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110th Street Streetscape, The High Line [PLACEMARK Award: Hugh Hardy]

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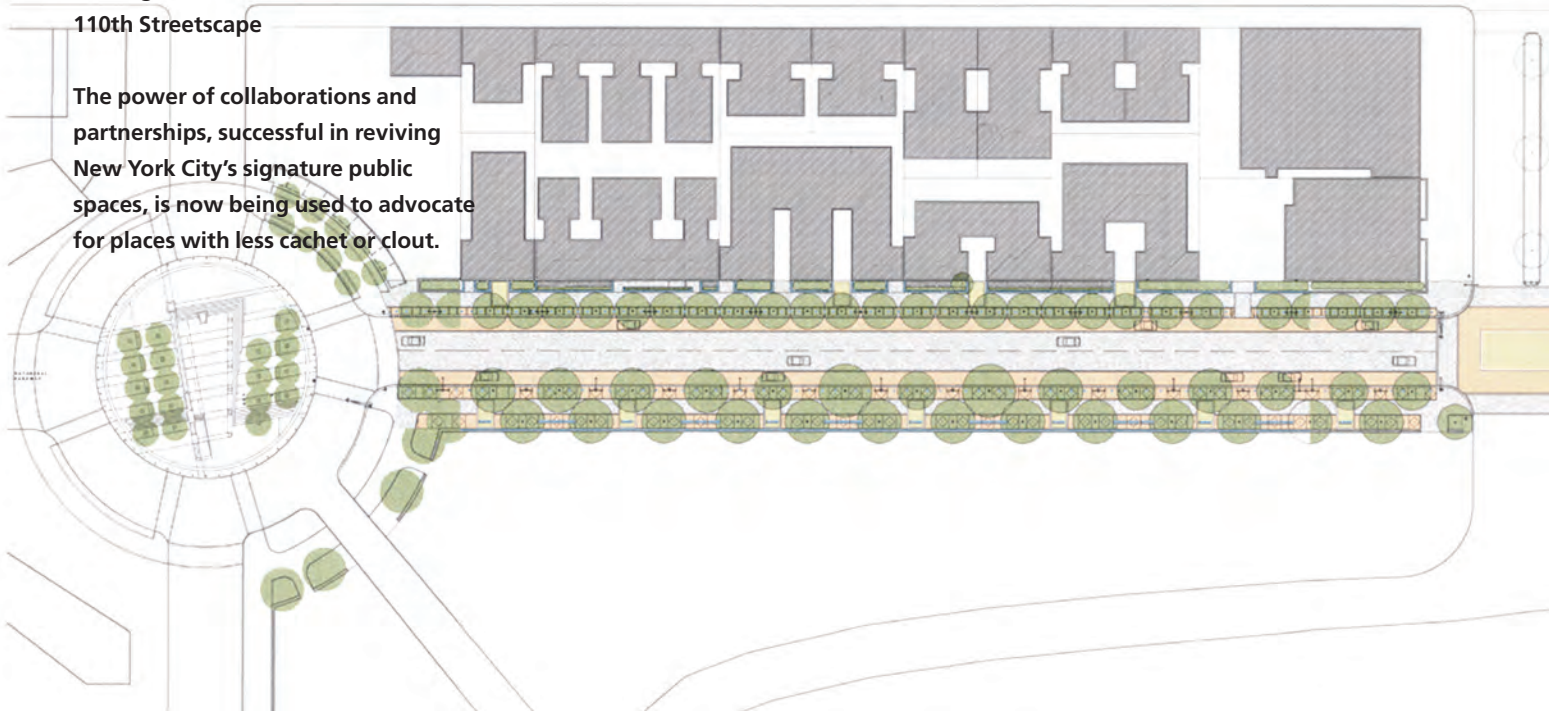
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The High Line, 110th Streetscape

The power of collaborations and partnerships, successful in reviving New York City's signature public spaces, is now being used to advocate for places with less cachet or clout.



The 110th St. streetscape project helps transfer the energy from the refurbished Central Park to the adjacent neighborhood. Graphic © Hardy Holzman Pfeiffer

Civic designers have helped frame broad visions for American cities, certainly since the days of Frederick Law Olmsted's park plans. Today civic designers not only require vision and foresight, as they did in Olmsted's time, but also the capability to work with increasingly fragmented power structures and diverse constituencies. The work of the civic designer requires not only a long view but also articulate voice and a skilled hand.

Hardy has brought all those qualities to the civic projects on which he has collaborated in New York. He is now a member of a group of architects who are seeking to preserve The High Line, an abandoned, elevated railroad track in Manhattan's Chelsea neighborhood. The High Line has long fascinated architects, planners and other designers; there were first a spate of proposals for using it as a light rail corridor and now, more magnificently, perhaps, as an aerial park, an aerie, much in the spirit of the Promenade Plantée in Paris.

HHPA is also working with residents of Harlem and the Cityscape Institute to provide that neighborhood with a gateway to Central Park that is every bit as elegant as the streetscapes that front the park in tonier neighborhoods. For one collaborator, Betsy Barlow Rogers, now of the Cityscape Institute and formerly of the Central Park Conservancy, this is a recognition that the wondrous transformation of the park cannot stop at the park's boundaries. For Hardy, it is a statement that civic streets in Harlem deserve as much attention as squares in Midtown. HHPA's earlier work in the neighborhood, administrative and artistic space for the Dance Theatre of Harlem, showed that New York's civic, urban and artistic spirit can be used to lift local neighborhoods as well as define the global city.

—Todd W. Bressi