



Rudy Bruner Award for Urban Excellence: Advancing Conversation about Placemaking and Practice

Questions + Answers from the Oct 06, 2014 Webinar

KK = Karen Kubey | AL = Annemarie Lubenau

Q: From your experience, can you give us a list of guidelines that the designer needs to follow for a successful community-based project that both involves the community and improves quality of life with a permanent impact.

AL: Each community is different, and understanding and respecting the context in which you work is important. 2013 RBA Silver Medalist Congo Street Initiative provides an example of a project that resulted from a thoughtful community-based process. More details can be found in the RBA case study: <http://www.brunerfoundation.org/rba/pdfs/2013/CH2.pdf>.

KK: The question we ask at the Institute for Public Architecture, where New Housing New York co-chair is now executive director, is, How can architecture better serve the public.

Q: Sustainable placemaking requires effective civic, organizational and social networks. How are some ways these projects foster functional social and civic fabric that can make them resilient and sustainable?

AL: Both 2013 RBA Gold Medalist Inspiration Kitchens – Garfield Park and Silver Medalist The Steel Yard incorporate programming and workforce development programs that help local residents improve their lives. Inspiration Kitchens introduced a sit-down restaurant with affordable, freshly prepared, healthy meals (prepared by people in the workforce development program) and a place for community to gather into an economically challenged neighborhood considered a food desert. Read the RBA case study for more information: <http://www.brunerfoundation.org/rba/pdfs/2013/CH1.pdf>. 2013 Silver Medalist The Steel Yard incorporates education, youth program and workforce development programs that engage local residents and a Public Projects program that partners with local artists to fabricate site specific public sculpture and furniture installed throughout the City of Providence (see the RBA case study for more information: <http://www.brunerfoundation.org/rba/pdfs/2013/CH4.pdf>).

Q: How did the proposal address the use of the winning prize (450k or \$10) and How was that eventually worked out?

AL: Each RBA applicant is asked to describe how the award monies will be used to benefit the project. In the case of Via Verde, the \$10,000 cash award will be used to support ongoing sustainability features of the project.



Q: Was there anything innovative about the design of various units themselves?

AL: The units incorporate open living spaces, rather than a separate kitchen, which we understand is more typical in affordable housing projects in New York City. They also included “trickle” vents that introduce fresh air into the well-insulated units. Additional information can be found in the RBA case study (<http://www.brunerfoundation.org/rba/pdfs/2013/CH2.pdf>).

KK: There are several innovations at the unit scale, particularly in the duplex apartments, some of which resulted in changes in NYC regulations for below-market apartments. Please see Karen Kubey's article on Via Verde in Domus: <http://www.domusweb.it/en/architecture/2012/06/14/via-verde.html>

Q: When it is considered necessary to organize an international competition?

AL: An international competition provides an opportunity to attract talent and ideas from other countries. The New Housing New York utilized two international design competitions. The development of Louisville Waterfront Park was initiated international Request for Qualifications that drew 85 responses. More information is available in the case study (<http://www.brunerfoundation.org/rba/pdfs/2013/CH3.pdf>).

KK: In the case of Via Verde, the competition brought new talent to the field of below-market housing, particularly Grimshaw, which had never before completed such a project. The interdisciplinary competition process itself led to the high quality building that was produced; each of the individuals, government agencies, and organizations involved in New Housing New York was committed to ensuring the project's success.

Q: Why it is necessary a Request for Qualifications when you can pull away new talents that maybe do not have a chance to prove them self or they are a small firm?

AL: A Request for Qualifications (RFQ) is a means of soliciting general information to inform a selection process. It generally requires less work and time on the part of the submitting firm than responding to a more detailed Request for Proposal (which can be attractive to small firms with low overhead). It can be an open process (to which anyone can respond) or invitation only.

KK: New Housing New York's two-stage process ensured stipends for competition design work (at the RFP stage). In-person and online "matchmaking" between architects and developers, along with the NHNY brief's emphasis on collaboration, were designed specifically to allow new talent to compete.

Q: Does a project have to be completed within a certain timeframe to be eligible? For example, could a project that was completed in 2001 qualify if it is defining urban excellence in our city?

AL: To be eligible for the RBA, projects must be completed and in operation long enough to demonstrate impact. We do not have a limit to the length of time between the project is completed and submitting an application.



Q: How has this financial model differ from other similar development projects?

AL: Via Verde incorporates a mix of rental and co-op units which increased the number of available funding options while introducing a greater degree of complexity due to the number of entities involved. More information on the financing, including a table of sources and uses, can be found in the RBA case study: <http://www.brunerfoundation.org/rba/pdfs/2013/CH5.pdf>.

Q: Can you speak to this through an advanced Placemaking lense ? When we think of placemaking its more temporary interventions , but to have affordable housing as placemaking is kind of beyond the vision of most philanthropic foundations. How did you speak to community and funders about this as placemaking?

AL: The RBA's perspective of "placemaking" is very broad. We seek projects that illustrate how the design of physical places (including the process that leads to them) – such as an 80-seat restaurant, six or 222-units of housing, an 85-acre park or a 3.5 acre industrial arts campus – can affect change in a community. Congo Street Initiative drew interest and financial support from the Meadows Foundation through a grant to buildingcommunityWORKSHOP. See the case study (<http://www.brunerfoundation.org/rba/pdfs/2013/CH2.pdf>) for more detail.

KK: Via Verde centers on a semi-public plaza that gives the project its identity and sense of place.

Q: Could you send a link to the MIT placemaking study if you have it?

AL: <http://dusp.mit.edu/cdd/project/placemaking>