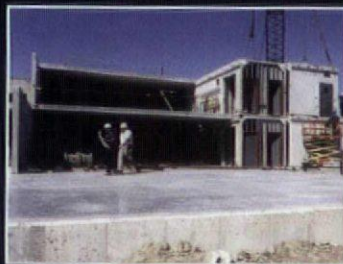
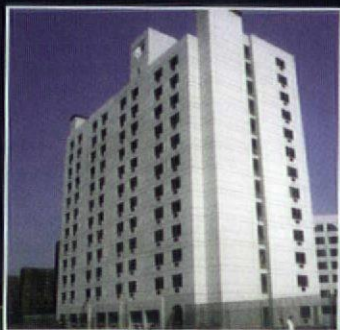



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Fall 2001

C o n n e c t i o n s

Retro-chic continues to dominate popular culture as the stylemakers, sated with the '60s, now start to forage around in the '70s. Pucci, platform shoes, Clapton on tour — even Diane von Furstenberg is hoofing the comeback trail. So maybe it's only natural to revisit some of our favorite old intellectual shibboleths, too — like urban sprawl.

Three decades ago, "urban sprawl" — much like "the greenhouse effect" today — was the buzz phrase of earnest specialists whose Cassandra-like predictions were met by a largely apathetic public. But unlike other hallmarks of that era, the phenomenon never went away. Instead, it quietly morphed into something far more virulent. The planners of that time had correctly identified the outbreak of a new disease, but even they could not predict how it would eventually adapt and transmogrify with every social shift: the technology revolution, changing household demographics, the growth of big-box retailers. A plague is now upon us. No longer faced with simple "urban" sprawl, we are seeing the metastasis of new, unfamiliar building patterns. Parts of our cities feel strangely suburban; rural areas sprout million-square-foot office buildings; development erupts like tumorous growths at highway intersections.

Today, sprawl affects millions of Americans, draining their pocketbooks, wasting their time, increasing their stress, destroying their cherished places. They are no longer apathetic — as has been demonstrated by the response to the BSA's Civic Initiative for a Livable New England, a two-year program launched by past BSA president Rebecca Barnes FAIA to promote a coordinated regional response to sprawl (*see page 20*). But the prognosis is not necessarily as bleak as it once seemed — we now have an array of remedies at our disposal, and a growing understanding of both the causes and consequences of sprawl.

And there is one other source of optimism: In the last decades of the 20th century, we learned the value of *connection*. Perhaps our deliberate move away from a racially segregated society subliminally influenced the way we look at our communities. Just as different races and ethnicities inhabited discrete places, so were the functions of a city assigned to designated districts, either by zoning or by custom: the Financial District, Leather District, Piano Row, Newspaper Row. Today, we energetically erase those distinctions, encouraging mixed-use and mixed-income development, promoting linkages such as the Urban Ring transitway, embracing trail and park systems like the Bay Circuit and the Minuteman bikeway. Even opposing factions in the debate over the new surface of the submerged Central Artery share the conviction that the project offers an unprecedented opportunity to forge new kinds of connections in the city.

We must now begin to make similar kinds of connections across our region — to erase old rivalries and blur political distinctions. Words like "network," "fabric," and "stakeholder" are no longer self-conscious metaphors in urban development discussions. They can be equally effective in building a more livable New England.

Elizabeth S. Padjen FAIA
Editor

2 Letters

8 Getting smart about growing smart

Roundtable Discussion

Armando Carbonell

Jack Clarke

Charles Euchner

Phil Herr

Randolph Jones AIA, AICP

Elizabeth Padjen FAIA

Wig Zamore

20 How We Live:

A Civic Initiative for a Livable
New England

by Larissa V. Brown PhD, AICP

24 Bridging the Gap

by Peter Vanderwarker

36 Fear and Loathing of Density

by David Dixon FAIA

42 Building the Urban Landscape

Anne Whiston Spirn ASLA, APA, talks with
Hubert Murray AIA, RIBA

48 Letter from Sydney

(Post-Marked Venice)

by Bridget Smyth

53 Covering the Issues

Periodical roundup

by Gretchen Schneider, Assoc. AIA

55 Books

59 Index of Advertisers

59 Site Work

Web sites of note

60 Other Voices

The Emerald Necklace

by Anne Stetson



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Letters

I read with great interest your recent issue (Summer 2001) dealing with the problems of globalization, specifically the discussion about "Architects without Borders." What struck me was the way the participants failed to address with clarity the very issue that formed the subject of the discussion — the management skills inherent in our culture, which is one of the reasons others seek out our skills. It further touched upon the difficulties American architects face in other regions because of their own (dare I say national) lack of sensitivity to local traditions and antecedents.

Globalization does indeed carry the dangers of potentially swamping local traditions. Americans have often been accused of insensitivity and ignorance in facing local historical precedents, though to a lesser extent than several years ago. This seems particularly puzzling when we in the US, in managing groups of individuals of varying abilities and expertise, succeed exceptionally well in smoothing out relationships and respecting the value of individuals of whatever background as players on the team. Yet we fail to employ equal management techniques in dealing with similar issues when working abroad with individuals with much more fragile sensitivities. Some of the speakers of your discussion indeed acknowledged our arrogance in this respect.

Working with other nationalities and traditions can only enrich us. Cultures have done this consistently throughout history. The assimilation of another culture is not something we need to shy away from; cross-fertilization usually can and does produce some exceptional results. Sentimentally clinging to cultural antecedents can only interfere with the larger benefit of learning from each other and absorbing the best of both cultures, for the long-term benefit of us all. Which traditions will survive and which will be modified or absorbed can not be governed by fiat. At the same time, the superimposition of one culture on another by arrogance will only cause bad feelings. We must retain our consciousness and respect for each other and educate ourselves to what is best in any of our multifaceted cultures.

Peter C. Sugar AIA
Ann Beha Architects
Boston

The Summer 2001 "Import/Export" issue of *ArchitectureBoston* caused me to do something I rarely do: sit for an extended period of time and read an entire magazine.

The topics discussed in that issue have a particular relevance to many of us in Boston. We have all been dealing with the effects of the global economy and the fractured international marketplace for some time.

Many of us have been working for 30 years with one foot in our convenient and friendly local projects, while the other foot dances around on some other continent. I couldn't dream of doing it any other way! Traveling, learning, discovering, testing — it all expands our capabilities and capacities.

As I reflect on this body of experience and watching over some of my firm's current and ongoing work around the world, I know that part of what attaches us all to this business with its long airplane rides in cramped seats and days of waiting for a busy Crown Prince to offer a few moments of commentary — our personal and professional (as well as cultural) roots. My father traveled the world building city-block-sized machines to process textiles and other raw materials. And, at 85, still gets holiday cards from old clients in Japan and South Africa. Our architectural forefathers traveled the world seeking knowledge and experience and a basis for their challenges. And now we do the same. I hope that we export knowledge of the same quality as that which we seek — we learn that Islamic architecture is not about arches, but about shade and wind and sound. We are able to learn so much with the global opportunities presented to us. I urge my colleagues to express as much friendship as possible, learn as much as possible, and look forward to those cards years to come.

Duncan Pendlebury AIA
Jung|Brannen Associates
Boston

I was so pleased to read your recent issue on globalization. I moved to the US a few years ago in order to finish the architectural education that I started earlier in Egypt. I consider myself very fortunate to have been able to study and practice architecture in both countries. My exposure to the two environments (Islamic culture and American civilization) has convinced me that we must respect both the supremacy of well-established historic principles and the necessity of reasonable consumption of 21st-century knowledge, resources, and opportunities. I have learned that architecture wherever the location, is neither the outcome of the architect's bias nor the outcome of the local building industry. Rather, it is the outcome of work done by people who have the right grasp of the purpose of the project, who can develop the project within the context of the surrounding environment, and who can identify the fixed requirements of the project while maintaining flexibility in the rest, which promotes creativity in design. The experience of working and learning in different cultures can only enhance our creativity.

Mohammed M. Abdelaal
Boston

Landsmark's article. "The Globalization of Architectural Education" (Summer 2001), addresses interesting issues on the broadening influence of academia and its implications for the workplace.

One of the most profound manifestations of change, as the author points out, is that many schools, especially MIT and Harvard, are playing a more global role through studios and workshops that concentrate on improving the built environment in South America, Europe, Africa, and Asia. This is a classic replay of trends in architectural practice abroad. The fusion of Western paradigms and methodologies in architectural practice that Zeynep Han Kadem articulated so well in the in-depth discussion in this same issue ("Architects without Borders") has permeated sections of society including schools of architecture abroad. Students are also turning to Western media, building types, and philosophies as inspiration for their architecture — even though local infrastructure may not be keeping pace and indigenous architectural character has greater relevance. However, there is little doubt that the experiences of these workshops enhance the built environment globally by providing fresh, ingenious solutions, especially when design teams are composed of culturally diverse personalities.

Contrary to Landsmark's observation, many foreign students do require financial assistance, which is not an option in the earlier semesters. The situation does improve in the subsequent semesters as research and teaching assistantships become available on a competitive basis. Enrolling in undergraduate, graduate, and post-professional programs therefore demands a considerable personal and financial commitment on the part of foreign students. As a result, they are committed and determined to succeed.

Changes in the academic environment are reflecting changes in the workplace. The road towards registration and recognition in architectural practice seems longer for international students because of the legalities of the work-permit process and also because many architecture programs abroad are not directly accredited by NCARB [National Council of Architectural Registration Boards]. Nevertheless, recent changes have made work permits easier to obtain and the cultural profile of architects and interns in the workplace is beginning to show a greater diversity. A truly global architectural practice will emerge when leaders in the profession here in Boston as well as the rest of the United States encompass the rich cultural diversity seen in the academic environment today.

Vincent Raghuram
Vette Associates
Boston

A minor correction and a comment on the article "The Globalization of Architectural Education" (Summer 2001): The Wentworth Institute's architecture semester abroad program is based in Montpellier, France, where classes are conducted at the School of Architecture of Languedoc-Roussillon and from where students visit sites in Barcelona, Paris, Berlin, Venice, Florence, and Rome. The optimum global educational experience is one where not only the spaces of architectural monuments and local urban patterns are experienced, but also — and more importantly — one where non-North American persons and cultures are known on a long-term daily basis. What more important educational gain is there for architecture students than to understand that the culture of the "other" is as important as their own?

Terrence Heinlein AIA
Department of Architecture
Wentworth Institute of Technology
Boston

I am writing in response to the article on the use of brick in the Boston area ("Boston: Home of the Bean and the Brick") that appeared in your Winter 2000 issue. I found the article to be entertaining due to the amount of intellectual rhetoric given to a material that has been around, essentially unchanged, for centuries. It was as if the Modernist light bulb had gone off and the material had made some significant transformation. I could not help but appreciate James Alexander's comment: "It's not the brick, it's the design, stupid!"

One must understand my perspective. I live in Tulsa, Oklahoma. Our city is young and has evolved from the beautiful city of brick, limestone, and terra-cotta built by oilmen and women who understood urbanism. We are fortunate to have one of the largest collections of Art Deco in the world. However, our city has lost sight of our founders' intentions and continues to allow the destruction of our most historic sites; pedestrian-scaled buildings have been demolished to provide parking. But perhaps the single most destructive addition to our environment is the extensive use of EIFS (synthetic stucco). This building product is heavily used in this region because of cost and ignorance. Many brick buildings have been covered with this product, which has robbed these buildings of their inherent texture. We feel fortunate when we convince our clients to use brick in lieu of EIFS and only wish we could worry about what Modernist pattern could be applied to our structures.

With continuing sprawl and all its EIFS-clad big-box stores, our city continues to lose its identity — something Boston will never lose if it continues to build on what has worked for over 200 years.

Matt King AIA
Tulsa, Oklahoma

I write from the frontlines as an officer of the "aesthetic police" supported by Jeremiah Eck in "The Home Makers" (Spring 2001). As a member of the Hull (Massachusetts) Design Review Board, I helped review the Avalon Estates project pictured in that article.

The Avalon Estates site juts out as a peninsula into a tidal salt marsh. Avalon's design approach featured the standard American car-oriented apartment complex of parking lots and scattered repeated generic New England buildings. Our Design Review Board, Planning Board, and Conservation Commission continually requested that the project be pulled back and consolidated in the spine of the peninsula to minimize its presence and impact on the salt marsh and woods. Avalon did grudgingly reduce the unit count and pulled back somewhat from its "by right" position, but flatly refused to consider any design significantly different from its standard formula.

In your article, Thomas Zahoruiko commented that aesthetic-related bylaws do not promote design diversity. On the contrary, our board requested more creative design and color schemes, but Avalon was adamant on basic unit repetition and a uniform gray color scheme. The oft-cited diversity of architectural expression eventually found in Levittown sounds good, but that project consisted of individual privately owned houses. In the uniformly controlled apartment or condo pod, what you see now is what you get in the future, albeit with more mature landscaping.

Tony Green's comment that the solution is zoning requiring more density in the right places is correct and mirrors what our board tried to do. As was repeatedly driven home in the article, housing is just another carefully marketed consumer product, no different from an SUV or large-screen TV. Design review *can* be successful in promoting good architecture and smart growth. Ultimately, though, the tyranny of housing-as-consumer-product and the unwillingness of most developers and towns to question the *status quo* usually results in the path of least resistance.

A final note: The Avalon site was a known coyote habitat. Displaced from their woodland abode, the coyotes are now making new homes throughout the entire town — without benefit of planners, architects, or developers.

Don Ritz AIA
Hull, Massachusetts

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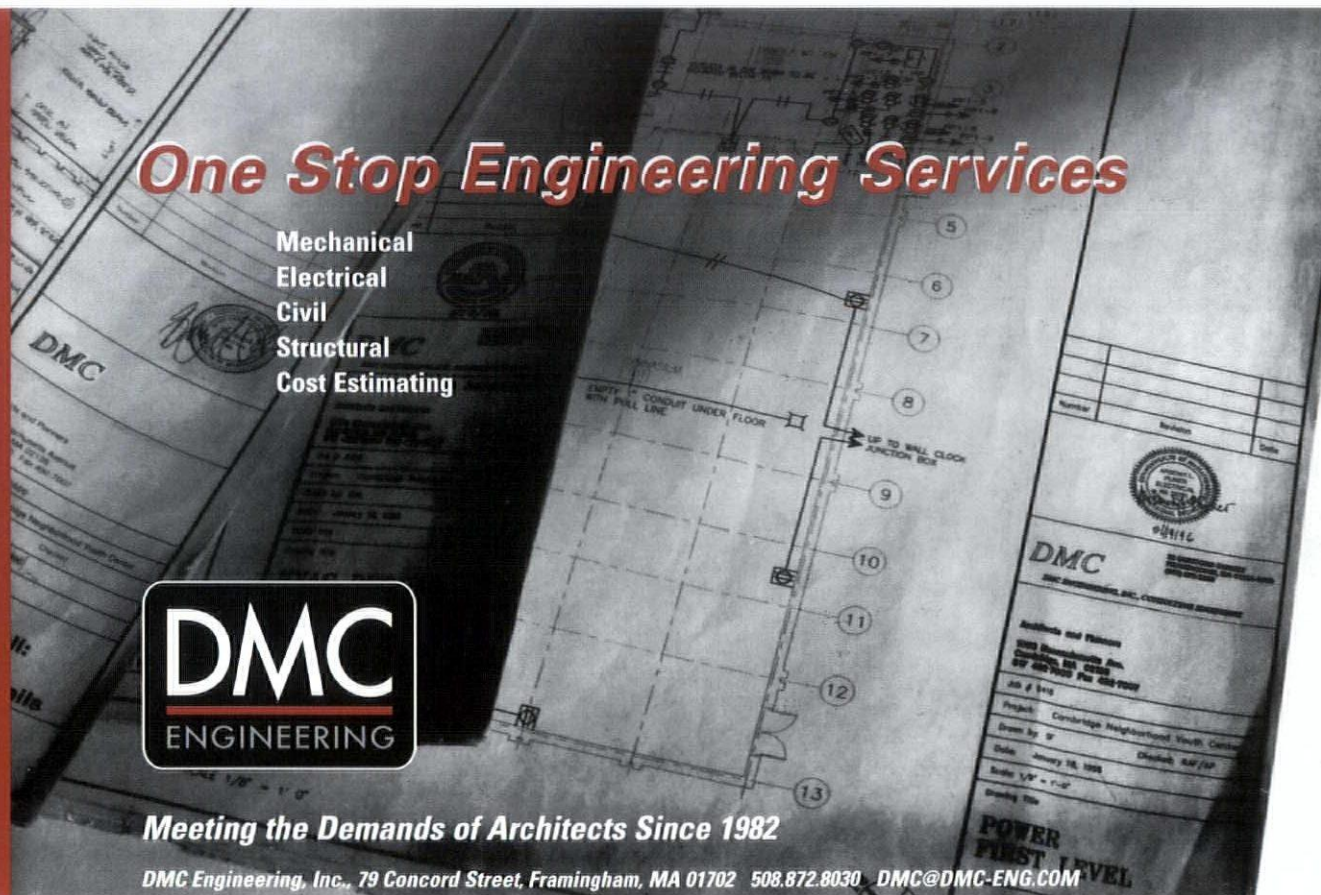
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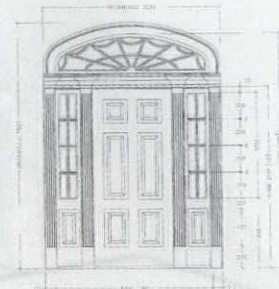
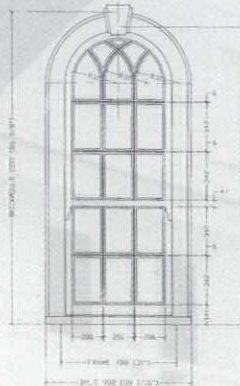
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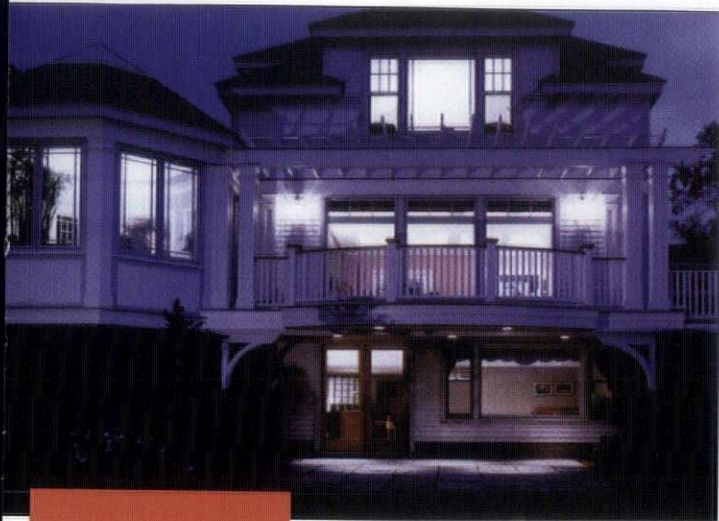
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Getting Smart About Growing Smart

It's not your imagination... sprawl is getting worse. What can we do about it? (And why hasn't anybody fixed it?)

PARTICIPANTS

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Jack Clarke is the director of advocacy for the Massachusetts Audubon Society and is chair of the Gloucester Planning Board.

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Elizabeth Padjen FAIA is editor of *ArchitectureBoston*.

Wig Zamore is a real estate financial consultant in Somerville, Massachusetts.

Elizabeth Padjen: The discussion of sprawl seems to have reached a fever pitch nationally in the last few years, with abundant coverage in the media and greater political attention to the issue. But sprawl isn't new, and discussions of it certainly aren't new. This has been a conversation going on for a very long time — 30 or 40 years at least. What's different about the discussion today? What keeps the general population from tuning out because they've heard it all before?

Bill Herr: My involvement in this issue goes back to the early 1960s, maybe even '50s. One difference is that many more people are personally hurt by the effects of sprawl today. Before, sprawl was an abstraction — something that was hurting some people, but most people weren't themselves affected. A second difference is that there is now a set of remedies that didn't exist before. People have the expectation that we can actually do something about it. Not many people believed that in the past. Sprawl had a sense of inevitability about it. It was inevitable, but it didn't really hurt. Now it hurts, but it's not inevitable.

Charles Euchner: I think that one of the most important changes is that people don't think that cities are beyond hope. Twenty years ago or even 10 years ago, there was a sense that the problems of New York, Los Angeles, Chicago, even Boston, were so severe that nobody could ever do anything about them and we would simply have to accept them. It seemed that the price of living in an urban environment was putting up with all sorts of inhumane surroundings and inadequate services. But in the last decade or two, we have discovered not only that cities are capable of revitalization, but also that in many ways they are the key to our success as a society: They are the incubators of artistic creativity, centers of technological advances, they're the hope of our environment, and they are the kind of places where we can actually bring people together.

Jack Clarke: Sprawl has become personal — it's not just a public-policy issue that you read about in the paper. The average American spends two weeks a year in a car. That's a serious issue and it's a personal issue. As an urban society up to the end of World War II, people had mass transit, they could walk to the store, neighborhoods were built around churches, houses were closer together and closer to the streets, people sat on their stoops talking in the summer evenings. But federal subsidies encouraged people to move out of the cities. The GI Bill provided education for men and women coming home from World War II, giving them upward mobility. Veterans loans helped people build houses. The federal highway system allowed people to spread out rapidly. So there is the financial incentive from the federal level for people to get out of the cities, to have their large lot and their large house. And then they discovered they had a whole new set of issues to deal with: "I can no longer walk to the store. I've got

a one-acre yard — it's too big to mow, but too small to farm — and I've got to keep it maintained." Now we are all invested in our suburban road systems. Daily life for a lot of people means driving the kids to the soccer game, driving for bread and milk, driving to church or the town hall — and it all involves getting in the car. That's what makes it personal.

Elizabeth Padjen: I sometimes worry that the current discussion is in danger of being perceived as an elitist conversation and, perhaps more counterproductive, as a politically partisan conversation. There are still lots of people who say, "The city is fine for other people, but I want to be someplace nice."

Randolph Jones: You're touching on the issue of choice, which drives a lot of the debate. These are personal matters — where we chose to live, where we work, where we send our children to school. But in making those big locational decisions, we need an alternative to Toll Brothers subdivisions, for example. The answer is to redirect investment into our inner-suburban school systems, focus more dollars on transit, and provide more affordable housing. We're already starting to do that. Our traditional New England building patterns offer a framework for an alternative to suburbia.

Armando Carbonell: I agree that the discussion is about increasing the amount of choice and the number of options available. I don't think many people believe today that it is possible to completely reject the standard model of suburbia. The forces of decentralization have been going on for so long and are so strong that they've created significant investments, a whole set of behavior patterns, and also substantial infrastructure. But there are many different models for urban development. We have the opportunity to think about the central city in different ways, creating not an elitist model that's available only to a few, but an opportunity to offer options for people who may fit very different profiles in terms of their needs for housing and work.

Elitist or not, we are not going to create a successful agenda if it rejects the idea that we have already gone very far down the road of decentralization. We need to accept what we have to work with today, and not over-promise what we can do in the short run. I agree with Bob Burchell from Rutgers, who says that if we can only deal with one third of the new growth in a very centralized fashion, keep one third within some reasonable proximity to community centers, and let one third go, we will still have significantly changed the overall pattern of growth in this country. And that hardly sounds as though we are saying that everybody has to work in a certain kind of place, and walk to work, and live in a prescribed pattern of behavior. It suggests that there will be choices in all categories.

WHY SHOULD WE CARE?

We've grown less urban...

Boston metropolitan area:
2,700 people per square mile

Los Angeles metropolitan area:
5,400 people per square mile

Massachusetts landscape is vanishing...

Land in farms, 1950–2000:
down 50%

**Land in subdivisions,
office parks and malls, 1950–2000:**
up 200%

We're spreading out, not really growing:

Population density, 1950–2000:
down 55%

Charles Euchner: The biggest challenge is to honor the different kinds of choices that people have made. The very worst thing that the smart-growth movement can do is to start wagging its finger at upscale suburbs like Wellesley and Weston. My favorite author and thinker on these issues is Christopher Alexander. And in his book *The Timeless Way of Building*, he says that every structure, every piece of work in a neighborhood or in a community, should aim at healing the larger whole. If we go at it from that stand-point, we aren't going to be setting ourselves at cross-purposes with people who choose, quite legitimately, a suburban way of life. There's a lot that they like about the suburbs, especially the schools. But there's a lot they don't like, and that they would welcome working on. And that means working across urban and suburban lines.

Elizabeth Padjen: Christopher Alexander's observation suggests in my mind, a wholly different value system from what is the reality of our society today. If every move is to heal the larger whole, that suggests a communitarian sense of sharing, or working toward the common good, that in many respects is a very old-fashioned idea. It's an idea that comes out of rural tradition, but is it really afloat in modern society? Can that work? A lot of sprawl is driven, subdivision by subdivision, by incremental decisions and incremental growth — individuals deciding what they're going to do with one piece of property.

Charles Euchner: The solution doesn't have to have a communitarian flavor to it. But it has to have a problem-solving flavor to it that responds very directly to people's immediate desires and anxieties.

Phil Herr: Alexander's work is at least as much about process as it is about prescriptive rules. What you find is that there are ways of both providing healing for the larger context and satisfying the interest of individuals. That requires a way of talking together that we are not as good at as we should be, although there are a lot more people today who are able to create processes of that kind than there used to be. I don't expect individuals to act altruistically, and I don't expect municipalities to act altruistically, but it's in their self-interest to work with others. That isn't just dream communitarianism — it is achievable.

Armando Carbonell: You could say that the current situation comes from mostly rational behaviors by individuals trying to solve problems in their own lives, within the options that are available to them. And in many cases they are making decisions that seem very sensible when seen on the micro-scale, but when seen in the aggregate, don't make sense at all. Planning, to put it very simply, is about giving people a process for looking beyond their individual decisions, for understanding their ability to shape the physical environment and their lives by working together with others in a way that achieves a better result.

Elizabeth Padjen: My sense is that people today are more sophisticated about understanding the complete system — how pushing on one edge will eventually have an effect on the other edge. They understand that planning is not done in a discrete little box.

Armando Carbonell: And yet we constantly see examples of how unsophisticated we are — simple solutions for very complicated problems that can actually be made worse by the simple decision. Both politicians and citizens need to understand the tools and options that are available to them and what the costs and benefits for different approaches will be.

Vig Zamore: I suspect that more people are aware of the ramifications of their decisions than they were in the past. They understand that sprawl is not an isolated problem. But I'm not sure that most people know where to find solutions. Increasing the knowledge base is a challenge in itself — it rarely happens when the advocacy gets too feisty.

Charles Euchner: People have a hard time knowing when they can push back. When they see a giant big-box retailer like Wal-Mart show up and say, "We need a footprint of this size, and we need a parking lot of that size, or otherwise we won't come, and our headquarters back in Dubuque says this is non-negotiable," people tend to accept that as a reality. And then they have to make a decision: either go with the monster box, or forego the tax revenue. In fact, a lot of national retailers are willing to negotiate and make their structures fit into the local context. They'd rather use the cookie-cutter, but they will negotiate in order to get access to a market. There are pockets of amazing knowledge about this sort of thing, but you can't find it everywhere. We're very lucky in Boston, Cambridge, Brookline, and Somerville to have people who have been through these wars. Other communities don't have this experience, and they don't have the density of people who care about these things, or who have the time to care about them. We've got some pretty decent tools that are already available; we just need to know how to use them.

Phil Herr: We've got good tools for some things. I think of sprawl as happening in three scales. The first is the small scale, where development sprawls all across a parcel. The parcel may have land of varying qualities or character, but with "parcel sprawl" it all gets treated the same. We've known how to address that problem for as long as I've been in practice. The simplest solution is cluster development, where you put the houses where they belong and the open spaces where they belong. Then there's the issue of sprawl that occurs at the municipal scale, where portions of the community that have very different attributes of access or land quality or history get treated in ways that don't respect those qualities, and you wind up with "municipal sprawl" that homogenizes the community. That's a problem that can be addressed with the

most traditional tools of municipal planning, although we've more recently added some newer tricks like growth boundaries and transfer of development rights.

And then there's the third scale of sprawl, at the regional level. If growth is accommodated uniformly across the region, we'll be sprawling across the region in a very destructive way. That's a problem that requires yet another set of tools, and that's where we in this part of the world aren't well equipped. We need new tools to address the pattern of growth at the regional scale. Is it a good idea that a huge share of the growth in the next decade is going to occur along Route 495? Is that what we want? Do we want to take vitality out of our civic places and put it out in those communities? I suspect few people think that's a good idea, but it's hard to even think about the complexity of the problem, let alone address it.

Armando Carbonell: Regional planning is a subject that deserves more attention in Massachusetts — it's true that we have no real mechanism right now for thinking about growth at that scale. And there's really no good reason to explain the lack of a mechanism. Other states have figured out how to do this. One interesting example is Maryland, which has a very deliberate policy of focusing development in areas of existing infrastructure and directing state investments to support that.

Jack Clarke: It's a policy that comes right from the governor's office.

Randolph Jones: We talked earlier about the differences in the sprawl discussion of 20 or 30 years ago. That was an era when the Commonwealth of Massachusetts actually had an Office of State Planning — which it used very effectively. One example was Wang — which is no longer around, but was then a wildly successful homespun high-tech company in Lowell, which was encouraged to stay within the city. Another example was Pyramid Companies — the Office of State Planning negotiated their relocation to downtown Pittsfield, with what was the largest UDAG [Urban Development Action Grant] in the country at that time. So there was a time when we enjoyed an active, state-level, public policy that said, "We are concerned about the location of new development, and we are going to do something about it."

Phil Herr: But that lasted less than four years. It grew out of a great process, in which the majority of the municipalities in Massachusetts participated actively, and the great majority of people who were activists concerned with these issues really felt that their voices had been heard. The policy was really a consensual one, and people rallied around its nifty tagline: suburbs didn't want to become cities, rural areas didn't want to become suburbs, and the cities didn't want to become wastelands. Those agreements were turned into a very coherent set of actions that required no new legislation and no new form of government. They simply took a state government prepared to use the authority and resources it already had to lead us in a new direction.

WHY SHOULD WE CARE?

Our sprawl is happening quickly...

Percentage of developed
land in Massachusetts

in 1996: 25%

in 2010: 33%

Percentage of all class-A office
space in downtown Boston:

in 1985: 70%

in 2000: 40%

We're severely straining our social fabric...

More than 75% of African-
American and Hispanic-American
citizens live in cities.

In 2000, almost 60,000 low-skill
workers in Boston were competing
for 10,000 available jobs.

Household income in core
communities is less than 50%
of the household income
of outer communities.

Elizabeth Padjen: I remember apparently simple things, like determining where curb-cuts would be allowed. What would seem to be dumb little tools became pretty potent when used coherently. So why did all that evaporate?

Randolph Jones: The recession loomed and we hit the skids — it was a very different economic time.

Jack Clarke: And unfortunately we haven't revisited those policies. The closest we've come is providing tax incentives for the redevelopment of brownfields — directing industrial and commercial development to existing contaminated industrial sites. But we haven't broadened that thinking to direct growth where we want it. I think Maryland Governor Parris Glendening has certainly done it for his state. Vermont Governor Howard Dean has reduced sales taxes on Main Street and increased it at the malls, encouraging people to shop and build new retail space in town centers, not by prohibiting it in any one area, but by providing financial incentives.

Charles Euchner: One thing that we need to think about is keeping things as simple as possible. I know that we live in a complex world, I know that there are all kinds of factors that enter into a decision about where and how you are going to build. But it's important to develop incentives that are easily understood, and therefore have some legitimacy. I think the genius of Parris Glendening is that he came up with something that was very straightforward. He said, "I'm not going to prevent you from developing in undeveloped areas, I'm just not going to help you. However, I *am* going to help those who already have something to offer, and simply need a little bit of a boost to make it on their own." I think it was a very straightforward deal that he cut with the people of his state. One of the things that concerns me is that many of the ideas that are springing up seem to add to the complexity and the confusion of public policy, rather than stripping away the more negative aspects and the perverted incentives.

Let me pose a possibility. In Minnesota, a civil war is going on over the tax structure. Governor Jesse Ventura, wants to replace property taxes with a new income tax and sales tax regime. It would do much to alleviate the kind of balkanization of that state, because one of the major reasons people move to suburbs is that they want better schools, and people in wealthier communities can afford to pay for better schools. It's a very straightforward way of removing a perverted incentive. I don't know if Jesse Ventura particularly cares about sprawl, but he's attacking a very fundamental inequity that's built into the system. And if we get back to our discussion of choice, that's really what's at stake here. Some people have choice and some people don't. We can't look for a magic bullet, because there's never going to be one. But we should be looking for a handful of major perversions that we should remove. And that can make a bigger difference than creating another apparatus on top of our existing apparatus.

Mano Carbonell: I wouldn't argue with greater clarity in public policy. I think we need to create incentives that are much more transparent and consistent, and that we should use the power of government in a much more intelligent way. But I think there's another challenge to our colleagues in the design fields. We need real projects on the ground that really make use of everything we've learned about building places and designing communities. It's a tremendous opportunity for the people who are the audience of *ArchitectureBoston* to think not just about large-scale policy choices, but also to do the kind of empirical work that becomes a model for others. The small town of Ipswich, Massachusetts, for example, has crafted a plan that makes a lot more sense than the standard model and demonstrates to other communities that it can be done. Massachusetts has had a couple of experiments in planning, the Cape Cod Commission and the Martha's Vineyard Commission. These are considered quite unusual across the country. I no longer advocate copying them in a specific way — communities should respond to their own needs and conditions — but I think they demonstrate that it's possible for communities to craft a set of solutions that work in their own geographic and human context. I hope we can encourage simpler, clearer policies at the state level without discouraging the kind of experimentation and progress that can be made in individual communities at a very finite, small scale.

Elizabeth Padjen: Let's return for a moment to Jesse Ventura's proposal — simply because it poses a fascinating hypothesis. Is the property tax a "hidden persuader" in its influence on sprawl? How much in planning, how much in terms of individual choice as we've discussed it, is based on the simple mechanism of the property tax? Let's play that out and imagine no property tax — simply a combination of income and sales tax. What would be some of the differences here in Massachusetts?

Phil Herr: My view is that the impact would be smaller than many people think. I work in many communities which, a generation ago, were powerfully influenced by fiscal consequences, but are much less so now. Partly because they've learned to live with Proposition 2½, which limited the growth of property taxes in Massachusetts, partly because there is an increasing understanding of the equalizing effects of state aid, and partly because of an increasing aversion to the broad impacts of projects that are otherwise tax-lucrative. The city of Cambridge [Massachusetts] recently underwent a searching, multi-year re-examination of its development controls, at the end of which it substantially reduced its potential for non-residential development in order to accommodate more room for residential development. That's not the best way to approach development from a fiscal perspective, but the city chose it because people thought it would create a better city.

Charles Euchner: But one of the central concerns with property taxes is who gets the money to have better schools and therefore who gets the money to draw the affluent families. But there's another aspect, too, which is that our reliance on property tax encourages certain kinds of new development, such as big boxes, because they are exempt from the limits of Proposition 2½. So if you're a town manager, you've essentially got a situation where you can either ask for an override [a vote to increase the allowed tax limit], which is not very politically popular, or you can take the new revenues from the big box. It's our reliance on the property tax in the first place that is driving us to accept things that we don't really want.

Wig Zamore: I would say that there's an unevenness in understanding of fiscal impact, not just among the general public, but among the people who run our cities and towns. Cities like Boston and Cambridge and some of the more affluent towns understand the cost-to-benefit ratios of different kinds of commercial properties. They look at a proposed office building in terms of revenue per unit of traffic and jobs per unit of traffic. The communities that take the big boxes believe they are going to gain fiscally, but rarely do, given their alternatives. Because 15 acres of big boxes will create as much traffic as 15 acres of mixed-use development and only 1/10th the tax revenue and jobs. That unevenness of understanding creates a circular situation. It puts the less able towns in a worse and worse position to pull themselves out.

Somerville, for example, is so dense that the city spends \$100,000 dollars per acre per year in services. A big box will only generate \$50,000 per acre per year in taxes, so it only generates half the spending rate. It's like running a lemonade stand where you guarantee a dollar's worth of lemons in every 50¢ glass. It's very hard to get ahead, doing that.

Elizabeth Padjen: Okay, but it's easy to beat up on the big boxes. Let's continue with the no-property-tax scenario. Can you imagine that it would lead to no growth? That development would come to a screeching halt? What would be the incentive for a city or town to take on new office, commercial, or industrial development if the residents perceive that it's noxious or that it generates traffic?

Wig Zamore: There wouldn't be one, unless they wanted the jobs. Families need jobs, and it's better to have jobs close to where you live.

Phil Herr: I work with a couple of communities in the Blackstone Valley [in central Massachusetts], where the power lines and gas lines cross, so they are being courted by power-plant developers. The town of Bellingham has one plant in place, one under construction, and a third just approved. It is widely believed that because of the huge taxes those plants pay and the low demands they make on services the town should have no fiscal problem for many, many years.

WHY SHOULD WE CARE?

We are literally driving ourselves crazy...

Boston has more freeway miles per capita than Los Angeles.

Regional annual vehicle miles 1970–2000: up 75%

Regional population 1970–2000: up 10%

We're paving our way to pollution...

Despite clean air and water laws, over the next 5 years:

Massachusetts air quality will get worse.

More Massachusetts rivers will not meet EPA standards.

15% of Massachusetts animal and plant species will be endangered.

EMC then came along and said it would like to accommodate 2,700 workers in a million or so square feet of office building. The town loved the idea. They loved the prestige that goes with having that campus and they loved having good jobs nearby. So I think there are still attractions, even when you take away the fiscal incentives. However, that same community is now giving a cold reception to developers coming along proposing little strip malls. The town just isn't very interested in those right now. Fiscal freedom from immediate property tax concerns has indeed changed the equation.

Randolph Jones: It sounds as if it's given the community choice. It gives residents the ability to say no as well as yes.

Phil Herr: And of course there are other ramifications. Fiscal resources also give the town the ability to hire good staff, so it is now managing its own affairs far better than ever before. It is making the leap from being underserved to being very nicely served. The education issue is of course far more complicated than just access to tax dollars. Boston, for example, spends more per pupil than all but one municipality in all of Massachusetts. But the perceptions of what are good schools don't perfectly correlate with what is spent on them.

Charles Euchner: Suppose we were to have equal state funding of schools and suppose we were to say that we are going to embrace a diversity of schools, as long as they meet basic curriculum requirements, and basic civil rights and fairness requirements. You would have a situation where on the one hand you would have centralization of funding, and on the other hand you would allow an incredible level of dynamism at the local level. That's how we should be thinking in regional planning. We should make sure that we have some very compelling tools, but we should also allow localities to decide how to use them in their communities. A lot of smart-growth people are going to be uncomfortable with that. But ultimately we have to think not about creating a cookie-cutter approach or a top-down approach, but creating incentives that allow great experimentation throughout the region.

Wig Zamore: But, unlike education, you can't give each city and town a transportation budget or the right to build a subway station. If we look at the forces behind sprawl, transportation has to be pretty close behind land-use or schooling choices. Equity in transportation infrastructure is a tough problem. One of the big things that has changed in the last 20 to 30 years is that people lost faith in roads as the solution to everything. And now we are still faced with the need to supply transportation. The closer you get to a city, the more often transportation can work as a regional system because of the greater density. But there's an inequity if the state or the federal government isn't giving equal access to public transportation to cities and towns of similar densities. One local example is the plight of Chelsea and Somerville — the two densest cities in Massachusetts. They have one subway stop and one commuter rail station between them.

Phil Herr: You have to wonder why we're investing in air-conditioned commuter rail to New Bedford, when it is still so hard to get from Somerville to Boston.

Charles Euchner: Must these communities be served by a transit station? Are there other alternatives to automobile travel? Transportation is obviously one of the most difficult aspects of sprawl, because it involves such a complex mixture of choice and uneven opportunity. If you live in Chelsea and work in Framingham, good luck getting there. Can we open up the possibility of private vendors providing experimental new services?

Elizabeth Padjen: Chelsea and Framingham describe an inherent part of the problem — the growing distance between homes and workplaces, as people move away from jobs in the center city. That's exacerbated by the fact that people need flexibility in their schedules. Employers are demanding longer working hours. No one is out of the office by five o'clock and a lot of people can't predict in the morning when they'll come home at night. And maybe they'll need to run an errand or pick up kids from daycare. Transportation alternatives have to accommodate the changes in the work environment.

Charles Euchner: But let's go back to an earlier observation — if we can reduce sprawl by even one third, we might not solve everything, but it would make the world a hell of a lot better than if we do nothing. Maybe we should think of transportation in that way. Let me suggest that there's a kind of tipping-point dynamic to this. I live in Jamaica Plain. I walk a lot and drive my car maybe twice a week. I have it in case I need to do a big buy or visit my sister in New Hampshire or something like that. What would get me to give up my car and what would get other people to give up at least their second cars? The car-sharing concept, such as Zipcars, [rentals by the hour] is very promising. We need to find solutions that can turn things back without fighting inexorable forces. The car is here for good. But do we need the car for every quick trip we take? No.

Elizabeth Padjen: But when you need a car, you're still going to use a car. It doesn't matter if it's your car or a car you share. The fact that there may be multiple cars in a household doesn't mean that they are all on the road at once.

Charles Euchner: But you're more likely to use a car if it's sitting in front of your house than if you have to go down two blocks to pick it up. And car-sharing could diminish one of the biggest blights on our urban neighborhoods now, which is the proliferation of surface parking. One of the biggest fears that I have is what I call internal sprawl, where we are making our cities like the worst aspects of our suburbs, with Walgreens and Stop-and-Shops surrounded by huge parking lots.

Wig Zamore: And we are seeing a behavioral shift in car-sharing people. They have to pay for every mile they drive, so there's much more incentive to monitor how many miles they drive. The people who have switched to car-sharing drive fewer miles than they did when they drove their own cars.

Phil Herr: One of the fundamental roots of sprawl is that the cost of travel has been hugely reduced, so it is much cheaper now to travel long distances than it was two generations ago. When we support the highway bond act, we are in fact subsidizing sprawl. When we make rail travel cheap, we're subsidizing sprawl. There are Tokyo corporations that give commuter passes for the bullet train to their executives as a perk. Some of those people are now commuting 100 miles from Tokyo. That's subsidizing sprawl.

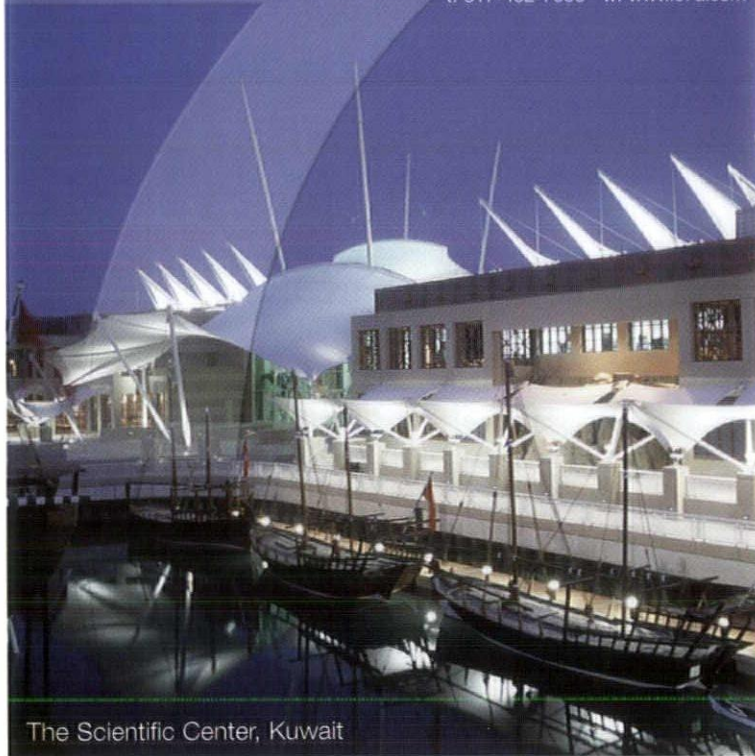
Charles Euchner: And that brings up the issue of political will. Politicians don't want to contradict their constituents. Politicians need to push back a bit when their constituents say "I don't want density," or "I want parking because I need to be able to bring my dry cleaning into my house," or "I need to be able to have my customers park right in front of my store." But density is one of those issues where anyone who's concerned about sprawl and livability needs to speak with a strong voice.

Boston is about a third less dense now than it was a century ago. Which means there are a third fewer customers for local businesses. Doesn't that matter to anybody? Can't we agree that that is a significant problem, rather than letting ourselves be cowed by people who say that more people mean more traffic? That's ultimately what's going to give the smart-growth agenda some traction. We in this country have all become so used to having everything we want. We can have a wonderful urban neighborhood, we can have a wonderful park, we can have big sprawling school campuses, we can hop in our car and drive across town and commute across the state. But ultimately this comes down to choices. We need to understand the consequences of our choices.

Wig Zamore: It's often very difficult to reconcile altruism with self-interest. But a lot of people have an interest in protecting their community fabric, because it's a reflection of their own identity — their life, their work, their home. And maybe recognizing that a simple yearning for a sense of place is something most of us have in common is enough to start us in the right direction. ■ ■ ■

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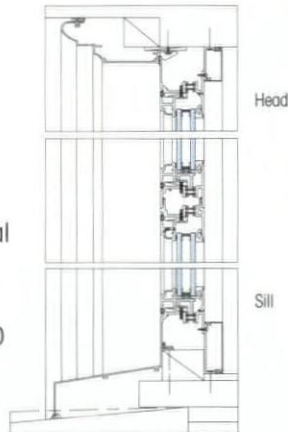
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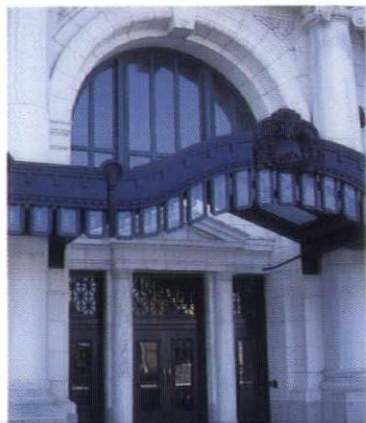
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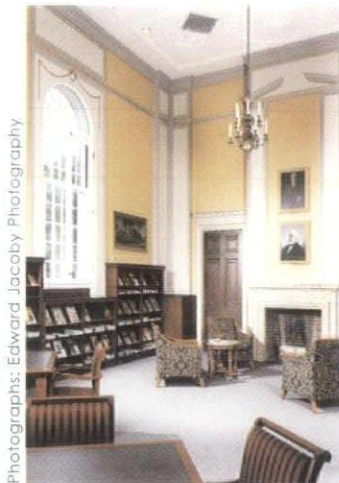


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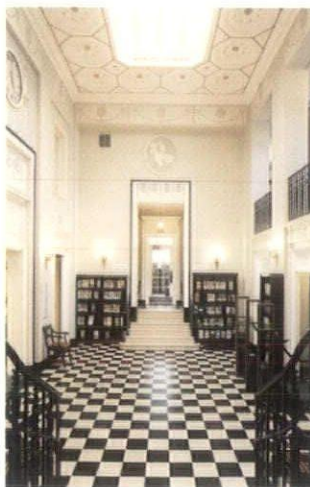


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How We Live: A Civic Initiative for a Livable New England

by Larissa V. Brown PhD, AICP

photos: Larissa Brown



Brainstorming the future:
Over 200 people participated in a 2½-day session combining big-picture thinking about regional growth with case studies of specific planning problems.

A town common headed by a spare white church...country roads shaded by sugar maples...compact cities of close-knit neighborhoods and walkable streets...small-scale farms and orchards...forested hills and shimmering marshes...meadows bounded by stone walls. These are the talismans of place in New England. They hold our imagination and, because they do so, they are also the images we use to sell New England to tourists and to ourselves. But is this really "how we live?" What about the farms and orchards turned into subdivisions, miles of commercial strip development along historic roads, struggling old industrial cities unable to provide jobs for new immigrants, traffic-jammed highways, increasing economic inequity, and soaring housing costs?

Although we are reluctant to admit it, New England has become the land of sprawl, where land consumption far outstrips population growth. During the last half-century, we saw urban population centers dissolving into a low-density periphery and the decentralization of everything — employment, shopping, education, and entertainment, as well as housing. Now, in the 21st century, each major city is surrounded by a nimbus of varying development densities, from high-tech clusters to pockets of farmland. These multi-centered metropolitan regions are composed of hundreds of separate municipalities, each attempting to shape land use and development within its own borders. But watersheds, transportation systems, and markets are not constrained by municipal boundaries. When individual communities try to control growth within their own borders through building caps, downzoning, or other efforts designed to save local "rural character" or neighborhood quality of life, they end up pushing growth farther into areas that are even more rural, setting off a new cycle of development and traffic congestion. The result is less open space, more pressure on environmental resources, more traffic, and more expensive housing.

The livability of our cities and towns is at stake and our traditional reliance on local decision-making is inadequate to the task of managing development. We need effective regional approaches to planning. The Boston Society of Architects (BSA), building on its long tradition of civic engagement, began the new century with a two-year program of events to promote the implementation of "smart growth" policies in the Boston metropolitan region and New England.

Led by Rebecca Barnes FAIA, past president of the BSA, and supported by a diverse group of civic, professional, governmental, environmental, and business groups, the program was designed to bring disparate communities together. These events collectively called "How We Live: A Civic Initiative for a Livable New England," focused on the Boston metropolitan region, which now extends into New Hampshire and Rhode Island. But the experience of the Boston region is not unique in New England, and smart-growth initiatives are under way in all the New England states.

designed to be participatory, inclusive, and visionary, the Civic Initiative has also been pragmatic. From the beginning, many individuals and organizations who contributed to shaping the program of events wanted to make sure that the Civic Initiative would include an agenda for action and a strategy for implementation. The Civic Initiative was composed of a series of elements:

The Challenge: More than 400 people attended a conference held in Boston in September 2000 to identify key questions and inspire participants to work for change.

Regional Workshops: Workshops in February and March 2001 were held in three communities outside Boston, highlighting the relationship between struggling older cities with new immigrant populations and their neighboring affluent suburbs; obstacles and opportunities for supporting growth in urbanized inner suburbs while preserving neighborhood quality of life; and the dynamics of suburban sprawl, including the growing need for nonresidential tax revenues, and ambivalent attitudes toward affordable-housing initiatives. Over 150 people attended the workshops.

Regional Charrette: A 2½-day brainstorming session ("charrette") in late April 2001 combined big-picture thinking about regional themes with case studies focusing on specific places and planning problems. Discussions focused on the key forces that shape the character and location of regional growth and development such as transportation, economic development, housing, environmental priorities, infrastructure, and fiscal demands. The case studies were solicited through a call-for-proposals distributed to community leaders, nonprofits, and others throughout the region. Ten teams of participants, including both local sponsors and professionals, worked on nine case studies including village- and town-center revitalization; neighborhood access to an industrial waterfront; appropriate development in a three-municipality border area marked by a wide diversity of land uses, environmental sensitivity, and traffic congestion; development in the high-tech ring along I-495; and redevelopment of contaminated industrial brownfields and abandoned mall sites. Charrette participants were asked to develop proposals based on smart-growth principles and to identify how smart-growth policies would help them solve the planning problems they faced. Over 200 people participated in the charrette.

Future Search: In June 2001, a group of 64 people met over a weekend to develop an agenda to bring the Civic Initiative forward from vision to implementation.

■ **Implementation:** In the fall of 2001, the Civic Initiative is moving into its implementation phase with the publication of a report, forums for political candidates to speak about sprawl and smart growth, and establishment of an ongoing coalition. This active agenda will include state legislation as well as local planning initiatives that will expand upon existing community preservation and environmental efforts.

It has been said that the only thing Americans hate more than sprawl is density, and the "density question" was fundamental to all the Civic Initiative discussions. Mixed-use development, clustering houses to save open space, and greater housing density were the hallmarks of the charrette case-study results. New investment in fixed-route public transportation was very popular with groups working on urban and inner-suburban case studies. They saw public transportation as the key to making denser mixed-use neighborhoods acceptable in existing urbanized communities.

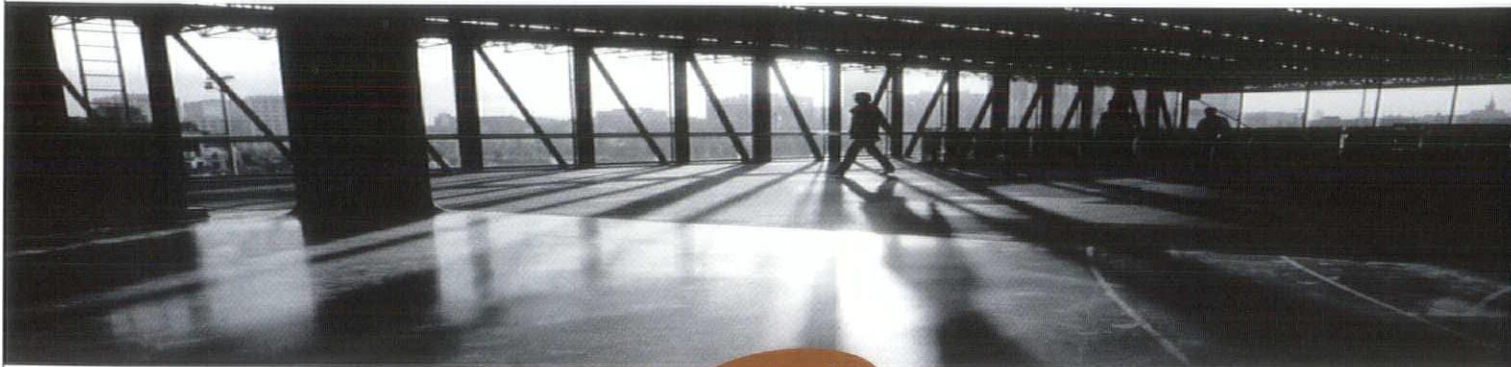
Working on more peripheral communities or subregions, Civic Initiative participants struggled with the results of 50 years of low-density suburbanization in the context of municipal competition for the non-residential tax base, increasing economic segregation, variations in the quality of school systems, circumferential travel patterns, and an identity crisis in many towns that still believe they are rural long after they have been swept into the expanding metropolitan nebula. In these parts of the region, encouraging density in existing older communities, in town centers, and through redevelopment of sites such as brownfields and abandoned malls was seen as the key to conserving open space and environmental resources while providing a diverse housing stock and managing traffic congestion.

The Civic Initiative illuminated the need for public policy to guide our development choices on both a regional and state level. Markets by themselves will not produce balanced development. Tax-sharing, equalizing the attractiveness of urban and suburban public schools, coordinated transportation and land-use planning, and networked open space and environmental resource protection are among the efforts that require public leadership to restore and enhance the livability of our region. This is a propitious moment, when we can see that years of economic success have led us to forsake the qualities of place and the social ideals that are part of our New England heritage. "How we live" in the New England of this new century will depend on the choices we are making today. ■ ■ ■

Larissa V. Brown PhD, AICP, is a principal of Community Design Partnership, Inc. in Boston. She co-chaired the program committee for the Civic Initiative and is a member of its steering committee. She also serves as chair of the Cambridge Planning Board.

Editor's note: For more information on the Civic Initiative and updates on recent activities, go to: www.architects.org.

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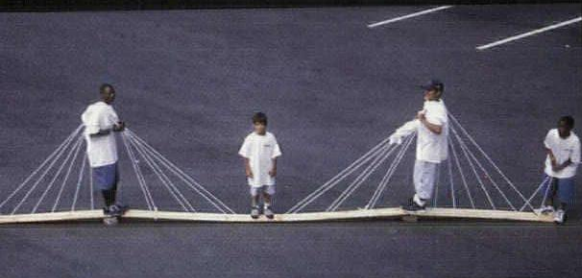
Bridging the Gap

by Peter Vanderwarker

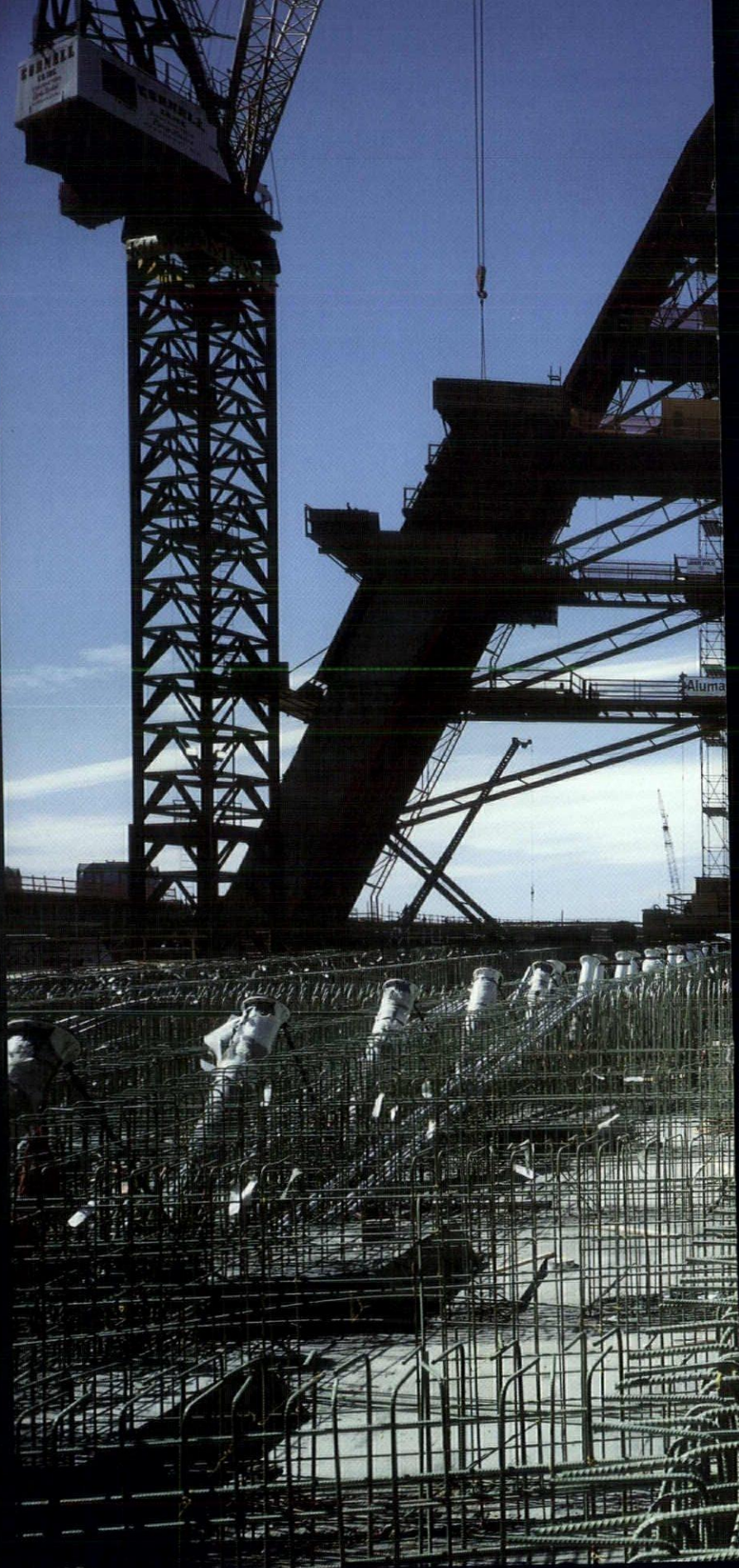
Anyone watching the construction of the Leonard Zakim Bunker Hill bridge since 1998 has seen two separate bridges, each hung from its own tower, reaching to each other across the Charles River, as if they were trying to shake hands. The southern half was finished in November 2000, and it hung there for five months, waiting for the northern span to approach. For a week last April, there was a 12-foot gap between these two huge structures, waiting for one last set of precast-concrete panels.







Some students in a class I taught at Citizen Schools in Boston built their own cable-stayed bridge — a 20-foot span which supported a student easily at mid-span. They used their bodies as the towers and ran the cables carrying the main span over their shoulders. They could feel the distribution of forces in the cables, and they quickly realized they needed a lot of weight at the ends of their bridge to carry the mid-span and then figured out they could anchor the back spans with their feet.

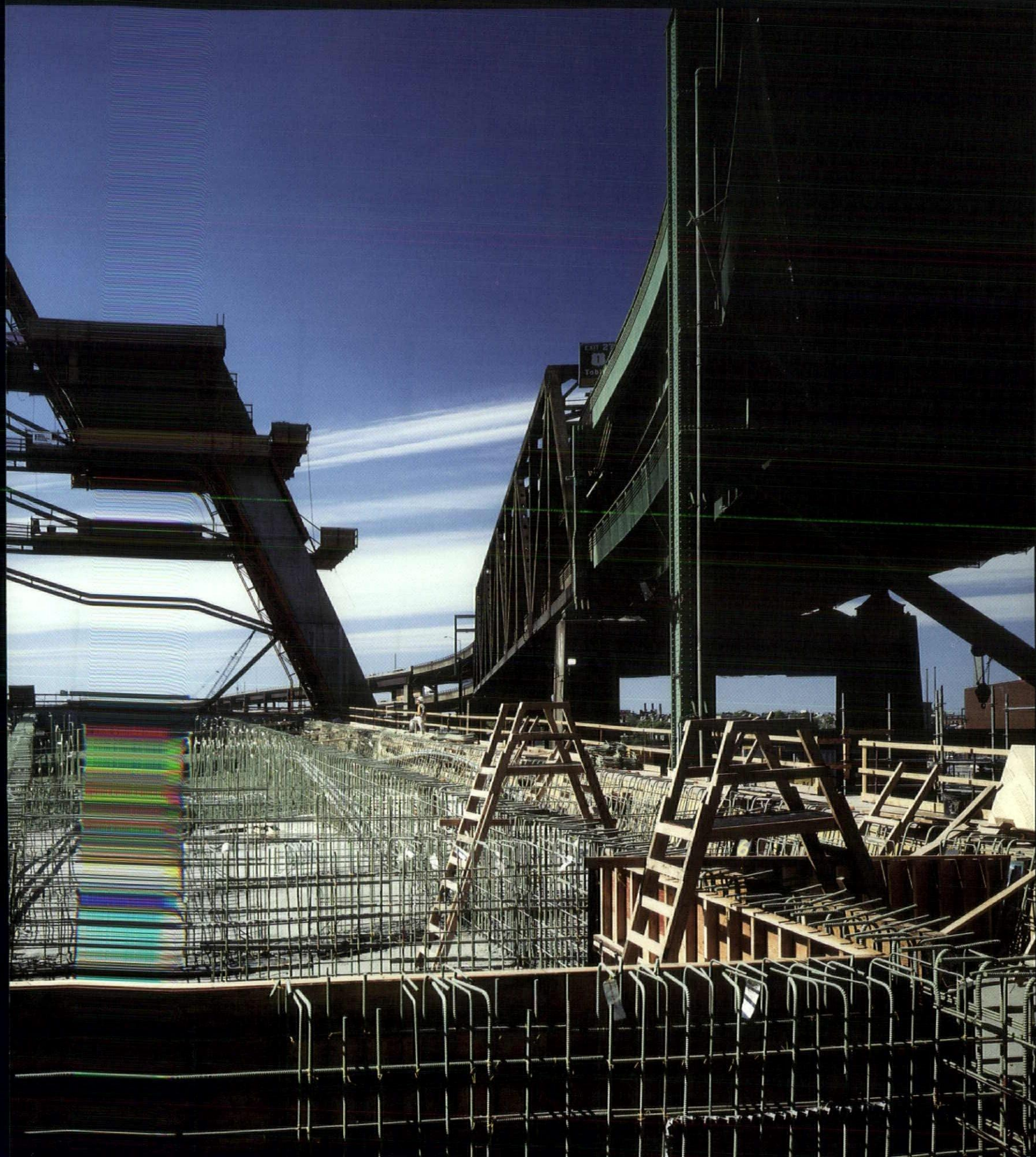




Engineers did the same balancing act with concrete bridge towers and iso-tensioned stays.

Each stay was made up of strands of $\frac{5}{16}$ th-inch wire rope. The stays that reach the farthest must pull the hardest to carry the span, so they have as many as 72 strands. Shorter cables carrying less load contain as few as 14 strands. Each $\frac{5}{16}$ th-inch strand carries the same load — 30,000 pounds (30 kips) — and all strands are pulled one by one through a unique collar that distributes the 30 kips to each strand. The jack doing the tensioning was about the size of Manny Rodriques' bat.







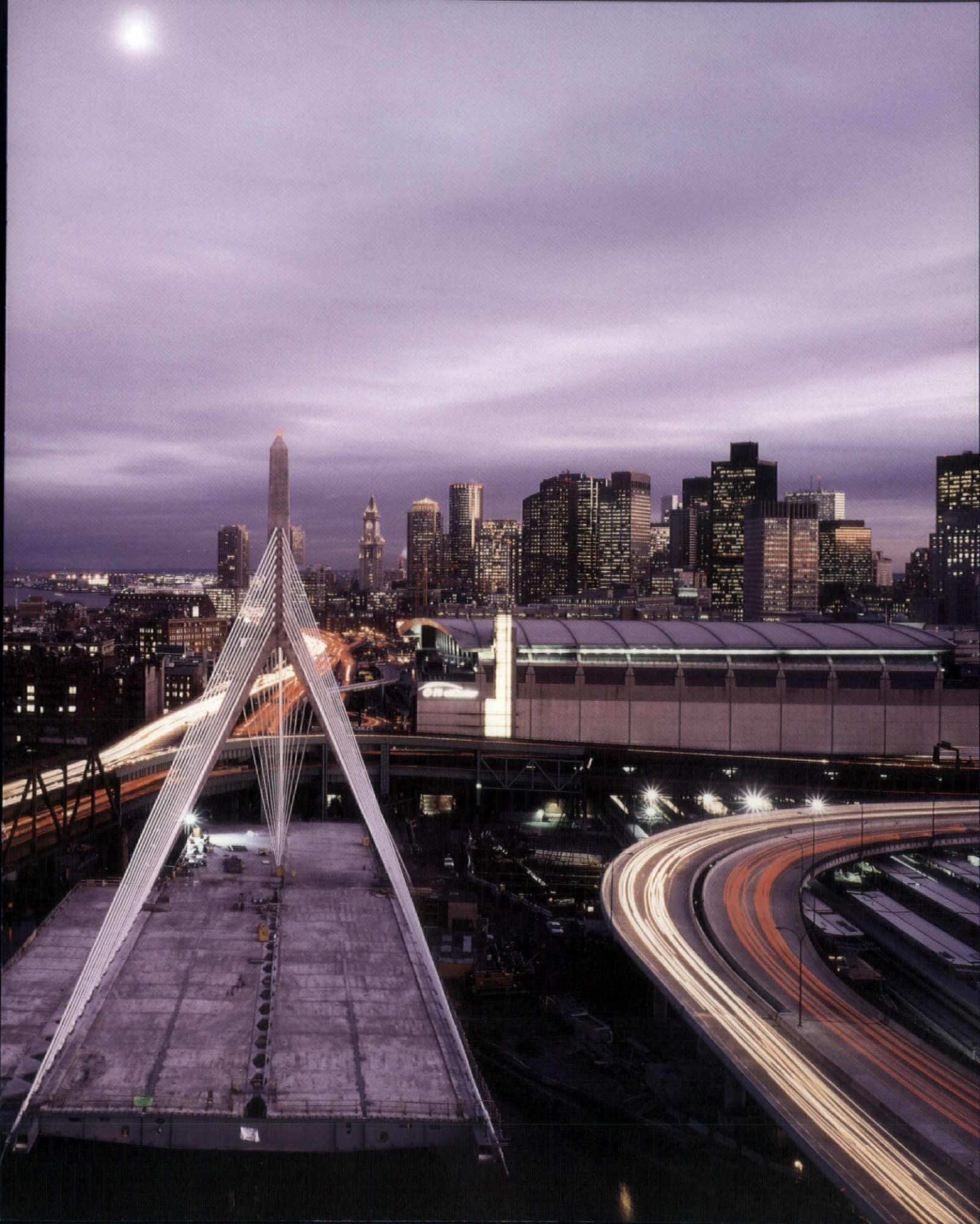
Like the students, the real towers are flexible. Bridges are dynamic structures, and live loads from wind, snow, and cars cause them to bend and sway. If the towers are too stiff, the cables could easily be overstressed. The world-record width (183 feet) of the Zakim is both a blessing and a curse: The width keeps the span very stable, like a giant sheet of plywood. But placing 130-foot girders supporting the main span was tricky in the narrow basin over the Charles.

It is a shame that the marvelous physical handshake of the Zakim Bridge isn't as visible as the other famous spans over the Charles River. But from unlikely spots around town, one is treated to a web of engineering that is the first big mark of the 21st century on Boston.

■ ■ ■

Peter Vanderwarker is an architectural photographer in Newton. His fourth book, *The Big Dig: Reshaping an American City*, will be published by Little, Brown in September. He was a Loeb Fellow at Harvard and received Institute Honors from the American Institute of Architects.







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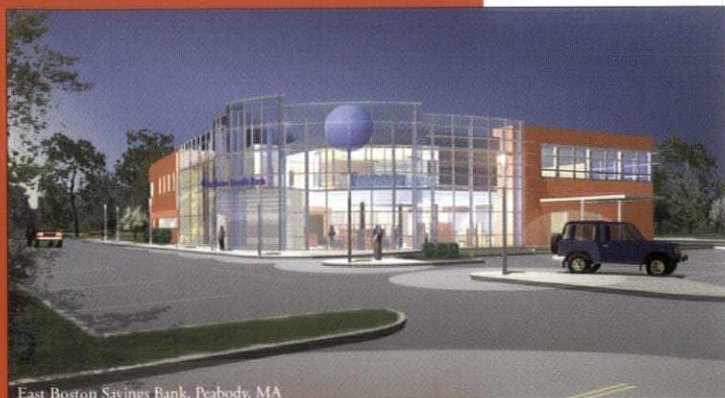
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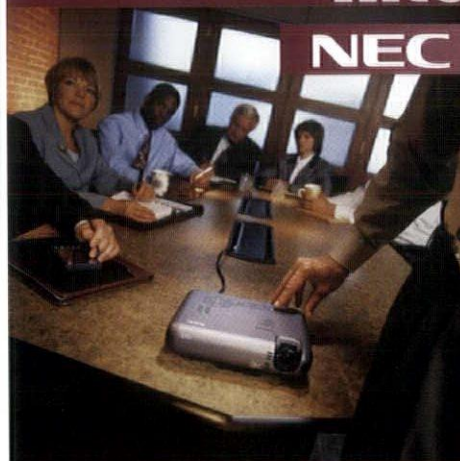
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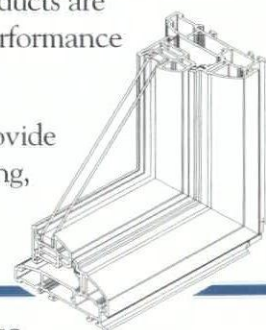
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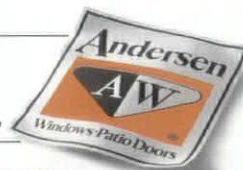


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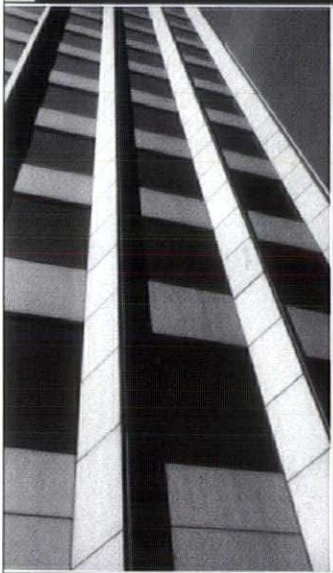
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Fear and Loathing of Density

by David Dixon FAIA

I have long been fascinated by the fear and loathing of density. I am not talking about bringing Manhattan to the older neighborhoods and traditional “Main Streets” of Boston, Cleveland, or Chicago...just bringing back the older neighborhoods and Main Streets of Boston, Cleveland, and Chicago. For many years, the phrase “urban density” was a curse, conjuring up images of crime, decay, and poverty. Robert Campbell FAIA, the *Boston Globe*’s architecture critic, helped rescue “urban”; today phrases like “urban vitality” and “urban character” conjure up images of lively cafés and restored historic townhouses.

“Density” awaits rescue. When Charles Euchner, director of Harvard’s Rappaport Institute for Greater Boston, declared “density is good” at a recent public forum, community activists complained for two weeks that his comment was “anti-community.” Typical of this sentiment was US Representative Michael Capuano’s recent declaration that he did not want “a single additional housing unit” in his home community of Somerville, Massachusetts. “Why should my neighborhood suffer,” he demanded, “so planners can have density?”

Why did Charles Euchner, knowing the inevitable reaction, tell the congressman and activists that density is good? After all, resistance to density is central to almost every major planning discussion going on today. So why should designers and planners continue to antagonize their client communities by promoting density? Because fear and loathing of density is ironic, counter-productive, dangerous...and based largely on myths.

Why ironic? Boston’s most expensive neighborhoods are its densest neighborhoods, a pattern repeated in many cities. Somerville has lost 33 percent of its pre-1950 density, a “golden past” for which residents long. Which streets do Bostonians enjoy most? Those within walking distance of large pockets of density that support active street life.

Why counter-productive? Density is often the key to achieving the very qualities that make communities more livable. Three very different communities have recently made this discovery:

In Cambridge, Massachusetts, following a successful moratorium campaign to stop rapid development, a community-based task force spent a year preparing a plan to make neighborhoods around Kendall Square more livable. The resulting zoning supports the same mixed-use development level envisioned before the moratorium — including housing at densities ranging from row houses to apartment buildings (30-100 units to the acre) — but reshaped to enhance livability. Development consultant Pam McKinney estimates that several thousand new households will support the cafés and shops that will transform lifeless streets into walkable streets. “Density bonuses” provide incentives to replace industry with housing. Mixed-use development on a 20-acre site can unlock creation of a substantial public park. And ultimately new development can help pay for new transit that has already been planned but that currently lacks funding.

The city of Chicago was committed to densities below 30 units to the acre (single-family rowhouses), but found that higher densities were required to redevelop the notorious Cabrini-Green public housing into a new mixed-income neighborhood with enough units to house both former public-housing tenants and new middle- and upper-income residents — and to support a Main Street. Many of Chicago’s beloved older neighborhoods represent densities 50 to 100 percent higher than 30 units per acre. The city has now embraced a mix of one- to three-family row houses, apartment houses, and lofts at densities ranging from 30 to 60 units per acre, and a new mixed-income neighborhood is taking shape.

Cleveland’s vibrant Ohio City neighborhood initially opposed increasing density on a redeveloped public-housing site. Following a six-month planning effort, the community supported development of more than 500 units with a mix of one- to three-family rowhouses, lofts, and mid-rise apartments, at a density of more than 50 units to the acre, that provides the critical mass to support the community’s goals for a revitalized Main Street, parks, and diversity.

A satellite view of density:
Earth at night, November 2000

Why dangerous? Lack of density promotes sprawl, obstructs diversity, depletes Main Streets, and deprives communities of needed resources. If these sound like the words of a true believer, they are. As the pace of Boston's sprawl accelerates, the fact that household sizes have shrunk by 25 percent since 1970 means that it takes much more housing to return cities to their previous population levels; the alternative is to continue spilling ever-increasing numbers of people farther and farther out. Households are shrinking because families are changing: A developer in Cleveland, forced to build single-family houses for families that weren't seeking them, could not build apartments and lofts for the very diverse mix of people who were actually in the market for housing. Given the immense competition for retail dollars, it can easily take \$10 to 20 million of new household income to support the new shop or café that will enliven a neighborhood Main Street; unless we want only very high-income cities, the block of revitalized Main Street requires 3,000 to 5,000 new households.

So why do people fear, if not loath, density? As cities declined and suburbs thrived following World War II, cities emulated suburbs, hoping to bring back jobs and the middle class. As many cities recover, five "density myths" continue to foster the sense that density degrades livability:

Myth: Density depletes open space. I have yet to see a potential park site developed instead for housing or any other use. Parks and development don't compete. In this era of public/private partnership, development is often used to create and maintain parks that the public sector cannot otherwise afford.

Myth: Density is ugly. There are many examples of badly sited and inappropriately designed housing and commercial buildings that denigrate the character of charming older neighborhoods and Main Streets. The problem is insensitive design, not density. Ironically, beloved older buildings are far more likely to represent high density than newer buildings.

Myth: Density hurts property values. "Why should my property values suffer so that a developer can make more money?"

No one's property values should suffer, and they don't. New investment — whether in the form of housing, which is invariably more expensive than existing housing, or jobs, which create more demand for nearby housing — raises property values.

Myth: Density causes gentrification. While development can be a symptom of gentrification, the failure to produce sufficient new housing to meet demand ultimately pushes prices up and displaces longtime residents. The solution is to build in affordability and diversity, not avoid building. Boston Mayor Thomas Menino's "Housing Strategy" notes that the region needs 15,000 new housing units annually to avoid steep housing inflation, more than twice the production over the 1990s. Building housing in older neighborhoods increases the options for affordable housing.

Myth: Density causes traffic congestion. Ironically, our past failure to provide density in the urban core creates the most troubling barrier to increasing density in the core, because people who live farther out are more dependent upon cars to reach the city's jobs and attractions. Architect Oliver Gillham AIA reports that, as sprawl has hit the Boston region over the past three decades, the total miles driven has increased 15 times faster than the population. Streets feel more congested because they *are* more congested. The answer is not less new housing in urban neighborhoods, inducing yet more sprawl, but managing the traffic we have and paying for the public transportation we need. The limited available sites in older neighborhoods are not the problem; they are mostly too small to support enough development to really aggravate traffic congestion.

The problem is not density, but how we shape density. The last 15 years have produced terrific examples of higher-density housing and commercial development that enrich neighborhoods in cities across America. We need to focus on learning from these examples and use them to build a new understanding — and perception — of density. ■ ■ ■

David Dixon FAIA is the principal-in-charge of planning and urban design at Goody, Clancy & Associates in Boston. He co-chaired workshops and the regional charrette for the BSA's Civic Initiative for a Livable New England.

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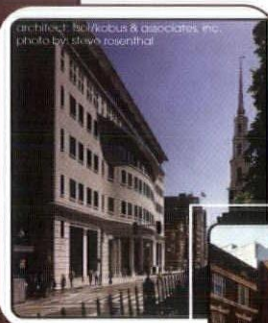
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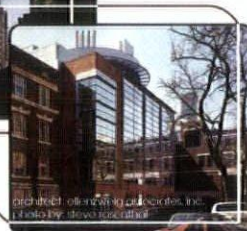
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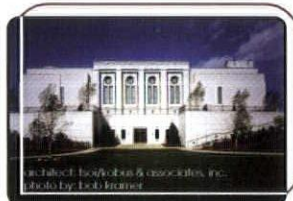
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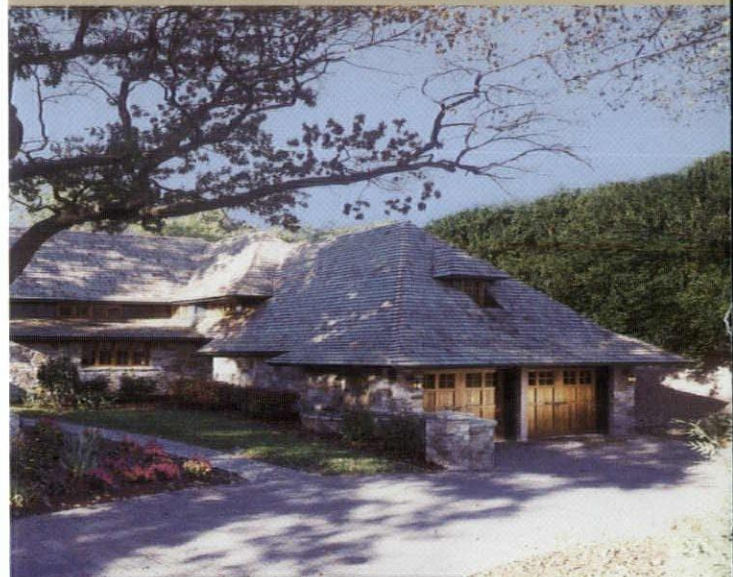


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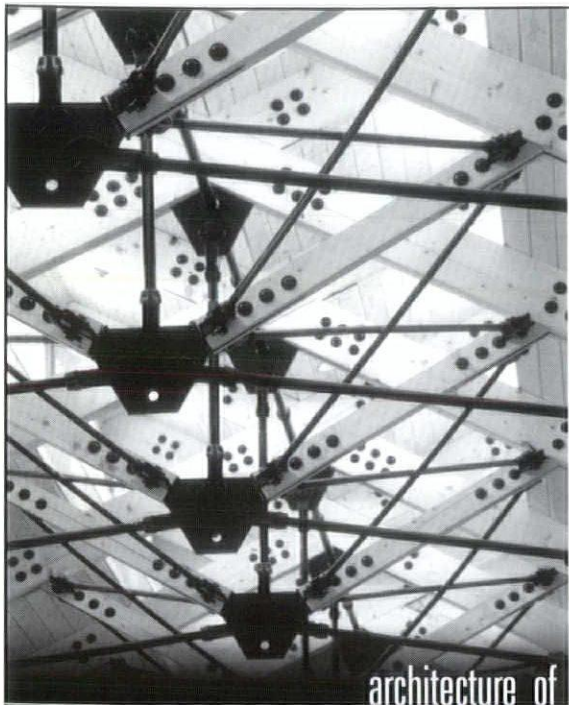


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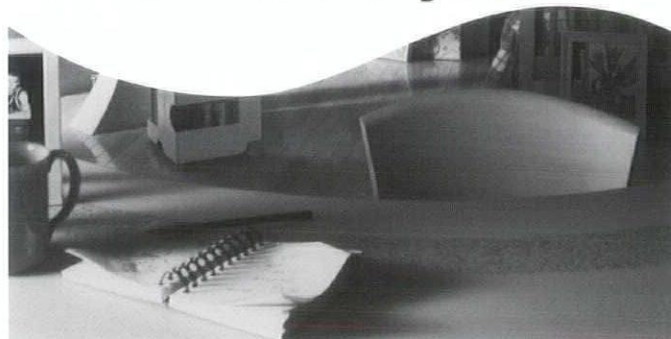


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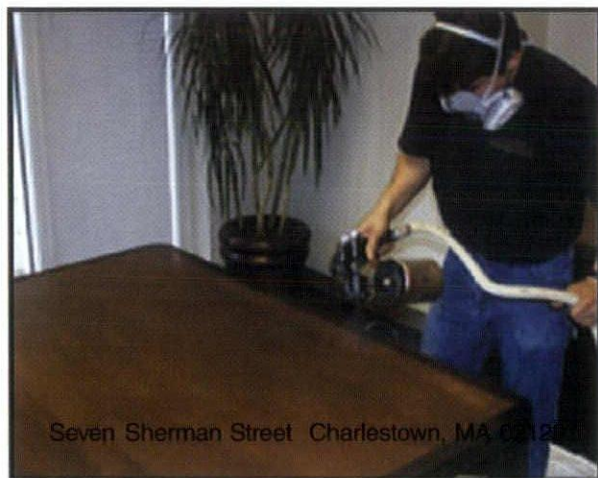
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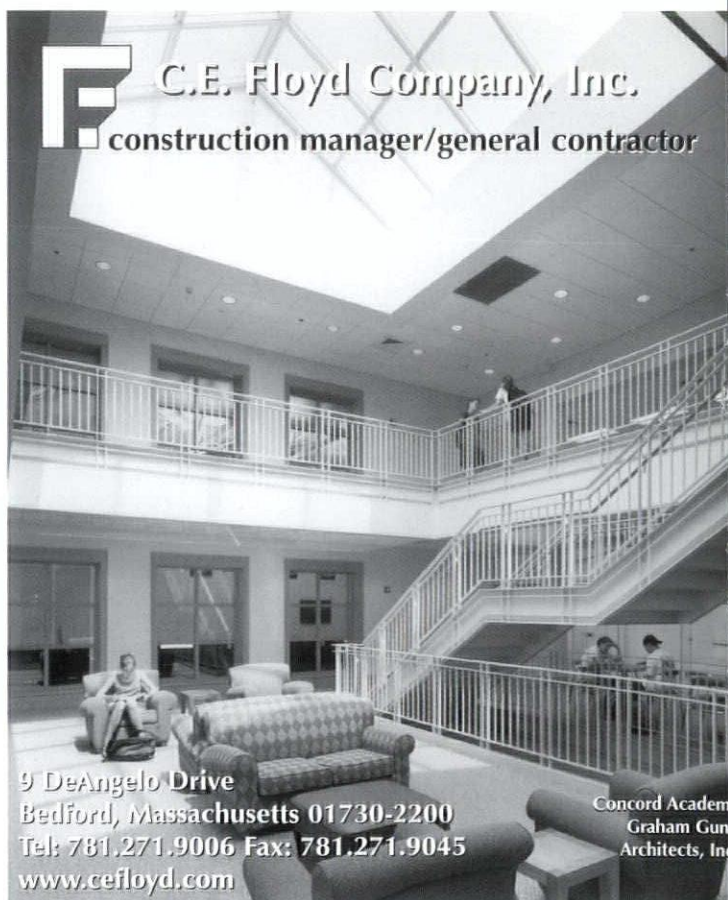


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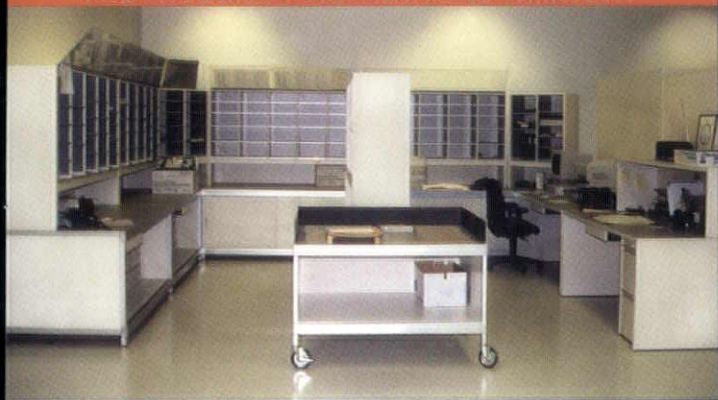
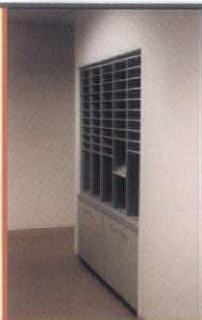
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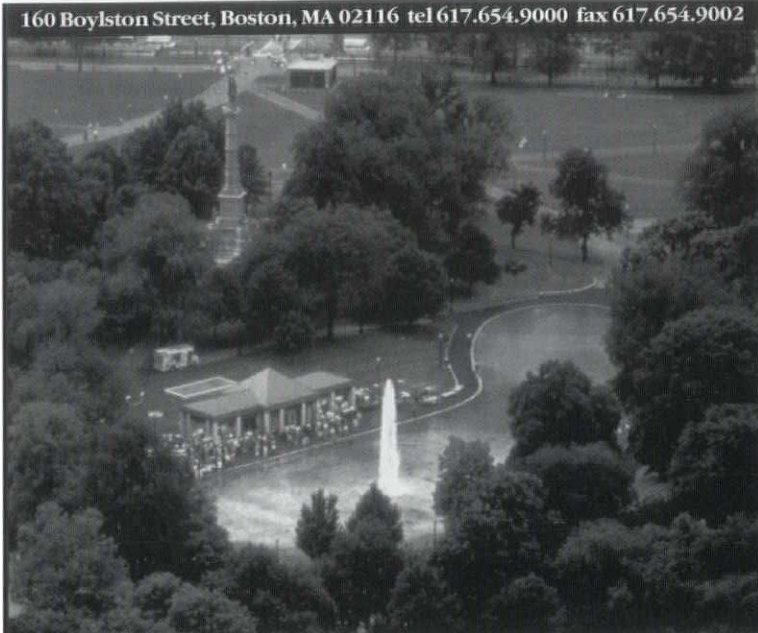
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Building the Urban Landscape

Anne Whiston Spirn ASLA, APA,
talks with Hubert Murray AIA



photo: © Anne Whiston Spirn 2001

Landscape of play.
Park Citroën.
Paris, France.

Anne Whiston Spirn ASLA, APA, recently returned to Boston as a professor of landscape architecture and planning at MIT. From 1986 to 2000, she was a professor at the University of Pennsylvania, where she chaired the department of landscape architecture and planning and served as co-director of the urban-studies program. She is the author of *The Language of Landscape* (Yale University Press, 1998) and *The Granite Garden: Urban Nature and Human Design* (Basic Books, 1984).

Hubert Murray AIA, RIBA, principal of Hubert Murray Architect + Planner in Cambridge; his work has included projects in the United States, Britain and East Africa. He has also taught architecture in London and Nairobi.

Spirn: One of the reasons that I debated about going to Philadelphia was that I was loath to leave the work that I had begun here with Boston Urban Gardeners and with the Dudley Street neighborhood — I knew that exciting things were going to be happening here. I had been teaching studios at the Harvard Graduate School of Design that looked at the potential for vacant land in the city. In the course of that work, I discovered a correlation between large-scale vacant lands in inner-city neighborhoods and buried flood plains. I looked at a proposed development for one large vacant site. There was a reason why that land was vacant — and it wasn't due only to arson and disinvestment. There's a buried flood plain there. The developers laughed at me at first, but over the course of the studio with students documenting the history of the neighborhood, they became convinced and eventually modified their site plan accordingly.

But Philadelphia posed a great opportunity. Ian McHarg had been my mentor, and I was offered the opportunity to succeed him as the chair of the department of landscape architecture and planning at the University of Pennsylvania. As my husband said, it was the job of the decade.

When I got to Philadelphia, it turned out that the president of the university, Sheldon Hackney, had been in discussions with the Pew Charitable Trust about funding a greening project for West Philadelphia. They had been thinking about the project more as literally greening — developing community gardens and planting street trees. I persuaded them to broaden the project scope, so that the greening projects would be done within the context of larger environmental thinking.

It was natural for me to look at the flood plain/vacant land phenomenon in that area — I had actually done work there on the subject for my master's thesis in the '70s. The Mill Creek watershed drains almost two-thirds of West Philadelphia, and I immediately noticed the same phenomenon that I had seen in Boston: the vacant land is the low-lying land. These lots, of course, aren't the same as "missing teeth" and vacant corners, which occur within city blocks and are often the result of economic processes.

Murray: I've been working in a city just outside Boston, in a neighborhood where there are a lot of "missing teeth" — partly as a result of the city's "weed-and-seed" program — which is weeding out the drug dealers and then demolishing drug houses through a zero-tolerance policy. No sooner had the city started the program when it realized there were consequences — namely missing teeth in the neighborhoods.

Spirn: Right. But in a densely built-up neighborhood, this can also be a benefit — particularly if a lot is adopted by the adjoining owner. The ones in Philadelphia have been used for off-street parking and gardens, because the housing stock in Philadelphia tends to be very dense rowhousing with relatively few neighborhood parks.

Murray: Did anything come of your observations of the flood-plain phenomenon in Philadelphia?

Murray: You've recently returned to Boston to join the faculty at MIT after 15 years at the University of Pennsylvania. What are some of the differences that you've noticed on your return?

Spirn: Boston is booming and it's a stark contrast to Philadelphia. People here in Boston cannot appreciate the devastation that is occurring in many American cities because the problems here are of rising housing costs as opposed to falling housing costs, of increased population as opposed to decreased population. It's quite different from the problems of cities like Philadelphia, Detroit, Baltimore, and Washington, D.C. The thing that struck me first was the strong economy, and the resulting flip side to familiar problems. Philadelphia today is facing the issue that Boston was struggling with in the early '80s when I last lived here: what to do with thousands of vacant house lots.

The flip side of the problem is that Philadelphia — unlike Boston — is not experiencing market pressure to develop them right away, and so can take the time to rethink what could be built, what should remain open, how to consolidate infrastructure — to rethink the future shape of the city. Boston doesn't have that luxury because of the strong economy. And that's one flip-side to Boston's strength. The other, of course, is experienced by many people who don't have the means to purchase a home or pay the rent in neighborhoods where they grew up and fully expected to stay. There are different problems here.

The other thing that struck me in coming back to Boston is how much has changed in terms of water quality in Boston Harbor. Today there are actually swimmable beaches, and it's a very striking difference.

Murray: You developed an agenda for your work in Boston that centered around those very issues: water, vacant lots, and public places. What happened to those interests when you went to Philadelphia?

Building the Urban Landscape

Spirn: I started to launch the same kinds of proposals that I'd launched in Boston. The Philadelphia Water Department — just like Boston — had been under the gun from EPA to clean up their combined sewer overflows. The city had whole square blocks of vacant bottom land. Now, 15 years later — and it's taken 15 years — the Philadelphia Water Department has embraced these ideas and has made the Mill Creek neighborhood, where I've been focusing my work since 1987, a demonstration area. They will be developing a series of comprehensive storm-water management strategies and redeveloping vacant land as storm-water retention facilities that are also neighborhood resources.

Murray: What is interesting is that you haven't mentioned the Parks Department. You're talking about infrastructure here, which is the fundamental premise of your early book, *The Granite Garden* — that landscape is actually part of the infrastructure of cities.

Spirn: Yes, absolutely. I define landscape more broadly than many people might. To me, buildings and cities are landscape.

Murray: Your introduction to your more recent book, *The Language of Landscape*, seemed almost apologetic about that definition. I wondered if it was not a response to critics of *The Granite Garden*.

Spirn: Interestingly, the critics came from within the landscape architecture profession — not outside, where it was embraced

a comprehensive examination of the urban natural environment. The book came out at a time when there was a struggle within the profession between those who would emphasize landscape as art, and those who would emphasize the importance of ecological design. McHarg, in the '60s, had reintroduced the larger environmental concerns that had been present earlier in the field. But, as often happens, the disciples went overboard, and many landscape architects, particularly academics, became critical of garden design and that side of the profession. By the early

1980s, there was a swing of the pendulum back to the garden, back to landscape as art. And, of course, there were a few sane voices asking why must it be one or the other?

I think I underestimated the polemics in the argument. I wrote *The Granite Garden* out of aesthetic concerns as well as out of concerns for health, safety, and welfare. But it was read by some people as being more about health, safety, and welfare and about ecological design and planning, which therefore, because of the context of the debates that were going on at the time, must mean that it wasn't about art and aesthetics. I wrote an essay a couple of years later called "The Poetics of City and Nature," which was a response to that.

photo: © Anne Whiston Spirn 2001



Ascent.
Hill of Remembrance, Forest Cemetery.
Stockholm.

Murray: I suppose the architectural analogy would be the purely functionalist approach, which is deemed anti-aesthetic in some?

Spinn: Right.

Murray: Your observation about the flood plains, the low-lying lands, has a functional basis but there's a poetry in discerning the pattern.

Spinn: I actually wrote a poem as a prologue to *The Language of Landscape*. And then my editor said, "No one reads poetry, Anne." So I knocked it down into prose.

Murray: *The Language of Landscape* is in fact written beautifully. But then your subject matter is very literary. The metaphor you chose — language — and especially your chapter on poetics are interesting because they bring the discipline of linguistics to your own discipline, which makes me think about landscape in another way.

Spinn: I hope it brings my discipline, landscape, to linguistics as well. I was determined to trace the roots of language and of the shaping of landscape. The more I read about the origins of consciousness, the evolution of the human mind, and language, the more I became convinced that the shaping of landscape came before verbal language and that languages are reflective of the shaping of landscape. Once you start looking at grammar, at linguistic elements, and at poetics, you realize how deeply rooted in landscape our languages are. For instance, let's take the concept of "address." A gate is a form of address. Shrines are a form of address. Cemeteries are a form of address. Laying flowers on graves is the address of the living to the dead. And on the other hand, the tombstone is the address of the dead to the living.

Exploring literary metaphors helped me to be more disciplined in my thought. The value of this is not to show how erudite you are, but to think more clearly about your expression. So my purpose was to help landscape designers, be they professionals or amateurs, to express themselves more clearly and more powerfully. If landscape is language and if it's going to be useful, then it has to be useful not just in professional work, in high design. It also has to be useful in the vernacular. I put myself to the task of testing language and metaphor in a range of places — Versailles, Stockholm, Australia, Japan, and West Philadelphia. These ideas in landscape literature have to be equally valid to ordinary people who are shaping their landscapes, like community gardens, or their porches, their houses, their yards.

Murray: One of the advantages of being a stranger in a foreign land is that you look at that foreign land with a fresh set of eyes and the foreign land in turn gives you new ideas about home. You've also spent some time in Denmark?

Spinn: I lived on a very small farm in Denmark as an exchange student. It was a seminal experience because I had grown up in a suburban neighborhood in Cincinnati and I had spent a lot of time exploring the city. When I was growing up, the suburb that we lived in was in the process of

expanding — so I'd had the experience of watching farmlands and woods being developed. Places where I had played seemed to disappear. But I hadn't developed an intimate understanding of the realities of natural processes — that was all something romantic, something to write poetry about.

Murray: You got chickens from the supermarket?

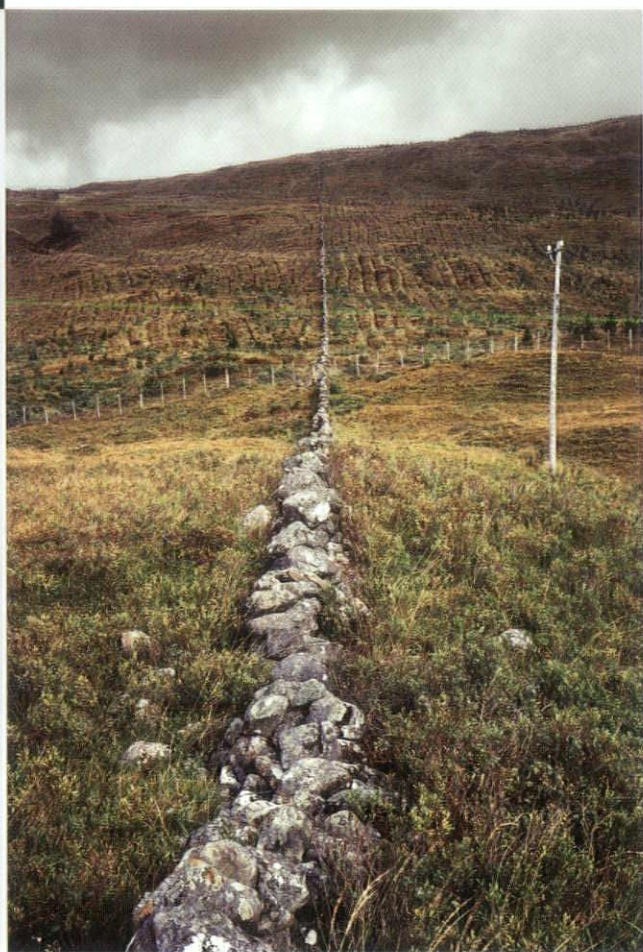
Spinn: Yes, of course, we bought our food in the supermarket. But that lack of understanding changed after living on a farm for a year, particularly on a farm where the family's income depended on the vicissitudes of weather. I remember we had a very wet spring and my Danish father walking out and just staring at the field that couldn't be plowed day after day after day, checking it out to see if it was dry enough to plow. I learned a lot from him — he had a very deep understanding of the soil and of weather. That experience is probably what led me to landscape architecture.

Murray: One of the things about the current foot-and-mouth disease in England is that it is likely to change the nature of the English landscape completely over the next 10 years as people do not restock their sheep and cattle. The land that we know as moorland both in myth and in literature will be forever changed. The landscape will change and, with it, the self-image and self-regard of English, Scottish, and Irish people. It will in a sense be the visible conclusion of an economic process that has been going on since World War II.

Spinn: Most people don't think about how rural landscapes that they admire are shaped by agricultural practices. What you say about foot-and-mouth disease is certainly true, although I think the British are aware of the fact that the hedgerow-and-small-field landscape that seems so archetypal of the English landscape is a function of the wool industry and is therefore a relatively recent phenomenon. In order to keep that landscape, one has to keep sheep; small fields with hedgerows aren't very well adapted to large farm machinery. More broadly, since the emergence of the European Union, sweeping changes have started throughout Europe on marginal agricultural lands within the EU member countries where they can no longer protect farming. These marginal agricultural lands are being abandoned and successional growth is occurring. I have several colleagues in Denmark who realized this about 10 years ago and got grants from the EU to study the phenomenon. It is a change that is going to have cultural, not just economic, reverberations and it's a landscape issue that countries are having to address now.

Murray: I'd like to go back to your interest in infrastructure and landscape. It's very much in the tradition of Frederic Law Olmsted who, in creating Boston's Emerald Necklace, was after all, simply draining the Fens. But he drained it in a very creative and imaginative way, which has left an indelible mark on our city. In the mid-19th century, one of the functions of the park, apart from the purely aesthetic, was to address the issue of public health — creating recreational spaces for people who couldn't get out of the city, to create light, fresh air, greenery.

What does public health through open space mean for us now at the beginning of the 21st century? We have reasonably fresh air. We have reasonably clean water. We can go to the beach on the weekend. We have two days off at the weekend. We have vacations. We supposedly have a 40-hour week. The thing that seems to be ailing our cities is a psychological problem — our inability to meet with one another, to establish what you and others have called “common ground.” Now that fresh air and sunlight are reasonably adequate, is our new public-health mission to create a psychological center to our city? Is there something above and beyond the notion of green space, the park tradition established by Olmsted? What should be the framework for our thinking of new urban open spaces such as Boston’s Central Artery?



From wool to wood:
Landscape of production.
Glen Loe, Scotland.

Spirn: You’re certainly right in characterizing Olmsted’s vision as a social vision that embraced health and safety as well as aesthetics and social interaction. But even though we may have relatively clean air and clean water compared to the 19th century, these issues still need constant vigilance. So I wouldn’t put them aside — we need to continue to work on them along with these larger social issues. I’ve been working mainly with public landscapes in neighborhoods, as opposed to downtown public places. Downtown public places belong to everybody in a city and then sometimes become iconic — they begin to represent the city in the minds of people across the country, even around the world. The Central Artery is certainly one of those kinds of public places that has the potential to become iconic. It’s probably already iconic in terms of the Big Dig, which in itself has become a tourist attraction.

The work I’ve done over the past 17 years has really been about integrating social processes with natural processes — and perhaps that has some application to the Artery. How do you integrate the processes of working with people in a neighborhood and working with people in public agencies at the local, state, or even federal level? Sometimes designers focus too much on static features as opposed to processes. So if one thinks about the space not as something static but as something dynamic that intensifies ongoing processes — whether they be hydrological, climatic, social, or cultural processes — the result will be dynamic places.

Murray: To what extent can an outsider pick up on that?

Spirn: An outsider can definitely pick up on it. It requires reading the landscape, looking for patterns, and then asking questions.

Any given place has a characteristic physiography, climate, and interaction of natural processes that give rise to an enduring structure of that landscape — a structure that existed prior to human settlement and that continues to exist after human settlement. It’s very important to recognize that enduring landscape structure — you could call it “deep structure” or “enduring context” — and to develop plans and designs that are congruent with that structure instead of working against it. If you do work against it, not only do you lose aesthetic opportunities, but you also incur greater costs of maintaining the structure of human settlement.

Murray: That seems to summarize your ideas about the relationship between teaching and practice, research and practice, which are integral to your work. You couldn’t do one without the other.

Spirn: No, I couldn’t do one without the other. I use practice to develop theory, and theory to refine what I do in practice, and then practice to test the theory. I certainly couldn’t be a scholar without practicing. ■ ■ ■

Editor’s note:

For more information on Anne Whiston Spirn’s work, go to: www.upenn.edu/wplp and www.thewolftree.com

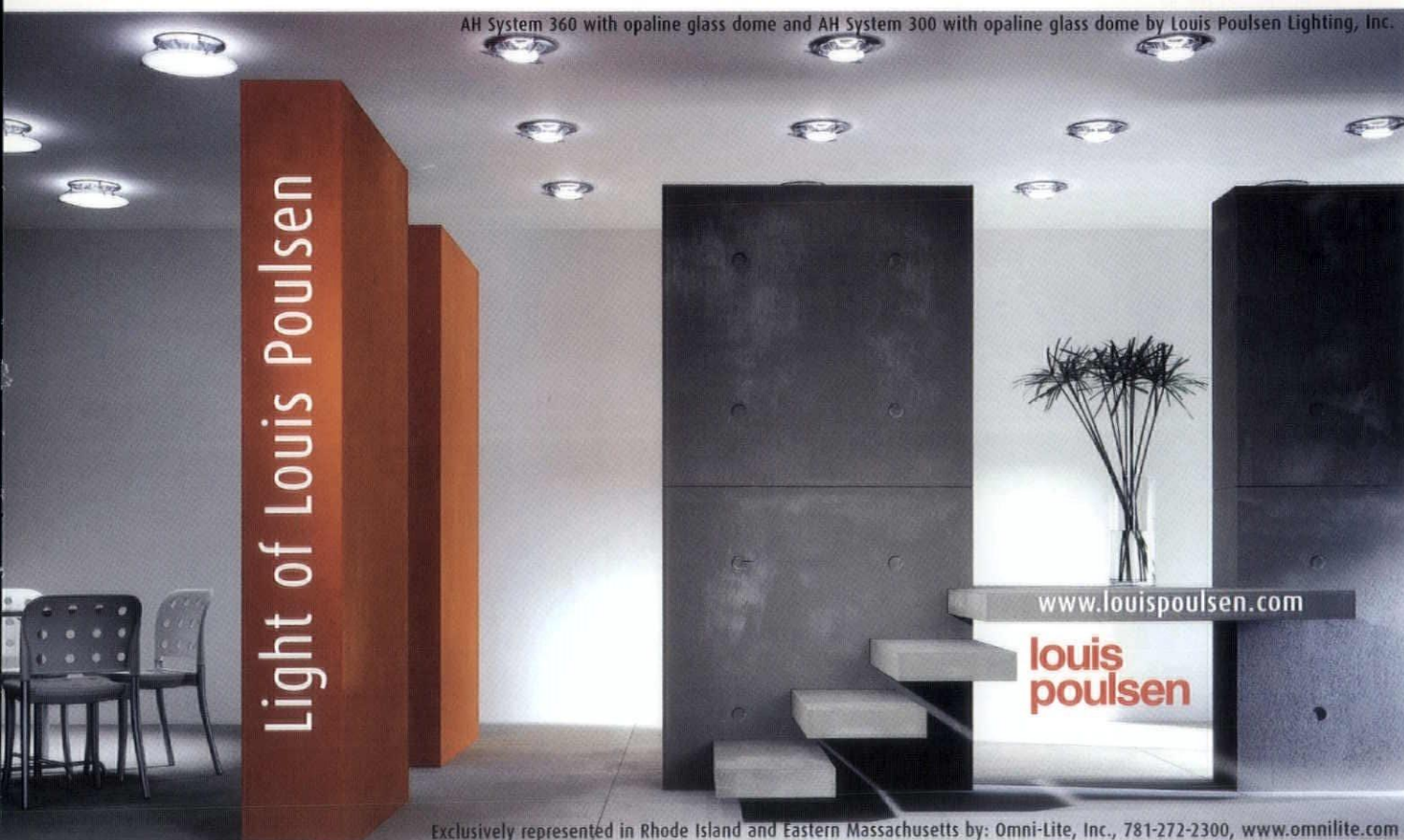
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Letter from Sydney (Post-Marked Venice)

by Bridget Smyth



I am reminded as I sit today in Venice that the culture and built form of a city serve to reflect that city — its values, its rituals — back to its people. In Sydney, we campaign to save buildings just 50 years old and we strive to create innovative icons to our time; in Venice, the restoration of 12th- to 19th-century buildings flourishes and contemporary intervention is seldom found. Somewhere between Venice and Sydney is Boston — a city able to absorb contemporary routines of travel and commerce in its urban fabric while maintaining a link with its own past. As waterfront cities, Boston, Sydney, and Venice have many similarities in culture despite differences in urban form.

This letter from Sydney is penned from two perspectives: from my current assignment in Venice where I am researching the effects of tourism and cultural events — biennales, carnivals — on this ancient city's public spaces; and from my recent experience of the Sydney 2000 Olympics, for which I became director of urban design after living in Boston until 1996. The Sydney Olympics supplied a vivid legacy of urban development as well as some less tangible galvanic stirrings of national pride that are the substance of what we in Sydney value as a culture. At the time, we, the Games organizers, felt we were running our own marathon, with moments of exhaustion, exasperation and, finally — upon staging "the best Games ever" — exhilaration. At least one of those three sentiments would feel familiar to any city undergoing major urban change, such as Boston's Central Artery/Tunnel Project.

The Olympic and Paralympic Games are the world's largest urban event. They have the capacity to catalyze and transform cities, even though few host cities have managed to produce lasting legacies that improve their physical and economic environment. Yet we all know the impact of Barcelona's 1996 Olympic Games on its host city. In fact, without the Games, Barcelona would not hold the pre-eminence that it does in our mind for its innovative contemporary architecture and design leadership. While the regeneration of Barcelona's urban environment and infrastructure was overdue post-Franco, the Games catalyzed it and enabled millions to experience and see it.

With Barcelona in mind, we in Sydney wanted to seize the opportunity of the Olympics to accelerate urban development programs and project Sydney to Australia, to the world. We had the money, the widespread public expectation to accomplish improvements, and a base of political and professional support. The simultaneity of these circumstances would carry us beyond images of P. Hogan and Crocodile Dundee and demonstrate instead that we are a clever country, environmentally conscious, culturally diverse, and intent upon reconciliation with our indigenous peoples.

For a country of 19 million and a city of 4 million, the scale of the event was overwhelming. Some 28 sports drawing 16,000 athletes and officials from 200 countries; 5,000 media people; and 500,000 visitors per day generated a total "load" of 8.5 million people and 36.4 million trips on public transportation. In my view, one of the most important legacies of hosting the Games is a new attitude about our built environment. In Sydney, this is felt in two areas: the development and

consolidation of ecologically sustainable architecture; and the heightened awareness of public space being important to our culture (accompanied by heightened awareness of the role of designers in creating such space).

Our bid to host the Sydney Olympics was underpinned by a mission to be "green." Trumpeting "the Green Games," the bid committee developed a games program that not only promoted sustainable design, but also demonstrated a commitment to environmental sustainability in transport, waste removal, and the many pragmatic aspects of event management. Rather than mandate strict rules, the Environmental Guidelines for the Sydney 2000 Olympics provided designers with performance standards. A new benchmark for sustainable design has been created by the building, landscape, and infrastructure completed over the four-year, \$7.8-billion construction program. Architects have turned what could have been stringent constraints into tools of inspiration. Buildings open the sky to ensure natural ventilation, new materials are used to enhance natural lighting, recycled materials add texture, and solar panels go beyond mere function to become decorative, vivid demonstrations of environmental commitment. Today, the roofs of the Olympic Village constitute the largest solar-powered suburb in the southern hemisphere, while 19 light towers on Olympic Peninsula, each 120-feet high, are powerful expressions of solar-powered and environmentally sustainable Australian architecture.

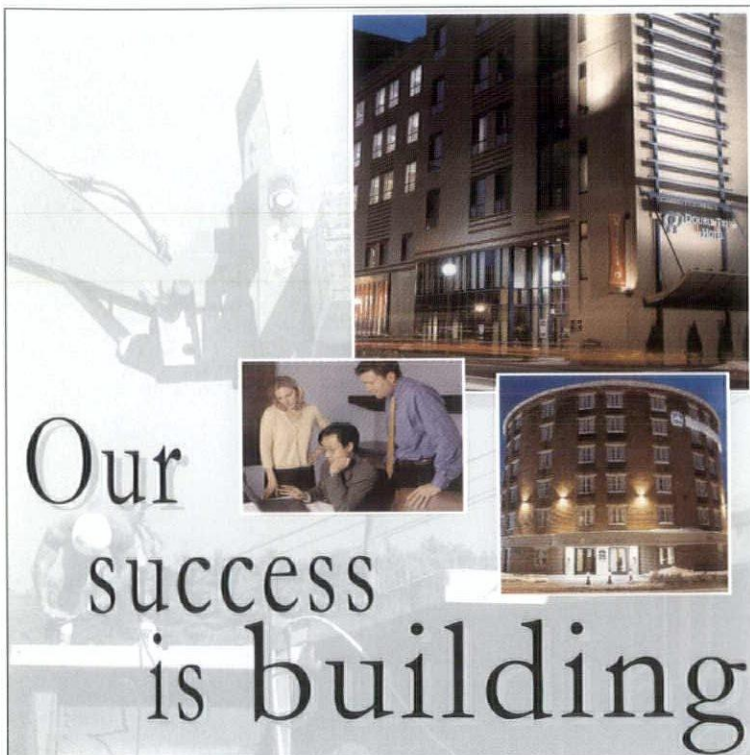
None of this development would have been possible without a massive remediation process to clean up Homebush Bay, the site of more than half the competition venues. Sixteen kilometers from Sydney, Homebush Bay was a derelict, contaminated, and abandoned industrial wasteland, the site of a former tanneries, slaughterhouse, racecourse and, most recently, garbage dump. State-of-the-art remediation processes cleaned the site; in fact, designers made remediation a visible, declarative process. Landscape architects sculpted the surrounding 460-hectares of wetlands known as Millennium Parklands into sculptural forms amid sensitive wetland environments. The Homebush Bay site now stands as a model of "brownfield" site transformation into a community asset as well as an international sports and recreational venue.

The new appreciation for public space and its design grew from Sydney's US\$460-million upgrade of city streets and public spaces. The new work shifted the balance between pedestrians and vehicles in favor of the pedestrian, while basic patterns of vehicular circulation remain operable. The result is a more livable, contemporary, and visually exciting city in which to live, play, shop, and work.

At Homebush Bay, the agglomeration of 14 venues created a unique Olympic precinct and a public space of a scale unprecedented in Australia. The public now understands better that design professionals are shapers not only of buildings but also of systems that support our lives. The staging of the Paralympics has catalyzed a new sensitivity in the design of accessible environments. As in our mission to promote sustainability, designers were challenged to meet or exceed standards for accessibility rather than adhere to strict rules. The resulting public spaces are accessible to all, and were further enhanced by a public-art program modeled on North American collaborative processes.

Just like the athletes, the members of the Olympics planning team are all a little tired and exhausted after our race. As I take a break enjoying the Italian pace of life and studying the Venetian love of spectacle, I see our efforts in Sydney as part of an ancient human impulse, a long continuum of festivals and celebrations. Hearing reports that Boston, New York, Cincinnati, Dallas, and Tampa are interested in hosting the 2012 Games, I wish them well. With the right mix of leadership, skill, realism and vision, the event will provide them a unique opportunity to accelerate urban development programs that have lasting resonance with elusive cultural values, long after the last national flag is waved. ■■■

Bridget Smyth is an architect and urban designer and is the director of urban design for the Olympic Co-ordination Authority in Sydney, Australia. Following her master's degree from the Harvard Graduate School of Design, she was senior urban designer on the Boston Central Artery/Tunnel Project with Wallace Floyd Associates. She is currently the recipient of an Australian Fellowship and is residing in Venice.




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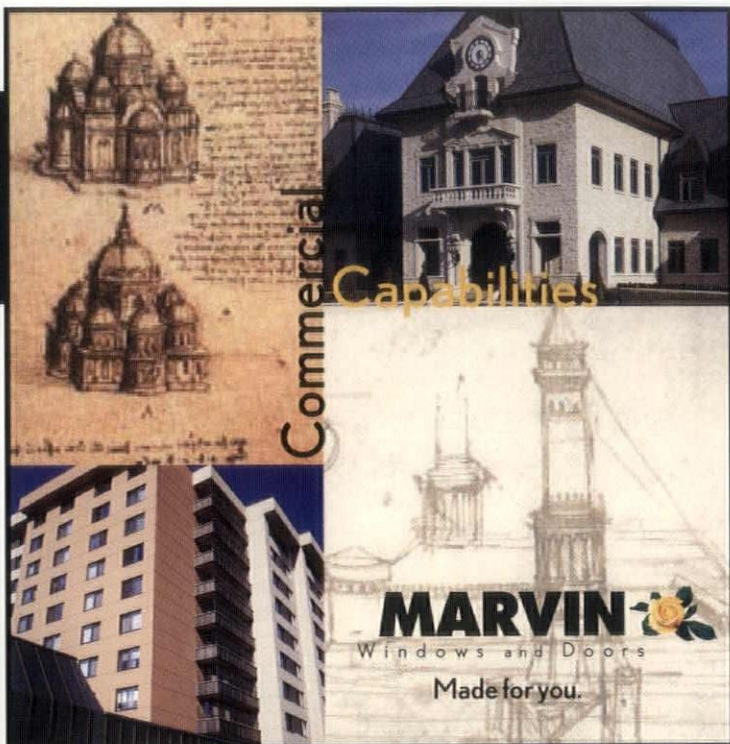


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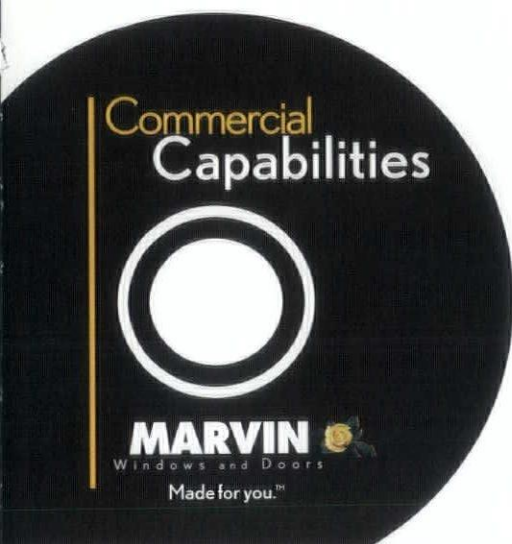
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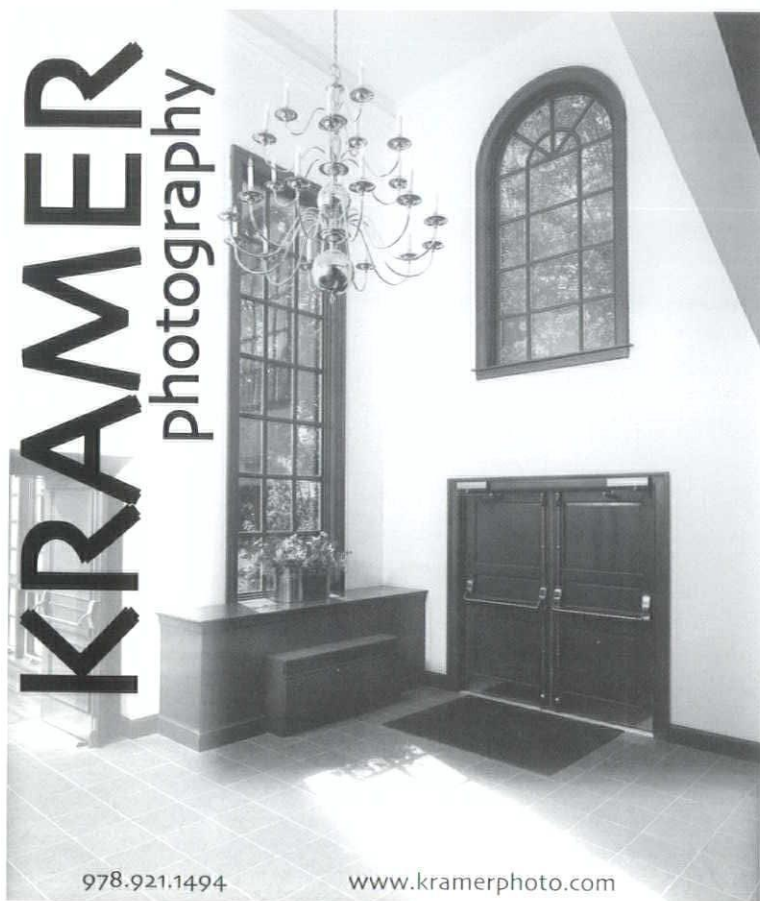
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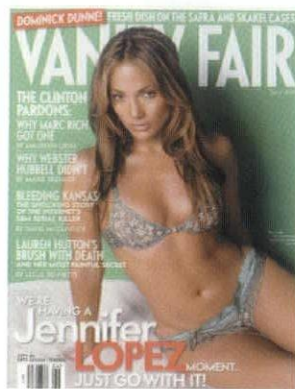
covering the issues

periodical roundup

Gretchen Schneider, Assoc. AIA

Happy birthday, Mr. Johnson...

Robert Stern FAIA pays Philip Johnson FAIA an eloquent — if brief — 95th-birthday tribute in June's *City Fair*. A fitting place for this ever-evolving master of styles and tastes. From Arata Isozaki to Zaha Hadid, Johnson has launched the careers of many prominent architects of the century. A photo from Johnson's 90th-birthday bash features an extended family. (This same photo was also published in *Architecture*'s May 2000 "Power" issue.) Good luck with those candles! We look forward to party at 100.



Bauhaus is back... The Society for the Preservation of New England Antiquities' four-year restoration of the Gropius house is complete, announces Boston's *artsMEDIA* (May 15-June 15, 2001). Originally designed by Walter Gropius in 1938, this iconic, humble house brought Modern architecture to "a new level, overlooking an orchard in a classic New England landscape." As writer Ellen Howards explains, this house is significant for the way Gropius emphasized connections between indoors and out, employed regional materials in untraditional ways, choreographed movement of light and space, and efficiently addressed utilitarian needs. Howards takes her readers on an insider's tour. For those of us trained under the ghost of this legendary educator, the references are strangely informal. She writes, "Walter's wife, Gropius loved gardening and did most of it herself," and "Walter and Gropius both used cologne." Who knew? As Howards brings this house back down to earth, she reminds us that if we haven't been to the house since a school field trip or the last time the in-laws visited, it's time to go again.

King of the hills... Nearly 50 years after his death, Philip Johnson's work has finally gained respect and acclaim. To coincide with LA MoCA's traveling exhibit, "The Architecture of Philip Johnson," Sam Durant, Michael Maltzan, Roy McMakin, Robert Rauschenberg, Wolf Prix, Michael Rotondi, Judith Sheine, and Robert Shulman each contribute to the cover subject of the May 2001 *Art Forum*. This collection of essays, eloquently written and beautifully photographed, alternately addresses Schindler's Viennese training; his immigration to the Hollywood Hills; his interpretations of Modernism; the inspiration (and competition) he drew from Loos, Wright, and Neutra; his lifestyle and friendships; and his influence on California's current generation. Barry Sloane contributes on this belated recognition and provides a map

and an illustrated, annotated guide to a driving tour of Schindler's extant work. Of 500 designed projects, approximately 150 were built, most with modest budgets, inexpensive materials, and difficult sites, nearly all in Southern California. Much the opposite of current globetrotting trends, Schindler's architecture makes an inspiring catalogue of what's possible through a long-developed, intimate knowledge of the cultural and physical landscapes of a particular place and time.

Neither shaken nor stirred... No news here, just a note of equal billing. Bill Steigerwald interviews "urban studies legend Jane Jacobs on gentrification, the New Urbanism, and her legacy" for the conservative libertarian journal *Reason* (June 2001). With extra emphasis on free markets, Jacobs stays true to her well-known

message, long championed by liberals. A toast to Jacobs! Vibrant, walkable, livable cities should be on the bipartisan agenda.

Sprawl watch notebook... These two articles don't come packaged together, but they should. In "Urban Sprawl" (*National Geographic*, July 2001), John G. Mitchell's text and Sarah Leen's photographs remind us of overall issues, update statistics, and argue that America has made little headway since sprawl started making headlines a decade ago despite a rising tide of smart-growth advocates. For example, "since 1969, the number of cars and trucks in the US has grown twice as fast as the population" and our expanding communities now take up four times more land than they did in 1950. Then, in "Is This Your Beautiful House?" (*Fast Company*, July 2001), author Ron Lieber and photographer James Smolka develop these overall themes through two striking case studies, both under construction on the outskirts of Denver: Highlands Ranch and Prospect New Town. If Highlands Ranch is suburbia on evil steroids, Prospect New Town is renegade New Urbanism without neo-traditional kitsch. Lieber provocatively writes, "For all the amazing innovations in almost every industry, there has been no corresponding creative boom in American urban and community development." While considering that, check out the pictures; in both articles they're well worth more than their requisite thousand words. ■■■

Gretchen Schneider, Assoc. AIA, teaches architecture at Smith College.



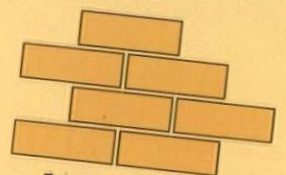
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Chestnut Hill Life Care Facility,
Brookline, MA

Architect: DiGiorgio Associates
General Contractor: Beaver Builders
Mason: D'Agostino Masonry

Boylston Place Life Care Facility uniquely blends a skilled nursing facility with an assisted living residence. Connecting the two areas is a communal interior courtyard with sitting areas, a fountain and raised landscaped beds. The exterior is **ARRISCRAFT STONE**, selected by the architect to provide the endurance and beauty required by the local planning board and the neighborhood association.



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Privately Owned Public Space: The New York City Experience

by Jerold S. Kayden
John Wiley & Sons, 2000

Reviewed by Matthew J. Kiefer

American cities increasingly seek ways to privatize responsibility for creating pieces of the public realm, they depart from the traditional paradigm of city building in which the public sector builds streets, utilities, parks, and civic amenities, and the private sector fills the spaces in between. An early, novel, and influential example of this trend is New York City's 1961 zoning ordinance, which granted property owners a floor-area bonus in exchange for providing quasi-public plazas and arcades. In his new book, Jerold Kayden, a planner, and assistant professor at the Harvard Graduate School of Design, examines the fruits of this now 40-year-old ordinance.

The 1961 zoning resolution allowed developers in specified districts to increase the allowed size of a new building by as much as 10 to 15 times the area of any public plaza or arcade that they included in the project; the additional area is known as a "floor-area bonus." As the ordinance has evolved, more stringent and more detailed standards have been developed, and more public amenities have been required. This increased complexity required more discretionary review and drew attention to enforcing owner obligations.

Working with New York's Department of City Planning and the Municipal Art Society, Kayden compiled the first comprehensive database of the city's privately owned public space. This compilation revealed that a total of just over 3.5 million square feet of public space — equivalent to 30 average New York City blocks, or to the section of Central Park between 54th and 64th Street — was leveraged by the construction of approximately 16 million square feet of bonus floor area — equivalent to 1.6 World Trade Centers. So, to grossly

oversimplify the book's central question, did the creation of 30 blocks of open space justify the construction of another 1.6 World Trade Centers?

Evaluating each of the more than 500 privately owned public spaces created under the ordinance, Kayden concludes that a high proportion of these spaces are of only marginal value, due mostly to a lack of clearly articulated standards. Worse yet, nearly half of the spaces are out of compliance even with the often inadequate design, maintenance, and operational requirements that apply to them.

The question posed above of course presumes that additional density is *per se* bad and that additional open space is *per se* good. But the reality is more complex. Additional density supports retail uses, rapid transit, and street life. Conversely, the value of these open spaces is not based on their size but rather on more subtle, context-driven factors such as solar orientation; pedestrian patterns; placement of plantings, movable seats and other amenities; and the relationship to host buildings and other nearby spaces.

The book's methodology and conclusions raise provocative questions which reverberate beyond Manhattan. Although the city of Boston has few incentive zoning provisions outside the Midtown Cultural District, quasi-public open spaces are often mandated as conditions of development approval for large-scale projects such as the Fan Pier. The private developers who are the creators and stewards of these spaces may perceive a value in adding amenities for the users of their own buildings, but they cannot be expected to have an

independent commitment to providing benefits to the broader public.

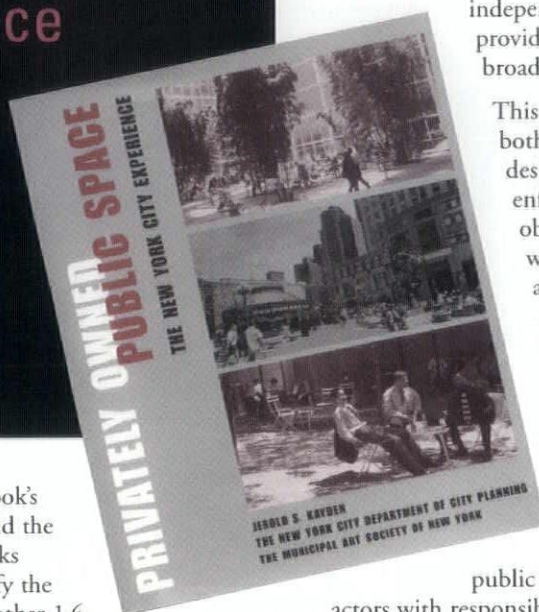
This highlights the need both for clearly articulated design standards and for enforcement of legal obligations. Are we willing to bear the administrative burden of making sure these public amenities are appropriately designed and maintained? Does the promise of attractive public benefits distort the public approval process? Is it good

public policy to burden private actors with responsibility for creating and maintaining public amenities?

One hopes that these questions resonate with Boston's Surface Artery Commission, which is charged with overseeing the development of parcels created by the submerging of the Central Artery highway. The Commission is looking for ways to shift the burden of designing, building, and maintaining Surface Artery open space onto developers and abutting property owners. This goes beyond incentive zoning, requiring private actors to create and maintain a truly public resource.

More fundamentally, ever since the decade-old agreement to maintain 75 percent of the Surface Artery as open space, environmental advocates have treated the open space simplistically as a commodity to be maximized. One of the many lessons of *Privately Owned Public Space* is that quantity is much less important than quality and context. It is not clear that a linear park winding through central Boston will be an important public amenity; it is possible that public (or private) resources would be better spent completing the intermittent Harborwalk a short distance away. Kayden's landmark study provides a conceptual framework for addressing these questions from both sides of the debate. One thus hopes the book's conclusions vex both developers and open-space advocates equally. ■■■

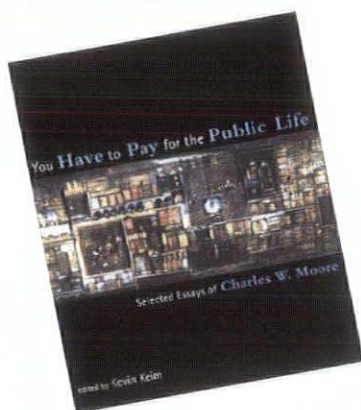
Matthew J. Kiefer is a partner at the Boston law firm of Goulston & Storrs, where he practices real estate development and land-use law.



You Have to Pay for the Public Life: Selected Essays of Charles W. Moore

Edited by Kevin Keim
MIT Press, 2001

Reviewed by
James McCown



Of the many charms of the late Charles Moore, perhaps the greatest is his sense of self-deprecating humor. Twentieth-century architecture is filled with seriousness and self-importance, with designers thinking, "This is it! This will save the world!" By contrast, in the early 1980s when Moore was designing a new museum for Dartmouth College, instead of referring grandly to the two final proposals, he dubbed them merely "Tweedle Dee" and "Tweedle Dum." Like his demeanor, his writing was suffused with modesty and an instinct that architecture, like everything else, is subject to fashion, and that each project is not necessarily Ictinus designing the Parthenon: "I take jobs that...call not for pearls that will ring down through the ages but for something that was pleasant in the circumstances. Every building does not have to be wildly important."

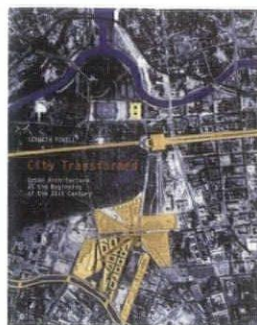
This collection of Moore's essays spans 41 years, from his days as an *enfant terrible* architecture instructor until his death at 68 in 1993. Moore's career was a blessing to the profession. But, unfortunately, this book does him a disservice with the decision to present the essays chronologically. This starts the book with the fledgling, not-yet-focused writing of a 27-year-old and ends with a somewhat

rambling piece about Austin and Salt Lake City. Like a Whitman's chocolate, the best stuff is in the middle, including the seminal 1965 essay "You Have to Pay for the Public Life," in which Moore eloquently calls for "the kind of monumentality that occurs when the Establishment requires buildings more important than others...when skilled architects give physical form to this requirement...and when public imagination confirms this importance..."; and "Eleven Agonies and One Euphoria," a trenchant 1971 critique of the radicalism that was then sweeping many elite architecture schools. Another problem is the book's "mystery writer" — one presumes that the lengthy introductory essay and brief paragraphs preceding each chapter were written by editor Kevin Keim, but we're given no indication of this, nor for that matter who Kevin Keim is or why he is qualified to edit this book. (He is the director of the Charles W. Moore Center for the Study of Place in Austin, Texas.)

The "Disneyfication of America"? Moore was writing about it in 1965 and basically saying, relax — we need *more* fantasy in architecture, not less. Learning from the vernacular? Instead of focusing on architects' usual geographic muses — Japan, Italy — Moore looked to our misunderstood neighbor to the south, Mexico, and found much to be inspired by.

Moore the puckish, Moore the irreverent, Moore the deflator of architectural pomposity — it's all here. It's just harder to appreciate because of the half-baked package it's wrapped in.

James McCown is a freelance writer in Cambridge, Massachusetts.



City Transformed: Urban Architecture at the Beginning of the 21st Century

by Kenneth Powell
Neues Publishing, 2000

Reviewed by
Charles Redmon FAIA

Kenneth Powell braves to ask the question that many architects, urban planners, sociologists, economists, and politicians only ask themselves, quietly before they go to sleep at night: What will the city become in the third millennium? And what role will architecture and design play in shaping the city of the 21st century? *City Transformed* is a glossy attempt to address these issues.

Powell's thesis is that the "prime role of the modern city is as center of consumption rather than production, and that recent architecture reflects that reality." He follows by postulating that it is mainly signature architects, in cahoots with "mayors on the make," who can correctly shape the future of cities. One has to question such a sweeping and presumptuous statement.

Powell goes on to discuss many of the aspirations that have shaped the city in the last century: livability and a richer public realm; reducing density; preservation and infill; vast rebuilding; and balanced work/live communities. In contrast he presents elements of new thinking that are shaping new global communities: concentration of extreme density (as in Asian megalopolises); virtual places and global media; sustainability; reclaiming outdated infrastructure; new modes of transportation; and use of culture and art. Predictably, he suggests that balancing the old goals with new sensibilities and new knowledge may resolve the future plight of cities.

To build his case, Powell offers 20 city case studies from North America, Asia and Europe (Africa and Australia lose again). Although Powell's examples are uneven in presentation text and images, they do offer diverse windows into major transitions of cities and provide a useful reference guide to recent urban design. They are grouped under four general themes: healing and rebuilding; extending and infilling; taming transportation; and enriching with art. Unfortunately, in many cases, the design details of architectural superstars are more celebrated than the local development process, the role of public-private players, the planning framework, or the social agenda. For architects, being titillated by the beautiful designs of Norman Foster, Renzo Piano, SOM, Cesar Pelli, Terry Farrell, and Helmut Jahn is a wonderful experience. However, one would have hoped for more content over form in a book bearing such a provocative title.

Powell believes that the role of the architect at the start of the new millennium will be either that of salvage merchant, economically pulling together the resources of place, or that of a magician, synthesizing fantasy, commerce, entertainment, and public life in new forms of urban space. If this grimly narrow perception proves true, then any access to equity for the world's urban disenfranchised hangs by tenuous threads.

Charles Redmon is a principal of Cambridge Seven Associates in Cambridge, Massachusetts, and a former president of the Boston Society of Architects.

From the Puritans to the Projects: Public Housing and Public Neighbors

Lawrence J. Vale
Harvard University Press, 2000

Reviewed by
Diane Georgopoulos AIA

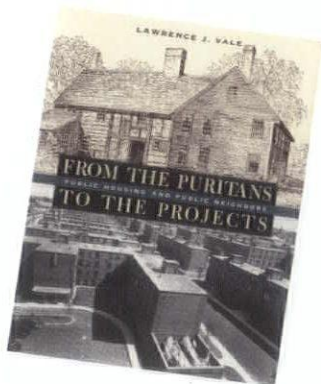
the transformation of public-housing policy from the almshouse to the sophisticated public-private partnerships of the Boston Housing Authority is the subject of this thoughtful and readable history that traces the lurches and retreats that have characterized efforts to provide housing to alleviate a daunting range of social conditions. Lawrence Vale, an associate professor of urban studies and planning at MIT, has divided his portrait of public housing into two main sections: the "prehistory" of public housing and a detailed case study of the Boston Housing Authority. The story begins with the religious conviction of the Puritan settlers to assist the worthy poor and continues with 19th-century combined charities for criminals, juvenile offenders, "lunatics," and the "bleb-minded." More recent history includes housing for defense workers and veteran housing, and the enforcement of anti-discrimination laws rising from the civil-rights movement. We come to appreciate the sometimes uneasy alliances that have been forged among federal, state, and local elected officials, the electorate, landlords, bureaucracies, the home-building industry, and the poor and their advocates. By analyzing housing policies that are implemented in spite of deeply held racial prejudices, we can see the effects of cultural conflicts as they play out in the streets and neighborhoods of the city. These prejudices come in many forms, such as the preference for single-family home ownership instead of rental apartments; discomfort with financial support for those who are perceived to be capable of work but are unemployed; grudging acceptance of what is thought to be a socialist approach to housing production in a free-market

economy; segregation of populations because of age, race, and family composition through tenant selection policy and patronage. Vale offers a largely evenhanded discussion of these ideological conflicts, with an overlay of his own view of where the moral high ground lies.

Vale had a tough job in presenting a vast subject at uniform depth. Many stories can be told about the history of public housing, but the author has exerted admirable restraint in selecting those that best illustrate his thesis: that Americans are collectively ambivalent about how to house the poor, but incremental strategies that remove high concentrations of the poor and consistently enforce fair-housing laws will ultimately lead to success.

To the uninitiated, the subject matter can be complex. The discussion turns technical in its explanations of income limits and ceiling rents or the advantages and disadvantages of vouchers instead of project-based Section 8 subsidy. One criticism of the work is the quality of graphics: Site plans can be difficult to decipher, and captions are sometimes too small. But the book's extensively footnoted and indexed chapters refer to many important source materials and contribute to its value as a professional resource.

Diane Georgopoulos AIA is an architect with the Massachusetts Housing Finance Agency and serves as vice chair of the AIA Housing Committee.



Comeback Cities: A Blueprint for Urban Neighborhood Revival

by Paul S. Grogan
and Tony Proscio
Westview Press, 2000

Reviewed by
Annie C. Harris

America's cities are dying. For as long as I can remember, there has been a growing sense of hopelessness, a growing conviction that the problems of poverty, drugs, and crime will forever mire our cities in defeat, no matter how much money is thrown at our urban centers. Now along come Paul Grogan and Tony Proscio and their new book, *Comeback Cities*, which makes the case that these problems are not intractable and that there are even many new trends and tools that offer great hope for the future of cities.

The authors describe four pro-city trends: the rise in grassroots, non-profit community development corporations; new capital investment in the inner cities due to factors ranging from the Community Reinvestment Act to the discovery that inner-city retail markets can be very profitable; new strategies for dealing with crime; and recent reforms in national welfare, public housing and, currently under review, education. The authors contend that these factors have created more positive changes in the inner cities in the past 25 years than all the billions of federal dollars invested since the Great Depression.

The authors offer some controversial correlations to explain recent urban successes. For example, they argue that immigration plays a key role in turning cities around and suggest that struggling cities might do well to attract new immigrants. They suggest that school vouchers could be critical tools in city revitalization because they provide choices that are currently only available to the affluent. And they argue that eliminating poverty should not be the foremost goal in urban revitalization because we

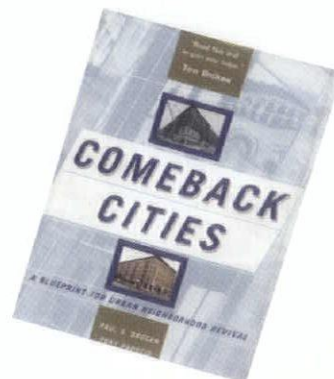
need to recognize that safe, pleasant inner-city communities can be successful even if they are poor.

Although city dwellers are the book's obvious audience, even the most ardent rural resident can learn from its message. For years, America's urban centers have been emptying out into the suburbs. If we continue to think "it's too bad about those inner cities, but they don't really matter to me," we cannot hope to deal with sprawl. Development cannot be completely stopped, but it can be redirected, perhaps most logically into our urban centers. Unless we find ways to have our cities "come back" — making them attractive, safe, interesting, and desirable places to live — the assault on our countryside will proceed unabated, moderated only slightly by the occasional recession.

Occasionally controversial, the authors' ideas are intriguing and well-grounded in practical thinking and first-hand experience. Grogan and Proscio have captured the core of a promising national "blueprint for urban neighborhood revival" — even though they themselves are quick to point out that the results are not yet conclusive. There is no "quick fix" for rebuilding cities, but *Comeback Cities* makes a convincing case that recent urban trends are not passing flukes but can be the harbingers of effective urban revitalization.

Annie C. Harris is the executive director of the Essex National Heritage Commission. She was previously the executive director of The Salem Partnership, a public-private coalition of business leaders dedicated to economic development in Salem, Massachusetts, and the surrounding region.

Note: *Comeback Cities* is available from the BSA, 617-951-1433 x221



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Other Voices by Anne Stetson

The Emerald Necklace

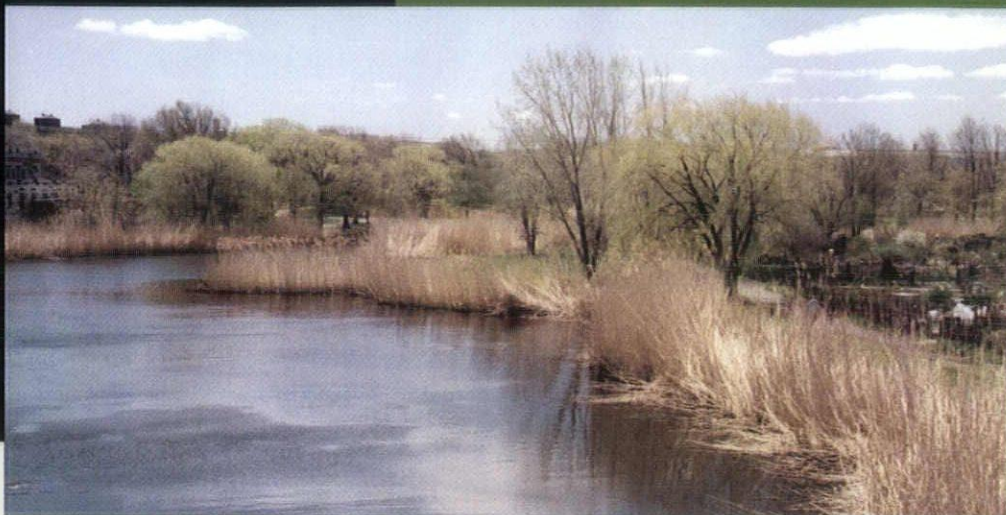


photo: © Michael Berger 2000

My husband persuaded me to move from Manhattan to Boston some years ago by promising we could have a dog (New York City dogs are suspiciously lacking in muscle tone). But when we moved, I entered a long period of mourning for, among other things, Central Park. I had always been careful to live close to the Park so that it would be available for spontaneous and soul-replenishing meanderings, and over the years I had come to know and depend on its whimsy and expansive beauty and to view Frederick Law Olmsted as a hero of no small proportions. Where was the Central Park of Boston, I wondered?

We lived initially in the Back Bay, then migrated over to Beacon Hill and, as the attentive parents of a Weimaraner puppy, were obliged to explore all green spaces available. Soon the Commonwealth Avenue Mall, the Common, and the Public Garden became our daily stomping grounds, but it wasn't until we discovered the rest of the Emerald Necklace, and particularly the Arnold Arboretum (also an Olmsted design), that we felt really at home. I have since learned that the park system was constructed between 1878 and 1895 as Boston's answer to New York's Central Park.

At the Arboretum you can lose yourself in the mirage of an English country estate — happily a democratized version — thanks to exquisitely placed hillocks and copses, lily ponds and paths, and the many species

that compose this tree museum. On a fine autumn day that will make your heart ache with the beauty of the amber foliage against a bigger, more cerulean sky than you ever expected to see in a city, everybody turns out — Hispanic families from Jamaica Plain setting up camp for the day, older Chinese couples taking their daily constitutions, black families letting the afternoon unfold as it will, earnest botanists sporting safari hats and oversized notebooks: Boston in microcosm. We quickly designated the Arboretum our top destination. I have walked through two pregnancies up and over Bussey Hill, where I have sketched the birch trees on its eastern slope, lingered over the lavish number of species of lilacs on Lilac Walk, crosscountry-skied on those rare occasions when Boston snows are adequate, and breathed in deeply the poem that is Olmsted's park.

Over time, we've canvassed each pendant of the Emerald Necklace, so called due to the topographical view of a park system carefully strung over five miles and 2,000 acres of parks, boulevards, and parkways. Each has its own personality quirks, but the common theme of connecting community with community pervades them all. Stringing from the Common (originally a cow pasture and now home to a baseball field, sundry statues, a bandstand, and the Frog Pond), along the Public Garden (an exquisite Lilliputian English garden),

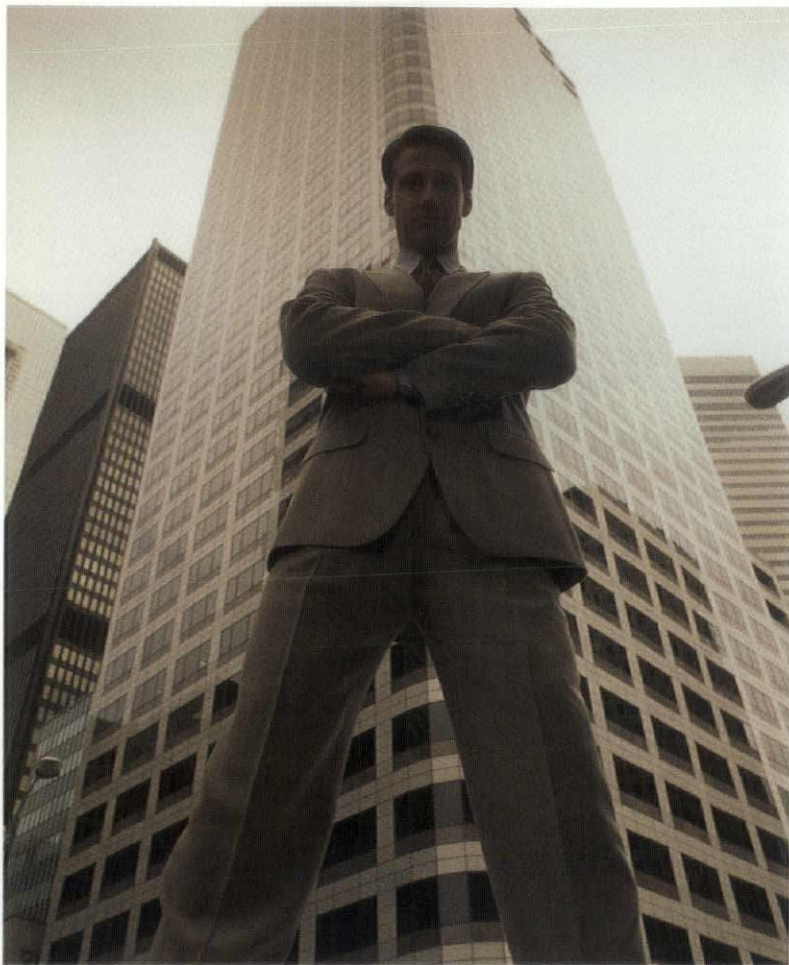
the Commonwealth Mall, the Fens (where my Guatemalan friend George drives in from Roslindale to tend one of the victor gardens), through the Muddy River, Olmsted Park, Jamaica Pond, the Arnold Arboretum, and finally Franklin Park (now less a park than a golf course and zoo), this intricate public park system links Chinatown with Dorchester, Beacon Hill with Jamaica Plain.

And this is no serendipity: Olmsted's social ideal informed his artistry every step of the way. Not only did he espouse the view that city folk need pastoral landscapes to restore their spiritual and mental equilibrium, but he also envisioned the parks as places where people of all classes, colors, and religions could share a common and uncompetitive ground and recognize community among and in spite of themselves.

To this day, the common places that compose the Emerald Necklace serve this purpose. I am cheered in any of the parks to hear languages other than mine: always Spanish, often Hindi, Arabic, Chinese, Russian, and others. Although my children are growing up in a predominantly white (albeit eccentric) neighborhood on Beacon Hill, their daily perambulations to the Common and the Public Garden, and our weekend jaunts to the Arboretum and Franklin Park, teach them that Boston — their world for now — embraces a multiplicity of cultures and races. Olmsted divined that our city would grow increasingly crowded yet at the same time atomized according to culture and race, and he (and the Boston Parks Commission) came to our rescue. The Emerald Necklace endows us with not only physical, but also spiritual beauty in affording us equal footing in spaces whose air we breathe in deeply, knowing that they belong to us all. ■ ■ ■

Anne Stetson is a lawyer and poet living in Boston with her husband and three children, the oldest of which has four legs.

Editor's note: For more information about the Emerald Necklace, go to: www.emeraldnecklace.org



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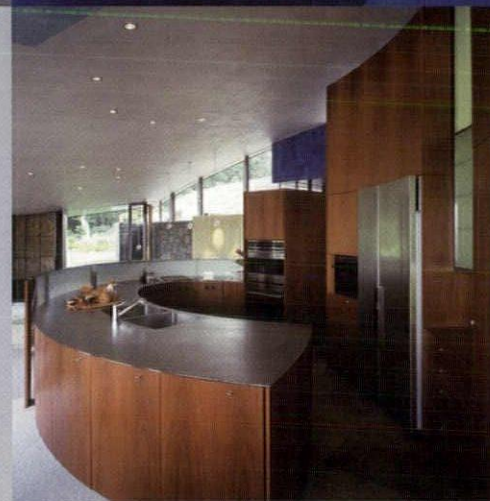
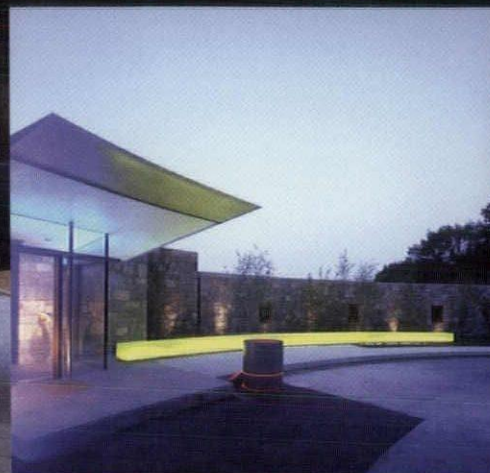
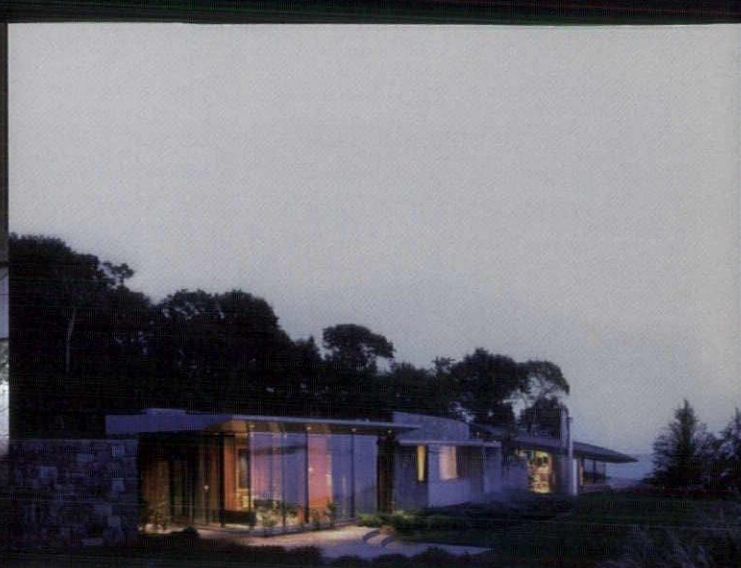
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