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AIA's Jefferson Award Comes Full Circle

By David Sokol
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Photo: Courtesy Goody Clancy
David Dixon, FAIA

The other recipient of this year's Jefferson Award, David Dixon, FAIA, may not have expected to win either. As principal in charge of planning and urban design at the Boston firm Goody Clancy, Dixon is the first urban designer to be honored in the category of private-sector architects who have produced noteworthy public projects.

Dixon's contributions aren't architectural. Rather, he applies smart-growth principles to high-density urban neighborhoods. Almost singlehandedly, Dixon has orchestrated the repopulation of city centers to ensure income diversity, public transit options, and open space. He points to the Civic Vision for Turnpike Air Rights Development, in Boston, and his role in lifting the development moratorium in Kendall Square, in Cambridge, Massachusetts, as case studies in

this kind of deployment. The projects also highlight Dixon's extensive educational outreach to both communities and real estate developers to effect positive change.

Dixon happily professes his love for Boston, and cities in general, but says that nowadays 90 percent of his work takes him elsewhere. Regardless of location, the 59-year-old guesses that his devotion to the dynamism and diversity of traditional urban cores was propelled by a Los Angeles childhood in which "I only ran into people who were white, upper middle class, and Jewish."

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