

Malcolm X Academy Students'

# Architecture Think Tank



## Creative Proposals for HOPE SF Hunters View Neighborhood Park and Public Space

A project sponsored by: UC Berkeley Center for Cities and Schools  
National Organization of Minority Architects, San Francisco

with the generous support from John Stewart Company and  
the Avery Foundation Bay Tree Fund



# Introduction

How can the new Hunters View HOPE SF housing revitalization project respond to the special needs of children and youth in the immediate and surrounding community? This is the question explored by 3rd and 4th grade students in Mr. Moore and Ms. Rahima's classes during an intensive Children's Architecture Think Tank at Malcolm X Academy this spring.

The students worked with architectural educator Shirl Buss from the University of California, Berkeley Center for Cities and Schools and Rommel Taylor, Prescott Reavis, and Katherine Williams from the San Francisco Chapter of the National Organization of Minority Architects.

Together we engaged in a series of hands-on architecture and planning projects to identify and document our visions for how the parks and public space in this development can catalyze positive change in the community. Some of the goals for the project were:

- To engage students in research about their school and community
- To augment academic learning objectives: study of scale, sustainability, and cultural influences in design.
- To honor students' voices by creating and presenting their ideas in drawings, models, and artifacts.
- To create opportunities for oral and visual presentation using the oral presentation rubric.
- To ensure that ideas developed are linked into the broader Hunters View revitalization plan.

This document represents our process and the products we produced as a team.



# The Educators



Ms. Cooley, Principal

The students are supported every day by their dedicated teachers, Mr. Moore and Ms. Rahima, and their amazing Principal Ms. Cooley. For this project, the teachers combined their classrooms and allowed the students to creatively engage their hands and minds in a workshop setting. They encouraged the fourth grade students who had participated in the Architecture Think Tank last year to mentor the third grade students. The teachers also challenged the children to apply their writing and oral presentation skills. As you can see, the teachers often got involved in the projects themselves as well.



Mr. Moore, 4th Grade Teacher



Mr. Rahima, 3rd Grade Teacher

# The Project Coordinator



## **Shirl Buss, Center for Cities and Schools**

This project was coordinated by Shirl Buss who is a designer, educator and urban planner. For more than 20 years, Buss has worked with children and adults on design and construction projects, with a specialty in consensus-based participatory design. As an educator and researcher, Buss' work focuses on children, youth and the urban built environment. Ms. Buss is a consultant for the Center for Cities and Schools at the University of California at Berkeley. The Center for Cities & Schools works to promote high quality education as an essential component of urban and metropolitan vitality to create equitable and sustainable cities and schools for all.

# The Architects from SF NOMA

## National Organization of Minority Architects

### **Katherine Williams**

Katherine is a Frederick P. Rose Architectural Fellow at the San Francisco Housing Community Development Corporation. As a fellow, her work has ranged from tracking very large development projects in her neighborhood to managing a small community center renovation project. Katherine is currently assisting on the project management of an 18 home affordable condo building. Katherine also served on the board of Urban Ecology. Katherine graduated from Howard University and is a LEED Accredited Professional.



### **Prescott Reavis**

Prescott Reavis has spent the majority of his career focusing on the programming, planning, managing, designing and the construction of buildings which enable healing, learning and discovery, throughout the country. Mr. Reavis's latest endeavors are the design and planning of the Energy Center for the University of California's San Francisco Medical Center at Mission Bay with Anshen + Allen. Furthermore Prescott is the Corporate Internship Coordinator for Anshen+Allen. Prescott has mentored students of all ages about the architecture and the built environment.



### **Rommel Taylor**

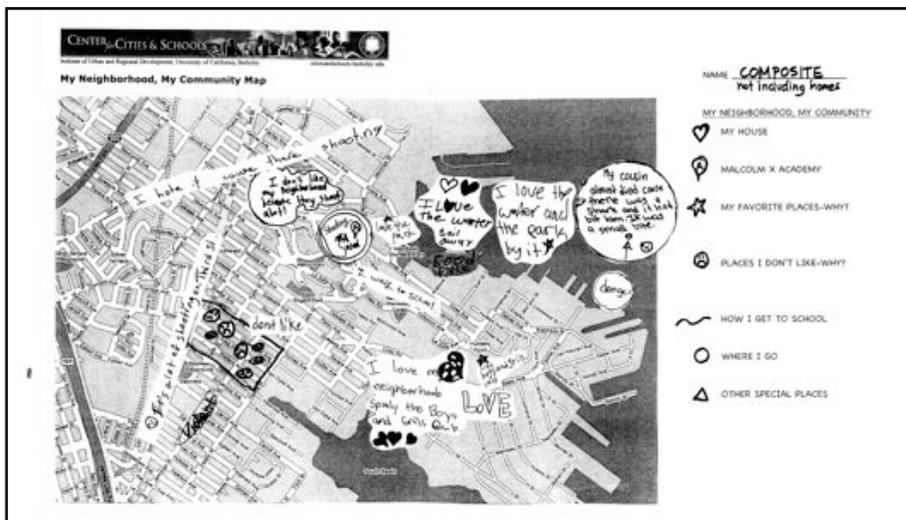
Rommel Taylor graduated with a degree in Architecture from California College of the Arts. His professional design experience has focused on work for nonprofit organizations, public housing, single-family homes, and public work. In his art he explores the aesthetic, social, and narrative potential of public and private spaces. He is passionate about exposing young people to architecture, art, and design. He currently works for the San Francisco Department of Public Works Bureau of Architecture.



# Our Process

## 1. Review Last Year's Work on The HOPE SF Hunters View Project

Together we reviewed the posters created by the 3rd and 4th grade classes last year outlining their proposals for the entire development. They made recommendations in these areas: Safety; Physical Challenges and Recreational Diversity; Community Connections and Business Development. This year we concentrated on developing proposals and recommendations for one major park space within the housing development. Its working title is Promontory Park.



# Our Process

## 2. Visions for HOPE SF Park and Public Space

Together we watched a slide show featuring ways in which we might create opportunities for recreation, community and learning in the new park. As we watched the slides the students marked the elements they preferred on a contact sheet. We made a cumulative list of the elements, and tabulated the results. We especially focused on how the park could be more responsive to youths needs, and connected to the school.

The students selected elements that would benefit not only youth, but their families and friends. The list included: exercise stations, water features, harvest and flower gardens, treehouses, playground events, places to play sports, public art, safe pathways, challenging activities, and natural places where people could enjoy the views.

## 3. Scale Models of Our Best Ideas

Referring to the sources of inspiration from the slide show, each student selected and built a small-scale study model of that feature. The fourth grade students shared model-making tips with third grader. After the models were built, we situated each element on the topography model, grouped according to function, views, proximity to housing, streets and the school.



# Our Process

## 4. Treehouse Models / Prototypes

Because treehouses were one of the most exciting and compelling elements envisioned by the children, we spent several weeks developing 1/8" scale models and 1" scale prototypes of treehouses that might be incorporated into the park. The students designed the structure, orientation on the site, and ways to get up and down from the tree. Each student also created a narrative/story driving the design of their building: for stargazing, for relaxing and, reading, etc.



# Our Process

## 5. Studying Sustainable Strategies

Mr. Reavis gave an excellent slide show illustrating traditional ecological building practices in various communities throughout the world—including Southeast Asia (Thailand), Africa (Ethiopia), North America (Oakland!) and South America (Peru). During the interactive presentation. We discussed illustrative example of green strategies such as solar heating, wind capture, and water conservation. The students then retrofitted their tree houses to include eco-effective interventions such as windmills, rain chains, solar ovens, and people powered playgrounds.



## 6. Cultural Influences in Architecture

Ms. Williams gave an extraordinary slide show featuring various ways in which local cultural influences are expressed in the built environment. She assembled images from Africa, Asia, Latin America and North America to showing how cloth, basketry, and symbols have been re-represented in the form, organization, and decorative patterns on buildings. The students took some traditional Adrinka and Somoan colors and patterns and incorporated them into their treehouses.



# Our Process

## 7. Communicating Our Ideas

Oral presentation was a key theme throughout the project. Each week four students presented their project to the group. Using the oral presentation rubric, the other students gave each speaker feedback about their speaking skills: eye-contact, projection, organization, etc. The students invited family, friends, and representatives from the City, the HOPE SF development firm, UC Berkeley and the school to come to a culminating presentation, where they exhibited their models and spoke about the design process.



You are invited to

### A Gallery of Creative Proposals

for HOPE SF Hunters View neighborhood  
from the Students' Architecture Think Tank

**Friday, May 28, 2010**  
**1:30 - 2:30 p.m.**  
Malcolm X Academy  
350 Harbor Rd, San Francisco

The UC Berkeley Center for Cities & Schools, and SFOMA (National Organization of Minority Architects) worked with 3rd and 4th graders at Malcolm X Academy on a series of hands-on architecture and planning projects to express their visions for the community.

Young people from Ms. Moore and Ms. Bahima's classes focused on the Hunters View HOPE SF neighborhood and school revitalization projects now being developed by Hunters View Associates and SFUSD.

The students identified how the special needs of children and neighbors of all ages and abilities might be incorporated into the design of public spaces.

**Please come and honor these students as they present their ideas and models.**



For information, please contact Shirli Buss at [shirli@LSA-Design.com](mailto:shirli@LSA-Design.com)

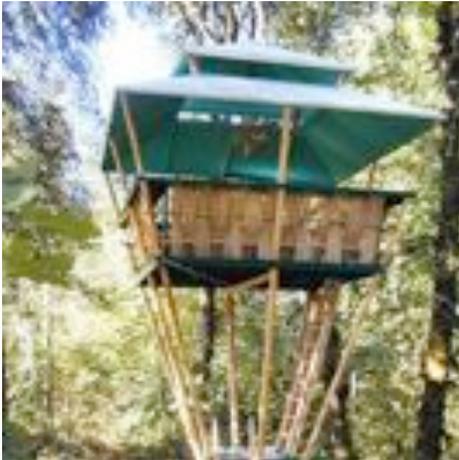


# Our Recommendations

For the HOPE SF Hunters View  
Park and Public Space

## 1. Adventure Playground with Treehouse

All of the students are excited about the possibility of including an adventure playground featuring a treehouse in the new park. They recommend a unique and sturdy treehouse accessible to people of all ages. The treehouse could be a place to visit, relax, and play. It could showcase sustainable building strategies and use of recycled materials. It could be situated within an adventure play area with swings and other challenging activities.



# Our Recommendations

## 2. Flower and Harvest Gardens

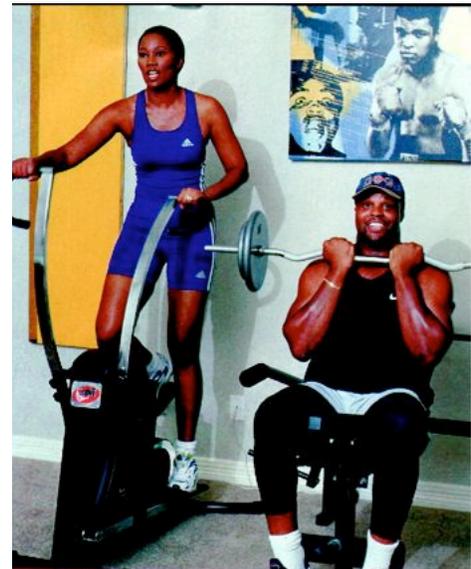
The students were keenly interested in incorporating gardens that could harvest food such as fruits and vegetables, as well as gardens that were more decorative and beautiful. They were inspired by the edible schoolyard at Berkeley Middle School, and also by the possibility for creatively using left over spaces such as median strips for planting and harvest. The garden could also be part of an economic development plan.



# Our Recommendations

## 3. Exercise and Adventure Trails

The students were also very excited about creating some challenging and interesting exercise trails within the park, or possibly throughout the HOPE SF housing development. These trails could feature places to work-out, stretch, walk, run, or lift. They also could incorporate some fun and adventurous elements such as a zipline, rock climbing, or innovative playground elements using recycled materials. These trails could be used by the children during and after school hours. If designed right, these exercise and adventure trails might be featured by Michelle Obama's "Let's Move" campaign. The trails could even be adjacent to the harvest gardens.



# Our Recommendations

## 4. Natural Places with Views and Water

Inspired by the slide shows the students were very excited about the possibility of creating some "wild space" or natural elements into the park setting. These could be more designed elements such as water fountains or pools; an outdoor amphitheater using the natural topography of the site; or using natural features such as large rocks for landscaping, but also for play. Everyone understood that there are problems with water features, but the students recommend that the park designers investigate all possibilities to include somewhere in the housing development.



# Our Recommendations

## 5. Safe, Colorful Paths

Students are very concerned about existing conditions in their neighborhoods and community with respect to safety and security. Their proposals for the HOPE SF Hunters View project last year included many suggestions for safe pathways, streets, and routes that connected the home environments to the local resources, businesses and the school. This year they suggested creating pathways that are not only safe, but artful, beautiful and fun.



# Our Recommendations

## 6. Heroes Wall

Many of the students were inspired by the Heroes Wall at Jefferson High School in Los Angeles. This wall features images of famous people from the community who attended that school. In between are mirrors so that the students can envision themselves as future heroes. One of the students created a model of a heroes wall that could be incorporated into one of the retaining walls in promenade park.



## 7. Places to Play Sports

While it wasn't the highest priority for this park, the sentiment among the students was that there should be some dedicated and some flexible spaces where people of all ages can play organized sports and informal sports. These places can also be designed to include friendly fencing, color and natural design elements.

