



Sustainable Wrocław...
 2007 winner project from Aleksandra Andrychów features a rejuvenated residential area in the heart of the city.

Faith in the Future

An annual award presented at the CEPIF real estate fair aims to promote sustainable development across Central and Eastern Europe and allow up-and-coming architects to show off their ideas.

Central Europe's commercial real estate market was spoilt for choice around the end of May and early June with fairs in Vienna and Warsaw fighting for the higher ground.

At the Warsaw fair, CEPIF, one of the highlights of the event was the third annual Architectural Academic Awards, a competition organised by Guy Perry of Investment Visions + Environments (IN-VI), a design and development service company aiming to help developers recognise and address the environmental challenges facing them.

The term "environmental" does not necessarily refer to the eco-policies associated with the actual construction of buildings. Instead, the term is used in reference to the social environment within the project itself and its immediate surroundings.

This for Perry is of particular importance for Central and Eastern Europe. As property prices sky-rocket he said "totalitarianism will shift from political allegiances to economic abilities leaving those outside literally standing at the gates".

These concerns, Perry feels, are not being given enough emphasis or recognition in architectural colleges throughout Central and Eastern Europe; hence the award program, which this year was given the theme "The City in the Central and Eastern Europe : a Project to Reflect the Soul of the City".

The objective, said Zlatina Mikołajczyk, marketing manager for CEE from IN-VI, "was to present how a new generation of architects and urban designers see the future of their cities".

The winner for 2007 was Aleksandra Andrychów from the Wrocław University of Technology. The project was to add communal space to an existing residential block in order to foster the community values of the block. From a technical perspective the key points were its quick

construction design and the ability to reconfigure space for the different needs of the community. The sustainable aspect was that the space was to be owned and maintained by the residents themselves. "I am now working on the development of some big projects which have links between the city and its society," says Andrychów. "The awards and learning processes from Warsaw and CEPIF give me the opportunity to better understand the design and implementation of real projects in an urban and social context."

The project she submitted for the competition was her diploma project, and "it was a good fit to the competitions title", she says. "My project was an attempt to improve a poor neighbourhood of Wrocław by designing a residential in-fill, remodelling an old wash house into a culture house, and building temporary, low-cost sports pavilions so the local community can integrate through sport. The pavilions are the heart of the project. They are there to integrate and improve the neighbourhood. So it was a project that reflects the 'soul of the city'. I believe at least one part of this project can be done in Wrocław."

Yet, Andrychów says there is not good recognition of sustainable development and pro social design on the part of the authorities, who, after all, are big part of decision making in land development. "Sustainable development and pro-social design are not popular and is not seen as being profitable right now," Andrychów says. "There are some initiatives into pro-social urban development but they are at the 'artistic level' rather than being part of real urban planning. But I learned while in Warsaw that in Serbia such an approach is becoming popular, so I believe it will be in Poland too," she adds.

Andrychów believes that local governments, rather than market forces will have to become driving force of the change as pro-social development is one of their responsibilities. "I think that local government has to take the initiative because of the need to have pro-social [design] as an integral part of urban planning and development. However, I also understand that for that to happen cities have to be richer as they currently have to fulfill their other responsibilities before they will think of sustainable development in terms of social factors. In Wrocław there are a lot of construction



Winner...
 Aleksandra Andrychów accepts her prize from ARUP's Paul Geeson.

CEPIF 2007

works—such as the road infrastructure—aimed at Euro 2012 and potentially World Expo. So now they don't have time to think of social aspects of architecture. But when they build all they have planned, the local government may start thinking of sustainable development and the application of architectural solutions to improve the social life in the city. So maybe after 2012. Earlier? I don't think it is realistic."

What's next...

One of the criticisms of these kind of awards is that nothing happens after the ceremony closes down, but according to last year's winners, Serbs Nikola Carevic and Aleksander Vicko, this has not been the case.

They scooped the award for a residential project in a rejuvenated riverside district. Twelve months on and part of the project has actually been implemented in terms of communal museums and community parking. These small steps not only encourages the winner but also shows that the projects showcased by the competition are viable.

Along with seeing their plans put into action Ceravic says that winning the award gave her a deeper insight into the philosophy underlying the design criteria, and an early recognition of her abilities. Now she is working in Barcelona for TOYO ITO & Associates, on the new Barcelona Feria project. "Of course it is important to have this award on my CV," she said, "but equally important was our better understanding architecture and its responsibilities. The problem is that we are too young to turn ideas into action, but now our idea are making some people think and reconsider their responsibilities." ■ Neil Crook