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Jury of Award: Design Competition

Pioneer Courthouse Square Design Committee

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REPORT OF THE JURY OF AWARD

Pioneer Courthouse Square Design Competition

The Jury, in its deliberations, has adhered to the Competition Regulations and Design Program as stated. During the discussions certain "considerations" evolved that assisted the Jury in the selection and recommendation of a design concept. These "considerations" are as follows:

- The "Quality of the Northwest", including our relatively casual lifestyle, appreciation of the spectacular environment in which we live, and concern for a delicate balance between man-made and natural artifacts in our urban centers.
- Historic precedent and future expectations -- how have certain facilities served urban centers in the past, and how projected facilities can reasonably fulfill the stated desires of the community.
- The implied and major difference between "Park" and "Square"; a Park being organic in design, a Square functioning as an integral part of the urban retail core.
- "Opportunities for activities" in a design concept can function as a "strong positive attractor to the downtown" if the community assumes the responsibility for "programming" events that reflect and compliment the day-to-day activities of the retail core.
- Pioneer Courthouse Square, when constructed, must have a "timelessness", that is, not be of a specific period or architectural school of thought. It must be a concept that endures in quality and use, with a built-in flexibility for accommodating both known events and future dreams.

In its evaluation and recommendation, the Jury approached the five designs as "concepts". Each designer has represented an overall site organization, features, attractions, and details that attempt to define the purpose and function of a public square in downtown Portland, Oregon. The resultant concepts are subject to design refinement.

The Jury views the selection of one concept and its designer as the end of the "Design Competition Process" and the beginning of a "Process of Collaboration" between the selected designer and the City of Portland. The "Process of Collaboration" is necessary to realize the full potential of the design concept. The evolution of the design concept from paper and model to built form requires the same open monitoring of the community that has characterized this project from its inception.

The Jury, in selecting the concept and its designer, strongly recommends that every effort be made to insure the continuity of community input and review as the concept is refined and implemented.

PIONEER COURTHOUSE SQUARE DESIGN COMPETITION

ENTRY A

The Jury commends the designer for the elegance and clarity of the design. The concept embodies simple, strong ideas that form complex relationships when juxtaposed in the context of the site.

The Jury enjoyed the symbolism of the design -- the integral relationship of man and nature, the tracery of the "Portland Pavillions" as an extension of the Courthouse, and the incorporation of plant and water forms that reflect both the natural features of the Northwest and the man-made urban setting. The warped plane with its superimposed grid is a unique surface treatment that opens all edges of the Square to pedestrian access.

The Jury was concerned that the design does not provide opportunities which would encourage the day-to-day informal activities anticipated for the Square. The "Pavillions" appear to be more symbolic than functional, lacking the openness at the ground plane necessary to encourage a flow of activity between the inside and the outside. The benefits of the warped plane appear to be overshadowed by the problems inherent in the form. The peripheral edges (the 50 foot wide north and south flanks of the Square) would require continuous programming since the warped plane with limited terracing restricts the opportunity for sitting and impromptu gatherings. The inclined surface and elements in the center of the Square limit the opportunity for large scale events.

The Jury compliments the designer for the physical simplicity and intellectual complexity of their concept.

ENTRY B

It is the pleasure of the Jury to select the designer and this conceptual approach for Pioneer Courthouse Square. The approach embodies a civic square with a grand open area, suitable for the city-wide celebrations which should properly take place in this dynamic city. The space is defined and reinforced by simple terraced levels providing viewing and activity relationships, both formal and informal. The concept provides for the diversity of small and large scale activities, and humor, without compromise of dignity and elegance.

The Jury compliments the designer on the manner in which the adjacent buildings frame and create the edges of the space, with subtle but sensitive response to the Courthouse and local historical detail. The scale of this composition enhances the buildings surrounding it. The materials proposed have the desired enduring quality.

The selected concept requires design refinement. The Jury appreciates the scale and delicacy inherent in the design but suggests a consolidation of structure into a more symbolic crystalline element, providing greater usable space as well as "symbolic" value. The Jury encourages the designer to seek opportunities for the inclusion of more vegetation and water -- elements characteristic of Portland -- and explore a broader pallet of materials on the ground surface for relief from the large expanse of brick. The Jury wishes to compliment the designer for the inventiveness in suggesting new activities such as the "Lord Mayor".

It is with excitement and anticipation that the Jury looks forward to the evolution of this conceptual approach emanating from a working relationship between community and designer. The result will be an exemplary composition of urban design, providing the City of Portland with a model to be emulated by other cities throughout the country.

ENTRY C

The Jury appreciated the designer's response to the Design Program. The concept provides spaces and facilities for formal and informal activities through such elements as the amphitheater, canopied areas, open and intimate seating spaces. This design provides for large and small scale formal and informal activities such as theater, exhibits and seating.

The Jury does not feel the design has achieved the kind of space and setting that would be enjoyed in Portland. Elements like the trellis would be inconsistent with the intent of the Design Program and would be viewed as an undesirable intrusion into the character and nature of the Square. The Jury further questions the choice of the dominant material. The Jury acknowledges the designers desire to make the space a "civic" place by the choice of granite, but does not feel the material appropriate considering the number of overcast days experienced in this area. The complexity of the design appears to limit its use as it diminishes flexibility.

The Jury wishes to compliment the designers on their attempt to realize the complexity of the program through the design elements and materials.

ENTRY D

The Jury found the concept handsome and compelling. The single large glass structure in a classical relation to the courthouse, separated by a simple single major open space, provides a meaningful and attractive "civic" design appropriate to the site.

The Jury compliments the designer on the responsiveness to the Courthouse, the symbolic value of the glass structure, the apparent flexibility provided by the major open plaza, and the

tie of the courthouse block with the Square through the use of 4 major flag poles and night lighting.

The Jury was concerned that the north and south flanks of the design seem to be inconsistent with the requirements of the site. Acknowledging the need for smaller scaled experiences and activities, the Jury felt that these areas were not successful. The amphitheater limits and denies access from Yamhill. The elements on the corners of Sixth Street at Yamhill and Morrison do not invite diagonal access to the space.

Although the single glass structure provides a strong symbol for the Square, the interior arrangement of functions seems curiously inconsistent with the desire to make the Square visually and physically active. For instance, the placement of the restaurant under the street level (outside the limits of the glass structure) eliminates its connection with the Square. The Jury would have enjoyed seeing more physical access between the building and the Square at the lower level, providing a greater opportunity for communication and potential programming of activities.

The Jury commends the designers for their attempt to be responsive to the Citizens Advisory Committee suggestions and regrets that the execution does not provide the desired functional relationships at the junctures of street to square and square to building.

ENTRY E

This concept was very responsive to making the Square an attractor of people. The Jury commends the designers for their courageousness and invention. The design is an event in and of itself.

In the Jury's opinion, the dominance of the design would tend to distract from any of the events that would take place in the Square. Although interesting and enticing, the design does not appear to be appropriate or responsive to its context.

The design lacks sufficient flexibility to provide the required range of programs intended for the site and restricts open diagonal movement through the space. The Jury reacted negatively to the suggestion of the structure extending over Morrison and connecting to the pilasters of the adjacent American Bank Building, one of the most elegant buildings on the Square. In order to realize the design within budget constraints, the designers would be required to use materials that are not of a lasting "civic" quality.

The Jury wishes to state their appreciation and enjoyment for the wonderful, humorous, elevating and inventive design. It should be built, but, alas, not as our major public square.

PIONEER COURTHOUSE SQUARE DESIGN COMPETITION

ENTRY A

Eisenman/Robertson
Planning/Architecture/Urban Design

ENTRY B

Willard K. Martin
J. Douglas Macy
Lee Kelly
Terence O'Donnell
Spencer Gill
Robert Reynolds

ENTRY C

Geddes Brecher Qualls Cunningham: Architects

ENTRY D

Machado/Silvetti & Schwartz/Silver
Architects

ENTRY E

Lawrence Halprin
Charles Moore

DJS:cn
7/17/80