



## **Executive of the Month: Samton, principal at IBI Group & Gruzen Samton: Legacy dotted with numerous milestones**

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As far as New York City architects go, it is hard to find one who has had a more dynamic impact on our cityscape than Peter Samton, FAIA, principal at IBI Group & Gruzen Samton. His legacy is dotted with numerous milestones that include character-defining moments, professional achievements, and exciting turning points.

A graduate of MIT's School of Architecture + Planning and a Fulbright Scholar, Samton has taken a pragmatic approach to architecture that has resulted in countless award winning designs, effectively balancing form with function.

While only in his early twenties, Peter found the Action Group for Better Architecture (AGBANY) with the help of several like-minded architects to prevent the demolition of New York City's original Pennsylvania Station. While the collective couldn't stop the demolition, AGBANY did increase public awareness for the need to protect New York's architectural heritage. Samton credits AGBANY for kindling a movement that would later lead to the establishment of New York City's Landmarks Preservation Commission. "For the first time in the city's history, average citizens took notice of the buildings around them and the important role these structures played in defining New York's historical and cultural heritage," said Samton.

In the early 1960s, Samton joined former MIT classmate Jordan Gruzen at Kelly & Gruzen, an architectural firm established in 1936 by Jordan's father, B. Sumner Gruzen. Soon after, Peter and Jordan were invited by then New York City mayor John Lindsay to participate in a competition to design the Central Park Stables. Competing against acclaimed New York architects Marcel Breuer, Conklin & Rossant and Philip Johnson, the duo of Gruzen and Samton impressed New York's architectural community by winning with their innovative underground concept, which serves as an early example of green design and construction.

In the late 1980s, the firm Samton joined in his early twenties now bore his name Gruzen Samton LLP. Once again, Samton found himself at the forefront of shaping New York's cityscape, this time collaborating with the New York City School Construction Authority (SCA) to literally reshape the city's approach to designing and constructing public schools. Peter's proposition: abandon the century old "square" classroom design for one that would feature protrusions on opposing corners of each classroom. According to Peter, these protrusions would enhance the overall learning process by creating semi-private coves that could be used as independent study areas or mini-computer labs. Furthermore, the new design would be more cost-effective and easier to build. The SCA agreed. The design was adopted, and construction of the first of seven Gruzen Samton designed schools began in the early 1990s.

Fast-forward to the new millennium and a lot has changed since Samton joined his classmate at what was then Kelly & Gruzen. Conscientious green construction denominates the architectural

industry and new construction materials and technologies are pushing the boundaries of constructible design. However, throughout the years one thing has remained constant, his commitment to expanding his firm's horizons and setting new benchmarks for design, performance and client service within a collaborative environment. Nowhere is this best exemplified than by the strategic alliance between Gruzen Samton and IBI Group.

In 2009, Gruzen Samton formed a partnership with multi-disciplinary consulting firm IBI Group. Established in 1974 and headquartered in Toronto, Canada with 75 offices across the world, IBI Group offers a comprehensive portfolio of professional services in four core disciplines: urban land, building facilities, transportation networks, and systems technology. The new firm, known as IBI Group \* Gruzen Samton enables the two entities to take full advantage of each other's strengths. Gruzen Samton is now positioned to export its design ethos worldwide by tapping into IBI Group's global network of professional service firms. Accordingly, Gruzen Samton's stellar reputation positions IBI Group to realize its North American expansion strategy.

The collaboration has already proven worthwhile as IBI Group & Gruzen-Samton recently completed the design of the first section of Tel Aviv's Light Rail network known as the Red Line. The project, which is currently under construction, is estimated to cost \$3 billion, and will be the first underground public transportation system in Israel. "This is a great example of how the relationship with IBI Group has enabled us to perform on a global stage, something we did not have the network to do prior to the alliance," said Samton.

Closer to home IBI Group & Gruzen Samton provides its clientele with a portfolio of architecture, planning and interior design services executed by its multi-disciplinary team. Award-winning past projects include additions to the El Museo del Barrio in New York City that garnered IBI Group & Gruzen Samton AIA's Design Award of Merit for Adaptive Reuse in 2011; and the 89,000 s/f Human Ecology Building (HEB) at Cornell University located in Ithaca. HEB, a certified LEED Platinum facility, serves as a hub for science and design, boasting features such as versatile multi-purpose classrooms and studios for drawing, design, and fabrication.

Current projects include Crystal Point, a 41-story, 477,000 s/f condominium tower designed for Fisher Development Corp. located alongside the Hudson River in Jersey City, N.J. The tower's design uses multiple facade planes to ensure every unit has magnificent views. More notably, IBI Group & Gruzen-Samton is the architect of record for the design and construction of the Edward P. Evans Hall, which will serve as the new home for the Yale School of Management at Yale University in New Haven, CT upon its completion in January 2014. The 242,000 s/f project is being completed in-conjunction with Foster + Partners.

On the cusp of its 75th year anniversary, IBI Group & Gruzen Samton and its namesake Peter Samton celebrate a rich legacy that boasts well over 100 awards such as the prestigious Bard Award, which has gone to the firm more times than to any other firm in New York. Having contributed significantly to New York's cityscape, Peter Samton and IBI Group & Gruzen Samton look forward to new exciting projects throughout the world.