Creating Excellent Urban Places: Learning from the Rudy Bruner Award

International Making Cities Livable
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PRESENTERS

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30 YEARS OF URBAN EXCELLENCE
The Rudy Bruner Award for Urban Excellence (RBA) is a national design award that recognizes transformative places that contribute to the economic, environmental, and social vitality of American cities. Established in 1986 by the Bruner Foundation, the award documents and shares the stories of the winners to promote innovative thinking about the built environment and conversation about making cities better.
“The Rudy Bruner Award for Urban Excellence can be thought of as a question—an inquiry into the nature of excellence.”
HOW IT WORKS –
THE RUDY BRUNER AWARD
FOR URBAN EXCELLENCE

Eligibility
Built, urban projects located within the continental United States are eligible to apply.

Selection Committee
A new six-member committee is assembled for every biennial award cycle, including a mayor and a participant from a prior winning project.

1 $50,000 Gold Medal Winner
4 $10,000 Silver Medal Winners

APPLICATION
The application provides an understanding of the project’s design, development, and impact, including:
- Project data, overview, and description.
- Perspective forms completed by people involved in the project and community.
- Photographs and other visuals.
- Award use letter (opened after medalists are selected).

SELECTION PROCESS
Winners are determined by the selection committee through a three-step selection process:
- Selection Committee reviews and discusses applications and selects five finalists.
- Bruner Foundation conducts site visits to collect additional information.
- Selection Committee reviews and discusses site visit findings and determines the medalists.

AWARD & CASE STUDIES
The winners and their stories are documented and shared through presentations and publications:
- On-site award presentations that showcase and celebrate the winners.
- Events, presentations, and tours that highlight the stories of the winners and their impact.
- Accessible, detailed case studies about the winners and lessons learned from them.
Application

- Project Data, Description, Visuals
- Perspective Sheets
- Award Use

Rudy Bruner Award for Urban Excellence
St Joseph Rebuild Center
New Orleans

Call for Entries

- Application
- Perspective Sheets
- Project Data, Description, Visuals
- Award Use
Selection Process

- Selection Committee Meetings
- Site Visits
- Site Visit Report
URBAN EXCELLENCE

- Intent/Goals (clarity)
- Process/Community Involved
- Fresh Approaches/Innovation
- Potential Model/Repliable (not copy cat)
- Equity
- Diversity
- Inclusion
- Temporal - continues to inspire over time
- Excellence is Evident
- Has broad support
- Impact
- Good vs Innovative
- Process Program/Design

URBAN EXCELLENCE

- Economy - Doing a lot with a little
- Visually appealing
- Aesthetically - Evokes feeling
- "Evocative" - Provokes Conversation
- Scale of Impact?
- Public vs Intimate

URBAN EXCELLENCE

- Contextual - fits environment
- Accessible - "Public" Not exclusive Public Benefit
- Catalytic Effect - spurs excellence
- Do people embrace it? Ripple effect
- Leverage - Economic Identity
- Additional Projects
- Inspiration
- Overcoming Challenges/How Hard?
- Honoring Community
Project At-A-Glance

WHAT IS CIVIC SPACE PARK?

- Civic Space Park is a newly-created open space of 2.77 acres on the campus of ASU.
- The park is a result of a unique partnership between the City of Phoenix, ASU, and the residents of the neighborhood.
- The park is designed to improve the quality of life for the community.

PROJECT GOALS

- To provide a “place for the community to come together”
- To become a “true civic space” that could bring together the neighborhood
- To involve the residents in the development process
- To incorporate many ecological and energy-efficient features
- To provide a space that is welcoming and inviting
- To provide a space that is safe and secure
- To provide a space that is accessible and functional

Other features include two trampolines, one interactive and one light sculpture consisting of lights and controlled LEDS.

Despite the excitement of many environmentally-sensitive features, the design of the park is simple and enjoyable. The park is designed to be a place where people can relax, enjoy the outdoors, and socialize with each other.
83 projects in 27 states
Pike Place Market
Seattle, WA

1987 GOLD MEDALIST
A public market and mixed-use complex supporting the local community

Photo: Suman Chakrabarti
Post Office Square  
Boston, MA

1993 SILVER MEDAL
A park that reuses underused land and sparks community revitalization
Project Row Houses  Houston, TX

1997 SILVER MEDALIST

22 shotgun style redeveloped houses for alternative housing, art, and community spaces
Millennium Park  Chicago, IL

2009 SILVER MEDALIST
A public park supporting cultural events, art, and recreation on an old parking lot
Santa Fe Railyard Redevelopment

Santa Fe, NM

2011 SILVER MEDALIST

A new park incorporates the Railyard into its 50 acres of public space

Photo: Jane Phillips
SteelStacks Arts + Cultural Campus  Bethlehem, PA

2017 SILVER MEDALIST
Transformation of an abandoned steel plant into a mixed-use cultural and entertainment district
Bruce C. Bolling Municipal Building

Boston, MA

2017 SILVER MEDALIST

A community-oriented mixed-use development integrating public school headquarters, public meeting space, retail, and transit

Photo: Anton Grassi/ESTO
Chicago Riverwalk Phases 2 and 3

2017 SILVER MEDALIST

Reclaimed waterfront that transforms the river into Chicago's next great civic park.

Photo: Christian Phillips
Iberville Offsite Rehabs I & II  New Orleans, LA

2017 SILVER MEDALIST
The rehabilitation of 26 scattered-site historic houses into 46 homes for low-income families
La Kretz Innovation Campus + Arts Park  Los Angeles, CA

2017 SILVER MEDALIST
A cleantech incubator, education center, and neighborhood park developed by the local public utility

Photo: Benny Chan/Fotoworks
Vision & Leadership
Collaborative Partnerships
Engagement & Empowerment
Leveraging Design
Anchoring in Place
PLACE
Vision and Leadership
Market Wars

The inside story of how an improbable band of contentious Market activists managed to defy long odds and the Seattle business-media establishment

by Joyce Skaggs Brewster

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