

City Post

Granddaddy of green living

M Paul Friedberg, 73, is an internationally renowned landscape architect based in New York. A fellow of the American Society of Landscape Architects, Friedberg has also made his mark as a scholar, educator, and writer. He has been on the faculty of Columbia University, the New School for Social Research, as well as guest lecturer at numerous colleges throughout the United States and Canada. He has also authored four books on landscape design.

Recipient of more than 100 prestigious awards in recognition for his exemplary performance over last five decades, at present he is the director of the Urban Landscape Architecture Programme at City College of New York and founding partner for M. Paul Friedberg and Partners. He was recently in Kathmandu to oversee the design aspects of Clean Developers promoted Central Park Premium Apartment project. In an interview with selected journalists, Friedberg talked about how he entered into this field by chance, the development of landscape design over years, its changing roles and its importance in modern day urban living. Excerpts:

To start with, tell us how you started your career as a landscape architect?

After receiving my Bachelor of Sciences from Cornell University in 1954, I was expected to pursue a career in ornamental horticulture, my major. However, as fate would have it, I instead headed for New York, where I found my way into a landscape architecture office seeking employment. So, although I was not actually a landscape architect, I started my career in the field through sheer drive and skill. You can say it was all by accident that I got into this field.

When I started nobody had a clear idea what landscape architecture was. They thought it was a profession that primarily designed gardens and parks.

What kind of projects have you undertaken till now?

My firm — M. Paul Friedberg and Partners — has extensive experience in interdisciplinary landscape architecture, urban design and planning in many countries. The quality of services it provides has been acknowledged worldwide with over hundred professional awards. Over the years our work has become increasingly diverse, which includes range of services from planning, programming, designing, engineering and construction supervision

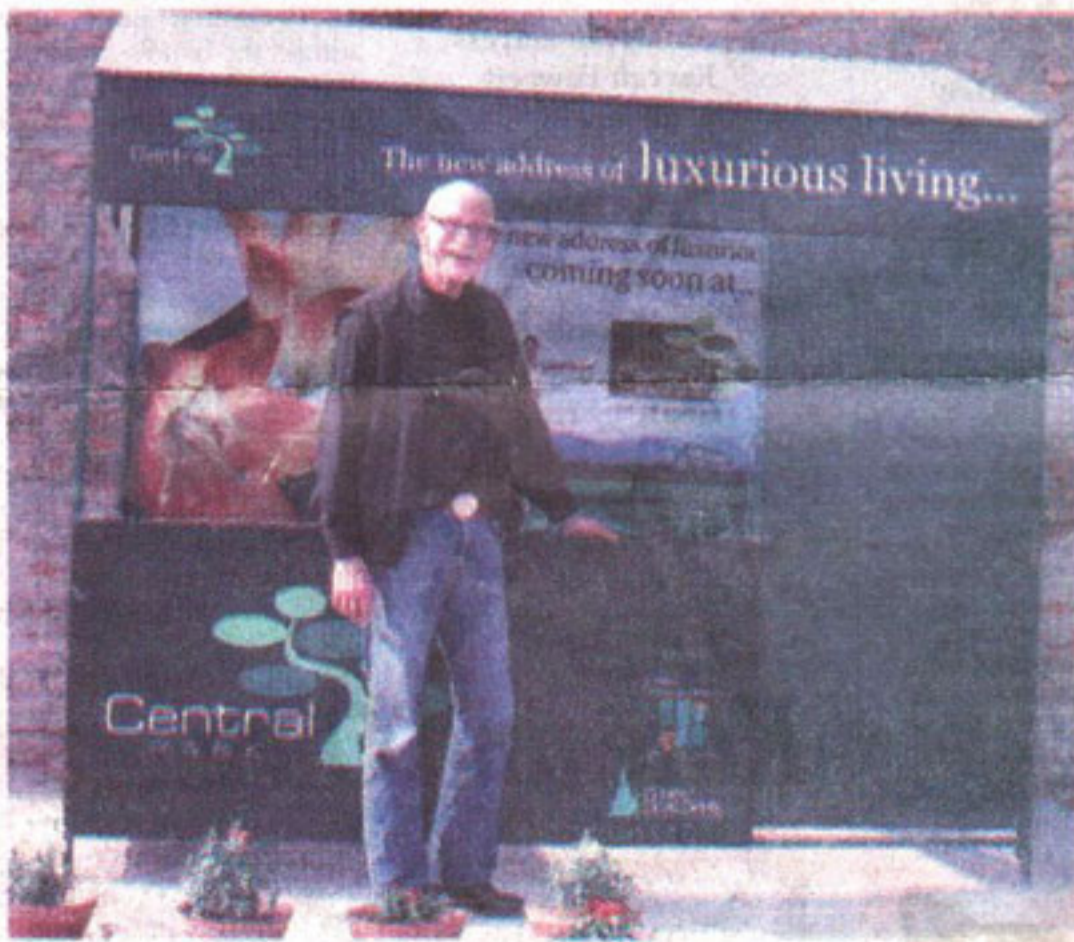
ing, Israel, Brazil, Pakistan, India, Turkey, Hong Kong and Japan.

Now that you are working on a new residential project in Kathmandu, can you tell us what would your major focus be?

I am here to oversee the design aspects of Central Park, a luxury green residential apartment project being undertaken by Clean Developers Pvt Ltd. I would be assisting ARCOP, the principal architects for the project, chiefly as a conceptual designer for the over 70 percent of open space the residential complex offers. My aim is to design open spaces that will offer an elegant lifestyle for the people living in Central Park; to make this complex work for them.

You were in Kathmandu 40 years ago. What kind of changes have you found?

I was simply fascinated when I first came here. The mountains were simply breathtaking. It was the end of the 60s. Kathmandu was among few places around the



world where people came because they were allowed to be free and do everything they wanted to do.

The first thing about the city that truly set it apart was the number of

open spaces, and I found it very intriguing.

What do I see now? I think the quality of life seems to have changed. Somehow it was richer back then.

an intense place to be. The city has its own beauty, its own uniqueness and speciality.

Would you say that Kathmandu has become a nightmare, an urban disaster?

The first time I was here I felt it was an expanded village, a small town. Now it has become a huge city. I don't think I want to be that negative as to call Kathmandu an urban disaster. The city sure needs help. I think it needs to build on its own splendid tradition, rich history and culture. The city's architecture needs to be raised. More parks and open spaces need to be built so that it dignifies, exalts the people living in it.

I don't think I saw any open spaces in the city. The city should be a series of streets, spaces and parks. It is what makes the city worth living because it enriches the life of people who live there. But here everything is linear. However, the most interesting part of the city is the people who live in it. They should try to elevate themselves by re-building this city. You are what you build, and you build what you are. So the responsibility falls on the shoulders of the people who live in Kathmandu.