

TO: Members, ASLA Executive Committee  
FROM: Len Hopper, ASLA Past President  
SUBJECT: ASLA Design Medal Nomination  
Date: March 16, 2004

I would like to put forth the nomination of M. Paul Friedberg, FASLA, for the ASLA Design Medal. A comprehensive biography, thoughts and body of built works was highlighted several years back in Process Magazine and I include excerpts that provide a firm base for the Committee to begin their evaluation. The issue of PROCESS magazine dedicated to Paul and his work provides an excellent introspective of the man and a retrospective summary of his most important works. I would like to expand and add to this background of his accomplishments with the following highlights:

With the design and implementation of Riis Plaza in the Lower East Side of New York the landscape model for low income housing was permanently altered. The model was equally applicable to all urban high rise housing. Integrated into the landscape design is a series of events and opportunities facilitating a new and unique level of social interaction among both the community and the residents. No longer were lawns fenced off and inaccessible to the people. Space was re- defined in relationship to the needs and desires of the community and the resident population.

A Demonstration Grant from the federal government and with New York City as the client, Friedberg developed new forms of play environments which made the traditional swing/slide and seesaw obsolete. This was accomplished through the development of playgrounds which were conceived of as total design environments dedicated to the issue of "inter-connected play" and performance. The face of the recreational facility was permanently changed. No catalog of play equipment limits itself to the primary elements that preceded the so-called play ground revolution, which was started with Riis Houses and the Demonstration Grant from the federal government. Based on the environmental designs that were developed, a company called Timberform was created with Paul as the designer. Since then there have been many imitations, which is the highest form of flattery.

From the creation of the revolution in playground design, Paul began to work in major urban downtown spaces and created the concept of a park plaza, which is an urban space usually with a large water body as a pool, which can be easily drained and thereby creates a usable paved area when the need for a celebration or performance occurs. The surrounding terraced levels are planted with lawns and trees thereby mixing the concept of park and plaza. The specific places that are best known would be Pershing Park in Washington D.C. on Pennsylvania Avenue, a new form of park for the city of Washington D.C., Peavy Plaza, the major central space for the city of Minneapolis; the Olympic Plaza in Calgary, Canada, designed specifically as a residual space for the city, but primarily to provide an opportunity for large crowds to gather while the awards for the 1988 Winter Olympics were being presented. Other forms of urban space that are well known include the Madison Mall, in Madison Wisconsin; the Grand Rapids Mall; and the Niagara Mall, which is particularly unique in the sense that it is punctuated in the center by a large greenhouse which serves as a conservatory of plants providing a living room for the city of Niagara Falls.

The wide variety of urban spaces represented by his work, brought landscape architecture heavily into the field of urban design on a large scale. Towards this end, Paul Friedberg developed Loring Park, a mixed/use housing development in Minneapolis, the Fort Worth Cultural district, the master plan for the capital city of Willow, Alaska; and urban design studies for the City of Syracuse, NY and Tel Aviv, Israel.

In 1970 Friedberg started the first undergraduate landscape architectural program in a major city at The City College of New York. He served as Director of the program for 20 years. He authored the books "Play and Inter-Play" and "The Handcrafted Playgrounds" and "Playground for City Children" and published numerous articles in architectural and educational magazines which all can be referenced in the issue of Process Magazine.

On a personal note, I'd like to go back thirty years to my sophomore year of Architecture School at The City College of New York. It was during that spring semester that Paul gave a presentation on the new Urban Landscape Architecture Program that he had created and was to be offered that fall. It was my first introduction to the profession of Landscape Architecture. The enthusiasm, excitement and energy generated by the presentation of the profession as well as the man himself, changed the direction of my life. In a moment that I will remember forever, I immediately signed on for the fall semester and consider myself to be privileged to have been part of the first junior class of that innovative and creative Program. I have had the extremely fortunate opportunity to be able to teach in the Urban Landscape Architecture Program at City College since 1986. In some small measure I try to instill in the students the same feelings that Paul, through his generous and unselfish giving of himself, imparted to me and my fellow students. My teaching provides me a vehicle to say thank you and give back a little to a Program that gave me so much as well as continue the legacy of its distinguished founder. Paul's impact and influence on my life, personal and professional, has left a lasting impression. I'm confident that many of my fellow alumni share these same feelings.

Paul Friedberg's vision of a Landscape Architecture school with an urban focus that addressed the physical environment and social issues was a unique concept. In retrospect, the founding of a school with such a non-traditional approach and concepts are more amazing looking back today, than any of us thought at the time. The Program has evolved into a school with a significant minority student body. This all began two decades before the rest of the profession even began, to seriously confront the lack of minorities in Landscape Architecture. As we struggle to address issues of cultural diversity, the Urban Landscape Architecture Program at City is a beacon of potential that shines across our Profession.

On a professional level, little did I know that after leaving the Urban Landscape Architecture Program at City College that I would work for and eventually head the Landscape Architecture Division of the New York City Housing Authority's Design Department. It is in this role that his work at Riis Houses, a NYC Housing Authority development, had a profound impact on my professional career. Paul's work at Riis Houses set a new direction that effected a permanent change in the face of public housing landscape design. That new direction went far beyond just the innovative and creative physical forms introduced at Riis. It was a defining work that represented how Landscape Architecture could provide a physical framework that fosters a sense of community by encouraging social intersection and positive social change. His initial breaking through the barrier of traditional public housing landscape design opened up opportunities for myself and my staff that would be difficult to imagine without Paul's efforts at Riis. The Landscape Architecture Division has received a number of awards as well as national recognition for its work throughout the New York City Housing Authority's housing developments. In my opinion, Paul's early Housing Authority work provided a basis for what we are doing today and in that sense he shares in any recognition we receive for our accomplishments, past, present and future.

In recent years, Paul initiated a new form of landscape as a collaborative effort with artists in such projects as Battery Park City World Financial Center Plaza, the first waterfront urban plaza in New York City with Siah Armajani, Cesar Pelli, and Scott Burton; Fulton County Government Center in Atlanta, Georgia with Jackie Ferrara and Walter Dusenberry; Transpotomac Canal Center with

Anne and Patrick Poirier in Alexandria, Virginia, and numerous other projects around the country with a variety of internationally well know artists.

Paul Friedberg has recently been working on projects in New York, Tel Aviv, Israel, Egypt, Japan, India, Taiwan, Brazil, Athens, St. Maartin, San Francisco, Phoenix, and Atlanta. His recent projects include a major urban complex in Yokohama, Japan; the Children's Place Garden on the roof of the Moscone Convention Center in San Francisco; the Phoenix Canal Demonstration Project in Phoenix (winners of a competition); the Archery and Velodrome Venue for the 1996 Olympic Games in Atlanta, Georgia; the United States Tennis Association -U.S. Open Facilities at Flushing Meadow Park in New York.

Ball State University presented M. Paul Friedberg with a Doctorate of Laws in April, 1983.

The French presented Paul with the Chevalier de L 'Ordre des Arts et de Lettres in November, '984 from the, Ministry de la Culture Republic of Francais .

The American Institute of Architects conferred the AIA Medal for an allied professional to Paul Fried berg. On this award it states: " Author, Urban Designer, Teacher and Landscape Architect. He is founder and Director of the Landscape Architecture Program at the School of Architecture and Environmental Studies at City College of New York. His work - a response to changing needs and values of city dwellers - has redefined urban residential open space and helped mend the tattered inner city fabric".

In summary, M. Paul Friedberg has won 85 national and international awards for design over his career. Many of these awards from organizations and other professional associations represent the highest level of award that they convey. I believe that recognizing the work of Paul Friedberg with the Design Medal by the Society of his own profession is much deserved and long overdue. I hope that the ASLA Executive Committee will review this nomination favorably and forward the nomination of M. Paul Friedberg for the ASLA Design Medal to the Board of Trustees for vote.