

Library-1980

Boulder Creek library wins architectural honor

By Robin Musitelli
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The Boulder Creek Library, a building designed by more than 100 of the town's residents, has been cited for architectural excellence by the American Institute of Architects.

Selected from 130 submissions

nationwide, the library was one of six libraries given the Award of Excellence in Library Architecture, said Santa Cruz County Supervisor Joe Cucchiara.

The award really belongs to each of the residents who participated in the building's design, Cucchiara said. Cucchiara advocated

the community-design process and was also among the participants.

Located on the outskirts of town, the library was designed by residents during a series of workshops.

The locals, under the direction of Santa Cruz architect Jeff Oberdorfer, sketched on butcher paper their ideas of what should be in-

cluded in the plans.

They wanted window seats and stairs to sit on, multipaned windows and natural wood, covered walkways, natural lighting, an art gallery, cozy fireplace and a large children's room.

A large outdoor amphitheater

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the tests are conducted. But the ordinance uses regulatory terms might benefit other crops would be welcome.

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built around existing redwood trees and a community room for public meetings were deemed essential, Oberdorfer said.

Later, residents worked on interior and site plans and met with neighbors who were concerned about the impact of the building. As a result, an entryway was moved away from nearby residences, Oberdorfer said.

Oberdorfer and principal architect Peter Calthorpe of Sausalito incorporated the residents' ideas into a redwood-shingled building surrounded by redwood trees.

A reading loft requested by the community was the only feature left out, Oberdorfer said. The loft did not conform to standards for handicapped access.

The community design process used for the library has been the subject of several architectural articles and case studies, Oberdorfer said.

"Very few public projects really include public participation," Oberdorfer said. "Most are show-and-tell projects where architects come in and say, 'Here's the de-

sign; tell us what you think.'

"Very few start with a blank slate. In Boulder Creek, Peter and I came in with no preconceived ideas."

The building has also become a repertoire of local art, most donated. A full-size bronze sculpture by local artist Bonnie Veblen Chancellor greets visitors at the library entrance. The inside entry features a tile mosaic by Dan and Laurie Hennig.

A stained-glass memorial window by Virginia Fordice is hung in remembrance of her son, Gunnar, while ceramic masks by Julie Mackie are hung behind the wood stove.

Oberdorfer said the award is significant.

"Most architectural awards today go to multimillion-dollar projects in urban areas. Here we have a relatively small project in a rural area being selected."

The award will be formally presented to the Santa Cruz City-County Library System and Calthorpe in June at the American Institute of Architects Annual Conference in San Francisco.