By Katie Swenson

Photography by Harry Connolly

DESIGN WITH LOVE

At Home in America

SCHIFFER PUBLISHING

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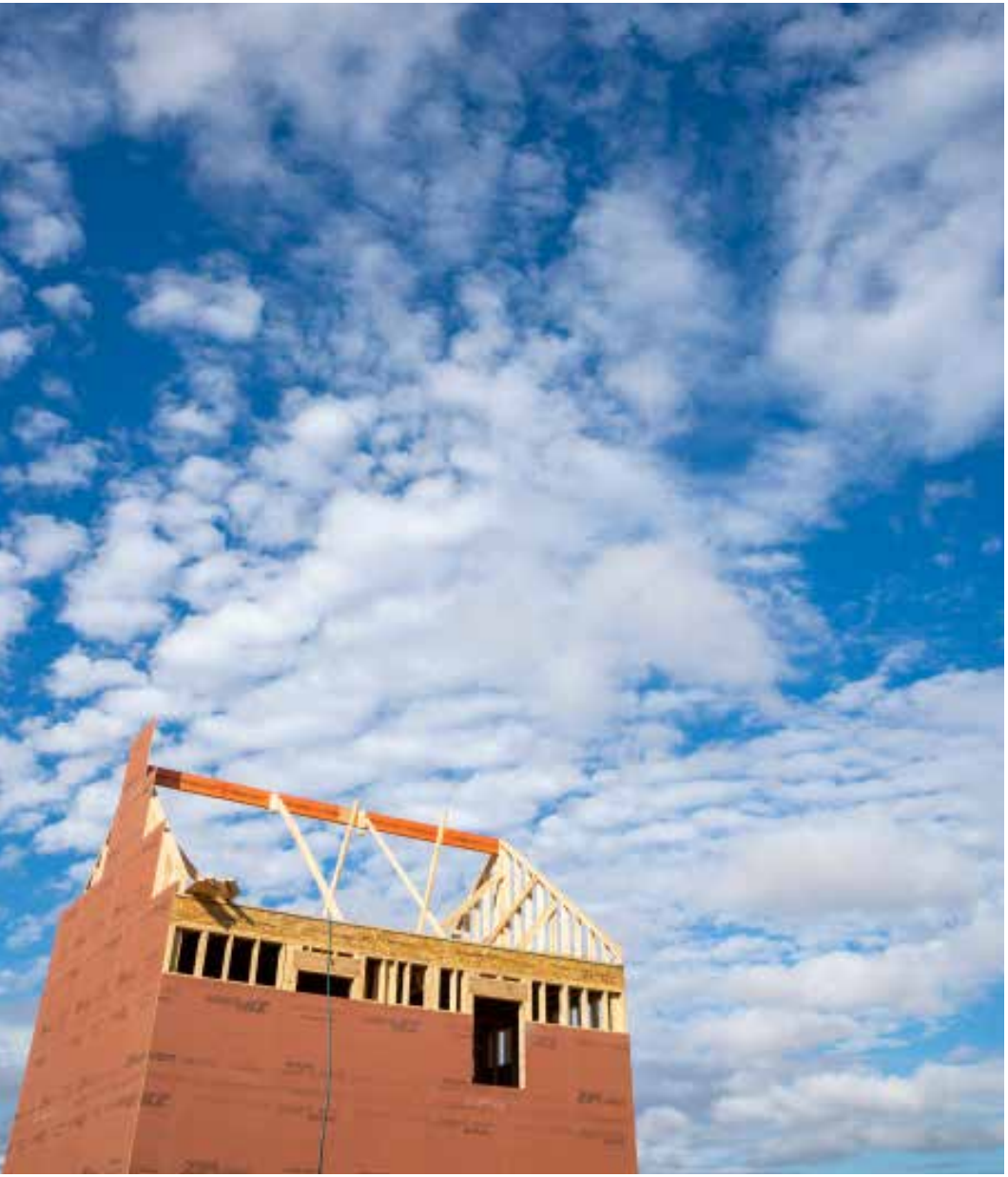

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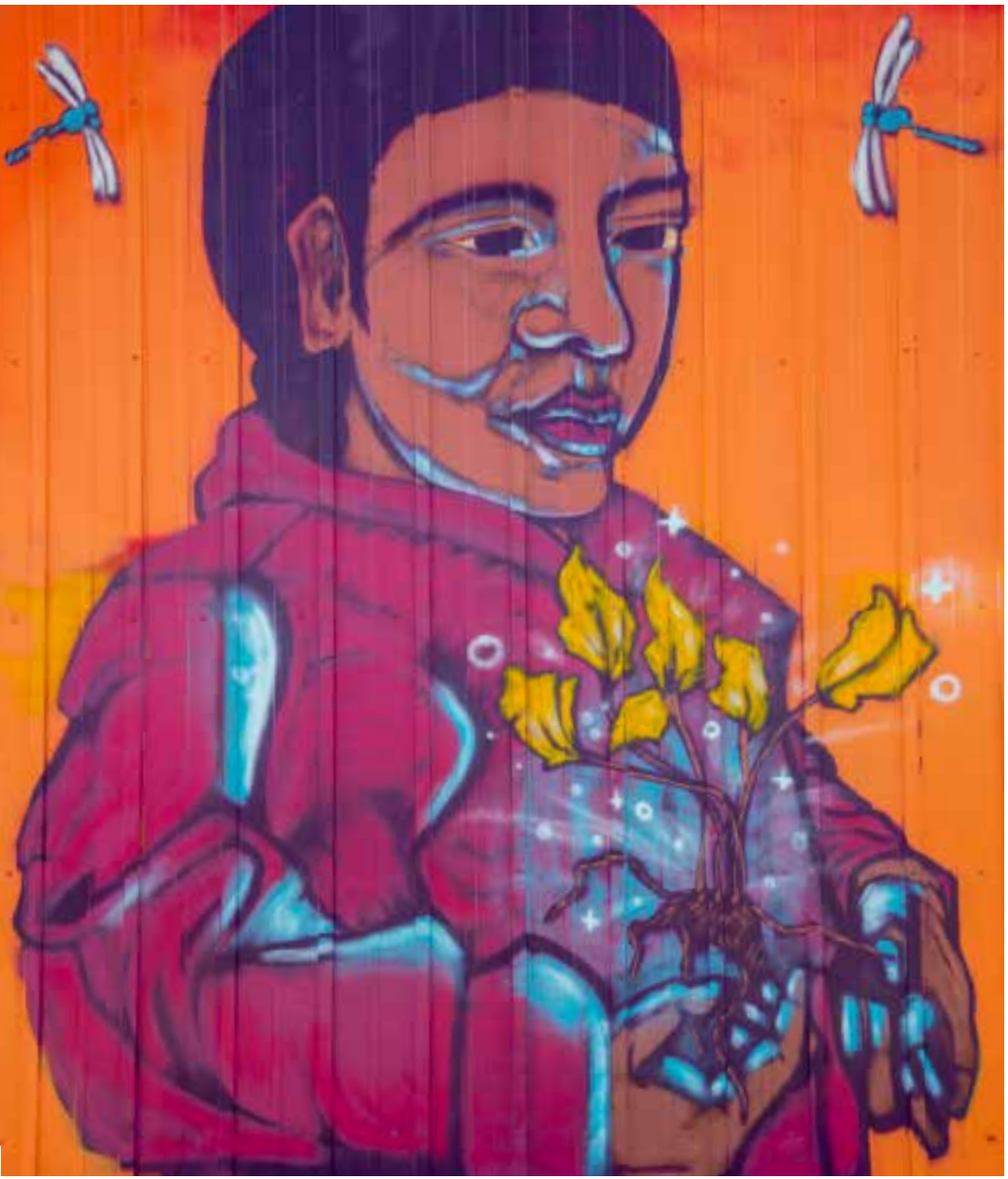


"Love is space. It is developing our own capacity for spaciousness within ourselves to allow others to be as they are. That is love. And that doesn't mean that we don't have hopes or wishes that things are changed or shifted, but that to come from a place of love is to be in acceptance of what is, even in the face of moving it towards something that is more whole, more just, more spacious for all of us."

—angel Kyodo williams[1]

Foreword

The Enterprise Rose Architectural Fellowship was conceived of in August 1999. It was a time of great optimism. The Soviet Union had fallen, and democracy had taken root in dozens of countries where it had been repressed for decades. The United States had a surplus budget and was paying down debt. The president was talking about infrastructure investments. It was anticipated that the new millennium would bring even more equality, democracy, environmental improvement, and perhaps even peace.

My father, Frederick P. Rose, was one of the optimists. He was born in 1924 to a father who was a small businessperson by trade and an artist by avocation, and a mother who devotedly translated books into braille by hand. From the very beginning, even when they were poor, his family was philanthropic. A sense of the common good was in his DNA. Fred was exceptionally bright and skipped several grades, entering Yale in 1940 at the age of sixteen, the first of his family to go to college. There he encountered both an expanded world—for example, taking a music class with Paul Hindemith—and the contracted world of discrimination against Jews, whose admission was limited by a quota. Eager to serve in the war against fascism, he joined the ROTC, graduated in three years, and enlisted in the navy.

After the war, Fred joined his father and uncle's growing real-estate firm and became a leading New York builder. He loved the design and building process, walking the jobs, speaking to the workers, and frequently visiting his architects' offices, to see not only the progress of his own projects, but what they were designing for his competitors.

As his career and prestige grew, he joined the boards leading New York arts, cultural, and educational institutions, and oversaw the design and construction of their projects, working with architects including Edward Larabee Barns, Kevin Roche, Jim Polsheck, and others. His final project was the American Museum of Natural History's Frederick P. and Sandra P. Rose Center for Earth and Space.

At the end of my father's life, a few weeks before he passed away, he asked me to help him create a fellowship program for young architects. Fred wanted them to be able to get out of the office, and to be liberated from the menial jobs that came with starting in the profession. I wanted them to learn how to be community developers, to work with community development organizations, to learn how to finance and build community solutions, to bring design to places that the design world had forgotten. Out of these two streams, we co-created the vision of what was then called the Frederick P. Rose Architectural Fellowship, to be hosted by Enterprise Community Partners. It was the last of my father's extraordinary philanthropic projects.

Enterprise Community Partners was founded by Jim and Patty Rouse as a national intermediary to grow affordable-housing and community development solutions by partnering with local not-for-profits. Jim Rouse was a hero and occasional mentor of

Opposite: Downtown View, Minneapolis, a project of Abbie Loosen, Rose Fellow 2008–2011. Developer: Project for Pride in Living (PPL) and YouthLink; Architect: UrbanWorks Architecture

mine, and by 1999 I was deeply involved with the organization. At that time, it had a national network of more than 2,000 community development organizations, and a strong technical-assistance group. Today, Enterprise is one of the leading forces of thought leadership, advocacy, and financing in the field of affordable-housing development, bringing more than $6 billion a year to its partners and leading the advancement of community development practice.

Launched in 2000, the Rose Fellowship was initially a three-year partnership, and now a two-year one, among Enterprise, the fellow, and the host organization. Enterprise helps recruit hosts and candidates and provides the curriculum, support, and funding for the program. Community partners apply to host a fellow, detailing their aspirations for organizational ambitions and a work plan.

Enterprise also understood the need for emerging architects to use the time in the fellowship toward their licensure, and designed a program with appropriate mentorship to help achieve that. In the early days, the fellows were all architects. But in recent years, the program has expanded to include landscape architects and artists who have a passion for community development and who proposed meaningful work projects in conjunction with local community development organizations. The first group of fellows' work ranged from an award-winning Native American community in New Mexico to a rural housing-project model in Hale County, Alabama, one of the poorest in America. It quickly became the premier social-action design fellowship in the field.

The results of the optimism of 1999 have been mixed. While globally there has been an extraordinary reduction in poverty and increase in wealth, the distribution of that wealth has been more and more unequal. Civilization is increasingly urbanizing, and staggering into climate volatility, drunk on fossil fuels. Natural disasters, human oppression, violence, and corruption have escalated migrations, which have given rise to nativism as a counterreaction. In the United States, as in many other countries, the tensions between those who seek transformation toward an imagined better world versus those who seek regression to an imagined previous world have frozen governments, which are unable to address the existential issues they are facing.

However, the communities in which the Enterprise Rose Fellows work are eager for action, committed to democratically founded positive change, and brimming with creativity. Working in the forgotten rural and urban neighborhoods of America, the Rose Fellows are creating models of a better world. They were among the first to design deeply green affordable housing, ranging from straw-bale homes on Indian reservations to inner-city multifamily projects. They led the imagining of transit-oriented development and transit corridors. They figured out how to bring social, health, and educational services to the communities in which they worked. They helped revitalize retail corridors. They built housing for low-income seniors, people with disabilities, and much more. And every project soared on the wings of beauty.

Some Enterprise Rose Fellows have remained in the communities to which their fellowships brought them. Others have gone on to be significant leaders in the field elsewhere. And so, the fellowship provides multiple benefits, creating tangible projects, empowering and enriching communities, and growing extraordinary leaders.

The works that the fellows, their community development hosts, and their communities' residents have created are models of emergent solutions to the issues of social justice, income inequality, and environmental destruction. These are particularly powerful forces in lower-income communities. To overcome them requires the equally powerful force of collective vision, manifested through design, finance, development, and construction skills. But, as so beautifully written about by Katie Swenson and photographed by Harry Connolly in this book, it also requires deep listening, collaboration, and love.

Martin Luther King Jr. said, "Power without love is reckless and abusive, and love without power is sentimental and anemic. Power at its best is love implementing the demands of justice, and justice at its best is power correcting everything that stands against love."

Love is most powerful in its collective form. The solutions to the issues of our age lie in cultures of pervasive altruism.

Katie Swenson embodies the power of love, expressed through design. She was one of the program's earliest fellows, building affordable housing and engaging in community development work in Charlottesville, Virginia. When she became the fellowship program's executive director, the fellowship was at an inflection point. Enterprise had to commit to the value of the program and ensuring its continuation. With her own firsthand experience in Charlottesville, and an understanding of the impact the program was making in her fellows' communities, Katie endeavored to demonstrate the value of the program, raising both the awareness and the funds to allow it to flourish to this day. Building on the lessons of the Rose Fellows, she expanded the scope of Enterprise's design work to include the Affordable Housing Design Leadership Institute and the Cultural and Climate Resilience Program, all the while advocating tirelessly for the incorporation of design excellence and the power of creativity into all of Enterprise's work.

Throughout her term of leadership, Katie traveled the country, mentoring fellows and their community development partners; bringing tools, resources, and appreciation for their efforts; and learning from them how to be an effective advocate for better affordable housing and community design. The beauty of this book flows from the intimacy of her relationship with the people and work that it describes.

May the work of the Enterprise Rose Fellows continue to grow the seed of beloved communities, and from them, might the common good flourish.

—Jonathan F. P. Rose

Introduction

In my final year of architecture school, I heard the term "community architect" for the first time. I had never heard those two words together, but something in me immediately lit up: whatever a community architect was, *that's* what I wanted to be.

The source of those words was Enterprise Community Partners, which was issuing a call for its first offering of what was then known as the Frederick P. Rose Architectural Fellowship. Named for Frederick P. Rose, a developer and philanthropist who believed in the value of good design and the spirit of public service, the Enterprise Rose Fellowship provides grants for local housing organizations to host an emerging designer for three years to help underresourced communities reach ambitious development goals.

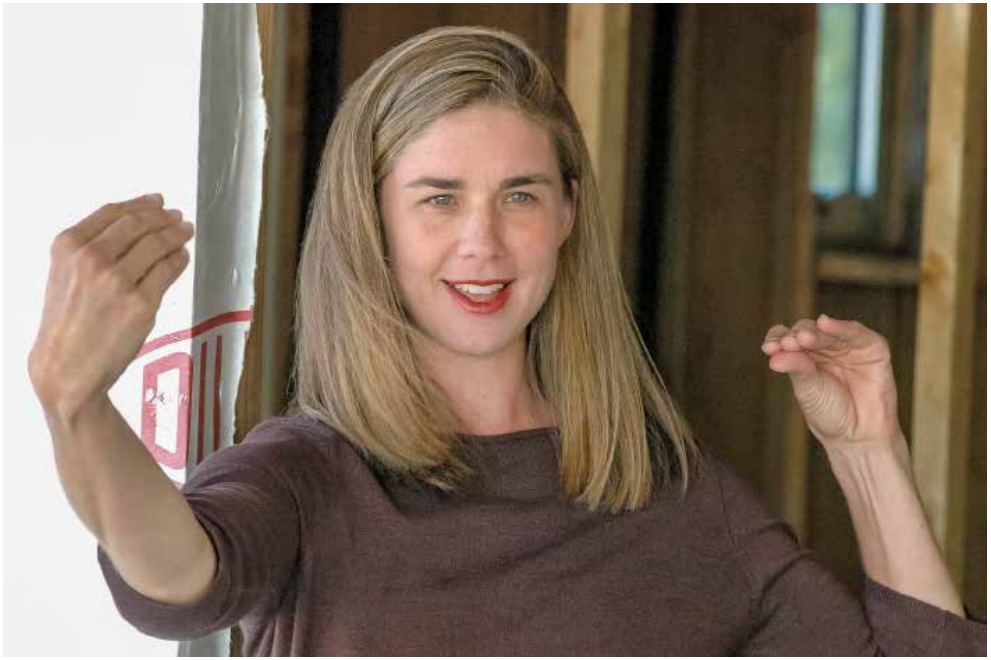
In addition to financial resources, Rose Fellows are given access to Enterprise's national support network and the time to become immersed in a community. The goal is to give the fellows a chance to get to know the people and understand their unique circumstances and needs. After learning from the local community and developing trusting relationships, these fellows contribute their design skills to help create sustainable, equitable, connected communities for people of all income levels.

In short, the fellowship is a platform for social-justice designers to learn how to become community architects. And this sounded exactly like what I wanted to do. Throughout my teens and twenties I had volunteered with housing and homeless organizations, where I witnessed the slippery slope of housing insecurity and its devastating effects on individuals and families. I went to architecture school because I loved design, and I had a vague notion of wanting to be involved in the creation of beautiful and stable, affordable housing. Shortly after graduating from the University of Virginia School of Architecture, I applied to be a Rose Fellow with the Piedmont Housing Alliance (Piedmont Housing) in Charlottesville, Virginia, and was accepted into the class of 2001–2004. I knew little about the world of community development, and less about exactly what I was signing up for. I had two toddlers at home: my daughters Sophie and Olivia were four and one, respectively, and their sister, Bliss, would be born while I was in the third year of the fellowship.

It was a challenging time, to say the least. Navigating the demands of family with the challenges and aspirations of the fellowship was energizing, at times overwhelming, and often humbling. Ultimately, it was life changing.

As with all Rose Fellows, I stepped into a community development initiative that was already underway. My primary project was the 10th and Page Street Neighborhood Revitalization Initiative.[1] My role was to participate in the project management and funding

Opposite: Tsigo Bugeh Village, Ohkay Owingeh, New Mexico, a project of Jamie Blosser, Rose Fellow 2000–2003. Developer: Ohkay Owingeh Housing Authority; Architects: Van Amburgh+Parés+Co. Architects and Ned Cherry



Katie Swenson, Rose Fellow, 2001–2004, photo from 2005

while designing and overseeing the rehabilitation or new construction of thirty-one homes—about 10 percent of the neighborhood—for mixed-income homeownership.

The 10th and Page Street neighborhood is in the center of Charlottesville, halfway between the Downtown Mall and the University of Virginia. It is near Vinegar Hill, which had been a thriving African American, mixed-use neighborhood until the 1960s, when the Charlottesville Redevelopment and Housing Authority (CHRA) demolished it as part of an urban renewal program. Many Vinegar Hill residents were offered relocation in West Haven, CHRA's new, 126-unit rental development adjacent to 10th and Page.

The roots of its problems run deep. Charlottesville was too small to have been one of more than 239 US cities that had a Home Owners' Loan Corporation residential security map—now known as redlining maps. Nonetheless, the racialized real-estate practices of the time, coupled with federally mandated underwriting requirements that promoted segregated housing, restricted access to people of color. Tenth and Page was one of a few areas where the black and brown community could live. However, it eventually suffered from the same type of disinvestment and displacement seen in other redlined areas, particularly as subsequent urban renewal programs disrupted the socio-spatial fabric. According to Mapping Inequality, "As homeownership was arguably the most significant means of intergenerational wealth building in the United States in the twentieth century, these redlining practices from eight decades ago had long-term effects in creating wealth inequalities that we still see today."[2]

By 2000, decades of disinvestment had left the area with a series of challenges. Piedmont Housing, the City of Charlottesville, and a local advisory group prepared to respond to goals stated by residents in the Neighborhood Comprehensive Plan. The top four priorities were to preserve neighborhood stability by improving housing conditions and striking a balance between renters and homeowners; improve deteriorating housing conditions and address consequent crime that undermines quality of life and morale; acknowledge that some residents no longer feel safe in the neighborhood, especially at night; and embrace community involvement and empowerment as critical to improving the neighborhood.

When I started my fellowship, there were a few houses still standing on the corner of 10th and Page. They were slated for demolition, but it was taking some time. I heard there had been a double homicide in a dilapidated house on the northwest corner of the intersection, and the police chief and many residents (as I understood) wanted it torn down. Also slated for demolition was the house on the southwest corner, which was empty but had recently been occupied by a family with five children. The house reeked of mold and there was no railing on the stairs.

I had the idea that I would open a "design center" in the house on the southwest corner, since my vision of being a Rose Fellow meant spending as much time in the neighborhood as possible. I cannot remember anyone protesting. I hung sheets of Homasote wall board in what used to be the living room, and painted the first floor white. Despite my temporary renovation efforts—and even after I closed off the kitchen and bathroom—I could not get rid of the mold smell. I moved a desk and computer in and started hanging maps, drawings, and neighborhood research on the walls.

Within two weeks, I got a call informing me that someone had broken into the house. It was about 4 p.m., which was when I had to pick up my daughter Sophie at daycare. With her in a car seat in the back, I drove over to the house. I kept a drill and basic tools in the trunk of my car, and I knew there were a few sheets of plywood around the corner. A neighbor helped me screw the plywood over the door and broken windows.

That night, after I put Sophie and her baby sister Liv to bed, I was struck by the events of the day. We lived only 2 miles away, but my street was safe. I was in my newly renovated 1925 farmhouse, and my babies were asleep in their beds. I thought about the mother of five who had recently moved, and wondered where she and her children had gone.

While I knew less than I know now about racial inequity, it was no mystery that we owed our safety and well-being, in part, to being white. I thought I could do something to make things better and naively thought that design could be the answer.

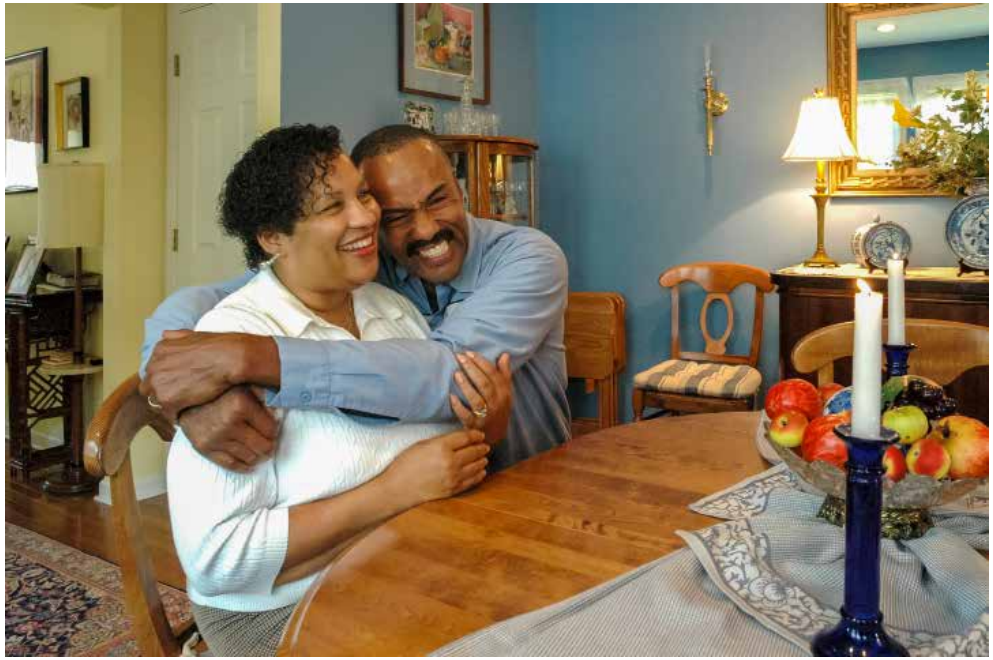
Realizing that the design center was not a good idea, I moved my office into a local architecture firm. But I showed up in the neighborhood every day to work on behalf of the project's steering group. Over time, as I began to form relationships with the residents, I realized that this job didn't require me to be an expert; it required me to be humble and a facilitator.

It was a mistake to think that design by itself could solve a problem, without recognizing that it takes people, joining together and using many tools, including design, to support their community. I learned what it meant to be an outsider in a community, even one so close to home, and how persistent race and class divisions can define a city.

This experience, however, also committed me more fundamentally to strive for the core values I hold today: that everyone, no matter their race or the neighborhood they live in, deserves a well-designed, affordable home in a safe community. My experience as a Rose Fellow strengthened my commitment to making that aspiration a reality. It also raised an essential question: Could effective community design help overcome the trauma born from years of racism, disinvestment, and neglect? On an individual level, could I learn to recognize the power dynamic of my personal privilege in a way that allowed me to contribute to the dismantling of systemic injustice, rather than contributing to its perpetuation?

The other eight Rose Fellows from the first two classes were on their own fellowship journey, and we provided a support network to each other through this transformative time. We organized monthly check-in calls and shared our project work plans. We were the only designers in our host organizations and were trying to figure out how to be most effective in our unconventional roles.

One of my Rose Fellow colleagues, Jamie Blosser, was working with Ohkay Owingeh Housing Authority in Ohkay Owingeh, New Mexico. In 2001, she planned the first all-fellows retreat at her site. As soon as I got to Ohkay Owingeh Pueblo, the vast open spaces and the terra-cotta landscape, so different from the East Coast, where I'd spent most of my life, made me feel relaxed and expansive. During the weeklong retreat, the nine of us had ample time to trade stories of successes and setbacks. Everyone was confronting complex environments, and I realized I was not alone in feeling overwhelmed. Over the course of that week, we dug into our projects and



Diane and Louis Baskfield, homeowners on Anderson Street, 10th and Page Street neighborhood, Charlottesville, VA, photo from 2005

problem-solved together. The "fellowship of the fellowship," as we called it, gave us a way to learn from and support each other. By the time I left New Mexico, I felt fortified to get back to work.

When my fellowship concluded, I had become substantially more experienced and aware and chose to remain in the community I'd grown to love. With a team of collaborators, I opened the Charlottesville Community Design Center, where we endeavored to apply the community-led approach to neighborhoods across the city.

Two years later, Enterprise Community Partners hired me as director of the Rose Fellowship program. Here was the opportunity to continue working at the intersection of architecture and affordable housing. I was now in a position to give back to the program that had set me on this path, to mentor—and learn from—the next generation of emerging designers and architects.

Over the next twelve years, I would travel the country to recruit and support communities and fellows. I have visited with Rose Fellows at every stage of their tenure, from the early, optimistic days, to the days when the work seemed insurmountable, to the moments of celebration as their team broke ground on a new affordable-housing development, to the long-anticipated day the first residents moved in. Perhaps more important, I got to know the people who form the backbone of the community development field, many of whom have dedicated their lives to the locations they serve.

This work with the Rose Fellows and Enterprise Community Partners has been an incredible privilege. I could never have predicted how completely it would change my life, both personally and professionally. The Rose Fellowship provided the initial platform that enabled me to test out and refine the inchoate notions I had about what it means to be a community architect.

It taught me how to approach design first from a place of listening. It sparked a revolution in my thinking about how designers and community developers can work collaboratively to address the deeper issues preventing communities from enjoying equal access to every kind of opportunity—issues as seemingly intractable as systemic poverty, institutionalized racism, crime, neglect, and abandonment.

As the fellowship begins its third decade, eighty-six Rose Fellows have designed and developed nearly 40,000 homes in partnership with local groups in forty states in the US and Puerto Rico. In border towns, inner-city streets, rural communities, Rust Belt cities, remote tribal reservations, and neighborhoods starved for resources, the fellows have learned how to navigate the complex and sensitive process of entering a community as an outsider and finding the best ways to be helpful.

Across the nation, 19 million families—about one in six US families—face housing insecurity. Most of the communities in which the fellows have worked have been communities of color. According to 2018 US census data, the highest poverty rate by race is found among Native Americans (25.4%). Blacks (20.8%) have the second-highest poverty rate, and Hispanics (of any race) have the third-highest poverty rate (17.6%). Both whites and Asians have a poverty rate of 10.1%.[3]

The architecture profession, however, is about 80 percent male and 80 percent white. In the first two classes, we were eight white and one Mexican-born American, and we were six men and three women. Today, fellowship cohorts are more representative of

the general population, with an even number of men and women, and at least half are people of color, Diversity in the program disrupts a view of architecture predicated on the idea of white professionals working with primarily white corporate and institutional clients. The increasing diversity of the fellow cohort means that everyone learns from an ever-broadening spectrum of experiences and perspectives.

In anticipation of the Rose Fellowship's twentieth anniversary, photographer Harry Connolly and I embarked on a two-year journey to visit Rose Fellows all over America. The result is this book, which shares the stories of ten diverse fellowship locations, capturing best practices and hard-won wisdom. I first met Harry in 2005 when he came to photograph our work in Charlottesville. He has now met and photographed every fellow in the program, along with hundreds of community members.

Harry is as much a storyteller as a visual artist, and the subjects of his photos are often people whose stories usually remain untold. The writing reflects my personal perspective, and I have tried to represent each person's experiences and aspirations authentically. In doing so, I have become increasingly aware of the problematic nature of telling other people's stories through my lens as a white person who has never known discrimination, housing insecurity, or economic hardship. I could not have done so without their generous cooperation and support. Each person featured in *Design with Love* welcomed us into their communities and spent many hours with us, and each has participated in the telling and editing of their stories.

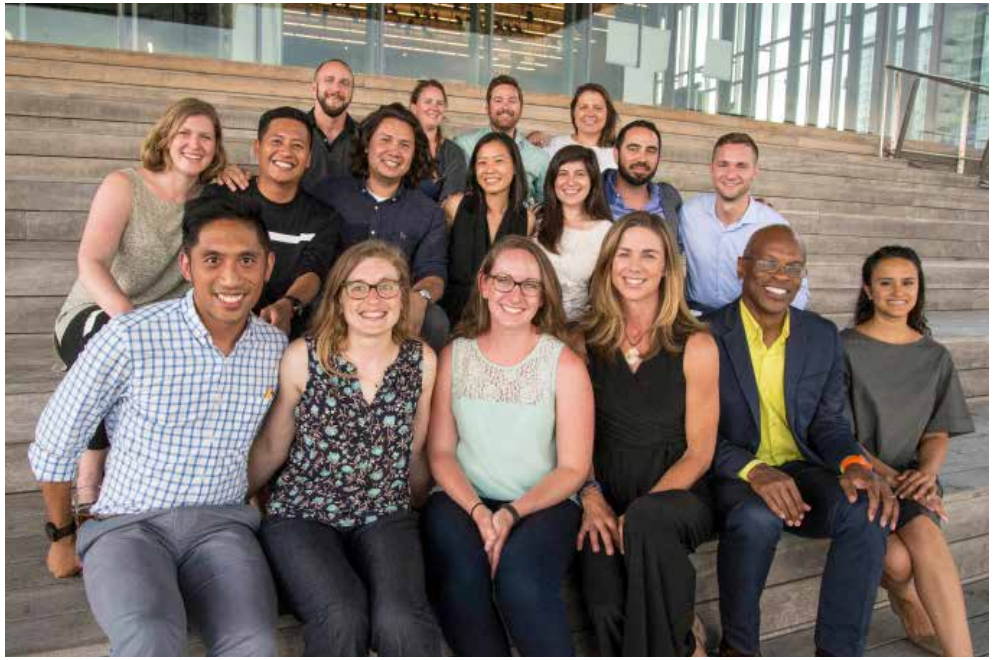
As our travels wrapped up and Harry and I began poring over transcripts and notes, we noticed that people described their work in remarkably similar ways. It became clear that the most-successful communities—and fellows—were those that share the same core elements: a clear commitment to their mission, a common understanding of the philosophical and spiritual underpinnings of their work, and the tenacity to meet their community's goals.

Chief among these core values was love. That's right, love. Love is not a word often used in architecture circles, yet it has enormous implications for the work of architects and designers. The Greeks spoke of eight types of love: *eros*, erotic love; *philia*, affectionate love; *storge*, familiar love; *ludus*, playful love; *mania*, obsessive love; *pragm*, enduring love; *philautia*, self-love; and, most important for us, *agape*—unconditional, selfless love, the highest and most radical type.

This is the love that Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. used as a tool of urban design for what he called the Beloved Community. "In the Beloved Community," he said, "poverty, hunger and homelessness will not be tolerated because international standards of human decency will not allow it. Racism and all forms of discrimination, bigotry, and prejudice will be replaced by an all-inclusive spirit of sisterhood and brotherhood."[4]

I have come to believe that love is as crucial a tool for design as solving spatial problems, meeting a pro forma, or getting a building permit. The social critic Dr. Cornel West reminds us, however, that love without justice is sentimentality. "Never forget that justice is what love looks like in public," says West.[5]

The love expressed through direct service is a first step. This means the work of design but also the work of listening, valuing a variety of perspectives, and building trusting relationships. It recognizes that residents themselves are the experts in



Katie Swenson (front row, fourth from left), with Rose Fellows and advisors at the Institute for Contemporary Art, Boston

understanding their own needs, aspirations, and solutions. Too often, architects enter a community with the attitude that as the professional, they know best what that community needs. The foundation for collaborative design is based on two-way, long-term community relationships, increasing exponentially both the number of problems that can be solved and the number of people who can benefit.

In the most-successful partnerships, the Rose Fellows bring their whole selves to their placements. This, too, is an act of love. They work to recognize the power dynamics of their position and learn about the history and structural forces that have contributed to a community's current experience. They bring professional skills and knowledge, but they do so with a level of empathy and self-reflection that acknowledges their positions as actors, active participants, and collaborators. They learn from their communities in equal measure, and usually more.

Love, too, may be the only force powerful enough to undermine and delegitimize the wide-scale systemic forces that make community development necessary in the first place. We know that without a stable home, everything else falls apart. What will it take for us to create a national housing policy that commits to the fundamental right for every person to have a good-quality home?

As I reflected on twenty years of working in community development, about why things are the way they are and what we can do, it occurred to me that maybe we simply don't love enough. We care for the people we know, but we neglect to recognize the essential humanity of people who are different from us or those we may never meet. We neglect to understand that their essential humanity is just as worthy as ours. And it is connected to ours.

This is why love matters—in policy, architecture, community development, and our everyday lives. None of this work can be accomplished unless we consider each member of the greater community a member of our own community.

The work of the Rose Fellows and their local partners represents the myriad ways that people are bringing about Dr. King's Beloved Community. During this journey, I heard the quote, "Love is advocating relentlessly on behalf of your community." While you will meet many of the Rose Fellows here, their host community members are relentlessly, over decades, making the seemingly impossible things possible. They are the people who get insurmountable things done. Person by person, home by home, neighborhood by neighborhood, together they are doing the hard, messy work of moving the housing industry forward.

I hope this book will give you an appreciation for the results the Rose Fellows have achieved, and for the diversity and beauty of the communities that have welcomed them.

And, I hope it will inspire you to get to work wherever you are, to join the legions of committed designers, developers, community organizers, and neighbors fighting to bring justice home.