Rehabilitation of the West 72nd Street Subway Station

New York City Transit
2005

RUDY BRUNER
AWARD
FOR URBAN EXCELLENCE
**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.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Project Name</th>
<th>Rehabilitation of the West 72nd Street Subway Station</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Location</td>
<td>West 72nd Street &amp; Broadway, New York City</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Owner</td>
<td>New York City Transit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Project Use(s)</td>
<td>New York City subway station and intermodal transfer point</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Project Size</td>
<td>70,000 sq ft</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Development Cost</td>
<td>$60,419,315</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Annual Operating Budget</td>
<td>(if appropriate)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Date Initiated</td>
<td>Spring 1996</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percent Completed by December 1, 2002</td>
<td>75%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Project Completion Date</td>
<td>2003</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attach, if you wish, a list of relevant project dates</td>
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Application submitted by:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Peter A. Samton, FAIA</th>
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<tbody>
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Key Participants (Attach an additional sheet if needed)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Organization</th>
<th>Key Participant</th>
<th>Telephone/e-mail</th>
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<tr>
<td>Public Agencies</td>
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<td>Architect/Designer</td>
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<td>Community Group</td>
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<tr>
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<td>Other</td>
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Please indicate how you learned of the Rudy Bruner Award for Urban Excellence. (Check all that apply).

- Direct Mailing
- Magazine Advertisement
- Professional Newsletter
- Magazine Calendar
- Previous RBA entrant
- Previous Selection Committee member
- Bruner/Loeb Forum
- Other (please specify)

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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: Rehabilitation of the West 72nd Street Subway Station

Address: 72nd Street & Broadway
City/State/ZIP: New York, NY 10021

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

The project comprised the expansion and rehabilitation of this heavily used subway station at West 72nd Street and Broadway in the Upper West Side neighborhood of Manhattan. Built in 1904, the station was part of New York City’s original subway system. The existing entrance building, designed by Heins & LaFarge, is a landmark and one of four remaining original entrance control houses. The creation of this station brought prosperity and development pressures so that by the 1930’s the station had become overcrowded, with difficult access, dangerously narrow platforms, and lacking handicapped accessibility.

Through the years, proposals were made to modify or expand the station, but none gained acceptance or were implemented. In the early 1990s, MTA New York City Transit developed alternative approaches to address station congestion and initiated extensive community outreach. An innovative, yet cost effective and feasible scheme that retained the landmark control house and added a new entrance building north of 72nd Street was selected. The joint venture of Gruzen Samton/Dattner Architects was commissioned to design the project in 1996.

Key elements of the project include: closure of the northbound lanes of Broadway between West 72nd and West 73rd Streets, development of a new entrance building and new public plaza on the site created by the lane closures, restoration of the existing landmark building south of West 72nd St, rehabilitation of the underground station, including landmark elements, and construction of platform extensions.

Major project goals were: to alleviate congestion and facilitate access to the station, to provide handicapped accessibility, to preserve and restore the landmark elements of the station, to complement the architecture of the landmark entrance building, to enhance the open space and the urban context of this important intersection; and to involve the community and affected public agencies in the design process to successfully implement the project.

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 West 72nd Street Station merits the Rudy Bruner Award for Urban Excellence for the following reasons:

- An innovative, collaborative design approach involved the participation of community groups and public agencies to resolve complex issues.

- The project emphasizes design excellence, combining the benefits of preservation with a distinguished contemporary architectural expression.

- The urban impact of the project creates a new public space and acts as a catalyst for community building and neighborhood revitalization.

- The Upper West of Manhattan is known for spirited public engagement and often contentious politics. The sponsoring agency, MTA New York City Transit, involved community groups, concerned agencies and elected officials from the beginning of the project in the evaluation of alternatives and the key design decisions. This participatory process resolved potential conflicts and resulted in strong community support.

The project exemplifies the benefits of preservation, while addressing contemporary functional needs and aesthetic expression. Preservation of the existing building and enhancement of the park were anchors assuring the successful integration of the new structure into the urban context. The architecture of the new building complements the existing building. The new plaza extends Verdi Park and increases public enjoyment of the open space. The project illustrates the value of preservation and of weaving the urban heritage into the contemporary city.

The project initially provided for transportation improvement to alleviate crowding and integrate accessibility. It evolved into a multi-dimensional plan with significant positive impacts for the urban environment and community benefits beyond basic transportation amenities. It is a prototype for innovative public investment, which responds to broader community needs and aspirations while achieving specific project objectives.
PROJECT DESCRIPTION

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1. How has the project impacted the local community?

At the turn of the 20th Century, the Upper West Side transitioned from an isolated and rural area to speculative development. It began with Edward Clark who built the Dakota Apartment Building and a row of townhouses on 73rd street. After construction of the IRT in 1904 and in the decades that followed, West 72nd Street became the commercial center for the area and prospered until the 1990's when the street, stretching from Riverside Park to Central Park lost its luster and decayed architecturally and economically. Historian Christopher Grey wrote in his article for the New York Times in 1997, "nothing on the Upper West Side slipped as dramatically as 72nd street [which] has taken on a honky-tonk air." The infrastructure was inadequate to attract, support or maintain commercial businesses and property owners.

The catalyst for change started with the announcement of the station-wide rehabilitation and improved customer access. Local merchants, building owners, residents and city officials launched RAP (Retail Assistance Program) under the leadership of Landmark West!, a grassroots community based group founded in 1985 to preserve the Upper West Side architectural heritage.

Improvements at the intersection of Broadway and 72nd Street beginning with the MTA /NYCT historic control house and sub-surface platform radiated to an enlarged pedestrian plaza providing the land for a new building and subway access point. The effect of regeneration and renewal of the public space extended to the commercial corridors where building facades were repaired and cleaned, redundant signage was removed and new signage installed, neglected storefronts were upgraded and renewed, new sidewalks and curbs were installed along with new historically appropriate streetlamps and additional trees wells and new plantings.

The now vibrant intersection is safer and the streetscape improvements have reinforced not only the character of the architecture but strengthened the economic base of the neighborhood. The cumulative efforts of the last decade were recently recognized by acknowledgement as a semi-finalist for the National Trust for Historic Preservation's Great American Main Street Award.

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

Renowned as New Yorkers are for resilience, change is not easy to embrace, especially when there are diverse interests and stakeholders. Reconciling the flow of pedestrian, vehicular and subway accessibility and determining the most convenient transfers between bus, subway and pedestrian access crossings were difficult to prioritize and evaluate. Consensus was achieved when mere compromise was all that was believed feasible. Modifications to traffic routes and transportation connections were few and subtle changes that were implemented included:

• Extending the distance between bus stops to mitigate traffic congestion at the corners of West 72nd Street.
  Closing the Broadway northbound (three lanes) between West 72nd and 73rd Streets.

• Prohibiting parking and standing and permitting limited commercial delivery at traffic lanes immediately adjacent to the new subway facility.

Loss to the subway traffic islands was minimal and limited to:

• Relocation of one newsstand (New York City Parks Concession).

• Reduction of on-street and metered parking spaces along Broadway.

The benefits have been visible in both the quality and maintenance of the immediate area:

• Cleaner streets
• Increased park seating
• Improved and uniform street lighting
• Increased visible and safer streets and gathering places
• Enhanced and hardier landscape plantings
• Comprehensive pavement and curb cut access to all plazas and crossings
• Reduced signage and advertisements
• Replacement of street lighting with historic bishop's crook lampposts along 72nd Street
3. Describe the key elements of the development process, including community participation where appropriate.

The key elements of the project's development process consisted of:

- A determination by the client, MTA/NYCT to intervene as the station had become one of the most congested among the 468 stations in the system.

- A study by MTA/NYCT professional staff of the problems with the station, leading to the development of five alternative solutions with a wide range of cost and benefits.

- A declaration of support for the effort by all of the elected officials representing the area. Client duly noted that while the problem with the station was identified as far back as 1929, nothing had been achieved to date do to a lack of unified support.

- The gradual building of community consensus around a “reasonably” affordable scheme through an extensive outreach effort to a variety of local groups and Community Board. The benefits to the community beyond the improvement of the station, including the enlargement of Verdi Park, became an important element.

- An agreement by all of the City's public agencies having jurisdiction over the site to support the station rebuilding effort.

- An agreement by the client to select Architectural Consultants with a great deal of urban design experience and sensibility.

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

- The total project cost was $60,419,315 of which 51% is Federal and 49% State financing.

- The gross square footage is 70,000 sq ft of which 26,000 is interior and 44,000 is landscaped plaza area.

- The Construction Bid cost was $35,803,064. This produces a cost of $511/ sq ft

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

- The intermodal nature of the facility is both unique and adaptable to other urban settings.

- Combined transportation facility with public and pedestrian benefits and amenities.

- The degree of community outreach and input was unusual.

- The physical model is adaptable and the ADA amenities are ideal for future facilities, such as street level elevators and a headhouse.

- The NYC grid system is typical in a city – the project merged the pieces without obliterating the history of the grid, while simultaneously creating something new that benefited the neighborhood and community.

- The grid layering was enhanced at each layer: the subterranean layer got wider platforms; at the street level pedestrians and vehicles got more space. Natural light filters down into the subway station through a skylight that contains artistic work.
2005
RUDY BRUNER AWARD
COMMUNITY
REPRESENTATIVE
PERSPECTIVE
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.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Andrew Albert</th>
</tr>
</thead>
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<tr>
<td>Organization</td>
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<td>1865 Broadway</td>
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<td>E-mail</td>
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1. How did you, or the organization you represent, become involved in this project? What role did you play?

Community Board #7 was involved from the very beginning of this project. NYC Transit came to the Board, providing us with various scenarios for the station, ranging from just a cosmetic upgrade, all the way to expansion of the platforms, as well as new entrances, etc. As Chair of the Transportation Committee, it was my Committee that heard all the presentations, viewed all the architectural drawings, and listened to hours of community input. Ultimately, our Committee made a recommendation on which station plan we preferred to the full Community Board.

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

   a. Extent of improvements that were being made to the station, especially with regard to the capacity of overcrowded downtown platform each morning.
   
   b. Extent of disruption to the surrounding community that each phase of the project would bring. Our concerns ranged from continuing access to the station, noise levels, and hours of construction.
   
   c. The cost of each of the station scenarios, vs. what improvements were being made.
   
   d. Restoration & expansion of Verdi Park.

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

   There were several trade-offs and compromises made during the construction of this project. Compromises were made on the hours of construction, weekend diversions of the trains, limiting access on southbound Broadway, how many lanes of traffic on southbound Broadway would be available, the nighttime storage of materials, the temporary routing of some bus routes through the area, etc. The Transportation Committee of Community Board #7 heard all these issues and negotiated with the contractor regarding all these issues, as well as with NYC Transit regarding weekend diversions, layovers for the M57 bus, etc.
4. Has this project made the community a better place to live or work? If so, how?

This project has made the 72nd Street & Broadway area a much nicer place to be, as well as improved the commuting for thousands of west side residents. Not only has the Verdi Park area been totally rejuvenated and enlarged, but there are now also wonderful benches that residents utilize daily, not to mention the wonderful new head house entrance that was constructed, once again allowing for the transfer between uptown and downtown trains, a convenience that was lost when the old head house was renovated. The new entrance also allows for easier access to the station from the north, where half of the riders using 72nd Street station come from.

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

Many people would have preferred, if the funds for this renovation had been more generous, to have expanded the downtown platform's width, allowing for a much wider platform. This would have meant moving the tunnel wall westward, an expensive proposition. As it was, NYC Transit did not choose the option the Community Board recommended. That does not diminish in any way the wonderful project we did get.
2005 RUDY BRUNER AWARD COMMUNITY REPRESENTATIVE PERSPECTIVE
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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Signature:

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

When I was elected to the New York City Council in 2002, the construction work for the new 72nd Street Subway Station was already bid out. However, as a member of Community Board 7, I attended many of the community meetings with MTA personnel and neighborhood residents. The process was extensive and inclusive, perhaps more so than any other I have experienced for planning and designing a public structure. I believe that the very positive reaction to the new building, plaza and Verdi Square redesign is a result of that process.

In sum, my role was to participate as a Community Board 7 member in the planning and to invite other residents to join us. As a Council Member, I monitored the construction, which was disruptive to the community, and worked with agencies to mitigate noise, traffic congestion and other quality of life conditions that accompany such a project.

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

From the community’s point of view, the most important issue was to alleviate the overcrowding on the subway platform. The design of the building was also a major issue. The Upper West Side of Manhattan has always been a community concerned about architectural historic preservation, and that interest was channeled into significant participation at monthly meetings to follow the project’s progress and fine-tune the final design.

The original head house is landmarked, and all of us wanted to be sure that the second headhouse was compatible with the original design.

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

The community thought that enlarging the subway platforms was the best way to alleviate overcrowding. Enlarging the platforms, however, would have led to a much more expensive project that would have involved subway track realignment and possibly reconstruction of the tunnel. Funding for such a massive project was problematic. I played a role in convincing members of the community that a new second entrance would help to alleviate the overcrowding. Most people in the community now agree that this solution has proven to be effective even though the optimal solution would have been to widen the tracks and platforms.
4. Has this project made the community a better place to live or work? If so, how?

This project has made the community a better place to live and work for a variety of reasons. On a practical level, creating a second subway entrance saves time for all who use the subway. It saves time for residents who are now able to exit closer to their final destination. There is also less wait time to exit the subway platform because of the reduction in crowding around the platform stairwells. The decrease in crowding also makes for a far more pleasant experience waiting for the train.

The building itself is beautiful, and consequently, a source of community pride. Such pride even extends to the graffiti writers, as the structure has been graffiti-free since it opened last year.

Construction of the new structure was part of a larger plan that included Verdi Square, which is adjacent to the gatehouse. Verdi Square has been transformed from a small park that was little more than a lightly landscaped roadway median into an urban oasis. The park's reconstruction, landscaping and expansion make it an attractive, pleasant space for the community to congregate and recreate. The park is also producing more specialized programming, for example; in October, The New York City Department of Parks, community residents and organizations (including Lincoln Center and the Metropolitan Opera) coordinated an event to celebrate the 171st anniversary of Verdi's birth.

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

No.
PUBLIC AGENCY PERSPECTIVE

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This sheet is to be filled out by staff representative(s) of public agency(ies) who were directly involved in the financing, design review, or public approvals that affected this project.

Name  
David Foell, RA

Title  
Lead Design Manager

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Signature

1. What role did your agency play in the development of this project? Describe any requirements made of this project by your agency (e.g., zoning, public participation, public benefits, impact statements).

New York City Transit is the owner of the property and sponsor of this capital improvement project.

NYCT’s Capital Program Management directed the design and construction effort which involved both in-house and consultant designers. In compliance with Federal, State, and local laws, the design required the approval of the following governing bodies: NYC Community Board #7, NYC Department of Parks and Recreation, NYC Landmarks Preservation Commission, NYS Historic Preservation Office, NYC Department of Transportation, the Mayor of the City of New York, and the Governor of the State of New York.

2. How was this project intended to benefit your city? What trade-offs and compromises were required to implement the project? How did your agency participate in making them?

The project was intended to benefit the transportation needs of New York. The purpose of the project was to rehabilitate the existing 100-year-old transit station, to correct its operational deficiencies, and to provide ADA accessibility.

At street level, the design required a reduction in the number of lanes in Broadway, thereby resulting in the elimination of approximately a dozen parking spaces. At the platform level, the design team sought a remedy to the problem of overcrowding during peak periods; however, the only solution — widening of the platform and tunnel — was found to be infeasible and was eliminated from the project.

Our agency facilitated feasibility studies to determine the cost / benefit relationship of these trade-offs.
3. Describe the Project's impact on your community. Please be as specific as possible.

The project has impacted the community in two important ways; the addition of the new entrance building has significantly reduced congestion at the platform stairways thereby improving the quality of the customer's experience, and the creation of a new park at the entrance building has introduced a new community common space - a meeting place known to all the residents - a place in the consciousness of the community which serves as a spiritual "center" to the neighborhood.

4. Did this project result in new models of public/private partnerships? Are there aspects of this project that would be instructive to agencies like yours in other cities?

This was entirely a public effort; no private involvement. The main lesson: bring in the community early and often; give them a "seat at the table". Take the time to for them to understand the constraints of the project. In the end, the community representatives were our best allies.

The project also involved unusual inter-agency partnerships. For example, siting of the new headhouse over the Broadway Mall required "alienation" of parkland and the newly created plaza area was to be designated as parkland. This arrangement required a collaborative effort among the sponsor agency, New York City Transit, the NYC Department of Transportation, which has jurisdiction over streets, and the NYC Department of Parks and Recreation. The transfer and creation of parkland required the cooperation of the NYS Governor's office and an act of the NYS Legislature.

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

The new headhouse and surrounding park plaza are a gem of architectural and landscape design and are perfectly adapted to the functional requirements of the project.
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: __________________________
Date: __________________________

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

My firm, Page Ayres Cowley Architects, LLC served as the preservation consultant for the Design Team under the direction of Gruzen Samton / Dattner Architects. Initial tasks were the survey and existing conditions reports for the landmark entrance building designed by Heins and LaFarge, housing the ticketing and stairwells leading to the subway platform and for the original wall mosaics on the track walls.

These reports conveyed information to the design team about the history, quality of materials and construction methods used in the original architecture. Other tasks included the formulation of options for the repair, restoration or rehabilitation of station components that are protected historic fabric as a property listed on the National Register of Historic Places and contributing the construction documents for the historic components of the project.

2. From your perspective, how was the project intended to benefit the urban environment?

At the outset of the project, there was great concern from the public that the landmarked building would be diminished, or even worse, be made redundant and substantially altered. As the programmatic requirements were developed it became clear that the existing kiosk would serve as the prototype for the new building so that the two structures, designed almost one hundred years apart, could co-exist without competition and compromise of character and purpose. The project demonstrated that new design and comprehensive restoration are compatible, each commanding their own platform – the original kiosk on a the original traffic island to the south, and the new structure on a larger plaza connected to the existing Verdi Park to the north so that the new building was sited on an appropriately scaled landscape island.

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

The most important goals that were realized were the alleviation of platform crowding and additional entry and exit points along the length of the existing subway platform. This was achieved without diverting roadways to create the additional surface openings, demolition of the inadequately sized historic kiosk or substantial incompatible alteration and without obscuring the street pattern of the neighborhood. The placement of the supplemental entrance building was located with specific reference to and in alignment of both the existing control house and the orientation Broadway. Asphalt - underutilized traffic lanes - was the sacrifice for the land used for the new structure, not the Verdi Park or private property.

The creation of twinned traffic islands, each large enough to accommodate the subway patrons accessing each respective building, has effectively reduced traffic and wear of the historic kiosk. This has lessened surface congestion and made access and use of this station easier and safer. Where new amenities could not easily be installed without altering the character and quality of the original kiosk interior, these conveniences were located in the larger new structure and include larger ticketing areas and ADA compliant elevator access to the platform.

Lastly, the neighborhood has benefited from an accurate restoration of the historic structure respecting the age and patina of the landmark, which stands in the shadow of adjacent apartment buildings and commercial premises, which have also been restored and repaired in response to the beautification of the station and the avenue. Tom Melinn, a noted New York based historian wrote about New York City in the American Institute of Architects New York Chapter’s magazine, Oculus that “In contrast to the great public spaces of Europe which are defined by cathedrals and palaces, here public space is primarily in parks and in the streets themselves.” At this crossroad, a sense of place has been re-created with the two stations defining the past and the present of the Upper West Side.
The complexity of planning and budgeting the project could have diminished the quality of the preservation components of the project. Assurances about preservation issues needed to be made among the diverse stakeholders and agencies. Previous attempts to improve this station and passenger access had stalled or required sacrifice of appropriate restorative treatments and the reduction and/or substitution of inferior materials and design details.

Working alongside the MTA NYCT managers, public liaison agency staff, and the Design Team, extraordinary efforts were made to secure the support and approval of local preservation groups and statutory approvals at both the New York City Landmarks Preservation Commission and the New York State Office of Parks Recreation and Historic Preservation. An example was the effort to procure the materials needed to restore the damaged face brick. Replacement brick came from other, non-landmark stations that were being renovated elsewhere in the transit system and were stock piled for two years prior to the Construction Phase of this project.

Throughout the design and construction phases of the project, communication among the all parties was essential. The team distributed information about the significance of the architectural characteristics and the rarity of this building type as a transportation building. Early archival streetscape images of this intersection and the station platform (which originally has glass block pavers and light wells over the platforms and track), as well as the physical condition of the building were used to provide a basis for evaluating the extent of change to the immediate streetscape and neighborhood as well as the quality of the original station design.

These actions to inform and educate the agencies, community groups, and the interested public resulted not in a compromise but a balance of the old and the new in all aspects of the decision making process. Our firm was part of the advocacy for the preservation aspects of the project and the public forums where the project was presented and evaluated.

First and foremost, this project demonstrates fundamental preservation planning principles and processes as applicable to dense urban areas. Second, the project exemplifies the important of communication and neighborhood participation. Thirdly, the project illustrates the opportunities for new design when making additions to historic and landscape settings.

The most successful aspect of the project was the decision to keep and restore the existing kiosk and place programmatic requirements and amenities that would have substantially altered the original character of this structure in a new building. Another successful aspect was recognizing that a compatible new building did not have to be the same size but did have to be the same proportion and scale. Similarity of materials was not a requirement but became a recognizable and important factor to promote this solution as site specific to the urban context of 72nd Street. Sensitive treatment of open space created by the new building and its relationship to Verdi Park was the ultimate bonus.
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Please answer questions in the 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.

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.

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Signature  William Stein

1. Describe the design concept of this project, including urban design considerations, choice of materials, scale, etc.

The design scheme involved closure of the northbound lanes of Broadway between West 72nd and West 73rd Streets to accommodate a new glass and steel station house and an expanded street-level plaza.

The design for the new station house takes its cue from the style of its historic predecessor, located across West 72nd Street, using a contemporary architectural expression. The existing building, designed by Heins & LaFarge in the Flemish Renaissance style and built in 1904, has buff colored Roman brick facades, a granite base, limestone trim and fanciful brick gables with terra cotta copings. It is a designated landmark on the National Register of Historic Places, as well as a New York City landmark.

The new building mirrors the organization and proportions of the existing building with a linear three bay arrangement and entrances on the north and south facades. Two lower side bays flank a central, higher bay in both buildings. The project restores the original roof skylight at the existing building, and the new building incorporates a vaulted skylight in the central bay. The skylights bring natural light to the platform level, a welcome amenity. A reconfigured layout of the existing building once again allows transfer between uptown and downtown trains.

The new building complements the height, scale and materials of the existing building, while an exposed steel structure and extensive glazing identify it as a contemporary building. Through the MTA Arts-for-Transit program an artist, Robert Hickman, designed a glass mosaic on the theme of a Verdi aria, which is installed as an integral part of the vaulted skylight in the new building.

The plaza created by the traffic lanes closure extends the landmark Verdi Park. The plaza provides access to the new station building, pedestrian circulation, a newsstand/coffee kiosk, seating and landscaping. Use of traditional materials, such as stone seat walls, hexagonal asphalt pavers, “World’s Fair” benches and traditional light fixtures, respect the landmark park and emphasize the park environment. A series of landscaped ‘islands’ modulate the scale of the open space. The plaza enhances visual access to the landmark park, creating an outdoor room in a dense urban neighborhood.

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

The design provides improved access to a crowded subway station through the new building and reconfiguration of the existing building. The new facility features entrances for passengers, four new stairs and two ADA-compliant elevators—which distribute the heavy passenger flow along the narrow platforms. Platforms were extended to the north to accommodate the new entry stairs. Station systems, services and finishes were restored and rehabilitated to a state of good repair. The plaza, as described above, provides access to the new station entries, while creating pedestrian amenities and providing community benefits.
3. Describe the major challenges of designing this project and any design trade-offs or compromises required to complete the project.

Two major design challenges were achieving community and agency consensus and the technical planning for the complex, phased construction required to maintain transit operations throughout the construction period.

The project involved close coordination with interested local and state agencies, as well as extensive outreach and dialogue with local community groups. The design synthesizes the input from agencies and the community, respecting the landmark building and expressing its own distinctive architectural character. The participation and input of community groups was essential in building support for the project and achieving success.

The project came under the jurisdiction of numerous governmental agencies, including the various MTA New York City Transit divisions, Mayor’s Office, NYC Department of Parks and Recreation, NYC Department of Transportation, NYC Art Commission, NYC Landmarks Preservation Commission and the NY State Historic Preservation Office. These agencies and local and state elected officials were involved in reviewing and approving the project.

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

The West 72nd Street Station is one of Manhattan’s busiest and most congested subway stations. The station adjoins Verdi Park formed by the intersection of Broadway, West 72nd Street and Amsterdam Ave. The small, triangular park, adorned by a statue of Giuseppe Verdi, was once famously known as ‘needle park,’ depicted in the 1971 film “Panic in Needle Park.” Since that time the neighborhood has revitalized and renewed itself as a vibrant residential and commercial center, a gateway to the Upper West Side. The project reinforces and builds on this renewal by creating an open space that facilitates pedestrian circulation, as well as transit access, and encourages positive community activity.

The site includes three landmark elements – the existing station house, the track walls within the station and the adjoining Verdi Park – and is surrounded by other landmark buildings, including the Ansonia Hotel, Central Savings Bank and the Dorilton Apartments. Preservation of the urban environment was an important goal of the project, both the specific restoration of the landmark elements of the station and creating a complementary relationship to the surrounding landmarks and context.

The project knits together disparate elements – a transit facility, routing of vehicular traffic, pedestrian flow, open space and landscaping, relationship to a historic context – to create a coherent, vital urban environment.

5. Describe the strengths and weaknesses of the project’s design and architecture.

In addition to the factors described above, the project was an unusual, collaborative partnership between two architectural firms – Gruzen Samton LLP and Dattner Architects – along with a team of talented design and engineering consultants. Peter Samton and Richard Dattner were both students at MIT, longtime colleagues and are both residents of the Upper West Side. Samton and Dattner’s abilities to communicate complex issues to the community and agencies and, with the client, to forge consensus, was key to the success of the project.

Samton, who led his firm’s team, states, “The new subway station and station house are designed in the spirit of the old head house, but with the important advantages of a larger, more commodious building that significantly improves the movement of pedestrian traffic, quality of light and wayfinding.”

Dattner, who was the lead principal for his firm, adds, “We believe we’ve succeeded in creating a greatly improved station that relieves crowding and integrates contemporary design with an existing landmark. Extending the landmark Verdi Park to the west creates a new public plaza at this gateway to the Upper West Side.”
Legend:
1 Existing Control Building
2 New Control Building
3 New Public Plaza
4 Newsstand
5 Planters and Seatwall
6 Statue of Verdi