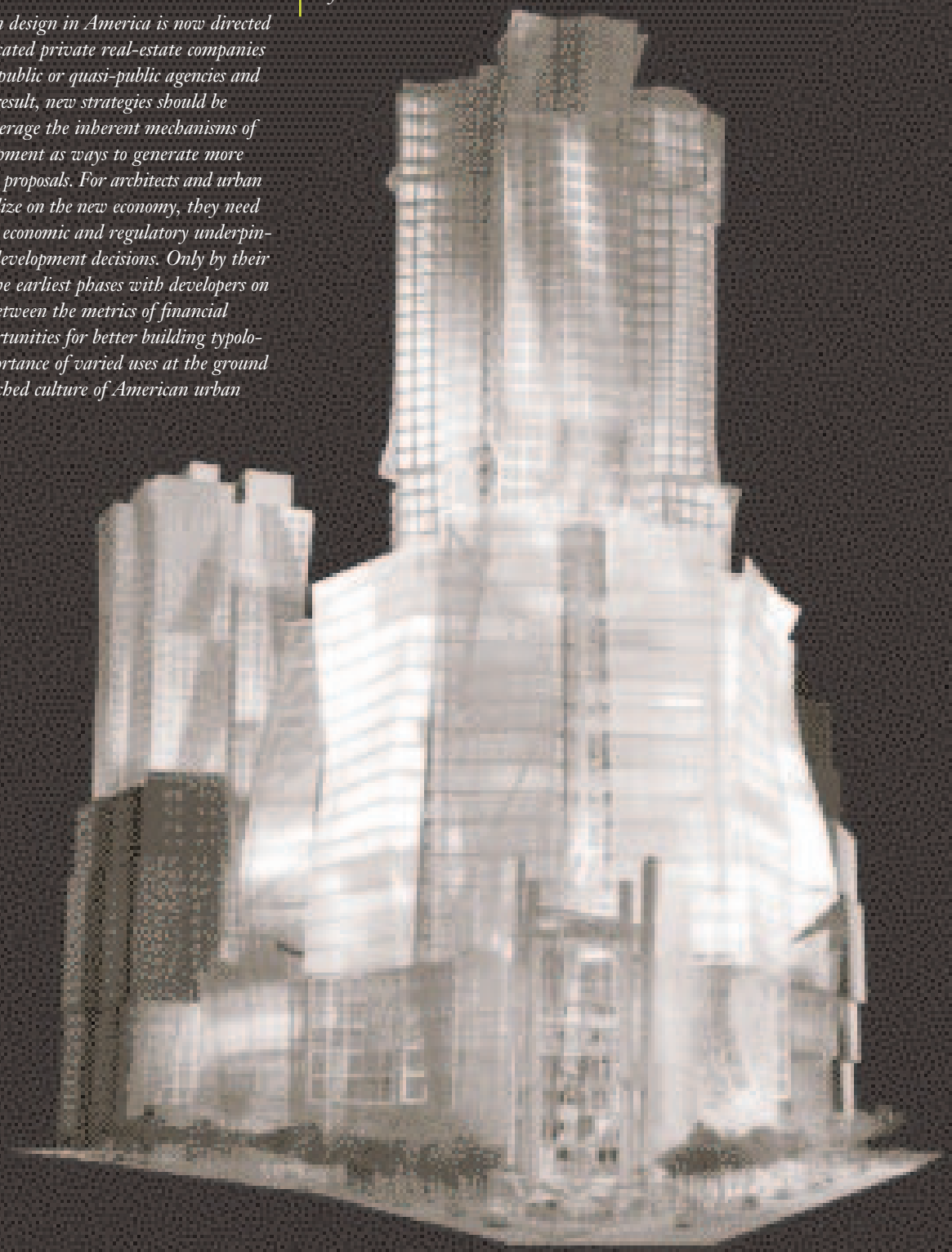
Urban Design after *Battery Park City*

Opportunities for Variety and Vitality in Large-Scale Urban Real Estate Development

by **TIM LOVE**

Large-scale urban design in America is now directed mostly by sophisticated private real-estate companies and no longer by public or quasi-public agencies and authorities. As a result, new strategies should be developed that leverage the inherent mechanisms of real-estate development as ways to generate more innovative design proposals. For architects and urban designers to capitalize on the new economy, they need to understand the economic and regulatory underpinnings that drive development decisions. Only by their collaborating at the earliest phases with developers on the relationship between the metrics of financial analysis, the opportunities for better building typologies, and the importance of varied uses at the ground plane can an enriched culture of American urban design emerge.

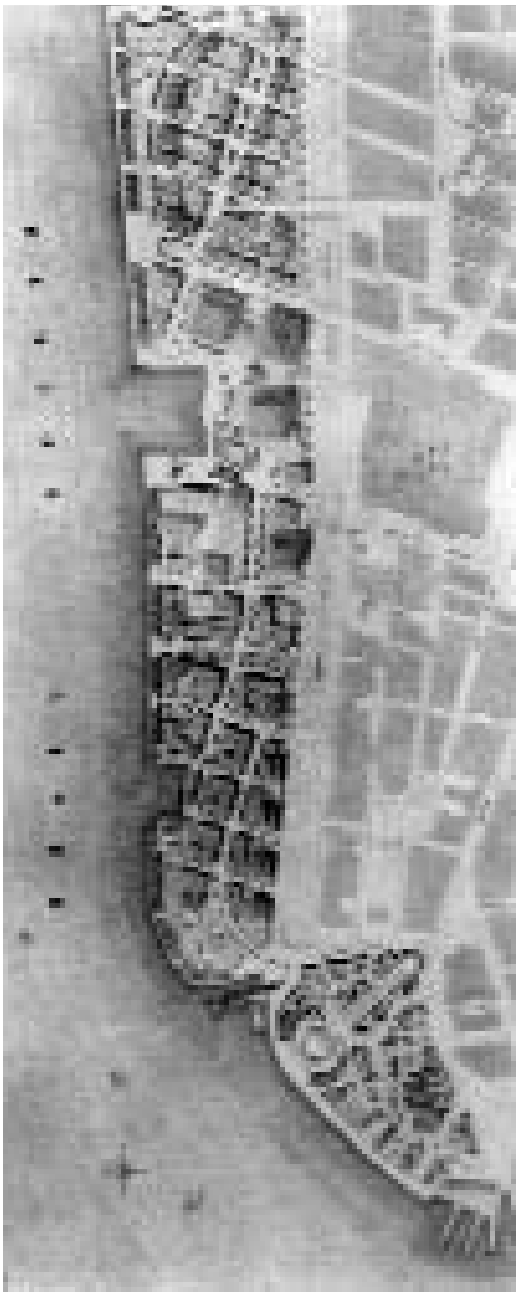


Somewhere between the suburban anti-sprawl agenda of the New Urbanism and the recent media focus on large-scale architecture projects such as Frank Gehry's proposal for *Atlantic Yards*, mainstream American urban design practice hums along, seemingly accepted by the media, public officials, and the academy as an appropriate, if staid, paradigm for organizing large-scale development in urban areas. When the environments that result from these plans are criticized, the culprit is thought (as it was with *Battery Park City* and *Canary Wharf*) to be the quality of the architecture and not the urban design framework. Perhaps standard urban plans are beyond reproach and have not been a focus of serious intellectual inquiry because there is a general acceptance that the traditional concept of streets and blocks should serve as the conceptual core of any city-building effort.

But what this lack of critical focus and commentary means is that the specific dimension, pattern, and logic of these streets and blocks are not questioned. Ironically, the New Urbanism, in its focus on suburban and small-town development, has a much more advanced and self-critical agenda[1] (although New Urbanism's practice models and paradigms are ill-equipped for large-scale urban development). More significantly, in the disciplinary and conceptual division between urban design's focus on "the public realm" and an architect's focus on the microprogramming of buildings, opportunities are lost for a more fine-grained planning at the ground plane.

Rather than grudging acceptance of the status quo, perhaps better designed urban frameworks provide a way both to create a more vital and diverse urbanism and to incite more innovative architectural production across a broader spectrum of American design culture. For this to occur, urban designers and architects are going to need to conspire with enlightened real-estate developers and public-policy experts to find opportunities for new planning and building paradigms at the intersection of real-estate finance logic and the regulatory context. For example, creative negotiation will be necessary to call into question the conventions of office floor- plate dimensions and urban zoning frameworks. Many urban design and architecture conventions are the result of ingrained assumptions of large American firms, habits compelled by the expediency of early phase project planning. But a new paradigm for urban design can arise with a creative coordination between building types, parcel configurations, and larger urban design frameworks,

Adopted in 1979, the *Battery Park City* master plan by Alexander Cooper and Stanton Eckstut established a durable paradigm for large-scale urban real-estate development in North America. This approach, still the primary model of urban design practice in the U.S. for blue chip firms like SOM, Cooper Robertson & Partners, and Sasaki Associates, is a distant echo of the reengagement of the city by American architecture theorists in the late 1970s and early '80s. This trajectory begins with Aldo Rossi's *Architecture of the City* (translated into English in 1978), Colin Rowe and Fred Koetter's *Collage City* (1978), and the brief influence of the brothers Krier (Robert and Leon) in East Coast architecture schools in the early '80s. Instigators in this realignment included the Cornell University Department of Architecture, specifically the urban design studios run by Rowe, and the publications and programs of the Institute of Architecture and Urbanism in New York. Before this almost instantaneous



Cooper Eckstut Associates, architect, master plan, *Battery Park City*, New York City, 1979.

GehryPartners LLP, *Miss Brooklyn*, Atlantic Yards, architectural plans, model, 2006. Courtesy, FOGA

embrace of both "contextualism" in architecture and the practice of "urban design" by architects, both progressive architects/theorists (e.g., Michael Graves, Peter Eisenman) and the architects favored by high cultural patrons (e.g., I.M. Pei) were primarily focused on the architectural project as an autonomous sculptural artifact. And while this is a schematic overview of a much more complex shift in the preoccupations of architects, it is important to outline because of what it now means for urban design and architecture.

The renewed focus on the city in the late '70s and early '80s was predicated on the spatial and morphological virtues of the traditional city. This was conditioned as much by the legibility of certain urban morphologies and patterns in the traditional city as by the Nolli map/figure-ground obsessions of Rowe and his followers. In fact, the birth of contemporary urban design as a professional discipline might be pinpointed to the mid-1980s when architects like Jaquelin Robertson and Alex Cooper practiced urban design using the figure-ground and urban poche techniques of Rowe and the Kriers. Within this conception of urbanism and urban design, the open spaces of the city, including streets, squares, and parks, are conceptualized as spatial figures "carved" out of the poche of building mass. This framework thus tends to favor shapely spatial figures such as Bath, England–like circles and crescents. The École des Beaux Arts technique of giving the poche of the plan a pink tint was adopted by urban designers who made the buildings in their urban plans a uniform pink in contrast to the lush, green, and shapely public spaces that were to constitute the "urban realm." Projects as recent as Cooper Robertson's draft master plan for Harvard's Allston campus still deploy this conceptual framework and representational technique—buildings-as-poche, figurative urban spaces, and all.

Soon after these approaches became mainstream in the mid-1980s, these tenets were quickly adopted in the Northeast by both planners and architects embedded in municipal governments. Commonly held assumptions included the notion that the primary goal of city design was to create an "active urban realm" achieved by maximizing "active ground floor uses" along the edges of streets and open spaces that in turn were conceived as outdoor rooms carved from the fabric of the city. In fact, the virtues of this conception of urbanism persist to this day as the physical antidote to both postwar Modernism and suburban sprawl—its figure-ground and ideological opposites.

In addition to the unquestioned appropriateness of the urban design principles, another reason the *Battery Park City* method has endured in almost all urban plans of comparable scale is its real-estate development logic. The breaking up of large development parcels into independent "blocks," each earmarked for a single building project, achieves two objectives: The overall development can be divided into flexible phases that can easily adapt to the changing real-estate market, and by dimensioning blocks to correspond to the optimum parcel size for a typical residential or commercial development project, the resulting building is guaranteed open exposures and free access on all sides, thus promoting its value on the market. The parceled, multiphased development has the ability to attract capital on an ongoing basis. Interestingly, the flexible phasing logic of a long-range commercial master plan—"In this cycle, it will need to be commercial, but in the next residential . . ."—all but codifies a block size that persists from plan to plan. This ideal block type is typically configured for nearly square large floorplate office buildings. The double-loaded corridor building, the multifamily building type preferred by developers, can also be efficiently accommodated within the parcel configuration by wrapping and bending the plan around the outside edges of the parcel.

The aesthetic monotony of *Battery Park City* and other similar almost finished examples, including *University Park* in Cambridge, Massachusetts, and *MetroTech* in Brooklyn, can be attributed partly to the haste of implementation of the original template. Master plans filled in relatively quickly, like the southern end of *Battery Park City*, may suffer from the look-alike architecture syndrome of a particular taste phase. Interestingly, *Canary Wharf* has had a more protracted and gradual implementation, and thus has a lively mix of Postmodern and Neo-Modern architecture, offering a pattern book of recent trends in commercial design.

DESIGNERS AND ARCHITECTS ARE GOING TO NEED TO CONSPIRE WITH ENLIGHTENED REAL-ESTATE DEVELOPERS AND PUBLIC-POLICY EXPERTS TO FIND OPPORTUNITIES FOR NEW PLANNING AND BUILDING PARADIGMS AT THE INTERSECTION OF REAL-ESTATE FINANCE LOGIC AND THE REGULATORY CONTEXT.

Most have blamed the quality of the architecture rather than the quality of the urban design framework for the monotony of the result. At a recent waterfront conference at Yale, Dean Robert A.M. Stern followed this trend, faulting the sameness of the new slender Neo-Modernist residential towers proliferating on the Toronto waterfront, rather than the urban design of the new districts. Stern recommended a more robust decorative strategy, citing the differentiation in facade expression in the otherwise consistent prewar apartment building type that lines upper Park Avenue in New York.[2] Implicit in Stern's critique and remedy is the assumption that the logic and basic form of developer building types, the very DNA of any master plan, are a fait accompli. Worse than complicity with the forces of the real-estate market, this

Allston, master plan, Allston, Massachusetts, 2006.
Courtesy, Allston Development Group

position suggests a strategic disengagement of architecture from the preoccupations of developers and zoning code lawyers, the professionals that in most cities are primarily responsible for shaping the massing and circulation logic of buildings.

But more than the style of the architecture, it is the monopoly of a single scale of building that is the problem. Perhaps it is now safe to say that the serial repetition of a single building type—successful in Boston's Back Bay or in Bath, England—does not work for buildings with 35,000-square-foot floor plates. The only exception to such a rule may be Central Park West in Manhattan—the double-tower skyline looks great from *Central Park*. But insistent repetition of a single building type does not make for a socially rich street life.

A cultural and social critique of the neighborhoods that result from the *Battery Park City* method is much more complex, having to do with the monoculture meant to fill out such districts. Suffice it to say that the master developer's ability to maximize value at every stage of the phased development implementation (in office space leases, revenue from condominium sales, etc.) is predicated on the establishment and then reaffirmation of a "Class A" district. Recent public policies, such as "inclusionary zoning," which requires a certain percentage of affordable housing as part of any large development project, have helped ameliorate the situation. Similar policies needed to be adopted for retail to provide space for small-scale entrepreneurial retail, businesses often run by immigrants. Regulations that require a certain percentage of micro-retail could balance the natural tendency for large chains in large developments. The building footprint dimensions are again much of the problem, yielding an ungainly depth for uses along active street fronts. Only the urban versions of America's big-box retailers can fill the big leasable voids, achieve the lease rates projected in the pro forma, and meet the Class A expectations of the developers.

So how do four recent and ongoing master planning efforts of a similar scope and scale offer specific opportunities for alternative design approaches that may redress some of the aesthetic and social shortcomings for prevalent urban design strategy?

QUEENS WEST AND *THE OLYMPIC VILLAGE*, NEW YORK CITY: BIG ARCHITECTURE IS NOT THE ANSWER

An offspring of *Battery Park City* in business and political structure and design, if not in successful implementation, is the 1993 plan for *Queens West* in Long Island City. Its master plan, by Beyer Blinder Belle with Gruzen Samton, is almost identical in size, design guidelines, scope, and plan language to those for *Battery Park City*. To date, several development projects have been constructed or are in the planning stages, but given the relatively remote location of *Queens West*, the completed projects are inward-looking residential enclaves. In anticipation of the selection process for the 2012 Olympics, a competition was organized for an *Olympic Village* in the southern and undeveloped sector of the master plan. Thom Mayne emerged as winner, after which he developed the proposal in more detail. To many, including Alexander Garvin (former Managing Director of Planning for the NYC 2012 Olympic bid, and former Vice President for Planning, Design, and Development at the Lower Manhattan Development Corporation), Mayne's proposal serves as a potential counterexample and antidote to the by-now staid design of the original *Queens West* projects.[3] Interestingly, uninspiring architecture (and not the design of the framework plan) was seen as the problem with *Queens West* and aggressive architecture as the solution. Another recent example of a single-author architectural proposal for large-scale urban design is Peter Eisenman's much-lauded scheme for the air-rights over the Penn Station yards.

But both the Eisenman and the Mayne proposals are not urban design but rather very large-scale architectural works—requiring implementation by their initial authors to achieve the desired *Gesamtkunstwerk*. And in fact, there is a tipping point between the moment at which the scale of architecture can negotiate between built form and the spaces between, and both Eisenman's West Side and Mayne's *Olympic Village* proposals far exceed it. Mayne's *Diamond Ranch High School*, Louis Kahn's *Salk Institute*, Michelangelo's *Campidoglio*, and the *United Nations Building* are all examples of successful single-author chunks of coordinated urbanism. Once control by a single author exceeds this scale—in my view, Richard Meier's *Getty Center* crossed the line—it borders on the megalomaniacal, and form becomes the stand-in for the requisite variety.

I am interested rather in the realm of urban design meant to be filled in by others both because the scale exceeds the architectural but still requires physical design (not "planning"), and because it claims precisely the pragmatic territory of the *Battery Park City* method in the dynamics of the real-estate market. This complicity with market is not just an issue of efficacy but also of aesthetics—a phased project designed by many hands will result in true variety and not the artificially induced variety conjured by compositional effort. More broadly, it is valid to distinguish between these two kinds of urbanisms, given the real problems confronted by the contemporary city. Perhaps the architecture-centric schemes by Eisenman and Mayne are meant to supply the "flash value" of media-oriented architectural production, just at a much larger scale. Certainly Daniel Libeskind's galvanizing role at Ground Zero, whatever one may think of the actual proposal, proves the marketing value of this approach. But the second model for urban design, a model that distinguishes the role of urban design from that of architecture, may be the real territory for innovation.

NORTHPOINT, CAMBRIDGE, MASSACHUSETTS: AN UNBALANCED FOCUS ON OPEN SPACE CREATES POLARIZED URBAN FRAMEWORKS

Northpoint, a forty-eight-acre former train yard on the border of Cambridge, Boston, and Somerville consisting of twenty irregular small city blocks, is structured around an open-space network that integrates the Minute Man Bicycle Trail leading to the Charles River and a series of "green fingers" that penetrate the blocks. The redevelopment of this site illustrates several emerging issues that have informed more recent large-scale development. The most salient are technical and political ones provoked by the environmental remediation of brownfield sites to make them both legal and palatable for real estate development. Landscape architects have taken the conceptual lead, partly given technical issues that include grading, hydrology, and the succession of natural environments over long periods. Innovators in this area include James Corner of Field Operations and the University of Pennsylvania, which has planned the conversion of *Fresh Kills* landfill on Staten Island into an enormous regional park. Chris Reed, founder of StoSS and an instructor at the GSD, has also recently won a series of design competitions that include phased ecological processes as instigators of both the aesthetic and the underlying pragmatic argument of the design proposals.

Northpoint, aerial rendering, Cambridge, Massachusetts, 2006.
Courtesy, Childs Bertman Tseckares Architects (CBT)

As part of the *Northpoint* master plan, completed in 2002, Michael Van Valkenburgh and Ken Greenberg proposed a 5.5-acre "central park" as the heart of the larger green spine that both gives value to development parcels that face it and functions as conceptual centerpiece of a broader sustainable design concept.[4] Van Valkenburgh's design arguments for the park focus on its environmental and social virtues, although the published renderings of the project mostly highlight the role of the open space as a visual amenity for contiguous buildings. Certainly, a large park is an important amenity, given that three sides of the emerging neighborhood are surrounded by an elevated transportation infrastructure. (The park is being completed in phase one, along with the initial development blocks.) The sustainable design agenda became the primary marketing narrative to sell the project during the regulatory approvals process and to offer a lifestyle choice for condominium buyers.

The hurdles for regulatory approvals, already difficult given the number of jurisdictions overseeing the project, were even higher because the development entity, a joint venture between Guilford Transportation Industries of Portsmouth, New Hampshire, and Boston real-estate firm Spaulding & Slye Colliers International, was private and not under the control of a quasi-public authority like the master developers of *Battery Park City* and *Queens West*. Without "public interest" represented within the development team, community groups and single-issue advocates had additional leverage to require development-subsidized "public benefits" in exchange for development approval. *Atlantic Yards* in Brooklyn, developed by Forest City, is another example of a large-scale project initiated by a private developer rather than a public-private partnership. Forest City had to partner with several non-profit organizations and include a higher-than-typical percentage of affordable residential units to redress the perceived unbalance between the private and public benefits that would result from implementation.

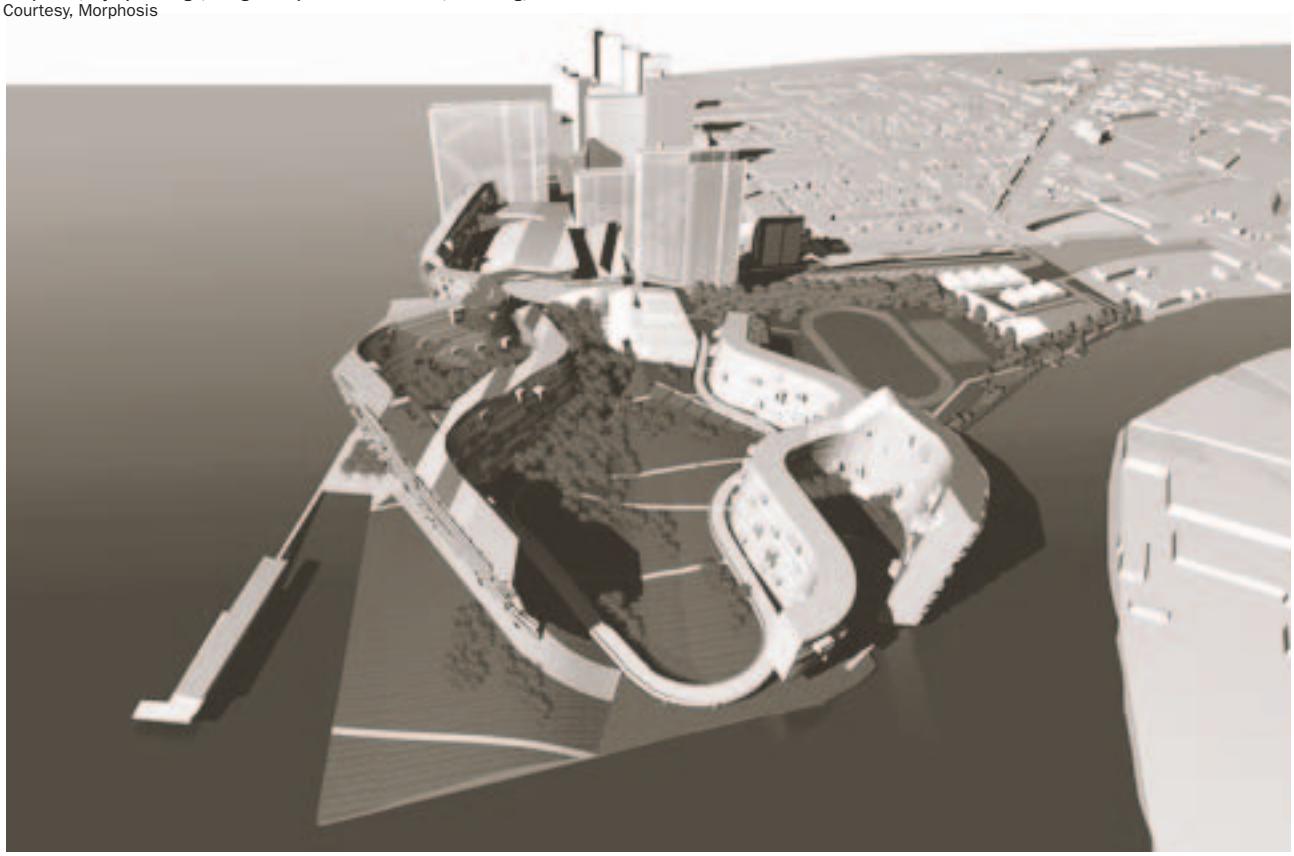
More generally, the ratio between private real-estate value and public benefits has become the central negotiating point between developers and single-interest advocates/

activists. Each side provides it best-case narratives, with elected officials and the affected residential communities the prime constituency for swaying the decisions of the regulators. This fundamentally political and economic negotiation has prioritized new public parks subsidized by the development financing in recent urban design plans. In fact, the politics inherent in a "parks are good—development is bad" process means that a "pro open-space" landscape architect is much more effective than a "pro buildings" architect as an advocate for urban design proposals. This is perhaps one reason that Michael Van Valkenburgh has recently found himself as the chief advocate of so many large-scale urban design projects.

The balance between parks and development can be heavily skewed one way or another depending on whether the developer is a private or public-private entity, the organizational strength of the affected community, and the original impetus for the project. It is certainly easier to add a park and reduce development rather than the other way around. The parcels reclaimed as a result of the suppression of the elevated highway that snaked through downtown Boston, for example, were finally designated in a simple *75% open space/25% building parcel* ratio, despite several years of sophisticated urban planning initiatives. Michael Van Valkenburgh Associates' *Brooklyn Bridge Park* project was stalled when a decision was made in early 2006 to carve several condominium development parcels out of the project to make it "financially self-sustaining." Two arguments were offered: Revenue from the condominiums was needed to pay for park maintenance, and a residential constituency would be created for the park at Atlantic Avenue, planned as one of the major park entrances.

Unfortunately, what has resulted from these kinds of negotiations is a polarization of those who promote privatized development and those who promote unencumbered public space. The political polarization jibes almost perfectly with the one-fat-building-for-each-development-block favored by the *Battery Park* method, since in the minds of the public-space advocates, nothing within the development poche is of any public value. Yet, the best models of urbanism grow from the messy overlap of private interests and public space, as Jane Jacobs and countless other social theorists have pointed out. What is being advocated is not the fully privatized "public" spaces of Boston's *Quincy Market* or New York's *South Street Seaport*, but rather a finer-grained exchange between commerce and public space. The Italian café, the North African souk, and the Asian food market are specific examples of cultural/spatial patterns that are predicated on this condition. What is needed are urban design

Morphosis, *Olympic Village*, design competition submission, rendering, 2003.
Courtesy, Morphosis



approaches that focus precisely on this condition of exchange rather than consider this a boundary between very different interests. This is a job for both designers and community-minded advocates. Fred Kent's *Project for Public Spaces* is one of the few groups that examine this grain of urban design; every city needs its own version.

EAST BAYFRONT, TORONTO: DESIGN THE STREET AND OPEN SPACE NETWORK TO INSTIGATE CREATIVE FRICTION WITH ESTATE DEVELOPMENT AND CORPORATE ARCHITECTURAL PRACTICE

The *East Bayfront Precinct Plan*, completed by Koetter Kim & Associates in November 2005, confronts several of the issues already raised, such as the open-space/development parcel balance. The project narrative is organized around the by-now requisite sustainable design theme. What is notable about this proposal is the balance it achieves between the generic *Battery Park* City master planning language of other similar proposals (including the *West Dons Precinct Plan* by Urban Design Associates, located on a large parcel adjacent to the *East Bayfront Precinct Plan*) and the overtly architectural proposals of Thom Mayne and Peter Eisenman. Koetter Kim's interest in looking more seriously at the architectural implications of urban design decisions is partly the result of pedigree. Fred Koetter was originally in Colin Rowe's orbit at Cornell and cowrote *Collage City*. In the late 1970s and early 1980s, Koetter, Susie Kim, and their team produced several urban design proposals for central Boston that owed their architectural specificity to the contemporaneous urban proposals of Leon Krier.[5] Importantly, Koetter and Kim's proposals were as much a mandate for typological innovation to solve specific urban problems as an ideological position about style.[6] (Koetter and Kim's Boston proposals predate and perhaps influenced Andrés Duany's first formulations of the New Urbanism.)

The architectural language depicted in the *East Bayfront Plan* is generically contemporary, the kind of soft Neo-Modernism prevalent in large corporate work. Bits of green fuzz are visible on roofs and setbacks in the renderings to signify an affordable green agenda. The overlap between architecture and urban design is best represented by the prescription for a south-facing arcade system that can be converted to enclosed pedestrian walkways during cold weather —an excellent example of the role of urban design as a discipline distinct from generic planning and the one-off specificity of architecture. The message here is that it is the strength of the urban framework rather than the quality of the architecture that matters.

The *East Bayfront Plan* tackles the interrelationship between block size and building typology specifically rather than generically. The plan includes a taxonomy of residential and commercial building types and how they might be accommodated within a block plan with more dimensional

Koetter, Kim & Associates, *East Bayfront*, master plan, Toronto, Ontario, Canada, ca. 2005

and proportional variety than most. In fact, the concept of using block configuration as a way to inhibit complete market flexibility, while tentative in this plan, is an important area of research for urban design. But this variety must be tested at a microeconomic level: Is each of the specific building types economically robust enough to be feasible in a market economy? Are there enough fat and flexible parcels in the overall plan to spur first-phase development, thus adding value and reducing risk for the less flexible parcels later in the development?

Consistent with the compositional language of the *Battery Park City* method, the *East Bayfront Plan* introduces inflections and exceptions into an otherwise smooth and vaguely axial grid. These exceptions are justified by existing site conditions, including the geometry of "gateway" streets (that connect the district to the city under the Gardiner Express-

MORE THAN THE STYLE OF THE ARCHITECTURE, IT IS THE MONOPOLY OF A SINGLE SCALE OF BUILDING THAT IS THE PROBLEM. PERHAPS IT IS NOW SAFE TO SAY THAT THE SERIAL REPETITION OF A SINGLE BUILDING TYPE — SUCCESSFUL IN BOSTON'S BACK BAY OR IN BATH, ENGLAND — DOES NOT WORK FOR BUILDINGS WITH 35,000-SQUARE-FOOT FLOOR PLATES.

way) and the alignment of the expressway itself. In this case, as in many examples, the nervous ticks that provoke compositional variety do not threaten the insistent grid of the overall district. As a result, all the architecture can do is politely lay there, awaiting instructions for architectural variety from "Design Guidelines"—the typical adjunct to a master plan that qualifies cornice heights, special features at

Ken Greenberg, Kendall Square, realized plan with architects' and landscape architects' final designs collaged, Cambridge, Massachusetts, ca. 1999. Courtesy, Ken Greenberg

corners, and the location of building entrances, service bays, and so on.

Ken Greenberg's[7] master plan for Kendall Square in Cambridge, a precursor to his plan for *Northpoint*, pushes the irregularity of the street and parcel plan to a point that an overall grid is no longer legible—a solution originally shaped by the site's environmental problems. The streets avoid areas of major contamination to delay the costs of remediation to the individual development projects. This knowingly ad hoc strategy has benefits beyond visual variety, including its overt pragmatism (heroic and costly efforts are not required to create a resolved plan). More importantly, the idiosyncrasies of the master plan may provoke more interesting architectural responses.[8] For example, a street that dead-ends on a real-estate parcel may invite a unique programmatic response or architectural elaboration. This approach suggests a more general principle: The more specifically idiosyncratic (and pragmatic) the master plan, the less important are prescriptive design guidelines. In fact, a highly permissive, guideline-free master plan may create precisely the variety hoped for in city-building.

Rather than rely on design guidelines to frame (and some architects would say restrict or limit) the architectural options for a project built within a master plan, a master plan framework could be conceived that hardwires all the planning intentions within the infrastructure plan itself and then allows free rein for each individual development/design team. The hope is that by eliminating the possibility of design guidelines as a safety net, the infrastructure plan will need to work harder to generate a successful urban realm and will yield a higher degree of variety than the typical master plan/design guidelines framework.[9] This results partly from the additional responsibility of the master planner to design an infrastructure plan that is preloaded with juicy architectural opportunities rather than a plan that in its even-handed "correctness" can only produce monotony. In other words, one goal of the urban designer could be to set up a provocative and compelling game board for the participation of architects during the multiphased implementation of large-scale development.

BERKELEY INVESTMENTS *FORT POINT PORTFOLIO*, BOSTON: GENTRIFICATION AS A MODEL FOR FINE-GRAINED GROUND-LEVEL PLANNING

Berkeley Investments, a Boston-based real-estate development company, bought thirteen buildings, two parking garages, and several vacant parcels in the Fort Point District, a dense neighborhood of turn-of-the-century brick loft buildings immediately adjacent to downtown Boston. My firm, Utile, Inc., was hired by the developer[10] to do a comprehensive master plan that would look at reuse options for the existing building and development opportunities for the development parcels. Utile established a methodology that linked urban design to phased retail lease marketing as a way to create a neighborhood with a supportive and character-defining retail mix. The details of the plan hinged on the concept that cultural and economic reciprocities between retail at the street level and the addition of housing above would be set in motion by the establishment of the first retail.

Although there is a small residential population, the

Left: **Berkeley Investments, Fort Point Portfolio, 12 Farnsworth, after, Boston, Massachusetts, 2006.** Courtesy, Berkeley Investments / Utile

Berkeley Investments, Fort Point Portfolio, 12 Farnsworth, before, Boston, Massachusetts, 2006. Courtesy, Berkeley Investments / Utile

existing neighborhood is dominated by office uses; as a result, the streets are mostly deserted at night. Utile proposed new restaurants and cafés, lured to the neighborhood by below-market rents and the quality of the existing loft architecture, as a way to generate activity in the evening and create a market for condominium conversions. The plan suggested that Berkeley Investments would introduce neighborhood service retail such as a grocery store, dry cleaners, and pharmacy after developing a critical mass of residential units in existing loft buildings. Berkeley Investments would then develop residential, hotel, and office projects on infill sites in subsequent phases as real-estate values increased in the neighborhood. In this case, urban design includes the specific social engineering of the neighborhood through the careful scripting of the ground floor uses and the mix of residential and commercial uses above.

Rather than preexisting urban design paradigms, the methodology for the Fort Point plan was informed by an analysis of the initial impetus for and subsequent manifestations of gentrification in New York neighborhoods, specifically Smith Street and Williamsburg in Brooklyn, the Lower East Side, and, most recently, Bushwick in Brooklyn.[11] The question is whether naturally occurring neighborhood change, albeit shaped by real-estate speculators, can be translated to a planned process under the control of a single master developer such as Berkeley Investments.

The development of B3 (the blocks below Broad Street) in Philadelphia followed a similar strategy. Goldman Properties, led by Tony Goldman, a pioneer developer of SoHo, had acquired several contiguous parcels and prewar office buildings in the late 1990s with the idea of creating a mixed-use urban neighborhood. Rather than architects, the Goldman team[12] hired 160over90, a Philadelphia-based branding firm, to help create the blueprint for a carefully phased development of the neighborhood. In this case, a marketing and programming strategy, rather than physical design, served as the template for change. Central to the strategy was providing space "at cost" for the kinds of restaurants, galleries, and shops that would appeal to the target demographic for similar urban neighborhoods. By carefully selecting pioneer tenants, the Goldman team was functioning more like a casting director than a physical planner. To attract these tenants, 160over90's Creative Director, Darryl Cilli, chose to veer from the traditional real-estate brochure. Realizing Goldman Properties was not simply selling space but an emergent neighborhood, 160over90 created a culture magazine that could be used during the sales process. Tied to this publica-

Berkeley Investments, Fort Point Portfolio, area of study, Boston, Massachusetts, 2006. Courtesy, Berkeley Investments / Utile

Goldman Properties, cover of brochure designed by 160over90 for *Blocks Below Broad* (B3), Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, ca. 2003. Courtesy, 160over90

Goldman Properties, interior pages of a brochure designed by 160over90 for *Blocks Below Broad* (B3), Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, ca. 2003. Courtesy, 160over90

tion was a public relations campaign that placed stories about the district in national magazines and newspapers. Subsequently, Goldman Properties has made careful and incremental additions to the neighborhood—three boutiques here, an ad agency there—while not displacing the preexisting retail that helped give the neighborhood "character" in the first place. The examples of Fort Point and B3 are rare but significant, since they suggest that the microprogramming of both ground floor uses and the occupants of the buildings above can result in a planned community with the cultural and social vitality of traditional neighborhoods that have arisen naturally over a longer period.

More generally, the examples of the Fort Point and the B3 plans suggest that large-scale development is occurring in existing urban neighborhoods as well as on brownfield sites, partly because of the lack of available large-scale development parcels. Unlike tabla rasa brownfield sites, these plans include both existing buildings and open parcels, and thus generate a range of building scales. This is turn may encourage a more diverse population of residents and businesses, and a more diverse group of development partners, encouraging implementation over a shorter time. The implied financing logic is that the reduction in returns caused by the smaller size of some projects within the broader mix may be offset by more aggressive absorption rates.

Ken Greenberg will be testing these financial assumptions with a new kind of parcel guideline for a development project in San Juan. In the spirit of a guided ad-hoc approach, larger blocks will require further subdivision to be determined by program and need at the time of development. The innovation is that the ultimate parcel sizes can be varied—dictated by a logic of specificity as long as the larger blocks remain permeable. This would allow and indeed encourage an overall developer to acquire the larger block but would leave smaller parcels for additional phases and presumably smaller development entities. These multiple scales of development opportunities encourage several scales of economies to participate—converting one of Jane Jacobs's principles for a socially healthy neighborhood into a proactive planning strategy.

Despite the persistence of the *Battery Park City* method, several emerging trends point to new opportunities for urban design. These opportunities stem from the nature of the sites now available and attractive for large-scale real-estate development. Postindustrial sites requiring ecologically-minded remediation and districts in existing cities, usually with a critical mass of historical buildings that give character to the reengineered neighborhood, are typical. In both kinds, broader social and environmental concerns often color public perception. Creating a large public park is one of several strategies that have been deployed to find an equitable public benefit in exchange for the right to build large-scale projects. Landscape architects have taken the lead with this agenda, since they have effectively developed a narrative for park designs that combines the traditional social virtues of a public park with its new role as a healer of polluted landscapes. A drawn-out development process and the need for large developers to attract capital and tenants to projects in advance of construction necessitate robust arguments for project design decisions. This is one territory where urban designers and architects, rather than marketing consultants, can more proactively add value for developers and seize opportunities for innovative design.

At the same time, the acquisition and development of projects within existing urban districts provokes a more nuanced understanding of development and urban design by large-scale developers and the urban designers and architects who work with them. This understanding is prompted partly by the range of building sizes and types that must be accommodated in such a plan, and this diversity may also lead to a more nuanced and rich practice of urban design on tabula rasa sites. Urban infill development sites also require a more nuanced phasing strategy, since existing tenants and residents need to be considered and accommodated while larger planning moves are contemplated. The beneficial result of this approach is that the planning of specific ground floor uses and the larger public-space network that is typically the focus of urban design occur simultaneously. The ability to micro-engineer the mix of ground floor uses over a longer time may encourage a finer grain of urban design that begins with the charged boundary between buildings and street rather than the clear separation of building-as-poche and "urban realm" that was the conceptual underpinning of the *Battery Park City* method.

The inherent negative social effects of gentrification, potentially provoked when a single entity quietly buys the real estate in an urban area (whether Harvard University in Boston or Goldman Properties in Philadelphia) has to be mitigated not only with sensitive planning, but also with public policy through mechanisms such as inclusionary zoning, which fixes the percentage of affordable housing. A more balanced discourse about gentrification needs to emerge, one that avoids the polarized positions of affordable housing activists on the one hand and the champions of sanitizing versions of economic development on the other. More research needs to be done to determine other market-sensitive policies to encourage economic diversity for other use-types such as retail and office space.

More generally, there is still a place for urban design as a discipline distinct from architecture and as a vehicle for designing large city districts. Urban design conceived as single-author architectural propositions are too monolithic. In contrast, I and others are supporting a method of urban design that benefits from the ad hoc compositions that naturally arise from the pragmatic planning of street networks and development parcels on complex urban sites. Our hope is that urban framework plans that aim to produce a rich enough "context" will spawn subsequent development projects that avoid architectural and social monotony. The aim is not to apply design guidelines to resolve differences but rather to put the responsibility back on the quality of the plan and thus eliminate the need for guidelines altogether. This will encourage a flowering of programmatic and aesthetic variety, and it implies that, from an urban designer's perspective, architects need to be trusted more than Andrés Duany would recommend, but not to the degree that a single architect should design an entire city district.

This reformed planning methodology needs to be organized around a sophisticated understanding of the real-estate market and justified by financial models that favor a variety of parcel sizes over a monotony of buildings and uses. A new paradigm for urban design can arise only with a careful coordination between building types, parcel configurations, and a larger urban design framework, and it requires a collaboration between architects and real-estate finance analysts who are not satisfied with the status quo. Architects, after at least fifteen years of neglecting urban design, need to follow the lead of landscape architects and reengage it as a territory for creative practice. □

NOTES

1. An impressive level of discussion about best-practices urban design approaches was in evidence at the most recent Congress for the New Urbanism held in Providence, Rhode Island, June 1–4, 2006.
2. Stern's comments were made during a question-and-answer period at "On the Waterfront," a conference on large-scale waterfront development, held at the Yale School of Architecture on March 31 and April 1, 2006.
3. Alexander Garvin was the organizer of the Yale School of Architecture "On the Waterfront" conference and introduced both the general session on Queens West development and Thom Mayne, one of the speakers.
4. The *Northpoint* master plan team was led by Ken Greenberg and included CBT Architects of Boston and Michael Van Valkenburgh Associates, Landscape Architects, of New York and Cambridge.
5. See "The Boston Plan: Fred Koetter and Susie Kim" in *Modulus 16, the University of Virginia Architecture Review*, 1983, 98–109. The journal serves as an excellent snapshot of the intellectual climate of the time since it contains Leon Krier's detailed reconstruction of Pliny's *Villa* and Kurt Forster's important essay on Schinkel's approach to urban design in central Berlin.
6. T. Kelly Wilson, Adjunct Associate Professor in the Department of Architecture at the Harvard Graduate School of Design, drew several of the highly detailed Boston Plan perspectives.
7. The initial Kendall Square plan was designed by Ken Greenberg with Urban Strategies, Inc. Greenberg worked on the later stages of the planning as a principal of Greenberg Consultants, Inc.
8. The *Kendall Square Plan*, approved in 1999, has now been partially filled in by buildings and landscapes by Stephen Erlich and Anschen and Allen of Los Angeles, Michael Van Valkenburgh Associates of Cambridge and New York, and most notably, the *Genzyme Headquarters* by Behnisch and Behnisch of Stuttgart.
9. For this to be a tenable framework for urban design, the infrastructure plan will need to be more specific at the ground plane while allowing for a flexibility of possible uses on the levels above. By prescribing the precise location of curb cuts for loading and parking access, for example, a street network would be generated that would be more variegated than the typical development master plan. Ideally, the full streetscape design would be finished in detail before any individual projects were initiated. As a result, a strong urban realm could act as an influential "context" in lieu of other potential form generators on tabula rasa sites.
10. The lead clients from Berkeley Investments for "The Berkeley Fort Point Portfolio: A Vision" were Young Park, President, and Rick Griffin, Executive Vice President. The plan was completed in 2005.
11. See, for example, "Psst . . . Have You Heard about Bushwick?: How an Undesirable Neighborhood Becomes the Next Hotspot" by Robert Sullivan, *New York Times Magazine*, March 5, 2006, 108–113.
12. Craig Grossman, Director of Operations for Goldman Properties in Philadelphia, was also a key member of the development team.