

145 **URBAN
DESIGN**

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NORTH AMERICA



**URBAN
DESIGN
GROUP**



General Motors Futurama exhibition, 1939 New York World Fair

MODERN IDEAS OF HEALTHY CITIES

October's inaugural Healthy City Design International Conference, Unleashing Health by Design, held at the London Royal College of Physicians, brought together a wealth of experience from both the built environment and medical professions, to help to reconcile the relationship between city and health. It followed on from a number of themes addressed at the 2017 National Urban Design Conference Health, Happiness and Harmony, but drew upon a much wider expertise concerned with mental and physical health.

Lord Nigel Crisp, an independent crossbench member of the House of Lords and co-chair of the All-Party Parliamentary Group on Global Health, opened the conference with a thought-provoking observation: 'Modern societies actively market unhealthy lifestyles'.

This was hard to disagree with. In fact, the relationship between city and health has arguably not been resolved since their acrimonious divorce in the early 1900s, when the city was cast as the epitome of sin, pestilence, madness and squalor, and health sought to escape from this ruinous

relationship by running off with a much younger suitor, the Garden City. And if there was a low point in this divorce, it followed the 1939 New York World's Fair, when health (clearly a fan of dating websites) ran off with the less salubrious, but very popular, motorcar based suburb, beguiled by a detached house and a mown lawn, all made accessible by the shiny things promoted by the motor manufacturers that would maintain visiting rights to her former consort. These shiny things would whisk citizens back and forth between the choked, congested and fume-filled city and the green open spaces of the healthy 'burbs.

Yes, there have been many attempts at the reconciliation of city and health. Who would have thought that smoking would become banned from city spaces and confined to the home? Tobacco was once supported for its health benefits by the medical profession and promoted by a very powerful lobby. Now, there is an urban generation that has never experienced the joy of having smoky clothes, hair and lungs after a night out.

And good design is helping to tackle mental health too. Research shows that lacking social connections is as damaging to our health as smoking 15 cigarettes a day. You may have noticed that many coffee chains have internal layouts that promote loneliness: you can sit there for hours, on your dating app perhaps, in a world of your

own, and never speak to anyone. However, one small coffee shop, perhaps aware of loneliness (or the benefits of more social spaces selling more coffee), has deliberately set out narrow benches and chairs which almost forces conversation between strangers. A small impact, but nevertheless an important one for our mental well-being. The list of small interventions goes on, for example creating social spaces midway up a high rise block.

But let's return to that lifestyle promised at the 1939 New York World's Fair and the shiny, autonomous motorcar. As I've recently discovered, most things in life are not as reliable (or honest in terms of emissions) as a certain motor manufacturer would have us believe. Fortunately, motor manufacturers are more than willing to sell me a replacement that suits my urban lifestyle: a clean, healthy, autonomous car, that glides effortlessly through a sociable, happy, stress and traffic-free city. No longer part of a utopian future, the car is now portrayed as a natural best fit for the hipster city of today, but not a city I'm familiar with: for a start, there are certainly a few more stationary cars in it than just mine. Why do motor manufacturers continue to market, and get away with, such clearly fantastical visions (or alternative facts)? Because the social city is 'where it's at' and for advertisers and marketing campaigns, through association with this cool place, you will naturally love and need your car.

So yes, modern societies do actively market unhealthy lifestyles, but change is afoot. If Barcelona, Bogotá and even New York can close a few city blocks to cars, I'm sure other cities can, and will, follow. And as car-free days become more frequent, after a few weeks of social anguish, pain and a few transport consultants spitting venom, everyone will slowly forget about the car and wonder what all the fuss was about as they walk, hover, or cycle, stress and pollution free through urban spaces. ●

Colin Pullan, Chair of Urban Design Group and Director of NLP Planning

DIARY OF EVENTS

Please check the UDG website www.udg.org.uk for the latest events.

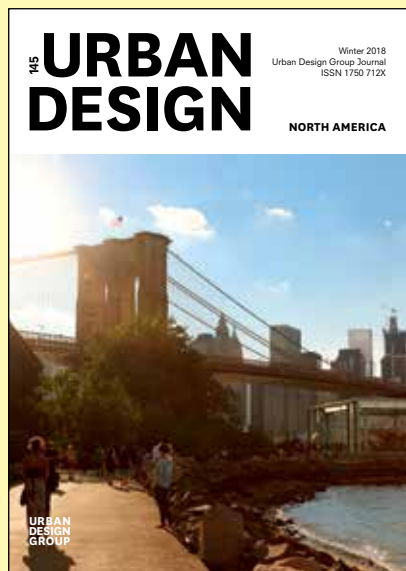
UDG STUDY TOUR OF THE ABRUZZI, ITALY, 9—17 JUNE 2018

The Abruzzi is a wild, mountainous region of Italy which contains many hill towns including the city of L'Aquila, which was devastated by an earthquake in 2009. We shall be looking at how the city has been reconstructed, and acquainting ourselves

with the distinctive urbanism of the region. The cost of the tour is £960 (£910 for UDG members).

Further details are available from Alan Stones at a.stones907@btinternet.com.





Urban Design Group

CHAIR Colin Pullan

PATRONS Irena Bauman, Alan Baxter,
Dickon Robinson, Lindsey Whitelaw and
John Worthington

Office

Urban Design Group

70 Cowcross Street

London EC1M 6EJ

Tel 020 7250 0892

Email administration@udg.org.uk

Website www.udg.org.uk

Editorial Board

Matthew Carmona, Richard Cole,
Tim Hagyard, Joe Holyoak,
Sebastian Loew, Daniela Lucchese,
Jane Manning, Chris Martin,
Malcolm Moor, Geoff Noble,
Judith Ryser, Louise Thomas

Editors

Sebastian Loew (this issue)
sebastianloew@btinternet.com

Louise Thomas

louisethomas@tdrc.co.uk

and

Book Review Editor

Jane Manning

Design

trockenbrot

(Claudia Schenk and Anja Sicka)

www.trockenbrot.com

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Brooklyn Bridge Park (istock photograph)

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If you are interested in contributing to the journal, please contact the editors Louise Thomas and Sebastian Loew (email addresses on the left) with a very short summary of your proposal. We will advise you on its suitability, best format, length and timing for publication. The topics for the next issues of *Urban Design* are listed above, but contributions do not necessarily have to relate to these, as other regular features, such as Viewpoints, address different issues.

The Editorial Board meets on a quarterly basis and plans the forthcoming topics about a year in advance. If you would like to suggest a future topic, please contact the editors with an indication of the issues to be addressed and likely contributors of articles.

The choice of topics and articles is at the discretion of the editors, and is based on readers' interest, relevance to urban design, and how recently they have been featured in the publication.

America the Great?

It is a very long time since this journal last dedicated an issue to North America. Times were very different then: at the end of the Cold War, the USA was the undisputed leader of the world and was respected internationally. Yet its cities were in decline as populations fled to the suburbs and urban policies were not succeeding in stopping the flow. Public transport was almost non-existent and urban sprawl was ubiquitous. Today, many of these problems persist, but the man at the helm does not seem to be concerned. He rules through tweets and decides unilaterally to withdraw from international treaties, in particular from the Paris climate accord, with potentially disastrous consequences for the world. As a result the USA is no longer seen as a model to be followed. Fortunately North Americans are not all united behind their leader: local governments and business have decided to respect and implement the Paris accord regardless, and urban governments in particular are determined to do so.

As we planned this issue, we feared that New Urbanism would dominate the contributions, as it was, for a long time, the main movement reacting and trying to deal with the American urban woes. Refreshingly, it has not been the case at all. The concerns expressed do not relate solely to the challenges mentioned above, and the solutions are more fundamental. Global warming and the environment are a major concern tackled in some way by cities and states through most of the country. Inequality, expressed mainly through the housing situation, is another major challenge dealt with mainly on the two coasts where the most progressive policies are being implemented. The cultural wars are also a subject of reflection and urban design is seen as an expression of these.

David Mathewson has assembled a collection of articles that show the range of approaches taken in a various parts of the country, aiming to resolve problems that the Federal Government neglects. One striking feature in a number of contributions is the importance of individuals as initiators and catalysts of change, something not often found in the UK.

Of course, North America includes Canada, and articles show the similarities and the differences between these two neighbours, and to a certain extent, the greater similarities between Canada and the UK.

Overall we start a new year in a world that is even more uncertain than it was 12 months ago when I hoped that 2017 'would be better designed than its predecessor'. It has not been so. Thus the agenda for urban design needs to change at the same speed as the context in which it operates, and that can be confusing and worrying. Publishing examples of efforts that go against the grain and lead to a better world, may be one way to retain our optimism. ●

Sebastian Loew, architect and planner, writer and consultant

HOW TO JOIN

To join the Urban Design Group, visit www.udg.org.uk and see the benefits of taking out an annual membership.

- Individual (UK and international)** £50
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- Small practice** (<5 professional staff) £250
- Large practice** (>5 professional staff) £450
- Education** £250
- Local Authority** £100
- UK Library** £80
- International Library** £100



The Future of Farringdon, Smithfield and Clerkenwell Green after Crossrail

The Gallery, London,
26 September 2017

At an afternoon event, the future of Farringdon, Smithfield, and Clerkenwell Green stoked a passionate debate, calls for change,

and pleas to remember the past. To start, the room was treated to a summary of the rich history of the area by Dr. David Harrison of *London Living Streets*: from Bartholomew's Fair, and the tournaments of the Middle Ages in Smithfield, to the radical protests held in Clerkenwell Green. We were taken through the area's early development, finishing by discussing its creative, anti-establishment energy that made it into the place it is today.

The future of the area will see many changes to its fabric and one of the main reasons for this will be Crossrail. Paul Reynolds of *Urban* described the complex underground workings of the Elizabeth Line, with plans for an improved entrance at Cowcross Street, and a new entrance at Charterhouse Square, making the entrance to Farringdon Station very close to Barbican Station and potentially setting up some challenges for visitors to the area.

Central to the afternoon was the plan for a reimagined Clerkenwell Green. Ludwig Tewkesbury of *Atkins* presented work done previously on the Green, and Martijn Coojimans, from Islington Borough Council, presented the current thinking for the new square, which redresses the balance between allocated space and actual use. Currently the Green is laid out predominantly for vehicles, despite people being the dominant user group, as well as what brings life, value, and enjoyment to the area. The plans for the Green are now at a public

consultation stage with Islington Council.

From the Green, attention shifted to another historic, magnificent, and charmingly ramshackle local institution: Smithfield Market. David Bianco, Cultural Hub Property Director at City of London Corporation presented their ideas for a new Cultural Mile that incorporates the market, and Sustrans' work into how the area performs for pedestrians was presented. Wide streets designed for HGV deliveries, complicated crossings that prioritise vehicles, few trees, few seats, and a lack of cohesive and connected pedestrian infrastructure, all make for a less than perfect pedestrian environment and a confusing one for visitors.

The afternoon came to a close with this very issue; David Spence, Director of Transformation at the Museum of London showcased their plans for their new site, highlighting how they are working with the building to change its use, without wholly changing it. Closing remarks focussed on the area surrounding the market, and how the museum has not yet picked where its front door will be, in part because of the hostile pedestrian environment surrounding it. An effective balance needs to be found between the great market institution and its needs, and its changing use and character as a place for people, for city life, for all Londoners. ●

Christopher Martin, urban designer and planner, and co-Founder of *Urban Movement*

Lessons from Vienna and other Austrian cities

The Gallery, London, 18 October 2017

Sebastian Loew and Alan Stones gave presentations on the Urban Design Group's recent study tour to Vienna and regional capitals of Austria.

Sebastian started by contrasting the reputation of Vienna 20 years ago, staid and socially conservative, with its present vitality and civic ambition. Vienna's position near Austria's eastern border places it close to Hungary, Slovakia and the Czech Republic and reflects its former role as the hub of the Austro-Hungarian empire. The Ringstrasse, a 19th century boulevard of mansions and institutions built on the line of the city walls, is a physical reminder of this imperial past. The old city contained within the Ring is a UNESCO World Heritage Site, where strict building height controls ensure that the Cathedral spire remains the pre-eminent landmark.

Vienna is on track to simultaneously meet ambitious growth targets and environmental goals, maintaining 50 per cent of its land as open space, and fostering a steep reduction in car use. Growth is mostly taking place outside the Ring, with massive redevelopment around the Hauptbahnhof (central station), to the north of the Danube in the University Quarter and at Aspern Seestadt to the east. The city authorities are planning for some 120,000 new homes by 2025, of which 90 per cent are to be socially rented. This follows the traditions of the famous Karl Marx-Hof estate (1927-30), which is still fully occupied and in excellent condition. Equally impressive is the 1970s housing ensemble at Alterlaa, with its massive tiered apartment blocks in a verdant setting, and all amenities close to hand.

The city has a comprehensive and well-coordinated transport system and a number of pedestrianised or shared streets. Vienna also offers an array of interesting examples of early 20th century schemes by pioneering architects such as Otto Wagner and Adolf Loos and later ones by Friedensreich Hundertwasser and Hans Hollein.

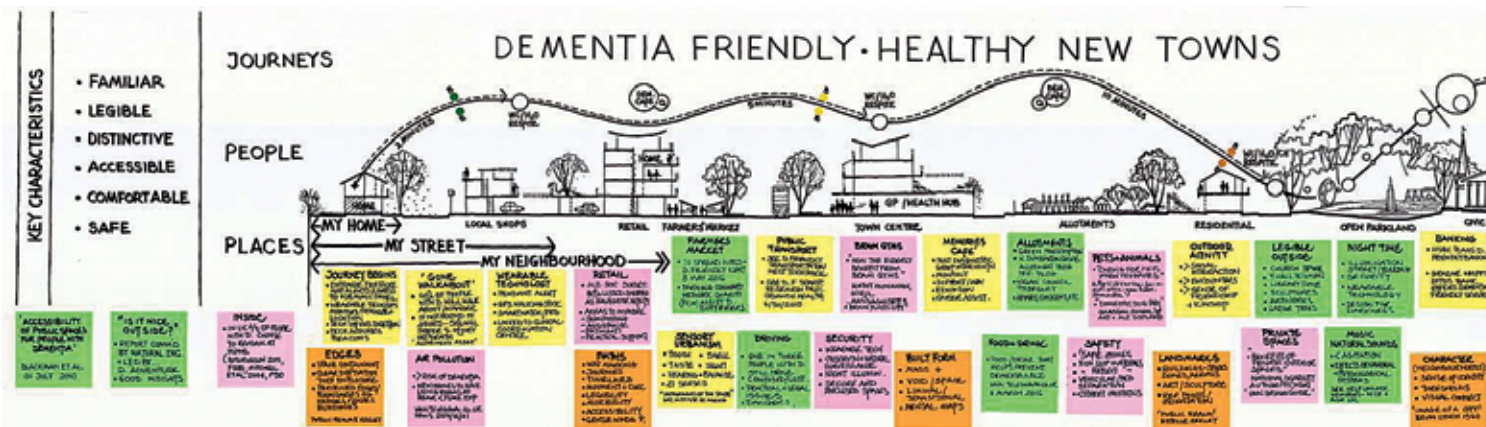
Alan Stones's extension of the tour took in Graz, Linz, Innsbruck and Salzburg. Alan observed that without exception, public transport in the cities was excellent, with



modern tram networks and well-planned interchanges. Architectural highlights included a former tobacco factory by Peter Behrens, Zaha Hadid's funicular station in Innsbruck and the extraordinary Archigram-inspired Graz Modern Art Museum.

A short discussion followed, fuelled by supplies of *Sachertorte* and *Apfelkuchen*. It was noted that the high standard of much of Austria's housing could not solely be put down to the wealth of the country. There seemed to be a much more positive attitude towards public, specifically municipal, ownership. The continuity of stewardship had allowed the cities to maintain the quality of housing and public realm, and be genuinely tenure-blind development. ●

Geoff Noble, urban design and heritage consultant



National Urban Design Conference Health, Happiness, Harmony: the Role of Urban Design

Manchester, 7–9 September 2017

This year's well-attended UDG conference in Manchester offered a large amount of knowledge and experience, as well as a convivial networking atmosphere. The conference was connected to current urban design issues in Manchester: urban regeneration, skyscrapers emerging alongside refurbished old red brick industrial buildings and housing with vast open spaces. A dense network of trams and buses aims to entice citizens on board, while cycle lanes and pedestrianised areas help to encourage people to live healthier lives. At an early session, Bob Phillips, chair of RTP1 North West, raced through 250 years of Manchester's history of innovation and planning. A review of academic research, together with hands-on workshops on local public realm design, a student project exhibition and guided walks through the city complemented local contributions.

A multidisciplinary panel debated these issues at a public Question Time style event. The panellists from academia, public administration, law, the development industry, urban design practice, social housing and politics personified the many interests that stakeholders have in their city and showed how complex it is to reach agreement on specific urban transformations.

HEALTH, HAPPINESS, HARMONY

The conference themes of health, happiness and harmony have not traditionally formed part of spatial planning and urban design, despite their origins from the adverse effects of the industrial age. A very large number of speakers presented their views on how to incorporate health into urban development, which left little time for discussion and exchange. It is not possible to mention here all the presentations, including those of the introductory three minute UrbanDesignFest

Presentation Zen, but many will be available on UrbanNou through the UDG website.

Jamie Anderson and Richard Kingston saw the need for a 'wellbeing science of cities' to be taught in universities with focus on mental health, to help people to evolve from moderate to flourishing mental health, through urban design. There are causal relations between physical activity and wellbeing. However, the only correlations established to date regarding wellbeing behaviour are among children and the elderly. Static design solutions do not necessarily help. Thus there exists an ethical imperative to attribute greater importance to mental health issues in urban design.

Andrew Raven presented an evidence-based approach to improving physical activity in urban environments. Academic research, instead of biased information, should convince volume house builders to include results in their designs. This evidence can be statistical analyses, technical research such as a GIS walkability index, and inclusion of 'weird data' which may provide new insights. In a recent study, six design principles were used to explore their impact on moderate to vigorous physical activity: residential density, intersectional densities, central retail and civic land use, mixed uses, travel (train stations, bus stops and the distances between them), and the number of parks (not sizes). The findings were that higher residential densities, permeability and proximity to parks create more physical activity. This could be translated into 'active friendly' neighbourhood designs.

Marcus Wilshire reported on the latest NHS Healthy New Towns Pilot Programme. We need to stop designing places which make people sick with poor housing, adverse environmental conditions, disconnected from family and social networks, and review our over-centralised healthcare focused on sickness rather than health. The idea is to invent design criteria which lead to healthy urban streets. Among them are biophilic design, open spaces including balconies in high-rise estates, dual aspect dwellings, as well as preventative and localised health care. Such streets should be conducive to fast walking amounting to 75 minutes per week. The Healthy House concept and the Village Movement have already

contributed to shifting the NHS from financing sickness to tackling health through pilot experimentation.

Hugh Barton suggested a radical guide to planning cities of wellbeing; health has been neglected in planning despite the World Health Organisation Healthy Cities project. He proposed seven new criteria: put people at the heart of planning; compare and select best planning principles for the good city; share responsibility between all professionals of the built environment and prevent domination by traffic engineers; link 'sectoral' criteria to whole health criteria; take account of land economics and development; understand spatial dynamics, place and form, and see location as a critical factor for users; and, foster governance of land and a strong role for local authorities to defend the common good.

CHALLENGES FOR URBAN DESIGN

Colin James addressed the issue of conflict and urban design in its global context. He showed a pyramid of human needs, ranging from basic physiological needs and freedom from fear, to wants such as sense of belonging, self-esteem and happiness which can be met once the basic needs are achieved. He illustrated his arguments with a site in Belfast showing how urban design could contribute to more harmonious relations between members of a divided society, for example by establishing a bridge as a new link between places of work, shopping and civic activities that both sides would use to reach residential areas, making the divided site more attractive. He showed other forms of segregation in the developing world, to demonstrate how cities shape society, as expressed in the symbolism of people's behaviour and movements in urban environments.

Jenny Raggett critiqued car dependence which persists in new developments despite opposing planning philosophy, and showed how cars, using up between 30 and 40 per cent of road space, diminish quality of life. More stations would be a solution to making public transport attractive, but such changes meet resistance. A vicious circle of low use of unsatisfactory public transport leads to curtailment of lines and frequency of services, making it even less attractive. Yet, in her research on a range of towns, she encountered



Estate Regeneration

Pollard Thomas Edwards,
London offices, 13 September 2017

Hosted by Pollard Thomas Edwards (PTE), this event spirited its audience away from Cowcross Street and up to Angel. Keen to make the most of the late summer evening, we started with a tour of the Packington Estate in Islington, a PTE-designed regeneration project currently in the final phase of construction. During the tour, we learnt that all the existing residents are being rehoused on the estate and that the new canal facing properties are affordable

homes. The fabric of the estate now connects to the surrounding historic street pattern and new public open spaces open up vistas where there were once alleys and leftover land.

Back at PTE's office, a series of quick-fire talks followed. Introducing and chairing the event gave me an opportunity to talk about my own relationship with estates: playing on the Holly Street Estate in Hackney as a child, redesigning a large section of public housing in San Francisco as part of my master's degree, and working on estate regeneration schemes at PTE. *Altered Estates*, a report that makes a series of recommendations on how to approach estate regeneration was also presented (see *UD* issue 143).

An architect, two urban designers and a developer then gave insightful talks which touched on the history of estates, resident engagement, different design approaches and lessons learned from recent and current projects.

Carl Vann from PTE described the practice's approach to estate regeneration: no one size fits all, and community engagement as the key to unlocking the opportunity for successful regeneration. Carl took the audience through a current project in Lambeth, showing how events with residents and a contextual based approach is shaping the design. Peter Frankum from Savills advocated a street-based approach to estate regeneration, as opposed to block renewal. Peter showed how a street-based approach can contribute to place-making and increased values.

Lizzie Cowan from Tibbalds explained, through a project in Camden, how estate regeneration could retain some of the positives of the buildings and use urban design principles to retrofit legible routes and natural surveillance to the public realm. And lastly, Richard Fagg from Countryside gave an enthusiastic advocacy of what he called 'social architecture', where regeneration is not just about homes, but also about employment and health.

The Q+A time produced a lively discussion about the role of estates in providing higher densities, the potential of their public spaces and the role of councils in estate regeneration. Interesting, emotive and topical, estate regeneration is likely to spark debate for politicians, the general public and urban designers well into the future. ●

Leo Hammond, associate, Pollard Thomas Edwards

Open Places: Innovation and the Public Realm

Centre for London Seminar,
17 October 2017



This two-day event organised by Centre for London and the Brookings Institution considered how cities were adapting to new ways of working, trading, meeting and exchanging ideas, and how the innovation economy had an impact on the public realm. The speakers included a wide range of researchers and practitioners in urban related disciplines. Opening the proceedings, Ben Rodgers, the director of Centre of London set two questions: what is the value to business of the public realm? And does the latter promote innovation?

For the Brookings Institution, Julie Wagner described 'the rise of innovation districts' (also the title of a publication they have produced) as creating a new geography, with new types of collaboration needing close proximity in order to share complex information. Having studied a large number of places in the world, she saw a link between innovation and place that could operate at district, nodal and human scales; she analysed the 'assets' at the crucial nodal scale,

but her example of a public space seemed closer to a managed, corporate space.

In the first session, on the theory of innovative places, Max Nathan of the University of Birmingham concentrated mainly on economic issues. He emphasised the importance of proximity and hence of clusters (not a new idea), noting that at the same time as collaboration across long distances has become easy, people increasingly value proximity; real and virtual interact in a complex way. Nate Storing from the Project for Public Spaces was one of the many speakers who was inspired by Jane Jacobs. He quoted her work *The Economy of Cities* to comment on how cities evolve by 'multiplying divisions of labour'. Reminding the audience that more start-ups disappeared than were being created, he warned that the power of size and the power to create were two different things.

A panel discussions opened with Mark Kleinman of the Greater London Authority (who also quoted Jane Jacobs) commenting

on how London reinvented itself as a global city, building on its existing strengths. A variety of innovation districts have emerged, each one different from the other and requiring policies adapted to each case and to each scale. Kleinman suggested that although the public realm is very important, not much is known on the role of public space.

The second morning was session entitled Going beyond building: open innovation and the public and private realm. Darryl Chen of Hawkins Brown has been researching the relationship between the design of public space and innovation, and more specifically between open space and its wider area. He and his colleagues developed a methodology to analyse different types of spaces in London's innovation districts, on the basis of such characteristics as form, use, users, and identity, leading to a matrix of attractiveness and integration. Acknowledging that more research was needed as they couldn't yet relate the design of a place to innovation, he suggested that 'events, furnishing and branding can compensate for locational disadvantage, development density or spatial insularity'.

Matthew Carmona then addressed more specific issues, that of London's local mixed streets, the high streets, some of which thrive and others decline, and for which there are contrasting narratives: congested and polluted or vibrant and lively. Having undertaken research on these, Matthew pointed that high streets are truly mixed (in use and morphology) and only partly commercial. They are generally well served by public transport, serve and employ a large number of people mostly in small business. They are places of innovation, competitiveness and sustainability, they have huge development potential but have been suffering, and are not really dealt with by policies. TfL and the Mayor are finally dealing with them but far too little investment goes to them.

Ending the morning Lucy Musgrave of Publica outlined their work on 75 neighbourhoods, focussing mostly on civic spaces at three scales: the street, the district and international. On the basis of observation ('our work is forensic') and the study of land uses, they draw three-dimensional briefs for their clients. Hanover Square, Oxford Street, Aldwych and Denmark Street are examples of the area they have studied.

After lunch, Hamdan Majeed from Think City Penang described how a decayed neighbourhood of George Town was transformed through a series of small steps, into a thriving centre that attracts many service industries and a startup community.

In the next session, concerned with the value of place, Indie Johar of oo Architects reflected on numerous changes in London and the need to create new business and organisational models, new institutional infrastructures, and new governance and taxation models in order to get value



2

from place. Ethan Kent of Project for Public Spaces, suggested that we should all focus on places and ensure that various movements and/or disciplines (architecture and design, economics, art, culture, community, etc) converge around it. Cities can be transformed through placemaking which he defined as 'a collaborative process by which we can shape our public realm in order to maximize shared value'.

The value of place was also the subject of the next intervention by Juliette Morgan of British Land. She saw a shift in the distribution of innovation which is no longer happening in one place but all over the city. She also saw a change in developers' attitudes as they now realise the value of investing in the public realm: innovative placemaking has produced outperformance in places like Kings Cross, Paddington Central or Alphabeta. Another shift may be happening, as big tech companies become themselves developers.

Moving the focus to Barcelona, Mar Santamaria-Varas, urban landscape researcher and professor, emphasised that the ecology of a place includes a wide range of companies, big and small, startups and research centres. Her own research on the relationship between location and startups success or failure, led to six variables showing the connection between urban factors (density, productive land use, connectivity) and innovative activities. Then Alan Penn, professor at the Bartlett, described his work on the relationship between spatial layout communication and innovation at work, with the aim of making a place more useful for people to connect. He suggested that London is successful because its structure makes it easy for people to meet and relate. He also suggested the signing of a new covenant as a way for the community to keep the value created by placemaking.

In the last session of the day, entitled Do like minded communities mean like-minded places?, Anne Minton, journalist and reader at the University of East London, challenged

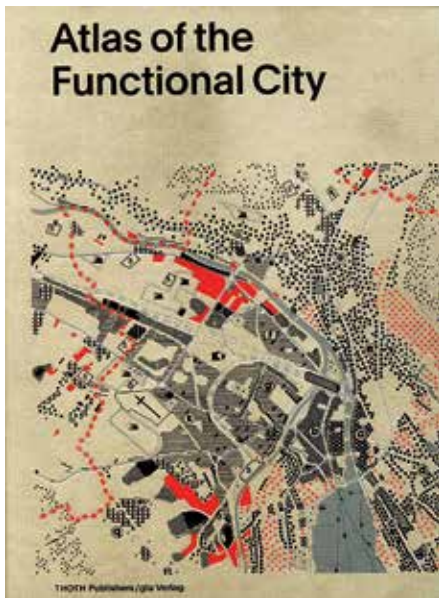
the premise that the benefits of privatising public space outweigh the potential drawbacks. She stated that all regeneration schemes now have privatised public space and that even places managed by Business Improvement Districts restrict public activities. The consequences of this trend are segregation, fear and distrust. As an alternative approach she gave the example of Windrush Square in Brixton.

Kat Hanna, Insight Associate at Cushman and Wakefield then argued that the knowledge economy relies on people first of all. 'Money things' are not what it is about but 'people capital' and developers know it and act accordingly. She also pointed out that because of the way people now work, spaces are being used at odd times and in odd locations. Jack Sallabank of the Future Places Studio agreed with her, adding that in London at least, developers are trying to get it right but, because they are not very creative, they need advice on place-making.

One surprising element of this stimulating seminar was the recurrent references by many speakers to Jane Jacobs, almost as if she had just been discovered and, more worryingly, suggesting that nothing as innovative had been published since her seminal works of the 1960s. Maybe we should be reassured that a new generation of innovators relies on the wisdom of a lady that was revolutionary over half a century ago and that we at least, have recognised all along. ●

Sebastian Loew

- 1 Jane Jacobs dominated the conference
 - 2 Panel discussion during the morning session
- Photographs by Tom Colthorpe



Urban Design Library #24

Atlas of the Functional City, CIAM4
and Comparative Urban Analysis

Evelien van Es, Gregor Harbusch,
Bruno Maurer, Muriel Perez, Kees
Somer and Daniel Weiss (eds), 2014,
Thoth Publishers & gta Verlag.

This book is different to those reviewed in the *Urban Design Library*, as it is both historic-classical and contemporary. It is a publication of the material prepared towards, and the outcomes of CIAM 4 (Congrès International d'Architecture Moderne) held in 1933 which was never published before.

This very scholarly 480 pages *Atlas* is the result of a research project funded by the Van-Eesteren-Fluck and Van Lohuizen Foundation and the Institute for the History and Theory of Architecture at the ETH Zurich, which hosts a large part of the CIAM archive. It contains the reworked maps of 33 cities from 18 countries (mainly European, two ex-colonial countries and USA), a summary of unrealised city analyses (Soviet Union, Algeria, Brazil and Japan), the written conclusions of CIAM 4, material from the CIAM 4 exhibition in Amsterdam in 1935, and the historic table of urbanism of 1934. The explanatory introduction is followed by six essays discussing the relevance of CIAM 4 today.

The bulk of the book consists of the city maps and their accompanying material, with contemporary critical comments. The aim of the three maps per city, drawn up according to three agreed map templates – city, transport, city-region – was to expose the existing physical and social deficiencies of cities, as a comparative analytical base

to design for improved urban living conditions. People and society were at the centre of CIAM's thinking, although some wanted to attribute more weight to aesthetics or formal considerations. The maps identified four main uses of cities: living, working, moving and leisure. CIAM never considered them in isolation. They aimed at more compatible links between these functions to create an integrated urban environment for healthy, sociable and spiritual life. CIAM 4 acknowledged the specificity and cultural values of city centres despite their slums, as well as the importance of city location, morphology, historic and cultural features. CIAM members argued about whether urban regeneration should mean redesigning the existing fabric or city extensions and never had a 'one size fits all' approach. Even Le Corbusier's proposal of razing cities to the ground and building tower blocks to liberate land, provide air and greenery, were not endorsed by all. The mobility maps show that the emphasis on the motorcar came mainly from engineers rather than architects. Moreover, the idea of the compact city can already be found among CIAM's deliberations, when they sought solutions to reduce travel times to work.

The contemporary comments on the city maps explain how they were produced and by whom, mainly architects. They show that the CIAM teams in the various countries differed very much from each other. No reason is given why many countries submitted maps only of their capitals. Most likely, the enormous amount of voluntary work required to produce these maps, and the poor availability of data, restricted the number of cities and maps.

The book reflects the enormous energy, optimism and generosity of CIAM members and the tireless efforts of CIAM Secretary General, Sigfried Giedion. CIAM believed in a brave new world and wanted to make a major contribution toward it.

CIAM were keen to publicise their thinking widely to the population at large, decision-makers and professionals. They planned two publications, a popular one to trigger a debate on their ideas of the future city, and a comprehensive technical and theoretical one which would hopefully attract more CIAM members. Unfortunately, neither of them materialised. The only follow-up of CIAM 4 were Jose-Luis Sert's *Can Our Cities Survive?* published in 1942 and *The Athens Charter* written by Le Corbusier in 1943.

What found its way into planning and physical development during rapid urbanisation after the second world war was a very distorted interpretation of modernism, not least by protagonists who were motivated by generating profits from urban growth. Since post-modernism it has been *de rigueur* to refute modernism outright and often accuse it of all the ills of contemporary planning. The book gives a differentiated insight into the standpoints of the CIAM members on how to regenerate cities. All this has to be

put into the turbulent inter-war geo-political context, the rise of European fascism and the aftermath of the ideal Soviet society, which was so promising for completely rethinking urbanism.

The contemporary essays address specific issues raised by CIAM 4 and critique the Modern Movement. The authors are a combination of academics, historians, and qualified architects. Their cultural and professional backgrounds suit the cultural diversity of CIAM. As CIAM 4 had chosen maps as their visual means of communication, three essays discuss the characteristics and role of maps in urbanism: *The Conception, Production and Language of the Maps* by Ute Schneider, historian at Duisburg University; *Function and the Comparative Method, an Essay in Reconstructing Theory* by Sokratis Georgiadis, architectural historian at Stuttgart Academy of the Arts; and *Thematic Mapping as an Analytical Tool*, CIAM 4 and *Problems of Visualisation in Modern Town Planning* by Enrico Chapel, architect at Toulouse Technical University. The essay on the dissemination of CIAM 4 relates to this theme as well: *A Clear Message to the Outside World, Drawing Conclusions and Publishing the Results of CIAM 4* by Kees Somer at the Dutch Ministry of Education, Culture and Science. The other two essays deal with the substantive aspects of CIAM's understanding of urbanism, their historic contributions and limitations. They are: *In Search of a Better World*, Cornelis van Eesteren and *The Rise of Urban Planning* by Vincent van Rossen, journalist in Amsterdam; and *Zoning *Bien Défini?** by Sophie Wolfrum, urban designer and planner, professor at Munich Technical University. These essays can be seen as a contemporary take on modernism and what it can contribute to today's urban design and planning issues. ●

Judith Ryser

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My Favourite Plan: Paul Drew

Josef Kleihues' masterplan for
Potsdamer Platz, Berlin

WHY I LIKE IT...

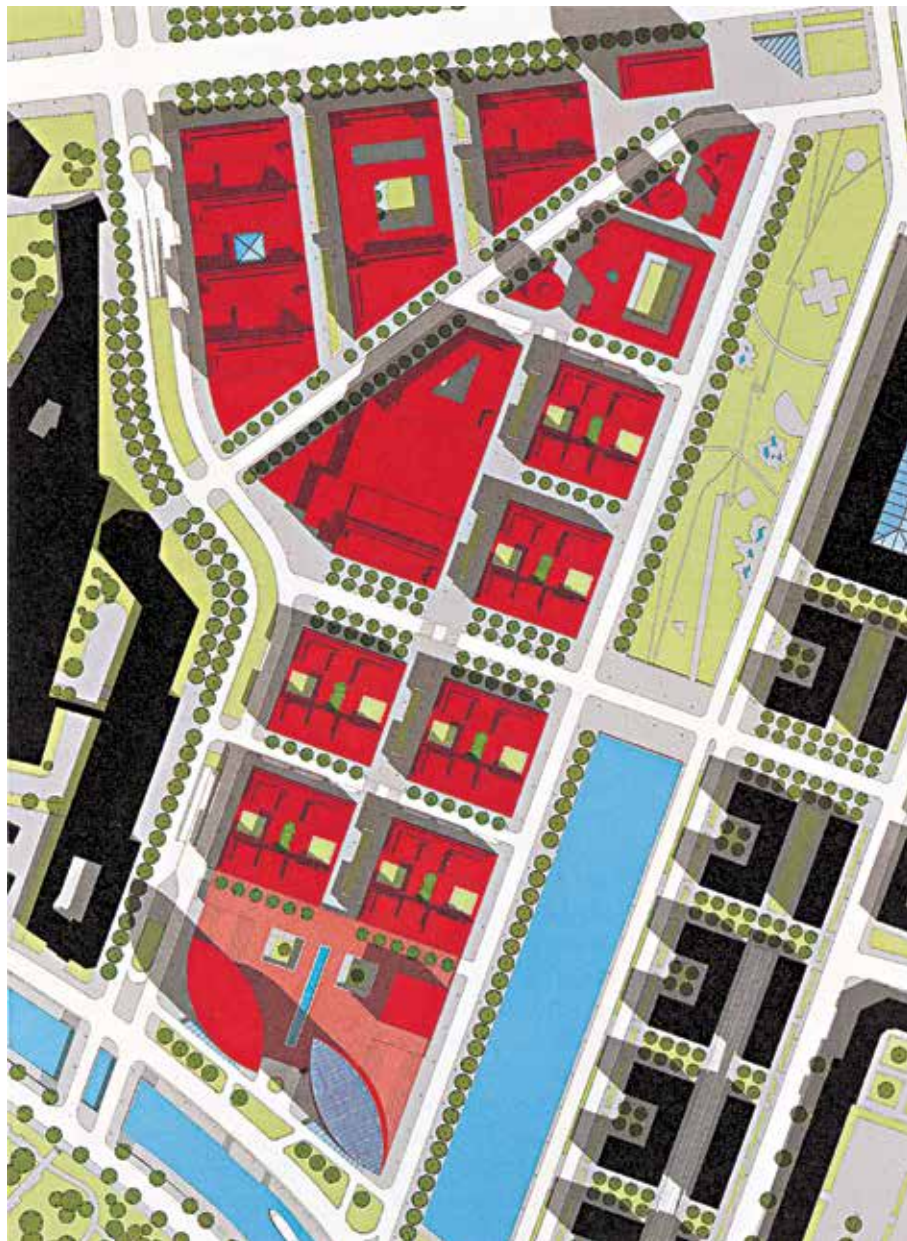
In 1994 the book recording the competition entries for the renewal of Potsdamer Platz was published. As one of the most important pieces of Berlin cityscape, the entries expressed a mood of optimism for a nation's reunification after the decline of the Soviet Union in 1989. Berlin, although wholly in the east, was under several western protectorate regimes with The Wall running through Potsdamer Platz. The renewal project became a 'statement of intent' for Germany, so the masterplan had to be a symbolic gesture as well as being physically purposeful.

For the period of Soviet occupation, Potsdamer Platz was a wasteland with no features indicating its previous importance as the heart of the city. The divided city and Platz were featured in the Wim Wenders film *Wings of Desire* (1987). In one part, an old man stands in a bleak no-man's land that is the Platz. He remembers a place of bustle and vibrancy; confused, he recalls 'this is where Cafe Josty used to be... I would chat and watch the crowds'. Reunification provided the opportunity to re-establish this important civic space and to perhaps contribute further to such memories.

The Berlin Senate organised the competition which was concluded in October 1991. As ever, there were a few eccentric masterplan ideas entered for the competition. These were nonetheless important as they allowed all to question the idea of national identity and reunion.

At the other end of the spectrum from the unconventional were the calmly ordered rationalists, and although not the final competition winner, Josef Kleihues' competition entry fitted into this category.

The masterplan by Josef Kleihues has a degree of sensible logic about it, with blocks, an axis of canal and park, and regular streets. As when any design is worked on so well, it becomes so comfortable it can



become invisible.

There is minimal signature pattern of objects or novelty architecture in Kleihues's scheme that shout to be looked at. For him, ego is disposed of at the macro scale; perhaps with the author's signature identity is left to be displayed as bright red urban blocks.

WHAT TO LEARN FROM IT...

What Josef Kleihues did achieve was a critical framework that gets the main urban design vocabulary right. Are the routes direct and obvious with a number of circulation options? Are the scale and massing judged right, a good living environment and a contextual fit within the city? Does the proposal retain the spatial structure of the city as a main priority? Can other designers come along afterwards and carry out further designs for streets and building activity? The answer to all this is yes. It is as if there is sufficient restraint, possibly humility at this stage of the framework to unlock a multitude of other creative thinkers and allow further contributions.

I wonder what Wim Wenders' old man would have thought, given the opportunity to see a favourite city place before and after such upheaval, and of course, to have another coffee. ●

Current Position

Urban designer and masterplanner, Design Director, Icen Projects

Education

Urban Design and Architecture degrees (with Distinctions), Oxford Brookes University.

Specialisms

town design and delivery of new and regenerated neighbourhoods, from the scale of villages to cities.

Ambitions

Passionate for design quality and craftsmanship in all artefacts whatever the scale. Always return to streets and urban spaces I have contributed to.

Everyday Life Spaces for Low-income Women

Elisa Sánchez del Río develops a tool to empower women to shape cities according to their needs and experiences



1

Feminists have been fighting for women's right to the city for a long time. Nevertheless, as many scholars of gender studies recognise, this is still an issue in planning and urban design that needs special attention from practitioners. In this context, my research project sought to develop a conceptual gender mainstreaming assessment toolkit for public spaces, and provide specific design tools in order to improve the environment for low-income working women in London's Seven Sisters Market area, the second largest Latin American hub in London.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The main literature in the field suggests that the binary conception of space – public vs. private – has marginalised women into the private spheres, usually associated with reproductive activities. As a result women, especially from deprived neighbourhoods, have been denied the benefits that cities can give their inhabitants, such as education, transport, exchange of information and access to well-paid jobs, in other words, access to prosperity and a high quality of life.

Considering women are more restricted when accessing public space for reasons of gender-imposed responsibilities and general safety, improvements to everyday networks and infrastructure are required to lighten their burden. People tend to think of public spaces as parks or squares; however, in everyday life, unmapped places and routes are relevant because they are highly important for women's activities to unfold.

Many authors argue that the way of incorporating women into the public realm is by making their roles visible, in order to give them value and share the reproductive and productive burdens. Public spaces are important to build a sense of belonging, which in the urban context refers to the right to be involved in shaping the environment according to the needs of people. Thus, there is a gendered aspect to the construction of sense of belonging that is based on the quotidian use of space.

There are three key findings from the literature studied. First, all of the literature and practical tools for designing women-inclusive spaces are focused in the care-giving dimension, overlooking the productive side of women's lives and how paid-work can empower them to appropriate their independence and public space at the same time. Second, all of the reviewed material is targeting either housing or the wider city scale, forgetting everyday spaces in neighbourhoods. Third, physical design is not enough when revitalising public space; therefore, changes require a social process that triggers the appropriation of place.

Hence, this project aims to support the activities of working women and their families. Accordingly, the site of the project had to be a place that combined both aspects of women's lives.

THE STUDY AREA

Seven Sisters Market in Haringey was chosen for the project because it is a mainly Latin American women's work place, and

entrepreneurship is a very important factor in making the city more productive for women. Many of the traders are independent businesses that with hard work, have taken care of their families in both the UK and their home countries.

The site of the market is under development pressure, since a scheme for redevelopment is soon to be implemented. The community has been fighting against this regeneration project for over a decade, and in response to the demolition scheme, it proposed a community plan that contemplates the refurbishment of the market. Acknowledging these two contrasting proposals, this project is a reflection on how the refurbishment of the market's surroundings would be, if led by the women of its community.

THE DESIGN PROCESS

The design process starts with an awareness of women's daily activities in Seven Sisters market, a space of work and leisure and by recognising that they are experts in its everyday life. Several interviews were undertaken to establish how they used different typologies of public space associated with the market. One of the main findings was that they used the inner corridors of the market as a public square. Also, the surrounding spaces, for instance the pavement and car park, represented dangerous areas for their daily activities. Overall, they wanted to be able to perform better at their jobs, attract more customers and become socially stronger as a community, in order to be ready to face the future challenges that London may present.

Besides the suggestions given by the market traders, a conceptual assessment toolkit was applied to find out how inclusive the different typologies of public space in the market area are. Based on research by Ciocoletto¹, five tools were used for this evaluation, plus an additional one developed in this research.

CONCEPTUAL ASSESSMENT TOOLKIT

The spaces were assessed in terms of form and function with the following criteria:

- Proximity: when everyday life spaces are close to daily activities, and are connected (without obstacles) with housing and each other. This allows everyone to perform their daily activities mainly by walking, cycling or public transport.
- Diversity: when there is a social, physical

- 1 Overview of the proposed improvements to the market
- 2 Proposed new entrance to the market
- 3 The 'agora', a mixed activity public space

and functional mixture of people, activities and uses that respond to different needs in the community, according to gender, age, origin and social condition.

- **Autonomy:** when spaces are perceived as safe and foster the confidence to be used without restrictions. In addition, accessibility has to be universal, regardless of the physical capacity of each individual.
- **Vitality:** this refers to the simultaneous and continuous presence of people and activities.
- **Representation:** when there is recognition, and real and symbolic visibility of the whole community, so that its collective memory and social patrimony are valued. Moreover, participation in urban decisions is needed from every member of the community.
- **Collaboration:** when the aim is to enhance women's leadership and capacity by providing a space to blend their personal passions and professional expertise. Collaboration and networking amongst women are effective ways to empower them.

Taking into account the strengths and weaknesses of public space in the market area and the suggestions of interviewees, a design toolkit and specific indicative interventions are proposed.

DESIGN TOOLKIT

Some of the tools overlap and their function applies to more than one category of the assessment toolkit. The proposed tools are related to the previous analysis of the study area. Further tools could be used but are not considered in this project.

Proximity:

- Paths must be free of obstacles.
- Paths between different spaces need to be legible and clear.

Diversity:

- The design needs to be able to allow for different purposes and activities.
- Urban furniture must promote socialisation among people with different needs.
- Free public toilets must be incorporated.

Autonomy:

- There must be unifying signage and different spaces must be clearly defined and named.
- There must be continuity in pavements. Places should be connected with each other and no space should be a dead end.
- Maximise natural light to inner spaces and provide public lighting of an appropriate scale.



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Vitality:

- Using elements such as colour and greenery, the design should be appealing and striking.
- Ground floor activities should be promoted.
- Facilitate access to the market in order to attract more customers.

Representation:

- Increase exposure to stalls by improving signage from surrounding streets.
- Incorporate public art that reflects the history of the female community in the market.

Collaboration:

- Safe and flexible space for collaboration must be provided.
- The space for collaboration should also function as the link between residents, entrepreneurs, and the local authority.

CONCLUSION

Despite the fact that in the developed world, women's access to paid jobs has been mostly achieved, there is still a pay gap, and family caring chores are still an implicit responsibility for them. Consequently, women cannot separate work and caring for others, and for example, the project had to include facilities for kids. This can provide tranquility for women to work in the knowledge that their children will be playing safely in a visually stimulating area where adults can oversee their activities. Thus, by designing a more suitable space for women, other groups of people could also benefit.

This does not mean that general inclusive urbanism would satisfy women's requirements in the public realm: by overlooking their particularities, the feminist

struggle to visualise women's needs gets forgotten. When evaluating the results of the research, it became apparent that including the gender perspective in the process of shaping a place is as relevant, if not more so, than the result itself.

This project has built on the work that sees the urban designer's role not only as the architect of the space, but the enhancer of existing assets currently underutilised. The overriding aim of the project was to create an awareness of how women are experts in everyday life and how this could be reflected in the renovation of a place that is not performing well for everyone. ●

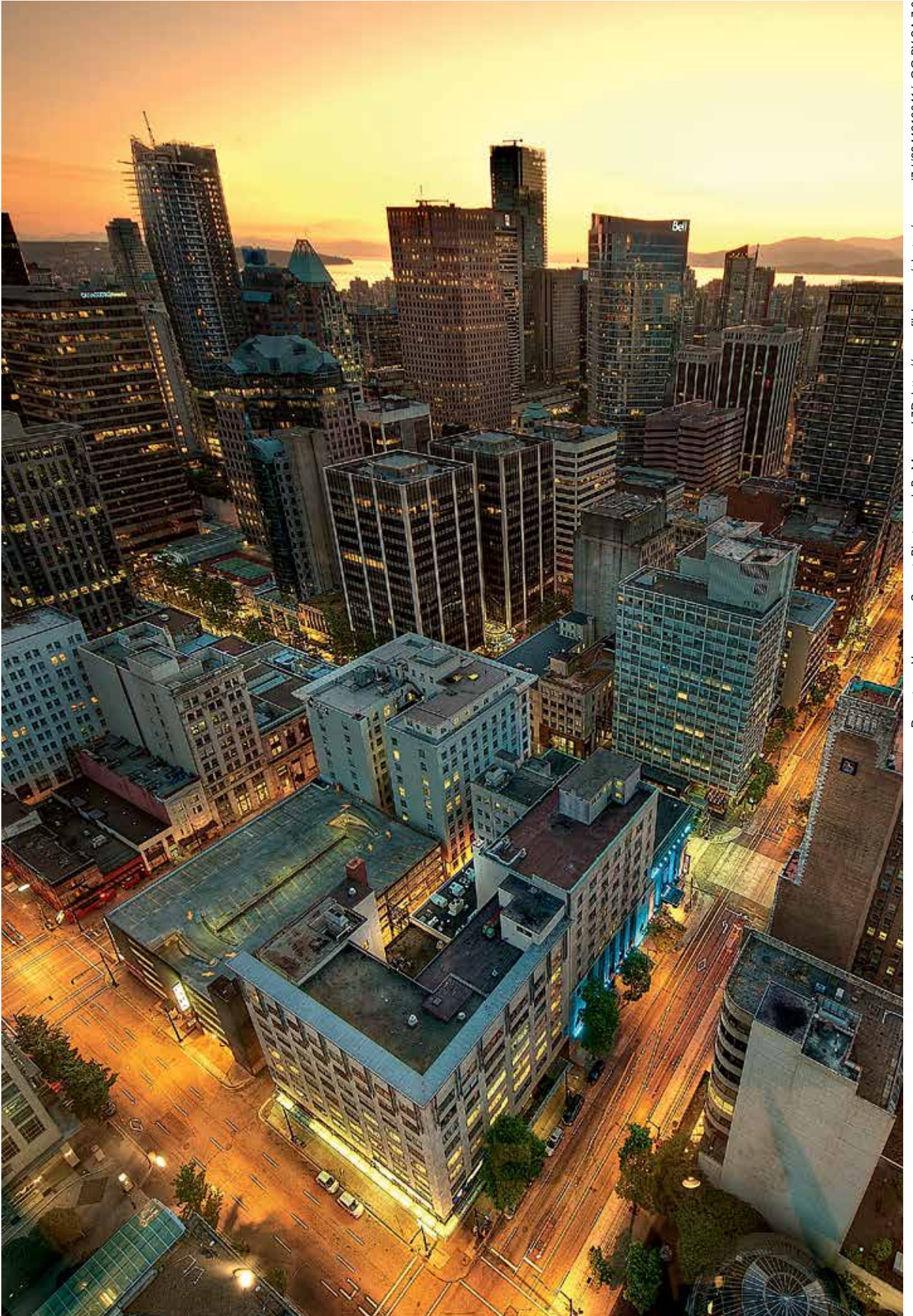
Elisa Sánchez Del Río, architect/urban designer

The research that underpins this article was conducted between April and September of 2017 for a Major Research Project as part of a Master's degree of MSc Urban Design and City Planning at University College London.

1 In her 2014 doctoral thesis *Urbanism for the everyday life: Tools for analysis and evaluation in a neighbourhood scale from a gender perspective*, Adriana Ciocoletto developed five tools to incorporate everyday life into urban design.

DO YOU HAVE IDEAS FROM YOUR DISSERTATION THAT YOU WOULD LIKE TO PUBLISH?

Please send an abstract from your postgraduate research thesis (or other studies) for consideration to: research@udg.org.uk and we will be in touch.



Downtown Vancouver Sunset, Photograph By MagnusL3D, <http://www.flickr.com/photos/magnusl3d/6044910841/>, CC BY-SA 3.0

North America

The United States and Canada collectively form a region of more than 360 million people, with a number of mega urban regions with populations exceeding ten million inhabitants, including New York, Los Angeles, Toronto and Chicago. According to the International Monetary Fund (IMF), these two countries account for US\$21.13 trillion in GDP or 16.7 per cent of global GDP, and have among the highest living standards in the world. Despite this vast wealth, the US and Canada suffer from high income inequalities and therefore face issues of access to housing, employment, urban transport and public space that are key to the quality of life of large sections of their urban populations.

This issue considers a number of themes pertinent to urban design and large-scale planning in North America in recent years, including some that are topical in the United Kingdom, such as huge demands for housing in proximity to places of work in cities. This is a key challenge for policy-makers and designers because while a number of cities in the US and Canada boast world-class urban transport networks, in most cases these are woefully underdeveloped. As a result local residents inevitably rely on driving to work through significant traffic congestion, leading to long hours of commuting.

The focus on two main areas of urban design: quality of life topics such as housing, the design and planning of public open space, and walkability; and strategic planning and development frameworks such as tall building development and heritage conservation areas, as well as sustainable energy. Housing is covered in articles by Julissa Lopez-Hodoyan and Arturo Bárcenas who write about large-scale residential developments in California and the Bronx respectively, from an affordability standpoint, while highlighting the importance of community engagement in urban revitalisation efforts. Peter Baird examines the issue of walkability in Austin, Texas, in order to understand whether that city, which suffers

from major traffic congestion and a lack of comprehensive urban transit options, can host a pedestrian-friendly public realm and improve its movement network.

Harold Madi tackles the notion of urban intensification through 'middle housing' which seeks to fill a gap between low and higher density areas of inner cities that have long languished as abandoned urban landscapes. I write about the public realm, looking at the recent history of New York's waterfront public parks and the city's strategic vision for city-wide post-industrial waterfront regeneration. John Miminis examines the role of conservation heritage planning in the revitalisation of Toronto's Queen Street West District, and again I write, this time with Katerina Karaga, on tall building management in Vancouver, a paragon of planning and urban development in North America. Agatha Vaaler looks at California's attempts to integrate sustainable energy provision into the state's infrastructure, while George Loew explores the manner in which San Francisco expresses processes of urban change through public art, reflecting the city's South of Market Street gay leather community's history. Jumping to the East coast, Reetuparna Sarkar considers Pittsburgh's attempts to revitalise its urban public realm in-line with notions of walkability, connectivity and becoming environmentally friendly.

These articles provide an overview of the multiplicity of issues challenging urban designers and planners in North America in both large metropolitan areas and smaller regional cities. They offer important lessons as we attempt to manage the urban context here in the UK, particularly in view of the shared common cultural background and history which indelibly links the three nations. ●

David Mathewson, lecturer in International Planning and Urban Design, doctoral researcher in Urban Morphology and Historical Institutionalism in Jakarta, Indonesia, The University of Westminster, London



1

Housing in the South Bronx

Arturo Bárcenas describes the transformation of the South Bronx from dereliction to potential prosperity

It has been a long way to urban recovery for the South Bronx. After decades of decay, the South Bronx is in the midst of experiencing a kind of rebirth. Left behind are the images of endless vacant lots full of rubble, empty buildings and total desolation that prevailed in vast areas. It has slowly risen from the ashes of neglect as new developments have been built at a rate not seen before. But its slow way to recovery has not been an easy one, especially for the local residents who witnessed its fall and endured decades of neglect.

BACKGROUND

The South Bronx is in the southern part of the borough of the Bronx, the only borough of New York City located on the mainland. It is bounded to the north by the Cross-Bronx Expressway and its waterfront to the south. The South Bronx experienced rapid population growth after its consolidation with New York City and during the first half of the 20th century. With the expansion of subway lines and the elevated train, waves of European immigrants were persuaded to leave crowded tenements in lower Manhattan for newer and more spacious new apartments. Italians, Irish, Germans, and especially Eastern European Jews created a thriving working class, self-sustained and vibrant community.

But starting in the 1950s the South Bronx experienced a slow and decades-long descent into urban decay. The advent of the automobile precipitated ‘white flight’ to the northern Bronx and city suburbs. The population of the South Bronx dropped considerably, and its demographic composition changed drastically

from two thirds white European middle class to two thirds poor Hispanic (mainly Puerto Rican) and African American.

The construction of the Cross Bronx and Major Deegan Expressways destroyed many neighbourhoods and created physical barriers bisecting once vibrant districts, displacing residents and lowering property values along the way. Fires spread throughout. Landlords, unable to find suitable tenants abandoned buildings, which were then occupied by squatters and drug addicts. In many instances, building owners resorted to arson to collect insurance money on their own properties. Other fires were set by tenants hoping to get relocated to nicer buildings and many others were set by vandals after stripping the abandoned buildings of anything of value. As the population and housing units declined, blocks of empty buildings and vacant lots proliferated creating an atmosphere of insecurity and high crime for the people who remained.

Although funds were allocated for affordable housing to counter this urban problem, the city’s response proved inadequate. Hastily built high-rise housing units separated from the neighbourhood and without essential public amenities appeared throughout. The ‘tower in the park’ typology, set away from the street, perpetuated the ills of urban decay by creating closed-off locations, segregating residents and lacking mixed use components, leading to vandalism and crime. Although originally intended for working families, this high-rise housing increasingly became occupied by low-income residents who were segregated from the rest of the neighbourhood. For many, the

1 South Bronx: the controversial proposal for waterfront luxury apartments for rent



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South Bronx with its sprawling landscape of towers in the midst of such decay became the depository of generally unwanted city development of low-income housing.

COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

Beginning in the late 1980s, a new approach to urban renewal started to emerge. Thanks to broad community activism and involvement, a more comprehensive vision for development was implemented. Plans like the Melrose Commons Urban Renewal Area, which was originally developed by the city alone met with broad resistance from the community demanding an active role in the design and implementation of the plan. This plan, as originally conceived, was to create a housing community for new middle-income families, along with commercial space and parks, and required the displacement of existing residents. South Bronx homeowners, tenants and businesses who had survived the worst years of devastation by weathering the abandonment of aid and money in the past, were left out of the planning process and felt expendable in the new city plan for redevelopment.

The community organised and fought to have a role in deciding its own future. Priority was given to the existing population to avoid displacement. The right to reside within the community was the main objective. Density, mixed use and improvements to the pedestrian environment were implemented as catalysts for change. Efforts were made to repurpose existing vacant buildings for residential use. In addition, the development of scattered sites of low or mid-rise housing occupying empty lots was favoured over creating entirely new superblocks. This was done with the intent of harmonising with the existing context. By creating a consensus between the city’s agencies and the community around a vision and strategic interventions, the renewal plan proved successful; decades later, it is still the roadmap for development in the area.

SCATTERED SITE HOUSING

The idea of scattered site housing implemented so successfully by the Melrose Commons Urban Renewal, has been replicated throughout the South Bronx. Financed by city agencies with community participation, efforts to slowly restore the urban fabric while providing affordable housing have taken place. The city has given incentives to developers to build affordable projects, in many instances giving away public land and offering tax abatements to secure affordable units, either for decades or in perpetuity. Usually in partnership with private not-for-profit managing organisations, these private-public housing developments abound in the South Bronx.

Perhaps one of the more emblematic of the efforts is Via Verde, which brought together a private and non-for-profit development team with city agencies, to secure approvals and financing. The complex occupies a 1.5 acre brownfield site previously owned by the city and long abandoned. It is a mixed use project incorporating 151 affordable rental apartments, 71 co-ops affordable to middle-income households, and



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commercial spaces at the street level. It successfully integrates three housing types: town houses, mid-rises and high-rises on a single site. Its innovative design addresses the needs of the residents as well as responding to sustainability and healthy living concerns. While respectfully addressing the street, and creating a vibrant pedestrian edge, it also acts as an anchor for the urban development in the neighbourhood.

WATERFRONT

Until recently, this transformation of the South Bronx has been propelled by public funds and benefited low to mid-income families, generally in areas within walking distance of transportation centres and subway stations, but removed from the waterfront. However, at the South Bronx southern tip and waterfront area, market rate development has begun to thrive.

The South Bronx waterfront has been inaccessible to most and detached from its surrounding Mott Haven and Port Morris neighbourhoods. Wedged between the Major Deegan Expressway and the Harlem River, a series of warehouses, self-storage facilities, waste transfer plants, bus depots, industrial buildings and vacant lots occupy this area, which has great potential for development not only for its access to public transportation and bridges, but also for its expansive views of the Harlem River and Manhattan skyline.

The city identified the potential for the South Bronx’s waterfront and began a process of investment in infrastructure

- 2 Life carries on in the War Zone
- 3 Among the Last Residents, their playground
- Both photographs by Max Rosenthal/ Museum of the City of New York
- 4 South Bronx Waterfront Map. Image by Arturo Barcenas



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to lure or anticipate private development. City funds have been directed to expanding access to high-speed broadband and upgrading sewer lines, traffic intersections, sidewalks and street lighting. Furthermore, the city has approved and funded plans for an affordable housing development with more than 1,000 units for low to moderate-income families on the waterfront, just north of the 145th Street bridge. This massive mixed use development will also house commercial spaces, a hip-hop museum, food hall, and a waterfront esplanade connecting to the existing parkland in the north. It will act as a gateway to the South Bronx when approached by the 145th Street bridge and an anchor to the waterfront development to the south.

MARKET RATE HOUSING

The conversion of a former piano factory into loft apartments in 2002 has brought artists and some like-minded professionals to the southern edge of the Bronx. Occupying the space between existing brick townhouses and high-rise affordable housing, this market-rate development proved successful and slowly ushered a new wave of real estate investment. A re-zoning in 2009, to accommodate residential development in the lower Concourse area of Mott Haven and skyscrapers along the waterfront on the Harlem River, further accelerated the appearance of mid-rise market-rate condominium buildings for sale and market-rate rental units in Mott Haven.

Among the new planned housing, none has attracted more attention than what is due to be the largest privately funded and entirely market-rate complex ever built in the Bronx. This luxury rental building will be located in an old industrial site facing the waterfront and straddling the 3rd Avenue bridge. Two separate buildings with six 16 to 25-storey towers will house 1,300 luxury rental units with no affordable housing component. Luxury amenities will be an essential part of the development, not unlike similar complexes elsewhere in the city, but unlike anything else built in the South Bronx. A swimming pool, gym, cafe, screening room, library, pet care and bike storage have been promised to lure would-be residents, albeit in a complex

surrounded by one of the largest concentration of low-income public housing. The scheme also includes a publicly accessed esplanade facing the waterfront. The development is viewed with suspicion by many local residents who see it as an engine for gentrification and potential displacement. Already the Mott Haven area saw an increase of 13 per cent in rents for one-bedroom apartments, one of the sharpest increases the city. Others welcome the change as a much-needed infusion of money, and as part of a larger revitalisation effort to bring about positive investments to one of the poorest districts in the nation and in desperate need for change. Seeing the early success of other smaller rental buildings in the area and realising the site potential and high demand for housing in the city, the developer believes that his investment will pay off. River development may well take hold in the South Bronx, in part due to its proximity and accessibility to Manhattan, but whether this will bring about change to areas beyond the waterfront is yet to be determined. ●

Arturo Bárcenas, senior architect,
Ike Kligerman Barkley, New York

5 High-rise affordable housing in the South Bronx

6 Scattered site housing in the Melrose area

7 Via Verde Housing complex

All photographs by Arturo Barcenás

Vision 2020: New York City's Comprehensive Waterfront Plan

David Mathewson describes the City's ambitious projects for its waterfronts



New York City, originally a Dutch colony founded in 1625 and passed onto the English later that century, was by the mid 1700s, the second most important port of the British Empire. After the conclusion of the American Revolution, the city became the largest port in the United States, continuing its role as the principal port in North America until the 1960s when the advent of larger container ships pushed the port facilities further out to deeper waters.

New York's waterfront has been the focus of mercantile and commercial activity throughout its history, until the 1960s when waterfront landholdings went into a sustained period of decline characterised by redundant waterfront sites, abandoned buildings and environmental pollution. In the late 1980s, a series of waterfront revitalisation projects began, first with South Street Seaport in 1982, followed by Battery Park City's waterfront redevelopment from the mid 1980s and more recently by the Hudson River Park, begun in the late 1990s. The latter is a major waterfront regeneration project, complete with new or revitalised piers, parks, walking trails, landscaping and other public open spaces, which will eventually link to Riverside Park to the north, transforming the entire West Side of Manhattan.

THE HUDSON RIVER PARK

The Hudson River Park itself emerged from an unsuccessful six-lane highway proposal known as the Westway in the 1970s

and 80s. The plan had provision for 40 hectares of new development and 40 hectares of waterfront parks, boulevards, a 4.8km long cycle path and other public open spaces over the top of the highway. The project was eventually dropped due to political and environmental objections. As a result, the US\$2 billion earmarked for the project were later diverted to mass transit projects in the city.

In 1992, the Governor of New York, Mario Cuomo, along with Mayor David Dinkins, announced a new plan for the West Side which included the commercial redevelopment of Chelsea Piers, Pier 40 and a new convention centre near the Hudson Rail Yards, later named the Jacob Javits Centre. A memorandum signed that year established the Hudson River Park Conservancy, a government agency tasked with the redevelopment efforts. Construction began in 1994 with the Chelsea Piers commercial and leisure complex and opened in stages in 1995.

1 Hudson River Park at Christopher St, photograph by CucombreLibre 2016 Commercial use allowed



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The plan for the remainder of the park was signed in 1998 by then Governor George Pataki, which divided ownership of the park between the State (the southern area running from Battery Park to 35th Street) and the City (the northern area from 35th to 59th Streets). Both portions were then leased to the Hudson River Park Trust to manage the design and development, while Piers 40, 76 and 84 were set aside for parks, the first section of which, adjacent to Greenwich Village, opened starting in 2003. By 2015, the park was 70 per cent complete, at a cost of approximately US\$500m.

Following two decades of planning and construction, the park has proven to be highly successful as a leisure and sports destination in the city. It includes an 8km-long cycle and pedestrian path along the Hudson River connecting Riverside Park in the north with Battery Park in the south. It was built by the US Department for Transportation in conjunction with the redevelopment of the Westside Highway as an urban parkway, which the Hudson River Park Trust claims is ‘the busiest bikeway in America’. The park is dotted with a number of sports pitches, tennis courts and basketball courts popular with local residents. In addition, it features a dog run, which the *New York Times* calls the ‘best in New York’. Activities such as free rowing and boat building at the Village Community Boathouse, as well as outrigger rowing and kayaking at Pier 26 are also available. Beach volleyball and a skate park are located at West 30th Street. Chelsea Piers forms one of the largest sports and exercise facility in the city and the largest in the park; it includes rock climbing, gymnastics spaces, batting cages, bowling lanes, playing fields, a driving range, and an ice skating rink.

The park also includes hard surface and grassy open spaces, which offer popular meeting spots and viewpoints of Jersey City and Hoboken across the Hudson River. The park has enabled access to the entirety of the western waterfront of Manhattan, a total length of nearly 23km.

THE BROOKLYN BRIDGE PARK

In 2002 the City and State governments signed a joint agreement to revitalise a 34ha section of the Brooklyn waterfront facing Manhattan, and including land surrounding the Brooklyn side of the Brooklyn Bridge. The Brooklyn Bridge Park was, beginning in 2008, constructed in part from land reclaimed using soil from the new World Trade Centre in Manhattan, then under construction. The park was designed by Michael Van Valkenburgh Associates along a 2.1km long stretch of Brooklyn’s post-industrial waterfront, from Atlantic Avenue in the south to Jay Street in the north, passing underneath the Brooklyn and Manhattan Bridges. It includes six redeveloped piers, including Fulton Ferry Landing, the pre-existing Empire-Fulton Ferry pier and Main Street Parks, as well as two Civil War era

structures, the Empire Stores building and the Tobacco Warehouse.

The first phase of construction was financed with funding contributed by the Port Authority, the City and State governments, which mandated all operations of the park to be economically self-sufficient and financed from revenues resulting from commercial and residential development surrounding the park. The initial stages were designed by the New York Department of Parks, with the Brooklyn Bridge Park Development Corporation hiring Van Valkenburgh Associates in 2004 for the later development phases, which included an updated and detailed master plan in 2005, adopted by the city council in 2006 and modified in 2010. This was followed by further funding and requirements for the commercial and residential development to be built around the park in 2011.

The Brooklyn Bridge Park is located in the Brooklyn Heights and DUMBO (Down Under the Manhattan Bridge Overpass) neighbourhoods of Brooklyn, and is divided into 11 sections: Piers 1 to 6, Fulton Ferry Landing, Brooklyn Bridge Plaza, Empire Fulton Ferry, Main Street and John Street. Each section features individual topography, unique plantings and foliage, amenities as well as cultural elements and art installations. The park connects with another public open space, the Brooklyn Queens Greenway, a bicycle and pedestrian route linking a series of parks and streets in Brooklyn and Queens. The architect, Michael Von Valkenburgh describes the park as ‘guided by the concept of ‘post-industrial nature’ using ‘unabashedly man-made landscapes to kick-start new site ecologies that can thrive and evolve in a heavy-use urban setting’. The park is intended to serve as a vital threshold linking the city with the East River. ‘We realised this park wasn’t about scenery’ Von Valkenburgh said, ‘the nature of this park is the river’.

2 Brooklyn Bridge Park with view of Manhattan (istock photograph)

NEW YORK CITY: VISION 2020

More recently the City has sought to implement a larger-scale, more strategic plan for the waterfront, *Vision 2020: New York City Comprehensive Waterfront Plan*, as part of a wider, long-term development strategy for the city. This initiative was inspired by the Hudson River Park, the Brooklyn Bridge Park, both of which are still ongoing, as well as older waterfront developments such as Battery Park at Manhattan’s south end and Riverside Park in the Upper West Side. The plan has two primary elements: a three-year action plan for 130 funded development projects, which includes more than 20 hectares of new waterfront parks and public open spaces, 14 new waterfront esplanades, a new ferry service across the East River between Brooklyn, Queens and Manhattan, which will provide a framework for the city’s coastline covering 840km of shoreline, for the next ten years and beyond. Part of this plan sees a condensing of existing port activities into smaller, more concentrated facilities at six sites throughout New York Harbour: The Red Hook Container Terminal in Brooklyn, the New York Container Terminal in Staten Island, the Port of Newark Container Terminal in New Jersey, the Global Marine Terminal in Jersey City, New Jersey; the Maher Terminal and APM Terminals in Elizabeth, New Jersey.

Several abandoned waterfront landholdings and former maritime structures which suffered from decades of abandonment and decay, were first recognised in the *Comprehensive Waterfront Plan* of 1992. This plan recommended regulatory changes including rezoning waterfront areas to be based on actual land uses. As part of this regulatory effort, in 1993 the *City Rezoning Resolution* was revised to redefine waterfront sites with special regulations and development rules. The current plan furthers this impetus, designating six Significant Maritime Industrial Areas (SMIA), which were previously sites for heavy manufacturing and industrial uses: Kill Van Kull on Staten Island, Sunset Park, Red Hook and the Brooklyn Navy Yard in Brooklyn; Newtown Creek in Brooklyn and Queens and the South Bronx in the Bronx.

The current plan identifies eight goals, according to the City of New York planning department:

- Expand public access to the waterfront and waterways on public and private property for all visitors and residents of the city
- Activate the waterfront with a range of attractive uses integrated with adjacent landside communities
- Support the working waterfront economic development activity in particular
- Improve water quality through measures that protect and enhance natural habitats and ecosystems, support public leisure and recreation, while enhancing waterfront and landside communities
- Restore the natural environment, including degraded waterfront areas, protect wetlands and shorefront habitats and ecosystems
- Enhance the city’s Blue Network of waterways throughout and surrounding New York’s five boroughs
- Improve government oversight, improve regulation, coordination and oversight of the waterfront and waterways, and
- Increase the city’s climate resilience by identifying and pursuing strategies to respond to climate change and sea level rises.

According to the *New York Times*, following years of aggressive rezoning and more than 10 years of environmental clean-up efforts, large swathes of land along the remaining undeveloped waterfronts in the five boroughs are now positioned for regeneration on a grand scale. A number of recent waterfront development projects began in 2010, and acted as an initial phase of redevelopment. Indeed, dozens of large-scale plans undertaken by developers have been balanced by those already set in motion by the City. These include land parcels at the Hudson Waterfront in the West 50s and the East River waterfront from South Street Seaport to Harlem including a recently built recreational pier.



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Dozens of large-scale plans undertaken by developers have been balanced by those already set in motion by the City



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They are part of a larger, US\$150m project to develop a number of piers, parks and urban green spaces intended to impact the East Side of Manhattan in a similar way that the Hudson River Park has improved the West Side and raised real estate values, something the city hopes to emulate on the East Side.

‘Vision 2020 is a blueprint for the next 10 years and beyond that will change the way New Yorkers live for generations to come,’ notes Amanda Burden, and the goal is for the water to create a ‘sixth borough’, where according to the *New York Times* ‘the water should become a part of our everyday lives’. This continues efforts begun in the 1970s and realised from the late 1990s onwards, to open up access to the entirety of New York’s extensive waterfront. The project will continue at least for the next several decades, as Vision 2020 will almost certainly be updated, with access to all of the city’s waterways envisioned, as well as access to open spaces within a reasonable walking distance for all residents of New York City. ●

David Mathewson

3 Brooklyn Bridge Park with view of Manhattan (istock photograph)
 4 Having fun at Hudson River Park, Christopher St Pier-3, photograph Chris Watts, 2011
 Commercial use allowed

Middle Housing: the Missing Link

Harold Madi advocates a return to a traditional form of urban infill



There is an emerging movement across North America concerned with what has been coined the ‘missing middle housing’. Its advocates the gentle intensification of contemporary low-density neighbourhoods by reviving and introducing low-rise, but more intensive, residential building types that are commonplace in pre-automobile neighbourhoods in most North American cities and towns.

While the older established neighbourhoods continue to enjoy the sustained benefits afforded by a broad range of integrated residential building types, elsewhere we are grappling with increasing challenges and tensions: challenges such as suburban neighbourhoods that are stagnating; a lack of family-oriented housing and services in new high-rise neighbourhoods; well-serviced, walkable neighbourhoods facing rapid gentrification; or, the proliferation of infill projects that are poorly designed or of an inappropriate type for their site and context.

Reviving middle housing opportunities within neighbourhoods is fundamentally about increasing housing supply and affordable housing choices, but it is also about enabling these places to continue to grow, evolve and improve in a more gentle and incremental way. For suburban neighbourhoods lacking in amenities and urban life, the missing middle is truly the missing link towards a more diverse, inclusive, complete and life-long community.

MIDDLE HOUSING DEFINED

The term ‘middle housing’ refers to a range of once commonly built housing types that are sandwiched between the detached single-unit house at one end of the spectrum, and the mid-rise multi-unit building, typically taller than five storeys, at the other. This broad range of residential building types were once common place in pre-war neighbourhoods but have gone missing in contemporary developments. In urban areas of the northwest, such as Ontario in Canada, the range of middle housing types would typically include the following types:

- Semi-detached: two attached side-by-side units or duplex,

triplex, fourplex and multiplex: two to eight units generally in a stacked formation

- Rowhouse and townhouse: three or more attached side-by-side units, or stacked townhouse and back-to-back stacked townhouse: three or more attached side-by-side units as well as vertically stacked units

- Walk-up apartments: eight to 40 units in stacked formation and with a common building entry

- Garden and courtyard apartments: eight to 40 units in stacked formation with a common building entry and generally organised around a shared forecourt or courtyard

- Accessory unit, granny flat, coach-house: a secondary unit contained or external to the main building

- Main street building and live-work: apartment units stacked above street level commercial functions.

THE RISE & FALL OF MIDDLE HOUSING

Alongside single-detached houses, the integration of middle housing types is a hallmark of most traditional neighbourhoods that evolved prior to the middle of the last century. These neighbourhoods are also compact, walkable and well-serviced, and have become in many cases the most desirable places to live. Middle housing not only contributes to the eclectic spirit and charm of these places, it also leads to their inclusivity and population diversity.

However, middle housing types are for the most part missing in North American urban areas that developed over the last six decades. Initially, their loss was an outcome of culture fixated on the dream and status of owning a single-detached house, brought to fruition by the advent of the automobile with its reach unlocking vast lower-cost lands on the peripheries of town and cities. Eventually, zoning by-laws designed to perpetuate this suburban pattern, being as zealous about segregating building types as uses, sealed their fate.

As a consequence, the rich variety of low-rise residential building types diminished from perhaps a dozen to mostly detached units, occasional semi-detached units, a sprinkling of townhouses and the

1 Range of missing middle housing



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- complementary initiatives:
- Protect the existing stock of middle housing, some of which has historic significance
 - Pass enabling polices with supporting guidelines, such as a form-based regulatory approach to permit an adequate degree of flexibility
 - Streamline application processes for new proposals that conform to policies and guidelines
 - Build capacity with residents on the benefits of modestly intensifying neighbourhoods, as well as the design traditions and best practices associated with middle housing types that can benefit small-scale builders and designers. ●

rare duplex, all segregated in their own enclaves of course. This segregated form, combined with the enclave-supportive street and block configurations synonymous with suburban sprawl, is challenging to intensify and highly intrusive to alter. Also, the segregation of housing types reinforces a population homogeneity that naturally instils fear and intolerance of change among residents, which in turn further challenges planning processes aimed at correcting these unsustainable urban patterns.

COMING FULL CIRCLE

The benefits of a proactive infill strategy for established low-rise neighbourhoods that reintroduces middle housing are numerous. It helps to retain controlled management of growth by being proactive in defining and delivering a consistent message on standards and expectations, and ahead of pressures that can be anticipated in the near future.

Introducing new potential areas for infill can cumulatively make a significant impact and lessen development pressures on individual growth areas. By defining appropriate forms of infill for neighbourhoods, including building types that have a long and historic tradition in the region and can be held up as successful built examples, it deters potential inappropriate forms that are not compatible and/or are at odds with other planning and design objectives.

Introducing middle housing through infill can serve as a transition between areas of differing intensities, while serving to accommodate growth and change in a gentle, and incremental way that in most instances, may be invisible or not perceived by most. Given that this translates into a local population increase, it also serves to generate a critical mass of residents that can better ensure the support and viability of local amenities, shops and services that are essential to creating complete communities.

Increasing the variety of housing types and tenures strengthens the life-long attributes of a community. This variety invariably includes more affordable housing options, which can especially serve the highly desired, but ever more expensive, walkable neighbourhoods near the urban centres. For young growing families, the revenue that can be generated by an accessory unit could enable them to finance a more suitably scaled property, perhaps without having to leave the neighbourhood where they have already planted roots.

Middle housing comprises building types that have evolved over generations of building traditions, during a time when neighbourhoods, as the rest of the city, were in a constant and tolerated state of change and evolution. In this context, infill was gradual and incremental, generally adding or replacing entirely within the confines of the same property lot. Hence, middle housing, by virtue of the constrained sites, is kept modest in scale and impact. Furthermore, with the complexity and costs associated with acquiring and consolidating properties not being a cost factor, middle housing can be relatively less costly to develop and therefore can result in a more affordable housing product. This scale and relative simplicity, translates into an opportunity for the involvement of start-ups or small-scale builders, developers and young designers.

As cities and towns consider adopting infill strategies for middle housing, they should review the following

- 2 Example of proposed infill middle housing distributed through a block
- 3 Example of a townhouse
- 4 Example of a coach house
- 5 Example of a duplex

Harold Madi, senior principal and Urban Places Canada Lead, Stantec

Toronto's Queen Street West Heritage Conservation District

John Miminis evaluates the conservation policies applied in the Canadian city



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It has been a little over a decade since the adoption of the Heritage Conservation District of Queen Street West in Toronto, and there is now an opportunity to stand back and review its effect on local urban heritage and cityscape, whilst gauging whether its uniqueness and distinct character has flourished or suffered.

In 2017, the United Kingdom celebrated the fiftieth anniversary of the introduction of conservation areas in the planning system, a tool which calls on local authorities to enable the preservation or enhancement of character or appearance when determining development applications. Canada's own Heritage Conservation District (HCD) answers a similar call to preserve the uniqueness of place with the first HCD designated in 1980. The Canadian Register of Historic Places (CRHP) defines a heritage district as 'a place comprising a group of buildings, structures, landscapes and/or archaeological sites and their spatial relationships where built forms are often the major defining features and where the collective identity has heritage value for a community, province, territory or the nation'.

Initially these were typically forts, natural landscapes and condensed sites of landmark buildings of national significance. Local level conservation is enabled through provincial legislation, and following the 2005 ICOMOS *Xi'an Declaration on the Conservation of the Setting of Heritage Structures, Sites and Areas*, the Province of Ontario strengthened its own Heritage Act allowing municipalities to create and enforce their own Heritage Conservation Districts. At its core the HCD is in principle a plan to preserve the existing building stock with an emphasis

on enhanced levels of conservation-led approaches. There are 125 adopted HCDs in Ontario with twenty in the City of Toronto. Many are residential neighbourhoods but three are principally commercial, and this includes the Queen Street West Heritage Conservation District.

THE QUEEN STREET AREA

Laid out at the end of the late 18th century, Queen Street has a deep heritage extending back to the founding of the town of York in Upper Canada. It is 14km long and is the east-west reference axis informing the city's street grid. The original timber building stock is lost, replaced by late 19th century red brick with decorative motifs, stone embellishments, fine external cornices and colourful ground floor shopfronts.

Queen Street West's gradual transformation into a commercial and retail strip began in the 1960s, augmented by a thriving music scene. Will Alsop's Ontario College of Art and Design is in close proximity and feeds into the cultural, media and performing arts character of the area. Queen Street West's attractive and slightly raw aesthetic, tourism and cultural draw is supported by a commercial ribbon of familiar retail which, in the best cases, are neatly slotted into fine Second Empire-type buildings with clearly defined, active frontages. Where buildings are modern there are considerate attempts to maintain narrow and articulated commercial frontages in keeping with the established scale and typology of heritage buildings. Unlike the nearby, modern downtown core, which is dominated by skyscrapers and innumerable tall buildings, the general building height is 16m and Queen West remains bright and inviting.

Spadina Avenue also crosses Queen Street West in the district, and some readers might recall the late 1960s Stop Spadina and Save Our City campaign championed by Jane Jacobs, against a proposed sunken expressway which would have decimated neighbourhoods. It was ultimately cancelled in 1971, though briefly resurrected in 2010 in tunnel form, but saw little traction with the public.

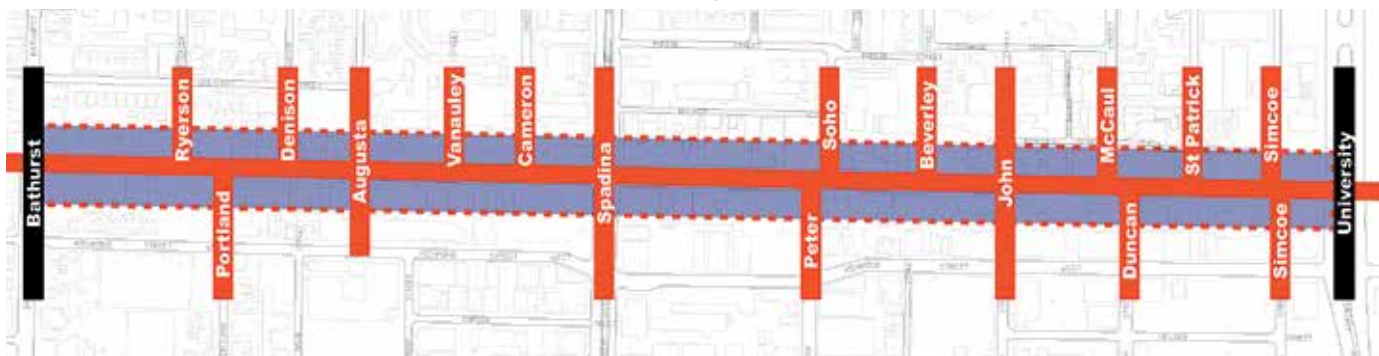
1 Hip shops in present day Queen St. West, photograph Richie Diesterheft (From Flickr)



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THE HERITAGE CONSERVATION PLAN

The proximity to the downtown financial district was a key driver for mobilising the 2005 heritage study, which assessed the existing building stock and overall character of a 1.5km linear zone bound on either end by major north-south arterial roads, University Avenue and Bathurst Street, and just one plot deep, encapsulating the commercial functions of the street.

Community engagement with residents and property owners was necessary. It was clear at the time that many residents were eager for the forces of change to be halted immediately and some saw the City Council as part of the problem: gentrification, the loss of independent business and the advance of a night-club culture that catered to out-of-towners, seemingly ignoring the needs of local residents. Some property owners wanted to capitalise on potential tall building development and many were sceptical that the City Council would assist with grants to fund heritage repairs. Many grievances were aired and the HCD Plan was adopted by the Council on September 20th 2007.

Alongside defining the physical extents of the HCD, the Plan included a means of evaluating alterations and new-build development proposals based on a set of criteria including:

- Significant Architecture and Prominent Buildings
- Street Wall
- Street Wall Elements
- Building Heights (typically between two and four storeys)
- Façade Pattern and Features
- Public Realm (defined by a consistency in the built form that gives the corridor a distinct character).
- Circulation.

Constraints were defined to protect against out-of-scale or unsympathetic development proposals whilst recognising opportunities to enhance the HCD, including the infill development of vacant plots, and the proportionate redevelopment of single-storey buildings. Mixed use schemes with commercial ground floors were preferred as in keeping with the existing street scene. Toronto today has a commitment to mixed use zoning which helps to liberalise thinking and loosen controls, thereby accepting and managing change. In this way much of the City’s recent successes are through the encouragement

of mixed use zoning and revitalising districts, which deteriorated under previous overly prescriptive zoning controls. New structures in older neighbourhoods would also be expected to adopt height restrictions, floor area ratios and parking requirements.

EVALUATION

Since adoption the HCD Plan has been referenced in seven development applications along Queen Street West including:

- Infill of vacant lots (No. 308)
- Replacing non-contributing building stock with new and more appropriate solutions (Nos. 336 and 464)
- Altering and intensifying an existing contributing building (No. 349)
- Replacement building following destruction by fire (No. 619).

These cases document some of the success of the Plan. The architectural response is considered and thoroughly measured against the criteria. Whilst considering development applications there is a push for architectural detailing to break up massing into similar proportions found within the district.

A robust approach for a consistent street wall has certainly helped to bring greater definition to the area by filling in the ‘missing teeth’ in vacant lots and low rise structures. Although intended as a development guideline, it is now, worryingly, a dogmatic approach which may compromise the future of the area. For instance, the design of no. 336 is carefully aligned with its taller neighbour immediately west and the accompanying Heritage

2 Toronto in 1931, South side of Queen St. West, photograph Arthur Gross, City of Toronto Archives
 3 No. 619 Queen St. West, completed scheme by Quadrangle Architects
 4 Queen St. West Heritage Conservation District boundary. Copyright City of Toronto



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Impact Assessment makes no mention of the impacts to the adjacent Rivoli, a contributing structure which will now read as subservient to the new, larger mass. It is a missed opportunity in heritage terms that a more equitable review was not undertaken.

The replacement structure at no. 619 following its earlier destruction by fire, is a noteworthy achievement addressing historical and community significance, renewed through the introduction of new materials and craftsmanship. In September 2017, City Council awarded it a Toronto Urban Design Award of Merit.

More controversial are the successful appeal against the HCD boundary leading to a 25-storey mixed use tower (no. 219); and the successful appeal against height restrictions within the HCD leading to 7-storey mixed use tower (no. 375).

It is comic that no. 219, a formerly vacant plot successfully appealed for development, was excluded from the HCD boundary. By doing so it defaulted to the policy of the Toronto Official Plan – specifically the Financial District – thereby enabling the City's Tall Building guidance to be used.

Similarly, at no 375, this overlap of conflicting policies was manipulated to arrive at a negotiated settlement at the tribunal level. Perhaps unwittingly heritage experts have set a precedent for the abandonment of height restrictions, the delegitimising of historically significant buildings, and paving the way for future demolition.

CONCLUSION

In large part the HCD designation has helped to focus on sympathetic and well-considered design approaches to infill development, while height constraints where they have held, have delivered responses in keeping with the scale of the area. Rebuilding from fire damage can still retain links to historic periods, and there is evidence of a concerted effort by the community and landowners to improve and enhance the built fabric. Scale, materiality and consideration to context have been respected in the majority of proposals.

However, when the HCD was manipulated and could not be enforced, it seems to lead to outright planning failure. Although zoning and the process of appeals have created the conditions for the HCD to be implemented, the same tools can undermine it. Ultimately, the Plan does not survive the stress test; this is perhaps a critique of the overlapping and competing planning policies, in particular a patchy zoning framework leading to even patchier outcomes. Unaddressed this may lead to the Plan's final undoing and the dilution of the character of the heritage district.

Moving forward, there needs to be a general limitation of powers of the current appeal tribunal, the Ontario Municipal Board (OMB). It is routinely criticised for its broad reach into local planning matters supported by a lack of understanding of



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Ultimately, the Plan does not survive the stress test; this is perhaps a critique of the overlapping and competing planning policies, in particular a patchy zoning framework leading to even patchier outcomes

community values. Toronto City councillors have advocated its reform since at least 2012 and there are moves afoot to replace the OMB with Local Planning Appeal Tribunals giving greater weight to the local decision-making process. Such change is enshrined in the *Building Better Communities and Conserving Watersheds Act, 2017*.

There is no immediate facility to measure the heritage gains through the enforcement of the plan. The inventory of built stock of 2005 stands as an archive and has not been renewed. The Council could consider regular condition reports, a sort of quinquennial survey, to help to achieve heritage objectives and to routinely evaluate whether available planning tools are fit for purpose. The City has, since 2014, established a property tax rebate programme for commercial properties within the HCD, incentivising conservation excellence and linked to the value of eligible conservation work. This will no doubt have an effect on the Queen West HCD which should be monitored. Additionally, this conservation rebate can apply to internal conservation work and repairs, which is beyond the scope of the HCD, with implications for the wider Toronto context. ●

5 No. 336 Queen St. West adjacent to the Rivoli
6 No. 219 Queen St. West, north elevation of a 25 storey mixed building
Both images City of Toronto

John Miminis, architect and urban designer, Associate at Feilden Mawson LLP London



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Vancouver as a Benchmark

David Mathewson and Katerina Karaga explain how the city utilises view corridors and public space in a smart way

Vancouver, Canada, set within a breathtakingly beautiful natural environment in the North American region of the Pacific Northwest, is positioned on a peninsula between the Fraser River on the south and Vancouver Harbour to the north, with a backdrop of the Pacific Coastal Mountain Range beyond and the Pacific Ocean to the west. This city of over half a million people stands at the heart of a metropolitan region of over two million inhabitants in the southwestern corner of British Columbia, Canada's westernmost province and its only link to the Pacific Ocean. The city lies just 30km north of the border with the US States and a four-hour drive north of Seattle in the US State of Washington.

BACKGROUND

Vancouver has been hailed as a paragon of planning and urban design in North America, at least since the 1980s. This is in large part due to its unique response to its spectacular natural context, that of high density, high-rise urban core surrounded by tall, picturesque mountains and dark blue water, an ideology developed since the 1980s that some refer to as Vancouverism, as noted previously by Michael Short (2012). This view is characterised by the city as it now stands, with tall, slender towers set apart, low-rise buildings, parks and public spaces set between and streetscapes designed with pedestrians in mind, in close proximity to public transport. Short ascribes this planning conception to the engagement effort between the city's planners and urban designers with particular high density building typologies. Indeed, this endeavour includes strategising where to position towers, while restricting their development in key locations where views of the surrounding mountains and water

could be adversely affected, as well as increasing urban densities in appropriate areas to facilitate the intensification of the inner city.

However, Vancouver has not always been the exemplar of North American urbanism that it is today. Although it is one of the most rapidly developing metropolitan regions in North America, due to a long history of immigration across the Pacific Ocean, the city suffered many of the same ills of other cities typical of the continent. During the 1970s and 80s, Vancouver experienced the out-migration of the wealthy and middle classes from the inner city to the surrounding suburbs. This resulted in economic stagnation that lasted until the urban regeneration set off by investment around the 1986 World Exposition. The urban development which followed, revitalised the downtown area into a high density, high-rise mixed use, residential-led quarter that helped to drive a wider regeneration of the central city, promoting Vancouverism and resulting in the city we know today.

NEW POLICIES

The City Council has also utilised strategies developed during the 1980s and 90s,

1 Downtown Vancouver skyline (iStock photograph)



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to establish its vision for the urban core. Now referred to as the *Living First Strategy*, this effort has emphasised residential living and associated development in the city centre and downtown, and led to a reconsideration of the urban core in terms of quality of life, walkability, access to employment and public transport, the provision of local services within a quality public realm and open space network, in essence, all the elements of benchmark urban design.

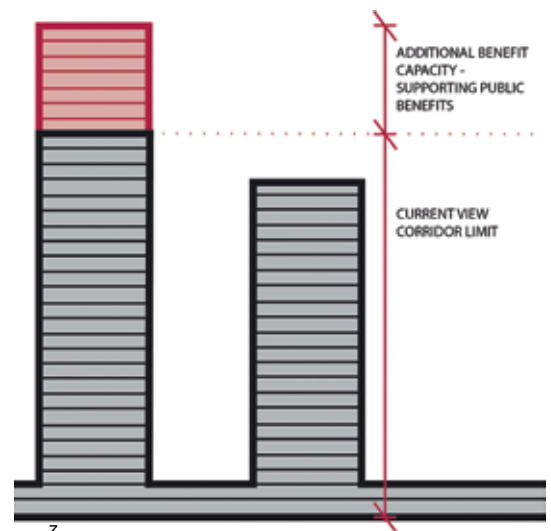
According to Short, the regulatory framework for planning in Vancouver is a combination of three fundamentals: the promotion of tall buildings in key city centre locations, the preservation of important views to water bodies and mountains encircling the city, and the promotion of the development of buildings with setbacks stepping down to the harbour and False Creek. These principles are managed by the following City of Vancouver planning department documents:

- The *General Policy for Higher Buildings* (2014), applicable when proposed buildings surpass the limits for the *Downtown Official Development Plan*, requires re-zoning or impinges upon an existing protected view corridor;
- The *View Protection Guidelines* (2011), which created 27 protected view corridors. If a proposed development impinges on a view corridor, the City Council will calculate the maximum height allowable, which depends on the topography of the site and its distance from the view point;
- The *Historic Area Height Review* (2011) and the *Higher Building Review*, stipulates the zoning policy for tall buildings in and adjacent to historic conservation areas;
- The *Downtown Capacity and View Corridor Study* (2008), which recommended the intensification of development in the city centre through densification, allowing for additional height on towers;
- The *Special Review Process* (2002) of the Higher Building Advisory Panel, provides design advice to statutory decision-making bodies through a review process of architectural quality and height limitations of proposed towers; and,
- The *Downtown District Official Development Plan* (1975), which determined areas with varying height limits.

COMPARISON WITH LONDON

This planning system, which has been argued to be rigid due to its use of prescriptive rules, stands in contrast to how London allows for the development of tall buildings within its 33

boroughs and the City. London lacks a *de facto*, city-wide policy which governs the overall appearance and composition of the city's skyline. Instead it utilises a series of planning regulations and conservation guidelines that effectively constitute a framework for the positioning and organisation of tall building clusters in the UK's capital, without prescriptively designating a specified policy on the matter. These regulatory structures include heritage guidelines such as the *London View Management Framework* (LVMF), which protects key views of St Paul's Cathedral, as well as important views and vistas of the city and other historic monuments from specific locations, such as Parliament Hill or Greenwich Hill and views along the River Thames, such as the silhouette of the Palace of Westminster or views of the Tower of London from the east.



2 Vancouver skyline (iStock photograph)
3 Vancouver: Additional benefit capacity. Diagram by Katerina Karaga

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In addition to this, the Greater London Authority (GLA) sets out in the *London Plan* a number of Opportunity Areas which are designated locations for mixed use, high-density development clusters and therefore appropriate locations for tall buildings, as well as transport nodes throughout Greater London, which are also recognised as appropriate places for tower clusters, using Transit Orientated Development (ToD) as a planning principle.

Despite these *de jure* policies that effectively form a minimal framework for tall building development, London and other UK cities with their minimal or lax height policies have a great deal to learn from Vancouver. For example, in the case of the building height of individual towers, where in London individual boroughs can set their own policies, the GLA has not set out height limits, resulting in the Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) guidelines effectively setting out maximums for new towers in lieu of actual policies at the local level. This is the case at both the City and Canary Wharf tower clusters where the flight path into London City Airport limits maximum heights for safety reasons. However, these have not yet been challenged in court, which remains a distinct possibility given the pressure on land values and to build ever taller buildings in inner London.

FLEXIBLE APPROACH

In Vancouver's case, the City Council is unique in Canada for its relative local power, being independent from the provincial legislature. Therefore, the City has specific processes in place for unusual developments or applications which merit special consideration; it can weigh the merits of a particular scheme for the city as a whole against the planning rules. For example, where there is potential for a tower to surpass the current height limits set by the City Council through the protected view corridors and the Downtown District Official Development Plan, an application for re-zoning is possible through a principle of benefit capacity. This is where additional height, density or both, can be approved pending the demonstration of added public or local community benefit, such as a rooftop garden or terrace, affordable housing, funds for nearby or adjacent historic structures or conservation areas, public open spaces at the ground level or other public facilities. This system not only benefits the city and local community, but also the developer of the project, as the building's additional height inevitably results in added real estate value and profit. Benefit capacity applications are reviewed by the Higher Building Advisory Panel. The City Council also utilises a

Additional height, density or both, can be approved by the City Council pending the demonstration of added public or local community benefit

height calculator with sophisticated GIS-based software, designed to determine the limit of proposed building heights for a given development, where it falls into a view corridor or given a particular location on a topographic condition. The software utilises a formula to determine these maximum heights, which then informs city planning decisions.

Vancouver has developed a well-considered urban development strategy, tried and tested planning and development regulations, heritage guidelines and principles around high quality public space, the conservation and acknowledgement of natural environmental assets of mountains and waterfront, public transport provision and access to employment and local services, all with a view to increasing urban liveability in the city centre. This has led to the establishment of a well-managed framework for tall buildings in the context of a system of protected views, expansive and high quality public space, and a supreme natural environment and urban heritage. ●

David Mathewson and Katerina Karaga, senior urban designer, Farrells

Reference:
Short, M. J., (2012). *Planning for Tall Buildings*. New York: Routledge.

4 Vancouver, water and mountains (iStock photograph)



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California Dreaming: Are the State's Environmental Goals Possible?

Agatha Vaaler outlines progress towards reducing carbon-based energy and greenhouse gas emissions

Since January 2017, the Trump administration had been intent on pursuing a policy of massive deregulation at the federal level. However in some parts of the country, state governments are beginning to fill the roles of regulation vacated by the Federal Government and the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). California is at the forefront of this effort and has continued to pursue its own regulatory agenda at the state level, which had already advanced beyond the standards set by the Federal Government. Over the past five years, state legislation and executive orders regarding the energy sector have helped to advance sustainability and reduce energy consumption in the state. But can politicians and lawmakers propel California towards its long-term environmental goals, which include an 80 per cent reduction of greenhouse gas emissions to levels below those recorded in the 1990s, by 2050?

ENERGY SAVING POLICIES

Beginning in the late 1970s, the State of California passed legislation requiring its natural gas and electric utilities providers to decouple their profits from energy sales, in order to fund capital investment into infrastructure and related services. At the same time, California established its first building energy efficiency codes and standards prescribing building envelope, mechanical and lighting systems requirements. Since then, per

capita energy consumption in California has remained relatively flat, while steadily increasing in virtually every other part of the United States. Today, the average Californian uses one-third less energy and approximately 55 per cent of the greenhouse gas emissions of the average American outside California.

In 2012, California's Governor Jerry Brown issued an Executive Order which adopted Zero Net Energy (ZNE) requirements as goals for California's *Long-Term Energy Efficiency Strategic Plan*. A ZNE building produces as much energy as it consumes in a year, through on-site renewable energy, and is a major achievement towards limiting greenhouse gas emissions. ZNE performance standards for residential new construction will be incorporated into the State's *Energy Efficiency Code*, which sets minimum efficiency standards for buildings, appliances and equipment, and is expected to significantly further the State's low emissions objectives.

Subsequent to this effort, a windfall of complementary legislation was passed, which redoubled environmental achievements to be met by the year 2030: *Senate Bill 350* established the goal of doubling the State's current level of energy efficiency and renewable energy achievement, while the Governor also set interim targets on the State's long-term goals of 80 per cent reduction in greenhouse gas emissions by 2050. Importantly, these include a 40 per cent reduction in greenhouse gasses below 1990 levels to be met by 2030.

Since 2012, there has been a measurable surge in California's renewable energy generation: 27 per cent of its electricity now comes from renewable energy sources, up from 15 per cent in 2010. The state experienced an increase in the use of solar photovoltaics in particular, which now makes up 10 per cent of California's renewable energy sources compared to less than 1 per cent in 2010, not including Customer-Side Solar Photo Voltaic generation (generation that occurs behind the customer's electric meter as opposed to on utility grid infrastructure).

GREENHOUSE GAS REDUCTION

While California is on track to meet its energy goals, the State will have to exert further influence on how its citizens consume fossil fuels at the individual and system-levels, in order to make progress on its larger goal of reducing greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions. Transportation remains the greatest source of emissions in California, accounting for 37 per cent of the emissions. This is a significant challenge, because between 2014 and 2015, transportation-related emissions increased by 3 per cent, whereas emissions from electricity production decreased. In the same year, commuter

1 Solar PV Charging Station for Electric Car. AltCarExpoSoCal. 2017

times increased by nearly 3 per cent while the use of public transportation decreased by nearly 5 per cent.

To illustrate how some of these implications are negotiated, recent examples of municipal energy planning in a Southern California beach community, as well as the California Air Resources Board's efforts to curb vehicle emissions, are explained below.

MUNICIPAL ENERGY PLANNING

A beachside community approximately 20 miles south of Los Angeles had endorsed the US Conference of Mayors' *Climate Protection Agreement* in 2007, which makes an explicit commitment to reduce its greenhouse gas emissions. Through a GHG emission inventory, the City of Los Angeles found the greatest source of emissions to be transportation, followed by energy used by its street lighting, facilities and parks.

Before turning to energy, the City converted its vehicle fleet to electric vehicles, seeing a 10 per cent drop in its emissions. Los Angeles then conducted a series of energy efficiency projects at its own testing facilities, before pursuing additional demand response and renewable generation projects in keeping with the State-endorsed *Loading Order*. California's *Energy Action Plan* promotes maximising energy efficiency and building commissioning at facilities before installing renewable generation as the most cost-effective way to reduce energy use and GHG emissions. In so doing, the City is also minimising its system load with energy efficiency projects, setting a base for an optimally sized and cost-effective renewable energy system ZNE performance in the future.

Los Angeles had been considering participation in *Community Choice Aggregation (CCA)* for supplying renewable energy to its own facilities and community's needs. The CCA was signed into law in 2002 in California and allows local governments a method that offers electricity to their communities at a low cost. There are currently a number of nascent and a few established CCAs with founding missions largely predicated on meeting or exceeding state's Renewable Portfolio Standard (RPS) at competitive prices to the utility providers. The City's CCA would presumably have to utilise the utilities' transmission and distribution infrastructure as a means to transport renewable energy from large-scale solar PV generation in the desert where land is cheaper and more abundant. By aggregating its community's demand with other cities, Los Angeles can overcome the limits on system size and achieve greater economies of scale in energy procurement than it would by independently developing at its own community sites. The City would also potentially capture a new source of revenue generation through energy sales.

STATE REGULATORY AGENCY PLANNING

The California Air Resource Board (CARB), which sets vehicle emissions standards, provides another good illustration of the current challenge the State faces in meeting its emissions targets. CARB joined with similar government bodies in 12 other states to advance policies with the aim of achieving a zero emissions auto market in the US by 2025. California is the only state in the country currently permitted to issue vehicle emission standards under the *Clean Air Act*, which has been granted a waiver by the Federal Government through the EPA. The current US presidential administration is however proposing to rescind this waiver while making concessions to automakers in other parts of the country wanting to roll back national fuel economy standards.

In essence, regional and interstate partnerships and leadership will be critical to overcome legislative and regulatory structures established by previous administrations, to holistically transform how Americans use fossil fuels. The State of California has undergone population and job growth, and must make commensurate investments in its infrastructure to support its environmental goals. Ultimately, there is a high level of confidence in the State's political leadership from multiple sectors of the energy industry, while it is publicly recognised that



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Californians have great resolve to make clean energy a reality. However, change will require a multi-sectorial approach to systemic barriers as well as collaboration across state lines and at various levels of government to make California's GHG emissions reduction goals a reality. ●

2 California clean energy solar project at Ft Hunter Liggett, US Army Corps of Engineers

3 California clean energy, White Water, Palm Springs, photograph Tony Webster

4 Long Beach California, part of Los Angeles agglomeration, photograph Greg Gjerdingen

Agatha Vaaler, architect and urban designer, consultant on energy efficiency with Newcombe Anderson McCormick



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Housing: A Crisis and an Opportunity

Julissa Lopez-Hodoyan looks at potential new approaches to solving the housing crisis

In the US, the issues that are defining our time are led by a crisis in housing. This single component has a direct effect on social integrity and cohesion, and on all aspects of social life. The crisis must be addressed in the same manner as all other emergencies (such as natural disasters) and be at the top of the agenda every day because it is a necessity and crucial to keeping a just and peaceful society together. Housing should not be a luxury afforded to the few. It is not optional.

Americans are accustomed to a societal infrastructure which uses taxes to build airports, schools, libraries and housing. However, when it comes to housing, the government's intervention seems insignificant. The private developer has happily stepped in when these governmental systems fall short of delivering, but it cannot cover all aspects of the housing crisis, which takes many forms: the availability of land, buildings or units, types of housing needed, and most importantly affordability.

There are great examples of developer-led projects which target specific audiences but what they provide is often predictable, based on previous models of success, and usually exclude a large portion of the population. So new solutions are needed.

ALTERNATIVE APPROACHES

Observing how past housing delivery systems are failing, a few brave and creative visionaries are taking matters into their own hands. Stepping into the open market, new partnerships are

providing alternate ways of designing and financing residential projects. This movement is infiltrating the top-down and bottom-up approach; average citizens are becoming extraordinary and entrepreneurial because of their immediate concern for social values, and a can-do approach.

These new players have their own mission statement, and are responding in a local way. For example, Heyday Partnership is a firm started by two brothers with a background in the built environment, real estate, development and architecture. They looked at the Los Angeles' housing shortage and began to study it. They were shocked to realise that small houses of approximately 500 sqft were being sold for almost US\$0.5m, in neighbourhoods far away from the beachfront or a preferred postcode. Baffled by finding mediocre housing stock with inflated house prices dominating the market, they decided to step in. Wanting to 'improve the quality of building in working class

1 The heart of the community Agrihood: farm yard and educational areas. Image: Davis Studio Architecture + Design

neighbourhoods throughout LA, they are increasing the density and providing beautiful but non-standard housing.

These infill projects maximise land use by increasing the average density, from 7 dwellings per acre to approximately 27 dwellings per acre. Their projects aim to be LEED (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design) certified and offer open spaces with conscientious, drought-resistant landscapes. The Heyday Partnership has been steadily adding new housing into the market since 2002, by looking at the potential in abandoned or unused sites in residential areas in north-eastern Los Angeles.

From a different angle, Kirk Vartan originally from New York, moved to Silicon Valley to work in the high-tech industry. Aware of the amazing clustering of great minds working in forward-thinking, digital companies, Mr. Vartan was disappointed to see a landscape which did not reflect any of the innovative qualities which distinguished these companies. The built environment, and housing in particular, were anything but cutting edge, revolutionary, or inspiring. Disheartened by what he saw, Kirk decided to take a stance and fight for protecting available land that had particular significance to the local community.

Knowing that the housing shortage was promoting new developments devoid of character and meaning, Mr. Vartan, now a pizza shop owner, spent over US\$100,000 of his own money and invested in a 'what if' scenario: a new vision distinctly different to traditional developers. He commissioned architects and landscape designers to envision a mixed use community which would be sustainable and affordable to those with mixed incomes and shared values. With the aim of securing six acres of urban land owned by the City of Santa Clara, he started a movement to promote an urban village through community-led efforts.

After years of public consultations, community meetings and workshops, designs for an urban agri-neighbourhood or 'agrihood' began to emerge on a contentious site known as BAREC/ Win6. BAREC stands for Bay Area Research and Extension Center and Win6 identifies the movement, referring to the six acres of land. Eventually, the placemaking gurus Project for Public Spaces (PPS) were hired to help the collective vision gain greater strength and direction.

The urban village promises to embody the ideals of its supporters and to respect the memory of a fruitful and rich site that has been part of the residents' lives for over 80 years. It will house a variety of people and include 'low-income senior housing, a community farm... aquaponic and vertical gardens, artisan shops, studios and an open-air market'.

After fighting for social values rather than profit sharing, the Win6 group selected a developer that represented their interests. Though still in progress, this is one example of how one man or one group with an idea to build a better future, has the ability to generate change. Local support for this type of project was enough to sway the City of Santa Clara into changing its development plan for the BAREC/Win6 site, and gain the support of its Mayor, Lisa Gillmore, who is now committed to a city-wide placemaking strategy in collaboration with PPS.

DEALING WITH HOMELESSNESS

The great demand for housing in large metropolitan areas, such as the San Francisco Bay Area, Los Angeles, and San Diego means that housing prices go up exponentially. Financial struggles are pressing among families and singles alike. In best-case scenarios, people are forced to leave these cities; in the worst-case, many become homeless, joining the estimated 118,000+ people in California who live sheltered or unsheltered, in tent-ridden streets and sidewalks, under bridges, along highway off-ramps or in public parks.

When dealing with housing and urban design matters, the conversation must at least mention the presence of the homeless population on the streets as a reflection of social injustice. The housing crisis has become an urban crisis, which goes hand-in-hand with the experience of the public realm and the state of private property. The inability to afford housing, along with other



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social structures which have deteriorated, forces people onto the streets. This is a problem that needs multiple types of housing solutions, and fast.

Solutions for the homeless are getting better and come from government agencies, but they have been slow to step in. The homelessness problem in California is not new and has been brutally ignored in major cities like San Diego. Recently, the municipality in San Diego finally created a robust plan that will be implemented at the end of 2017. The 'quick' decision to act was jump-started because of a recent outbreak in Hepatitis A on the city's downtown streets. Due to a lack of washing facilities and public bathrooms, the epidemic was easily transmitted among those living on the streets, causing 19 deaths and over 500 cases as of October 2017. Once the realisation that the whole population, not just the homeless, could be in peril, the municipality began to deal with the issue with a new type of urgency.

San Diego County has over 9,000 homeless people and the number keeps growing. Los Angeles County, a large agglomeration of 88 incorporated cities, has according to the Los Angeles

2 Aerial view above Silicon Valley toward downtown San Jose
Photo: Aerial Archives/ Alamy Stock Photo
3 Initial concept for the Win6 / Agrihood site.
Landscape Designer: Alrie Middlebrook



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Homeless Services Authority (LAHSA): ‘57,794 people experiencing homelessness on a given night’.

Homelessness, is not specific to California. It is evident in cities throughout the US, so much so that the US Department of Housing and Urban Development recognises its scale and publishes a yearly document to inform and guide the Federal Government and its initiatives to combat the issue.

POTENTIAL SOLUTIONS

The homeless and the non-homeless share the same spaces and meet eye-to-eye in city centres, outside malls, in residential neighbourhoods, in industrial sites, in parking lots, and along rivers, yet have very different positions in relation to basic human needs. As we hope and wait for the top-down approach of state and local governance to reverse this situation, some creative individuals and developers have stepped in, and asked for partnerships in the interim.

The general trend is to house the homeless in California in modular construction. Some are old repurposed shipping containers, and others are micro-apartments, all easily stackable. In Berkeley, a developer has teamed up with the municipality to address people living on the streets. A Micro-Prefabricated Affordable Dwelling, MicroPAD, can be used to house the homeless or those on very low incomes in a 160 sqft studio. These units can quickly be assembled and stacked in parking lots, although Councilwomen, Lori Droste and Linda Maio recommended that the City of Berkeley looked for ‘city-owned land on which to build them, fast-track the necessary permits and allocate the money necessary to pay the monthly leases’.

Many other developers and charities are stepping up to the challenge in Los Angeles and Orange County. Their solutions address social issues through physical built form, provide public open spaces, and a support team for training and helping residents to find jobs, while offering them a safe place to live. A few container homes are already in place, while others must wait until 2018.

Beyond affordability, there is still a large housing problem which manifests itself in different origins and geo-cultural settings. The good news is that individuals are stepping forward and taking it upon themselves to open businesses and offer new solutions. Small interventions are making an impact not just in California but also in New York, where new types of housing are catering to those who chose to live not in single-family homes,

New types of housing are catering to those who chose to live not in single-family homes, nor in apartments, but in communal dorm-like housing with shared facilities



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nor in apartments, but in communal dorm-like housing with shared facilities.

USING DIGITAL TECHNOLOGY

Through identifying new ways of living by a population that is increasingly living longer, the problem isn’t only a matter of providing new housing types, but in noticing that perhaps the only housing options are far out of reach for many. The issue could potentially be solved with new ways of building, but primarily we must look at access to these. Perhaps we need to find a new way for payment, such as an exchange of services that is not monetary, or in the spirit of the technological era, use crowdfunding, Kickstarter, and other types of data apps to fill in the gap, and jump-start new projects.

With so much more digital awareness among our network of friends and local shops perhaps the topic of housing can be part of a conversation that can be quickly funded, designed and brought into fruition using ‘likes’ and local interest in one’s own virtual community. Not that a single swipe or ‘like’ would be the only effort, but the beginning for projects gaining life and traction.

Housing, homes, and the way we live are an inextricable urban component which needs of our attention and creative solutions. We must be complementing and filling in the gaps of a slower, heavier, top-down governmental approach. In the US, this is already happening in small but effective ways in neighbourhoods, as partnerships between the caring and brave, are taking a stance. ●

Julissa Lopez-Hodoyan, adjunct professor, New School of Architecture, San Diego

4 Vision for the Win6 /Agrihood site, incorporating multi-income housing, urban farming and native gardens surrounding a central public open space. Image: Davis Studio Architecture + Design.

5 Aerial view of the Win6 /Agrihood site, showing its proximity to the highest land value in Santa Clara county



Written in Stone

George Loew recounts how San Francisco's culture and the process of change are expressed through a public art installation

Every year, San Francisco's Folsom Street Fair transforms one of the city's main thoroughfares into an unmistakable expression of the neighbourhood's unique identity. People in leather vests, hats, boots and accessories come to celebrate the neighbourhood's significance as a historic gathering place for an important part of the city's culture: its leather scene. Starting in the 1960s, San Francisco's South of Market district (SoMa) began attracting members of America's emerging gay leather men community. Over the years, SoMa became increasingly synonymous with that community, which grew to include people of various genders and sexual orientations. Now over 30 years old, the Folsom Street Fair is the climax of a week-long celebration of leather that attracts around 400,000 attendees from around the world.

A COMMUNITY MOVES IN

Originally, leather men found their way into SoMa to escape moral oppression in other parts of San Francisco. Once established, this marginalised population continued to face threats: the AIDS epidemic, redevelopment pressures and planning initiatives that undermined the institutions upon which it was built. Today's residents and businesses confront upscale housing, restaurants, and bars that are transforming the neighbourhood.

The story of San Francisco's leather community's birth, continued survival, and celebration is now forever written into the public record. One block from Folsom Street, on Ringold Alley, *A Leather Memoir* stands as a monument to both individual and collective contributions to this vital part of the city. Restrained and enduring, the recently completed art installation contrasts with the boisterous, ephemeral nature of the Fair.

The unveiling of *A Leather Memoir* has occurred during a time of fierce national debate about historic monuments and their place in both the public realm and narrative trajectory of the United States. This debate has put a less scrutinised facet of urban place-making at the centre of a highly contentious political climate. To-date, the focus has been primarily on the many public tributes (statues, memorials, street names, etc.) to the Confederacy, its so-called heroes, and what these monuments represent. At a broader level however, the argument is about our collective identity and values and their representation. As the final adjudicators of what appears in the public realm, urban designers play a pivotal role in how this debate plays out on a practical level.

In this context, *A Leather Memoir* stands as a rare example of inclusivity and validation. But while the national context

1 San Francisco Ringold Alley and adjacent pocket park during the inauguration



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makes it particularly relevant at this moment, its place in the ongoing evolution of SoMa makes it a particularly compelling story about the process of urban change. An achievement like this requires more than bureaucratic best intentions. It also requires the convergence of forces and dedicated individuals.

THE MAKING OF AN ENCLAVE

Despite San Francisco's current reputation, the city establishment has not always been welcoming of its lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans and queer (LGBTQ) population. The community has faced discrimination, suppression, and segregation in a pattern familiar to many minority groups. San Francisco used police crack-downs, planning and redevelopment tactics, and moral crusades to disrupt homosexual activity and enterprise, persecute this population, and displace its members. In this way, the experience of LGBTQ subgroups strongly parallels that of ethnic minorities whose enclaves and ghettos can be found in cities around the globe.

In the 1950s, SoMa was a largely industrial area on the city's eastern side. While there was an existing Filipino residential population, SoMa was mostly quiet after the garages closed each night. Into this scene, stepped the leather community. Its growing membership slowly established itself along Folsom Street, which provided its members with a safe place to pursue their social, entertainment, and sexual interests away from the larger public's moral, and sometimes violent, condemnation.

Starting in the early 1960s and peaking in the late 1970s, leather-oriented clubs, bars, bath houses, clothing shops, coffee houses, non-profit organisations, and print shops could be found all over SoMa. In a 1964 *Life* magazine article on homosexuality in America, a photo of one of the bars, The Tool Box, is spread across two pages, with a now-famous mural by Chuck Arnett. Located at its centre, Ringold Alley became an after-hours cruising spot, well-known and renowned among local men.

WESTERN SOMA: AN ALTERNATIVE VISION

Fast-forward to the 1980s and 90s, the AIDS epidemic was ravaging SoMa, like many gay communities. With the crisis came a concerted effort by city leaders to eradicate what they saw as the breeding grounds for the disease, namely enterprises that catered to the gay population. The district's proximity to downtown, cultural institutions, and transit options made it a tempting area to focus urban growth. The destabilised leather community and the relative powerlessness of the Filipino community made SoMa particularly vulnerable to the effects of that development. In the mid 1990s, the Planning Department started to formulate the *Eastern Neighborhoods Initiative*, a transformational growth strategy for a large section of the city that included SoMa.

Among the planning staff deployed to develop that document was a young man with a passion for participatory planning: Paul Lord was running community meetings for one specific part of the planning effort. At one of these meetings he met an equally passionate SoMa resident, business owner, and leather community member named Jim Meko. Jim and Paul became a powerful inside/outside partnership, one an effective advocate for his community's interests and the other a crucial activist within the city's bureaucracy.

The pair sketched out a diverse representative community planning council. Jim then took these concepts to the local Supervisor, Chris Daly who insisted that the Planning Department adopt these planning council concepts and provided the legislative guidance and finances to formally enact the group.

The Western SoMa Citizens Planning Task Force became San Francisco's first and only citizen group with a formal advisory function to the Planning Commission and Board of Supervisors. The leather community was represented on this committee, but Jim worked diligently to ensure that its membership included the full spectrum of local stakeholders. Once formally appointed, the Task Force crafted a community-driven conforming plan and policies.

AN OPPORTUNITY PRESENTS ITSELF

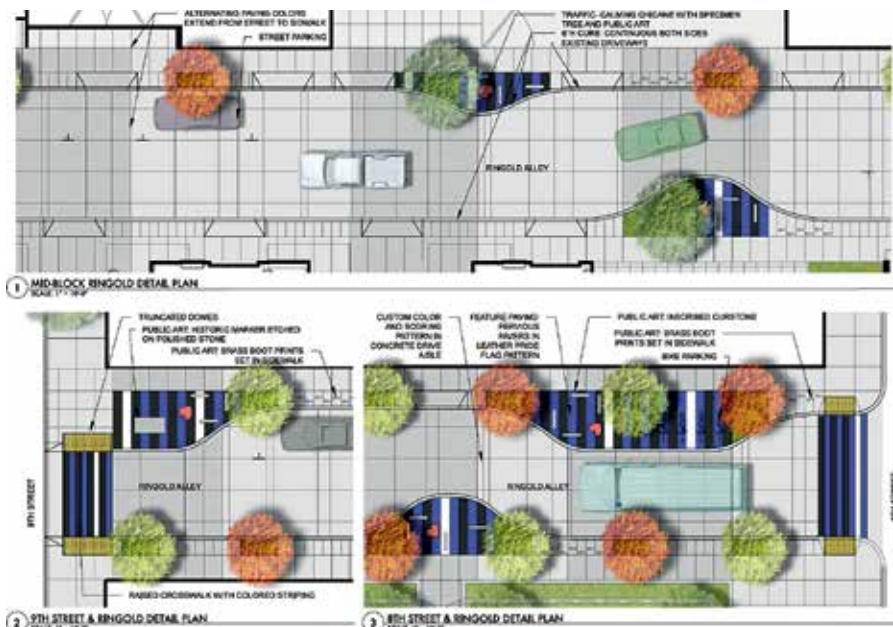
By the early 2000s, elements of the SoMa redevelopment effort had been realised, most of it on the Eastern Waterfront and including a new baseball stadium. Western SoMa remained a primarily light industrial area which included a large undeveloped parcel that served as a municipal parking lot. In 2006, a private developer Amir Massih of 4Terra Investments approached the Task Force with an early proposal for a multi-storey, mixed use project, the LSeven, which would be the largest new development in the district.

During the next few years, Amir attended over 100 community meetings, reviewing and revising every aspect of the project. He learned about the significance of Ringold Alley, which abuts the parcel, and about Jim's idea of doing something there to commemorate the neighbourhood's history. Amir was sympathetic to the community's interests and inspired by their dedication.

The LSeven project is bounded by Harrison Street, 8th Street, Ringold Alley and Gordon Alley. It includes seven separate buildings that sit atop a large underground garage. Trees, planting and furniture create a welcoming pedestrian experience within the development, while balconies above break up the building massing and further activate the space. The largest building offers rooftop

2 Overall plan of the LSeven scheme and the abutting Ringold Alley along the top

Trees, planting and furniture create a welcoming pedestrian experience within the development, while balconies above break up the building massing and further activate the space



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amenity space that includes a gaming area, outdoor lounges and cooking/dining facilities, as well as a large green roof.

On its perimeter, each frontage responds to its unique adjacent condition, with 8th and Harrison Streets being significant vehicular corridors, and Ringold and Gordon being smaller alleys. One specific outcome of the community engagement process was the treatment of Gordon Alley. Previous developments in SoMa often located residential units adjacent to the many existing clubs and live music venues, creating discord between the neighbourhood’s historic tenants and their new neighbours. Community stakeholders specifically identified the thoughtful integration of new residential development into these conditions as a priority. In response, the design team located light industrial space along Gordon Alley, opposite The Stud, a worker-owned historic leather bar that dates back to 1966.

A narrow, pedestrian-only passage now connects Gordon to Ringold Alley. In addition to the art installation, one-way Ringold Alley now includes live/work units with garages that reflect conditions across the street. Chicanes calm traffic, protect on-street parking, and provide the space for art elements. At the 8th Street end of Ringold, a new pocket park sits atop a large cistern that collects storm water from the buildings’ roofs and which is reused for on-site irrigation. The 8th Street edge of the park features a blue glass gabion wall that glows at night. Along 8th and Harrison Streets, glass and steel façades reflect the emerging mid-rise character of SoMa’s main thoroughfares.

The LSeven project survived a rigorous community planning process and a severe economic recession. In 2013, it won approval from the City’s Planning Department with the Task Force’s blessing. Among the required concessions, developers agreed to pay over US\$6m to the city’s Community Improvement Benefit fund. Community members then successfully lobbied the city to invest some of that money per the Task Force’s vision. And so, 50 years after gay men first crept into SoMa to escape judgement and persecution, the city formally recognised the significance of the leather community by earmarking nearly US\$2m for the transformation of Ringold Alley.

FROM DREAM TO DESIGN

From this point forward, the story of the project is fairly typical of any large, urban project in San Francisco, involving an endless rain of design revisions, regulatory reviews, budgetary constraints, and an uncertain sea of logistical coordination. To successfully navigate this perfect storm requires a compelling vision and a persistent captain. In terms of Ringold Alley, that person was Jeff Miller, principal of Miller Company Landscape Architects. After the project’s planning approval, Jeff was hired to



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provide landscape design services for the entire LSeven development. That scope included the streetscape work along Ringold, and eventually expanded to include the historic art commission. In this role, Jeff learned about the significance of Ringold Alley and with the community representatives moved from the abstract goal of creating a historical installation to defining its material manifestation.

The commission allowed Jeff to combine his skills as a landscape architect and public artist with his passion for an inclusionary approach to design. As the lead designer, Jeff was not only central to the art installations conceptualisation, but its execution as well. In addition to developing a functional scheme, Jeff oversaw the procurement of materials, coordinated fabrication with local craftsmen, and was on site to help installation. His devotion has extended into the post-installation period. In parallel with this effort, a group of members of the leather community worked on the politically charged goal of identifying key historic people and institutions to be honoured, establishing the parameters for selection, and ultimately providing the names and content that adorn the Alley’s commemorative elements.

3 Details of the Ringold Alley design
4 Memorial boot imprints set in the concrete pavement



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Today Ringold Alley is the site of *A Leather Memoir*, a commemorative art installation comprised of four discrete elements that fuse literal and abstract representations of the leather identity. These elements are integrated into a broader redesign that includes traffic calming chicanes, new street trees, and custom scoring. Those four elements are:

- A black granite marker mounted at Ninth and Ringold etched with a narrative, reproductions of a statue by Mike Caffee known as The Leather David, and Chuck Arnett's historic mural, which graced the walls of The Toolbox bar
- 20 speckled granite standing stones recycled from San Francisco kerbs that have been polished and engraved with the names of relevant community institutions
- The standing stones emerge through Leather Flag markings in the pavement of new bulb-out areas along the new street alignment. San Francisco author and publisher Tony DeBlase designed the original Leather Pride flag in 1989 to represent all people of leather
- 28 bronze boot prints embedded in the new concrete sidewalk curbs honour individuals who helped to create and build the leather community of San Francisco.

PAST, PRESENT AND FUTURE

Cities are places of constant change, and the installation of *A Leather Memoir* does not mark the end of the community's engagement with Ringold Alley. The issue of on-going upkeep is a challenge made more difficult by the number of homeless living in SoMa. In order to approve the installation, the city required an institutional partner to provide maintenance. For

now, Folsom Street Events has agreed to fill that role.

The City Planning department has generated a Historic LGBTQ Heritage District document, but it has no funds or mechanism for its execution. Members of the leather community are interested in developing an oral history project that would provide the stories behind the names honoured along Ringold, and the possibility of adding boots and stones to Ringold over time. These ideas require opportunities and resources for their implementation which do not come easily. They require the sustained dedication of tireless advocates committed to telling the untold story.

On a sunny late afternoon in July, people gathered in the new pocket park at 8th and Ringold for a ribbon cutting ceremony. After more than 10 years, the new LSeven development and the reconceived Ringold Alley were officially opening. The building with more than 400 apartments on top of light industrial, office, and retail space represents the future of SoMa. Ringold Alley with its stone and bright stripes represents its unique legacy. At the podium, community activists took turns talking about what the project meant to them. An audience of several hundred people, representing everyone who made the project possible, included dozens of leather-clad men and women. Unfortunately, Jim Meko could not be among them, having died in 2015.

Ringold Alley is not only the remarkable culmination of a long battle for acknowledgment, but a fitting one as well. It was the original location for a second longstanding leather event, the Up Your Alley Fair; that took place in 1985 to fundraise for organisations combatting the AIDS crisis. This Fair moved to nearby Dore Alley a few years later, where it continues today. And while Folsom Street has become a celebration of all things leather, that was not its original intent. The inaugural 1984 Folsom Street Fair was organized to resist redevelopment pressures and demonstrate that SoMa was already home to a community, which was still active and organised despite the AIDS epidemic. Today that redevelopment and that community stand permanently side by side, cast in concrete, steel and bronze, painted proudly and written in stone for all to see. ●

George Loew, landscape architect, Miller Company Landscape Architects

Members of the community actively involved in this project included Dr Gayle Rubin and Demetri Moshoyannis. For a thorough account of the history San Francisco's LGBTQ History, see *Citywide Historic Context Statement for LGBTQ History in San Francisco* by Donna J. Graves & Shayne E. Watson, City & County of San Francisco, March 2016.

5 A chicane with granite memorial standing stones
6 Members of the community at the opening ceremony
All images by Miller Company Landscape Architects

Walking in Austin, Texas?

Peter Baird wonders whether the city can become a beacon of walkable urbanism



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The site for the city of Austin was selected because Edwin Waller, on a morning's excursion from his camp on the banks of the Colorado River, walked a short way up the hill between two creeks and shot a buffalo. It was deemed such a triumph by his comrades that this site was chosen for a new city. The Waller plan for Austin is simple and effective: one square mile of city grid set out with four civic parks and a central avenue leading to the State Capitol from the river. The grid is compact with 90 x 90 metre blocks, therefore small and easily walkable. It has, and continues to serve the city very well. The flexibility of the streets is commonly recognised and later developments never managed to recreate this success. Two reasons are acknowledged for this: first, the introduction of Euclidian planning regulations in the late 1920s creating monotonous neighbourhoods with a high sensitivity to change; second, the introduction of auto-centric planning in the 1950s. If the downtown is the good bones of Austin, its suburbs are the high-fructose-induced flab, padding the rest of the city.

Both of these underlying issues affect the current experience of Austin and its ability to emerge as a leader in the urban resurgence that is sweeping medium-sized cities in the US.

The final element that sets Austin aside from other cities is its comparable lack of downtown industry. It has two principal city centre businesses: the State legislature and the University of Texas at Austin. There is no significant financial centre, no heavy industry or manufacturing, no old train yards. The city survived for a long time on these two pillars of government and higher education, therefore leaving downtown's other use principally to entertainment. This is an important distinction from other mid-range or regional American cities because it means that urban regeneration already had a culture of night life, restaurants, and music venues to build upon. All that was needed

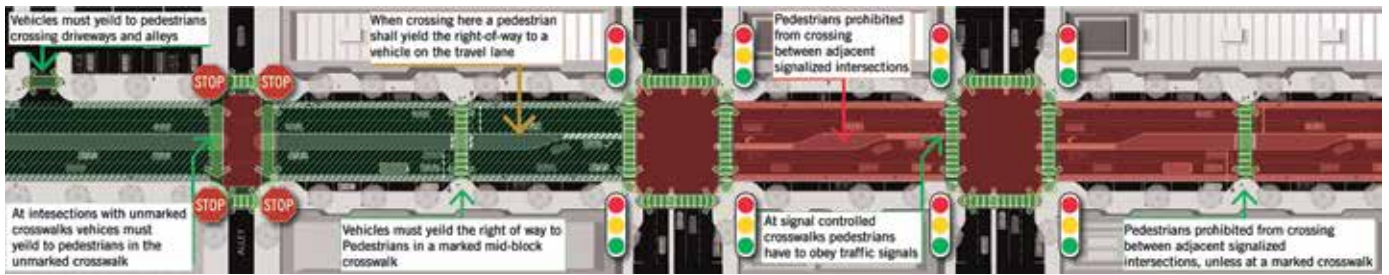
was for people to realise that living downtown was more convenient than driving back to the suburbs. This shift began around 10 years ago, when the Austonian, the tallest all-residential tower west of the Mississippi was built. Soon after, the title was taken by the Independent, only a few blocks away and measuring 58 stories and 209 meters tall.

CREATING THE PROBLEMS OR SOLVING PROBLEMS?

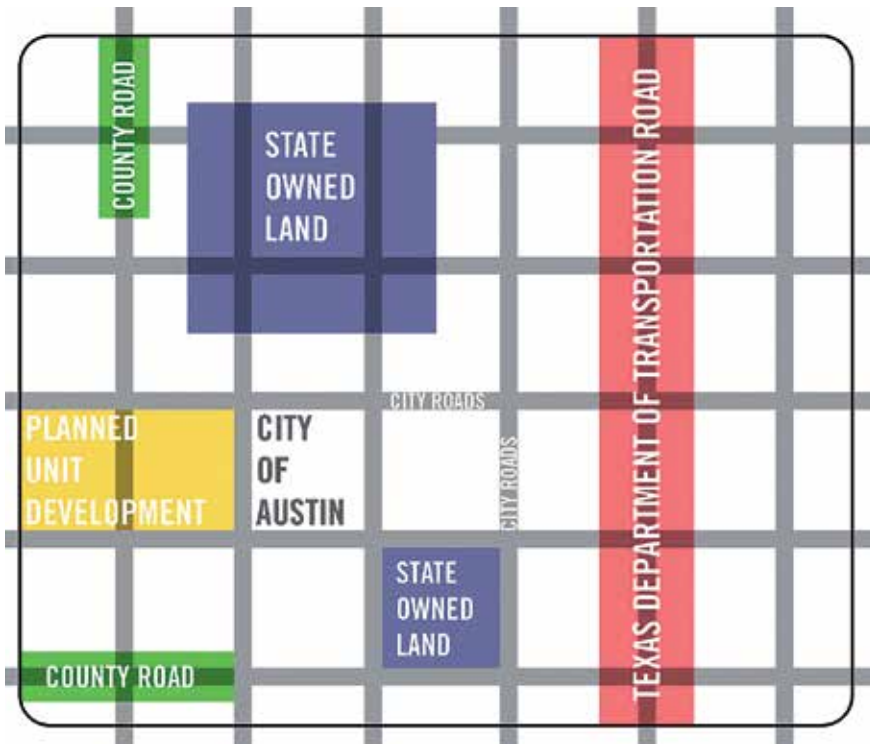
Urban regeneration is reported to have been led by the 'silver tide' of wealthy retired people moving back to or buying second homes in downtown Austin. Soon after this, the floodgates opened when so-called millennials wanted urban living and started arriving in droves. Every day, 150 people move to the Austin metropolitan statistical area, many of whom are tech-savvy 20-somethings looking to take up Facebook, Google, and Apple jobs, and seeking urban living, culture, and a sense of place. This is different from the tech growth of the 1970s and 80s, when new arrivals were happy to adopt the suburban lifestyle that the city had comfortably eased into.

These new urbanites noticed that despite the wonders of Austin, there were some pretty major gaps in the urban

1 Austin, Texas: A crossroad to nowhere



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experience: gaps in sidewalks, gaps in bike lanes, and gaps in the urban fabric. The urban shift shined a light on issues that had never before been given serious consideration.

When I moved to Austin four years ago, the newly formed Pedestrian Advisory Council (PAC) was formed of a small group of dedicated individuals with an uphill struggle: a hill with no sidewalk. Now, as Chair of the PAC, it is still the hardest thing for me to understand as 50 per cent of the urban area is devoid of sidewalks, not bad sidewalks, just no sidewalk or in some cases, not even a grass verge. There is no physical way to access a location or business except by car.

Austin's astronomical growth in popularity as a city, combined with its sprawling land consumption and lack of affordable downtown housing are compounded into a mobility nightmare. If people have to have a car, they will drive. The city's congestion has been declared a crisis that legitimately raises concerns about economic development. The lack of choice, other than to drive, is causing the congestion that impacts on the city's economic attractiveness. American cities are all in competition with each other, not just for the next Amazon HQ2, but for business, investment, grants, and talent. A lack of mobility means points against Austin in these popularity contests.

The growth in population is not the problem, but the historic lack of investment in urban transport, the lack of medium density housing, and the rolls of suburbs around the city affect everyone; it is no longer just the poorer minority neighbourhoods that are affected by the lack of connectivity, but wealthy residents whose expectations of easy driving around the city are also limited. However, it is precisely this level of frustration across the entire population which is necessary to create a climate of change. This desire for change was demonstrated in November 2016, when through a referendum vote, the City

passed the largest transportation bond in its history (US\$720m) to pay for streets, bridges, sidewalks and other mobility related projects.

THE URBAN DESIGN BAROMETER

Austin may very well be at a tipping point: if urban design in Austin was a barometer with good design in the middle, the left low-pressure side of the dial would be a heritage of the pioneering west, i.e. no rules, fierce independence, and freedom of expression. Previous Austin urban developments fit nicely into this spectrum where exceptionally high quality urban design like the 2nd street district or Hyde Park contrasts with staggeringly poor development, which is neither attractive nor accessible, or in some cases even functional.

In this time of change however, the barometer is in danger of slipping past good design into over-engineering: a high-pressure situation where the client, city codes or public demand 'design for stupid people'. This results in an urban design to safeguard against the 1 per cent of people who either deliberately or accidentally disobey rules.

CAN'T WE ALL JUST GET ALONG?

Austin is an unfathomable patchwork of isolated, disconnected developments, some great and some atrocious, but fragmented for anyone other than a private car driver. In part, this is also due to the myriad of ownerships and regulations at play in the city, as experienced by walking from downtown Austin to the Capitol. Starting within the historic Waller grid, some of the best surviving heritage buildings line the streets; past the Capitol something changes. Streets are still streets, the tourists are the same, but it is as if a filter has been added. That filter is a sepia haze of State-owned land and makes everything appear as though from the 1970s. The state doesn't have to abide by the city codes, it has its own rules for planning, transportation and parking.

Try planning for a connective tissue of urban fabric when the street changes ownership from City to County to State Department of Transportation in the space of three blocks, and each one of them has a different set of rules. Try creating a compact and connected urban area when the surrounding county-owned land is governed by different policies which

2 Austin: Diagram of pedestrian rights and prohibitions
3 Austin: Diagram showing the patchwork of land ownerships

allow suburban sprawl. These issues of varying jurisdictions are nothing new, but in Austin they run deep, past the various neighbourhood plans created by self-selecting neighbourhood groups, through the Planned Unit Development master plans drawn up in the mid-1990s and still being implemented, right into City departments and the interpretation of city and state ordinances.

SHARING THE MIDDLE GROUND

The best cases of successful creative design in Austin are in places which find a middle ground between the two extremes of over control and *ad hoc* design. Nowhere is this more important than the public realm. In an attempt to advance the discussion, the PAC has been talking about shared streets as a solution to reclaiming streets for pedestrians, particularly where there is difficulty in implementing *American with Disabilities Act* compliant sidewalks and where the right of way has become constrained over time. The goal would be an environment that conforms to a broad spectrum of accessibility for age and ability, but removes engineering solutions which seek to control activity and provide flexibility and adaptability in use.

After successfully working with the Public Works Department to include shared streets as a pilot option within the Sidewalk Master Plan, the PAC observed a step back from shared streets by the City's Transportation Department. Their recent *Street Design Guide* included no reference to them as a potential solution.

This typical occurrence of conflicting approaches is at the heart of the urban design issues in Austin. In a broad sense, it is an issue of connectivity between places, ownerships, jurisdictional regulations and guides, the users, and the natural systems within the city such as storm water. Rhetoric at public meetings is often about the competing needs for space in the street, and rarely about the complementary benefits of combining and sharing the public realm. These competing needs can be City departments actively competing against each other even before the public and other stakeholders weigh in. There is a need to stop delineating lines of ownership and control, and start approaching this new Austin condition as a city whose sole function is to connect people, places and things.

WE ALL HAVE A PART TO PLAY

Major new developments have started to transform Austin and have the opportunity to make these connections. Transformational projects include the Dell Medical School complex, the future Brackenridge Hospital site and the planned surrounding innovation district, the recently completed Seaholm District mixing retail, residential and commercial uses, and especially the South Waterfront District, which sits directly opposite downtown on the south side of the Colorado River. Yet aside from these projects, the one element that can ensure the success of Austin's transformation is the people.

One example is the Hack for Change project created by St Edward's University, endorsed and sponsored by the City of Austin. This event provides the opportunity to explore solutions to civic issues, such as sidewalk connectivity or accessibility, by a broad spectrum of the community. It ties directly into the shift in culture to a tech-based community and recent efforts to recognise Austin as part of the Smart Cities program and the South by Southwest Eco Design Challenges. It opens up urban discussions to a part of the community that have two very important characteristics: they actively enjoy problem-solving and they truly believe that change is possible and that it should be fast.

An example of this is the gamification of the urban engagement process: Glasshouse Policy, Open Austin, and the Austin Monitor community paper teamed with Capital Metro, the City's public transit provider, to broaden engagement on the future of transit in the city and the land development code process. There is now an app for city planning and budgeting. If this spirit of collaboration and connection prevails, it can only be to the benefit of the city and has the potential to spark ingenious ways

Rhetoric at public meetings is often about the competing needs for space in the street, and rarely about the complementary benefits of combining and sharing the public realm



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of capturing data, tackling, funding, and implementing solutions to Austin's urban design issues.

Austin has all the ingredients for a transformation. It also has all of the typical hindrances of civic bureaucracy. As a city it needs to capitalise on its strengths, the talent pool of people, while seeking out unexpected partnerships, nurturing and finding ways to implement creative solutions which demonstrate that the urban form sparks creativity, and not simply prescribed engineering actions. Bold ideas are the foundation of the pioneers in Texas, and there will be a shift soon from 'look at what Portland has done' to Portland asking 'how did Austin do that and how can we follow their trail?' ●

Peter Baird, Associate Urban Designer, Perkins + Will, Austin, Texas

4 A pedestrian environment? Missing pavement in the Domain development, Austin
5 Street café in downtown Austin

Pittsburgh: Redesigning Market Square

Reetuparna Sarkar describes the successful transformation of a public space in downtown Pittsburgh



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Over the years, urban planning in North America has disregarded traditional patterns of urbanism and built cities around the needs of the private automobile rather than people. The result has been the production of an undifferentiated urban landscape of non-places and socially polarised geographies of nowhere. The segregation of land use into isolated mono-functional districts connected by an extensive network of high-speed motorways has meant reduced dependence on and subsequent neglect of the mass transit system, and the elimination of pedestrian circulation. Moreover, prioritising accessibility over propinquity contributed to the ubiquitous and standardised pattern of lifeless downtowns and endless suburban sprawl, prevented the formation of place-based communities, and inflicted severe damage upon the vitality, social purpose and quality of the public realm.

PITTSBURGH'S DECLINE AND RENAISSANCE

A product of such urban planning tradition, Pittsburgh suffered from spatially segregated functional zones, extended daily commutes, worsening traffic congestion, poor pedestrian infrastructure, and a desolate downtown on weekday evenings and weekends. Located at the confluence of the Allegheny and Monongahela Rivers that form the Ohio River, the so-called City of Bridges enjoyed miles of prime riverfront property, yet failed to take advantage of its extensive riverfronts as much of the shoreline was consumed by the then flourishing steel mills and factories. While 446 steel bridges provided easy vehicular access and connected both sides of the rivers and the downtown to the other parts of the city, the factories served as visual and physical barriers, denied both public access to the rivers and the provision of any riverfront amenities and activities, and in doing so, promoted a serious disconnect in the physical and social fabric of the city. The problem was further exacerbated following the collapse of the steel industries in the 1980s when the factories fell into disuse and were abandoned.

Nevertheless, unlike some of the equivalent Rust Belt

cities, Pittsburgh showed resilience by diversifying its economic base from steel and heavy manufacturing industries to technology, robotics, healthcare, finance and education, and managed to revitalise its downtown core, decaying riverfronts and deserted public spaces. Surviving repeated disinvestment, high unemployment and population exodus, Pittsburgh entered its third renaissance determined to shrug off the stigmas of the past, reverse the long-standing effects of degeneration, and provide a more sustainable, more liveable, more accessible and less automobile-dependent urban environment. To that end, the city devised an integrative urban design strategy employing the long-established principles of traditional place-making:

- A connected city: an integrative mobility strategy was put in place; extension of light rail to the North Shore and beyond the South Side helped to connect downtown to its adjacent areas and distant suburbs; abandoned riverfronts were reclaimed and redesigned to host commercial, recreational and cultural activities and connected by strong visual and pedestrian corridors.

- An eco-friendly city: following redevelopment of the riverfront and redesign of the many disused parks and squares, strong visual and pedestrian corridors created to build a connected and accessible open space system of parks, riverfronts, squares, and nature trails; mass transit system were improved and extended and protected bike lanes and wider sidewalks built to discourage dependence on automobiles, reduce congestion and pollution, and promote healthy living habits.

- A walkable city: streetscape improvements and public transport upgrades enhanced pedestrian experience in the city and redefined the purpose of streets and public spaces; provision of active frontages, wider sidewalks, better street furniture and signage, and safer pedestrian crossings, traffic control, and the strategic positioning of parking garages and public transit stops aided walkability and maximised pedestrian comfort and safety.

- A 24-hour city: mono-functional zones transformed into mixed use districts for use during both day and night through

1 A Christmas market brings European charm to the Steel City

introduction of a mix of activities, to attract new employees, residents and visitors; the densification and adaptive reuse of existing buildings to cater to contemporary space demands and urban lifestyles; and the city's image reconstructed as a vibrant, safe and attractive destination for investment, living and tourism.

MARKET SQUARE

Part of the downtown improvement and revitalisation initiative, Market Square located at the intersection of Forbes Avenue and Market Street in the heart of Downtown Pittsburgh underwent a complete transformation in 2009 from a declining, unsafe and traffic-dominated historic open space to a successful, people-oriented and pedestrian-friendly one. The square always held a prominent position in the history of the city as a bustling social and economic hub. Known as The Diamond at the time, it housed the first courthouse, the first jail and the first newspaper of the city region, and was the centre of communal and civic life. However, the square gradually came to be inhabited by panhandlers, the homeless, alcoholics and drug dealers, and was converted into a filthy and dangerous space. Besides, Forbes Avenue and Market Street ran through the square dividing it into four quadrants and reducing visual coherence and pedestrian experience. Concerns over safety and security, fear of drug dealing and crime, declining civility in and increased vehicular traffic through the space, led most stores fronting it to close down. It became one of the many disused and neglected spaces in the city.

Since 2010, Market Square has experienced success through its complete redesign and reconstruction: improved legibility and accessibility, well-connected and safe pedestrian networks, and outdoor dining opportunities. Learning from the vibrant streets and piazzas of European cities, especially Paris, the new design incorporated the qualities that make the streets and squares of Paris so vibrant, accessible, liveable, walkable and safe. In conjunction with the Paris to Pittsburgh Initiative created by the Pittsburgh Downtown Partnership and funded by the Colcom Foundation to assist business and property owners to improve and enhance their building façades, promote outdoor dining and active sidewalks, and enliven the public realm through landscaping and street furniture, Market Square sought to achieve economic revival through streetscape improvements and high quality pedestrian-oriented designs.

GOOD URBAN DESIGN

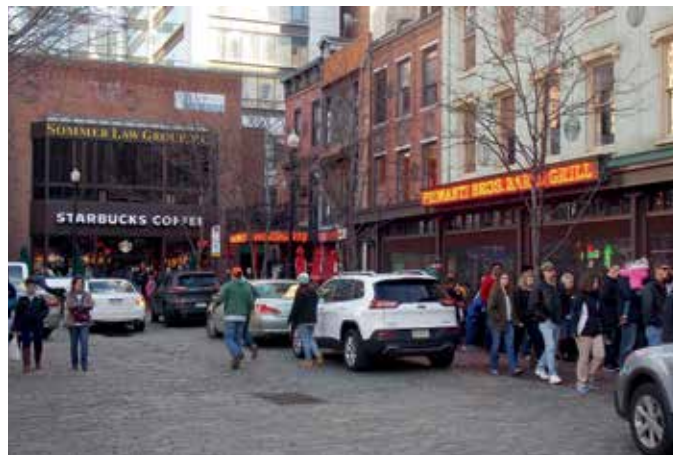
The new design for Market Square capitalised on the historic character and charm of the existing cast iron, glass and brick masonry buildings fronting the square. Although tall buildings constitute much of the compact downtown fabric, buildings ranging from one to six storeys high enclose the square with taller buildings set behind them. This variation in building height and volume, style and material engender a sense of openness and enhance the pedestrian experience.

In addition to preserving the historic structures, building uses were diversified and higher densities introduced to satisfy the space demands of the new innovation economy, promote downtown living, working and shopping, and stimulate a unique environment with varied activities throughout the day and night. Buildings were transformed into new apartments, hotels and offices with ground-level retail and restaurants, and façades upgraded and refurbished.

The new design closed off the square to through traffic, diverted vehicular traffic around it, unified the four quadrants, and created a big plaza in the centre. The entire square was built at the same level without any kerbs separating the road from the widened sidewalks or the plaza.

Moveable tables and chairs were also provided for residents, office workers, shoppers and visitors to use throughout the day and the night. Bollards placed around the edge of the plaza prevented vehicular entry.

Trees were planted along the perimeter of the plaza and at



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the edge of the sidewalks to beautify the square as well as provide shade. Street furniture also included bike rails, litterbins, a clock and adequate lighting. The new design with clear sightlines, active frontages and outdoor seating and dining amenities aimed to reduce the real and perceived fears of crime and render the space attractive, safe and habitable.

A PARISIAN SQUARE?

Once again the centre of public life and downtown activity, Market Square today is a vibrant public space, set within a high-rise context, offering a wide range of eateries, and shops at street level with attractive storefronts, activated sidewalks and outdoor dining and seating arrangements, and hosting regular farmers' markets, free concerts and performances, art installations, and annual Christmas markets. It is heavily used during the day and night, and immensely popular for playing chess, practising group yoga, and public screenings of movies and sports.

It is easily accessible and well served by public transport. It is now a part of the city's open space system, and well connected to a number of redeveloped riverfront sites and other amenities on the North Side, and to Station Square and Highmark Stadium on the South Side by means of visual and pedestrian corridors, previously non-existent. Employing coherent visual strategies, people-friendly design and event programming, Market Square has been able to change the impression and function of the downtown area and guide subsequent adaptive re-use and mixed use developments nearby and in other parts of the city.

Whether it has been able to evoke a Parisian atmosphere is debatable, but it certainly has contributed to the post-industrial transformation of the city of Pittsburgh and to making it one of the most liveable cities in the United States. ●

Reetuparna Sarkar, architect, urban designer, PhD researcher and post graduate teaching assistant at the Bartlett School of Planning, University College London

2 Active frontages, shared streets and pedestrian priority

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Upright Behaviour

One day on my first visit to New York, I walked into the atrium of Sony Plaza (originally the AT+T Building, designed by Philip Johnson; now simply 550 Madison Avenue). It was busy with people going to and fro, and on one side was a man in a suit playing a grand piano. He was playing what perhaps you might call cocktail lounge music (having never been in a cocktail lounge I can't be certain). I was struck by what seemed the anomalous nature of this rather private and intimate activity going on in a noisy public space, albeit indoors and quasi-public of course; as well as photographing the pianist, I photographed one of Sony's discreet signs on the walls, which pointed out that although the public were allowed in, this was not actually a public space. It is one of those quasi-public spaces in Manhattan resulting from bargaining between developer and planning authority, which Jonathan Barnett, who I met on that visit, describes in his book *Urban Design as Public Policy*. It usually takes the form of something like 'you provide a public space of x square feet at street level and we will give you permission for five additional floors'.

I thought of that corporate pianist when in October, I listened to a Radio 4 programme called *St Pancras Pianos*. In London's St Pancras Station, there are two upright pianos, and the idea is that members of the public can just sit down and spontaneously play music, for their own amusement and for the enjoyment of passers-by. The programme consisted mostly of vox pop interviews with some of the pianists and the people listening to them. The public pianos seem a wonderful idea. Not expensive to install (Elton John donated one of the two

pianos, and played a gig), and low in maintenance (a regular passenger generously offered to keep them in tune), but contributing greatly to social capital and to a sense of place. I haven't been there recently, and some of you reading this will have been and will know better than I, but I imagine that many commuters' lives are enhanced a little by the music, and that conversations are started between strangers who stop to linger by the piano and listen, who otherwise would walk straight out of the station.

I think there is something particularly appropriate about the piano in this context. It is an instrument which many people have some proficiency in playing, and is therefore more accessible than most. Being big and heavy, it tends to stay in the same place, so it becomes part of the local geography of the station. And although I don't have the musical vocabulary to describe how this works, the sound of a piano carries marvellously above voices and other random noises of the kind you find in a railway station, without ever becoming dominating. Another distinction is that because of its size, it is not an instrument used by buskers. The Radio 4 programme did not go into the protocol of the pianos; it was more concerned with the experiential nature of their use and the motivations of their players. But I expect there may be a rule preventing a busker from occupying the stool and soliciting money in exchange for music. I am much in favour of buskers playing in the street and other public places (though I would outlaw recorded backing tracks, keep it acoustic). They generally add to the conviviality of the public realm. But I think there is a special social value in someone sitting down in a public place and spontaneously offering strangers something to enjoy, receiving only their appreciation in return. I can't play the piano, but if I could I would like to play in St Pancras. I am sure Jan Gehl would approve too.

Another matter of protocol that occurs to me is how someone is prevented from selfishly occupying the stool all day. Is there an HS1 piano superintendent quietly monitoring keyboard activity by CCTV? I would like to think not, and that the spirit of unstructured cooperation which mostly characterises our occupation of public spaces, is enough to prevent anti-social piano-playing. In fact, I am inclined to suspect that the presence of altruistic piano-playing might even reduce the likelihood of other anti-social behaviour happening in a major railway terminus, at the same time as simply adding more joy to the public realm with help from Rachmaninov, Joplin or Gershwin. ●

Joe Holyoak, architect and urban designer

1 The free piano playing is also alive in Paris at Gare St. Lazare
2-3 Simultaneous performances at St. Pancras Station, London

An aerial photograph of a city grid, overlaid with a semi-transparent blue filter. The image shows a dense urban layout with various building footprints, streets, and green spaces. The text is positioned in the upper right quadrant of the image.

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