2007 RUDY BRUNER AWARD FOR URBAN EXCELLENCE
### Eligibility/Who May Apply (cont.)

- Applications may be initiated by any person who has been involved in the planning, development or operation of a project.
- Previous applicants and Honorable Mention winners may re-apply. Previous winners are not eligible. Please do not apply more than three times.

#### Completing the Application

The application is designed to give each project the opportunity to state its story in its own words, and to elicit multiple perspectives on project development.

Applicants are urged to concentrate their efforts on providing a clear description of their projects and responsive answers to the questions on the application forms. Excessive presentations are discouraged. Although visual representations of the project such as drawings, photographs, plans or maps are required, judgments will be based upon the quality of the project, rather than upon the elaborateness of the presentation.

The application requires completion of the following elements:

1. **Project Data**
2. **Abstract**
3. **Project Description**
4. **Perspective Sheets**
5. **Visual Representation of the Project**
6. **Optional Supplementary Pages**
7. **Award Use**

### Perspective Sheets

Perspective sheets are provided to assist people who were involved in the project in describing their personal or organizational point of view. It is important that as many people as appropriate from the following categories complete perspective sheets, and a minimum of 4 sheets is required as part of the application. If it is not possible or appropriate to submit 4 sheets, please explain why not.

Applicants may use their discretion to identify which categories are most pertinent to the project:

- Community Representative perspective
- Public Agency perspective (from local, state or federal government agencies)
- Developer perspective
- Professional Consultant perspective
- Architect or Designer perspective
- Other perspective (which might not fit above categories)

Please obtain as wide an array of perspectives as possible. More than one "Other" perspective may be submitted if appropriate. Use the perspective sheet marked "Other" for people who do not fit into the categories provided or for a unique point of view that will enhance your submission. The completed perspective sheets must be included in the application package.

Applicants should feel free to use photocopies of the application forms if needed. If possible, answers to all questions should be typed directly on the forms. If the forms are not used and answers are typed on a separate page, each answer must be preceded by the question to which it responds. The length of each answer should be limited to the area provided on the original form.

### Submission Information

- **Project Data**
- **Abstract**
- **Project Description**
- **Perspective Sheets**
- **Visual Representation of the Project**
- **Optional Supplementary Pages**
- **Award Use**

The application must be received at the Bruner Foundation no later than Monday, December 18, 2006.

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### Notice

Please submit a copy of the completed application to the Rudy Bruner Award for Urban Excellence. Applications are due by December 18, 2006.
The Selection Process

Established in 1987, the Rudy Bruner Award recognizes one Gold Medal Winner and four Silver Medal winners each biennial cycle. The Rudy Bruner Award is distinguished from other award programs by its broad eligibility criteria; the multi-disciplinary Selection Committee; and the detailed on-site evaluation of each finalist. Each award cycle is documented in a book, which includes in-depth case studies of the winners and a distillation of the Selection Committee discussion. The publications are available from the Bruner Foundation.

The Foundation does not restrict the kinds of projects that may apply. Urban excellence is a dynamic and changing concept, and the Award is enriched by a diversity of applications. Rudy Bruner Award winners are not selected through an established set of criteria. Rather, the issues emerge from the Selection Committee discussion of the applications.

Each Selection Committee includes the mayor of a large city and other urban experts from across the country, such as architects, planners, developers, financiers, writers, community activists, and others who know and understand cities. The Selection Committee discussion is a national forum for exploring the nature of urban excellence. The Award and its publications bring these discussions to the public domain, and make new models of urban placemaking widely available.

Prizes and Presentation

The Rudy Bruner Award for Urban Excellence is given to five winning projects in each biennial award cycle.

- One Gold Medal Winner is awarded $50,000.
- Four Silver Medal Winners are each awarded $10,000.
- The winning project teams may use prize money in any way that benefits the project.
- All winners are promoted by the Bruner Foundation and are described in books that are published by the Foundation at the end of each award cycle.
- All finalists will be featured in award ceremonies, and a media outreach effort.

2007 Selection Committee

Manuel A. Diaz, Mayor, Miami, FL
Reese Faye, CEO, Living Cities: The National
Community Development Initiative, New York, NY
Robert Krown, Director of Planning, Boston
Redevelopment Agency, Boston, MA
Reed Kroloff, Dean, School of Architecture,
Tulane University, New Orleans, LA
David Perry, Director, Great Cities Institute,
Chicago, IL
Josephine Ramirez, Director of Programming
and Planning, The Music Center, Los Angeles,
CA

2005 Rudy Bruner Award Winners

Gold Medal:
Portland Streetcar Project,
Portland, OR

Silver Medals:
- Artist Relocation Program,
  Paducah, KY
- Downtown Silver Spring Revitalization,
  Silver Spring, MD
- Fruitvale Village,
  Oakland, CA
- The Heidelberg Project,
  Detroit, MI

Site Visitors and Advisors

The following people serve as advisors to the Rudy Bruner Award, and may be present on site visits:

Simeon Bruner, Founder
Emily Axelrod, MCP, Director, Rudy Bruner
Award for Urban Excellence
Jay Farbstein, PhD, FAIA, President,
JayFarbstein & Associates, Los Angeles, CA
Robert Shibley, AIA, ACIP, Dept. of Architecture
and Planning, Director of Urban Design,
SUNY Buffalo, NY
Richard Wener, PhD, Department of Human
Sciences, Polytechnic University, Brooklyn, NY

Rudy Bruner Award Archives

The State University of New York at Buffalo maintains a web site of all Rudy Bruner Award winners. The SUNY web site address is:
http://libweb.lib.buffalo.edu/libraries/projects/bruner/index.html

Some Rudy Bruner Award applications have been recorded on microfiche and are accessible through the Lockwood Memorial Library at the State University of New York at Buffalo, Amherst, NY 14260.

An abstract and key word identification has been prepared for those applications, and can be accessed through two major databases: RLIN/Research Library Information Network, and OCLC/First Search.

The Rudy Bruner Award web site contains on-line case studies and images of past winners as well as Award history and information on our Selection Committees and publications. Please visit the Award site at:
www.brunerfoundation.org

Completed Applications

- Upon submission, applications become the property of the Bruner Foundation, and will not be returned.
- At the close of the award cycle, applications will be permanently housed at the Lockwood Library at the State University of New York at Buffalo.
- Portions of the winner applications will be posted at the Rudy Bruner Award web site:
www.brunerfoundation.org
- Complete winner applications are posted on Lockwood Library’s Rudy Bruner Award Archive web site:
http://libweb.lib.buffalo.edu/bruner
- The Bruner Foundation reserves the right to use, reproduce, or make available to others, the material submitted.

Key Dates:

- Submissions must be received at the Foundation no later than Monday, December 18, 2006.
- Applications received after December 18 will not be considered.
- Five finalists will be notified by Monday, January 29, 2007.
- Site visits to finalists will take place in February, March and April, 2007.
- The Gold and Silver Medal Winners will be selected and notified in May, 2007.
- Presentations of the Rudy Bruner Award for Urban Excellence will be made in May and June of 2007.

Mail Submissions to:
The Rudy Bruner Award for Urban Excellence
Bruner Foundation, Inc.,
130 Prospect Street
Cambridge, Massachusetts 02139

Contact Information:
Tel: 617-492-9407 ext.104
Fax: 617-475-4002
E-Mail: info@brunerfoundation.org
THE RUDY BRUNER AWARD SEEKS TO ILLUMINATE THE COMPLEX PROCESS OF URBAN PLACEMAKING SO THAT IT MAY BE STRENGTHENED TO BETTER REFLECT THE BALANCE BETWEEN FORM AND USE, OPPORTUNITY AND COST, PRESERVATION AND CHANGE.
Manuel A. Diaz
Mayor, Miami, FL

Manny Diaz was elected as Mayor of the City of Miami on November 13, 2001. Mayor Diaz has developed a vision for Miami in which it is an international City that embodies diversity, economic opportunity, effective customer service and a highly rated quality of life.

Under Mayor Diaz crime rates have decreased for the tenth year in a row, and private investment and development have reached unprecedented levels. At last count, over $20 billion dollars worth of development projects are at various stages of the planning process. Under Diaz’s leadership, the city has augmented its world-class profile and has succeeded in attracting new residents. Miami has witnessed a 5 percent growth in population over the past four years.

Mayor Diaz is a member of the Executive Committee and Board of Trustees for the United States Conference of Mayors (USCM). He serves as Chair of the Arts, Parks, Entertainment and Sports Committee, and Co-Chair of the Faith-Based and Community Task Force for the USCM. Mayor Diaz also serves on an advisory board member for both the Manhattan Institute’s Center for Civic Innovation, the University of Pennsylvania’s Institute for Urban Research and the Mayors’ Institute on City Design.

Born on November 5, 1954, in Havana, Cuba, Diaz and his mother, Elisa, left Cuba in 1961. He attended Belen Jesuit Prep School and continued his education at Miami-Dade Community College, Florida International University and the University of Miami Law School.

Reese Fayde
CEO, Living Cities: The National Community Development Institute, New York, NY

Reese Fayde is the Chief Executive Officer of Living Cities: The National Community Development Initiative, a partnership of leading foundations, financial institutions and the federal government, committed to improving the vitality of cities and urban neighborhoods. Living Cities funds the work of community development corporations in 23 cities and uses the lessons of that work to engage in national research and policy development.

Prior to assuming the leadership of Living Cities, Ms. Fayde had extensive experience in the fields of community economic development, affordable housing, and real estate, operating real estate development and consulting firms for over 20 years. Working for foundations, non-profit organizations, local governments and federal agencies, Ms. Fayde provided assistance in organizational development and operations, project design, financial packaging and training.

Ms. Fayde established her own firm in 1979 and prior to that worked for the Massachusetts Housing Finance Agency, the Cambridge and Worcester, MA housing authorities, and a non-profit housing development organization, in those positions she had responsibility for monitoring and operating subsidized housing programs. Ms. Fayde was a Loeb Fellow at Harvard University, has a bachelor’s degree from Clark University and a master’s degree in planning from Boston College. She has taught at Harvard University and Tufts University and provided training seminars nationally. She is a member of the Mayor’s Institute on City Design National Advisory Council and also served as a Director of the Federal Home Loan Bank of New York. Ms. Fayde currently serves on the Board of Preservation of Affordable Housing, Inc.

Robert Kroin, AIA
Director of Planning, Boston Redevelopment Agency, Boston, MA

Robert Kroin is the Chief Architect at the Boston Redevelopment Authority, Boston’s planning and development agency, where he has worked on large-scale planning projects including the South Boston Seaport Plan, the North Station Plan, the Longwood Medical Area Plan, and Downtown Plan efforts, and the creation of planning and zoning initiatives to establish the Boston Civic Design Commission, the Back Bay Architectural Commission, and new zoning for North Station and Cambridge Street. He has worked on more than 550 large and small development projects both public and private, downtown and in the neighborhoods, commercial, institutional and residential, including Rowes Wharf, The Holocaust Memorial, Hynes Auditorium, and the Millennium project.

Mr. Kroin has taught at Harvard as a Critic in Urban Design, at MIT as a Lecturer, and has served on award juries for the Rietz Scholarship, and the Harleston Parker Award, and frequently on juries of student work at the local design schools. He has given seminars on Boston’s urban design and on the issue of contemporary design in an historic context at the 2001 AIA National Convention, and was the keynote speaker at Seattle’s 2000 Urban Design Conference, and at the Boston Society of Architects BuildBoston convention.

Robert Kroin is the recipient of the 1999 Thomas Jefferson Award for Public Architecture, awarded biannually by the American Institute of Architects as the profession’s highest honor in civic design. He received his Master of Architecture degree from Harvard after receiving a Master of Arts in English from Harvard and a BA from Brown, magna cum laude.
Reed Kroloff
Dean, School of Architecture, Tulane University, New Orleans, LA

Reed Kroloff is the Dean of the Tulane University School of Architecture and an independent architectural consultant and commentator. The recipient of the American Academy in Rome’s 2003 Rome Prize Fellowship, Mr. Kroloff previously served as Editor-in-Chief of Architecture magazine. Under his direction, Architecture received more awards for editorial and design excellence than any magazine of its type, and quickly became the leading design publication in the nation.

Prior to joining Architecture in 1995, Mr. Kroloff taught at Arizona State University, where he was a tenured professor, and the Assistant Dean. At ASU he received the first “Award for Academic Excellence” from the Arizona chapter of the American Institute of Architects. Mr. Kroloff advises a range of clients on architect selection and design strategy, including, among others, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, the Ministry of Culture of the Federal Government of Mexico, the Whitney Museum of American Art, the University of Connecticut, and Motown Center. His practice was recently profiled in the New York Times, and the combined construction value of the projects on which he has advised now exceeds $500 million.

Mr. Kroloff writes and lectures widely, and is a regular visiting critic at architecture schools and professional organizations across the country. He holds degrees from the University of Texas at Austin and Yale University, and has practiced architecture in Texas and Arizona. Mr. Kroloff serves on numerous boards and advisory councils in both the public and private sectors.

David C. Perry
Director, Great Cities Institute, University of Illinois at Chicago, Chicago, IL

David C. Perry currently serves as Director of the Great Cities Institute and Professor of Urban Planning and Policy at the University of Illinois at Chicago. The Great Cities Institute is a University-wide, trans-disciplinary research center committed to building community-university partnerships that apply basic research to the great cities of the world, starting with Chicago.

Author of eight books and over 150 articles, book chapters and reports on urban policy, political economy and public infrastructure, Perry is an equally experienced policy practitioner having served on numerous public boards, commissions and research advisory panels. In Chicago, he is a member of the Mayor’s Zoning Reform Commission and has co-chaired the City of Chicago’s Housing Forum on Information Infrastructure. He is a member of the Urban Land Institute’s Chicago Public Policy Committee and the Global Chicago Committee of the Chicago Council on Foreign Relations.

Perry received his PhD from the Maxwell School at Syracuse University and went on to teach in the Government Department at the University of Texas in Austin. From 1982 to 1998, Perry was professor of planning at the School of Planning and Architecture at the State University of New York at Buffalo and senior faculty fellow at the Rockeﬂeber Institute in New York. Perry retains the title of Senior Research Fellow at the International Institute of Communications at San Diego State University. He joined UIC in 1999 as director of the Great Cities Institute.

Josephine Ramirez
Director of Programming and Planning, The Music Center, Los Angeles, CA

In January 2004 Josephine Ramirez joined the Music Center (the Performing Arts Center of Los Angeles County) as Vice President of Programming and Planning, supervising a variety of new civic cultural programming and downtown cultural planning/policy-related endeavors. Previously she was a Program Officer at the Getty Foundation, managing funding areas related to arts leadership development, Los Angeles cultural organizations, arts education research and arts policy. Before her work at the Foundation, Josephine was a Research Associate at the Getty Research Institute creating a multi-year investigation with local non-profits and the Urban Institute that focused on community art making as civic participation.

Prior to the Getty, Josephine was Director of Education, Producer of the Improvisational Theatre Project and Program Producer of the Latino Theatre Initiative at the Mark Taper Forum/Center Theatre Group. Josephine has also participated as an arts consultant to numerous cultural organizations including the National Endowment for the Arts, Inner City Arts, and the Kennedy Center. She was Community Arts Coordinator for the King County Arts Commission in Seattle. She served as Vice President of the Cultural Affairs Commission for the City of Los Angeles and as the Arts & Culture Commissioner for the El Pueblo Historic District.

She is currently on the Board of Directors for Los Angeles’ new public downtown arts high school and a Fellow at the UCLA Center for Civil Society. Josephine earned an MFA in Theatre from the University of Washington and was awarded a 2003 Loeb Fellowship at Harvard University.
2007
RUDY BRUNER AWARD
PROJECT DATA
PROJECT DATA

Please answer questions in space provided. Applicants should feel free to use photocopies of the application forms if needed. If possible, answers to all questions should be typed or written directly on the forms. If the forms are not used and answers are typed on a separate page, each answer must be preceded by the question to which it responds, and the length of each answer should be limited to the area provided on the original form.

Project Name: The House of Dance and Feathers
Location: Lower Ninth Ward, New Orleans, LA

Owner: Ronald W. Lewis

Project Use(s): Mardi Gras Indian Museum, Community and Cultural Center

Project Size: 384 square feet
Total Development Cost: $34,000

Annual Operating Budget (if appropriate): $8,000

Date Initiated: January 2, 2006
Percent Completed by December 1, 2006: 95%

Project Completion Date (if appropriate): Substantial Completion: August 15, 2006

Application submitted by:

Name: Patrick Rhodes
Title: Executive Director
Organization: Project Locus
Address: 1227 Tupelo Street
City/State/Zip: New Orleans, LA 70117
Telephone: (617) 447-6130
Fax: 
E-mail: rhodes8mph@msn.com
Weekend Contact Number (for notification): (617) 447-6130

Key Participants (Attach an additional sheet if needed)

Organization: Project Locus, Kansas State University Architecture Students
Key Participant: Lany Bowne, Architect
Telephone/e-mail: (785) 317-3084 lbowie@ksu.edu

Public Agencies

Architect/Designer: Project Locus, Kansas State University Architecture Students
(617) 447-6130 rhodes8mph@msn.com

Developer: Project Locus
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Professional Consultant: Lany Bowne, Architect
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Community Group: Ronald Lewis, House of Dance and Feathers
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Doug Harmon, Citybuild, New Orleans
(504) 220-0387 dharmon@tulane.edu

Other

Please indicate how you learned of the Rudy Bruner Award for Urban Excellence. (Check all that apply).

Direct Mailing
Magazine Advertisement
Previous RBA entrant
Previous Selection Committee member
Bruner/Loeb Forum
Online Notice
Other (please specify) colleague

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Signature: [Signature]
ABSTRACT

Please answer questions in space provided. Applicants should feel free to use photocopies of the application forms if needed. If possible, answers to all questions should be typed or written directly on the forms. If the forms are not used and answers are typed on a separate page, each answer must be preceded by the question to which it responds, and the length of each answer should be limited to the area provided on the original form.

Project Name  House of Dance and Feathers Mardi Gras Indian Museum, Community and Cultural Center

Address  1317 Tupelo Street  City/State/ZIP  New Orleans, LA 70117  Lower Ninth Ward

1. Give a brief overview of the project, including major project goals.

Immediately following the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina, Project Locus began to address the crisis in New Orleans. In partnership with the Tulane City Center at Tulane University and the University of Arkansas, we developed a pair of conferences comprised of community members, design professionals, students and educators. The result was the establishment of a national consortium of schools, Citybuild, focused on addressing social, economic and environmental issues through architectural, development and research responses. In addition, several independent design-build projects were initiated, including the reconstruction of the House of Dance and Feathers, a Mardi Gras Indian Museum, Community and Cultural Center in the Lower Ninth Ward of New Orleans.

Beginning in January, 2003, Project Locus began organizing the initial phases of the project. Initially, we intended to rebuild only the museum, but it soon became apparent that we must also reconstruct the Lewis Residence. In March, we traveled to New Orleans with 15 architecture students from Kansas State University to raise the original museum, gut Mr. Lewis’ residence, survey, conduct research and schematic design, and hold a community design charrette. During the next two months, the students developed construction documents and budgets for the museum and residence. In April, due to the fundraising efforts of the University of Montana’s Department of Environmental Studies, we received a grant from the Charles Engelhard Foundation for $50,000 for construction of the project. In May, on-site construction began and continued through completion in August. The house and museum were constructed by students from Kansas State, Harvard, Tulane, Berkeley, and IT, among others. The crew was comprised of six members who remained for the entire summer and 30 others who joined in for shorter periods of time. None of the students received pay or college credit for their efforts.

Project Locus viewed the House of Dance and Feathers project as an immediate response in one of the most devastated areas, and as a catalyst for rebuilding. Our intention was to promote design as a tool for affecting positive community change, to generate public awareness and encourage community involvement, to promote cross-cultural and interdisciplinary learning, to preserve the history of the community, and to help reconstruct the shattered social networks of the Lower Ninth Ward and New Orleans. Also, we wanted to bring a family home.

2. Why does the project merit the Rudy Bruner Award for Urban Excellence? (You may wish to consider such factors as: effect on the urban environment; innovative or unique approaches to any aspect of project development; new and creative approaches to urban issues; design quality.)

The devastation of New Orleans caused by Hurricane Katrina was of a scale and scope rarely seen in history, and rarer still in terms of major developed urban centers in modern times. To approach rebuilding in New Orleans as we did, with a small, first step, seemed at times futile, and the task of reconstruction felt insurmountable. Yet, in the face of the devastation, working in a city with unreliable basic services, unstable and nonexistent material and resource streams, and an architecture profession which remained largely unconvinced that New Orleans should be rebuilt, at all, we persevered. And, we did so in a community suffering great hardship and under duress, with determination and a positive spirit.

The House of Dance and Feathers, both the process to reconstruct it and the impression it will make in its community over time, exemplifies the best America can offer. Working in the Lower Ninth, an area which shows much of the same destruction it did just weeks after the storm, our project was the first sign of public construction, and the only public construction project ongoing during the summer months in that neighborhood. It not only demonstrated the effectiveness of localized, institutional design-build programs to assist in community building, but also the success of self-motivated, resolve organizations and individuals to respond to crisis in a grassroots manner when governmental structures founder. The design and construction process was a model of inclusiveness and integration within the community. Ronald Lewis became less a client than an on-site job captain, and ultimately, a partner, mentor and friend.

The museum represents the culmination and preservation of the Mardi Gras Indian folk art culture, distinct in its level of organization, richness and diversity as a movement grown in relatively underprivileged African American communities in New Orleans for more than 250 years. The culture is credited with the birth of jazz. Standing on its own, regardless of the conditions which created it, the building is a handsome structure, though modest, and a beautiful marriage between its form and its function. The museum recalls the vernacular, celebrates progressive materials and a modern aesthetic while pushing innovation in sustainable systems. And, rather than striving for cleanliness and ultimate precision, the process allowed for mistakes and, much like New Orleans, embraced the real, messy and funky relationships that resulted.

Finally, those involved in the House of Dance and Feathers project should be commended for acting when others would not or could not act, and for having faith in the American city and the resiliency of its people.
PROJECT DESCRIPTION

Please answer questions in space provided. Applicants should feel free to use photocopies of the application forms if needed. If possible, answers to all questions should be typed or written directly on the forms. If the forms are not used and answers are typed on a separate page, each answer must be preceded by the question to which it responds, and the length of each answer should be limited to the area provided on the original form.

1. Describe the underlying values of the project. What, if any, significant trade-offs were required to implement the project?

Project Locus is a grassroots organization committed to educating architects and rebuilding communities through the sensitive design and construction of public structures in areas of need. We intend to offer the opportunity for higher architectural education to expand its curriculum from 'paper architecture' to the creation of real buildings and to sow a moral sense of service within the community. The architecture profession has an ethical responsibility to help improve living conditions for the poor and disadvantaged. We hope to challenge architects to move the status quo towards the making of responsible environmental and social changes, and towards the creation of an architecture of decency, which elevates the spirit and better the human condition.

Our goal is to enable each participating student to cross the threshold of cultural and social disparity to create, design, and to ultimately build, and to allow them to put their educational values to work as members of a community. Project Locus seeks to provide, at no cost, practical, yet beautiful, architectural solutions to the needs of impoverished communities who would otherwise be unable to afford such efforts. Our aim is to practice within the limits of the vernacular and context of the community, and to create a sense of place that is warm, dry, and noble. The House of Dance and Feathers project encompassed all of these ideals and was an opportunity to bring attention to the conditions in the Lower Ninth Ward, to celebrate the rich Mardi Gras Indian culture and, in responding so quickly, to inspire the rebuilding effort.

In taking on the museum project, it became evident that we must deviate from our mission to build public structures in order to take on the reconstruction of the Lewis residence. It would have been senseless to build the museum in the back yard of a destroyed and vacant house with its owners living in exile an hour west of the city. This meant, because funding for the rebuilding of private homes is non-existant, that the funding earmarked for the museum construction would have to include the building of Ronald's home. While this meant that we would not be able to be as aggressive with the design and detailing of the museum, the project had a real sense of purpose and, when finished, gave us all a great sense of pride to see Ronald and Charlotte step across the threshold.

2. How has the project impacted the local community? Please include relevant information on urban context.

The House of Dance and Feathers has had an impact on many levels. Nationally and internationally, schools of architecture, planning, and policy have come to New Orleans to assist in the rebuilding effort and have used the project as a gathering point and springboard for their own work. Media coverage of the project, including ABC national news, the New York Times, and the New Yorker has heightened the visibility of our work in the public eye and raised awareness of the situation in New Orleans. Inclusion in the 2006 Venice Biennale, an exhibit next summer in the Smithsonian's Cooper Hewitt National Design Museum, and the December 2006 issue of Architectural Record is helping to garner support and encourage participation within the architecture and design professions. The museum, in serving the public, has become a central gathering place, an information hub and a bright spot in a community with little hope. An aspect of the Mardi Gras Indian culture requires that during their parades, tribes must have stops in place along the route, which can sometimes be up to four hours in length. On Mardi Gras day, 2007, the House of Dance and Feathers will be the starting point and the final stop on the Choctaw Hunters tribe's parade route. In the long term, we hope the House of Dance and Feathers will become a binding agent for the city in its education of a younger generation through the preservation of a culture.

Evidence that the project fulfilled the mission of Project Locus and that our work had a direct impact on the local community was obvious toward the end of the summer when, learning that I had been offered a position to teach at Tulane University and would be returning to New Orleans, several residents offered me their homes. In fact, I accepted a room in a house a few doors down from the Lewis' on Tupelo Street and continue to live there. It is the clearest sense of community I have experienced.
3. Describe the key elements of the development process, including community participation where appropriate.

The House of Dance and Feathers project was an exceptional example of a collaborative, interdisciplinary, and cross-cultural creative process bringing together practitioners, both professional and academic, from across the country and around the world. Immediately following Hurricane Katrina, when Project Locus began the process, we were not connected in any tangible way to the architecture profession or local community in New Orleans, and were required to invent each step in developing the project.

In September, when I did not know who to contact in the aftermath, I posted a call to action of the architecture community on the internet which was read by Dan Etheridge, a survivor of the storm and researcher at Tulane's Center for Bioenvironmental Research. Our resulting conversations led to a pair of conferences attended by community members and professionals aimed at an immediate response, and laid the groundwork for the project. In the spring, when funding sources were scarce for our aggressive timetable, students and professors at the University of Montana's Environmental Studies program made a commitment to us to help raise money for construction, and managed in the next few weeks to raise $50,000 for the project. During spring break in March, the local community took us in, introduced us to their way of life and gave us their trust when we were outsiders and a potential risk in a sensitive and damaged landscape. When we were planning the construction and faced with building in a community without power, the University of Montana offered to build us a trailer outfitted with solar panels that powered our tools throughout the summer and provided security for our shop equipment. During the construction, when we were unsure in our decisions due to our inexperience in building, Ronald Lewis became our mentor and fellow project manager on site. Because we were all struggling to finish the project by the deadline and couldn't spend the time advertising our work, Citybuild and member schools did their best to get the word out. And at the end of the project, when I needed a home, the community made a place for me to become a part of their lives and to continue my work to rebuild their neighborhood.

4. Describe the financing of the project. Please include all funding sources and square foot costs where applicable.

Major funding for the project was provided by a grant from the Charles Engelhard Foundation in the amount of $50,000. The grant was awarded when Tom Roy of the University of Montana approached the foundation and introduced them to the House of Dance and Feathers project and Project Locus. They were impressed with our mission and dedication to the residents of the Lower Ninth Ward, and contributed the funds with no strings attached.

Additional funds were provided in the form of $15,000 in FEMA funds awarded to Ronald Lewis to rebuild his home, and in-kind donations provided by local and national companies. These latter contributions were secured by a third-year architecture student with no prior experience in development and under very rigid time constraints. The students' food costs during construction were offset by frequent barbecues organized by Ronald and local residents Yacky and MeMe.

Although final accounting is underway, the estimated cost of construction for the museum is $34,000, and the house was rebuilt for $40 to $50 per square foot.

5. Is the project unique and/or does it address significant urban issues? Is the model adaptable to other urban settings?

The rebuilding of the House and Dance and Feathers represents the reconstruction of a central element in the traditions of New Orleans and one of the most unique folk art cultures in America. As an architectural response to Hurricane Katrina, the project was distinctive in its timeliness to react to the crisis, and was a unique opportunity for a group of designers to be able to take action to help rebuild and restore a destroyed American city. Despite its rareness, the design-build and development process demonstrated is highly replicable and adaptable to underserved communities around the world, both rural and urban. In the words of the late Samuel Mockbee,

"I would like to see more rural or urban studios in places like Africa, the Philippines, or on Indian reservations. To teach students critically about the world, they need to be out in the world. An architectural studio needs to be subversive. What I mean by that is that it can't just address the current social, economic, and political structures. We have to challenge the status quo in order to allow for a better future."
2007
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ARCHITECT
OR DESIGNER
PERSPECTIVE
ARCHITECT OR DESIGNER PERSPECTIVE

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This sheet is to be filled out by a design professional who worked as a consultant on the project, providing design, planning, or other services. Copies may be given to other design professionals if desired.

Name Jason Fedak, Caitlin Heckathom, Kyle Wedel
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1. Describe the design concept of this project, including urban design considerations, choice of materials, scale, etc.

Concepts and considerations were derived from direct exposure to the Ninth Ward's broken landscape and severed community most importantly through Ronald Lewis and other residents, fellow academics and aided research into the historical predisposition of this landscape to disaster both politically and climatically. Aside from the obvious tectonic preconceptions of rebuilding to accommodate water, as a group we never lost sight of the community strong-hold potential this 384 sqft museum and residence could have on the preservation and representation of Mardi Gras Indians and the history of African Americans in New Orleans. With a Mardi Gras Indian museum already in existence and untouched by flood waters, we were able to make reference to it as a working replica of Ronald Lewis's vision to better understand Indian masking in all of its political upbringing, how display the artifacts, as well as pinpoint the ideal spatial requirements for such. Increasing our background knowledge of these traditions inevitably produced a straightforward program by merging the necessary climatic adaptations with a historical display space unique to New Orleans.

Design considerations included: public and community need and interest in the construction of a cultural museum; suspended display capabilities within a climatically adaptive work space; emergency artifact-salvage techniques; structure that will breath air and water incorporated with cladding needing no continuous care after installation; accessibility and accommodation of the public; significant levels of residential privacy yet accommodating a 'front porch' mentality; humble material uses which offspring local vernacular; implementation of recycled materials and resourcefulness; pre-fabrication and ease of replacement.

2. Describe the most important social and programmatic functions of the design.

"Front porch sitting" is one of most simple acts imaginable while paradoxically being one of the most difficult design implications to artificially reproduce its community benefits in any other way. Community interaction comes so naturally in the Lower Ninth Ward it would be both foolish and insensitive not to acknowledge this aspect of their culture and neighborhood way of life.

The design implements the concept of the front porch by creating a visual link and physical connection to the street from the interior of the building as well as the exterior. Wrapping an outdoor patio from the museum to the residence continues the theme of the front porch. This simple act not only unifies the two structures, but also creates an open area from the negative space to gather for activities integral to the culture such as barbeques and live music.

The most important function of our design was what we had never planned for in any climatic research or schematic sketch; it was how beautifully a small group of people can team up to reinstate one family rooted in New Orleans and become a preeminent core of such an eclectic bunch of volunteers, workers, and interest groups, all working based on the shared belief that a community can be revived with a genuine care and a hard work. These sincere efforts have proved to go a long way in helping others.

When Ronald was a young man, community social events included Mardi Gras Indian parading and brought people together through costume making. This pertained to those around him as well as other neighborhoods in New Orleans. So as these events continue every year, so does the social gathering within each neighborhood, Indian tribe, and other New Orleans residents who are not apart of the process. This epitomizes the concept of community. By reconstructing a museum devoted to these celebrations of human freedom and life, we have helped rehabilitate social networks as well as sustain a rich cultural craft and traditions by education, all through a passion to serve.
3. Describe the major challenges of designing this project and any design trade-offs or compromises required to complete the project.

Finding aid and support was the biggest struggle in approaching the project. We were forced to be creative by initially planning for prefabrication outside of New Orleans, which was not feasible due to shortage in volunteers during the planning and design phase. Upon onset of construction we discovered an architectural salvage and recycling program that helped our team by donating materials and selling us items at reduced pricing that made construction possible.

One of the most difficult aspects in pulling the project together initially was discovering those who share the same passions and visions with all of the young and inexperienced designers. As was primarily students who spent considerable amounts of time working out the logistics of building processes, it seemed experienced designers and professionals were more willing to be a part of the volunteer labor rather than the design and fundraising. There was no lack of continuous support from within the student population, but more sporadic involvement from institutional faculty and professionals.

As labor came strictly from volunteer workers, there were times when successful completion was in question. With each week came new groups of students and volunteers through Project Locus. In the end, there were even students from Tulane University who were excused from classes to help tie up lose ends before the opening. This kind of help could not have been planned for and made it uncertain at times. However, that is one downfall to doing this kind of work through a non-profit organization.

Resourcefulness is a challenging idea in itself, but also very exciting and makeshift. If our budget had been unlimited and spending frivolous, the museum's design and execution would lack the southern charm and character it has been given through building craft. Funding constraints were a setback, but also an innovative push forward for design students and an inexpensive forward way of thinking for the residents of New Orleans.

4. Describe the ways in which the project relates to its urban context.

This museum demarcates a place in time, which signifies struggles overcome and freedom of expression by the African American population; what Americans stand for, collectively, as individuals. In planning efforts for this project we have strived to put the Lower Ninth Ward back on the map. In the larger urban context it has brought together students, designers, professionals, volunteers, businesses, and organizations who all share common visions of preservation and change from inside New Orleans. Not to mention people reaching out from across the country to help those in need of hope, desire to live, and support in rebuilding their lives post evacuation.

In the local context, we constructed a museum for public use and private workspace, which creates opportunities for tourists and residents to appreciate a significant part of history that Mr. Lewis has captured in his hand-crafted costumes over the last 40+ years, located in Ronald's own backyard. All the residents in and around the Lower Ninth Ward know of Ronald and his life-long friends whom he has worked so closely over the years and are in turn celebrated by the museum along side the artifacts.

New Orleans, currently, is forced to rely on social contexts outside of their own geographic location for support. So a project like the rebuilding of the House of Dance and Feathers is not confined to rely on its own urban context for reserves, but rather the ability of organizations like Project Locus to bring physical and mental health to community rejuvenations. Therefore, it creates a greater urban context which New Orleans previously lied within. In the future, people will remember the Hurricane Katrina tragedy as one which called together the support of persons outside of New Orleans, not solely the individual workings of small neighborhoods.

The House of Dance and Feathers allows Ronald Lewis to continue representing the residents as a driving force through preservation and education of New Orleans historic culture. Mr. Lewis also advocates political fairness and awareness from within the Lower Ninth Ward community, therefore, through his continued work in the educational and social networking of New Orleans, our hopes are that visitors and followers of the House of Dance and Feathers will acknowledge and appreciate the ongoing celebrations and traditions of Mardi Gras Indians, Social Aid and Pleasure clubs, second line parading, and the elaborate costume art that men and women construct for self-expression during the Mardi Gras season.
**COMMUNITY REPRESENTATIVE PERSPECTIVE**

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This sheet is to be filled out by someone who was involved, or represents an organization that was involved, in helping the project respond to neighborhood issues.

**Name**: Ronald Lewis  
**Title**: Founder, Curator and Executive Director

**Organization**: House of Dance and Feathers Mardi Gras Indian Museum  
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**Address**: 1317 Tupelo Street  
**City/State/ZIP**: New Orleans, LA 70117

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**Signature**: [Signature]

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1. **How did you, or the organization you represent, become involved in this project? What role did you play?**

   Before the storm, I was an associate of Sylvester Francis and the Backstreet Cultural Museum in the Treme District. Working at the Backstreet, the single museum dedicated to the Mardi Gras Indian culture in New Orleans at the time, gave me the desire to open a museum in my own neighborhood, which I did in the summer of 2002. The Ninth Ward had no such thing as a cultural center dedicated to preserving the true history of New Orleans and its people. It gave me a chance to educate the younger generation and the larger community of the Ninth Ward about our rich culture.

   After Katrina, my home, my neighbor's homes, and my little museum were completely destroyed. I wanted to help rebuild my neighborhood, and I became a liaison between my community and young designers and other professionals who had come down to offer us assistance. After attending the Reinhabiting New Orleans conference in November, 2005, I was put in touch with Patrick Rhodes and Project Locus, and the rest is history.

2. **From the community's point of view, what were the major issues concerning this project?**

   There were so many issues confronting our community at the time. First was the question of trust of these outsiders who had been flooding in to offer help. It was a major concern. In my mind, the Ninth Ward needed desperately to gain some stability, to show some signs of recovery, and I felt that rebuilding the House of Dance and Feathers could give something back, as a public place, to everyone in New Orleans, and inspire others to return and rebuild.

   We were all worried, however, about the possible failure of the project, due to the level of devastation in the area, and that it would actually have a negative effect.

3. **What trade-offs and compromises were required during the development of the project? How did your organization participate in making them?**

   For me, personally, there were many tradeoffs. During the development and construction of the House of Dance and Feathers, my wife and I were living 80 miles west of New Orleans in the middle of sugar cane fields in Thibodaux, Louisiana, my ancestral home. Finding places to stay in New Orleans to stay close to the project and help move it forward was a daily struggle. Although my finances were spread very thin, it was absolutely necessary to be an integral part of the process, to be on site everyday to provide my own expertise and encouragement to the students.
4. Has this project made the community a better place to live or work? If so, how?

In light of what has happened, not only the total devastation of Katrina, but also the lack of attention-neglect, really-by the city, state and federal government to help us rebuild, Project Locus restoring the House of Dance and Feathers has had a tremendous positive impact in my community.

During the summer, the project was the only construction happening in my neighborhood, and it soon became a central gathering place, a hub for information, and a place of congregating; a true 'locus' point. The House of Dance and Feathers has created a place with an atmosphere for everyone, including families and children, of hope and rebuilding. It has given the Choctaw Hunters a place to parade from and to on Mardi Gras Day next year.

Also, the project has given us Patrick Rhodes, and we are all very happy and proud to have him in our community.

5. Would you change anything about this project or the development process you went through?

There were many aspects of the project that, at the time, were less than desirable for me. It was nerve-racking to work with such a young, maverick organization with so many short-time crew members, working a week or two at a time. On future projects, I might opt for working with independent contractors rather than relying so heavily on family, friends, and their recommendations. And, although their intentions were good, some of the equipment choices of the crew, such as the on-demand hot water heater, should be reconsidered-it has had problems and is difficult to find someone to service it.

Yet, despite these problems, and the fact that my family was dependent completely on Project Locus to bring us home, in working with Patrick Rhodes I was always very confident we would finish. Being able to spend Thanksgiving Day this year back in my own home with all of my family and friends, including Patrick, wiped away all of those negatives.
COMMUNITY REPRESENTATIVE PERSPECTIVE

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This sheet is to be filled out by someone who was involved, or represents an organization that was involved, in helping the project respond to neighborhood issues.

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1. How did you, or the organization you represent, become involved in this project? What role did you play?

I became involved in the House of Dance and Feathers when I met Ronald Lewis and Patrick Rhodes at the Reinhabling NOLA workshop in November of 2005. This workshop brought together architects, planners, artists, community organizers, and residents from different neighborhoods around the city to talk about plans for rebuilding. Ronald is a resident of the Lower Ninth Ward in New Orleans, the president of the Big Nine Social and Pleasure Club and the director and curator of the small museum. Patrick was a visiting professor at Kansas State and the director of Project Locus. Part of my duties for their workshop was to give a tour of the flooded neighborhoods. Throughout our drive, Ronald explained the social landscape of the Ninth Ward. At the end of the two-day event, he said if anyone could help him with his house, he would greatly appreciate it.

A few weeks later, Patrick hosted an event at University of Arkansas that brought together design/build programs from around the country to talk about their involvement in the rebuilding. I spoke at the event as part of a contingent of Reinhabling NOLA organizers. We presented Ronald's museum as a possible project to get involved with and Patrick agreed to take it on.

2. From the community's point of view, what were the major issues concerning this project?

There were a lot of complicated issues to tackle with this project. To begin with, it soon became clear that Patrick and Project Locus couldn't rebuild Ronald's museum without rebuilding his home. However, Ronald's part of the Lower Ninth Ward was severely flooded and for first few months that Patrick was beginning to work on the project, residents were not allowed to move back to the neighborhood. Once money was secured for the building of both the house and the museum, they had to navigate through the changing landscape of the city's regulations about rebuilding.

How would a piece of contemporary architecture fit into the flooded landscape of 1930s/1940s homes in the Lower Nine? Patrick and his students at Kansas State designed a number of possibilities for both structures, and brought them back to New Orleans. Ronald hosted a barbeque for the entire neighborhood and people around the Lower Ninth Ward took a break from gutting houses to reconnect. In the back of Ronald's, Patrick's students knocked up drawings and Ronald's family and friends were talked through the different possibilities. They loved the new house plans, and Ronald said, "If y'all rebuild my house, I am comfortable with you doing some different with the museum."

3. What trade-offs and compromises were required during the development of the project? How did your organization participate in making them?

The biggest challenge of this design/build project was the time frame. Patrick had the spring semester of 2006 to design the project, and then the summer to build it. He had secured funding by promising to build the museum, but was committed to getting Ronald into his home as the first priority. I was impressed with how Patrick was able to recognize and balance the tension between the practicalities of helping Ronald get his family back to the city, and working on a beautiful piece of architecture. One of the things that I love about the museum is that it is new, but speaks to the spirit of the city and the Ninth Ward in particular. Patrick talked with his students a lot about how they need to account for the cultural and physical geography of their site. He taught them not to design in a vacuum—to take the nuances of everyday life and aesthetic and incorporate them into the design. At times, I think this was a struggle for his students, but one that has made them better architects.
COMMUNITY REPRESENTATIVE PERSPECTIVE (CONT'D)

4. Has this project made the community a better place to live or work? If so, how?

One of the great pleasures of being involved in this project was how many people’s lives it touched. Patrick and Ronald were true collaborators. While Patrick tapped into his networks and knowledge to (re)build the structures, Ronald tapped into his networks and strengths as a community organizer and public speaker to fuel the reconstruction of the Lower Ninth Ward.

Ronald saw his rebuilding project as a way to give his neighborhood confidence to come back home. He is one of the most amazing hosts I’ve ever met. After the initial barbeque, he was at the work site almost every day with Patrick and his students—helping lay concrete, going to get water, cooking for everyone, talking with neighbors and interested reporters, and groups from out of town. As people took ‘disaster tours’ of the Lower Ninth Ward, they would come by Ronald’s house to get a history of the community and a lesson on the culture. Ronald is a great teacher—challenging and generous at the same time. Whether he was talking to National Public Radio, photography students at an art school in town, or a neighbor who was just returning home to search for lost relatives, he was able to offer a perspective on the neighborhood that made people want to get more involved.

The grand opening of the museum was a huge success with neighbors, residents from around the city, and architecture professors and colleagues from around the country. Since the event, Ronald has set up his exhibits and his doors are open. In addition to this community service, he has also funneled resources to other neighbors who are rebuilding. When teams of volunteers come to town looking for projects to get involved in, Ronald connects them with Lower Nine residents in need of help.

5. Would you change anything about this project or the development process you went through?

The only thing I would have changed was the timeframe and the financial crunches. Patrick’s organization, Project Locus, is an incredible model for community-based design, but like many nonprofits, all resources and time are stretched to a limit. Patrick was committed to professionalism despite the constraints, but this meant he was working triple-time. I would like him to harness enough resources to be able to create a more sustainable organizational model. While the project was a resounding success, Project Locus as an organization will not be able to continue at the pace it is going without some structural shifts. To be able to do so, it will need financial commitments from foundations like Rudy Bruner, who believe in the work and the people who make it possible.
DEVELOPER PERSPECTIVE

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This sheet is to be filled out by the person who took primary responsibility for project financing or is a representative of the group which did.

Name  Patrick Rhodes  Title  Executive Director
Organization  Project Locus  Telephone  (617) 447-6130
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1. What role did you or your organization play in the development of this project? Describe the scope of involvement.

   Project Locus was the principal developer in the House of Dance and Feathers project and was involved in every aspect of development including identifying need and client, proposal development and fundraising, schematic design and construction.

2. What trade-offs or compromises were required during the development of the project?

   In taking on the museum project, it became evident that we must deviate from our mission to build public structures in order to take on the reconstruction of the Lewis residence. It would have been senseless to build the museum in the back yard of a destroyed and vacant house with its owners living in exile an hour west of the city. This meant, because funding for the rebuilding of private homes is non-existent, that the funding earmarked for the museum construction would have to include the building of Ronald’s home. As a result, we were not able to be as aggressive with the design and detailing of the museum as we would have liked. An important goal of the project was to raise awareness of the conditions in the Ninth Ward. Because the museum would be built in the rear yard of a house, the visibility of the project would be compromised. While the site conditions were unavoidable, our solution was to make the building more conspicuous through its design, and more specifically the design of the floating roof.

3. How was the project financed? What, if any, innovative means of financing were used?

   Major financing for the project was in the form of a generous grant from the Charles Engelhard Foundation. Also, Ronald Lewis contributed $15,000 in FEMA funds toward the construction of the residence. Additional in-kind donations were secured by the student design and construction team, totaling more than $10,000 in equipment and materials.

   The corrugated roof metal was donated by a brother of a neighbor of Ronald Lewis, saving us more than $2000. We used the Green Project, a local reuse center, extensively, employing recycled and sustainable methods whenever possible.
DEVELOPER PERSPECTIVE

4. How did the economic impacts of this project on the community compare with or differ from other projects you have been involved in?

I worked for several years in Los Angeles in an architecture firm which focused on large, affordable multi-family and senior housing projects. In every case, our clients were sizeable development corporations who, while producing meaningful and noble work, were concerned with the bottom line. Each project was prefaced by a feasibility study and analysis of the return on investment. Financing projects in the nonprofit sector raise the same issues. More often than not, prospective donors are interested in the measurable financial impact of the work they are financing, and rightfully so.

The potential economic impact of the House of Dance and Feathers is both possibly immeasurable and uncertain. The effect the project will have on inspiring rebuilding in the Lower Ninth neighborhood is immense, yet without the support of local and national government and the private sector, rebuilding may not happen. While we personally know of several residents who decided to return only after visiting the project during the summer, and hundreds more inspired by those few, the choice of most of the community to return is not solely their own. Without restored infrastructure and basic services, returning to the Lower Ninth is difficult.

5. What about this project would be instructive to other developers?

While it may not seem practical nor, on the surface, responsible to invest in people that do not demonstrate the potential for a good return on investment, many communities depend on developers willing to take certain risks. The future of underserved, marginalized and dying communities, like the Lower Ninth Ward will require courageous investment from those who evaluate their benefit based on a different set of principles. In the end, if it is not possible to do something smart, do something right.

6. What do you consider to be the most and least successful aspects of this project?

While planners, architects, city and national government are debating the viability of the Lower Ninth Ward, the resiliency of its residents, whether they would return, and what type of a green space to create when they will not, the House of Dance and Feathers project has shown the desire and capacity of the people to rebuild, and demonstrated accepting and compassionate nature of the community. Despite early criticism and skepticism, Project Locus confirmed its ability to become fully integrated and a necessary part of a new and unfamiliar place.

The most unsuccessful aspect of the project is its inability to yet prove the viability of the Lower Ninth Ward community to the powers that be.
2007 RUDY BRUNER AWARD PROFESSIONAL CONSULTANT PERSPECTIVE

RUDY BRUNER AWARD FOR URBAN EXCELLENCE
PROFESSIONAL CONSULTANT PERSPECTIVE

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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Title</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
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<td>Architect</td>
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1. What role did you or your organization play in the development of this project?

My role on the project was two-fold: first, I am a licensed architect; and second, I am a professor of architecture at Kansas State University, where my former colleague Patrick Rhodes taught during the 2005/2006 academic year. I worked on the House of Dance and Feathers as both architect and educator.

My involvement on the project began in the fall of 2005, shortly after I served as a panelist at the Arkansas Summit, organized by Patrick Rhodes. On our return to Kansas, Patrick and I strategized how we might lead a group of undergraduates down to New Orleans over winter break to work on the Lewis house and museum. Patrick and I drafted a proposal to the college, which I attempted to shepherd through our approvals process. The proposal was rejected, but that document became the basis for a later, successful grant application.

Throughout the spring, I lived in Tuscany, teaching in K-State’s study abroad program. On my return, I met regularly with Patrick to brainstorm how we might coordinate work happening in Manhattan, KS with site work going on under Patrick’s direction in New Orleans. We reviewed code and zoning issues, discussed fabrication options, and brainstormed tactics and procedures.

In August of 2006, I spent a week on site, working mostly with current and former K-State students. As I have taught most of them in my building technology lecture course, it was a pleasure for me to collaborate with them as they attempted to address the difficulties in realizing their design intentions on-site.

3. Describe the project’s impact on its community. Please be as specific as possible.

I would like to consider three communities in response to this question. First, and most significantly, I have witnessed the impact the construction of the House of Dance and Feathers—as well the restoration of Ronald and Charlotte Lewis’s home—has had on the Lower Ninth Ward community. By rebuilding his property grander and better than it was before the devastation of Katrina, Ronald has given his neighbors on Tupelo Street and beyond a deep and abiding faith that they, too, can rebuild. Every day I was on site, neighbors strolled onto the property, locals wandered in, and townspeople stopped by: the job site was proof that the Lower Ninth had not collapsed entirely, would not give in, would struggle forward.

Ronald’s example had direct agency; people ate at our evening barbecues, shared tips and advice on dealing with the city, salvaged construction remnants for their own reconstruction, and the like. The site became a sort of ad hoc community center. The site gave hope.

Second, the work of Project Legacy has a broad address to organizations and institutions working on community-based design/build projects. In its successful realization, the project might serve as a case study for our peers at other universities and foundations. A special fact about the House of Dance and Feathers, however, is that our project moved forward without support from our home university’s department and college. Design/build has a contentious legacy at K-State and our efforts proceeded without institutional backing: students received no credit and faculty sponsors were not permitted the use of university property or facilities. In spite of these obstacles, we persisted. Ultimately, I attribute the success of the project to the resilient passion of Patrick Rhodes, the steady support of a few of our colleagues at Kansas State, and the unflagging dedication of our students. Our collective efforts can serve as an example to individuals and institutions nationwide who wish to initiate community service projects—whether they have backing or not. This last group comprises the third community I wish to consider. For weeks on end, students of architecture, interior architecture and landscape architecture worked in the hot and humid New Orleans summer, receiving neither income nor expenses nor college credit. They worked out of conviction and a sense of belonging, and they worked under trying and adverse conditions. Some of the students started the summer shy or tentative; their work on Ronald Lewis’s property gave them confidence and bearing they had not known or demonstrated previously. To see a youth become an adult before your eyes is a wonderful thing, and the students who followed Patrick down to New Orleans, volunteered their summer break, and applied their training towards humanitarian ends made lasting impression on me as an architectural educator.
4. How might this project be instructive to others in your profession?

As above, I write as both an architect and educator. I see three ways in which the House of Dance and Feathers might ameliorate not just architectural education but the broader discipline of environmental design.

First, I believe that our work in New Orleans provides an example to design professionals that small-scale, pro-bono work can make a difference in the life of a family, a community, and a city. People have good intentions, but they often do not know how to direct their energies. The House of Dance and Feathers demonstrates that architecture need not be inexorably linked to privilege and patronage.

Second, I believe that educators at other universities-who have watched our efforts, monitored our progress, and critiqued our product—might be inspired and guided by our work on the Lewis property.

Finally, I believe that my efforts with Patrick Rhodes in New Orleans have specifically impacted my colleagues here at K-State, encouraging a much healthier approach to how and whether students and faculty at K-State might initiate design/build projects. Several actions seem to be underway now, with significant administrative support, and I would argue that the lessons of New Orleans (our success, but also the college’s difficulty in claiming a share of that success) have prompted a revised understanding of the merits of undertaking community-service design/build projects.

4. What do you consider to be the most and least successful aspects of this project?

As an architect practicing in a corporate consumer capitalist economy, I would suggest that the most successful aspect of the project was that it was completed on time and on budget. As an architect practicing in the hallowed tradition of building, I would suggest that the second most successful aspect of the project is that it is beautiful to behold. Its massing is clear and simple and direct, and yet it has a roof that flutters over the box below, letting in light and drawing in breezes. Its beauty has a character uniquely appropriate to 2006 New Orleans: the thing is a little bit Space Age and a little bit Honky Tonk. The building is special.

Of course there are other merits, outside the purely architectural: the House of Dance and Feathers offers hope amidst a landscape of despair. The project gave voice and venue to the communal aspirations of our student volunteers. For me personally, the project helped me see how I might bridge my professional experience in practice to my role as an architectural educator.

The House of Dance and Feathers has been widely acclaimed: it was featured in the Venice Biennale this fall, is in the December issue of Architectural Record, is scheduled to appear at the Cooper Hewitt National Design Museum in the spring. These successes belong to the project organizers, the faculty advisors, the student volunteers, the community activists, and to Ronald and Charlotte Lewis themselves. My biggest regret, however, is that my university—out of anxieties about liability, potential negative publicity, or fear of failure—could not participate in the accolades the project has received. The work should have become for us an exemplar, and while the participants know their contributions, the school they work for and studied at seems to have missed a great opportunity.
2007 RUDY BRUNER AWARD 
OTHER PERSPECTIVE
OTHER PERSPECTIVE

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Signature:

1. What role did you play in the development of this project?

The CITYbuild Consortium played a supporting role in the development and execution of this project largely by connecting Patrick Rhodes and Project Locus to other schools that could contribute supplementary resources and expertise, such as a mobile tool storage/solar power supply unit and bioremediation and landscape architecture services. CITYbuild also assisted in fundraising, administrative support, publicizing the summer volunteer opportunities among universities and helping to recruit and supply volunteers.

Describe the impact that this project has had on the your community. Please be as specific as possible.

From the standpoint of the CITYbuild Consortium, the term "community" has two meanings - the academic (or educational) community and the local community (or neighborhood).

Educationally, this project serves as an exemplary model for the potential of service-learning academic programs. The project involved the collaborative participation of volunteer students from a number of schools, including: Kansas State University, Boston College, Illinois Institute of Technology, the University of Montana and Tulane University as well as local and national design professionals. The educational impact on all the students involved is immeasurable both in terms of applied practical knowledge and the deepening of values and convictions regarding the social responsibility of the design profession. Students were deeply invested in the entire process and had to develop a sensitivity, courage and responsive intelligence to successfully meet the physical, social and cultural needs brought forward through this project.

Simultaneously, as established by the project's mission and leadership, it was imperative that the House of Dance and Feathers be engrained in the local community throughout the entire process. This concern ensured that the project would have relevance and significance to a great number of people in the community through their contribution. It was truly a communal effort, relying on many different resident experts (a kind of modern barn-raising), and it has become a catalyst for return and redevelopment of a heavily damaged neighborhood.

Lives have been impacted at every level - students learning from community members and community members learning from students, everyone making a critical contribution. The House of Dance and Feathers embodies hope at work and stands as a sign of rebirth in what was previously a hopeless landscape.

At CITYbuild, we use this project to demonstrate both the profound educational opportunity such an endeavor allows as well as the opportunity for academic programs to make a significant contribution to the rebuilding effort, beginning with a focus on communities.
OTHER PERSPECTIVE (CONT'D)

Working in the Lower 9th Ward of New Orleans only months after the hurricane presented virtually an infinite number of obstacles and non-ideal conditions. The completion of the House of Dance and Feathers is a testament to the creative vision and agile leadership which enabled it to happen. Every obstacle became an opportunity for improvisation and new creative solution which ultimately enriched the project. It was full of compromises from an ideal standpoint - starting with no power or running water, scrambling for funds and available materials, using a continually changing, minimally experienced crew, making design changes on the fly - yet each challenge left marks of character that echo (and reflect) a resourceful and resilient community.

Some of the most successful aspects have previously been mentioned - the educational impact for students and community members alike, the rich collaborative, community-building effort and the project as a catalyst for neighborhood rebirth. But I cannot talk about the successes of the House of Dance and Feathers without focusing on the beauty and power of the design and the way in which it embodies and animates the culture it is celebrating. The Mardi Gras Indian culture is very much a product of the local and everyday, yet through its celebration becomes transcendent. It is not about perfection, but about the reverent imperfections of life lived at the highest standards of humanity and dignity, regardless of socio-economic position. This is where character and personality truly emerge, inextricably linked to communal relationships through humility and generosity. The House of Dance and Feathers as a design did not start out with this personality and character - it emerged through the process, involving the care and labor of many different individuals unified according to this common, respectful concern. It must be pointed out that Ronald Lewis, the owner and curator of the House of Dance and Feathers, is the person responsible for conveying clearly the heart and spirit of the project. What has been produced is arguably the first-ever significant built artifact representing this important American culture.

Because of its location behind a rather conventional residence and in a currently marginalized and underpopulated area of New Orleans, the House of Dance and Feathers does not have the kind of profile one might think it deserves or is required to make a significant contribution according to a standard of attention-grabbing agendas. However, its humble and unremarkable positioning do more to convey its true spirit. And it becomes a just reward for making the trip to this battered area. Once you stumble upon it there is no mistaking that you are encountering something extraordinary.
OTHER PERSPECTIVE

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1. What role did you play in the development of this project?

The Tulane City Center (TCC) first developed a relationship with Ronald Lewis and The House of Dance and Feathers as part of our community outreach agenda in the months following Hurricane Katrina. Mr. Lewis declared that he was seeking architectural and construction assistance to repair his museum and his home so he could act as a beacon of hope and informal community center for the rebuilding of his immediate Lower 9th Ward neighborhood. Project Locus approached the TCC looking to not only find projects for themselves to become involved with, but also to take on a leadership role in encouraging and facilitating the involvement of pro bono architectural services in the rebuilding efforts.

We arranged the initial meetings between Project Locus and Mr. Lewis and talked with Mr. Lewis about the initial scheduling and budget issues associated with this project. We also coordinated the involvement of other volunteers who prepared the site while fundraising was happening by gutting and cleaning the museum and house.

The TCC and Project Locus collaborated on fundraising efforts and our joint work secured the initial grant of $50,000 to initiate the project. The TCC also acted as a liaison between Project Locus and Mr. Lewis while project Locus were working from there then base of Kansas State University.

The TCC also helped with logistics such as accommodation and facilities for volunteer students working during the summer.

2. Describe the impact that this project has had on the your community. Please be as specific as possible.

This small museum and cultural center has had a tremendous impact on the people of the Lower 9th Ward. Many residents of this neighborhood have seen the progress made at this site and started to believe that they too can pick up the pieces. It has also served as a central gathering place for people to come together and discuss plans, and (not to be underrated) just to hang out.

The fact that this small museum also tells the story of the cultural history of this neighborhood adds a political dimension to the work done by Project Locus. Driving around the Lower 9th Ward it is hard to picture what existed before the storm because of the level of physical destruction, but 5 minutes in the House of Dance and Feathers and the neighborhood comes to life. The importance of this cannot be overstated as demonstrated by Ronald Lewis's repeated appearances on NPR's Morning Edition and his featured presence in a recent New Yorker article by Dan Baum. The ability to tell our own stories has become critical to the survival of our urban fabric. This is very hard to do in the face of population dispersal like that experienced by the pre-storm residents of the Lower 9th Ward. Project Locus' design and construction of this important museum allows the Lower 9th ward to have a face and a story that people can hear and understand as the planning process moves forward in a mostly empty neighborhood.
3. What trade-offs and compromises were required during the development of the project? Did you participate in making them?

Like most grassroots responses, the major tradeoffs revolved around lack of funds (or stretching the budget!). One issue that needed to be balanced throughout the project was that the funding was awarded to rebuild the museum, yet nobody was willing to build a nice new museum and leave the Lewis home sit there ragged and empty. Project Locus did an excellent job of budget management and securing materials donations to ensure that both projects could be completed for the small budget.

4. What do you consider to be the most and least successful aspects of this project?

The most successful aspects of this project relate to the effective way Project Locus and Ronald Lewis managed a multi-layered PR process to ensure the building symbolized something much larger than the structure itself. Representatives from at least 20 architecture schools from around the country attended the work site throughout the process, 4 national newspapers and 3 national television stations covered the project, and perhaps most importantly, hundreds of people from the Lower 9th ward came by the site. Project Locus and Ronald Lewis were determined to tell the world that the Lower 9th ward is an important place in America, and they were determined to tell the people of the neighborhood that it was possible to create beauty from the destruction. It will be impossible to measure the impact of this project because of its context; we are convinced however that it has played a key role in ensuring the Lower 9th Ward will help determine its own future.

I think the least successful aspect of this project relates to lack of available funds. If the House of Dance and Feathers is to be the community archive and exhibition center that Ronald Lewis envisions there needs to be time and money invested in conditioning the space. Project Locus realized this and has been attempting to raise the funds to finish this important piece of the project.

One small anecdote worth sharing here relates to the spring design presentation Project Locus did for the Lewis family to present design directions for the museum and house. Ronald Lewis wanted to celebrate the work done up to that point and announced he would invite some friends and family. By 7pm that evening there were approximately 100 people in Ronald’s yard, most of whom had not seen each other since Katrina struck. There was more positive impact achieved at this event through the repairing of social networks than any FEMA check delivered up until that point had been able to achieve.
OTHER PERSPECTIVE

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1. What role did you play in the development of this project?

As instructors of a Boston Architectural College (BAC) landscape architecture studio focusing on Tupelo Street, where the House of Dance and Feathers (HDF) is located, we began working with the project team after construction had begun on the project. Since then, we have worked on landscape drainage issues on the site and have collaborated with the design team to examine possible designs for the HDF site, and also for Tupelo Street. Our BAC project grew out of the HDF site and its existence has served to inspire our students and to expand the vision of rebuilding to the entire streetscape and the neighborhood. As instructors and professionals, we have collaborated with Ronald Lewis, the owner of the HDF, Patrick Rhodes, Project Locus and the City Build Consortium and other academics and architects working in the Lower Ninth Ward. The success of the HDF and the willingness of Ronald Lewis, Project Locus and City Build to embrace other groups, has created a rebuilding effort that has expanded to other sites on Tupelo Street and the immediate vicinity. We plan to continue collaboration on a landscape program and plan for the HDF site as well as the community spaces on Tupelo Street.

2. Describe the impact that this project has had on your community. Please be as specific as possible.

The construction of the House of Dance and Feathers has had a multi-layered impact on the community. First, the completion of the project heralded the rebirth of the neighborhood and a consolidation of good will and volunteerism. The adjacent house was the first rebuilt and occupied on Tupelo Street since Katrina, and has sparked the return of other residents and the rebuilding of other homes. The HDF is a clear sign that life has returned and that there are people in the Lower Ninth Ward fighting for the survival of their neighborhood and their geographical home, where generations of their ancestors have lived. Additionally, the HDF has become a destination point with people visiting from all over the city, the country and the world. As a design project and as a human "story", the HDF has been chronicled in the newspapers, the radio and on the web. Visitors come to see the structure and speak to Ronald Lewis who eloquently guides them through the museum. In this way, the HDF fulfills its most important function- it serves as keeper of community history and culture. The HDF tells the story of the Lower Ninth Ward, of an African American community, which, when marginalized and excluded, survived and celebrated in its own tradition. The evolution of Social Aid and Pleasure Clubs, born out of a concentrated culture and its forms of expression, served as a self-empowering tool for disenfranchised communities.

The House of Dance and Feathers (HDF) fills the same role. It allows this community a voice with which to tell its story. The marking of history upon the landscape, and the implied judgment of whose history merits telling, often results in the perspective of the dominant, more powerful group having a voice, while smaller, less powerful groups remain silent. The HDF tells the story of the Mardi Gras Indians though structure and object- a strong proclamation of an untold history. Additionally, the HDF educates the community's youth about the artistry, music and celebratory tradition of its community and tells the story of the struggle of their ancestors. The structure heralds a history that proudly proclaims, "We are still here and this is where we have been!" Whatever the future of the Lower Ninth Ward, the HDF preserves a cultural past that belongs to that place. It expresses history through a community voice within the neighborhood. It is not merely a museum containing an exhibit about the Mardi Gras Indians; it is a place that preserves history and continues to foster its expression and creation today in the Lower Ninth Ward.
3. What trade-offs and compromises were required during the development of the project? Did you participate in making them?

The HDF was built with volunteer labor and donations made by individuals and corporations, as such design decisions had to be made that corresponded with available resources. The project was completed within the context of a devastated landscape where clean-up and services were slow or non-existent. Of course, working in such a triage situation necessitates that the envisioned materials and resources be modified in accordance with reality. On the landscape level, the project site required drainage and stormwater mitigation efforts that were inexpensive and readily available. Our class designed and built a stormwater retention swale and extended the gutters on site to direct water away from the sites low spots. In much the same ways the HDF had to make decisions based on what was available to them during a time when the city is not fully operational.

4. What do you consider to be the most and least successful aspects of this project?

The HDF is a success in the ways in which it has impacted the community, brought hope to its residents and in its preservation of important community history and the continuation of these cultural traditions. As a place-making project, it is highly successful in its ability to transform a typical back yard lot into not only a museum through which people move, but also an outdoor gathering and work space for the community. As one experience of walking through the museum and continuing on the elevated walks, the structures succeed in blurring the lines between outside and inside. At the same time the residence and the HDF serve as anchors to the outdoor courtyard/gathering space. Additionally, through its design, the HDF meets the physical needs of the aging residents by providing elevated walkways from house to museum and provides peripheral seating for visitors.

The least successful aspect is perhaps not in the structure or the building and rebuilding itself, but the context of the abandonment within which it exists. The Lower Ninth Ward is presently a no-man’s land, having only had electricity and sewer service restored in the last few months. Where Lower Ninth Ward residents have valid complaints of neglect and marginalization pre-Katrina, what remains in its wake is unbelievable.
OTHER PERSPECTIVE

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1. What role did you play in the development of this project?

   none

2. Describe the impact that this project has had on your community. Please be as specific as possible.

   The definition of the community that The House of Dance and Feathers impacts is first, the displaced residents of the Lower 9th Ward. It also includes students and faculty from across the United States, as well as other resident and non-resident visitors, planners, architects, agencies, and politicians. The House of Dance and Feathers is visited by representatives of all of the above groups, including the students I bring from the University of Southern California who have been working with Tulane University and CITYbuild since November 2005. It allows visitors to learn about the social systems and culture of the Lower 9th ward pre-Katrina, and meet with resident Ronald Lewis or Patrick Rhodes of Project Locus.

   Ronald and Patrick met with USC students (from Policy Planning and Development, Health Administration, the Business School, the Master of Real Estate Development Program, and Architecture), took them on a tour of the Lower 9th ward, and the students helped Ronald and Patrick do punch-list clean up on site for a few hours. This opportunity to meet with a resident community activist allowed students to hear first hand that residents want to return, and made the students want to personally be involved. They saw a completed project and have been spreading the word to others when they returned to California. Patrick Rhodes, and the students he led to plan and complete this project, are role models to all of us in education. This project is truly a catalyst to others wanting to be involved in making a visible presence in the rebuilding of New Orleans.

   The building not only provides a social need in the community, but through its beauty, inventiveness and rigor, shows that good design can inspire others to continue building.
OTHER PERSPECTIVE (CONT'D)

3. What trade-offs and compromises were required during the development of the project? Did you participate in making them?

I was not a participant in the development of the project.

4. What do you consider to be the most and least successful aspects of this project?

"The House of Dance and Feathers" built summer 2006 is a revitalization of an existing neighborhood community center in the Lower 9th Ward. This under-sea-level district is central in the debate over whether New Orleanians should be allowed to rebuild in low lying areas. This catalyst project is a visible statement that shows it is possible.

"The House of Dance and Feathers" existed pre-Katrina in the garage of Ronald and Charlotte Lewis, of the Lower 9th Ward (aka Lower 9) in New Orleans. Renovated by Ronald and his two sons to house the memorabilia from Ronald’s life as founder and participant of the Big 9 Social Aid and Pleasure Club, and activities as a Mardi Gras Indian, the site became an informal community center for both men and women of the Lower 9. Social ties per-Katrina were extremely strong, as many families built their own homes and generations stayed there raising their families for decades.

I met Ronald Lewis and Patrick Rhodes at the Reinhabiting New Orleans Conference in New Orleans, and was invited by Ronald and Charlotte to accompany them to the FEMA tent the first day that it opened to the Lower 9 residents on December 2, 2005. Hundreds of people waited in line to sign-up at a few tables to get a pass that would allow them to drive on their streets and see their damaged properties, or to find out if their homes had survived Katrina at all. Most of these families were homeowners and lived in houses passed down from generation to generation, many of them built by the homeowners themselves with the help of their neighbors. Many homeowners were laborers and the residents who were framers, plumbers, electricians, and master plasterers helped each other build their own homes over the past several decades. As I learned that day, as children of the Lower 9 grew up and married they most often stayed in the Lower 9 to raise their children and stay close to their families. Pre-Katrina the social ties with families, friends, and the Social Aid and Pleasure Club was deeply rooted and a highly respected part of every day life in the community.

Ronald Lewis pledged to his community members, on December 2, 2005 the opening day of the Lower 9th Ward, that he would rebuild his house and the "Museum of Dance and Feathers". There was no mayor or council person in the FEMA tent that day to welcome back the residents of the most devastated neighborhood in New Orleans. Ronald Lewis greeted every person with a hug or handshake, and asked them to come back and rebuild. People who lost family members, or people who could not leave and had to be rescued from their rooftops were seeing each other for the first time post-Katrina and retelling their stories to each other. Ronald told everyone that he was rebuilding his home, as well as the House of Dance and Feathers, and asked them all to please consider rebuilding and returning to the Lower 9th Ward. Patrick Rhodes organized and implemented Ronald's Dream. One building, The House of Dance and Feathers, stands as a visible presence that rebuilding can and will occur in low-lying low-income communities, after the largest and most devastating disaster in this country.
PROFESSIONAL CONSULTANT PERSPECTIVE

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This sheet is to be filled out by a professional who worked as a consultant on the project, providing design, planning, legal, or other services. Copies may be given to other professionals if desired.

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Signature:

1. What role did you or your organization play in the development of this project?

1. I have known Patrick and have had a working relationship with him over the last three years. In some cases I have advised on his projects, in others I have benefited from his work such as attending an event he organized such as a Katrina Response at the University of Arkansas that allowed me to meet and network many involved in the disaster response.

I have been an advisor on this project since visiting last Spring at Kansas State and participating in a design review. I have visited the site several times and met with the client to be assured of his satisfaction, which was great. I have wanted to see how architects could respond to the challenge of Katrina's destruction, and how the nascent surge of interest in socially responsive design might raise to the challenge.

3. Describe the project's impact on its community. Please be as specific as possible.

Being a native of New Orleans as well as engaged in social architecture for fifteen years, there is not a single project that I would like better to recommend for your award than the House of Dance and Feathers.

The Ninth Ward is one of New Orleans' richest cultures -- but not the one you would know of if you weren't from New Orleans. It is where the working class of New Orleans live, the many who could not afford to live any closer to downtown. It was the hardest hit in all of New Orleans, and top of the list to leave un-restored. The sound and sight of any construction happening had the most significant encouragement to others, especially when it was the home and meeting place of a neighborhood leader like Ronald Lewis.

Understand that this was the first building in the entire neighborhood beside an un-repaired house occupied by Common Ground. In my first visit to Ronald's house to assess the damage, I climbed on the roof to replace a few tiles. Immediately, in a desolate scene, several cars stopped to ask me if Ronald was coming back.

One positive aspect of design/build is that they can get in fast and quick. And the best design/build projects can have impacts much greater than the modest structures realized. The question must always be asked: "When is a building more than a building." One answer is when it can restore civic infrastructure and encourage the re-occupation of an entire neighborhood that policy makers considered abandoning.
PROFESSIONAL CONSULTANT PERSPECTIVE (CONT'D)

4. How might you project the instructive impact on others in your profession?

Having organized six conferences related to the social impact of architecture and edited a book on community service through architecture, there is no project that ranks higher to my ideals of what architecture can achieve or deeper to my heart. The publicity and funds from your recognition could not have a better target or effect than for this project.

The conception of the project was well founded through a design charrette organized by Tulane with community residents. Based on the community's input, Dan Etheridge of Tulane identified this project as one of the most significant and valuable. This relationship between local and distant assets is exemplary and as a model will allow others to sensibly enter communities and be guided towards the best activities.

But the project would have stopped after the charrette if Patrick Rhodes had not responded first with full commitment and then with finding resources to do the project. As we all know, many worthy neighborhood efforts are stopped by limited resources. This is an expiring example of what a committed collaborative effort can achieve.

This project also will have a tremendous impact and has been completed with the most limited resources, for examples there was no sewer, water or electricity at the site during construction. The students received no credit for their hours of work in incredible heat and humidity.

As a demonstration of grass roots commitment, I challenge anyone to find a better example.

When Patrick told me about this project, my response was that: (1) this is a great and important project that would have a positive impact on the most devastated neighborhood in New Orleans, and (2) it was utterly impossible with the situation that existed in New Orleans and with the limited resources. I am glad to write you that I have been proved right as to point #1 and wrong as to point #2.

We are all realizing that designers need to better address the most critical issues we face, and the response to Katrina is a prime example. This project comes as close to this goal of architects being a first responder to a crisis as architects can.