installations, the Chalkboard could display works of art that take longer to develop and might be kept on view for a period of time.

It is apparent to those involved that this next level of Chalkboard use will not happen on its own, but might be accomplished by adding a programming officer or advisory board. This entity could commission works of art and organize competitions on a regular and more formalized basis, as well as work to integrate the use of the Chalkboard into school curricula. The TJC intends to use Rudy Bruner Award monies to support this type of future programming

TJC hopes to create additional monuments to free expression elsewhere in the country. Their experience in Charlottesville has taught them that the competition and ensuing dialogue are as important in some ways as the monument itself. The TJC imagines that a monument might look quite different in each city, and should be tailored to the urban character, social issues, and cultural identity of each locale.



## Assessing Project Success

### SUCCESS IN MEETING PROJECT GOALS

*1. To create a place that celebrates and promotes the First Amendment right to free expression in an active and challenging way.*

The Chalkboard is an innovative approach to memorializing the right to free speech. The Chalkboard is interactive, unlike traditional monuments that foster passive observance of the First Amendment. The genius of the Chalkboard lies in its simple design and thoughtful location. These qualities attract the ongoing, spontaneous and unedited exercise of free expression.

*2. To create a monument that is intellectually accessible to all people and that does not separate, segregate, or “self-select” a certain demographic of users.*

The Chalkboard appears to meet this goal. Many different kinds of people use the Chalkboard, including people of all ages, races and ethnicities. It is particularly attractive to young people.

*3. To create a dynamic, interactive and civic place of public discourse.*

The Chalkboard is interactive and dynamic, and encourages and supports public discourse. One aspect of the monument that makes it so successful is its placement at the center of a public plaza. People gather in the plaza for public events, and it is traversed en route to and from the adjacent public buildings.

The level of public discourse, however, remains somewhat disappointing to some, who feel that the Chalkboard’s potential as a venue for more thoughtful dialogue or higher quality art has not been fully met. Ideas to address this issue include additional programming to elevate the level of chalkboard use.

*4. To honor the intent of the First Amendment as a means of petitioning and challenging elected officials.*

At the time of the site visit there were only a few comments on the Chalkboard relating to public or political issues. Residents report, however, that when issues of public concern are before





the City Council, or when issues of national concern emerge, the Chalkboard is covered with responses and opinions.

*5. To enliven a formerly under-utilized area of downtown, and to anchor the downtown mall.*

One of the most important functions of the Chalkboard is as a focal point in an otherwise stark public plaza. The Chalkboard and podium are the functional center of that space. The monument is a meeting place and a venue for political and other social events, with the podium providing not only a platform for public speaking, but a space to sit and an area for children to draw. The installation has become a much-needed destination at the east end of the mall.

## SELECTION COMMITTEE COMMENTS

The Committee felt that the Chalkboard has “uncorked” the desire for public expression, particularly on the part of young people who use it frequently, and that it has energized the plaza, creating a new venue for public gatherings. They felt that this latter function was equal in importance to the opportunity for individual written expression. They also felt it was important as a new idea that could be easily adapted in almost any city.

The Committee emphasized the importance of the community process and competition that resulted in the final design of the Chalkboard. They noted that the public dialogue, including the vociferous objections to the idea, raised important issues of concern to the town. They also felt that the community process could be of value in many American cities. 🐦

*Chalkboard expression  
Right: Detail of Chalkboard bus mural*

2009 RUDY BRUNER AWARD: Silver Medal Winner

# Hunts Point Riverside Park

The Bronx, New York







*Neighborhood children in Hunts Point playground*



## Hunts Point At-A-Glance

### WHAT IS HUNTS POINT RIVERSIDE PARK?

- ❖ A new park built in a degraded industrial section of a residential neighborhood in the Bronx. The park provides a natural retreat, passive recreation and access to the Bronx River.
- ❖ A place for community gatherings and youth programs.
- ❖ The first public recreational access to the Hunts Point section of the Bronx River in over 60 years, and a showcase for ongoing river reclamation efforts.
- ❖ The first stage of development of the Bronx River Greenway (BRGW), connecting communities to each other and the waterway. The BRGW will eventually provide bike connections to Manhattan, other boroughs, Westchester County and the entire East Coast Greenway system. Hunts Point Riverside Park inspired the South Bronx Greenway, which will connect paths and facilities along the BRGW to streets and neighborhoods in the South Bronx.

### PROJECT GOALS

- ❖ To “reclaim the Bronx River as a resource for Bronx communities”.
- ❖ To open public recreational access to the Bronx River.
- ❖ To clean up and rehabilitate the park site.
- ❖ To serve as a symbol of the Bronx River’s rebirth and growth of the Greenway.
- ❖ To engage local communities in the redevelopment process
- ❖ To use design to “capture a sense of nature on a site located between a scrap metal yard and the world’s largest food distribution center”.
- ❖ To “create space for recreation and respite, provide habitat for wildlife, and offer a green oasis in a highly urbanized environment”.



## PROJECT CHRONOLOGY

**1996:** National Park Service Rivers, Trails and Conservation Assistance program identifies the Bronx River as an area that could benefit from an Urban Resources Partnership catalyst grant (\$182,000) and selects Partnerships for Parks as the entity to administer and coordinate the Bronx River Project.

**Mid-1997:** The Bronx River Working Group is formed; it includes approximately 10-15 organizations and government agencies.

**December 1997:** The Bronx River Project is launched. Jenny Hoffner is hired as the Bronx River Catalyst Coordinator by Partnerships for Parks (Partnerships), a joint program of the New York City Parks & Recreation Department and City Parks Foundation. Partnerships “re-grants” \$121,000 in funds for community development around urban ecosystem restoration (the money comes from a WaterWorks grant, funded by Urban Resources Partnerships, a former multi-agency Federal initiative).

**Summer 1998:** Jenny Hoffner meets with Community Board 2, and they recommend meeting with The Point CDC. Hoffner meets with Majora Carter of The Point CDC and invites the organization to submit a grant proposal for community and ecological development work along the Hunts Point section of the Bronx River.

**September 1998:** Majora Carter “discovers” the park site and writes \$10,000 seed grant proposal on behalf of The Point CDC for clean-up of site.

**Fall 1998:** The first of many community clean-ups at the abandoned street-end at Lafayette Ave and the Bronx River – the site of the future Hunts Point Riverside Park.

**Fall, 1998:** Majora Carter convenes the first meeting of community groups and elected officials, along with the State Department of Transportation and New York Metropolitan Transportation Council, to focus action on Hunts Point Riverside Park.

**1999:** Parks Commissioner Henry Stern declares 1999 the “Year of the Bronx River.”

**April 24, 1999:** The First Golden Ball Procession, organized by the Bronx River Working Group in collaboration with the National Park Service Rivers & Trails Program, lands at Hunts Point Riverside Park. Rocking the Boat sets up programming at the site. Prior to the site’s development as a park, The Point CDC and others use the site for community get-togethers and environmental education.

**2000:** The first “Amazing Bronx River Flotilla” is organized by Partnerships for Parks and the Bronx River Working Group.

**2000:** At the second “Golden Ball” event, Governor Pataki announces an \$11 million appropriation to fund the Bronx River Greenway (BRGW). In addition, then-Mayor Giuliani and Congressman José Serrano each announce separate \$11 million allocations to fund BRGW (for a total of \$33 million). The Parks Department allocates \$3.27 million of this mayoral funding to fund Hunts Point Riverside Park capital improvements. Community design meetings are organized and convene at The Point.

**Spring 2001:** Design of the park by NYC Parks commences when landscape architects George Bloomer and Nancy Prince take a canoe trip down the River. After the Flotilla, Nancy provides a pin-up board in the park, inviting Community suggestions that will frame the project’s program and scope of work.

**2001:** Congressman Serrano allocates \$421,000 in National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) grants to fund ecological restoration work along the Bronx River. The grant program is administered by Jenny Hoffner with Partnerships for Parks and designed to encourage collaboration and coordination between the many groups now working along the river.

**2001:** Majora Carter leaves The Point CDC and founds a new nonprofit, Sustainable South Bronx.



**Fall 2001:** Discussions begin over request to increase usable area in the park by transferring a parcel from the Hunts Point Terminal Market (owned by New York City's Economic Development Corporation) to the New York City Department of Parks & Recreation. First presentation to Community Board.

**Late 2001/Early 2002:** The Bronx River Alliance is formed from the Bronx River Working Group. Linda R. Cox is hired with dual title: Executive Director of the Bronx River Alliance and Bronx River Administrator in the New York City Department of Parks & Recreation.

**May 2002:** The NYC Art Commission approves the design for Hunts Point Riverside Park.

**2003:** Sustainable South Bronx starts the Bronx Environmental Stewardship Training program (BEST) for ecological restoration services training and placement. Trainees gain field experience with the Bronx River Alliance and Parks' Natural Resources Group.

**2003:** Hunts Point Vision Plan is developed.

**April 2003:** Capital project is put out to bid. The project is delayed to resolve permit issues with U.S. Army Corps of Engineers.

**2004:** Groundbreaking takes place on \$3.27 million park capital improvement. Rocking the Boat relocates to Concrete Plant Park, just upstream.

**September 2006:** Rocking the Boat returns to the site adjacent to Hunts Point Riverside Park, purchased by The Point CDC with funds from NOAA grant.

The park's opening is delayed for improvement of pedestrian access to the park across a dangerous intersection with at-grade railroad crossing.

**2006:** Majora Carter marries James Chase in Hunts Point Riverside Park. Chase arrives on a boat built by students in a Rocking the Boat program.

**2007:** The Barry Segal Family Foundation, in connection with the Clinton Global Initiative, commits to \$300,000 over three years for training and managing Greenway Stewards to provide maintenance along the South Bronx Greenway, including in Hunts Point Riverside Park.

**Spring 2007:** Hunts Point Riverside Park re-opens to the public as the first new park on the Bronx River Greenway.

**2007:** Sustainable South Bronx's first annual Hunts Point Hustle 5k race goes through the park, with 120 participants. The Point's Fish Parade commences at the park.

**2008:** The 10th Annual Amazing Bronx River Flotilla lands again at Hunts Point Riverside Park.

## KEY PARTICIPANTS INTERVIEWED

LINDA R. COX, Executive Director, Bronx River Alliance

MAGGIE SCOTT GREENFIELD, Greenway Director and Director of Communications, Bronx River Alliance

GEORGE BLOOMER, Landscape Architect, NYC Parks and Recreation, Capital Design Division

NANCY PRINCE, Landscape Architect, NYC Parks and Recreation, Capital Design Division

ADAM GREEN, Executive Director of Rocking the Boat Job Skill Apprentices for Rocking the Boat

ALEXIE TORRES-FLEMING, Executive Director of Youth Ministries for Peace and Justice

JOAN BYRON, Director, Sustainability and Environmental Justice, Pratt Center for Community Development; and Bronx River Alliance Board Chair

ROBERTO GARCÍA, Community Board 2 Chair

JOHN ROBERT, Community Board 2 District Manager

JENNY HOFFNER, former Bronx River Project Catalyst Coordinator for Partnerships for Parks

ADRIAN BENEPE, Commissioner, NYC Department of Parks and Recreation

JOSHUA LAIRD, Assistant Commissioner, NYC Department of Parks and Recreation

CHARLES MCKINNEY, Chief of Design, NYC Department of Parks and Recreation

MIQUELA CRAYTOR, Executive Director of Sustainable South Bronx

KELLIE TERRY-SEPULVEDA, Managing Program Director of The Point CDC

MAJORA CARTER, Majora Carter Group

JAMES CHASE, Majora Carter Group

JOHN NEU, Former owner of neighboring scrap/recycling yard

TOM OUTERBRIDGE, General Manager of Sims Municipal Recycling, a division of Sims Metal Management, current owner of neighboring scrap/recycling yard

ALYSSA COBB KONON, Executive Vice President, New York City Economic Development Commission

JAMES G. TUREK, Local/Regional Biologist, National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration Restoration Center

PAUL LIPSON, Chief of Staff to Congressman José E. Serrano

## Hunts Point Riverside Park



*View of Bronx River near Hunts Point*

### URBAN CONTEXT

The Bronx, the northernmost of New York City's boroughs, has been a part of New York City since the middle of the 19th century. The Bronx is one of the most densely populated counties in the country, even though almost a quarter of it is dedicated to public open spaces and parks, including the Bronx Zoo and the New York Botanical Garden. Since leaving its rural character behind in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, the Bronx has been home to immigrant and minority groups – first European, then African-American and Latino – especially Puerto Rican, Dominican and Jamaican. The 2000 Census showed that almost 30% of the population of the Bronx was foreign-born.

In the last three decades the Bronx, particularly the South Bronx, has been plagued by urban problems and blight. It was the site of many 1960s and 1970s urban development and renewal projects, and was sliced and segregated by highways and dotted with massive public housing projects. In the 1970s the Bronx was plagued by a wave of arson fires. The phrase “the Bronx is burning” was etched into the minds of many Americans when it was uttered live on camera by Howard Cosell as he viewed the silhouette of nearby burning buildings during his broadcast of a Yankees/Red Sox game in June 1977.



## NEIGHBORHOOD

At the southern tip of the Bronx, Hunts Point “was one of several large salt meadowland peninsulas... that jut into the East River.”<sup>1</sup> Even though the New Haven Railroad’s Harlem River branch had opened a station in Hunts Point in the 1850s, this remote area largely held farms and country estates and was not urbanized until the arrival of New York City subway lines in the first decade of the 20th century. These excellent transportation connections attracted industry to the area – although transport focused, even then, on multiple rail lines with little attention to commercial water transport options. The rail lines provided easy and inexpensive access to labor and freight for coal and other product deliveries. “By 1915, most of the area around Southern Boulevard between Intervale Avenue and East 163rd Street had been developed with 5-story apartment buildings and 4-story row houses.”<sup>2</sup>

Hunts Point retains a commercial and heavy industrial character, especially along the waterfront. Many automobile parts and repair operations dot the community. Nearly half of the Hunts Point land mass is occupied by the 329-acre Food Distribution Center immediately adjacent to Hunts Point Riverside Park. The idea of using this site for the city’s food distribution was the brainchild of the Lindsay Administration in the mid-1960s, conceived in response to the loss of manufacturing (including steel plants) in the area, and in order to meet the need for expansion and modernization of food market



operations in Manhattan. The excellent transportation infrastructure and largely industrial character of the area made Hunts Point a natural fit. “The location was convenient for goods to travel in and out by all types of transportation—rail, highway and water. By locating all of New York City’s food markets in one full-service hub, retailers could conveniently purchase everything that they needed in one location.”<sup>3</sup> It is now reportedly the largest wholesale food market in the world.

“The remainder of the peninsula comprises an industrial neighborhood where a diverse mix of food, manufacturing, construction, utility, municipal, auto-related and waste-related uses coexist. The northwestern portion of the peninsula contains a solid residential community, now home to roughly 12,000 residents.”<sup>2</sup>

*Auto body shops in Hunts Point neighborhood*

## PROJECT HISTORY

The area along the Bronx River is so industrial that at one point in recent history some in the city government proposed to rezone all of Hunts Point for industrial use. Residents of the South Bronx, including the Hunts Point area, have lived for decades near a waterfront made virtually inaccessible by industrial development. Stories abound of longtime residents who did not know that they lived on a peninsula. A few locals, especially those from the Puerto Rican community who had grown up in a fishing culture, picked their way through the garbage to fish in the river. For most people, however, high fences, large industrial plants, heavy truck traffic, train tracks, garbage and other unpleasant activities (including prostitution, drug use and dealing) were more than sufficient barriers to finding and exploring the water's edge.

In the 1970s, a group called Bronx River Restoration fought for reclamation of the Bronx River in the West Farms area of the South Bronx. Their work stemmed from the environmental movement and from a desire to counteract the deterioration of their community. They were able to conduct environmental studies and initial planning, but were severely limited by reduced funding during the recession of the early 1980s. The group was able to complete a *Bronx River Restoration Master Plan* in 1980, which some suggest laid out the guidelines for many later efforts along the river.



By the 1990s, the struggle for environmental justice became particularly relevant to a community overburdened with polluting industries, not the least of which were public waste treatment facilities and heavy truck traffic. Governor Patterson noted that “some areas of the South Bronx are burdened with some of the highest asthma rates in the State – four to five times the national average.”<sup>4</sup> Recent studies have linked levels of asthma in this community to soot from idling diesel trucks.<sup>5</sup> The American Diabetes Association cites the South Bronx as having New York City’s highest levels of diabetes. “South Bronx dwellers are 5 to 8 times more likely to die from diabetes compared to residents from New York City’s most wealthy neighborhoods”<sup>6</sup> Moreover, even though the Bronx has significant open recreation areas (including the Bronx Zoo and Bronx Botanical Gardens) the residential areas in the South Bronx are underserved with respect to close-by and accessible parks, recreational facilities, and waterfront access.

*Aerial view of Hunts Point Riverside Park site*

The latest generation of Bronx River planning was initiated in the late 1990s by the Bronx River Working Group with their Bronx River Action Plan (1999). The story that led directly to Hunts Point Riverside Park begins in 1997 when Partnerships for Parks hired Jenny Hoffner to catalyze community action. Hoffner described how Partnerships initiated The Bronx River Project to reclaim the river as a “healthy, ecological, recreational, educational and economic resource.” Hoffner coordinated the Bronx River Working Group to bring together diverse groups around river reclamation, including community and environmental organizations, government agencies, schools, and businesses. The Working Group grew to over 65 members by 2001, when it incorporated as a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization, the Bronx River Alliance. Today, the Alliance formally sustains the collaboration among the groups, stewards the significant amount of funding allocated to the restoration of the River, and works closely with the NYC Department of Parks and Recreation (a significant landowner along the Bronx River, with over 1,000 acres of Bronx River parkland).

In late 1997 Partnerships for Parks received a \$121,000 WaterWorks grant from the Urban Resources Partnerships, which provided seed money to community organizations. Urban Resources Partnership was an urban forestry program supported by the Departments of Interior, Agriculture, Environmental Protection Administration, and Housing and Urban Development “that put federal resources into the service of community-initiated and community-led environmen-

tal projects...to enhance, restore, and sustain urban ecosystems in their...cities”<sup>7</sup>

Hoffner conducted a windshield survey of the area to identify opportunities for river access, including the spot that is now the Hunts Point Riverside Park. This small site was listed on city maps as a continuation of Lafayette Avenue. The site was reportedly once part of Robert Moses’ plan to connect several expressways in the Bronx, with the Hunts Point site marked as a ramp to a proposed bridge over the Bronx River and through Soundview Park on the other side. In the 1990s planners discussed building a pedestrian bridge there to support the proposed bikeway routes on the far side of the Bronx River. Neither of these projects came to fruition.

Hoffner’s next step was community outreach to inform groups that grants were available. Her efforts included a call to Majora Carter, who then worked at The Point CDC. Hoffner suggested that Carter apply for one of these grants, but Carter, in her own words, “blew off” Hoffner’s request because she thought that the Bronx River was inaccessible and inconsequential to her work in the area.

Carter had lived all her life in this neighborhood and said she never knew it had potential access to the River. Sometime after the call with Hoffner, she “discovered” the site when her dog, Xena, took her through the garbage-strewn lot to the river’s edge – a “Eureka” moment for Carter. Later that day, she called Hoffner back, and



through The Point applied for (and shortly after received) one of the \$10,000 seed grants. The award kick-started organizing around the site and funding was leveraged with support from other agencies and corporations. Initial work included organizing community cleanups, connecting with businesses for help, and requesting land donations and setbacks at the park's borders.

The first cleanups began in the fall of 1998 and, according to Carter, the looming deadline of the "Golden Ball" event scheduled for Spring 1999 pushed the pace of the cleanup through the winter. There are few photographs of the site from that period, but all accounts indicate that it was a highly degraded space, with large-scale and heavy refuse from industrial and marine uses (such as huge links of anchor chains). The community received support for the cleanup from industrial neighbors as well as city agencies.



*Neighbors begin clean up of Park site*

New York City Department of Sanitation trucks helped remove some of the heavier waste, and the New York City Department of Transportation donated and constructed a smooth asphalt pathway that provided easy access for bikers and inline skaters. Carter and others would begin park cleanup some mornings at 6 AM, often just as prostitutes were leaving (though Carter noted that sometimes they would help with the painting). People could see that there was something new happening.

Momentum built in 1999 when Parks Commissioner Henry Stern declared it the "Year of the Bronx River" and initiated development of the Bronx River Action Plan, which laid out elements of the Bronx River Greenway (BRGW). The BRGW was designed to include a series of linear parks along the length of the river, and was developed with community organizations and the NYCDPR. The full BRGW plan was published by the Bronx River Alliance in 2005. Hunts Point Riverside Park was one of the first of the BRGW projects, and when completed it became the first new park on the Bronx River. The Golden Ball event was seen as a turning point for Hunts Point Riverside Park and, more broadly, the development of the BRGW. Conceived by a group of Swedish artists, the event entailed floating a large, heavy golden ball down the river to symbolize the river's return to the community. It was by some accounts an odd event, but certainly, Carter says, "a pivotal moment for the community, allowing people to see what could be done and especially to view the space from the river. People were surprised by



the level of empowerment they felt. It was an opportunity to see themselves differently as people who mattered – one of the proudest moments of my life.”

At the second Golden Ball event in 2000, Governor Pataki, Congressman Serrano and Commissioner Stern all took part. The Governor and Congressman announced two separate \$11 million awards, one from the New York State Dept of Transportation (NYSDOT) for Greenway development, and one from the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) for river restoration. James Turek, who oversaw the NOAA grant, noted that his agency was less interested in parks per se than in the health of fish habitats and the watershed. At the same time, an additional \$11 million award for the broader BRGW project came from the Mayor’s office, \$1 million of which was designated for design and construction of Hunts Point Riverside Park (and expanded to \$3.27



million as the actual costs were identified). The New York City Economic Development Commission (NYCEDC) also supported the development of the park by contributing an adjoining piece of land (part of the Hunts Point Market).

The Hunts Point Riverside Park’s design process (described in more detail below) was participatory, led by the Parks Department landscape architects and supported by The Point and Sustainable South Bronx. As the Park was designed and constructed, several contemporaneous planning processes unfolded for Hunts Point, involving overlapping sets of community organizations and city agencies. One plan concerned the creation of the South Bronx Greenway (SBGW), which was a direct spin-off of the organizing efforts around Hunts Point Riverside Park, and used the Park’s success to spur work on several segments.

Left: Mayor Bloomberg, Cmsr. Benepe, Majora Carter and Linda Cox at groundbreaking

Right: Park design illustrated on site

By 2001 Carter had left The Point to form Sustainable South Bronx and work on community projects with an environmental focus, including training programs for green-collar jobs. Carter won a \$1.25 million federal grant to plan the SBGW, with Hunts Point Riverside Park serving as its starting point, both geographically and symbolically. During the same period, the EDC organized and led the creation of a task force to develop the *Hunts Point Vision Plan*, which was released in March 2005. The task force included key local businesses as well as The Point and Sustainable South Bronx. While the plan focuses on commercial and industrial development, it includes discussion of brownfield remediation and “greater access to the waterfront, streetscape enhancements, and intersection improvements for pedestrian safety, including the South Bronx Greenway.”<sup>8</sup>

The SBGW is partially complete (perhaps 20% at the time of the site visit) but fully planned, and has significant funding in hand from several sources. The start of construction on the section of Lafayette Avenue that leads directly into the Park has been made imminent by an infusion of federal stimulus money, and is slated to begin in early 2010. Plans show that the SBGW eventually “will link existing and new parks through a network of waterfront and on-street routes. It will encompass 1.5 miles of waterfront greenway, 8.5 miles of inland green streets, and nearly 12 acres of new waterfront open space throughout Hunts Point and Port Morris.”<sup>8</sup>

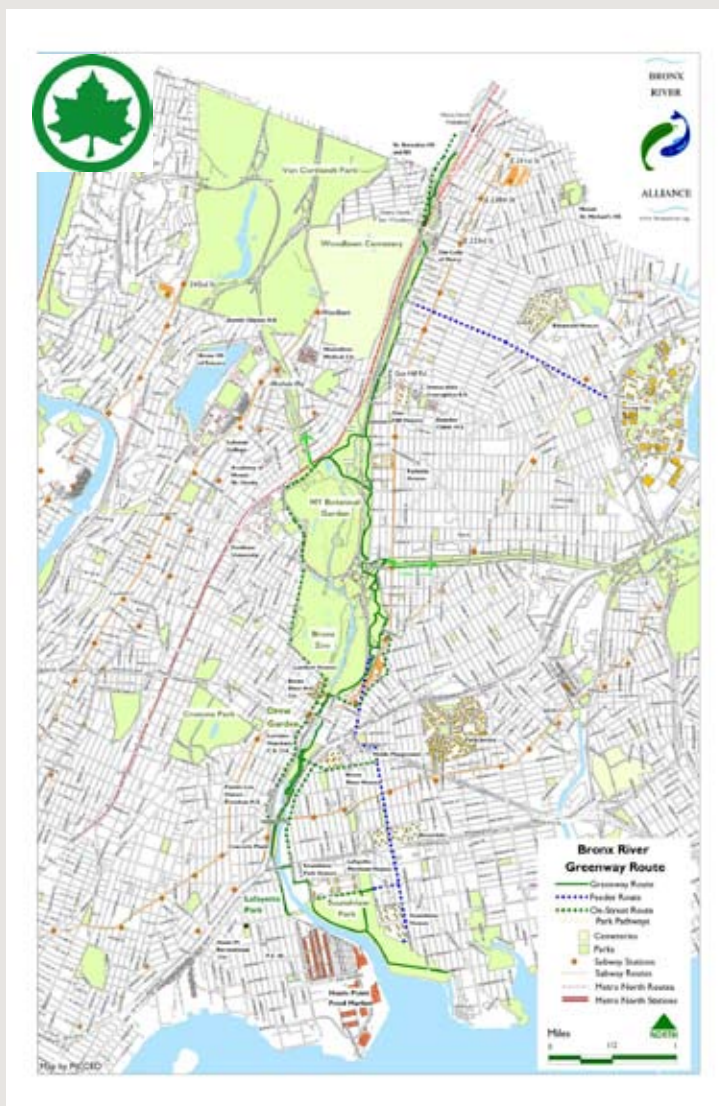


The SBGW will extend the larger network of the BRGW to the interior streets and neighborhoods of the South Bronx. The BRGW itself was approximately 60% complete at the time of the site visit and largely traversable via established routes through existing parks and new ones (such as Concrete Plant Park). It needs completion at a midpoint stretch (which is expected to take about five years) and substantial improvements to existing parklands in order to develop into a clear and attractive greenway system. Much of the funding needed to complete the project is in hand, but a great deal of construction and route development is still necessary. The full Greenway is projected to be available for use by 2015. To date over \$150 million has been allocated to the BRGW from federal, state, and local sources.

Hunts Point Riverside Park is a significant piece of this larger New York City park network, now under the direction of Parks Commissioner Adrian Benepe. As the BRGW and the SBGW develop, the Hunts Point Riverside Park site has become a focal point of both

Lafayette Avenue approaching Hunts Point Park





Map of entire Bronx River Greenway

routes, and its successes have helped to generate enthusiasm, confidence, capacity, community support, and the continued attention of government officials – all of which have helped drive the BRGW and SBGW forward.

## PLANNING PROCESS

The parcel of land that became Hunts Point Riverside Park was technically a dead end street and mapped as such, and there was much debate within the city as to whether it should be a park. The Bronx River Working Group's coordinated voice for the river along with the local community's advocacy provided the Parks Department with the needed encouragement to sustain the long process of de-mapping the street and transferring the property to the Parks Department.

Once agreement was reached within the city that the land would become a park, landscape architects for the Parks Department took responsibility for the design. The City's dual goals of waterfront development and increasing available park space for underserved communities were part of a 1992 comprehensive waterfront plan, the 2003 *Hunts Point Vision Plan*, and *PlaNYC*, the 2007 Citywide guide for sustainable development.

Local community organizations, led by The Point CDC and Sustainable South Bronx, worked with Park designers to encourage



members of the community to discuss their desires for the Park. At one point, the design team hung a banner on the site showing the preliminary plan, with post-it notes so that residents could attach comments and suggestions. For the Parks Department landscape architects, the design process included getting to know the site from the land and from the river, running scoping meetings, and meeting with community organization leaders. The designers note that “this Park taught us a lot about what it’s like – how heroic it is – to do an industrial site.” Soil remediation, permitting, and related due diligence were costly, and demanded as much work as making the Park. The designers’ priority was supporting the community’s perspective: “This was the Bronx River Working Group’s vision, not ours.”

The result of this community process was a list of desired features for the Park. The list, not surprisingly, was longer than the budget and the site could accommodate. Through a variety of forums, community members expressed their vision of a space that could serve as a green oasis in this industrial area of the South Bronx. The Park should draw in families, kids, fishermen and others. Hoffner noted that the community “loaded every dream on the site,” including a soccer field and a swimming pool – both much too large to fit on the site, but real needs in the community. These kinds of impractical suggestions may be common in such participatory processes, but in the end Hoffner was shocked at how many of the desires were actually accommodated in the final plan.

Among the requested elements that were provided were a green lawn to lie down on, a place for kids to play, an amphitheater, access to the river, and a water feature in which children could splash on a hot day. There is also a place to barbecue and have picnics – we were told that it is not uncommon early on a summer’s day to find nine-year-olds standing by the barbecue grills, holding a bag of charcoal to reserve a place. The Park program called for wide paths with gentle curves to facilitate access by emergency vehicles, wheelchair users, and canoes, as well as places to store and launch boats. “The final design included all of these features and was beautiful,” Hoffner said, emphasizing that people see this as “our design.” In sum, the community feels that the Parks Department listened and responded to their requests.

*Schematic Plan of Park design*

## DESIGN CHALLENGES AND INTENTIONS

The site bends or “doglegs” as it approaches the water, making it impossible to see the river from the entry. Fortunately, the contribution of the Hunts Point Market parcel, a small triangle of land to the south end of the Park, gave the Park a wider footprint and more water access. The EDC, the Market’s landlord, worked with the market operators to arrange for the land transfer. Alyssa Konon, EDC Executive Vice President, notes that the Hunts Point Market deserves credit for choosing to “play nice” with the park by transferring the piece of land. Konon acknowledged that the Market saw the value of the Park to the community, and recognized that they, too, benefit from improvements in the neighborhood.

Another construction issue was the need to mitigate toxins in the soil, particularly lead, before construction could begin. This turned out to be less of an effort than anticipated. However, after cleanup at the site was complete, designers were faced with the problem of how to “shoe-horn” as many as possible of the desired functions into the relatively small and narrow space. One early proposal would have restored the shoreline as a natural habitat, but this approach was rejected, as it would have severely limited the amount of usable park space.

The landscape architects also had to address a sharp 15’ drop in elevation from the park entrance to parts of the riverbank. This elevation change was mitigated by creating a gentle slope that accommodated the stone amphitheatre. Also, at the point where the

river reaches this site, significant tidal changes result in water level fluctuations that make the design of the floating dock a challenge.

The Park’s location also posed several problems. First, this “neighborhood park” was several blocks from the nearest residential buildings. Second, the narrow site is sandwiched between two massive commercial/industrial facilities. Third, and of greatest concern, was the need to find a way to bring families – especially children – safely to the site across a wide avenue, through busy truck traffic, and over active train tracks. The Park was intended to provide a transitional space between the harsh and gritty industrial district and the natural environment of the river. Designers intended that the Park serve multiple purposes:

- Connecting different parts of the community and bringing them to the river
- Buffering visitors from the built environment of the city
- Creating a green oasis
- Serving as a public gathering space

The final plan had five specific areas and components:

- Entrance
- Garden and water play feature
- Green oval
- Amphitheatre
- Access point to the Bronx River





## PARK DESIGN AND CONSTRUCTION

Hunts Point Riverside Park was completed in May 2007. The 1.72-acre Park includes a waterfront with floating dock, a small amphitheater, an area with tables and barbecue grills, and a children's play area that includes water sprays; there is substantial landscaping throughout. In the play area are concrete stylized "river boats" and child-sized seashell-shaped seats. Off-site improvements directly related to the Park include a streetlight with a left turn arrow, which controls traffic during train crossings, and a small planted peninsula that serves as a traffic island and makes it easier to cross the main thoroughfare. Fencing around the Park and a trellis near the children's play area are all made of bright blue metal, meant to reflect the industrial character of the area. Different colored stones were used around the Park to set off various uses – a warm yellow color at the amphitheater, and a cool gray granite at the edge of the grass oval.

The Bronx River flows on the east side of the Park. A gravel ramp and a dock provide access to the water. This area of the river is tidal, serving barges and recreational boats. The south side of the Park is



*Views of playground, dock, and trellised seating area*



bounded by a concrete retaining wall and fence that separates it from the Hunts Point Market.

On the north side of the park, a large industrial metal fence both separates and connects the Park to the neighboring property. The fence incorporates parts of an historic brick wall that was preserved to provide a glimpse of the previous building. The fence has gates in several places, providing access to the José E. Serrano Riverside Campus for Arts and the Environment, which is owned by The Point CDC and used primarily by their tenant, Rocking the Boat. The site houses a series of temporary buildings used by Rocking the Boat to teach, conduct water testing, and build wooden boats. The campus property, sandwiched between Hunts Point Riverside Park and the Sims scrap yard further North, was acquired by The Point with NOAA funds. Significant environmental remediation removed pollutants left by the site's previous use as a fur factory. Soil was removed and replaced, and turf block was used to provide

a porous surface. Large planted swales were installed to work with the turf block so that rainwater would permeate the surface and not wash off into the sewer system or the river. The campus allows a variety of non-profit uses, starting with (but not limited to) its tenant Rocking the Boat. Students from the program regularly roll their boats through raised metal gates, through the Park, and down to the river. The Rocking the Boat program is particularly suited as a neighbor to the Park; indeed, its founder says that the Park is the only place in the Bronx where they can operate effectively.

From the west, visitors enter the park at the intersection of Edgewater Road and Lafayette Avenue. They must first cross a railroad siding marked by semaphores; freight trains block the entrance twice a day. A small parking lot at the entrance serves the Park. The entry is flanked by black granite stone pillars with inscriptions announcing the Park and showing the Greenway route.

*Views of Park entrance area*

Materials, including plantings, were chosen for appearance and durability. The site is meant to be green and inviting, while still reflecting the industrial character of the area. Plants were chosen to provide a lush setting while requiring minimal water or maintenance. Some plants were selected specifically to attract Monarch butterflies in the fall. No irrigation system was installed, other than a hose-bib, although there are retention basins that allow runoff to recharge the groundwater. The designers chose plant materials that provide visual interest during at least three seasons and are not prone to vandalism. For instance, they did not originally plant bulbs or other flowers that might be likely to be picked. This year, though, the Park's regular gardener has planted spring bulbs, which appear to be respected and left in place. The designers report that there

has been very little plant replacement since opening, suggesting that the plants have thrived and that there has been little damage inflicted by users. They comment, "It's obvious that the community cares, because it's maintained well." Regular Park maintenance is provided by roving City park crews, assisted by Sustainable South Bronx Environmental Steward interns, and riverside maintenance is provided by the Bronx River Alliance's Conservation Crew.

Light poles were chosen from standard Parks Department fixtures, in part to ease bulb replacement and maintenance. "We need to have empathy for the maintenance people," the designers said, "who have to pull the hose, etc. – it's a kind of sustainability." They designed the water feature so that its spray would run off to the plantings and not down the drains, reducing water use and easing the strain on storm drains. The children's play space was located near the entrance to reduce parents' anxieties about children wandering too close to the water's edge.

Jenny Hoffner, a landscape architect, suggests that the big victory is the Park's existence – not any particular aspect of its design. Rather, every element of the Park has a long history in the community process and is appreciated by those who use it. Others with whom we spoke were happy with the Park design, but agreed that there were a few issues to resolve. The lack of a permanent bathroom on site is noted as a problem, particularly because the Park is used by very young children and older adults. There is a portable toilet at the site



*Amphitheater at Hunts Point*





now, but no permanent facilities. There are, however, plans to add a bathroom as part of the new campus on the former fur factory site owned by The Point CDC.

All agree, as well, that the dock design (done by an outside consultant) did not meet the needs of its primary users. On the one hand, the platform and ladder appear to invite swimming where none is sanctioned due to poor water quality, while on the other hand the dock does not provide easy access for bringing boats into or out of the water, or for tying them to the dock on return. This area of the Bronx River is tidal, so the dock was designed to float up and down. Unfortunately, the dock bottoms out against a stop that was placed too high; at low tide the dock is unusable by boaters. Furthermore, the outer pylons, ostensibly placed there as a buffer against meandering barges, interfere with docking a rowboat or canoe. At the time of the site visit, the dock was damaged – an errant barge may



have hit it – and a new “dockmaster” from the park system had been directed to design a solution (although the primary users of the dock, Rocking the Boat, had not yet been consulted on the plans). Bronx River Alliance and Rocking the Boat petitioned a local Council member for funds to repair and improve the dock, and \$200,000 has been allocated to NYCDPR to complete the repairs and improvements.

*Views of Rocking the Boat students launching boats*



Several people who were involved in the development of Hunts Point expressed frustration that it was closed for six months after completion while a solution was sought to the railway crossing problem. They felt that this issue should have been anticipated and solved before construction was completed. During this period, Majora Carter spent a great deal of time speaking in local elementary schools and started an Alinsky-like campaign by asking children to get their parents to call 311 (the city complaint hotline) to request that the Parks Department open the park. Responding to internal and external pressure, EDC and DOT worked to identify the level of safety and traffic control needed, and the requisite signaling was finally installed, allowing the Park to open.

### LEADERSHIP AND ORGANIZATION

No single individual or organization can claim sole responsibility for the Park, especially when viewing it as part of the broad network of New York's greenways. Rather, a number of individuals, not-for-profit organizations, and governmental agencies shared responsibility for planning, development, funding and operations. Certain individuals, however, were important in project leadership. Majora Carter (through The Point and later Sustainable South Bronx) provided drive, energy and creativity that was clearly essential to this effort. Her organization and focus led directly to the development of the Park and kicked off efforts for the South Bronx Greenway. Her involvement was made possible, however, by the context that



was established by many other people at Partnerships for Parks, the Bronx River Alliance, The Point, The Parks Department, the Office of Congressman José E. Serrano, and numerous other government offices. Jenny Hoffner played a key role at the outset, distributing seed grant money, organizing a forum for many community groups to meet together, and facilitating the collaboration with the Parks Department. Linda Cox held (and continues to hold) dual positions, at the Bronx River Alliance and the NYC Department of Parks and Recreation, which made it possible for her to serve as a liaison between community members and city officials.

The project provides an interesting model for non-profit community development that emphasizes the joint roles of community organizations and government agencies. The Park was developed

*Students learning about river ecology*

through a strong grass roots approach that made use of the energy, ingenuity and creativity of the local community. However, the effort and action was not uni-directional. This was a true public-private partnership with unusual depth and dimension, in which the private entities were almost exclusively not-for-profit, community-based organizations, while the public partners included federal, state and local government offices. The community-based response was recruited and proactively seeded by an early federal grant program and a city-based public-private partnership. The project was administered by a not-for-profit community organization, planning and capital work were funded by agencies at every governmental level, and the park received the support of city agencies necessary to create the project on the ground.

In the case of Hunts Point, city agencies showed an unusual respect for cohesive planning ideas that came from the community. As a result, the Park development process has started an inclusive, progressive conversation about the development future of this neighborhood and the entire South Bronx. This dialogue is visible in the work for the *Hunts Point Vision Plan*, organized by the EDC, with a task force that included key local businesses as well as The Point and Sustainable South Bronx. In earlier years, the bottom line was simply about zoning for heavy industry. Now there are productive conversations among public and private players about how urban design affects local communities with issues such as redesigning truck routes.

The interplay between these sectors and organizations was not seamless, and delays and disagreements certainly were present. At the outset of development at Hunts Point, for example, there were tensions between community groups and surrounding businesses over the level of truck traffic and the effluent flowing from the scrap yard into the river (Carter says that she often called the Department of Environmental Protection to report problems). Historically, the business community and residents did not interact. The fact that functional and even positive relations developed between them is a credit to both sides. Community leaders sought these business neighbors out, solicited in-kind support for the Park, and looked for ways to work cooperatively. They described how industry leaders came to the Sustainable South Bronx and said “don’t protest, we want to be good neighbors,” and subsequently increased their own green practices and local hiring. The scrap yard recycling center, for instance, has recently installed a green wall that is powered by solar panels and bioswales that support storm water management. The Hunts Point Market chose to cede land to enhance the Park, and successive owners of the scrap yard have looked for ways to cooperate and support the Park. Employees of the businesses are among the most frequent weekday park users.

There is an impressive level of continuity in the neighborhood efforts at Hunts Point. Although individuals in leadership positions have moved on at many of these public and private organizations since the project began (for instance, the city administration has

changed, there is new leadership at The Point and Sustainable South Bronx, and Carter has created her own consulting firm), progress has continued and even accelerated. Community programs are flourishing, and the SBGW and the BRGW are developing into a complete network of parks, with associated street improvements. That these projects were sustained through so many transitions is a credit to the foresight, planning, and organizational development of those involved.

Key not-for-profit organizations involved in Hunt's Point Riverside Park and related efforts include:

*The Bronx River Alliance* – the BRA began in the late 1990s as the Bronx River Working Group, a meeting place for several dozen local community organizations to share goals and ideas. They found support for community projects that helped to clean, make use of, and gain access to the Bronx River. BRA became the “coordinated voice for the River.”

*The Point CDC* – a non-profit “dedicated to youth development and the cultural and economic revitalization of the Hunts Point section of the South Bronx.” The Point chooses to focus on the assets of its South Bronx home (largely the talents and social capital of its residents, rather than problems like crime, inadequate housing, and poverty). “Our mission is to encourage the arts, local enterprise, responsible ecology, and self-investment in the Hunts Point community.”

*Sustainable South Bronx* – a non-profit that focuses on environmental justice issues, founded in 2001 by Majora Carter (then working for the Point CDC) to address “land-use, energy, transportation, water & waste policy, and education to advance the environmental and economic rebirth of the South Bronx, and inspire solutions in areas like it across the nation and around the world.”

*Partnerships for Parks* – a joint program of the City Parks Foundation and the New York City Department of Parks and Recreation. Its mission is to “help New Yorkers work together to make neighborhood parks thrive” [http://www.partnershipforparks.org/wedo/wedo\\_index.html](http://www.partnershipforparks.org/wedo/wedo_index.html). Their program “Catalyst for Neighborhood Parks” received and administered the funds that seeded many of the initial projects for the greenways, including Hunts Point Riverside Park.

*Rocking The Boat* – a non-profit organization located in the South Bronx dedicated to using “traditional wooden boatbuilding and on-water education to help young people develop into empowered and responsible adults.” Rocking the Boat has brought all of its operations to the site immediately adjacent to Hunts Point Riverside Park, a space owned and operated by The Point.

Key governmental agencies involved in Hunt's Point Riverside Park and related efforts include:

*NYC Office of the Mayor* - supported and funded the park project and the greenways over two administrations.

*Office of Congressman José Serrano* – played a major role seeking out and providing sources of funding from various federal agencies as earmarks for this neighborhood.

*NYC Department of Parks and Recreation* – was responsible for design and construction and continues to maintain the park.

*NYC Economic Development Corporation* – the largest landlord in Hunts Point; controls the Hunts Point Market property; responsible for developing the Hunts Point Vision Plan, and for arranging transfer of land to increase the park to its present size.

*NY Department of Transportation* – the agency through which state funds were provided; worked on the street and railway safety aspects of the park.

*National Oceanographic and Atmospheric Administration* – served as a source of federal funding for river restoration.

*Bronx Community Board 2* – community boards are local governmental bodies in New York City that provide community residents the opportunity to have input in planning decisions and activities of city agencies. Community Board 2 has been involved in the community response to plans, such as for the changes to Lafayette Avenue.

As these community organizations develop their voices, other projects become possible. For instance, non-profit organizations in Hunts Point fought the expansion of a waste water treatment facility in the neighborhood, taking it to the courts. The organizations were awarded \$20 million as part of a community benefits agreement. These funds will be used for the development of a community boat-house on the “fur factory” site adjacent to the park, a floating pool which docks off of Barretto Point Park in the summer months, and a maintenance facility for the SBCGW. All of these efforts provide momentum for further, badly needed, environmental remediation and increases in recreation space for the South Bronx.

## FINANCES

Considering Hunts Point Riverside Park as an individual site, the description of its funding is simple and straightforward (especially compared to many other not-for-profit development projects). Support for the costs of designing and building the park came from one source – the city budget. Originally estimated at \$1 million, the final amount of \$3.27 million covered hard costs and in-house services, including the landscape architects who were full-time employees of the New York City Department of Parks and Recreation. There were no site acquisition costs, since the space was owned by the City. Park maintenance comes from the Department of Parks & Recreation budget, supported by green-collar job trainees from Sustainable South Bronx.



The full story, though, includes the prehistory of how the community came to identify the opportunity for the Park and its waterfront access. Furthermore, the effort at Hunts Point Riverside Park was paralleled by – and in some cases triggered – broader park developments, including the BRGW and SBGW. This regional park development was a more involved process, including multiple funding sources from all levels of government, distributed over many years, with different purposes. The whole process was initiated, for instance, with federal support in the form of an WaterWorks grant from Urban Resources Partnerships.

In terms of the broader constellation of projects, Mayoral support totaled \$11 million, mostly for the planning and development of parts of the BRGW, including Concrete Plant Park. The City's commitment to the BRGW project has now grown to over \$50 million. New York State initially also allocated \$11 million to the BRGW, a number which has now swelled to over \$30 million. Federal transportation dollars have funded a significant portion of the BRGW (\$50 million). Together, with private sources funding the clean-up of Starlight Park, the total funds committed to Greenway projects now total over \$150 million. Beyond Greenway capital projects, Congressman José Serrano allocated funding to NOAA and created grants administered by the Bronx Zoo/Wildlife Conservation Society to support the environmental restoration of the river. As of 2009, this funding totaled \$17.5 million.

#### HUNTS POINT RIVERSIDE PARK – ANNUAL OPERATING COSTS, 2008

Use	Amount	Source
Maintenance & Operations staff (salary and fringe benefits)	\$ 56,945	City tax levy funds
Security (Parks Enforcement Patrol)	\$ 10,150	City tax levy funds
Waterfront Playground Associate	\$ 4,885	Corporate donation
<b>TOTAL STAFF COSTS</b>	<b>\$ 71,980</b>	
Portable Toilet	\$ 1,710	CDBG
<b>Total Annual Operating Cost</b>	<b>\$ 73,690</b>	

Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality (CMAQ) funds were obtained to support the development for the SBGW, relating to the EDC-sponsored effort to create the *Hunts Point Vision Plan*. Additionally, over \$20 million of federal stimulus funds have been allocated to the area and specifically the SBGW, including support to recreate Lafayette Avenue as a boulevard with a green median strip. Together, these funds indicate a serious commitment to open space, recreational waterfront development, and transportation alternatives in the Bronx.

## HUNTS POINT RIVERSIDE PARK CAPITAL COSTS

DESIGN	
In-house design services	\$ 190,000
Consultant's fee for environmental, structural & marine engineering, including original bulkhead design	\$ 136,000
Survey	\$ 58,000
<b>Subtotal</b>	<b>\$ 384,000</b>
CONSTRUCTION	
Landscaping	\$ 633,778
Hardscape	\$ 1,591,057
Utility Connections	\$ 18,500
Contaminated Soil Mitigation	\$ 60,775
Contractors Costs (including mobilization, RE vehicle, construction sign, etc.)	\$ 201,890
Change Orders*	\$ 348,768
Permit, fees	\$ 14,000
<b>Subtotal</b>	<b>\$ 2,868,768</b>
Construction Management	\$ 180,000
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$ 3,432,768</b>

\*changes in bulkhead design, additional trees, DEC planting requirements along shoreline  
Source for all of above Capital Costs - NYC Mayoral funds

## RELATED IMPROVEMENTS

		Source
NYC Parks Green Street @ Park Entrance	\$ 116,744	New York City Department of Parks & Recreation Green Streets
Signal and striping @ Park Entrance	\$ 10,000	NYC Department of Transportation
Railroad Crossing @ Park Entrance	\$ 250,000	NYC Economic Development Corporation
	\$ 100,000	NYC Department of Transportation
	\$ 100,000	NYC Department of Parks and Recreation
Subtotal RR/Entrance	\$ 450,000	
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$ 576,744</b>	

## IMPACTS

The impact of this project can be judged on multiple levels: as a community-generated planning and design process; as a park serving various community needs; and as the impetus for broader community participation leading to other related recreational and waterfront development.

From the first perspective, this was a remarkably community-driven process, through which the community contributed significant effort and critical ideas. Community organizations managed and participated in this process from the start. They organized neighborhood meetings, clean-up events, festivals and design input sessions. At the same time, the community effectively coordinated its planning with city agencies. Their efforts paid off: the final design of Hunts Point Riverside Park reflects community needs and concerns.

The Park itself is an important community amenity and is well-used. On weekdays, especially in the early part of the day, it did not seem heavily trafficked (at least at the time of the Bruner Foundation spring site visit), but later in the day it is used after school by students working with Rocking the Boat in their boat-building shops, labs, and on the water. On weekends and summer days, the park is reported to be very crowded for picnics, passive recreation, boating, and occasional (illegal) swimming. Every Saturday in season Rocking the Boat makes available rowboat trips free of charge, and the Bronx River Alliance conducts about ten canoe trips from the park per

season. It has also become a site for festivals and special events such as Majora Carter's wedding and the starting of The Point's annual Fish Parade. It stands out as a lush, green space amidst industrial neighbors. When the wholesale market closes in mid-afternoon, the park creates a presence on a street that is otherwise largely empty. The Park's place in the community and the process used in bringing it about seem to have had an impact on its immediate neighbors, most obviously seen in the environmentally-conscious elements added at the scrap yard site. And, without the Park, it is unlikely that the neighboring brownfield "fur factory" space would have been acquired, remediated and developed as the José E. Serrano Riverside Campus for Arts and the Environment.



*Views of Cement Park near Hunts Point*

Hunts Point Riverside Park was the first new park and link in the Bronx River Greenway (BRGW), which will soon include new elements along its length, including the Concrete Plant Park. The BRGW will link residential neighborhoods to the Bronx River waterfront along a critical north-south corridor in the Bronx in which bike and pedestrian connections are currently made difficult by the borough's dense highway network. The BRGW will eventually extend along the full 23-mile length of the river, providing a venue for healthy recreation and bike travel. The Bronx River Alliance and the Parks Department lead the effort to develop the 8-mile length of the Greenway in the Bronx and coordinate with Westchester County government agencies that are advancing the remainder of the Greenway beyond the city lines.

In addition, the successful completion of Hunts Point Riverside Park has given a boost to the development of the South Bronx Greenway. Planning is underway on a section of the Greenway that will run for a half mile along Lafayette Avenue between Hunts Point Riverside Park and Bruckner Boulevard. Construction is expected to begin in Summer 2009. It will include a green median strip with grass and trees and a separated bicycle path, improving safe access to the Park.

The development of both Greenway systems will provide an inexpensive, efficient and environmentally friendly means of transportation – locally, and even to Manhattan, Westchester County



and beyond via the route's designation on the East Coast Greenway system. The "Tour de Bronx," which traverses this route, is now the city's largest free bike event. Several people interviewed pointed out that a safe series of bike paths is more than just a recreational element here.

Many people pointed out a less tangible impact of the Park project on the psyche of community members. This community had spent decades in a downward spiral. The South Bronx was used as the repository for many undesirable city facilities no other neighborhood would tolerate, such as waste treatment plants and jails. The ability to conceptualize, plan and complete this Park has, they say, created a feeling of competence and empowerment that carries over to other situations and projects, and allowed residents to imagine other options for their community.

*Artist rendering of future improvements Greenway along Lafayette Ave.*



## FUTURE PLANS

Completion of the Greenways will be a significant focus of effort in coming years. As individual leases are renewed, the EDC will create a 35-foot right-of-way along the Bronx River running the entire length of Hunts Point Market. This is coupled with another plan for on-street paths along Food Court Drive, surrounding the Market.

There are also ambitious ideas for adding value to the market in several ways, perhaps not directly caused by Hunts Point Park, but supported and reinforced by its success. Currently, the market is open only to wholesale buyers. There are plans to add retail operations in the Fulton Fish Market and other purveyors' shops, creating a destination site for local residents and visitors. There are reported to have even been very preliminary discussions about the potential for creating working piers for the Fulton Fish Market that would bring commercial fishermen down the Bronx River for the first time in over a century.



Detail of railing at dock

## Assessing Project Success

### SUCCESS IN MEETING PROJECT GOALS

#### *1. To "reclaim the Bronx River as a resource for Bronx communities"*

The Park has reclaimed the area's defining natural resource – the Bronx River – as a visible and vibrant part of community life.

#### *2. To open public recreational access to the Bronx River*

There is now direct and easy access to the river in a community where none had existed before, with public access to affordable recreational boating.

#### *3. To clean up and restore the park site, and spur efforts to clean the Bronx River.*

This brownfield site has been remediated and recreated as a green space. The Park supports river remediation work and has enhanced the river's image and visibility.

#### *4. To serve as a symbol of the Bronx River's rebirth and growth of the Greenway.*

It is both a symbolic and a physical home for the Greenway, and an image of new accessibility to the river.

*5. To engage local communities in the redevelopment process.*

This was a community-driven and directed development and design process, and seems to have encouraged subsequent community engagement in other projects.

*6. To use design to “capture a sense of nature on a site located between a scrap metal yard and the world’s largest food distribution center,” and to “create space for recreation and respite, provide habitat, and offer a green oasis in a highly urbanized environment”.*

The project is complete and successful and its presence and design are appreciated by the neighborhood. The Park is an oasis of green in this otherwise industrial community, and its community-envisioned amenities are well used.

While its physical design is not unusual, the park’s function and the process of its creation are innovative. In the South Bronx, the very existence of the Park is impressive. It has become an important resource and focal point for community activities, youth programs and weekend and summer activity.

*7. To view the community from a perspective of strengths.*

The planning effort reflected the adoption of an “asset-based” philosophy and approach to community development, in contrast with traditional problem-based approaches. Rather than focusing solely on problems to be fixed, this approach identified local physical and human resources and tapped their energy and efforts. Hunts

Point Riverside Park and the Greenway show that an “asset-based” approach can have successful outcomes.

## SELECTION COMMITTEE COMMENTS

The Committee felt the reclaiming of open space on the Bronx River by the local community was a compelling and important story. They gave a great deal of credit to the community groups involved in discovering the site and organizing to engage the City of New York in building a public park in their neighborhood. The Committee noted that creating green space and a connection to the Bronx River was tremendously important in such a densely populated neighborhood, especially where there had been little access to public green space in the neighborhoods.

The Committee noted that the effectiveness of this Park was augmented by the construction of nearby parks which continue to expand river access, and by the presence of Rocking the Boat, a program that introduces inner-city youth to boat building and navigation on the River via the Park. They also felt that the participation of the community in the design of the Park has resulted in a high degree of ownership of the park and heavy use by local residents. The reclaiming of formerly industrial land, the cooperation of the City of New York, and the involvement of residents in the design of the project were felt to be ideas that could be effectively adapted to cities across the country. 🌿

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2009 RUDY BRUNER AWARD: Silver Medal Winner

# Millennium Park

Chicago, Illinois







*Aerial view of Millennium Park*

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## Millennium Park at-a-Glance

### WHAT IS MILLENNIUM PARK?

- ❖ A 24.5-acre park with venues for performance, art, sculpture, architecture and landscape architecture, located between Chicago's lakefront and the central business district (the Loop).
- ❖ The transformation of a dilapidated ground-level parking lot and rail yard into what may be the world's largest "green roof," covering two multi-level parking lots with a total of 4,000 cars, and commuter rail line.
- ❖ A park with twelve installations created by well-known artists and designers that supports over 500 free cultural programs each year, forming what the *Chicago Tribune* art reporter Chris Jones called "arguably the most expansive cultural project in Chicago since the 1893 Columbian Exposition."
- ❖ A catalyst for economic impacts, including estimated increases in nearby real estate values that total \$1.4 billion and an increase in tourism revenues of \$2.6 billion over a projected year period. These and other economic impacts are set against a \$490 million cost, derived from a mix of public and private sources.

### PROJECT GOALS

- ❖ To transform the commuter railroad tracks, surface parking and degraded parkland in the northwest corner of Grant Park into a landscaped venue for free public programming, concerts, and events
- ❖ To create a permanent home for the Grant Park Music Festival
- ❖ To provide one-of-a-kind public art spaces as a "gift" to all the citizens of Chicago from patrons who have made their fortunes in the city
- ❖ To lay the foundation for future private residential and commercial development in the area



## PROJECT CHRONOLOGY

One could argue that project development for Millennium Park (“the Park”) dates back to the 1805 decommissioning of Fort Dearborn, coupled with the 1809 dedication of 20 acres of the Fort as a park. In 1836, Chicago’s prominent citizens feared that the Board of Canal Commissioners, charged with making a canal to connect the Mississippi River Basin to the Great Lakes, might sell the Fort Dearborn parcel for commercial development on the lakefront. The citizens successfully lobbied to have the Commission declare the site “Public Ground – A Common to Remain Forever Open, Clear, and Free of Any Building.” Others might contend that project development for the Park really begins with Daniel Burnham and the Olmsted Brothers during the 1890s, and cycles through multiple proposals to transform Grant Park, a large public park that includes the land now occupied by Millennium Park.

In any case, agreements with the Illinois Central Railroad (ICR) in the intervening period resulted in an easement over a portion of the Park site for use by the railroad. The contemporary story of Millennium Park, chronicled below, starts with the reacquisition of the site area erroneously believed to be owned by the ICR. At that time, the site supported a large surface parking lot and railroad line.

**December 1997:** The ICR donates its rights, title and interest in lakefront property – from McCormick Place North to Randolph Street – to the City of Chicago.

**March 1998:** Chicago Mayor Richard M. Daley publicly announces plans for Lakefront Millennium Park. Daley states that the Park will cost \$150 million, with \$30 million coming from the private sector, and will be open by midyear 2000. Daley also asserts that tax money will not be used to finance the Park and appoints John Bryan to raise the private sector funds.

**June 1998:** The City generates approximately \$137 million to finance the Park by selling parking revenue bonds.

**September 1998:** Work on Millennium Park’s supporting foundations begins, based on plans prepared by Skidmore Owings and Merrill, LLP (SOM).

**February 1999:** Estimated cost of the Park rises to \$200 million.

**March 1999:** Chicago Planning Commission approves revised plans for the Park. Plans now feature additional amenities, including an indoor theatre and a skating rink.

**April 1999:** Frank Gehry is hired to design the outdoor concert pavilion and bridge over Columbus Drive. The Pritzker family donates \$15 million to finance the pavilion's construction.

**July 1999:** Construction of the underground garage according to new assumptions on loads and program for the surface begins before a building permit is issued

**January 2000:** Artist Anish Kapoor's sculpture and architect Frank Gehry's bridge across Columbus Drive are planned as new additions to the Park.

Overall design of the Park is altered to make it universally accessible to persons with disabilities.

Estimated cost of the Park rises to \$230 million as scope of project widens.

**May 2000:** Mayor Daley decides to invest \$35 million from Tax Increment Financing (TIF) funds to help pay for the rising construction costs. (The TIF funds include public tax dollars, and were initially set aside to stimulate development in the Central Loop, within which Millennium Park is located.)

**June 2000:** City of Chicago fires Schwendener Inc. and Harston Construction Co., the original general contractors, after failing to reach agreement on increased construction costs associated with proposed contract modifications.

Estimated cost of the Park is now at \$270 million.

**July 2000:** The Department of Transportation is replaced by the Public Buildings Commission as the main public project manager. Walsh Construction hired as replacement contractor.

**January 2001:** Schwendener/Harston sues City for roughly \$60 million in damages and expenses. Structural issues with Millennium Park's underground garage become public knowledge. In 2007 the firm filed for bankruptcy triggered by the collapse of the settlement of litigation with the city over their dismissal from the Park job seven years earlier.

**August 2001:** Mayor Daley seeks an additional \$30 to \$50 million in TIF funding.

In response to public criticism, Daley blames the Park's rising cost and delays on Frank Gehry and the ousted contractors. The mayor later recants his initial blame of Gehry.

Estimated cost of the Park rises to \$370 million.

**October 2001:** Plans for the Crown Fountain are announced, as Millennium Park, Inc. collects more private funding.



**December 2001:** The skating rink opens.

**October 2002:** Wrigley Square opens.

**December 2002:** Estimated cost of the Park and its art installations reaches \$410 million.

**August 2003:** Wall Street firm Bear Stearns cancels its financing pact with City. City is awarded a termination fee. John Bryan, chairman of Millennium Park Inc., announces that \$120 million has been raised so far in the private sector to finance the Park.

**November 2003:** The Joan and Irving Harris Theatre for Music and Dance opens.

**June 2004:** The City announces that a conservancy – a private, not-for-profit branch of Millennium Park, Inc. – will maintain the Park. The City will still own the property.

**July 2004:** Millennium Park officially opens to worldwide attention. Final cost of the Park is \$490 million. Roughly \$270 million came from the public sector.

**May, 2007:** The City privatizes four underground parking garages in Grant Park (with a 9,000-car capacity). Two of the garages (with a 4,000-car capacity) are under Millennium Park. The City receives a lump sum payment of \$560 million for the 99-year lease of the garage.

## KEY PARTICIPANTS

*(\* indicates interview as part of the site visit)*

### *City of Chicago:*

RICHARD M. DALEY\*, Mayor of Chicago

EDWARD UHLIR, FAIA\*, Assistant to Mayor; Project Design Director

EDWARD BEDORE, Former City Budget Director

SIDONIE WALTERS-LAWRENCE, Main financial advisor

KAREN TAMLEY, Commissioner, Mayor's Office for People with Disabilities

JUDY RICE, Commissioner, Chicago Department of Transportation

MIGUEL D'ESCOTO, Commissioner, Chicago Department of Transportation

RICHARD KINCZYK\*, First Deputy Transportation Commissioner, City of Chicago

KEVIN GUJRAL, Construction Director, Chicago Public Building Commission

LOIS WEISBERG\*, Commissioner, Chicago Department of Cultural Affairs

*Not-for-Profits and Cultural Organizations:*

JOHN H. BRYAN\*, Chairman, Millennium Park, Inc.  
 DONNA LAPETRA\*, President, Millennium Park, Inc.  
 ROBERT O'NEILL, President, Grant Park Conservancy  
 ERMA TRANTER\*, President, Friends of the Parks  
 VICTORIA RAINEY, Co-founder, Friends of the Park  
 ERIN HOGAN, Director of Public Affairs, Art Institute of Chicago  
 MEREDITH MACK\*, Deputy Director and COO, Art Institute  
 of Chicago

*Architects/Designers/Engineers/Construction Contractors/Artists:*

SKIDMORE OWINGS AND MERRILL (CHICAGO, IL) –  
 Master Plan Consultant, John Zils,\* SOM Structural Engineer  
 RENZO PIANO (PARIS, France), Architect, South Exelon Pavilions  
 HAMMOND BEEBY RUPERT AINGE, Inc (Chicago, IL) , Architect,  
 North Exelon Pavilions, and Joan W. and Irving B. Harris  
 Theatre for Music and Dance  
 MULLER & MULLER, Ltd. (Chicago, IL), Architect,  
 McDonald's Cycle Center  
 FRANK GEHRY (LOS ANGELES, CA), Architect, Jay Pritzker Pavilion and  
 BP Bridge – Craig Webb\* – Project Designer, Gehry Partners, LLP  
 GUSTAFSON GUTHRIE NICHOL LTD. (SEATTLE, WA), Piet Oudolf  
 (Netherlands), Robert Israel (Los Angeles, CA),  
 Landscape Architects, Lurie Garden  
 McDONOUGH ASSOCIATES, Inc. (Chicago, IL), Architect  
 Chase Promenade

HARLEY ELLIS DEVEREAUX (CHICAGO, IL) and SITE DESIGN GROUP  
 (CHICAGO, IL) – Landscape Architect, the Boeing Galleries  
 JAUME PLENSA (BARCELONA, Spain) and KRUEK & SEXTON\* ARCHITECTS  
 (CHICAGO, IL) – Architect, Crown Fountain  
 OWP/P (CHICAGO, IL, Architect,) McCormick Tribune Plaza  
 and Wrigley Square  
 ANISH KAPOOR (LONDON, England), Sculptor, Cloud Gate

*Major Private Donors:*

AT&T  
 THE BOEING COMPANY  
 BP  
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 EXELON  
 JOAN W. AND IRVING B. HARRIS  
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 PRITZKER FAMILY  
 ROBERT R. MCCORMICK TRIBUNE FOUNDATION  
 WM. WRIGLEY JR. COMPANY FOUNDATION

*Other:*

GEORGE K. BAUM & CO. - BOND UNDERWRITING FIRM

## Millennium Park

### URBAN CONTEXT

**M**illennium Park is located in the historic Chicago Loop area, adjacent to the eastern edge of the Central Business District. It comprises the northern section of Grant Park, a historic Chicago Park that has taken on modern significance as the site of Barack Obama's first appearance as President Elect. Millennium Park is three blocks south of the Chicago River and roughly two blocks west of the Lake Michigan waterfront. It is bounded on the north along Randolph Street by a mixture of new high-rise, commercial and residential buildings; on the East by parkland and the lakefront beyond; on the south across Monroe Street by the Art Institute of Chicago; and on the west by Michigan Avenue and its "wall" of historic commercial buildings, including the former public library which is now the home of the Chicago Department of Cultural Affairs.

There is new investment in the area surrounding the Park. Existing buildings are being upgraded and a number of new building projects are completed or in the final stages of planning. New and renovated high rise condominiums, shops, restaurants, and office towers to the west and north of the Park are part of this mix. A renovated train depot for the Illinois Central Railroad (The Millennium Station) lies underneath the Park, providing access through Chicago and into southern Illinois.



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*Aerial view of Cloud Gate, and Jay Pritzker Pavilion*

The Park is proximate to major arterial roadways and is easily accessible by public transportation. Buses, elevated trains and subway trains operated by the Chicago Transit Authority connect at the Park or are within walking distance. Parking garages located beneath the Park are accessible via North and South Michigan Avenue and at upper and lower Columbus Drive.

As part of Chicago's *Bicycle Master Plan*, which aims to encourage and improve alternative transportation routes and methods, a bicycle center was constructed at the corner of Randolph Street and Columbus Drive. The McDonald's Cycle Center is an indoor, heated bicycle parking facility with roughly 300 free-of-charge spaces. The Center offers lockers and showers for an annual fee of \$149, and food service to daily commuters and Park visitors. The Center supports a healthier and safer urban area and has been embraced by the bicycling community

The design of Millennium Park promotes pedestrian activity, public transportation use, and alternative transportation methods. The high-speed roadways that border the Park can still be viewed as an ongoing challenge to the overall connectivity of the many different sections of the Park system. On the eastern edge of the Park, Columbus Drive limits access to Daley Bicentennial Plaza in Grant Park, along with the lakefront and other park land. To the south of the Park, East Monroe Street provides access to the Art Institute of Chicago. Two bridges provide access across these thoroughfares.

The BP Bridge, designed by Frank Gehry, crosses Columbus Drive and links Millennium Park to Grant Park. A second bridge, built by The Art Institute of Chicago and designed by Renzo Piano, provides direct access to the new wing of the Art Institute.

## PROJECT HISTORY

Grant Park has historically been portrayed as the "front yard" of Chicago. Since its official designation as parkland in 1844, its approximately 320 acres of green space has served as the primary recreational area for generations of city dwellers. However, in 1852, despite early 19th Century legal restrictions that prohibited any development within the vacant premises, the City gave a significant portion of the land to the Illinois Central Railroad Company (ICR) in exchange for constructing a breakwater in Lake Michigan. This "swap" resulted in the construction of an immense system of railroad tracks running between Chicago's waterfront and the developing Loop district. In 1909, Daniel Burnham laid out a master plan for the City of Chicago, calling for Grant Park to become the premier cultural center for the City. Under the plan, Grant Park would include libraries, The Art Institute of Chicago, and a formally designed beaux-arts landscape by Edward Bennett. Because the City no longer controlled certain sections of the land, Burnham's plan accommodated the existing railroad tracks and built the park around them.



Over the years, Grant Park evolved and cultural amenities were added in and around it. However, a lingering eyesore still remained – the Illinois Central Railroad tracks. Chicago’s long-sitting mayor, Richard M. Daley, found this blemish especially troubling (he was reported to have been particularly displeased with the view of it from his dentist’s office in a bordering building). During the 1990s, Daley set out on an ambitious campaign to make Chicago one of the greenest cities in the United States. Daley began to redevelop streetscapes, called for environmentally sustainable building design (including the greening of rooftops as at City Hall), and continuously looked for opportunities to expand existing parkland. Mayor Daley long viewed the northwest portion of Grant Park as an opportunity to provide additional public green space. For years, however, the city’s efforts to improve this unsightly train depot surrounded by ground level parking had been frustrated, since the City (erroneously) assumed that the ICR owned this land.

### MILLENNIUM PARK ORIGINS

There are many “origin stories” about Millennium Park. One such legend (as reported above) would have us believe that Mayor Daley’s regular visits to his dentist, whose office overlooked the rail yard and parking lot, inspired him to beautify Grant Park.

Donna La Pietra, then Chairwoman of the Mayor’s Landscape Advisory Task Force, offers a variation on this origin story. “Oddly

enough,” she relates, “I am the source of the project.” According to La Pietra, she met with Mayor Daley and proposed that the City needed to develop a millennium project. Her suggestion was coupled with observations from the Task Force that Chicago’s “front yard” was a disaster zone made up of cracked sidewalks, fountains that didn’t work, surface parking and rail yards. Ms. La Pietra indicates that the Mayor initially balked at the idea of a millennium project because it seemed “too commercial,” but later warmed to it.

In any event, the Mayor did instruct his staff to pursue site control of the railroad lands. As a result, in 1996, the City filed a lawsuit against the ICR to regain some of the property within Grant Park. As it turned out, a provision in the original 1852 contract required the ICR property to be used for railroad purposes – a function that much of the land no longer maintained. The ICR therefore had to cede control of the property (including the northwest section of Grant Park) to the City. The reacquisition of this land made Daley’s proposal for the future Millennium Park possible.

Mayor Daley’s initial proposal was modest and largely self-financing. He wanted to turn the train tracks and parking lot into a 16-acre parking garage with a landscaped green space on top. In 1998, the Mayor’s office announced that the project would cost roughly \$150 million, with \$30 million coming from private financing to provide a new home for the Grant Park Music Festival. This idea ultimately evolved into what is now the Jay Pritzker Pavilion. Daley promised

that the \$120 million needed from the public sector would not come from tax money – instead, the Park would be financed by parking structure revenue bonds. The Park, put on a fast-paced construction schedule, was projected to open in mid-2000.

To raise the \$30 million needed from the private sector, Mayor Daley turned to John H. Bryan, an executive, entrepreneur and philanthropist with ties to Chicago's wealthiest citizens. Bryan formed a private, not-for-profit "blue ribbon" committee known as Millennium Park, Inc., whose members raised money for the construction of the Park's above-ground amenities. Bryan's commitment to the endeavor, together with Millennium Park, Inc.'s involvement, strongly influenced the evolution of the Park's design.

Bryan's vision for the Park would transform the 16-acre site into what he believed would be a one-of-a-kind cultural center, featuring the best of contemporary art and architecture that would attract visitors and Chicagoans alike. He aimed to raise far more than the \$30 million that was asked of him. In exchange, the City would agree to expand the size of Millennium Park and allow for additional amenities that would be financed and designed primarily by the private sector.

The complementary visions of Mayor Daley, Ms. La Pietra and Mr. Bryan were woven together largely through the efforts of Edward Uhler, assistant to the Mayor, who served as his Director of

Design, Architecture and Landscape. Uhler facilitated the complex interactions and demands of the site, politics, patrons, artists and designers, construction managers, a sometimes savage press, and the public. For example, Uhler's initial back-of-the-envelope calculations increased Mayor Daley's conviction that the green roof over the parking and rail yards could be self-financing. Uhler moved the ice rink to its prominent location on Michigan Avenue from the Randolph Street site chosen by Skidmore, Owings & Merrill (SOM). He was also part of the team that convinced Frank Gehry to accept the commission for what became the Jay Pritzker Pavilion and the BP Bridge. Uhler managed to keep the standards of each of the twelve venues in the Park consistent with individual patron aspirations, while still fulfilling the promise of "a high quality front yard" for all Chicagoans.

## CREATIVE CONTRIBUTORS

Various artists and architects were hired by Millennium Park, Inc. and patrons to design and construct its sculptures and facilities. The decision to work with multiple artists tested and adjusted the initial park plan by SOM, the planning and design firm originally hired by the City. Frank Gehry, who had recently completed the celebrated Guggenheim Museum in Bilbao, Spain, was hired to design the Park's main attraction – the outdoor band shell and future home of the city-owned Grant Park Music Festival. As part of his commission, Gehry was also awarded the opportunity to design

a bridge at the eastern edge of the Park connecting to the parkland across Columbus Drive. The size of the Park quickly expanded to roughly 24.5 acres and the construction deadline continued to be pushed back.

As the scope increased and became more defined, the public and private costs continued to rise. Private donors pledged increasing amounts of money to finance additional features and, although the donors were paying for these features, their addition escalated the public construction costs due mainly to increased loads on the garage deck and the resulting need for heftier structures. As a result of more or less continual changes, the City began to reconsider their fast-track planning of the underground parking garage. Due to the changes and delays, the original \$150 million budget became insufficient; thus, the City was forced to tap in to tax increment financing (TIF) funds which had been set aside to spur development in the Central Loop District. The Park, as realized, has had the TIF's intended effect on the Central Loop (see the section that follows on impacts).

Each new addition to the Park presents its own story of vision, risk, project design, finance, construction and operation. In many ways the Park is the aggregate of the initial SOM framework and individual additions of art, landscape design and architecture that were not anticipated in the original plan. The perception of several interviewees was that the place grew organically, largely without a fully developed plan. For example, controversies over the design of

Cloud Gate (a 110-ton, 66-foot tall mass) and changes in the design and use of the Crown Fountain (a pair of five-story tall, 23 x 16-foot wide structures) were not anticipated in the master plan.<sup>1</sup> Yet at each stage, the framework for planning was flexible and neutral enough to enable multiple options to evolve successfully. Each project enriched the whole, adding to the critical mass of attractions – and thus to the ability of the Park to attract a diverse group of visitors.

## A STRING OF CONTROVERSIES

The additional amenities were inserted like puzzle pieces on the site. In 1998, partly in response to the growing complexity of the project, the Public Building Commission replaced the Transportation Department as the public overseer of the project. This was an important and controversial shift that responded to the predominately private sources of new money for the Park, and the increased procurement flexibility needed to be responsive to the requirements of these donors. However, the shift led to press criticism that privatization of the project would lead to a loss of public control.



<sup>1</sup> The Crown Fountain was originally surrounded by a grass lawn and was programmed as a place of quiet contemplation. Its popularity, however, destroyed the lawn and led to the decision to pave the adjacent area.

Ed Uhler, FAIA, Executive Director, Millennium Park Inc.  
Right: Plan Map of Millennium Park



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A partial answer to such concerns involved the appointment of Ed Uhler as project manager. He provided important continuity in the transition, building on his twenty-five year history in the Chicago Park District.

Additional controversy arose when the City found itself at odds with Schwendener, Inc. and Harston Construction Co. due to disagreement over change order costs. By August 2001 – a year after the initial completion deadline – certain elements of the Park had yet to be designed and its price had risen to roughly \$370 million.

To reduce the growing public criticism of the project brought on by further delays, escalating cost, concerns about privatization, and a lawsuit by the builders, the City decided to open the Park's ice skating rink in December of 2001. Other sections of the Park were also opened to the public before the completion of the entire project – a move that garnered much-needed public support.

However, the City still faced serious financial challenges. The underground parking garage had not generated the estimated revenues needed to refinance the bonds issued to pay for park construction. As a result, the City was forced to take more public money out of its TIF fund. By December 2002, the cost had risen to \$410 million. A change came in August of 2003, when the Wall Street firm Bear Stearns decided to terminate a financing pact that it held with the City, which had also helped pay for construction. The termination

fee allowed the City to pay off most of the revenue bonds. At the same time, parking garage revenues began to increase.

In June 2004, a month before the Park's newly-scheduled opening date, the City announced that the Park would be managed by a private, not-for-profit conservancy which would be transformed from Millennium Park, Inc. While the conservancy would be in charge of the costly maintenance and upkeep of the landscape and numerous amenities, the City would still retain ownership of the property. On July 16, 2004, four years after the initial estimated completion date, Millennium Park officially opened to the public. The final cost was \$490 million.

## ART AND ARCHITECTURE – 12 VENUES

After six years of financial uncertainty and harsh criticism from the press, Millennium Park has become the new “front yard” of Chicago. The Park's contemporary architecture, art and landscape are surrounded by Chicago's historic architecture and parkland. While most amenities in the Park point to the new millennium, the peristyle at the corner of Randolph and Michigan (based on the original design from 1917), as well as the stair and rail at the Washington Street entrance to the park, reinforce the connection to the Park's history. In keeping with what has become a Daley tradition, the Millennium Park site is green and public. Roughly half of the Park's surface is a permeable “green roof,” and many aspects of the site's architecture



are designed to be energy self-sufficient and universally accessible. There are twelve main attractions within Millennium Park and each has its own story of conception, construction, management and operation.

### **1. AT&T Plaza/Cloud Gate**

Located in the center of Millennium Park, AT&T Plaza features Cloud Gate, the massive steel sculpture that has been nicknamed “The Bean” due to its curved shape. The sculpture is made out of highly polished stainless steel, which reflects visitors and the City’s skyline onto its convex and concave surfaces – something like an oversized fun-house mirror. The Cloud Gate sculpture has become a popular destination for Park visitors. Even on the rainy, chilly weekday afternoon of the site visit, dozens of visitors were touching, photographing themselves and the skyline, and moving in and around the sculpture.

The story of the making of Cloud Gate is the story of artist Anish Kapoor’s affection for the scale and character of Chicago, though

*Views of Cloud Gate*

even the artist seemed surprised by its presence, exclaiming, “It’s friggin’ big.” This was also Frank Gehry’s reaction: “It is big.” Even so, the artist rejected critical observations that it is too big. During Cloud Gate’s development, Kapoor was asked if he could make the sculpture any smaller, and he responded, “I can make it smaller if you can make Chicago smaller.” For him the “Bean” highlights the importance of scale in virtually all of the installations in the Park. Cloud Gate measures 66 feet long, 33 feet high and 42 feet wide. There is a 12-foot high “gate” that opens into a 27-foot high concave space underneath the “Bean.” Observing the installation from across Michigan Avenue or from Randolph or Monroe Streets reveals the relationship between the city surround and the Park. A smaller sculpture would not be visible from such vantage points.

The scale of the sculpture also explains some of the cost escalation on the project. When Kapoor’s proposal was initially considered for the Park it was estimated at about \$5 million. The first look by architects and fabricators jumped the cost to \$9 million. The final price tag was \$23 million.

Constructing Cloud Gate required innovative collaborations between the artist and his structural engineer Chris Hornzee-Jones in London; his fabrication and engineering contractor, Performance Structures out of Oakland, CA; his erection and finishing contractor, MTH Industries in Hillside, Illinois; and his project management firm, U.S. Equities Development from Chicago. Engaging all of these



contractors in the collaborative problem solving required to achieve the artist’s vision was another source of cost escalation.

Maintenance on Cloud Gate costs about \$70,000 per year (to clean fingerprints, rain and dew streaks, etc.). When the surface was scratched by a vandal, the cost to buff it out ran just over \$7,000.

## **2. Boeing Galleries**

Flanking the northern and southern edges of the Park, the Boeing Galleries offer permanent outdoor spaces for rotating art exhibitions. The exhibition terraces are lined with a row of sycamore trees that offer shade from the sun, and a series of black granite steps for sitting, which run along their eastern edge.

The Galleries are designed to accommodate temporary exhibitions and the contemplation of outdoor sculpture. At the time of the site visit, sculptures by Chinese artists were on display. This installation

*Dinosaur Sculpture, Boeing Galleries*

clearly appealed to children, as one three-year-old was reported to have climbed six feet up a dinosaur sculpture before security helped him down. Temporary fencing was then installed, which will remain for the duration of the exhibit.

### **3. BP Pedestrian Bridge**

Designed by Frank Gehry, the BP Bridge extends across Columbus Drive and connects Millennium Park to the Daley Bicentennial Plaza. The polished stainless steel façade of the Bridge snakes through Millennium Park and spans over Columbus Drive, offering a magnificent view of the city's skyline and waterfront. As a pedestrian negotiates the gently undulating curved path, the views change.

It was reportedly difficult to acquire Gehry's design team for the Millennium Park project. The firm was already fully committed to other work when Adrian Smith, the principal architect from SOM, first approached him. Gehry initially turned down the opportunity to design a sculptured addition to the Park's "band shell." Convincing Gehry to sign on appears to have required combined efforts

and incentives. The Pritzker family traded on their long-standing relationship with Gehry (a former winner of the prestigious Pritzker Prize for architecture) and made a \$15 million gift to fund the project. Ed Uhlir also included the BP Pedestrian Bridge as part of the design project, which would be the firm's first bridge commission.

Mayor Daley was initially unsure about the Bridge's design, which reportedly seemed to him to "go nowhere" and to have been "too much Frank." But the support of the Pritzkers and the functional values of the Bridge became convincing. The Bridge provides a connection to the Plaza, views of the city and parks, and a sound barrier between the Pavilion's lawn and Columbus Avenue traffic noise. Craig Webb, the project designer for Gehry Partners, tells the story of one exchange between the Mayor and Gehry, during which the Mayor expressed concern about the visual impact of the Bridge on the site. Gehry explained that no one would really see the bridge in plan, only on its edge. It would be like the flat edge of a butter knife, rotated so that the blade would be seen only in its narrow dimension.



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Views of BP Bridge





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#### **4. Jay Pritzker Pavilion**

The Frank Gehry-designed band shell stretches roughly 120 feet towards the sky. Featuring the same materials as the BP Bridge, the Jay Pritzker Pavilion is a trellis of curving and crisscrossing steel. The trellis supports a state-of-the-art sound system that distributes the acoustics of concert events evenly across the outdoor seating area.

The Jay Pritzker Pavilion accommodates 4,000 fixed seats in front of the proscenium, with additional space for 7,000 people on the lawn underneath the trellis. The complex shares support space with the Harris Theater, which is below-grade. The facility contains a stage area with portable risers and a choral balcony that accommodates a 130-person choir. It also supports a full orchestra and provides space for winter programming when the pavilion is not in use. All of

this then sits on top of the three-level public parking garage, which had to be significantly reinforced to accommodate the added functions.

There were several alternatives presented for the design of the Pavilion, beginning with a simple barrel vault approach to the sound stage. Cindy Pritzker is reported to have said that “It doesn’t look like Frank,” which launched more sculptural explorations. The Gehry team worked to assure good sight lines within the pavilion as well as to provide significant vistas to and from Michigan Avenue and Randolph and Monroe Streets. The digitally-enhanced sound system suspended from the trellis is reported to be among the best in the world and is the result of full-scale testing to confirm its viability.

*Views of Jay Pritzker Pavilion*



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### 5. Chase Promenade

A three-block-long walkway, the Chase Promenade includes Chase North, Central and South running through the entire Park from Randolph to Monroe Streets. The Promenade is lined by almost 200 trees, and is used primarily to accommodate exhibitions and festivals. Depending on the circumstances and seasons, a large tent is made available for special events, including a summer Family Fun Festival, and the promenade plays host to a variety of art fairs, festivals and temporary art installations. The initial plan for the Promenade featured gravel paving, recalling Buckingham Fountain Plaza, but was planted with grass until the Bean was installed. The donor, Bank One Foundation, then upgraded to concrete paving to support a higher level of use and a wider range of activities.

### 6. Crown Fountain

Located in the southwest corner of the Park, the Crown Fountain features two fifty-foot tall glass towers/fountains separated by a reflecting and “wading” pool (the water is only a quarter of an inch deep). The front face of each tower houses a giant LED screen that



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Left: Chase Promenade  
Right: Views of Crown Fountain

displays randomized 5-7 minute video portraits of 1,000 ordinary Chicago citizens (in fact, famous people or those seeking publicity are not allowed). These video portraits are timed to coincide with a water feature located in each tower, and the images become “virtual gargoyles,” as the subjects purse their lips and water spews out of their mouths – a contemporary nod to a traditional decorative architectural motif. The Crown Fountain and reflecting pool is a major destination for people of all ages. The pool and towers are designed at grade so that people with disabilities can easily enjoy the amenity. It is reported that families come with towels and bathing suits during warm weather with the express intent of enjoying the water feature.



*Crown Fountain*

Crown family leadership was essential to the project’s success. The family took the risk of allowing their name to be put on a one-of-a-kind Jaume Plensa sculpture. The family managed the process with an expressed understanding that “failure is expected” in the test phases. These involved producing transparent glass tiles, developing a unique structure to support the tiles as a seamless screen, fabricating the LED display system, creating a safe nozzle for the water spout, and more. Each design challenge in fact experienced several defeats as the supporting cast of architects, engineers, fabricators and contractors worked to realize the artist’s vision.

Mark Sexton of Krueck and Sexton Architects worked with the artist Jaume Plensa on the project. He speaks persuasively about the way the project and those around it radically changed his (and the City of Chicago’s) ideas about what art and architecture can do.

### ***7. Exelon Pavilions***

Four solar energy-producing pavilions were constructed within Millennium Park; two each on the northern and southern edges. The architecture of the pavilions serves as a frame for the Harris Theater to the north, and the expanded Art Institute of Chicago to the south. Covered in photovoltaic panels, the Pavilions are energy self-sufficient, and produce enough excess solar energy to power roughly twelve energy-efficient houses. The energy is fed back into the municipal grid reducing the electric utility operation costs accordingly. The north-facing photovoltaic arrays are mostly





decorative elements, allowing the facades to look essentially the same regardless of their orientation. Three of the four pavilions contain entranceways to the underground parking garage, while the northwestern pavilion serves as Millennium Park's Welcome Center.

#### **8. Joan W. and Irving B. Harris Theater for Music and Dance**

The Harris Theater, designed by Hammond Beeby Rupert Ainge Architects, is located on the northern edge of the Park, and features a 1,525-seat indoor center for the performing arts. It is located predominantly underground. The site and profile of the theater was one of the test cases of the requirement for the Park to be "open, free, and clear of any buildings" – and the fact that a portion of the Theater is above ground suggested some flexibility in interpretation.

The Harris Theater, which is privately operated, is the premier center for small- to medium-sized performance groups in Chicago. Its website describes it as home to several of Chicago's music and



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dance companies, including Chicago Opera Theater, Music of the Baroque and Hubbard Street Dance Chicago. It has also hosted the internationally-recognized San Francisco Ballet, New York City Ballet, Daniel Barenboim and his West-Eastern Divan Orchestra, Laurie Anderson, and eighth blackbird.

#### **9. The Lurie Garden**

A 5.0-acre green space in the southeast corner of the Park, the Lurie Garden is home to more than 138 varieties of perennial plants. Designed by Gustafson Guthrie Nichol Ltd, Piet Oudolf, and Robert Israel, the garden is enclosed by a 15-foot-high "shoulder hedge," designed to fill up a steel framework protecting an interior of tilted beds that are divided diagonally by a footbridge over shallow water. The tilt of the planter beds up toward their northern edges gives the Art Institute of Chicago a unique vista from their new facilities

Left: Harris Theater interior  
Right: Lurie Garden





across Monroe Street. The mix of running water, together with light and dark planes, is intended to be analogous to the stream, prairie and shading trees of a natural landscape. Framed with the backdrop of Michigan Avenue's streetscape and packed into the small footprint, however, the result is not a prairie landscape but rather a new form of landscape combining spatial structure, plantings and theatrical lighting. The Garden was designed to be a representation of Chicago's motto – *Urbs in Horto* – a City in a Garden.

#### **10. McCormick Tribune Plaza and Ice Rink**

Open from November to March, this 16,000-square-foot ice skating rink is free to the public and is located in the middle of the western edge of the Park parallel to Michigan Ave. During the warmer seasons, the space serves as Chicago's largest outdoor dining space and hosts an array of culinary events. The restaurant venue supporting the rink is open year-round and adds to the range of dining choices along Michigan Avenue.

#### **11. McDonald's Cycle Center**

The Cycle Center is a 300-space indoor heated bicycle parking garage built to encourage alternative transportation methods for people cycling to the Loop area. The Center features lockers, showers, a snack bar, a bicycle repair shop and a rental area. In the spring, summer and fall its 300 spaces are fully booked and rentals are reported to be brisk.

#### **12. Wrigley Square and Millennium Monument**

Located at the corner of Michigan and Randolph (the northwest corner of the park), Wrigley Square offers a passive open space for Park visitors. It features the Millennium Monument, a replica of the neo-classical peristyle that stood roughly in the same location from 1917 to 1953. The names of the Park's private donors are inscribed in the Monument's base.

Left: McCormick Tribune Plaza and Ice Rink  
Right: Wrigley Square and Millennium Monument

All of these venues support well over 500 free events a year. The programming ranges from Symphony performances in the Jay Pritzker Pavilion to sculpture tours in the Boeing Gardens. Regular offerings in the summer include Tai Chi and Yoga on the Great Lawn, a Family Fun Festival, and garden walks. The Park is open daily from 6 AM to 11 PM and is always free. This policy reflects the nature of the gift offered by patrons and the recognition of the city's investment in culture.

Designated sections of the Park, however, are also available for private special events. Performance charges are a central part of the *pro forma* for the Harris Theater.

## THE PLANNING AND DESIGN PROCESS

The overwhelming affection showed by all the participants for Chicago and its history, and the creativity and discipline of the professionals proved to be an extraordinarily effective substitute for a detailed plan. Mayor Daley succinctly summarized his lessons learned from building the Park: "Don't be ordinary." Ironically, that lesson emerged from his initially simple and fast-tracked proposal to build a green roof over the parking lots and rail yards, and to provide a new home for the Grant Park Music Festival on top. Surprisingly for a project of this magnitude and importance, many people interviewed during the site visit indicated that the plan for the Park did not really anticipate the mix of art installations and

program that finally emerged. Ed Uhler said that after SOM finished their master plan and John Bryan started to raise money, there was no formal plan for accommodating the new enhancements; Uhler was able to manage the opportunities as if a plan were in place. That said, the original design from SOM, which was based upon the historic Grant Park Plan of Daniel Burnham and Edward Bennett, did show a clear set of spaces or "outdoor rooms" ready to receive projects as funds, ideas, and the underground parking structure modifications would allow.

Within this framework, funding followed visionary ideas, and a committee of knowledgeable people governed the quality of work. The process was organic, yet also carefully orchestrated in much the way one might curate exhibitions within a well-designed museum. It can be difficult to structure meaningful participation in a "non-plan process," but the role of not-for-profit organizations was strong. The work of groups such as the Friends of the Parks, the Grant Park Conservancy, the Openlands Project, Friends of Downtown, and Landmarks Preservation of Illinois, indicates that various elements of the public were there from the start and followed the process carefully. In addition, there were conventional public hearings on the SOM master plan, and subsequent revisions required further hearings. There was continuous sensitivity to violations of the covenant to remain "...forever open, free and clear of any buildings," but it was coupled with a willingness to allow such work to proceed when it could be justified. In the end, the

watchdogs over the planning process were attracted to the vision of what Millennium Park could become.

Through years of readjustments and alterations to the site plan, the Park's eventual layout began to take shape. The final site plan pays tribute to Edward Bennett's 1920 master plan for Grant Park, with its succession of smaller-to-larger landscaped "rooms," represented by the major amenities as one moves from west to east across the Park. The site plan also takes into consideration the historic background of the surrounding neighborhood. The transformation of the Park from 19th century to contemporary architecture symbolizes the City's progression into the new millennium. The western eight acres of the Park, located within the Michigan Avenue Historic District, feature architecture and materials common to the area's period of significance, such as the stairs, handrails and balusters made of cast stone. A series of curved cast stone ovolos (a convex architectural molding that resembles a quarter circle or ellipse when viewed in cross section) mark the entry points to several of the Park's discrete amenities. The tree-lined Chase Promenade runs a full three blocks north-south, connecting all of the Park's amenities as a single armature. Millennium Park's design was based on a Beaux Arts style plan for the park, and its resulting spaces reflect the grid of the City. The Park's "rooms" extend the urban "city block" into green space, and the composition of the amenities within the Park reinforces a simple approach to wayfinding.



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The 16.5-acre section of the Park that was developed over the old railroad yards features a more contemporary spin on industrial design, including stainless steel, steel, and aluminum. Even the Lurie Garden frames its 5 acres of "light" and "dark" plates of vegetation with steel frame cages and a sharp wood and steel watercourse that cuts diagonally through it.

The design processes for most of the amenities demanded detailed and creative problem solving at every level. For example, Gehry was initially very sensitive to the "forever open" slogan, suggesting a low profile band shell that was a gesture to the history of the site and to expressions of public concern about structures in the park. He had to be prodded by the Pritzkers to challenge the public with

*Lurie Garden*

a proposal that some would call grander, and that produced a more dramatic presence than he initially thought possible. Problems with the sound system and trellis structure required unprecedented solutions. The Crown Fountain, Cloud Gate, and the Lurie Garden also represent unique acts of art, architecture and construction. They required very creative problem solving by designers, engineers, architects, landscape architects, fabricators and others to realize each artist's vision.

## LEADERSHIP, PHILOSOPHY AND ORGANIZATION

***Don't be boring.*** Park development strictly adhered to this unwritten rule of art. However one may evaluate the art and architecture of the Park, boring is not likely to be among the descriptions. The Mayor, the Commissioner of the Department of Cultural Affairs, and the Mayor's Director of Design and Architecture for the project all spoke of the primacy of pushing limits in the design process in order to create exciting places. The patrons insisted on great art, done with superb execution, and they managed their gifts toward that end. In some ways, the City and patrons were ahead of the artists, pressing for full realization of each artistic vision. The Mayor attributes much of the success of the Park to the artists.

***Allow failure in the test stage.*** "Test, redesign, and test again," was the mantra for the fabrication and construction of the Crown Fountain, the metal seams of the Bean, and the acoustics of the Pritzker

Pavilion. The teams shared a clear understanding that failure was an expected part of innovation. This principle was understood by the patrons as well as the artists, resulting in reciprocal reinforcement and on-going (and expanding) financial support.

***Facilitative management.*** While much of the fundraising and the selection of artists seemed serendipitous, the role Ed Uhler played to orchestrate and "soothe the savage beasts," wherever they were in the process, was critical. His ability to invite risk-taking in areas of budget, artist selection, design and construction kept the bar high and consistent with the expectations of some of the wealthiest patrons in the city. Patrons who would have preferred anonymity were invited to make their names public in order to create naming opportunities for others. All of this was done in a climate of sustained negative press about cost escalations and in the face of fear that the public park was becoming privatized with each new donor. The potential risk of course, was the possibility that the installations would not be well received by the public.

***Free and accessible – a Chicago tradition.*** The Park was intended as a gift to all of Chicago. The Chicago Department of Cultural Affairs animates this gift with 500 free events in the park each year (see the Project Description above), and the popularity of the new home for the Grant Park Music Festival is further evidence of the gift's success. The Paralyzed Veterans of America recently gave Millennium Park the Barrier-Free Award for Accessibility, affirming



the success of the City's commitment to making the park fully and universally accessible to all. The concept of the park as a gift to Chicago is what John Bryan refers to as "wrapping the civic cloak around the project," helping to provide an environment conducive to fundraising. Donors were not giving to catalyze economic development; they were giving to make the Park "a place that people like to be" and because "they wanted their city to be the best."

***Conscious of historic circumstances.*** Some citizens clearly saw the Park's development as an important continuation of the foundations of famous Chicago plans and expositions. Historian Timothy Gilfoyle was commissioned to write the story very early in the process, around the time John Bryan was beginning to raise funds, suggesting that there was already a sense that this was a historic venture. The result is a hardcover fully illustrated book, Millennium Park: Creating a Chicago Landmark, published by the University of Chicago Press in 2006. It presents a detailed accounting of the Park's development based on Gilfoyle's interviews with the principals.

***The three legged stool.*** The success of the project is based on three essential elements. First, Mayor Daley's political leadership ensured an understanding of cultural and tourism issues, and a push for Chicago to present itself as a global city. Second, John Bryan's vision and high standards led to the patronage of 115 donors, who gave a total of \$220 million. Third, Ed Uhlir's skillful oversight on the details of project development framed a team that continually traded

up on an initially modest vision. Uhlir was, according to historian Gilfoyle, "the architect that put it all together in the end." Gilfoyle describes Daley, Bryan, and Uhlir as "three legs of the stool," working reciprocally to reinforce strengths and anticipate each other's needs. There were, of course, many other contributors who worked creatively and well, but this triumvirate formed the core team of the process. The public sector and the private sector were both able to do their jobs, and the project manager moved adeptly within both of these worlds to coordinate their activity.

***Clear contractual separation from the City.*** When asked about the most important lessons to be learned from his experience with the Park project, John Bryan returns to the decision made early on in his involvement to create Millennium Park, Inc., to establish a clear contractual separation between City-run projects and those that were designed through private donor prerogative. This balance was essential to establish a base for donor participation, and for giving donors the decision-making authority required to attract major participation. So, for example, when one City official wrote a scathing critique of the Crown Fountain design to Bryan, he was able to simply, "wad it up and throw it away." The donors also wanted the amenities they were providing in Millennium Park to be "their" gift to the City.

## MILLENNIUM PARK PRICE TAG

City Funded Elements	Garage	\$ 99,000,000
	Metra Crossover Structure	\$ 61,000,000
	Park Finishes & Landscaping	\$ 43,000,000
	Music Pavilion	\$ 25,500,000
	Design & Management	\$ 40,000,000
	City Portion of Exelon Pavilions	\$ 1,500,000
	<b>City Funded Total</b>	<b>\$ 270,000,000</b>
Donor Funded Elements	Base Park Improvements	\$ 5,400,000
	Jay Pritzker Pavilion	\$ 31,900,000
	Jay Pritzker Pavilion Sound System Enhancement	\$ 2,500,000
	BP Pedestrian Bridge	\$ 14,500,000
	Chase Promenade	\$ 4,000,000
	Wrigley Square / Peristyle	\$ 5,000,000
	Lurie Garden	\$ 13,200,000
	The Cloud Gate ("Bean") & AT&T Plaza	\$ 26,000,000
	Crown Fountain	\$ 17,000,000
	Boeing Galleries	\$ 3,000,000
	Exelon Pavilions	\$ 6,000,000
	McCormick Tribune Ice Rink	\$ 3,200,000
	Harris Music and Dance Theatre	\$ 61,000,000
	Fixed Seating	\$ 490,000
	Demountable Fence	\$ 750,000
	Mid Level Terraces	\$ 600,000
	Graphics	\$ 200,000
	Furnishings	\$ 260,000
	Endowment Commitment	\$ 25,000,000
	<b>Donor Funded Total</b>	<b>\$ 220,000,000</b>
	<b>TOTAL PROJECT COST</b>	<b>\$ 490,000,000</b>

## FINANCING

*Capital Financing*

Millennium Park is the product of a unique public/private relationship between City Hall and Chicago's philanthropic individuals, families and corporations. According to the City's accounting, of the \$490 million final price tag, \$220 million came from public funds and \$270 million from the private sector. These donations funded the Park's evolution from a 16-acre home for the Grant Park Music Festival to a 24.5-acre cultural center featuring work from world-renowned architects and designers. The tables that follow detail the sources and uses of the funds.

*Operations*

The responsibility for Park operations lies within the broad purview of the Chicago Department of Cultural Affairs. They devote approximately \$7.85 million of their \$19 million annual budget to support the operations and programming of Millennium Park. Of that amount, approximately \$6 million goes toward basic operations provided under contract by MB Realty Inc. The remainder is combined with sponsorship and rental revenues as well as Millennium Park, Inc. reimbursements. The total annual operating budget for 2009 is \$12.85 million.

Several of the amenities in the Park have endowments dedicated to their maintenance, but not all of these have been received as of the time of this writing. Millennium Park, Inc. also reports that a total

of \$25M is being raised to support Park maintenance in the future. The endowment acquisition is also still in process. As of this writing Millennium Park Inc. has not reported any success in raising funds for the maintenance endowment.

#### OPERATIONS BUDGET FOR MB REALTY

Public Events, Security, Cleaning, Sound, Lights	\$ 600,000
Security	\$ 1,300,000
Engineering	\$ 500,000
Electrical	\$ 350,000
Landscape / Snow Removal	\$ 550,000
Management & Insurance	\$ 950,000
Cleaning	\$ 800,000
Ice Rink	\$ 400,000
Fountain	\$ 300,000
Chemicals	\$ 100,000
Liability Insurance	\$ 150,000
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$ 6,000,000</b>

#### 2009 MILLENNIUM PARK FUNDING SOURCES

City Funding	\$ 7,850,000
Sponsorship / Grants	\$ 4,264,259
Private Rental – 2008 Net Profit	\$ 315,341
MPI Reimbursements	\$ 420,400
<b>2009 FUNDING SOURCES</b>	<b>\$ 12,850,000</b>

#### 2009 BUDGET EXPENSES

Operations and Marketing	\$ 7,850,000
Programming	\$ 5,000,000
<b>2009 BUDGET TOTAL*</b>	<b>\$ 12,850,000</b>

\* Note that the Department of Cultural Affairs budget addresses the entire portfolio of events offered through DCA throughout Chicago. Their programming funds are used primarily to support their staff, as the programs are all directly supported by sponsorships. The programming funds for the Park include costs attributable to program delivery including sponsorships but excluding DCA support.

## 2008 DCA PROGRAMMING BUDGET

<b>2008 Department of Cultural Affairs Programs</b>	<b>Expenditures</b>
General Programs	\$ 955,015
Public Programs	\$ 128,431
Family Programs	\$ 250,000
Jazz Programs	\$ 190,000
Music Without Borders	\$ 127,831
Education Program	\$ 25,000
Visual Exhibitions	\$ 84,926
Workouts	\$ 120,000
Holiday	\$ 15,000
<b>2008 DEPARTMENT OF CULTURAL AFFAIRS PROGRAM TOTAL*</b>	<b>\$ 1,896,204</b>

## ESTIMATED ECONOMIC ACTIVITY ATTRIBUTABLE TO MILLENNIUM PARK 2005 – 2015

Gross Sales – Visitor Spending	<b>\$ 2.60 Billion</b>
Taxes on Visitor Spending	<b>\$ 0.24 Billion</b>
Direct Employment / Visitor Spending	<b>1,070 FTE's</b>
Direct Earnings / Visitor Spending	<b>\$ 0.20 Billion</b>
Direct Output	<b>\$ 0.72 Billion</b>
Induced Employment	<b>460 FTE's</b>
Induced Earnings	<b>\$ 0.14 Billion</b>
Induced Output	<b>\$ 0.63 Billion</b>

## ECONOMIC IMPACTS

Millennium Park has had very positive impacts for the City of Chicago and its surrounding areas. It has generated a tremendous increase in property and sales tax revenue for the City. Individual buildings in proximity to the Park are known to produce over \$10 million more than pre-Park amounts annually in property taxes. Additionally, over \$4 million is generated annually in sales tax revenue from the new population of downtown residents. The exact amounts attributable to the Park are the subject of a complex series of investigations commissioned by Millennium Park, Inc. The initial study done in 2005, for example, found that the increase in total residential value in the new East Loop real estate market attributable to the Park would be \$1.4 billion over the next ten years (based on 2,500 residential condominium units or 25% of the total being built in the area). Furthermore, the study found that tourism revenue (gross sales – visitor spending) would be around \$2.6 billion over the next ten years. Consultants John Devries and Christine Williams also project very positive impacts in both direct and induced employment, earnings, and output.

The economic activity study reported that the Park welcomed an estimated three million visitors in 2005. Of the three million, roughly 45% were domestic travelers, while 9% were international travelers. Since 2001, the Central Area has seen an estimated 21 new hotels constructed or renovated, with roughly 25 more that have been or are being proposed. In addition, many retail businesses



have moved in around Millennium Park. Local businesses have seen a tremendous rise in revenues. Restaurants and stores now attract more customers, and historic retail strips such as State Street are experiencing an urban revitalization, with retail space being constructed or renovated at a rapid rate.

While Ed Uhlir was not ready to speculate on the details, he notes that [Priceline.com](http://Priceline.com) reported in 2005 that Chicago was the 36th most popular destination in America; in 2006 it was the #1 destination. According to city officials, Chicago has seen a 47% increase in leisure travel over the past 5 years, versus the national average increase of 6%. The Park's influence has also impacted the Museum Campus, a series of cultural institutions along Chicago's waterfront that includes the Field Museum, the Shedd Aquarium, and the adjacent Art Institute of Chicago, which has created an addition that faces north on the park. The Park serves as a spark for the public's artistic curiosity, motivating them to experience other attractions that the lakefront has to offer. In recognition of the Park's draw (and potential to generate higher attendance), the Art Institute built a bridge (opening in May of 2009) to draw visitors from the pedestrian traffic in the Park. It also oriented major spaces to view the park such as its conference room.

Studies by the same consultant team building on the initial 2005 investigation of economic impact reveal that the City of Chicago continues to reap significant return from investments in the Park. Perhaps the greatest external attribute of the Park is its ability to transform Chicago's Central Area and East Loop into what it is today. Before the completion of Millennium Park, the East Loop consisted of mundane office buildings with little retail and almost no pedestrian activity. However, since the Park's completion, the East Loop has become one of the best-performing real estate submarkets in the City, featuring over ten new condominiums or residential conversions. In addition, between 2001 and 2003, Chicago's Central Area featured roughly 110 new residential developments. From 2004 to 2006, The Central Area had an estimated additional 80 new residential developments, and from 2007 to 2009, the Central Area

#### ESTIMATED IMPACT OF MILLENNIUM PARK ON RESIDENTIAL DEVELOPMENT 2005 – 2015

Condominium Units Completed 2005-2007	<b>3,696</b>
Forecast over 10 Years (units)	<b>10,000</b>
Millennium Park Factor	<b>25%</b>
Units Attributable to Millennium Park	<b>2,500</b>
Average Price per Square Foot	<b>\$400</b>
Average Unit Size (Square Feet)	<b>1,400</b>
<b>Total Value of Residential Development Attributable to Millennium Park</b>	<b>\$1,400,000,000</b>

had an estimated additional 85 new residential developments. In 2000, the Central Loop (including the East Loop) had an estimated 8,637 persons living within it boundaries. In 2007, the estimated population had grown to roughly 16,537 persons.

Results of the recent studies are summarized in the tables shown below. They include an assessment of the “base case” that provides a conservative assessment of what might be attributed to the existence of the Park while the “opportunity scenario” offers the upper range of impact. These assessments are then compared to the total additional supply regardless of how the supply is attributed.

CENTRAL AREA DEVELOPMENT TRENDS 2000 – 2007				
	Base Case Scenario	Opportunity Scenario	Total Addition to Supply	Annual Average
Office (Sq. Ft.)	1,600,000	2,200,000	15,135,000	1,892,000
Retail (Sq. Ft.)	250,000	350,000	3,160,000	395,000
Residential (Units)	1,800	2,200	33,464	4,183
Student Housing (Beds)	150	180	4,206	526
Hotel (Rooms)	600	700	4,323	540



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CENTRAL AREA MARKET SECTOR GROWTH BENCHMARKS 2008 - 2020		
PROJECTED AVERAGE ANNUAL GROWTH		
	Base	Opportunity
Population	4,200	5,300
Employment	4,500	6,000
Office (Sq. Ft.)	1,200,000	1,500,000
Retail (Sq. Ft.)	250,000	350,000
Cultural (Sq. Ft.)	85,000	100,000
Residential (Units)	2,600	3,300
Student Housing (Beds)	150	200
Hotel (Rooms)	500	700

## DEPARTMENT OF CULTURAL AFFAIRS SECURED GRANTS/SPONSORS 2009

SOURCE	PROGRAM	AMOUNT
Fairmont Chicago	Made in Chicago Jazz, Music Without Borders	110 Room Nights
Fry Foundation	Music Without Borders	19,000
Illinois Arts Council	Music Without Borders	\$ 100,000
	<b>Music Without Borders Total</b>	<b>\$ 119,000</b>
Target	Family Fun Festival	\$ 250,000
Chicago Community Trust	Made in Chicago	\$ 25,000
Joyce Foundation	Made in Chicago	\$ 50,000
Kraft Foods	Made in Chicago	\$ 50,000
The Boeing Company	Made in Chicago	\$ 55,000
	<b>Made in Chicago Total</b>	<b>\$ 180,000</b>
Andy's Pro Line	Music Without Borders (and other MP programs)	in-kind
Motorola	Education	\$ 25,000
McDonalds (by MPI Endowment)	Workouts	\$ 45,000
Hard Rock Hotel	Millennium – Visual Exhibitions	in-kind
<b>DEPARTMENT OF CULTURAL AFFAIRS (DCA) TOTAL</b>		<b>\$ 619,000</b>
PRESENTING PARTNERS	PROGRAM	AMOUNT
Chicago Office of Tourism	Great Performers of Illinois, Greeters, Fashion Focus, etc.	\$ 340,557
Grant Park Orchestra Association	Grant Park Music Fest	\$ 1,918,222
Mayor's Office of Special Events	Gospel Fest	\$ 585,000
Private Partners	Joffrey Ballet, Lyric Opera	\$ 501,480
Through Millennium Park Inc. (MPI) Endowments:		
The Boeing Company	Boeing Galleries	\$ 250,000
The Richard H. Driehaus Foundation	Boeing Galleries	
MPI for Lurie Garden Programming	Lurie Garden	\$ 50,000
<b>DCA &amp; PRESENTING PARTNER TOTAL</b>		<b>\$ 4,264,259</b>

## OTHER IMPACTS

Mayor Daley and Lois Weisberg, his Commissioner of the Department of Cultural Affairs, both believe the Park has given new definition to Chicago as a city of the future that also respects its past. The design of the Park features creative, eco-friendly architecture and a universally accessible landscape. Over 15 million people visited the Park between its opening in 2004 and January 2009. The Park further secures Chicago's position as a major American center of art and culture.

## FUTURE PLANS

The Chicago Children's Museum, to be located at the east end of the BP Bridge, is the next major (and controversial) project slated for Grant Park. The controversies revolve around placing structures in the Park and the need to relocate an already successful facility from elsewhere to this site.

Building the maintenance and operation endowment to the full \$25 million is also a priority for John Bryan.

Continued free programming is almost certainly in the Park's future. The Department of Cultural Affairs offerings represent a continuing commitment by the City and the history of sponsorship for these programs, even in tight times, has been very good.

The City launched a bid for the Olympics in 2016. The Mayor and planners for the bid saw the Park playing a major role in international cultural events programming themed by continent and ramping up to 2016. Even though the bid failed the preprogram planning illustrate how Chicago is positioning itself as an international city.

# Assessing Project Success

## SUCCESS IN MEETING PROJECT GOALS

*1. To transform the commuter railroad tracks, surface parking and degraded parkland in the northwest corner of Grant Park into a landscaped venue for free public programming, concerts, and events including a permanent home for the Grant Park Music Festival.*

By constructing the Park on top of an underground garage, the City was able to provide adequate downtown parking for its residents and workers, and at the same time preserve and create open space. The performing arts space supports highly popular programs including concerts and many other types of events.



*2. To provide one-of-a-kind public art spaces as a “gift” from patrons who have made their fortunes in the City, given to all the citizens of Chicago.*

The 15 million visitors, 500 well-attended cultural events per year, and the delight expressed by both children and adults as they move through the Park all provide persuasive evidence on the quality of public art venues provided. Park contributors see the Park as a gift to the city at the level of other major cultural and planning efforts in Chicago’s past. They also see their gift as positioning the City for the new millennium. The operations and maintenance endowment needs to be fully funded to assure the sustainability of the gift, but there are no foreseeable threats to continuing park maintenance or operation.

*3. To lay the foundation for future private residential and commercial development in the area.*

The Park has acted as a catalyst for development in the surrounding neighborhood. It has achieved this in two ways: by creating a highly attractive magnet for activity, and by removing a barrier between downtown Chicago, sections of Grant Park, and the City’s waterfront. While it is difficult to determine exactly how much to attribute surrounding development to the Park, there is substantial anecdotal evidence that much of it would not have happened without the transformation of the park site. However, the economic impact study suggests that a conservative 25% of new retail, commercial and residential developments in the East Loop can be attributed to



the Park. Many of the new condo developments, for example, trade heavily on the Park in their marketing literature.

It is worth noting that this goal was not explicit in the initial framing of the work and it was not a strong element of fundraising from the private sector. It is more a result of the Park’s success than an intention or preconceived goal.

## SELECTION COMMITTEE COMMENTS

The Selection Committee chose Millennium Park as a 2009 winner for a variety of reasons. They considered Millennium Park a powerful example of what can be accomplished when effective leadership and a strong public/private partnership come together to realize a compelling vision for a city. Mayor Daley’s vision of what could be

View of BP Bridge

created in an underutilized space in the heart of downtown Chicago, the willingness and generosity of Chicagoans to support that vision, and the skilled leadership required to make it a reality, provide a very significant model for placemaking around the country.

The Committee was also impressed by the sophistication of the design of Millennium Park and its components, and was fully cognizant of the difficulty and the significance of achieving such a large-scale intervention in the middle of a fully-developed urban downtown. Most Committee members were very familiar with Millennium Park, and acknowledged that it impacts thousands of people in a given year, both residents and tourists who come from afar to see the Park. They also commended the fact that the Park is used by a diverse group of people, and offers recreational opportunity for people from all walks of life.

Finally, the Committee applauded the transformative effect of Millennium Park in creating a major new public open space and forging new connections between that space, the Art Institute, Lake Michigan, and the Loop, adding new vitality to all of the nearby amenities. The Committee felt Millennium Park embodies a bold vision for transformative placemaking in critical urban spaces. 🐦

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2009 RUDY BRUNER AWARD: Silver Medal Winner

## St. Joseph Rebuild Center

New Orleans, Louisiana





*Courtyard at Rebuild Center*



## Project At-A-Glance

### WHAT IS THE ST. JOSEPH REBUILD CENTER?

- ❖ A day center for homeless people, providing meals, showers, laundry, phone calls, health and mental health care, immigration assistance, and other services
- ❖ A collaboration among four Catholic organizations
- ❖ A new, semi-permanent set of structures, custom-built and fabricated off-site, connected by an integrating system of decks, roofs, and trellises
- ❖ A design by the Detroit Design Collaborative from University of Detroit Mercy in collaboration with Wayne Troyer, a local New Orleans architect. Built, in part, by architecture students.

### PROJECT GOALS

- ❖ To provide a dignified, well designed daytime service facility for homeless people
- ❖ To contribute to the urban fabric of New Orleans by transforming a parking lot into a handsome building that relates to the street
- ❖ To meet the most basic needs of homeless people in an environment that is safe and respectful
- ❖ To create the highest quality structure possible with limited funds
- ❖ To serve as a model for providing temporary shelter and services in response to disaster situations



## PROJECT CHRONOLOGY

**August 29, 2005:** Hurricane Katrina devastates New Orleans.

**Late 2005:** Coalition members hold meetings and decide to cooperate on the Rebuild Center.

**May 2006:** Detroit Mercy's Collaborative Design Center starts work on the planning. After some delays, design began in earnest in August.

**January 2007:** Bids received for construction.

**March 2007:** Demolition and construction begin.

**August 2007:** Rebuild Center opens August 29 (exactly two years after Katrina) and the dedication ceremony is held September 11.

**Summer 2008:** Medical facility is constructed.



## KEY PARTICIPANTS INTERVIEWED

DAN PITERA, AIA, ACD, Director, Detroit Collaborative Design  
Center at University of Detroit Mercy School of Architecture

WAYNE TROYER, AIA, Wayne Troyer Architects, New Orleans  
(architect of record for the Rebuild Center)

DON THOMPSON, Executive Director, Harry Thompson Center

SISTERS VERA BUTLER and ENID STORY,  
Presentation Sisters' Lantern Light

FATHER PERRY HENRY, Pastor of St. Joseph Church

MARY BAUDOUIN, Assistant for Social Ministries, Jesuit Province  
of New Orleans (on board of the Harry Thompson Center)

VICKI JUDICE, UNITY of Greater New Orleans (a coalition working to  
address homelessness and bring residents back to New Orleans)

JUSTINE DIAMOND, Catholic Charities Archdiocese of  
New Orleans' Hispanic Apostolate

### *Volunteers:*

EMMA and BRENDAN (Jesuit Volunteer Corps) and SISTER MAGDALEN

### *Rebuild Center "Guests":*

HOWARD, BRIAN and GLORIA

## St. Joseph Rebuild Center



Entrance to Rebuild Center with pedestrian sky bridge and medical center in background

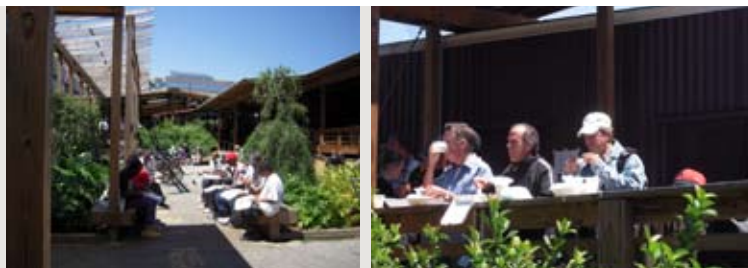
### URBAN CONTEXT

The devastation suffered by New Orleans in 2005 has become its *de facto* urban context. Hurricane Katrina flooded over 80% of the city, including the project site, and over 1,500 people died or remain unaccounted for. Still widely considered the “worst civil engineering disaster in American history,” Katrina will forever be associated with images of entire neighborhoods submerged by storm waters, of stranded residents awaiting rescue from their rooftops, and of desperate scenes at the Superdome, only a few blocks from the project site.

Those images stand in stark contrast to the city’s rich cultural and ethnic history, which has been expressed for hundreds of years in festivals like Mardi Gras, world renowned regional cooking, venerable musical traditions (New Orleans is the birthplace of jazz), and an architectural and cultural heritage unique in the country.

The city’s recent history, however, has been dominated by the question of how to rebuild. An estimated 60% of New Orleans’ 437,000 people left at the time of the storms, and some are slowly venturing back. By August 2007 the population had grown back to 273,000, and by March 2009 it had reached the 300,000 mark.

The recovery effort has been riddled with problems, most of which are well known. The federal government failed to support the re-



covery effort in a timely fashion, and ongoing controversy about the form and location of replacement projects has slowed rebuilding. In the past year, however, the rebuilding effort has gained momentum, and the City recently announced that over \$1 billion dollars has been spent, much of that on infrastructure and street and landscape improvements.

## NEIGHBORHOOD AND SITE

The project site is a portion of the parking lot of a church located just north of downtown – perhaps a mile up Canal Street from the French Quarter. Several hospitals and related facilities are clustered together; at least one of them is vacant as a result of Katrina. A new cancer research center is under construction on an adjacent property and two new hospitals, Charity and the Veteran’s Administration, are planned for the area. Some of the hospitals are connected by a pedestrian overpass or sky-bridge that spans an adjacent elevated highway and passes directly over one edge of the site.

St. Joseph Church is a large, red brick, almost cathedral-scaled structure. In the past, it served residents of the surrounding neighborhood, but now there are relatively few houses in the

area, and people tend to come to the church by car from a broader area of the city, since Katrina devastated the area around the church. The Superdome is only a few blocks away, and images of the stadium surrounded by water and providing grossly inadequate refuge to thousands were among the most widely broadcast during the disaster.

In addition to the hospitals, there are many surface parking lots in the neighborhood, including parking lots all around the church. In fact, the church derives some income from renting parking spaces during the week, and it allowed a portion of the lot to be used as the site of the Rebuild Center.

## POPULATION SERVED

There are three broad categories of homeless persons served at the Rebuild Center. The first group served is the chronically homeless, who were homeless prior to Katrina.

A second group was made homeless by Katrina after their dwellings were rendered unfit and/or their means of employment or support were destroyed. Some of these people may have had temporary housing, but have lost it more recently. In November 2007, the *Times-Picayune* reported that 550 families living in FEMA trailers were being evicted and were left to face the acute shortage of affordable housing.

*Rebuild Center guests enjoying lunch*

The third group consists of immigrant workers, who came to New Orleans seeking employment following Katrina, and for one reason or another have not been earning enough money to obtain adequate housing. Most of them came originally from Mexico and other Latin American countries, but may have been in the US prior to Katrina; some are legal residents and some are not. The Hispanic Apostolate estimates that as many as 12,000 Latino workers may have come to New Orleans under these circumstances. They expected well paying jobs related to hurricane cleanup and construction, and many found them. Even for this group, housing is and was scarce and expensive. As a result, many people crowd into small homes and apartments, and some live out of their cars. Others have experienced employment problems, including exploitation, failure to receive wages, and uncompensated job-related injuries, which have left them homeless.

The profile of people served at the Center (based on records kept for a period of time soon after the Center opened) is 90% male, 15% to 20% veterans, 65% to 70% African-American and the balance mostly white. There are not insubstantial numbers of Latinos (but fewer than planners anticipated). There are some, but relatively few, teenagers and mothers with small children, as they are generally directed to other facilities specifically targeted toward meeting their needs.

## SERVICES PROVIDED

Each of these groups has somewhat different needs for services beyond the basics of food and hygiene. Chronically homeless individuals often suffer from mental illness and/or substance abuse problems and need counseling and medical care. Many are veterans and are eligible for VA services. They may or may not be interested in permanent or transitional housing, which is by contrast a primary concern of those rendered homeless by Katrina. Displaced workers often need assistance with employment, benefits, workers compensation, or in resolving salary disputes. Any of the groups may need help with establishing or replacing lost identification papers. All these and other services are offered at the Rebuild Center to the people it consistently refers to respectfully as its “guests” (more detail on meal service and assistance with documentation is provided later in this chapter):

- The Center is open five days per week from 8 am till 2:30 pm.
- Meals include lunch and a morning snack two or three days per week. A hot meal is assured for at least 150 people (on other days, guests get sandwiches). On hot meal days the turnout is greater, recently drawing around 235 people, which is essentially the maximum capacity of the Center (slower days might see 170 to 180 guests). Staff members distribute colored tickets that establish the sequence for receiving meals. They randomize the order in which the colors are distributed,



so getting to the Center early assures one of getting a ticket for a meal, but not of being served first. (It is reported that some guests will give their ticket to another guest if they feel that s/he needs the hot meal more than they do – a strikingly generous gesture on the part of people who have next to nothing.)

Other days, the meal may or may not be hot and somewhat fewer people come. Food is provided by a list of donor groups who commit to providing one or more lunch per month. Donors include schools, service clubs, markets, hotels, restaurants, and individuals. Others provide food on occasion or make related donations. There are three dedicated volunteers who make sandwiches every morning using bread supplied from the bakery of a Benedictine monastery.

- Showers include use of a towel and toiletries, as well as sinks with mirrors for shaving and make-up.
- Laundry is offered on a first-come, first-served basis for about 25 people per day. Laundry is done by staff. Hospital-type scrubs are provided to those who have only the clothes they are wearing,
- Telephone calls include both local and long distance, but are limited to 10 minutes if others are waiting.
- Guests can use the Center's address to receive mail.
- Health and mental health care is available several times per week. Health care professionals from local institutions provide walk-in care, assistance with prescriptions and



vouchers to pay for them. TB tests are also given (these are needed in order to be admitted to a shelter).

- Assistance with identification documents, including birth certificates. Once a week, the police run a vanload of up to nine guests from the Center to the DMV to get their IDs. Homeless people may have their IDs lost or stolen, in part because they often are without a secure place to store their possessions. Lack of a proper ID often prevents an individual from being able to work. Obtaining ID contributes to a feeling of identity and integrity; one guest reportedly said, "Now I'm a person," after reclaiming his ID.
- Other legal and notary services, through lawyers who come once or twice a week to offer *pro bono* assistance. Many cases relate to family law matters such as divorce or child support.

Left: Policies for guests  
Right: Guests line up for lunch

- Wage claims assistance for those who are having problems with a current or former employer.
- Housing assistance services for locating affordable rental housing and obtaining HUD vouchers.
- Mortgage readiness classes are offered to first-time homebuyers (who are more likely to be moving from rental housing than directly from homelessness). Tulane Canal Neighborhood Development Corporation and Lantern Light also partner to build new homes for first-time buyers.
- Language interpretation is available to guests who do not speak English (particularly common is Spanish).
- Emergency groceries and financial assistance for neighborhood residents are part of an outreach program run from the Center.
- Referrals are provided to services offered by other agencies in the city.
- Pastoral services are offered on request and without pressure or proselytizing.

An initial snapshot of Center use was taken eight weeks after the opening. In that time, 5,429 people used the Center and received the following levels of service:



- 2,393 took showers
- 1,447 received toiletry kits
- 958 had their laundry done
- 7,000 phone calls were made
- 4,895 meals were served
- 116 obtained their ID or copies of birth certificates
- 233 families from the neighborhood received groceries
- 134 received counsel from attorneys and notaries
- 324 visited with a physicians assistant and the mobile medical team
- 85 received mental health case management services
- 55 Latino workers were counseled on employment, documentation, immigration and health care.

*Sinks for washing and shaving located in semi-outdoor space*

Though it is not likely apparent to the guests, the collaborating agencies divide up the services based, in part, on their experience and expertise (e.g., the Harry Thompson Center provides showers, laundry and telephone access; the Presentation Sisters take responsibility for meals and IDs, the Hispanic Apostolate offers wage claim assistance, and Lantern Light provides emergency groceries and mail service). As extensive as they are, services are limited by available resources of people, time and funding.

On the other hand, it is important to see the Center as part of a continuum of care for the homeless. We met with Vicki Judice of UNITY, which coordinates services including outreach, supportive services, and a variety of transitional and permanent housing programs. In their outreach work, UNITY staff members seek out people who need assistance wherever they may be – including on the street. In this way, the Center is remarkably useful to other agencies as a place where homeless people can be found and matched to available services or benefits. The Center reduces the agencies' need to search for the homeless on the streets in order to provide services.



*Guests visiting over lunch*

## PROJECT HISTORY: COMING TOGETHER IN COLLABORATION

This project is the result of several threads coming together following Hurricane Katrina. One thread involves the **Harry Thompson Center**. Before the storms, the homeless population in central New Orleans was served by the Harry Thompson Center, a service ministry operated by Immaculate Conception Church and the New Orleans Jesuits. At that time, the Thompson Center offered daytime services including showers and laundry – much as it does today through its partnership with St. Joseph Rebuild Center. In 2005, Katrina flooded the building that housed the Harry Thompson Center. The landlord was reportedly uninterested in cooperating with the Thompson Center to make repairs and reopen – which the organization badly wanted to do, as its services were needed more desperately than ever. In the interim, Don Thompson (note the different spelling), the Thompson Center's executive director, moved his family to the mid-West following the storm, so that one of his children could get needed services no longer available in New Orleans. However, the Thompson Center continued to search for ways to reopen.

The second thread concerns the **Presentation Sisters** of the Blessed Virgin Mary, an order of nuns formed in Ireland to serve the poor. Looking for a focal project, their North American conference selected New Orleans based on the recommendation of their Sister Vera Butler, who was already working in New Orleans with their Lantern Light organization. When Katrina hit, the delegation of

four other Sisters was actually en route to New Orleans, and had to operate out of highly provisional and unsatisfactory facilities. Still, they managed to start a feeding program and offered other services from a trailer on the St. Joseph Church site. In addition to services listed in the prior section, they also build houses in the neighborhood for first-time buyers. The Sisters have built seven houses so far, of which five have been sold at highly subsidized prices (up to \$65,000).

The third thread involves the **Hispanic Apostolate** Community Services of the Catholic Charities, Archdiocese of New Orleans, a ministry oriented toward meeting the needs of the Spanish-speaking population, and particularly of the recent immigrants described above. The Hispanic Apostolate was the third agency to join the Rebuild Center and has the smallest presence, typically one staff member.

As these groups struggled to find a way to offer their services, the **St. Joseph Church** of the Congregation of the Mission/Vincentians and its pastor, Father Perry, hosted discussions about how the groups might work together to create a facility where they would accomplish more together than they could individually. This would also foster the Church's services to the poor in its immediately surrounding area.

As the groups defined their roles and the overall purpose of the Rebuild Center, they developed the following mission statement.

"...to provide a setting, resources, and opportunities for collaboration among Catholic and other faith-based organizations in the City of New Orleans. The Center will work with needy and displaced residents to rebuild their lives and repopulate this neighborhood. We will be a Center of hope for this community."

The collaboration among the groups is a strong one, but it required a great deal of effort to develop. Each agency was operating independently before Katrina, and some of the services they provided overlapped. As plans for the Rebuild Center coalesced, the agencies had to compromise and each had to give up certain functions. Agencies were required to agree on what services would be added and who would do what. They also had to develop a new identity for the Center that was not aligned with any one of the agencies – especially St. Joseph Church, since it is right there on the site.

A memorandum of understanding among the parties governs their relationships, and leaders of each group meet regularly as an executive committee (now once every two weeks) to identify and resolve issues and to ensure coordination. This cooperation generates some very positive synergies. For example, the Sisters, who are older, enjoy the vitality of the young volunteers at the Thompson Center. The volunteers, in turn, benefit from the Sisters' wisdom and calmness. Still, concerns remain on the part of some partners about "loss or confusion of identity," particularly for the





Tompson Center, which had operated independently for many years prior to joining the Rebuild Center. Mary Baudouin, who works for the Social Ministries and is a board member of the Harry Thompson Center, notes that “Once it became a member of the St. Joseph Rebuild Center,” the Harry Thompson Center “does not get the credit it needs for work that they do as an individual non-profit.”

Other issues relate to a lack of clarity about liability, authority, and responsibility, particularly since legal and medical services are offered. Liability appears to fall mainly to the Vincentians, since the Center is on their property, but issues of authority and responsibility are still evolving. At the time of the site visit, the Center was in the process of forming a 501(c)(3) non-profit corporation and was planning to appoint an executive director who would be mission-driven, not drawn from the partner groups, and would provide coordination and focus on fund-raising for the Center. Each of the partners intended to contract with the corporation to provide its services and the Center planned to formalize a lease on the ground from the Church.

## THE REBUILD CENTER’S PEOPLE

### *Talking with Guests*

We spoke with three guests at some length (they were selected by the Center, presumably with the expectation that they would be at least generally positive).

**Gloria** is a single, middle-aged woman, local to New Orleans, who lived through Katrina. Her rent tripled, she “hit a brick wall” and wound up on the streets. She finds the Center to be a “life-saver” with compassionate staff (in contrast to the shelters where she finds staff to be abusive). When not staying with friends she prefers to be on the street and, at those times, comes to the Center for showers, laundry, meals and companionship. She describes herself as “houseless” and is on a list to get into permanent, subsidized housing.

**Brian**, a Caucasian electrician with 30 years experience, came from California to New Orleans looking for construction work after Katrina. He found work, but in his second year here his wallet was stolen, and he could not get work without his ID. The Center helped him to reapply for identification, and finally, after 11 months, he has received it. He is now looking for work again. In the meantime, he lives alone in an abandoned house about four blocks from the Center with no water, power, or locks on the door – but it does have a roof. He hides his stuff to keep it from being stolen. He is upbeat about getting work, but referred to the Center as a “great necessity” for him in his time of need.

Left: Gloria, a guest of the Rebuild Center  
Right: Brian, a guest of the Rebuild Center

**Howard** is an older African American man with serious health problems. He lives in a truck parked where he used to work on the other side of the river. He does have water and bathroom access, but he only sleeps and leaves his things there. He prefers the truck to the shelters, which are “bad” and which you must leave early, taking your things with you. He rides the bus to the Center, arriving a little after it opens, receives his mail, eats the meals and uses the phone service, medical treatment and referrals. When he speaks of the Center, he uses the word “we,” indicating his sense of belonging, and calls it his “lifeline.” He feels welcome here and states that there are no color barriers. On the weekends, when the Center is closed, Howard “suffers.” (We were told, however, that keeping the Center open on weekends would add about 40% to its budget and staffing needs and is infeasible at this time.)

All three guests had only good things to say about the Center, praising its services as unique (offered only there) and of special quality. They found the Center to be relaxing and the food to be good. When asked about what might be improved, the main suggestions were for expanded days and hours of service, longer phone calls, more showers, and the provision of hair dryers. Lockers for storing possessions were also proposed, for reasons of security and to assist in looking for employment, since having to carry around your belongings can seriously interfere with looking for work.



### ***Talking with Staff and Volunteers***

**Don Thompson** is the executive director of the Harry Thompson Center and was our principal contact at the Rebuild Center. Don spent some time as a seminarian and has always worked in the ministries. As noted in the Project History section, Don led the Thompson Center for the five years prior to Katrina but had to move his family out of state following the storms. However, he continued to visit New Orleans and participated in the discussions about forming the Rebuild Center. By the time planning was under way, Don had moved back to New Orleans and played a very active role, particularly during design and construction. He had never built a project before, but he became the *de facto* clients' representative.

Left: Rebuild Center Director Don Thompson  
 Right top: Howard, a Rebuild Center guest  
 Right bottom: Sister Vera Butler of Presentation Sisters Lantern Light

As involved as Dan was in the details of planning for the Center, he is still surprised at how wonderful the Center and its spaces are. He has come to recognize the extent to which the Rebuild Center's design contributes to the way services are provided and the message of hope that the Center conveys. Don told us that they would still have been able to offer services in a lesser setting, but it would not have been as conducive to the way the Center wants to operate. Don learned that design was critical to the more subtle aspects of the Center's mission: helping people feel better about themselves and their prospects.

**The Presentation Sisters.** We spoke with Sisters Vera and Enid. As described in the Project History section, their order had committed to a project in New Orleans just before Katrina. Sister Vera was already there, but the other four Sisters were on their way when the storm hit. Initially, they had to commute three hours from Alabama, and on several occasions had to depend on the generosity of friends for lodging, experiencing their own "houseless-ness" before finding a place. They worked out of a trailer on the St. Joseph Church site, since the church was condemned after the storm due to a lack of basic services such as power, plumbing, and air conditioning.

The Sisters started by helping local families until the homeless started to filter back into the area. At first they provided food from the trailer, with no place to sit in the parking lot. The Sisters worked with the other organizations to develop the vision of a one-stop service center

for the homeless. They describe their approach to operating the feeding program as a combination of joyful and fun on the one hand (there was live music one day we visited), while intentionally firm and orderly on the other (to keep things calm). According to the Sisters, the Center is "a place of beauty" that is safe and peaceful. Possible improvements are more counter space and equipment for food handling, and more shelter from wind and rain.

**Justine Diamond** graduated from Loyola University in New Orleans with a strong interest in community action. She interned with, and now works for, the Hispanic Apostolate at the Center. She focuses on services to Spanish-speaking guests, including translation and referrals to other agencies, but also assists them and others directly, especially with worker's rights issues. She says that many workers, and especially immigrants, are exploited by employers (offered a certain wage and then paid less or not at all) or "thrown away" (allowed to work in unsafe conditions, injured and then fired). It is precisely these types of experiences that contribute to a person being at risk for becoming homeless.

**Father Perry Henry** is the pastor of St. Joseph Church and the "effective" overall director of the Rebuild Center. He described the chaotic situation following Katrina. Though his church sits high off the ground, it was surrounded by two feet of water. Electricity and air conditioning were disabled and their pantry for feeding the homeless was wrecked. The church suffered limited but not



insignificant damage, with broken windows, a damaged roof and some mold; it cost \$1.5 million to repair. Father Henry was approached by the Harry Thompson Center and the Presentation Sisters about creating a day service center, and they later brought in the diocese and the Hispanic Apostolate. Henry was active in the planning phase but had little sense of how well it would come out. For example, he doubted that the landscaping was worth the cost and feared it would get trashed, but has found that guests are attentive and respectful because of the quality of the place. One change he would make would be to fully enclose the multipurpose room so it can be heated and cooled, making it more useful.

#### **Volunteers**

**Emma** is a graduate of Catholic University and came to New Orleans to do a year of service through the Jesuit Volunteer Service. She was concerned about coming to the area in the heat of summer,

but immediately found the Center to be “beautiful” and an amazing experience. She especially values the personal connections to guests and their stories. Emma recounted one man’s experience of losing his family to Katrina, and how moved she was to track his recovery from post-traumatic stress disorder and depression with the assistance of a mental health referral from the Center.

**Brandon** is a recent graduate of Fordham in the Bronx. For him, a year of service was an opportunity for spiritual and emotional growth, and a chance to travel. While the work is demanding, he appreciates the non-judgmental quality of the services and the opportunity to engage with the guests. He described one man who is mentally ill but has shown some progress over time, to the point where he offered his razor to another guest who had run out of them, saying, “That’s my neighbor.” Brandon was also moved by the generosity of some guests who offer their own meal to other, more needy guests who arrive late and have no meal ticket.

**Sister Magdalen** is trained as a nurse and has long worked with the poor. She finds the experience of working at the Center to be “wonderful.” While a few guests may be disgruntled, most are grateful, and she enjoys getting to know them.

Volunteers agreed that added services could include haircuts and programs to motivate homeless people to get off the streets. Facility improvements could include adding a room with tables for services

*Father Perry Henry, St. Joseph Church*



such as counseling on veterans' benefits or alcohol abuse. More indoor space in addition to the multipurpose room would also be useful, so that guests have a space to congregate when it rains. There were also some comments about the rigidity and regimentation of services offered by other agencies, although the relationship among them was described as one of mutual respect.

## DESIGN AND CONSTRUCTION

As the coalition of organizations formed and thoughts turned toward construction of the Center, the idea of a very quick solution using trailers was put forward. However, the functional program was not well defined and there was not yet a clear sense of what was needed. One of the Jesuits suggested inviting assistance from the only Jesuit community design center in the country, the Detroit Collaborative Design Center of the University of Detroit Mercy (UDM), led by Dan Pitera. Based on his experience elsewhere, Dan realized that he would need a strong local collaborator who knew local codes and conditions and could serve as architect of record. An initial candidate who had worked with St. Joseph Church turned out not to be a good choice and Dan worked through Tulane's City Build group to identify Wayne Troyer as a collaborator.

While the allocation of responsibilities between UDM and Troyer is at first glance clear-cut, the relationship was in fact highly collaborative, with both parties contributing design ideas and

sending drawings back and forth between their offices. In general, Troyer was responsible for designing the utilities, walks, trellises and roofs, while UDM was responsible for the in-fill buildings. Trailers were still used, but not the FEMA types originally considered. The fees were very modest, with Troyer being paid \$25,000 (half of which went to the structural engineer) and UDM getting \$10,000 for master planning and design, plus additional compensation for construction work.

Three initial planning workshops were led by Pitera, using techniques for programming that have effectively helped other clients to identify core values, images and functions. As the design evolved, models were built to help the clients visualize each space. Some of the key design goals and challenges included:

- Short construction time so the facility could open as soon as possible, given the pressing level of need
- Meeting a very limited budget
- New hurricane-related structural criteria, including resisting 130 mph wind loads
- Touching the ground lightly and using materials and assemblies that could be disassembled, removed and reused or recycled
- Integrating the trailers but avoiding a design that would look like a trailer park

- Creating a “place of dignity” that respects of the needs of the guests and, to the extent possible, allows for privacy and a sense of personal space
- Integrating the landscaping and open space to make a garden

As planning progressed, the scope of the project – and its costs – increased. Scope “creep” was largely due to two factors; first, expansion and integration of program services; and second, making the structure more than just a collection of trailers. This posed budgetary challenges, since funders had started the project with a very low number in mind (on the order of \$250,000). However, they rose to the challenge and were able to obtain what was needed. It was reportedly a good thing that the “scope creep” and cost escalation were gradual, since all involved parties had committed to the concept by the time the cost increases occurred and it was too late to turn back.

The drawings were completed and Don Thompson was able to obtain a building permit over the counter (partly because the project was viewed as having a temporary character). Bids were solicited, but the situation was chaotic in terms of availability of supplies and busy contractors; only three bids were received. There was concern about accepting the low bid (\$481,000) because it was so much lower than the other two, which were close to each other (at \$627,000 and \$657,000). The fear was that the low bidder was not charging enough money to allow him to complete the project or

ITEM	COST
Detroit Mercy Community Design Center (fees and construction labor)	\$85,932.00
Fees & Permits	34,053.54
Site Construction (incl. decks & roofs)	548,884.48
Building Units (trailers)	234,999.43
Furniture & Equipment - Indoor	43,242.41
Furniture & Equipment - Outdoor	1,596.92
Art/Mural Project	20,288.17
Parking Lot	47,624.00
Contingency	4,526.29
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$1,021,147.24</b>

provide the expected moderate level of quality. The final cost, with changes, for this part of the construction was \$521,000 including driveways and fences (with “real” change orders amounting to only about \$21,000). The construction costs break down as follows:

The medical building, constructed later, cost approximately \$93,000 to build and furnish.

The total spent is essentially equal to the total raised. Substantial donations were received from almost 30 different sources. Those who

gave over \$25,000 include Catholic Charities of New Orleans, Congregation of the Mission, Daughters of Charity, the Harry Thompson Center (Jesuits), the McClure Fund, a private individual, the Marist Society, Rotary International, the St. Vincent De Paul Society, the United Church of Christ, the Vincentian Systemic Change Fund, and St. Joseph Church (and the donations it received).

Construction proceeded in a very atypical way, with the general contractor and the Detroit Mercy students working on site at the same time. This happened because the overall framework of decks, roofs and trellises, which was built by the contractor, was not completed prior to the arrival of the students who needed to construct certain buildings within that framework. This led to some tensions that were eventually resolved, largely through the students and their highly experienced supervisor gaining the grudging respect of the contractor's superintendent.



Construction of the Rebuild Center with trailers in foreground

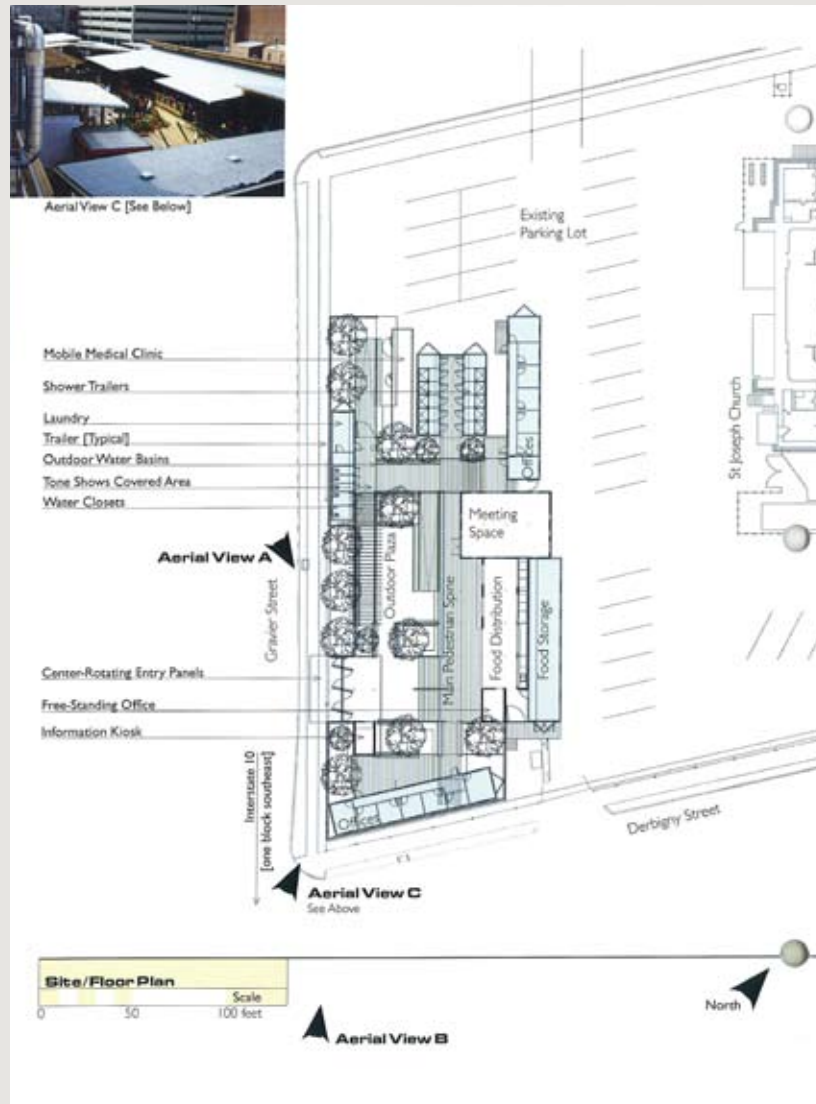
## ARCHITECTURE

The design of the Rebuild Center is an unusual combination of four elements. These include six trailers that were specially manufactured for the project; a number of small buildings or rooms constructed on site; a “framework” of walkways, decks, floating roofs and trellises which tie together the trailers and other buildings; and the landscaping, which is also inserted into the framework.

This design approach enabled very rapid completion of the facility (which was desperately needed) and lets the Center sit lightly on the parking lot site, which might need to be reclaimed for other uses in the mid-term future.

The trailers house specific functions that benefited from the technology and speed of off-site construction. Three trailers are plumbing-intensive: one accommodates toilets and laundry, and the other two house showers. Two more trailers are subdivided into small offices, and the last trailer stores food and other supplies (placed in a trailer because it required air conditioning).

Several parts of the project were built on-site for specific purposes: an entry check-in kiosk, food service, and a multi-purpose room. Some of their surfaces are covered in durable, attractive hardwood (Angel's Heart, *Hymenolobium petraeum*). The medical area was built later as an infill (it had been the intent that mobile medical units would pull in, but not all providers had them and some of the



ones that did not fit into the allotted space). All these were designed by the Detroit Collaborative Design Center and constructed by students from Detroit Mercy who worked as paid interns under an experienced construction superintendent.

These buildings sit under independently supported roofs that float above them. All of the decks, walkways, roofs and trellises were designed by the local architect and built by the contractor, along with power, lighting and plumbing for these areas and site utility hook-ups. The benches and stairs provide many places for people to sit. The trellises, roofs and decks tie together the other structures. They sit lightly on the ground, almost floating above the parking lot paving (which shows through in places, including the yellow stripes) and resting on piers or shallow foundations. The plan allows for cross-breezes, especially important during hot weather.

Finally, the landscaping is integrated into the design with substantial planted areas at the perimeter and interior. It incorporates many tropical and sub-tropical specimens that thrive in New Orleans, including palms, bamboo, jasmine, and many others. With most of two years' growth, the landscaping is lush and has a major and very positive impact on the appearance of the facility.

The facility is organized with its main entry along Gravier Street, under the pedestrian sky-bridge and opposite a small Asian restaurant and a parking lot. There are three large pivoting doors, each with

*Floor Plan of Rebuild Center with aerial view, courtesy of Detroit Mercy Design Collaborative*





a strong graphic symbol; there is also a considerable landscaped bed with vines growing up the wall. Upon entering, guests check in with a volunteer who records their name and the services they are requesting (showers, laundry and phone use are first-come, first-served). There is a paved area with well-utilized bike racks and a number of benches along the lower terrace. There is also a wooden ramp and set of stairs that lead up to the main level, raised to protect it from possible future flooding.

At the south end is a trailer that houses the Presentation Sisters/Lantern Light offices, with a large deck and seating in front of it. Facing the entry gates is the food service facility, with a six-panel mural depicting biblical water themes at one end, and the multi-purpose meeting room at the other. The food service counter is



closed off with sliding panels, which are opened when food is available during the morning snack and lunch service. Toward the north end are a number of outdoor sinks (three large troughs with a total of nine faucets and mirrors) and access to the phone room, showers and toilets, the medical area and other offices. There is also a more tranquil courtyard that serves as a waiting room for those seeking medical services. The facility is walled off from the street – on two edges of the corner by the trailers and polycarbonate plastic fencing, which provides a translucent visual screen. At the rear, the parking lot gives access for deliveries and staff.

Placing so much of the facility outdoors, even under cover, could only be contemplated in a mild climate such as New Orleans. Even here, there are times when it is very hot or when wind or wind-driven rain make it difficult to fully utilize all areas – a trade-off that the operators were quite willing to make, and for which design modifications are being explored (added screening in certain areas to reduce the wind, possibly added trellising or roofing). On the other hand, the substantial outdoor space was reported to be particularly comfortable for some of the homeless guests who tend to feel confined and even claustrophobic when indoors.

*View of Rebuild Center courtyard*

*Left: Gravier Street entrance doors*

*Right: Gravier Street entrance elevation with sky bridge overhead*



With its timber decks, trellises and roof structures, and verdant landscaping, the character of the Center was described as a campground or an Asian spa. In terms both of functional support and quality of environment, the design achieves substantial effect with very limited means. Guests and staff alike appreciate the design quality. Don Thompson finds the setting to be “restorative” and to contribute to the guests’ sense of self-esteem.

Considering the somewhat temporary nature of the construction and the very intensive level of use, the Center is holding up quite well. Some of the benches require repair, the outdoor ceiling fans had to be removed, and a number of relatively small modifications have been suggested (as mentioned throughout this chapter). The Detroit Community Design Center is planning to return during the summer of 2009 to make repairs and construct improvements. This arrangement, at Don’s suggestion, will ensure the integrity of the design concept. Though the normally anticipated useful life of the trailers and other structures might only be in the range of five to ten years, it is possible that adequate maintenance might extend that considerably – if the program endures.

## FINANCES

Budgets for the Rebuild Center are difficult to interpret, since what is likely their main cost item, staffing, seems to be off-line (in other words, it appears that staff are provided by the agencies that participate and are not in the Center’s budget; these off-line staffing costs amount to approximately \$90,000 per year). Other off-line costs include the money spent by the Sisters for food and related supplies. Each agency raises money to pay for the services they provide, and contribute proportionately to overall operational costs. That said the Rebuild Center’s operating budget is as follows:

The operations costs are split three ways by Harry Thompson Center, Lantern Light, and Catholic Charities, except in the case of electricity and water costs, 60% of which are covered by the Harry Thompson Center, and 20% each by Lantern Light and Catholic Charities. This results in the Thompson Center paying just over \$33,000 per year, while the other two organizations pay just over \$20,000 each.

*Views of Rebuild Center courtyard*

## REBUILD CENTER BUDGET

Operations 2008-2009	Cost (\$)	
Janitorial	15,000	grant pays \$12,500
Electricity	21,000	
Water	10,000	
Cable (internet)	3,600	
Phone	4,920	
Office Supplies / Printing	2,500	
Professional Fees	2,500	
Repairs / Maintenance	7,500	
Property & Casualty Insurance	10,000	
Contracted Services (garbage, etc.)	5,300	St. Joseph pays \$500
Miscellaneous	5,000	
<b>Total</b>	<b>87,320</b>	

## IMPACTS

Overall, the Center appears to be achieving its intended impacts. The services it offers are very much in demand, and are highly appreciated by its guests who tell poignant stories about how important the Center is to them and how well they are treated there. The Center is for day use only (and thus can only be expected to have a limited impact on people's lives), but it is part of a local continuum of services for the homeless that includes longer-term solutions related to education, job training and placement, and transitional and permanent housing.

From a design perspective, the facilities are very supportive of their functions and provide a remarkably attractive setting. Physically, the Center is a positive element in the urban streetscape, with generous landscaping and screening, offering relief from the otherwise hard and mostly impersonally scaled surroundings.

## Assessing Project Success

## SUCCESS IN MEETING PROJECT GOALS

*1. To provide a dignified, well-designed daytime service facility for homeless people. To meet the most basic needs of homeless people in an environment that is safe and respectful.*

The Center appears to have fully achieved this goal. It is perceived by guests and staff to be dignified, relaxing, and attractive. Guests treat the facility and staff with respect, express a strong sense of appreciation and identification with the Center, and understand that it was designed and built specifically to meet their needs.

*2. To contribute to the urban fabric of the city by transforming a parking lot into a handsome building that relates to the street.*

The Center is successful in meeting the street and presenting itself to its guests and the public. Where there are trailers at the street, they are mostly masked by translucent screens. In addition, there

are attractive gates and a substantial landscaped planter including vines that climb up a trellis. The rear of the facility is mainly utilitarian, with the trailers exposed and accessed by staff and service vehicles from a paved parking lot.

*3. To create the highest quality structure possible with limited funds.*

The Center achieves a very impressive level of quality with extremely limited means. It makes use of inexpensive, structural wood and landscaping to create a pleasant environment. Where “extra” money was spent on optional items (landscaping, detailing, art works) they contribute greatly to the positive impact – and are felt by the Center’s frugal leaders to have been well worth the cost.

*4. To create a model for providing temporary shelter and services in response to disaster situations.*

It is difficult to assess this project as a model, partly because it responds to very particular circumstances and is operated by a special set of faith-based charitable agencies. While it was designed and built relatively quickly, and the use of trailers contributed to the speed of realization, it still took about a year – so it was far from instant. However, the design does respond to its potentially temporary longevity by touching the ground lightly, using removable trailers, and employing structural connections that can be unbolted or unscrewed for possible dismantling.

## SELECTION COMMITTEE COMMENTS

The 2009 Selection Committee saw St. Joseph Rebuild Center as a significant project that deals effectively with several important issues: creating well-designed temporary space in disaster situations; providing humane and effective services for the homeless; creating a sense of place on the edge of industrial downtowns. The Committee noted that there are a growing number of people across this country whose basic survival needs are unmet, and that St. Joseph responds to this problem with a structure that is elegant and inexpensive, and with programs that have proven successful over time. This was considered to be a very important accomplishment that provides a national model both for disaster relief, and for homeless services that are not disaster-related.

St. Joseph Rebuild Center was also commended for its architectural quality. The Center is built with very simple and inexpensive materials, yet is extremely effective in creating a welcoming oasis for its clients. The natural materials (such as wood), economy of architectural gestures, and generous landscaping all combine to create an environment that offers welcome relief from the barren industrial environment of the neighborhood and the social ills faced by many of the guests. The Committee felt the project strongly demonstrated the way in which quality of design can impact everyday experience, and that this was a particularly important concept for the students who helped design and build the project. 🐾



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Detail of outdoor basins  
Right: Trailer entries with covered hallway

# Urban Transformation:

## LESSONS LEARNED FROM THE 2009 RUDY BRUNER AWARD



## INTRODUCTION

At the conclusion of each Award cycle, the Bruner Foundation reflects upon the themes that emerged. The Award is structured to invite such reflection and to capture the Selection Committee's discussions, adding to our ongoing conversation on the nature of urban excellence.

To encourage dialogue, the Selection Committee is given minimal criteria for selecting winners: they must be real places located within the 48 contiguous states. Other than that, projects may be of any type or scale, and may address any urban issue. Initially, this lack of pre-defined selection criteria can cause discomfort for Selection Committee members. However, the nature of the Committee's assignment – to select the finalists and ultimately the Gold Medalist – inevitably leads them to discuss their priorities. In response to the "raw material" presented by the submissions, Committee members draw upon their values and expertise. While some of the themes and issues reappear year after year, emerging trends and issues are also identified and the intellectual underpinnings of the Award are refreshed.

In 2009, the Committee recognized five projects that transformed urban places, bringing beauty and vitality to underused or derelict sites, while addressing the needs of under-served populations. Several themes re-emerged, including the quality of the vision guiding a project, the long-term viability of leadership, the strength of part-

nerships (or less formal relationships) among public and/or private entities, the development of new models for process or place, and environmental sustainability. The Committee also identified some new themes and priorities that they felt are important as we continue to build the national urban fabric. Both sets of themes are described in the following pages.

## TRANSFORMING DERELICT OR UNDERUSED SITES

One common feature of the five winners is that all the projects transformed derelict or highly under-utilized sites. This type of transformative placemaking has potential applicability around the country. In some cities, misuse or disuse blemish an otherwise healthy urban fabric, while in other cities, entire districts and neighborhoods suffer. Such sites are crying for improvement and reintegration into the active and productive fabric of the city.

Inner-City Arts was a collection of under-utilized warehouses and light industrial buildings on the edge of LA's Skid Row. Through a series of skillful architectural interventions, vacant industrial space was transformed into a brilliant new home for ICA's innovative art education programs. The project has become a shining beacon for the children of Skid Row, many of whom are transient or homeless and have no other safe place for artistic expression.



Photo: Ivan Baan

Hunts Point was literally a dumping ground – a derelict, abandoned street right-of-way, so encumbered with trash that the polluted stretch of river it borders was completely hidden from residents. The community, and then the city, reclaimed the site and transformed it into a neighborhood park. Hunts Point Riverside Park gives local residents access to the river for the first time in many years.

Saint Joseph Rebuild Center developed in the wake of Hurricane Katrina, a time of great need for the homeless in New Orleans. In an otherwise inhospitable environment – a church parking lot under an overpass, next to an elevated highway junction – the Rebuild Center creates a sense of place. A coalition of church-based service providers, working with a community design team from Detroit, created a series of simple, semi-outdoor spaces that knit service trailers together. The flexible and beautiful design transforms the site into a daytime oasis for New Orleans' homeless.

Millennium Park was once a set of open parking lots and depressed rail lines that separated Grant Park from the heart of downtown Chicago (The Loop). In a brilliant rethinking of urban space, this gap in the urban fabric was decked over to create a spectacular

new public park with multiple arts venues and as many as 500 free events per year. As “the world’s largest green roof,” Millennium Park has become Chicago’s new “living room,” a destination for locals and visitors from around the world. It is reanimating the surrounding parts of The Loop, and claiming billions of dollars in direct and indirect economic impacts for the city.

The Community Chalkboard site was formerly a busy intersection devoid of pedestrian activity in a critical location at the eastern terminus of the historic Downtown Mall. Through the creation of an urban plaza anchored by the Chalkboard, the area has become a new public forum in front of City Hall, the Charlottesville Pavilion, and a new transportation center. The Chalkboard installation creates a visual and functional focal point for the plaza.

## PROJECT IMPACT: EFFECTING URBAN TRANSFORMATION

The winning projects all bring substantial, positive benefits to the urban environment and to people who use them. Just as the projects vary greatly in size, there are also considerable differences in the nature, scale and quality of their impacts. Examples of impacts include the following which are described in more detail below:

- Improving the quality of life or of the urban experience – for individuals, specific groups, or the general public. Some of the



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projects generate shared experiences and/or new connections for the community.

- Improving access to services and amenities – especially for those who are underserved.
- Creating a place that people love and that attracts them to visit it.
- Generating improvements beyond the boundaries of the project itself. These may be physical development, economic benefits such as increased jobs, revenues, or tax base; or other kinds of contributions to the physical and social fabric of the city.

**Improving the quality of urban experience.** Urban and especially downtown environments often become degraded over time. Challenges may include lack of safety (real or perceived), crowding, pollution, traffic, lack of open space, and the like. Urban existence can be entwined with modern alienation, and tied to urban anomie, isolation, and a lack of real community and connection (which may be as prevalent in the suburbs as in the denser urban core).

Thus, a project that improves the quality of the urban experience, and attracts people into the city or to an area within a neighborhood,





represents a major achievement. The creation of opportunities for communal and shared experiences seemed particularly important to Selection Committee members. They took special interest in places that attract people of all ethnic and socio-economic categories. Several of the winning projects have achieved a great deal in this area (as described above in the section about their transformation of degraded sites).

**Improving access to services and amenities.** The Selection Committee was very interested in projects that provide access to services or amenities, particularly to populations or in areas that have been poorly served.

For ICA, the choice to locate – and stay – on the edge of Skid Row is central to its mission of bringing art education to low-income children and their teachers. ICA not only provides services (and an approach to teaching) that would otherwise be unavailable to these

students, but also transports the children from their home schools to the campus, providing safe and efficient access to education in an enriched environment.

St. Joseph provides a variety of services to the homeless at a single site, making comprehensive care much more accessible. Its physical location is on the edge of the city center, but within walking distance or a short bus ride for most of its “guests.” A formerly under-served homeless population is now well accommodated in an attractive, light-weight structure of decks, trellises and trailers.

Hunts Point Riverside Park provides a place for recreation, organized events, and educational programs in a densely populated, lower-income, minority community where open space and recreation facilities are very limited. Hunts Point can be reached by a short walk from an area of dense housing and commercial activity that also has a transit stop (and there is parking for those who might drive from further away).

On a much larger scale, Millennium Park provides a green and public place in the city. It is immediately adjacent to the Loop, with a very high density of office and residential uses. Accessibility is excellent – it is a center for public transit, with parking and a rail station underneath it, and is located a few blocks from the El. It has also been celebrated for its provision of accessibility to disabled individuals. Since it serves the entire city, the Selection Committee

wondered how effectively accessible it might be to lower-income residents, including those from the South Side – whether there might be cost barriers even to using public transportation to get there.

The Committee had somewhat similar questions about the Chalkboard and particularly the adjacent downtown pedestrian mall. They are located quite close to historically African-American housing projects, but there was little evidence that residents of the projects make much use of the mall. Still, when city-wide, national or international events stimulate the need to communicate directly and communally, the Chalkboard has become a place to debate public issues.

**Broader impacts.** While the main focus of the Award is on the qualities of each individual place, there is an obvious interest in how a place impacts its broader environment. Millennium Park commissioned detailed studies that document stunning impacts in terms of attracting revenue, business, and tourists, as well as catalyzing development around it. Hunts Point appears to have been a crucial first step in recognizing and reclaiming the ignored and degraded Bronx River and initiating park and open space development in this under-served area. ICA has provided a model for art education and is continually documented and analyzed for use in school curricula. The Chalkboard builds community connections in Charlottesville by establishing and protecting unfettered public dialogue on the issues of the day, and St. Joseph Rebuild Center



extends the reach of St. Joseph Church and its partner Catholic organizations to homeless populations in the area.

**Scale and quality of impacts.** Together with the nature, quality, or substance of a place's impacts, the Selection Committee considered the number of people who are affected by a place. On a given day, hundreds of community members may visit the neighborhood park at Hunts Point, or a similar number of homeless people may obtain services at St. Joseph, or busloads of students attend art classes at ICA. Over the course of a year, thousands may experience these places. By contrast, large segments of Charlottesville may be drawn to an event at the Chalkboard while Millennium Park attracts millions of visitors each year.

But the Selection Committee was also interested in considering the depth and quality of the impact, and how visitors or users are affected by a particular place. Is the experience pleasant and entertaining – or does it fundamentally change perceptions of the city or alter the nature of the urban experience? Even more, is the

experience transformative and life-changing for the individuals served? Along these lines, ICA was demonstrated to have a dramatic impact on the educational performance of the disadvantaged students and their teachers, and on their quality of life. Similarly, St. Joseph not only provides services to the homeless, but also offers dignity to people who are stigmatized by other segments of society. The fact that a project was aimed toward the underserved (Hunts Point residents, the homeless at St. Joseph, and the mostly poor and minority children who come to ICA) was felt by this Committee to be particularly meaningful.

**Costs and benefits.** Another approach the Selection Committee took to balancing these diverse impacts was to consider their cost-benefit – how much impact did they achieve, and at what cost? The goal is economy of means – to get the most bang for the buck. This also affects how applicable (or saleable) these models might be for other cities.

Of these projects, St. Joseph stood out for accomplishing a great deal with very little expenditure. It is a modest project, making use of trailers, trellises and landscaping to create an oasis that stands apart from its gritty urban environs. At the other end of the spectrum, Millennium Park marshaled tremendous resources and, arguably, spent them well and achieved a great deal. In considering these diverse projects it became clear that important and meaningful impacts can be achieved at any scale.



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## VISION, PROCESS, AND PARTNERSHIP

How did these projects manage to dramatically transform their sites and create marvelous new places with positive impacts? Creative placemaking often relies on extraordinary **vision**—sometimes contributed by an inspired individual and sometimes developed in a communal process. In all cases, to make that vision a reality, hard work, unconventional partnerships, and community participation were needed.

Each of the winning projects had a visionary leader at its outset, and the quality of his or her vision was powerful enough to compel others to support the work. Through the process, often in response to issues raised in public dialogue and challenges “on the ground,” the vision evolved. In all of the winning projects, people seized unexpected opportunities and doggedly pursued their creative ideas with unprecedented levels of effort and persistence. In doing



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so, they elicited cooperation among public and private entities; community and city; citizen and government.

**Public-private partnerships** represent another long-term theme of the Award, with continuing interest in the range of ways in which these partnerships can be effective. In this set of winners, we see a variety of models. At Millennium Park, the city was the proactive leader in creating a framework for the place; private donors were subsequently encouraged to step in to sponsor particular pieces. ICA was generated by a private vision, but always served the public interest and coordinated with the school system and the city. Given the soundness and value of what the ICA offers, the city has stepped up and contributed (e.g., by continuing to fund transportation and classroom teacher time). In the case of the Community Chalkboard, the “process is the product” in the sense that the public debate generated by the private proposal was, in essence, the very theme the monument was intended to encourage. And at Hunts Point, once

the community demonstrated what could be done with this strip of land by opening a connection to the river, the city parks department not only responded, but also took leadership in funding, design and construction.

**Process** is another focus of the Award. Generally fitting a “grass-roots” model, Inner-City Arts, St. Joseph Rebuild Center and Hunts Point Riverside Park all started with individual visions and expanded to include very broad-based input and participation. While inclined toward inclusive, democratic processes, the Committee noted that the top-down approach of Millennium Park was extraordinarily effective in its context. The Chalkboard embodied both kinds of process in the sense that it was generated by a foundation but, through the competition and engagement with the community, grew to be highly participatory. The lesson here is that all kinds of processes can produce quality places – but they must be appropriate to their contexts.

## LEADERSHIP

The Selection Committee also examined the quality and longevity of leadership of each project. Issues include the strength of the leader and sustainability of the organization built up around them, as well as the question of whether the organization has evolved and adapted to changing circumstances. In all cases, and compared to past winners, the current projects appear to have moved beyond





dependence on a single visionary leader and into longer-term operational strategies, evolving organizational infrastructures to ensure their ongoing success.

ICA, for example, was founded by a visionary leader, Bob Bates, who was already teaching art in an elementary school when he was inspired to “create a place for children’s art” in the midst of a social and industrial wasteland. Bob heeded that call, found local support, then gathered a team whose generosity and commitment to the idea helped to make it happen. Midway through ICA’s history, the team added a strong executive director who has succeeded in growing the organization and spreading responsibilities through an expanded professional staff and board. ICA has evolved over 20 years through three major phases, reaching out to ever-wider circles of support, yet always remaining true to its founding vision.

In New Orleans, Hurricane Katrina devastated services for the homeless, simultaneously greatly increasing their numbers and level of need. Three Catholic service organizations came together to

imagine how they could cooperate to fill the gap – and invited a talented community design group from Detroit to help them. Together, they envisioned a prototype homeless center that could be rapidly and inexpensively constructed, and would communicate through its design their desired message of care. Hard work included fundraising, growing a new organization, and the labor contributed by architecture students from Detroit.

In Chicago, the story is that Mayor Daley visited his dentist’s office in a building on Michigan Avenue. Looking down from the chair, he saw a prime corner of Grant Park occupied by huge parking lots and rail lines that cut the park off from the city. The Mayor envisioned a major park project, and developed the idea as a millennium-focused project with Donna LaPietra. They enlisted strong leaders: John Bryan approached major donors who contributed generously, funding many of the signature elements of the park, and Ed Uhlir managed the complex web of agencies, design and construction firms, and artists, many with strong personalities and agendas.

The Community Chalkboard vision began as a concept of the Thomas Jefferson Center to sponsor a competition for a “monument” celebrating freedom of expression. Their vision was expanded by the selected submission, which took the notion of monument to a new level. It proposed to embody the act of free expression, creating a civic space where none had existed. Developing the Chalkboard involved a major public debate about just how much un-edited



public speech was acceptable and appropriate. It also required negotiating the precise site, obtaining the public commitment to construct the new plaza, and raising the money for construction. Project planners capitalized on a “perfect storm” of circumstances and opportunities, including the success of the downtown mall, the development of a new transportation center, and the integration of the Charlottesville Pavilion into the plaza.

At Hunts Point, Majora Carter reports being tugged by her dog through a dump and, on the other side of the rubble, “discovering” the river hidden behind industrial yards and fences. She was struck by the realization that the place could be a tremendous asset to the Bronx community, whose residents had very little access to open space or recreation. She did not wait to convince the city to act; rather, she inspired community activists to pitch in and start the process, devoting countless hours to the initial clean-up. Only when the site’s potential could be demonstrated did the city get on board and become a significant partner in the development of the

park. As momentum for the park was established, Carter moved on from her leadership role and other leaders came forward.

## ARCHITECTURAL QUALITY

Given its substantial importance as one measure of urban excellence, design was discussed for every project. The focus was on the relative excellence of formal qualities – not in-and-of themselves, but rather in their relationship to social, environmental, and economic factors. In this sense, design quality is about how the physical fabric supports and expresses a place’s function, operations and meaning.

Looked at from this perspective, the level of design of the 2009 winners was felt to be very high. The architecture of Inner-City Arts achieves a singular and nuanced integration of formal and programmatic excellence, making a strong visual statement about the value of children and the importance of the arts. St. Joseph Rebuild Center was also noted for its innovative architecture and as the project whose design is perhaps the most supportive of its mission. The Community Chalkboard was a highly innovative design that incorporated the act of free speech into the very fabric of its structure. Millennium Park integrated powerfully designed architectural, landscape and art components within a traditional (almost classical) planning context that created “rooms” for these elements, allowing them to coexist without clashing or competing.

## TRANSFORMATION: NEW MODELS FOR PLACEMAKING

RBA Selection Committees look for **innovation**: projects that break new ground by inventing a kind of place that did not exist before, or radically transform the nature of a city or area, or shift the paradigm for how places can be made. Committees are extremely impressed when they discover a new model of urban placemaking among the submissions.

In this vein, the Committee found that ICA represented important innovations both in the way arts education is offered, and in how it can maximize its impact on the total child and his or her overall educational performance. ICA expands the importance of arts education at a time when schools find it increasingly challenging to support the arts within their curricula and budgets. Because this was accomplished in a facility that transformed derelict and vacant warehouses into beautiful landmark architecture, the Committee felt that ICA does indeed create a new paradigm, merging programmatic and formal excellence in a new type of place.

Some Committee members felt that St. Joseph Rebuild Center was “completely transformative” and “transcended the typology” of homeless facilities – especially in terms of its design and construction. They were particularly impressed with the innovative incorporation of trailers and open space. The structure sits lightly on the ground and has an outstanding ratio of effort and expense to effect. While

the use of light, almost temporary structures, and the incorporation of extensive outdoor public spaces might not be possible in other climates, there are many urban parking lots across the country that beg for better uses and would benefit from this design sensibility. Saint Joseph’s also provides a new way of thinking about rapid response to disaster situations.

Millennium Park has changed the face of downtown Chicago – a remarkable feat in a city with a rich history of architecture and planning. As a worldwide destination, the Park has also created a new identity for Chicago’s downtown and forged new connections between the center of The Loop, the Chicago Art Institute, Grant Park, and the surrounding areas.

The Community Chalkboard was seen as a wholly new idea of what a monument might be: not only representing – but actually embodying the act of – free speech. It is tailored to its location through a simple and beautiful design that uses local materials and is symbolically connected to the city’s history.

Recognizing that each urban setting is unique in its cultural, social, economic, political, and physical characteristics, Selection Committees are always interested in the possibility that a project can function as **a model**. What does it offer that can be used elsewhere? Does it present ideas that can be adapted to other cities’ settings and challenges?

Among this round's winners, the Committee felt that ICA offered a model of arts education that could be broadly applicable, and that St. Joseph's approach to design and construction of light-weight, indoor-outdoor structures could also be applied – at least in many climates – in disaster situations. They also valued the way in which St. Joseph involved architecture students in the design and construction of the facility and thought this could happen elsewhere. The notion of a community engaging around a discussion of how to foster freedom of expression also seemed like it could have “legs,” though its physical representation would likely vary greatly from place to place. Millennium Park offered many lessons that might find application elsewhere – from building over parking and transit lines (as was also done at The Park at Post Office Square – see the RBA book from 1993), to tapping major donors and including interactive artworks, although the scale of the accomplishment in Chicago made it unique.

## CONCLUSION

Just as these projects vary greatly in size, there are also considerable differences in the nature, scale and quality of their impacts. Because the Selection Committee can only award a single gold medal, its members are forced to weigh these diverse issues, and to ponder whether one is more significant than another. Here, dilemmas arise: for example, is contributing to arts education (with potential long-term impacts on the child) more important than meeting the short-



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term needs of the homeless (which could also help them transition out of homelessness)? How can these impacts be compared to transforming a portion of a large city and engaging millions of users? What about the importance of creating a place that brings together people of all different backgrounds and all parts of the city to share experiences together – is that not exceptionally meaningful in today's cities, where groups may be alienated from each other?

The Committee investigated these questions through a series of discussions that entailed a deep look at the purpose of the Award and the merits of each winner. In so doing, they selected a group of winners that contributes to our deeper understanding of the kinds of places that make our cities more robust, meaningful, supportive and enjoyable. Rudy Bruner Award winners all bring positive change to the urban environment and new opportunities to people who use these places. As their stories unfold, and the questions are asked, we learn more about the kinds of places and processes that make lasting contributions to our understanding of urban excellence. 🍃



