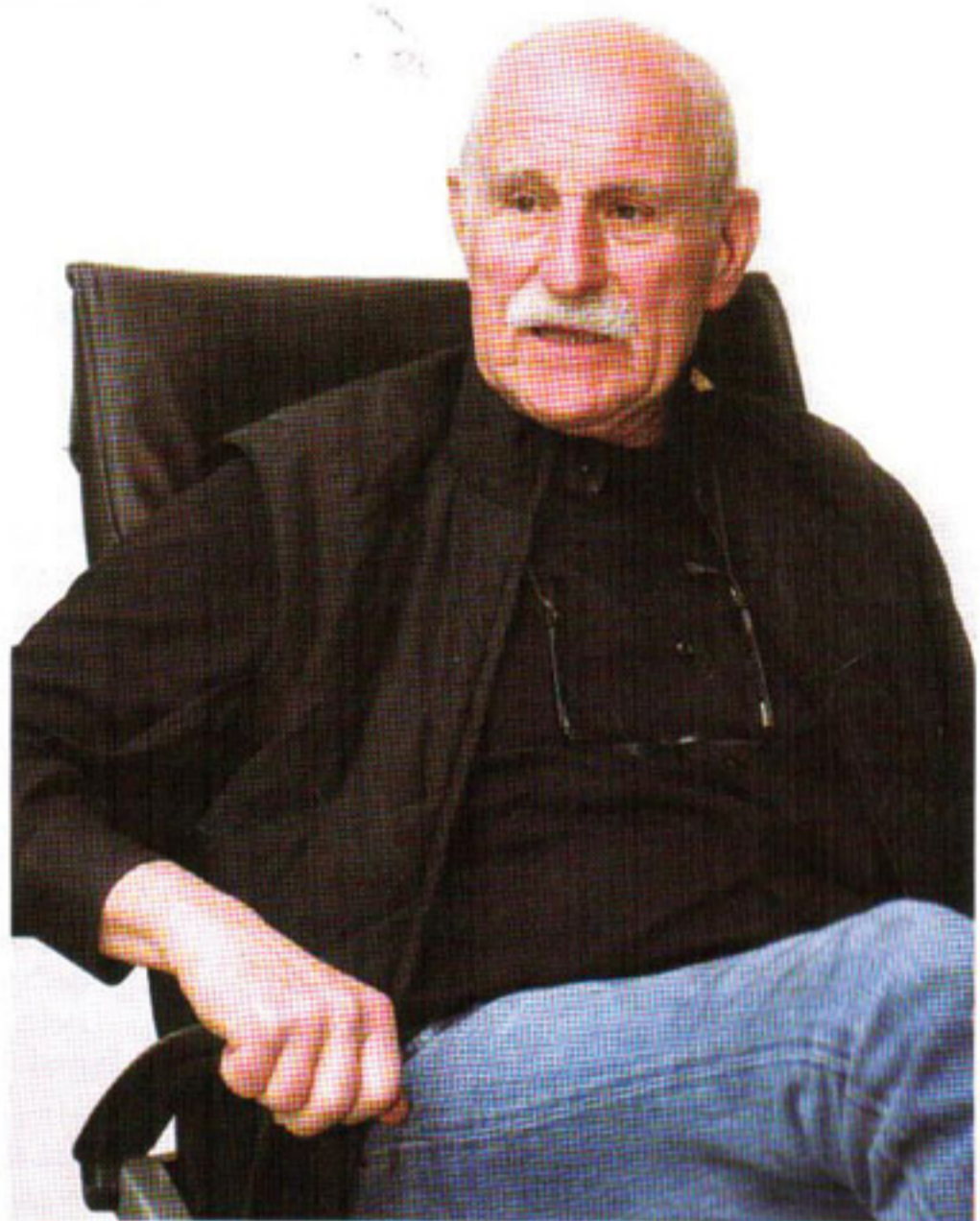


Nubiz VISITING BUSINESS PEOPLE



## Kathmandu needs to be Rebuilt”

**M. Paul Friedberg, a renowned landscape architect from New York, USA, was in Kathmandu for a site visit of 'Central Park', an upcoming green housing project of Clean Developers Pvt. Ltd. at Bishalnagar. He is engaged with the project as landscape consultant. Excerpts from a brief interview:**



### Can you let us know in brief about yourself and landscape architecture in its true sense?

After receiving my Bachelor of Sciences from Cornell University in 1954, I thought of making a career in the field of ornamental horticulture. I majored in it. I went to New York later and landed a job at a landscape architecture office. I had no skill whatsoever about the profession but I felt an inkling towards it. When I started up, people had no knowledge about landscape architecture. They would normally relate it to designing gardens and parks. I began with site planning and playground designing for low-income public housing blocks in New York.

Together with the team of fellow architectures, I received a grant from the housing authority to rebuild those residential blocks. We came up with structured designs and revamped the old setting with the installation of amphitheatres and various other amenities, thus transforming it into the country's first adventure playground.

### What should a layman understand by the concept of landscape architecture or urban designing?

Landscape architecture is a tool to add value to architecture and design. It is not just about designing gardens and parks but the overall design of structures accompanied by nature to provide space for relaxation and enjoyment and to make people feel mentally liberated. But landscape architecture is no longer just a design concept. It is being used as a marketing tool for high-end residential projects. The growing interest in the field of landscape architecture is also due to growing awareness among people regarding environmental problems.

### What institution do you work for? Where else have you worked?

Our firm is M. Paul Friedberg and Partners. We have extensive experience in interdisciplinary landscape architecture, urban design and planning. We have offices and associates across the world and have completed many domestic projects in the USA and international projects in Israel, Brazil, Pakistan, Turkey, Hong Kong and Japan. My experience ranges from planning, programming, designing, engineering and construction and supervision of institutional facilities, parks and play environments, streetscapes, waterfronts, recreational facilities, plazas, malls and residential complexes. That is why our work has been accredited with over hundred professional awards — both domestic and international.

### You are here for consultations on building a green residential project namely 'Central Park'. What would be your major focus in this project?

I will be managing the design aspects of the project. The principal architect for the project is ARCOP, an architect and designer firm. I will be assisting to conceptualize the design to make optimum use of the 70 percent open space of the residential complex. My focus would be on adding value not just to the design of the project but also in the lives of people who live in these apartments. The project space is too small but it certainly will be a good project although it won't be at par with the standards of some other international projects that we have accomplished. Our objective is to make this project fine in all respects without compromising with quality. We will benchmark the next era of real estate development in Nepal from planning to execution to finishing.

Also, the developers want my design to help them create a green living. That is my responsibility as well. I think a good design should be a marketable design. I will strive to apply and fit in every varied principle of landscape architecture and designing in a creative and sustainable manner to create design and space that people will most probably like.

### You were in Kathmandu in late 60s as well. What is your impression of Kathmandu now compared to that period?

Kathmandu was more fascinating then. Mountains and green hills encircling a valley is a visual treat that is not found everywhere across around the world. People would come here because they wanted to live free.

Beautiful squares at Kathmandu are its distinctions. In the West, squares and plazas are mostly open spaces. But the squares here are accompanied by temples that symbolize the history, architecture, culture and workmanship. I found it very intriguing as I couldn't find that sort of rawness and exoticism back in America. But now the streets are narrow and there are much more vehicles on the streets. It was much quieter then with open spaces and far less pollution. There are very few trees along the streets now. Somehow it was richer back then. I went to see 'Garden of Dreams' at Thamel and I must tell you that it's fascinating — its phenomenal design and use of space. That is how open spaces should look like. No matter what changes Kathmandu has gone through, it still is a wonderful city with a distinct beauty of its own and a simple way of life.

### Many people call Kathmandu an 'urban disaster'. What is your view on this regard?

Certainly Kathmandu has turned into a huge city. But calling it 'urban disaster' would not be fair enough. Of course, the city needs more open spaces, plantations and wide streets and should build on its history, tradition and culture. It should be a series of streets, spaces and parks. A beautiful city is all about architecture and design with open spaces. That is what makes a city worth living. But Kathmandu has lagged behind. I think people should rebuild this city to elevate their lifestyles. You are what you build and you build what you are! People who live in Kathmandu and its authorities should form a Public Private Partnership (PPP) to renovate the city and develop public spaces, like 'Garden of Dreams'. ■