

PLAZAS, MINI-PARKS, & CENTRAL SQUARES

OLD COURTHOUSE SQUARE

Santa Rosa, California

Old Courthouse Square is located in the heart of downtown Santa Rosa. Although the square contains abundant amenities, it has never been a particularly well-used public space. In recent years, the square has attracted teenage toughs, light drug users and the mentally ill. PPS was asked by a group of property owners, the Downtown Development Association, and the City of Santa Rosa to develop a strategy for improving the Square and making it an attraction for all the people in the community. PPS conducted a two-and-a-half day workshop and then proposed that the city encourage a public-private partnership to manage the space. Physical improvements were suggested that are modest in terms of scale and cost. Client: Santa Rosa Redevelopment Agency.

FILM ON CORPORATE PUBLIC SPACES

(1985-1986)

Using Exxon Mini-park as a case study, this sound film deals with some of the general problems of corporate public spaces, such as under use and abuse by drug dealers. It also looks at how a space can be redesigned and managed to make it more usable and functional for people. Funding: National Endowment for the Arts, McGraw-Hill Corporation, and Time, Inc.

GRACE PLAZA

New York, New York (1984-ongoing)

Grace Plaza, built under the 1969 incentive zoning "bonus" ordinance, has long been considered one of New York City's most troubled public spaces, a setting for loitering and drug dealing which has intimidated the general public and prevented its use by a variety of people. PPS was retained to develop a design and



**Project
Experience**

management program for retrofitting the plaza into an active, healthy public space. The PPS proposal called for the complete renovation of the plaza and the inclusion of a stage/entertainment center, small vending stalls, and a public cafe, as well as new landscaping and public sculpture. The project, which is a model for what can be done for other troubled "bonus" plazas in Manhattan, is currently being reviewed by the appropriate city agencies. Construction is expected in 1987. Client: Swig Weiler and Arnow, Mgt & Co., Inc.

DOWNTOWN PUBLIC OPEN SPACES PROJECT

Denver, Colorado (1984-1985)

PPS conducted an evaluation of all of the public spaces (both privately and publicly owned) in downtown Denver for the Denver Partnership. The results of the project were specific design and management recommendations for public space improvements, a handbook for public space owners on the process of making public space improvements, and guidelines for public space development. The study was followed by design workshops for the Curtis Street and Cleveland Place Connection to the mall in which PPS participated as the national urban design consultant. Client: The Denver Partnership, Inc.

OLD STATE HOUSE SQUARE

Hartford, Connecticut (1984)

Old State House Square is at the center of Downtown Hartford and the site of the renovated Old State House, now operated as a museum. The square is also adjacent to a Rouse Corporation festival marketplace set to open in 1986. PPS prepared a preliminary design plan for the redesign of the square to make it a more usable, attractive public space. Client: Downtown Council and Old State House Association.

ONE PENN PLAZA

New York, New York (1984)

PPS evaluated and developed recommendations for the public spaces in and around One Penn Plaza, a major office tower near Penn Station in Midtown Manhattan. Included in the plan were specific recommendations for landscaping, signage, the location and design of amenities, retail facade designs, and for programs and events. Funding: Helmsley-Spear, Inc.

MARKET SQUARE

Houston, Texas (1984)

The Downtown Houston Association retained PPS to develop a design and management program to transform one of the city's oldest public spaces into a day and evening activity center. The property, which is owned and controlled by the Houston department of Parks and Recreation, was the historic site of Houston's indoor/outdoor marketplace at the turn of the century. PPS's recommendations included a complete redesign of the Square's layout and landscaping, along with a number of revenue generating programs including a marketplace, farmer's market, and a small cafe/restaurant. These improvements will have the dual purpose of attracting a variety of users to an unused space during the day and evening hours while generating revenues that can be used by the proposed non-profit management organization for maintenance, programming and operations of the Square. Funding: Downtown Houston Association.

PERSHING SQUARE

Los Angeles, California (1983-1984)

PPS was hired by the Central City Association to develop a design and management program for Pershing Square, the central square of downtown Los Angeles. The goal was to determine how Pershing Square could be redesigned so that it would attract a more diverse population and reestablish its prominence as an activity center in downtown Los Angeles. PPS proposed and helped to establish the Pershing Square Management Association which oversaw low-cost design changes and programming for the L.A. Summer Olympics. The Square's new features included a cafe, food vendors, a newsstand, and a performance stage. Major design improvements are currently planned. Funding: Central City Association.

CROWN CENTER SQUARE

Kansas City, Missouri (1983)

PPS analyzed the design and use of Crown Center Square, the major public space of a large mix-use development. Recommendations were made to increase public usage of the square and to improve its connection to the rest of the center. Funding: Crown Center Redevelopment Corporation.

CRAMES SQUARE

The Bronx, New York (1981)

As lead consultant to the New York City Department of City Planning for its South Bronx Transportation Planning Project, PPS analyzed aspects of pedestrian and vehicular circulation needs in this major intersection in the South Bronx. Recommendations for a new entrance and other subway station improvements were also developed. The centerpiece of the plan is a new marketplace and gathering space on the square. Funding: Tri-State Regional Planning Commission.

PLAZAS FOR PEOPLE PROGRAM

Seattle, Washington (1979)

PPS planned a national conference, publication, and workshops on downtown public open space using downtown Seattle as a case study. Four half day workshops were conducted for specific interest groups (government, designers, the community, business) in order to solicit opinions, stimulate awareness, and generate ideas for improvement of plazas and urban parks in Seattle. Funding: Seattle Department of Community Development; Seattle First National Bank; National Endowment for the Arts; Washington Commission for the Humanities.

HUD BUILDING PUBLIC SPACES

Washington, D.C. (1979)

The vast, unused plazas around the Department of Housing and Urban Development in Washington, designed by Marcel Breuer, have stood for more than a decade as a symbol of all that is wrong with a monumental approach to federal architecture and urban revitalization. PPS recommendations, developed in part through an extensive survey of HUD employees, included a vendor's market on the front plaza and the redesign of an existing garden and playground area. Funding: National Endowment for the Arts.

FEDERAL OFFICE BUILDING PLAZA

Seattle, Washington (1977-1979)

The Seattle Federal Building, considered to be an outstanding example of a well-designed federal facility, features a dramatic, cascading plaza. A PPS study evaluated this and other downtown plazas to determine how well they actually functioned for

downtown workers, shoppers and visitors. Plaza events, outdoor concessions, and umbrella tables and chairs on the "cascade" outside the cafeteria were among the improvements implemented to increase usage. Based on this study, a design "check-list" for federal building plazas in central business districts was also developed. Funding: National Endowment for the Arts, City of Seattle General Services Administration.

LIPMAN'S PLAZA

Salem, Oregon (1978)

PPS developed preliminary design recommendations for Lipman's Plaza, a large public space being developed adjacent to two major department stores. Specific recommendations included the character and location of waiting areas, seating, entertainment, outdoor eating and information. Funding: City of Salem.

EXXON MINI-PARK, ROCKEFELLER CENTER

New York, New York (1978)

Exxon Mini-park was overwhelmed by marijuana dealing which was widespread because of an anonymous, impersonal physical setting. PPS recommendations, implemented in the summer of 1979, included substantial relandscaping, the addition of movable chairs and tables, food concessions and entertainment programs. These changes have dramatically increase both the variety and number of users of the park, improved its public image, and eliminated the drug dealing. Funding: Rockefeller Center, Inc. and Exxon Corporation.

PLAZA PLANNING AND ZONING STUDY

Seattle, Washington (1977)

This report translates PPS's plaza research findings in Seattle into preliminary policy recommendations and design guidelines for the city to revise its zoning ordinance. The new recommendations would allow more office space to be constructed if plazas or arcades are provided at ground level. Funding: Seattle Department of Community Development and the National Endowment for the Arts.