

Brian Bacon of Towers | Golde Invited to X-Treme LA Program in Kalamazoo, Michigan

A belief in the power of design to enrich public spaces inspired Landscape Forms to assemble 24 Gen-X landscape architecture professionals from across the country last September to develop a master plan for downtown Kalamazoo, Michigan. **Brian Bacon**, a Landscape Designer with Towers | Golde in New Haven, was one of the participants in this three day charette hosted by both the Landscape Architecture Foundation and Landscape Forms, a leading national designer, manufacturer and marketer of outdoor commercial furniture and accessories, headquartered in Kalamazoo.

The charge to these young designers was to creatively propose new initiatives to maximize existing resources to create an improved downtown experience that would attract people, support Michigan's Cool Cities Program, and make Kalamazoo a better place to live and work. With new collective understanding of the issues of revitalization projects, the group of emerging design leaders divided into three teams focused on the key elements of a vibrant city center: density, diversity, efficient transportation, and a mix of residential and commercial development.

Each team worked with a special distinguished guest who participated as either team leader or co-host, including Frederick Steiner, FASLA, a member of the board of directors for the Landscape Architecture Foundation; Tom Balsley, FASLA, of Thomas Balsley Associates; and Chip Crawford, FASLA, Director of the Planning Group, HOK. City of Kalamazoo leaders attended the final team presentations.

The event provided an opportunity for these young professionals to gain valuable experience and

exposure to an important urban project, challenging their imaginations and enhancing their appreciation for both the complexities of revitalization projects and the potential for landscape architecture to positively impact an urban environment economically, aesthetically, and socially, an experience intended to benefit both the participants and the firms with which they are associated.



The 27 hard-working landscape architects who participated in the program. They were split into 3 teams of 9 for the workshop.

Brian Bacon's Thoughts on the Project...

Thanks to Jodi Arden of Landscape Forms for selecting a firm from CT. It turned out that I was the only representative from CT and New England. Landscape Forms doing events like this, on their own dime, is a tribute and dedication to our profession.

Events like this are good for stimulating the mind, networking and furthering the profession. Surpassing the expectations as to what a small group of people can do in a short amount of time is always a nice boost to reinforce the importance of what we all do on a daily basis.

It was a long trip and a lot of work. Once we got going on the second day, which started at 7:45, we didn't stop until 2:00 a.m. Then we were back at it at 8:30 to get the presentation polished by 10:30. Long days, a lot of work, but rewarding and everyone involved was pleased with the products. I have a copy of the three PowerPoints (one from each team) if anyone is interested. Contact me at bbacon@towersgolde.com.