In Between: The *Other* Pieces of the Green Puzzle

in this issue:

**HEALTHY** Communities, **GREEN** Communities

Words, Words, Words

The Lay of the Landscape

Winter & Spring 2008/2009
Annual Report 2008
Going Greener Still—A New Era for the Museum

Six years ago, the National Building Museum launched the first in its ongoing series of popular and influential exhibitions on sustainable design and planning. Now on view is the latest exhibition in this series, Green Community, which examines the vital but often overlooked elements of the built environment that lie between individual buildings—infrastructure and landscapes that we observe in our daily lives. The exhibition reveals how design professionals are rethinking our communities to reduce energy consumption, protect natural habitats, and improve public health.

As a complement to these exhibitions, of course, the Museum has offered numerous lectures, symposia, and other education programs that have helped to focus the public discussion of green design and planning. Our ongoing series For the Greener Good: Conversations That Will Change the World, for example, poses provocative questions and engages broad audiences in the search for answers.

But our commitment to sustainability extends beyond our programming. Thanks in part to a generous grant from The Home Depot Foundation, we have been working hard to make our building—and our operations—greener. We are gradually installing green materials in our galleries—as the old ones wear out, of course—and enhancing our efforts to recycle and reduce waste.

We are now embarking on a new phase in that effort, and this issue of Blueprints represents a beginning and an end in that regard. You will notice, for instance, that in lieu of the glossy, 36-page Annual Report that we have mailed separately in the past, the report for fiscal year 2008 is incorporated in condensed form in this issue, saving a great deal of paper and ink, not to mention postage costs.

But an even bigger change is on the horizon. This is the last issue of Blueprints that will be distributed as a printed magazine. With the next issue, we are moving to online publication. We know that many of you have greatly missed receiving a physical copy of Blueprints, but we hope that you will come to look forward to reading the next version electronically.

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Chase W. Rynd
President and Executive Director

In this issue...

In Between: The Other Pieces of the Green Puzzle

The exhibition Green Community calls attention to important aspects of sustainable design and planning that are sometimes overshadowed by eye-catching works of architecture. The environmental implications of transportation systems, public services, recreational spaces, and other elements of infrastructure must be carefully considered in order to create responsible and livable communities. This issue of Blueprints focuses on the broad environmental imperative from the standpoints of public health, urban and town planning, and landscape architecture.

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Annual Report 2008

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Winter & spring 2008/2009

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HEALTHY COMMUNITIES

by Howard Frumkin, MD, DrPH

Dr. Howard Frumkin, a physician and epidemiologist, is director of the National Center for Environmental Health and the Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

Almost 2500 years ago, the legendary Greek physician Hippocrates wrote his classic Treatise on Air, Water, and Places. He offered careful observations on how towns and cities were situated, on wind, sunlight, soil, ground cover, and topography, and on how these factors influenced the health of residents. Writing as both physician and geographer, he knew the importance of place for health. More than two millennia later, Frederick Law Olmsted had the same insight. The father of landscape architecture, he was keenly attuned to human health, even serving as secretary general of the United States Sanitary Commission (forerunner of the Red Cross) during the Civil War. In such projects as New York’s Central Park—a landmark act of civil engineering, sewage management, and health protection—he saw his creations as acts of public health. Working as both designer and health activist, he, too, knew the importance of place for health.

These are insights that we are rediscovering today. The major causes of death, suffering, and disability have changed greatly since Olmsted’s time. Heart disease, cancer, strokes, injuries, asthma, diabetes, obesity, and depression have edged out such conditions as tuberculosis, dysentery, influenza, and pneumonia. Our population is far larger, and older, than it was a century ago. Are we creating healthy places to help address these challenges?

Perhaps not. For the last few generations, traditional town planning principles have given way to a pattern known as urban sprawl. With suburban growth, cities have expanded over vast geographic areas. Land-use patterns at the urban edge have changed, from traditional farm and forest to residential subdivisions. Land-use mix has declined; housing developments are built far from schools, stores, and workplaces. Land-use density has also declined; some communities can measure land-use in acres per family rather than families per acre. Traditional downtown areas have given way to long stretches of multi-lane roads lined by strip malls and big-box stores, set back on vast parking lots. Transportation systems have changed as well, with the vast majority of trips—even short ones—made by automobile, and with a concomitant drop in walking, bicycling, and transit use. Amenities that were routine in an earlier age—sidewalks, parks—are too often omitted from recent developments.

Revealing Statistics

Health professionals love hard evidence. Fortunately, we have considerable evidence to point the way to healthy community design. Consider these examples:

The SMARTRAQ (Strategies for Metro Atlanta’s Regional Transportation and Air Quality) study in metro Atlanta followed more than 10,000 adults, assessing their neighborhood characteristics, their means of travel, and certain health outcomes. Greater land-use mix, more walking each day, and less time in the car each day were each associated with a lower risk of obesity. Land-use and transportation patterns predict physical activity, and physical activity is important for health.

A study in Atlanta during the 1996 Olympic Games took advantage of a natural experiment. Atlantans were urged to refrain from driving during the 17 days of the games. Many complied, and peak morning traffic counts dropped by 22.9%. Peak daily ozone levels promptly dropped by 27.9%. And acute asthma events in children dropped by as much as 44.1%. All these parameters returned to their baseline at the conclusion of the Olympics. Transportation affects air quality, and air quality affects health.

In sprawling communities where people spend much time in their cars, motor vehicle fatality rates and pedestrian fatality rates are high. This is a pressing public health challenge—motor vehicle crashes are the leading cause of death among young people nationwide. Not surprisingly, reducing driving can help prevent these tragedies. In fact, when gasoline prices rise, people drive less, and highway death rates decline—an effect that seems to have operated to save lives during the summer of 2008. With less driving come fewer traffic deaths.

Common sense suggests that parks are an asset for communities. They provide a venue for physical activity, social interaction, and relaxation, which all promote health and well-being. But a recent study of parks in Copenhagen provided further evidence of health benefits. People who live near parks not only use the parks more frequently than those at a distance, but they have lower stress levels and weigh less—an effect not fully explained by visits to the park. Nearby green space is valuable.

Community design, then, can do a great deal to promote health. Good sidewalks and trails, nearby destinations, parks and other green space, safety, and the presence of other people all promote walking and bicycling. Transit use does the same; in fact, nearly a third of transit users get recommended levels of physical activity just by walking to and from their transit stops. To support these design features, many of the communities, below: View of typical suburban development.

Above: In the 1920’s, Virginia’s Alexandria County planned a wide and a leader’s only access through the new Washington area. More transit stops. The campus has since become surrounded by large group of houses, but it remains an urban village of communities. Below: SMARTRAQ study in metro Atlanta.

by Al Taylor, photo by Larry M. Levine.

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principles of “Smart Growth” are relevant: density, connectivity, mixed land use, vibrant activity centers, transportation alternatives, preservation of green spaces. Community design is increasingly recognized as a public health strategy.

A Virtuous Circle in Design and Planning

One appeal of this approach is the synergy it offers. We don’t have a pill that prevents heart disease, cancer, asthma, diabetes, depression, and injuries. (If we did, we’d be adding it to the water supply!) But we do have community design strategies that offer all of this and more. The simple act of a child walking to school—with all the precursors, environmental and behavioral, that lie behind it—reduces the risk of each of the conditions listed above. The simple intervention of planting trees in a community offers many of these health benefits, directly and indirectly. At a time when health care costs are rising and health care coverage eludes many Americans, such synergistic preventive strategies are more important than ever.

The beauty of this synergy extends beyond direct health benefits. In many cases, the interventions that define healthy communities also define green communities—the focus of the National Building Museum’s current exhibition Green Community. Shifting transportation from driving to walking, bicycling, and transit does more than promote health; it improves air quality, and reduces carbon dioxide emissions. Building more compact communities, balanced by the preservation of green space, does more than promote health; it protects watersheds and floodplains, conserves rural and agricultural land, and promotes biodiversity. At a smaller scale, “green” buildings that utilize sustainably produced, non-toxic materials and effective insulation do more than improve indoor air quality; they reduce energy consumption, which in turn reduces pollutant and CO₂ emissions from power plants.

The benefits of green, healthy communities do not accrue only to those who live in them, or even to their contemporaries. They accrue over time. We are increasingly reckoning with long-term limits on such resources as water, petroleum, and soil. As climate change unfolds, the consequences of past energy-use patterns will be felt by future generations. The decisions we make today—not only in community design, but in energy, transportation, agriculture, and a host of other realms—will have implications for our grandchildren’s grandchildren. The UN Commission on Environment and Development in 1987 defined sustainable development as that which “meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs”—a recognition that we need to be good stewards, for the sake of those who will follow us. This is a recognition found in many cultures and eras. The Great Law of Peace of the Haudenosaunee (the Six Nations Iroquois Confederacy) mandated that chiefs consider the impact of their decisions on the seventh generation yet to come. Contemporary religious leaders have called for “creation care”—stewardship of the Earth as both a religious obligation and an obligation to future generations. Ethicists have asserted intergenerational justice as a moral basis for action on climate change. We need to think to the future.

Green communities, then, are in many ways healthy communities—promoting good health and well-being directly for those who reside in them, indirectly for their neighbors, and indirectly for those who come after. They offer a wide range of health benefits, corresponding to the major contemporary causes of morbidity and mortality. They offer “co-benefits” that extend beyond health to the environment and the economy. Those who care about health, and those who work in design, architecture, and planning, can celebrate their growing convergence of interest, and the enormous opportunities to collaborate in achieving shared goals: green, healthy, and sustainable communities for all people.
An Interview with Leonard J. Hopper, FASLA

The Lay of the Landscape

by G. Martin Moeller, Jr.

Len Hopper is a landscape architect and currently a senior associate with Mark K. Morrison Associates LTD in New York City. He also teaches at The City College of New York and at Columbia University. Hopper is an active member of the American Society of Landscape Architects, having served as its national president for 2000–01 and as president of the Landscape Architecture Foundation for 2005–06.

Illustrations accompanying this article relate to the Sustainable Sites Initiative of the American Society of Landscape Architects.

Martin Moeller: How is the green movement changing the practice of landscape architecture?

Len Hopper: For landscape architects, sustainability arguably arose as an issue over 100 years ago, though of course they would not have used that term then. There are so many people now saying their practices are green—architects, engineers, everybody’s green now. But it’s not a competition—we all have to realize that we all have roles to play in being sustainable. As landscape architects, we look at ourselves as people who have been practicing this way for quite some time. It’s an ethic, something we believe in, and something that our training prepares us for.

What I find to be interesting is that now, rather than always having to convince a client, a public group, or another design professional that sustainability is something you need to think about, there’s more of an expectation that these are things you have to do. We are really over the hump of arguing that natural systems are things that need to play a part in any of these projects. So in some ways it has made the argument much easier and raised the expectations that we have to meet.

People are educated enough now that green design can’t be just a token gesture. They have a better understanding of what green means. The various standards or guidelines not only give the designer something to work toward, but also give clients some reasonable expectations as to what they’re getting.
Moeller: Were you directly involved in the initiative?

Hopper: I had the great experience of serving on one of the technical subcommittees—it happened to be the Subcommittee on Human Health and Well-Being, which is interesting in itself because that’s an aspect of sustainability that is often overlooked. Green design offers not only an environmental improvement, but also improves people’s health. Many mental and physical ailments can be eased by design strategies that are primarily geared toward the environment. It’s a win-win scenario.

Our two main goals on our subcommittee were to apply existing research to the standards, and then to establish standards that would stimulate new research so you would have a real basis for the proposed guidelines. We shed away from setting aesthetic standards or design standards, because those can be so subjective. The qualitative part comes from what your objectives are—your expected outcomes—and you have to reach a certain positive level of design in order to achieve those objectives.

Moeller: Can you cite examples of specific projects that reflect the goals of the Sustainable Sites Initiative?

Hopper: It’s hard to find one project that deals with them all—some emphasize certain aspects more than others—but I think if we looked at perhaps two fundamental things that are common areas of focus, they would be water management and the thoughtful use of vegetation, soil, and materials.

This gets back to the qualitative aspect. Landscape architects often take a practical element and make it into something that’s sculptural and aesthetically pleasing—something that looks like it is doing something other than what it actually is. Sometimes we say that the work of landscape architects is often at its best when it is unnoticed, and certainly there are times when that’s appropriate—you know, people look at, say, Central Park, and they don’t realize that someone designed it, since it looks so natural. Then there are other times when design interventions are quite bold and it’s very obvious what the man-made elements are. But what’s a little more subtle is that projects often function on different levels. In some landscapes, for example, you see these sculptural pieces and you think, wow, what a great design, but they’re actually there to harvest rainwater. There are very functional things that a landscape architect is able to take and turn into an aesthetic amenity for a community, and that’s the part I don’t think many people initially see.

Moeller: Many people associate the profession of landscape architecture with projects of modest scale—yards for private houses or common areas in corporate developments, for instance. Landscape architects also, however, often contribute to large-scale, community-wide design and planning projects. Is that becoming more common?

Hopper: I do see landscape architects increasingly working in larger planning roles. In fact, the line between a planner and a landscape architect is sometimes blurred. Although the disciplines are different, I think you’re seeing landscape architects being brought in much earlier in planning processes, if not right at the beginning. There are also some large firms that exemplify a multi-disciplinary approach within their own firm, including both planners and landscape architects, as well as other disciplines working together from the earliest stages of the project’s inception.

Moeller: You were previously the chief landscape architect for the New York City Housing Authority, which was recognized by the Landscape Architecture Foundation for outstanding leadership in urban design and planning. What did you and the agency do to earn that recognition?

Hopper: In New York, there are 350 or so different housing developments. The big challenge is how to give each development a unique sense of identity and place. There are a lot of fairly tall buildings—10, 12, 14 stories—but I always maintained that you can foster a sense of community through careful design of the ground plane. A high-rise is supposedly anti-street life, but you can bring people out and encourage them to think of the site as an extension of their homes.

One of the things we were able to do was reduce crime significantly. When I started in the late 1970s at the Housing Authority, it was right after a time of economic decline, and there was no money for public housing, infrastructure, or maintenance. Since they were unable to maintain the planning areas, much of the open space was paved with asphalt for ease of maintenance. The open areas in housing developments were desolate, gray, and bleak, allowing people from the street to come in and take over. Residents felt trapped in their houses. We had allowed these areas to become urban battlefields where outsiders had the advantage. So very early on I said, “Let’s change the battlefield, and let’s give ourselves the advantage and put the intruders on the defensive.”

The idea of “defensible space” was really popular at that time, but that really just consisted of building very tall fences, which put up a barrier and isolated the housing development from the community at large. If you went through the fences, there was really nobody “defending” the space on the other side. What we tried to do was keep our housing developments extremely open, creating spaces for residents’ activities and amenities that they requested, and in doing that, we created areas that they felt not only very comfortable using, but also taking care of them and assuming proprietary ownership over them. As part of that effort, we were able to create large green areas that replaced the “sea of asphalt” with carpets of green turf and flowering shrubs and increase the tree canopy. That positive presence created such an inherent sense of security that it reduced crime significantly on the housing development site and, in fact, in the areas immediately surrounding it.
Moeller: What kinds of projects are you working on now?

Hopper: The firm where I am now practices across a broad spectrum of the landscape architecture profession including a good deal of municipal work. We are working with a couple of different housing authorities, as well as with New York City Parks and Recreation in designing some of their play environments and recreation facilities. These projects involve some of the same safety, environmental, and social issues as in public housing. More specifically, in terms of sustainability, we are working with Mayor Bloomberg’s PlaNYC program [a long-term plan for “a greener, greater New York”]. We are helping to identify tree-planting locations on housing authority sites, through the sponsorship of the New York Restoration Project, which is Bette Midler’s group. We are also part of the mayor’s Schoolyards to Playgrounds program, taking barren spaces that are covered in asphalt and surrounded by chain link fence and redesigning them so they really become community assets. We are actually working with kids to redesign their own schoolyards with the goal of having a community playground within a ten-minute walk of all residents.

In all our projects, we are talking more and more about the connections between design and human well-being, so whether we are looking at creating walkable communities or providing pleasant outdoor spaces, we are also looking at how we can leverage the design for the maximum possible benefits—socially, economically, and environmentally. *

FISCAL YEAR 2008 AT-A-GLANCE
(October 2007 through September 2008)

Total Attendance: 406,796
Web site hits: 1,909,648
Public program attendance: 18,916
School program attendance: 24,227
Estimated media impressions: 163,824,079*
Total Revenue: $9,519,662
Total Contributed Income: $5,631,216
Total Number and Value of Volunteer Hours: 11,488 hours; estimated value $345,798 or $30.10 per hour**

*Media impressions are calculated based on a publication’s circulation rates and indicate the potential readership for any given news article.
**Source: The Independent Sector
Message from the Chair and the Executive Director

Managing Our Most Important Asset

As the National Building Museum’s fiscal year 2008 was coming to a close in October, the global economy, which had been gradually sliding downhill, fell off a cliff. Suddenly, longstanding assumptions about society crumbled, as did the public’s faith in many venerable institutions. Yet from this daunting situation there has emerged a broad resolve to seek meaningful solutions.

To that end, the mission of the National Building Museum has never been more vital. The Museum is, after all, one of the most important stewards of our nation’s greatest tangible asset: the built environment. Bridges and parks, schools and airports, office buildings and houses—these are the components of a diverse portfolio that continues to serve society’s needs regardless of the vicissitudes of financial markets. Increasingly, government officials, business people, and the general public are recognizing that this vast and complex asset must be protected, carefully managed, and continuously reinvented in order to ensure its long-term viability.

During fiscal year 2008, the Museum, through its exhibitions, education programs, publications, and awards programs, continued to shape the public’s understanding of the past, present, and future of our buildings and communities.

A Thoroughly Modern Museum

Over the past fiscal year, the Museum reexamined a seminal movement in architecture and design: 20th-century Modernism. The continuities of this exploration were a pair of exhibitions about two of the movement’s most creative figures: Marcel Breuer and Eero Saarinen. Featuring large-scale models of landmarks like Breuer’s Whitney Museum of American Art and Saarinen’s Gateway Arch, the exhibitions revealed that these architects—though both deceased for decades—continue to exert a powerful influence on contemporary design.

As a counterpoint to the focus on Modernism, the exhibition Lathing Foundations: The Art of Architecture in Africa explored the long and seamless history of vernacular building across that continent. The visually-rich exhibition included original works of architectural sculpture, handicrafts, photographs, and film.

Ongoing exhibitions included Cityscapes Revealed: Highlights from the Collection; Washington: Symbol and City; and the phenomenally popular Building Zone gallery, where young children learn about the built environment through hands-on activities.

Green is Still Good

For years, the Museum has been an advocate and resource for sustainable, or green, design, and 2008 was no exception. This past year, thanks to the support of The Home Depot Foundation, the Museum once again presented the critically-acclaimed program series For the Greener Good: Conversations That Will Change the World, and launched a project to make the Museum’s galleries and institutional practices greener.

Other education programs included the venerable Spotlight on Design lecture series, which featured the latest Pritzker Prize laureate, Jean Nouvel, among others. The annual L’Enfant Lecture, held in Chicago this past year, was given by California architect Teddy Cruz, who spoke about the need to diminish geographical boundaries and other barriers to improving design and planning.

The Museum’s highly-regarded youth and family education programs once again actively engaged youngsters in meaningful exploration of the built environment. Family events such as the Festival of the Building Arts. Family events such as the Festival of the Building Arts.

Honing Leaders in the Built Environment

In June, the Museum presented its 2008 Honor Award to The Associated General Contractors of America (AGC) and its nationwide network of 96 chapters. As the nation’s largest and oldest construction trade association, AGC has actively shaped the building industry while promoting excellence and safety. The award gala raised more than $1.2 million for the Museum’s exhibitions and programming.

In December 2007, the ninth Vincent Scully Prize was presented to Richard Moe, president of the National Trust for Historic Preservation, for his leadership and in expanding public understanding of the importance of protecting and celebrating our built heritage.

Due to a scheduling change, the Henry C. Turner Prize for Innovation in Construction Technology was awarded twice during fiscal year 2008. In October 2007, Frank Gehry of Gehry Partners and Dennis Shelden of Gehry Technologies were recognized for pushing the boundaries of construction and engineering to create some of the world’s most distinctive buildings. In September 2008, the award was presented to Dr. Charles H. Thornton, an engineer, for his role as the founder of the ACE Mentor program, which introduces high school students to careers in the design and building industries.

Enhancing Our Intellectual Capital

Thanks to the generosity of Beverly Willis, a founding trustee of the Museum, and other generous donors, we opened the renovated Beverly Willis Library in March 2008. The new library provides improved facilities for research, meetings, and presentations. We wasted no time in taking advantage of this facility as we welcomed our first two fellows—thanks to the support of The American Institute of Architects and Cynthia and Charles Field—who spent the summer conducting research that advanced the mission of the Museum.

As always, the Museum board and staff are indebted to the members, corporate sponsors, and many other contributors who made all of our activities possible. Despite the economic challenges that face us all, we look forward to another productive, creative, and informative year.

Michael J. Glosserman
Chair
Chas W. Byrd
President and Executive Director

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The opening of the Green Community exhibition at the National Building Museum is a good time to reflect on the meaning of terms like “green” and “sustainable.” Both are terms used to describe laudable goals. It’s when we try to closely define sustainability and to measure its outcomes more specifically that agreement begins to fall apart. Goals, objectives, strategies, tactics—all of the standard planning theories and approaches that dominate our practices across the globe—must be fine-tuned or even redefined if sustainability is to mean something other than a meaningless way.

Certainly, we can agree on many things. We can agree that we’re not achieving sustainability, either in the developed world’s current consumption habits or in the settlement patterns of much of the globe. We can agree that it is desirable to be more sustainable. We can probably even generally agree on the meaning of the term and that “sustainability” is a broader term than “green.”

It’s when we try to closely define sustainability and to measure its outcomes more specifically that agreement begins to fall apart. Because I don’t agree with its underlying challenges and aims but because I worry that the term is too often used as a marketing tool or is simply tossed into a discussion in a meaningless way.

I have to confess, however, that I am a skeptic when it comes to sustainability—not because I don’t agree with its underlying challenges and aims but because I worry that the term is too often used as a marketing tool or is simply tossed into a discussion in a meaningless way.

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“...all of the standard planning theories and approaches...must be fine-tuned or even redefined if sustainability is to mean something other than simply good planning.”

The facts are well known: the U.S., with only four percent of the world’s population, consumes 25 percent of the entire world’s current petroleum production. It produces less than five percent of the oil supply and has less than three percent of known reserves. Meanwhile, non-OPEC oil will reach peak production this year. Over the last year, I have listened to experts from various fields talk about the need for federal action on investment and production tax credits for renewable fuels. What caught my attention at one meeting was the observation of financier T. Boone Pickens, who made his fortune in oil and gas, but is now touting solar and wind as our best hope for clean domestic power. I was also struck by New York Mayor Michael Bloomberg, who highlighted the tie between energy and infrastructure. He noted that our antiquated power grid was the cause of the major blackout that hit the Northeast five years ago. Yet virtually nothing has been done since then to correct the situation. Mayor Bloomberg doesn’t have much faith in the much-hyped cap-and-trade system, either. “It amounts to taking three right tums when all you need is one left one,” he said. And that one turn? A carbon tax.

At another conference, a marine physicist at the Scripps Institution of Oceanography predicted that by 2012, the Colorado River water situation could become so dire that migrations will begin from Las Vegas, Phoenix, and southern California. By 2017, the region’s hydroelectric power production could end.

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important, we must highlight the best practices in planning and the best examples of community planning.

Community planners, who are trained to see the big picture and to think about the long term, are able to address both economic competitiveness and environmental issues in our cities, towns, and neighborhoods. Through education, plan-making, tax policies, capital investments, development review, and other planning actions, we can reduce the impact of development on the natural environment and improve environmental quality for all residents.

To become convincing advocates, we must become broadly educated in science, economics, and policy options. As Americans, all of us should support well-informed leaders with innovative ideas. Simply pondering the issue won’t do much good, and it could lead to false hopes and a lack of commitment to the difficult choices required to solve these problems. *

Revisiting Las Vegas
2008 L’Enfant Lecture on City Planning and Design
by Elizabeth Wilke, Associate Public Programs Coordinator

The National Building Museum and the American Planning Association (APA) established the annual L’Enfant Lecture on City Planning and Design—named for Pierre Charles L’Enfant, the renowned planner of Washington, D.C.—to draw attention to critical issues in city and regional planning in the United States. This year’s lecture, held on December 2, featured Paul Goldberger, Pulitzer Prize-winning architecture critic for The New Yorker, who took the opportunity to revisit Robert Venturi and Denise Scott Brown’s seminal book Learning from Las Vegas. Thirty-five years after the book’s initial release, Goldberger tackled the question of whether we can still learn from Las Vegas. Goldberger’s lecture examined the evolution of the Las Vegas Strip from its inception to the present day. He talked about how the “urban impulse,” or the desire for walkable precincts, has continued because of people’s fundamental desire to be together. He also discussed how other cities, in some ways are becoming more like Las Vegas as they transform from business centers into centers of culture and entertainment.

In an interview before the presentation, Goldberger stated that “the most important lesson other cities can learn from Las Vegas is about the urgency of planning on a regional, and not just a local, level.” Clearly, one of the fastest-growing cities in the country for much of the past generation—and one of the cities hit hardest by the current housing crisis—Las Vegas offers a whole variety of important lessons for architects, planners, civic leaders, and the general public. *

Tenth Vincent Scully Prize Celebration Gala

On Wednesday, November 11, the National Building Museum honored Robert A.M. Stern, dean of the Yale School of Architecture, celebrated author, and founder and senior partner of Robert A.M. Stern Architects, as the tenth laureate of the Vincent Scully Prize. David M. Schwartz, chair of the Vincent Scully Prize Jury and Carolyn Brody, honorary trustee, served as co-chairs for the gala, which raised more than $660,000 to support the prestigious prize’s endowment and related programming.

To commemorate the tenth anniversary of the prize, the Museum welcomed hundreds of guests, many of them family, close friends, and colleagues of both Stern and Scully, to the celebratory black-tie gala. Richard C. Levin, president of Yale University, The Honorable Michael R. Bloomberg, mayor of the City of New York, and Michael Eisner, former chairman/CEO of The Walt Disney Company, paid tribute to Stern and his accomplishments. In their remarks, they recognized Stern as an architect and scholar who fully embraces the principles of the Vincent Scully Prize and the vision of its namesake, Professor Vincent Scully. One highlight of the evening was a special performance by the Whitenpoofs, Yale’s famous a cappella group.

As a Vincent Scully Prize Laureate, Stern joins nine other internationally acclaimed architects, scholars, educators, and practitioners in the field of architecture and urbanism. Past recipients include Vincent Scully himself, Jane Jacobs, Andrés Duany and Elizabeth Plater-Zyberk, Robert Venturi and Denise Scott Brown, His Highness The Aga Khan, His Royal Highness The Prince of Wales, Phyllis Lambert, Witold Rybczynski, and Richard Moe.

On the following evening, Stern delivered an original lecture about the state of architectural education. Graciously hosted by the Canadian Embassy, the event drew many of the people who had attended the gala, along with other guests.

For more information on the Vincent Scully Prize or to watch video of Stern’s lecture visit www.vsbm.org. *

*All photos by Paul Morigi.
Green Leaves, Lectures, and Laudations

by Scott Kratz, Vice President for Education

A

n exhibition opening, a presentation by Congressman Earl Blumenauer, and an award ceremony honoring green efforts in America—all took place on a single remarkable evening at the National Building Museum. On September 17, 2008, more than 420 guests gathered at the Museum for the opening of the exhibition Life Without Leaves, attended the For the Greater Good lecture “World Leaders on Sustainability,” and celebrated The Home Depot Foundation’s Awards of Excellence for Affordable Housing Built Responsibly.

The evening began with the opening of Life Without Leaves, a photography exhibition that highlighted the importance of trees in a community. Meant to call attention to the ongoing removal of nearly one million trees from cities and towns each year, the initiative challenged students from the Art Institute of Washington, D.C. to take and retouch photos of area landmarks and tree-lined locations in order to depict them with and without trees. These striking images of the National Mall, the Folger Shakespeare Library and the U.S. Capitol emphasized the importance of trees for both their aesthetic benefits and their role in combating climate change.

Visitors then welcomed Home Depot CEO Frank Blake and The Home Depot Foundation President Kelly Blake Cafferelli, who presented the foundation’s Awards of Excellence for Affordable Housing Built Responsibly. These awards were created to inspire non-profit housing development by recognizing outstanding examples of affordable, sustainably built homes. The 2008 awards were given to the Madison Area Community Land Trust and the Mercy Housing Lakefront of Chicago. The ceremony included Oregon Congressman Earl Blumenauer; Cassio Taniguchi, former mayor of Curitiba, Brazil; and Irene Lundquist Stenfors, CEO of the City of Stockholm, Sweden. Mayor Taniguchi encouraged municipal leaders to “give examples of how to ‘green’ the city. Try to [make] the city more compact and give economic support to urban sustainability.” Congressman Blumenauer agreed and told the large audience, “Part of our success stems from an understanding that environmental protection and economic development can go hand-in-hand. Instead of forcing people into a certain way of life, we have given them choices. They can choose green power!” The program was co-presented with the National Capital Planning Commission and Capsitals Alliance, an organization of capital cities across the globe.

All of the programs in the For the Greater Good series have been filmed and are available on the Museum’s web site. The series continues in 2009 with presentations from Ed Mazria on his “Architecture 2050” initiative, a discussion about healthy hospitals, and a program addressing edible landscapes. To see the videos and schedule of events, please visit www.nbm.org *

Following the ceremony, moderator March Bradbury, former chairman of Canada’s National Capital Commission, engaged a panel of leaders from around the world in a discussion about their efforts to create a more sustainable planet. The panel included Oregon Congressman Earl Blumenauer; Cassio Taniguchi, former mayor of Curitiba, Brazil; and Irene Lundquist Stenfors, CEO of the City of Stockholm, Sweden. Mayor Taniguchi encouraged municipal leaders to “give examples of how to ‘green’ the city. Try to [make] the city more compact and give economic support to urban sustainability.” Congressman Blumenauer agreed and told the large audience, “Part of our success stems from an understanding that environmental protection and economic development can go hand-in-hand. Instead of forcing people into a certain way of life, we have given them choices. They can choose green power!” The program was co-presented with the National Capital Planning Commission and Capsitals Alliance, an organization of capital cities across the globe.

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For the Greater Good lecture series presented by The Home Depot Foundation.
A Celebration of Building: 2008 Festival of the Building Arts by Ellen Jacknain, Coordinator, Festival of the Building Arts

On October 11, under sunny autumn skies, some 3,000 children and adults attended the Museum’s annual Festival of the Building Arts and enjoyed more than 20 wonderful, creative, and interactive displays examining different aspects of our built environment.

Inside and outside the Museum, youngsters in yellow hard hats — gifts from festival exhibitors for their participation — got their hands dirty as they worked with concrete finishing, landscaping, and construction during a performance of Pas de Liz Lerman Dance Exchange merge dance and construction, together to chisel a stone; dancers from the Liz Lerman Dance Exchange and set to music from Tchaikovsky’s Suite No. 3 in D major; Lightning, a site-specific dance performance choreographed by Liz Lerman Dance Exchange and set to music from Tchaikovsky’s Swan Lake, which examined the relationship between movement and the tools we use to build our environment. Performances were held outside on G St, with a cast of propane-powered backhoes manned by Clark Construction employees and professional dance artists and ballet students from the Liz Lerman Dance Exchange and Bowen-MacCauly Dance.

The 2008 Festival of the Building Arts was presented by the Associated General Contractors of America and organized by Ellen Jacknain, Coordinator, Festival of the Building Arts.

Educating the Workforce of the Future: Careers in Construction EXPO 2008 by Gailie Hawkins, Schools and Youth Groups Coordinator

On November 11, the National Building Museum, with the support of the Associated Builders and Contractors, Inc., hosted the Careers in Construction EXPO 2008, a day-long event created to provide students and teachers a first-hand glimpse into the numerous job opportunities available in the building and design industry. During the EXPO, students in grades 7-12 met with professionals in various design, development, construction, and project management fields. Ten exhibitors from the construction trades participated in the event.

For the first time in the event’s history, the Museum invited representatives from colleges and universities with degree-granting programs in architecture and design to participate. Eleven schools from across the United States attended the EXPO and provided information about their programs to prospective students.

Throughout the day, students participated in panel discussions and learned about the construction industry’s need for new, skilled craftpeople. Students got their hands dirty as they worked with concrete finishing, landscaping, and plumbing, while some even had the opportunity to walk on drywall stilts.

The event attracted nearly 700 participants from across the Washington metropolitan area.

Donor Profile
American Public Transportation Association by Amanda Lewis, Corporate and Association Relations Manager

The American Public Transportation Association (APTA) is a nonprofit international association of more than 1,000 member organizations, including public transportation systems; planning, design, construction, and finance firms; product and service providers; academic institutions; and state associations and departments of transportation.

APTA members serve more than 90 percent of public transportation users in the United States and Canada. Since 1963, the National Building Museum has enjoyed a strong partnership with APTA. Beginning with its sponsorship of the exhibition On Track: Transit in the American City, APTA has continued its involvement with the Museum as lead sponsor of Green Community and as a member of the Industry Partners, an elite group of corporate and association donors that provide critical support to the Museum.

APTA has a profound interest in the exhibition Green Community for an obvious reason — truly sustainable community must allow for multiple, environment-friendly mobility options, including walking, bicycling, and public transportation. APTA President Bill Millar notes, “Green Community illustrates what is possible and what is already happening in communities around the country and the world to create a more sustainable future.” The National Building Museum looks forward to working with APTA and its members to continue to make communities greener.

The Museum relies on the support of corporations and industry partners like APTA, and the Board of Trustees and staff are grateful for the association’s generous support.

Photo courtesy of APTA.

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Photo courtesy of APTA.
The Mystery Building was the Synagogue of Berverah Veshalom Vehashidim, better known as the St. Thomas Synagogue since it stands on the island of St. Thomas, in the U.S. Virgin Islands. Built in 1893, when the island was a Danish possession, it is now the oldest synagogue in continuous use on American soil.

There were five current responses to this challenge. The winners were: Richard Ardrey, of Bethesda, MD; Bob Carr and Karly Keller-Baer, of College Park, MD; Arnold Berke, of Washington, DC; Robert S. Drew, of Albany, NY; and Gary Palmer, of Atlanta, GA.

We gave readers two clues as to the identity of the Mystery Building in the Fall 2008 issue. First, that it is a synagogue, which was evident from the Star of David over the main gate, and second, that it is in the United States, which probably came as a surprise given the building’s rustic character and tropical setting. Unfortunately, we did not say that the building is in one of the 50 states of the United States—because it isn’t.

This issue’s mystery... Tropical Synagogue

“The Phantom” T
Some sometimes renovation projects reveal surprising things about the buildings they are renovating. Apparently, the architect of this building changed his mind about the placement of the structure’s name after one letter was already placed. Can you identify the building pictured?

Responses will be accepted by e-mail or regular mail. To be eligible for a prize (for the first five correct responses only), send an e-mail to mysterybuilding@nbm.org or send a postcard or letter to:

Mystery Building
National Building Museum
401 First Street, NW
Washington, DC 20001

This issue’s mystery... Tropical Synagogue

The Museum thanks the following individuals, companies, associations and agencies for gifts of $50 or more received from August 1 – December 31, 2008. These generous gifts provide essential support for the Museum’s exhibitions, education programs, and enrichment efforts. Some of these contributions listed below are in partial fulfillment of larger pledges.

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Imagine planning your next vacation based on which rest areas you want to visit. It sounds ridiculous, but after a visit to the National Building Museum’s newest exhibition, Detour: Architecture and Design along 18 National Tourist Routes in Norway you may be doing just that.

*Detour* features small but noteworthy architectural projects built along 18 tourist routes in Norway—observation platforms, rest areas, service facilities, and stopping points—that are receiving international attention. These facilities’ eye-catching shapes and forms, use of interesting materials, and bold colors are adding a new dimension to the motorists’ experience of Norway. The projects were commissioned by the Norwegian Public Roads Administration as part of its “National Tourist Routes Project” in an effort to showcase Norway’s magnificent scenery in a “harmonious and non-exploitive way.”

“What fascinates me about *Detour*,” notes His Excellency Wegger Chr. Strommen, ambassador of Norway to the United States, is that you literally peek into architecture interacting with nature, and at the same time realize that it serves the needs of travelers along Norway’s spectacular tourist routes. In collaboration with the National Building Museum, I am delighted to bring this exhibition to the United States.”

*Detour* runs through May 25, 2009. The exhibition was developed by the Norwegian Public Roads Administration and the foundation Norsk Form and is presented at the National Building Museum in collaboration with the Royal Norwegian Embassy. Zimmer Gunsul Frasca Architects LLP is the exclusive corporate sponsor.

exhibitions on view

**Detour: Architecture and Design along 18 National Tourist Routes in Norway**
through May 25, 2009

**Green Community**
through October 25, 2009

**Washington: Symbol and City**
Long-term

**Cityscapes Revealed: Highlights from the Collection**
Long-term

**Building Zone**
Long-term