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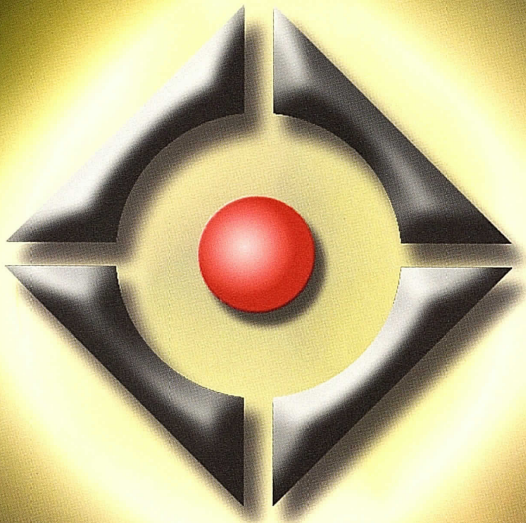
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Open to the Public: Civic Space Now | The Search for the Soul of Cities  
A Different Tale of Two Cities | Public Space Reasserts its Political Role  
Gatherings of One | Time to Welcome Woonerfs  
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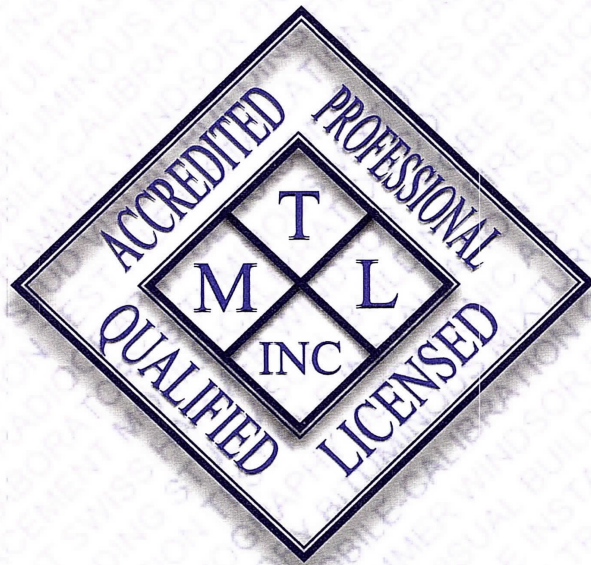
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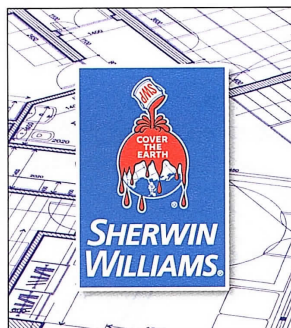


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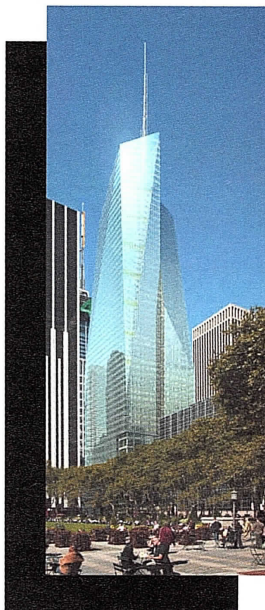
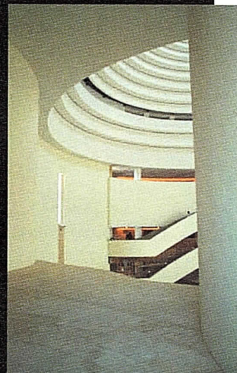
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## LETTER FROM THE PRESIDENT

## Civic Aspirations: Pundit Time

Collaboration and synergy are very much in evidence nowadays. When I introduced the 2014 President's Theme, "Civic Spirit : Civic Vision" before the mayoral election, I could only hope it would resonate. But so profoundly "civic" is Mayor Bill de Blasio's mandate to unite two cities that other U.S. cities are already hoping to emulate it. It's worth emphasizing that what we do as architects and urban designers is central to the mayor's mission.

We are striving within the Center for Architecture itself to be more civic, creative, and efficient as the AIA New York Chapter and the Center for Architecture Foundation work in closer collaboration. The same is true as we resume our Five Boroughs meetings bringing all five boroughs' AIA components together, and our FitCity conferences and Design for Risk & Reconstruction Committee (DfRR) continue to spawn extensions well beyond our Chapter's borders. The "public conversation" about the MoMA expansion in January was co-sponsored by AIANY, the Municipal Art Society, and the Architectural League – cooperation in action.

There are further opportunities for synergy between the professions that help shape the function and form of the city and those charged with determining policy. Civic engagement, the civic realm, civic resilience, and civil rights all nest within the "Civic Spirit : Civic Vision" theme. Topping the lists of New York's pundits are improving education, reconsidering public-private partnerships, increasing safety, building resiliency, underpinning and broadening the economy, and reducing inequities, especially in housing.

In January AIANY led off with a program about the future of public space in Asia. We continued to pursue the policies of our 30-point "Platform for the Future of the City." AIANY leadership recommended measures to the mayor and his team that have encouraged interdepartmental collaboration, influenced appointments, and altered titles.

In February we continued our post-Sandy/DfRR initiatives with "Considering the Quake," an exhibition and programs at the Center that delve into seismic threats. The exhibit, on view through May 26, explores the intimate relationship between

art and technology, and how creative and innovative architecture can result from the recognition of risk. It expands our awareness, knowledge, and ability to deal with the dramatic physical challenges ahead. I often say that nature does not respect political boundaries, and nowhere is this more true than with seismic issues. Many of the resiliency challenges we face can only be met if mitigations are locally collective and fundamentally regional.

Civic culture has been characterized as the fulcrum between urban public space and political formation. These same realms, regardless of scale, are variously suspended between play and protest, between formal and informal. The year's upcoming 2014 President's Theme exhibitions, "Polis, 7 Lessons Learned from the European Prize for Urban Public Space" and "Open to the Public: Civic Space Now," will examine classical and incidental examples of these realms, and explore how they please and sustain us and make us resilient. And, since the realization of places that allow for community are modified by culture and climate, we'll examine the civic realm both at home and abroad, learning lessons from each.

We have already accomplished a great deal this year. The 27 AIANY Chapter Committees, the Chapter's professional and civic foundation, are finding new ways to share knowledge, discuss issues, and leverage collaboration. The Center for Architecture Foundation continues to educate future generations and inform the general public with practical skills and awareness-raising programs.

This year my family was blessed with a grandchild, Sergio. Grandchildren are game changers. Ed Mazria, the early proponent of sound ecological design and initiator of the 2030 Challenge, closed a presentation with an enormous headshot of his first grandchild, and talked, somewhat choked up, about how important it is to build for her future. Our mandate is nothing less. Our civic values and visions must translate into planning, designing, and building beautiful, safe, and resilient communities.

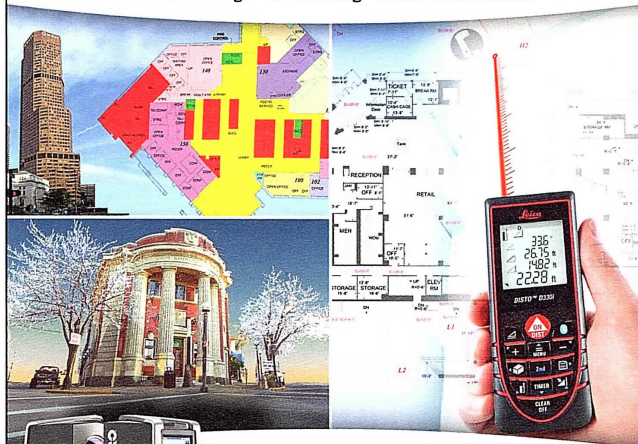
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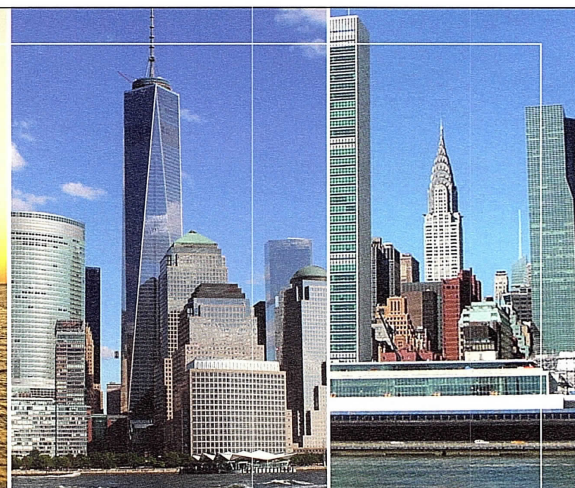
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## LETTER FROM THE EDITOR

## Shared Spaces, Shared Pages

In my mind, it was in the immediate aftermath of 9/11 that the importance of public spaces truly entered the consciousness of all New Yorkers. It began with the ad hoc memorials attached to fences and left at firehouses that created a community of shared grief. The feeling of loss was palpable – and shareable – on so many levels. The sense that the public wanted – and deserved – a place at the table in deciding what would be built, or not built, at Ground Zero went well beyond the more typical neighborhood clash of interests. As a key player in establishing the New York New Visions planning and design coalition, the AIA New York Chapter was integral to empowering public participation. It still is.

AIANY and the Center for Architecture continue to be vital to keeping the public informed, and bringing it into conversations about how best to build a thriving – and beautiful – city that serves the needs of all its residents. It isn't all smooth sailing, but the efforts and (most) results have been worth it. One example is the evolution of privately-owned public spaces (POPS). It is now more difficult for developers to just pay lip service to POPS to win zoning variances by including lifeless, and sometimes airless, plazas or atriums.

*Oculus* has played its own part over the last 11 years by covering the projects and politics that affect the public realm. While the Spring issue has always been dedicated to the annual President's Theme, this issue represents an unprecedented collaboration between the *Oculus* Committee, 2014 AIANY President Lance Jay Brown, FAIA, and Thomas Mellins, curator of this year's presidential theme exhibition, "Open to the Public: Civic Space Now," on view at the Center for Architecture beginning June 12. We share our editorial space with five essays, commissioned for the exhibition, that compare public spaces in New York City with those in Los Angeles; Columbus, Ohio; Athens, Greece; and Havana.

Our feature articles continue the theme, with profiles of projects that range from redesigning

and redefining mega-places, such as Times Square and Governors Island, to a smaller endeavor, but a saga in its own right – the NYC AIDS Memorial, rising on a small triangular island on Seventh Avenue in Greenwich Village. A bright note for the future is the J. Max Bond Center on Design for the Just City, a laboratory for CCNY faculty and students, as well as local high school students, to research and apply placemaking and city-building with the civic good in mind. Regular departments also have their say on the subject. For this issue, "One Block Over" becomes "Some Blocks Over," highlighting post-Sandy streetscapes across four boroughs that are being brought back to life by a young design firm revitalizing small-business storefronts through a city-sponsored program. "In Print" is a "bibliographic essay" on a number of books that offer insight and guidance on urban design and civic engagement. And "50-Year Watch" revisits a plan for a major civic center near City Hall that, had it come to fruition, would have drastically changed the face of Lower Manhattan.

Tompkins Square Park was a place to avoid at all costs when I lived in the East Village many years ago. Several years later, it hosted boisterous but (mostly) peaceful demonstrations against gentrification of the neighborhood. Now it has gracefully settled into its old age as a peaceable kingdom of dog walkers, yoga classes, concerts, and sunbathers. And on a recent winter day as I was crossing Zuccotti Park, I spotted an obviously Midwestern family taking photos of each other, and offered to take a group shot. When I enquired why they wanted pictures in that park, the response surprised – and pleased – me: "This was the birthplace of the Occupy movement!" As we continue through this post-9/11, post-High Line, post-Sandy era, I can't help but feel optimistic about the city's future. But it will require our continued vigilance and advocacy if our public spaces are to truly welcome and be embraced by the public.

Kristen Richards, Hon. AIA, Hon. ASLA  
kristen@ArchNewsNow.com



Editor at a favorite open space: a construction site.





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# Center Highlights



(above) AIANY 2013 President **Jill N. Lerner, FAIA**, handed the gavel to 2014 President **Lance Jay Brown, FAIA**, at the AIA New York Chapter 2014 Board Inaugural.



(left) (l-r): Members of the NYC Council Progressive Caucus **Donovan Richards** (Queens), **Stephen Levin** (Brooklyn), **Mark Levin** and **Margaret Chin** (Manhattan), and **Mark Weprin** (Queens) joined the New York State Civic Engagement Table, the Center for Popular Democracy, and a number of other organizations at the Progressive Holiday Party hosted by the Center.



(above) (l-r): Co-chairs of the AIANY Design for Aging Committee **Lisa Morgenroth, Assoc. AIA**, and **Jerry Maltz, AIA**, with **Beatriz de la Torre**, Commissioner of Strategy and Operations at the NYC Department of Housing Preservation and Development, and AIANY Executive Director **Rick Bell, FAIA**, at the opening of "Booming Boroughs: Redesigning Aging-in-Place in NYC," an exhibition that addresses the challenges faced by aging populations in NYC.

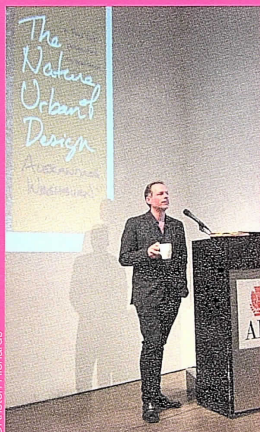


(above) (l-r): At The Path Forward: Sustainable Streets 2013 and Beyond panel, *New York* magazine critic **Justin Davidson** moderated a conversation between City Council members **Brad**

**Lander** (Brooklyn) and **Daniel Dromm** (Queens) and Manhattan Borough President **Gail Brewer** on the city's future transportation and streetscape policies.



(left) The traveling exhibition "People Building Better Cities: Participation and Inclusive Urbanization," a collaboration between Global Studio and the Center for Sustainable Urban Development at Columbia University, aimed to promote dialogue on participatory design and planning.



(left) Former Chief Urban Designer of the NYC Department of City Planning **Alexandros E. Washburn, Assoc. AIA**, presented *The Nature of Urban Design: A New York City Perspective on Resilience* at the January Oculus Book Talk.

## Center for Architecture Foundation

(right) In November, the Foundation hosted the Architecture College Fair. Representatives from 11 colleges and universities and more than 150 students and parents attended; pictured: Demetrios Comodromos, professor at RPI, speaks with students from the High School of Art and Design.





# Sprucing Up Shopfronts Post Sandy

A year after Hurricane Sandy, New York City provides grants and design expertise to rework damaged storefronts in four boroughs

BY CLAIRE WILSON

The question was inevitable: Why now? But when Susan G. Doban, AIA, of Doban Architecture, showed up at 35 shops around the city last fall with the promise of improvements, no one turned down her offer of a design for a spiffed-up storefront. Each had qualified under a special program offered by New York City's Department of Small Business Services (SBS), which offered up to \$20,000 apiece to improve shop façades and give a lift to damaged neighborhoods where foot traffic had not quite returned to normal. "Making new façades and upgrading gives an area new life and gets people back on the streets," Doban says.

The South Street Seaport is one neighborhood that still needs help drawing visitors. Amanda Byron Zink repaired the water damage to Salty Paw, her pet accessories shop on Peck Slip, but needed new visuals for the front of the store, which is land-marked and severely restricted. Doban suggested moving the blade sign, putting the store's name above the door, and keeping the windows clear for catchy displays. "We needed people to know it was a dog store, to give it something to stand out and have more consumer appeal," says Byron Zink. "Susan took my ideas and ran with them."

Other neighborhoods to get SBS grants include Red Hook and Coney Island in Brooklyn; the Rockaways, Queens; and Midland Avenue, Staten Island. Eventually, up to 75 businesses might get grants, according to the SBS.

Each project was as different as the businesses themselves, according to Doban, who worked with Jason Gorsline, design director of Think Fabricate, Doban Architecture's multidisciplinary design studio. In addition to a new façade and repairs, some needed logos, others awnings, and still others advice on how to clean up crowded visuals in the windows. There was a butcher, a surf shop, a Russian language pharmacy, a fish restaurant morphing into a Mexican eatery, and an empty store with a clown mural taken from an amusement facility. In other places, small groups of shops were unified with interesting colors and textures.

Erin Norris, owner of Grindhaus, a restaurant in Red Hook, already had something in mind for her façade and was doing a lot of the work herself. She'd lost everything to water damage, but didn't get any Sandy relief funds because the restaurant wasn't yet open when the storm hit. When the SBS funds came along she was able to realize what she'd long envisioned: a façade of rough cedar planks, copper shingles in the entryway, and a handmade copper awning she'd wanted but couldn't afford



(left) The Grindhaus restaurant in Red Hook, Brooklyn, before its facelift by Doban Architecture.



(below) Rendering of the Grindhaus after.

without the grant. Grindhaus finally opened late last fall, a year behind schedule. "The designers had a vision for my storefront, and were delighted with what I already had here," says Norris. "I was thrilled to work with them."

Doban says the hardest part was a very tight schedule. The architect would blitz a neighborhood, meet with shop owners, see what they needed, do a rendering, come back with it for comments, and revise. "We didn't have a lot of time for the typical process," she says.

Russell Whitmore, owner of the seven-year-old Erie Basin jewelry store in Red Hook, didn't mind the pressure. The grant allowed him to paint the façade, enhance the lighting, and replace the roof over the storefront corners with a copper version that doesn't leak. He would have done it all eventually, he says, "but it was nice to have a deadline to inspire me to do it all at once."

Claire Wilson writes for the *New York Times*.



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OPENER:

# OPEN TO THE PUBLIC: CIVIC SPACE NOW

BY THOMAS MELLINS

**T**his year the AIA New York Chapter's Presidential Theme is "Civic Spirit : Civic Visions," and no type of built environment reifies the civic realm more than public space: squares, plazas, parks, and streets. Regardless of how these spaces are owned, programmed, and policed, the idea that they belong to and can be freely accessed by all of us – the haves and have-nots alike – is essential to their character. In part because the issue of societal inequality – a "tale of two cities" – is currently dominating discourse about New York, public space has seized our collective imagination more dramatically than it has in decades.

## FREEDOM AND CONTROL

At its core, public space demands that we focus on the relationship of the individual to the group, raising the question: How does the fact that we are citizens, not subjects, impact our built environment? For architects, landscape architects, and designers, a key challenge becomes how to most effectively create inviting, flexible public space that fosters public debate and discourse.

Public space holds out the allure of taking one's place in society, of expressing one's identity, opinions, and beliefs. It also holds the potential for bearing witness and being watched. Occupying public space, one is immediately confronted with issues of freedom and control. How right the architect Charles Moore, FAIA, was in his landmark essay of 1965, "You Have to Pay for the Public Life," to point out a central contradiction in our

@Lance Jay Brown





experience of shared space: the simultaneous desire for inclusivity and exclusivity. Observing that Disneyland, with its idealized pedestrian-oriented Main Street, was “engaged in replacing many of those elements of the public realm which have vanished in the featureless private floating worlds of southern California, whose only edge is the ocean,” Moore noted, “Curiously, for a public place, Disneyland is not free. You buy tickets at the gate. But then, Versailles cost someone a great deal of money, too. Now, as then, you have to pay for the public life.”

## CIRCULATION AND CONGREGATION

Today, cities, not just theme parks, are being embraced as environments to explore, encouraging each of us to discover our inner flâneur as we search for the unexpected as well as the iconic. After decades in which the car transformed the American city and the highway engineer largely replaced the urban planner (much less the architect or landscape architect) as the key shaper of urban environments, streets and other aspects of infrastructure are being reclaimed and repurposed. Planners and designers are promoting pedestrian-centric schemes that emphasize human scale. The phenomenal success of the High Line (initially projected to attract 350,000 people annually and now visited by 4.5 million) demonstrates the power of public space designed to celebrate circulation through the city.

In contrast, while electronic interconnectivity and “virtual” communities worldwide have changed the way we communicate and how social movements develop, political demonstrations and uprisings, from Zuccotti Park to Tahrir Square, have shown the enduring power of public space intended to foster congregation. As pointed out in a 2011 blog by Peter Marcuse, Columbia University professor of urban planning, “The First Amendment set a minimum threshold for the exercise of the right of free speech, but what is needed is not the ability to speak freely out in the desert, inaccessible to most and heard by few. Rather, what is needed are publicly available spaces that can fulfill the functions of the traditional agora, places where free men and women can meet, debate, speak to, and listen to each other, learn from each other, confront issues of public concern, and facilitate their resolution.”

## BY CHANCE, BY LAW, BY DESIGN

In New York, there is resurgent interest in public places that were carefully planned as well as public places that evolved over time. In 1733, a cattle market at Broadway’s southern endpoint became Bowling Green, the city’s first public park. By the middle of the next century, the need to augment the city’s rather meager parks with a massive green space resulted in Central Park. A work of American genius, the park was also a remarkable demonstration of public will.

Three decades later, the city’s far-reaching civic vision could be seen again in a public space hidden in plain sight as a utilitarian piece of infrastructure; from the first, the Brooklyn Bridge, equipped with a pedestrian walkway, attracted both commuters and tourists. By the close of the 19th century, streets on the Lower East Side and elsewhere were transformed into open-air emporiums full of pushcarts, and children citywide used streets as impromptu playgrounds and playing fields.

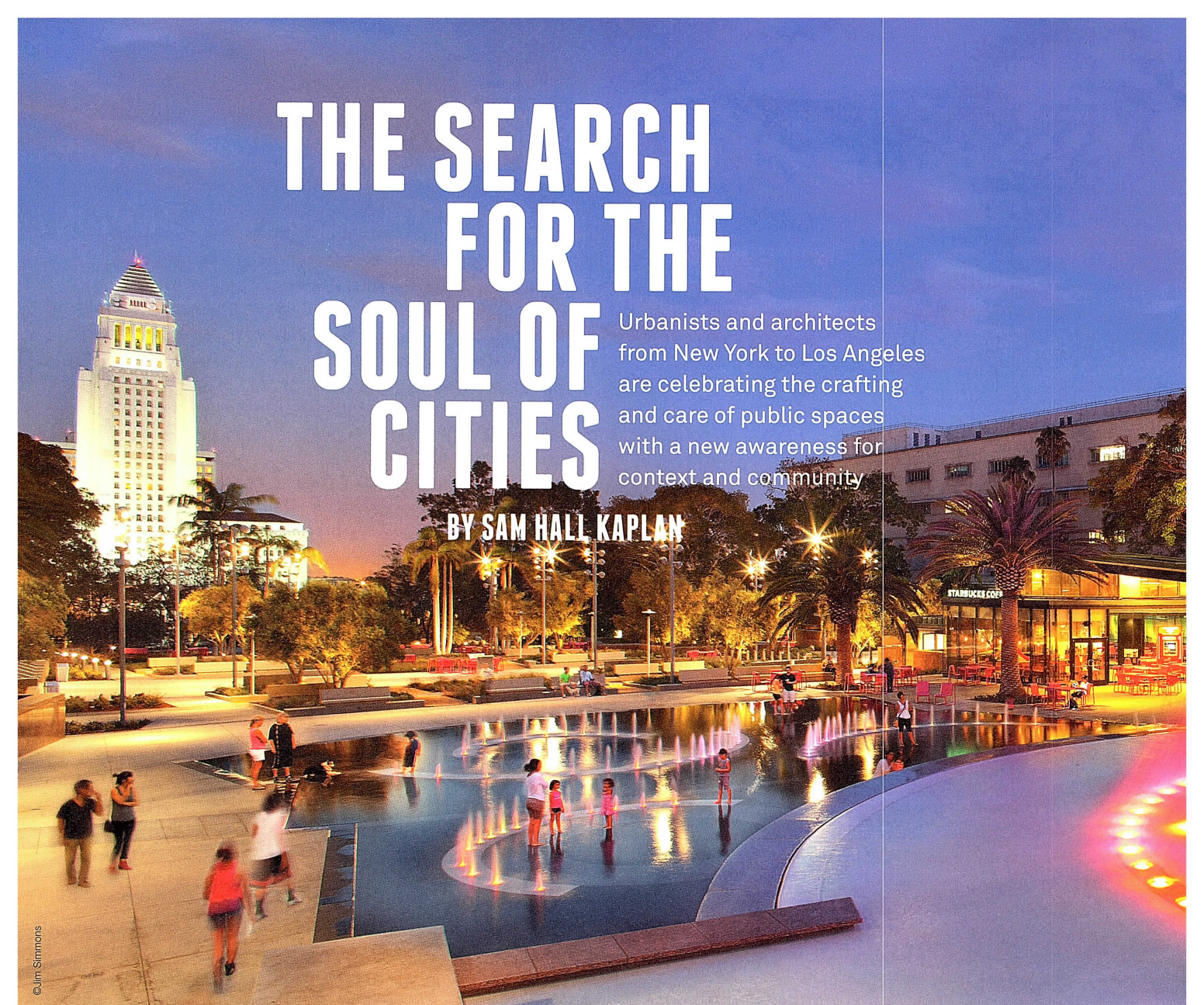
New York City’s post-World War II transformation, in which whole precincts were rebuilt with glass-and-steel office towers, led to the 1961 revision of the nation’s first zoning law, enacted 45 years earlier. Intended to open up the city and reduce congestion, the law resulted in so-called public “bonus plazas” that more often than not proved underpopulated, windswept, and lifeless, evoking Norman Mailer’s contemporaneous castigation of modern architecture, as producing “the empty landscapes of psychosis.”

Two New York City public spaces, one newly designed and the other recently redesigned, bookend the current state of public gathering spaces. The National 9/11 Memorial reimagines the site of the former World Trade Center as a place of remembrance. Entered now only after extensive security checks (which officials promise will go away some day), the geometrically orchestrated open area invites contemplation, but not yet unfettered congregation. At the same time, a redesigned Times Square mines the Great White Way’s tradition of neon signs as it surrenders streets to pedestrian-only plazas, creating a broadly accessible and celebratory whole.

The five essays that follow, which together serve as a key component in the accompanying exhibition, “Open to the Public: Civic Space Now,” on view at the Center for Architecture from June 12 to September 6, 2014, offer varied perspectives on the state of contemporary public space. Each essayist contrasts a public space in New York City with one in another city. All the essays consider the individual’s relationship to his or her larger community; several address the interplay between the necessary order of cities and the necessary disorder of democratic discourse. And there is an underlying note of advocacy. We must save an increasingly endangered spatial species: unthemed, unbranded public space. It can be more or less programmed, more or less managed, more or less flexible, even more or less designed, and still retain its defining characteristics. Public space cannot, however, fulfill its central mission unless it is truly open to the public. ■

**THOMAS MELLINS** is an independent curator and the co-author of three books on the architecture and urbanism of New York: *New York 1880*, *New York 1930*, and *New York 1960*.





# THE SEARCH FOR THE SOUL OF CITIES

Urbanists and architects from New York to Los Angeles are celebrating the crafting and care of public spaces with a new awareness for context and community

BY SAM HALL KAPLAN

©Jim Simmons

**W**hither public space, those prime and outré places in our urban sprawl we diffidently share with disparate others? Here for all to experience is the existential life of a city, the sidewalks, squares, parks, and playgrounds, as well as the varied vestigial spaces, its genius loci.

Just a decade or so ago, a gaggle of planning and design critics and pandering politicians were bemoaning the death of public space, a victim of municipal neglect, overt commercialism, and media disinterest. We had surrendered the weaving of our urban fabric to an unholy alliance of traffic engineers, duplicitous developers, disingenuous elected officials, and undiscerning pedants. As designers of singular structures for a predominately private and public elite, the self-absorbed design professionals were mostly irrelevant to the unadulterated urban condition. Streets were shunned, sidewalk gatherings suspect, and parks avoided. Pervading all was a fog of civic unease.

Today, in a notable change of personal perception and popular fortune, our urbanists are celebrating the crafting

and care of public spaces as a harbinger of a more open and inviting city, a place where people can come out from behind computer screens to experience a rare sense of community, however fleeting. Add to this chorus the growing gaggle of ubiquitous tourists, their communal ardor feeding local coffers and conceits.

For architects, there seems to be a new awareness for context and community, the purpose and potential of public space, and a need to hone the cryptic craft of placemaking. Prompted by the ever-increasing competition for new clients – or whatever – architects have taken on the magnanimous mantle of urban designer, landscape architect, and planner. As a play on a witticism suggests, you can call architects anything, but don't call them late for lunch. Give them a canvas, they will paint; clay, they will sculpt; a plot of land, they will design.

All hail the High Line, the benches on Upper Broadway (my roost was on 79th Street, facing south), and the blossoming parklets. These among other civic amenities in New York



(opposite page) Even at night, Downtown Los Angeles's Grand Park, designed by Rios Clementi Hale Studios, is a social gathering place for all ages.

are providing, as usual, the paradigms and envy for the less dense and creative cities beyond – or at least where private funds can be tapped for assemblages and maintenance, and the sites do not become too unruly and embarrassing, such as the Occupy paroxysms. Public space may indeed be the stage for democracy, but it has limits as deemed by the powers-that-be and rank-and-file police. Issues raised and bruises recalled in Zuccotti Park continue to haunt.

Still, there's no denying a rising design consciousness in the shaping of public spaces. This is most welcome to anyone who has ever looked for a place to sit in a park, rather than in a coffee house and having to pay for it. For New Yorkers who, for convenience and price, eat off of a street cart or roach coach, a nearby ledge also can be a public amenity – a blessing, too, if herding a child to a fenced playground where you can let go of his or her hand so the youngster can romp at will. That has to be one of the liberating joys of city life, played out as only it can be in an open, accessible public space. It is the stuff of memories.

The fact is, public space has always distinguished human settlements, from the first days of the Sumerian city of Ur, fabled Pompeii, to an evocative Paris and evolving New York. Architectural icons might be interesting to focus on from a distance: envision the Williamsburgh Savings Bank or the Empire State Building. But these and singular others are just backdrops in a city, heedlessly providing edges to the adjacent streets as an afterthought at best.

The real city envelops. For me it was the stoops of Bensonhurst that served our family as a living room; Eighth Street beyond, a promenade; the Ocean Parkway bike path, leading to the inviting worlds of Coney Island and Prospect Park; the ball fields of my adolescence in East Harlem; the Central Park dog run for my loving Lab; the chess tables of Washington Square for diversion and pocket change; and Bennett Park in Upstate Manhattan for sharing an occasional cigar and bench with other “alter kockers” looking like beached, whiskered, Yiddish-speaking walruses.

Los Angeles, where I now bask most of the time, also has its special public places for me, including the beaches of Santa Monica and Malibu, which are joyous sand-covered piazzas,

hosting the city's multicultural throngs. For strolling I head to the Venice boardwalk, Chinatown alleys, Santa Monica promenade, downtown Broadway, and, yes, upscale Beverly Hills, with their ebb and flow of idiosyncratic crowds. But these are disembodied locales, for despite the city's welcoming, benign weather, its public places are frail and fractured, due in part to an irresolute populace and politic.

Not so New York. Wherever they are and whatever labeled, a commons or a park, the spaces are gathering places where people make eye contact, bump buttocks, and rub shoulders, feeding commerce, socialization, and collective memories. They are also historic stages for both protests and play. Whether a conflict or plague was raging, a despot or religious fanatic ranting, the places persevered. They are the soul of cities, and as our metropolises grow and populations rise, the need for such places becomes paramount.

Working nearly a half century ago as an inspector for the Railroad Perishable Inspection Agency on a then-raw Chelsea waterfront, I never could have envisioned that the elevated B&O spur where I stalked nights would be transformed into what is today the High Line. But someone did, making me wonder what derelict sliver of the city, what interstitial civic space, will next be turned into a people place.

The challenges to repurpose and shape spaces excite and demand a design intelligence that includes sensitivity

for, and a commitment to, the user. “What is the city but the people,” Shakespeare reminds us in *Coriolanus*. My memories, meanwhile, remain rooted in Brooklyn, and the echo of my mother telling me to get out of the house and play, adding, always, “Stay on the street and watch out for the cars.” Good advice then – and now. ■

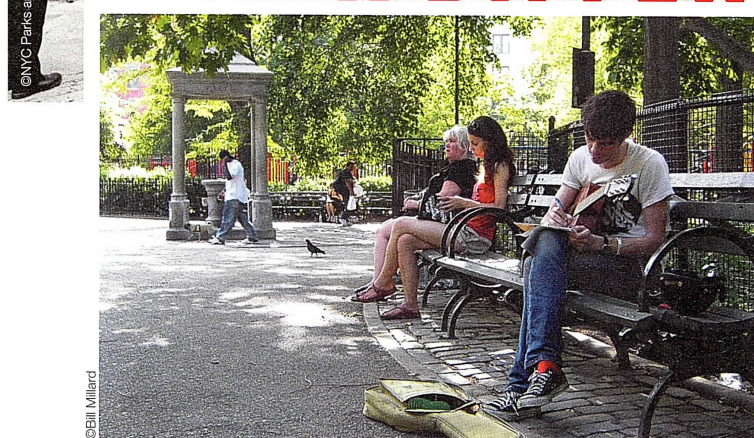
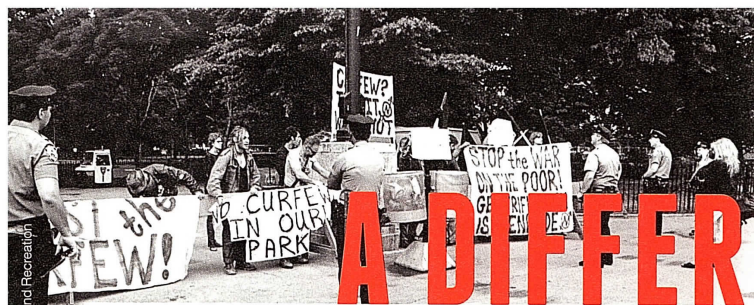
**SAM HALL KAPLAN** is an urban designer, journalist, and academic who in a long bicoastal career has been an urban affairs reporter for the *New York Times*, architecture critic for the *Los Angeles Times*, an editor of the *New York Post*, and an Emmy Award-winning commentator for Fox News and National Public Radio. His books include *The Dream Deferred: People, Politics and Planning in Suburbia*; *L.A. Lost & Found*; and *The New York City Handbook*.



©Kristen Richards

Washington Square Park in the heart of Manhattan's Greenwich Village is an urban oasis on a hot summer day.





# A DIFFERENT

BY BILL MILLARD

# TALE OF TWO CITIES

At NYC's Tompkins Square Park and several sites in Columbus, Ohio, public-space renovations to improve quality of life show that the traffic in urbanist ideas isn't always one-way

New York City and Columbus, Ohio, occupy opposite poles on urban America's density/sprawl spectrum. New York's decline-reanimation-gentrification rollercoaster may set precedents for processes driving other cities toward livable streets, diversity, and arts activity. It's a powerful, problematic model, often pivoting on changes in public space. As for "how much that happens organically versus how much with planned intervention," says Columbus planner Terry Foegler, AICP, "the jury's still out."

## TOMPKINS SQUARE PARK: HOMELESS OUT, DOGS AND TRACEURS IN

The Lower East Side has what Andrew Berman, executive director of the Greenwich Village Society for Historic Preservation, calls "a long tradition as an area where people continued to press the boundaries" as well as "a density that lends to vibrancy." The Tompkins Square Park riot and later reconfiguration were a physical and symbolic clampdown on an anarchic moment.

On August 6, 1988, during an anti-curfew rally, the New York Police Department came down hard on Tompkins Square's protesters, squatters, bystanders, and journalists. Videos documented that police officers used excessive force; more than 100 brutality complaints resulted, along with personnel shakeups and payouts to the injured. "That was a watershed moment," says Berman. "What happened in the aftermath had a profound impact on the park and surrounding area." Closed after another uprising and then reopened in 1992, the redesigned park had more fences, a dog run, playgrounds, and paths wide enough for police cars. Gone were a homeless encampment, a totem pole, and the treasured bandshell. Tompkins Square became more recreational, less capable of hosting unruly populations or turbulent dissent.

Since then the East Village has traded edginess for livability and the double-edged sword of gentrification – an ironic condition for an environment that "was mostly

developed in the 19th century as an immigrant labor ghetto, less a desirable location than a necessary one," notes Rob Hollander, Ph.D., co-founder of the Lower East Side History Project. The transition from slum to pioneer zone to hotspot, he finds, reflects shifting perceptions, readily accommodated by the prevalent tenements scaled "not too low and not too high: the Goldilocks building," well-suited for youth and close to favored amenities.

An Alphabet City resident and activist, Hollander can explain evolving spatial gradations in safety, the "Slavic corner" becoming chess players' and homeless people's turf, and dog walkers' and parkour practioners' effects on atmosphere. He downplays artists' role in gentrification, separating correlation from causation: "The same thing happened to the Bowery in the 1950s to '60s: every interesting important artist lived on the Bowery. Property values stayed rock-bottom. When the neighborhood began to gentrify, most artists were gone."

## COLUMBUS: SEEKING POST-SPRAWL "SPIZZERINCTUM"

Columbus, capital of a political swing state, has long been seen as representative of the so-called heartland. Dubbed "the All-American City" by Mayor Maynard E. Sensenbrenner (1954–1960, 1964–1972), who exuded a manically boosterish quality he called "spizzerinctum" – and who tripled the city's area by annexing suburbs – it is regarded as a center for test-marketing because, "As goes Columbus, so goes the nation."

David Byrne's *Bicycle Diaries* (2010) describes Columbus's "landscaped industrial parks and weird nonspaces that evoke nostalgia for the nonexistent." Metropolitan Columbus, with nearly two million residents, has no rail transit and is unserved by Amtrak. It is low-density and easily traversed by car, while pedestrian life, by New York standards, is minimal.

The city's population is diversifying; its north side includes two buildings by Peter Eisenman, FAIA, plus an award-winning highway-cap project by David Meleca, AIA;



(opposite, top) Tompkins Square Park, July 1990: protesters objected to a curfew and gentrification of the park.

(opposite, bottom) A peaceful Tompkins Square Park today.

bike- and car-sharing programs are expanding its transport options. Planners are fostering human-scale walkability unimaginable a few decades ago. As in the East Village, key changes began around a park.

The Short North, once a crime-plagued neighborhood between downtown and the Ohio State University (OSU), is now “probably our most successful urban neighborhood,” says Foegler, formerly president of Campus Partners, now director of strategic initiatives for the city of Dublin, OH. In nearby Weinland Park, mismanagement of a Section 8 portfolio and other “housing of last resort” bred crime in the 1990s; drug traffickers dominated the area. The university realized that if something wasn’t done, Foegler says, “the prospects for stabilizing, improving, and encouraging desirable kinds of investment wouldn’t exist.”

OSU formed the nonprofit Campus Partners, which took control of 1,800 residential units, an abandoned industrial site, and other assets. Ten years later, crime was down and Weinland Park was rebounding – without gentrification. OSU moved its early-childhood development center to the neighborhood and required that a percentage of its kids be non-university locals. Recreational facilities were upgraded, community leadership emerged, and the Short North evolved into Columbus’s leading gallery and restaurant district.

The 2006 Weinland Park Neighborhood Plan aimed to strengthen, not replace, the existing community. “Preserving so much of the Section 8 housing gave credibility to the notion that Campus Partners was not about displacement – it was about improving conditions and stability,” Foegler says. “It was of value, morally and self-interestedly,” says Boston-based Goody Clancy Principal David Dixon, FAIA, who has worked on this and three other Columbus-area neighborhoods, “to have Weinland Park emerge as a genuinely mixed-income neighborhood.”

Goody Clancy’s interventions began with the South Campus Gateway, a mixed-use center. These changes became a prototype for plans in East Franklinton, a former flood plain across the Scioto River from downtown, now poised to become a mixed-use arts district; the Bridge Street Corridor in Dublin, a prosperous suburb that followed autocentric sprawl patterns until demographic trends suggested that walkable human-scale cores were becoming a greater talent attractor; and the Near East Side, an older residential area with a strong African-American community and sturdy Victorian houses.

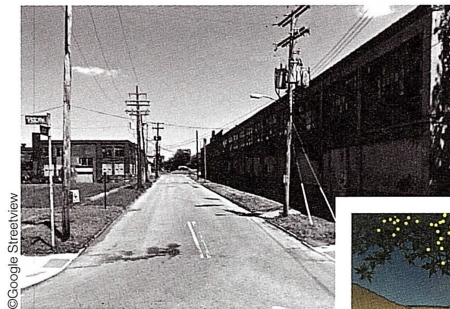
All these areas, Dixon acknowledges, face the same endemic challenge: attaining a critical mass of density. East Franklinton – featuring industrial buildings, nearby parks, two adjacent institutions, and two old factories beginning

to attract artists – is early in the pioneering process. Dixon notes that “areas built up for the arts gentrify really fast, and the only way you can avoid that is to provide long-term affordability for artists. Everything’s happening fast because physical planning, subsidies, and design guidelines all are informed by the same spirit.” Such projects call for developers patient enough to avoid “overrenovating buildings, so your cost base isn’t too high. Managing the cost structure for folks you want to stay there really, really matters.”

Another variable is Columbus’s willingness to experiment with codes to encourage Jan Gehl-ian livable-streets features in key areas like the High Street corridor. The city has adopted an urban commercial overlay and a Traditional Neighborhood Development code affecting nearly 10,000 units of housing; the approach is not prescriptive brand-name New Urbanism, but it shares many smart-growth goals. Vince Papsidero, AICP, Columbus planning administrator, says the two-year-old North High Street Kroger grocery near Weinland Park illustrates the power of design, guided by the overlay: this store’s transparency and street proximity interact better with the public than standard blank-box supermarkets, and it generates “the highest sales numbers per square foot in Ohio.”

Papsidero credits the code changes to “a city council member who’s very much into urban planning and smart growth.” The name might surprise longtime Columbus residents: Richard Sensenbrenner, grandson of Mayor Sensenbrenner. “His grandfather created a system that gave the city that uncontrolled growth and encouraged sprawl,” Papsidero observes. “The grandson comes back and reinvents it.”

Perhaps there is more than one form of spizzerinctum under both the Manhattan and Midwestern sun. ■



**BILL MILLARD** is a freelance writer and editor whose work has appeared in *Oculus*, *Architect*, *Icon*, *Content*, *The Architect’s Newspaper*, *LEAF Review*, and other publications.



The East Franklinton neighborhood of Columbus, OH, is undergoing the first phase of new housing and retail development designed by Goody Clancy; artists’ studios are filling up fast in the existing warehouse (at right in “before” photo). The project received the APA 2014 National Planning Excellence Award for Innovation in Economic Planning and Development.





(left) In September 2012, the Free University hosted more than 100 workshops and free educational events “occupying” Madison Square Park.

# PUBLIC SPACE REASSERTS ITS POLITICAL ROLE

In varied ways, public spaces still provide the political and symbolic places for public debate

BY SETHA LOW, MANISSA MCCLEAVE  
MAHARAWAL, AND DIMITRIS DALAKOGLU

**W**hy is the design and preservation of public space so crucial today? Public space is important as open space, a place to breathe within the dense fabric of the city, and as a frame for the architectural urban context. But its civic purposes and symbolic meanings offer the greatest resonance. An emphasis on democratic practices has emerged because of the spatial relationship between public space and the public sphere. Social movements and political uprisings belie arguments that public space and the public sphere have ever been separated. The Arab Spring and global Occupy movements drew inspiration from the jubilant atmosphere and contagious energy of the crowds, but also from the urban design and significance of the public spaces where they occurred. If the public sphere, as described by German sociologist and philosopher Jürgen Habermas, is “the sphere of private people coming together as a public,” its emergence has an architectural and spatial context as well as a history of social meanings.

Public space and the public sphere represent conjoined arenas of social and political contest and struggle, grounded

in the planning and design of a city. Consider public space as a location for manifesting dissent, made important when the public sphere is characterized by political exclusion. In reaction to their exclusion, people take to the streets or square to express their right to participation and representation. Democratic politics is about making dissent visible and widening the public sphere to include diverse publics and counterpublics.

Public space provides the political and symbolic space for public debate also found in cafés and the media, and on the Internet – the physical and virtual places where the public sphere is located. American philosopher, psychologist, and educator John Dewey’s idea that democracy works through the cultivation of shared understandings through diverse voices is expressed through the design of public spaces where people can be recognized and politically active. These moments of openness, however, are also moments of contestation. The following examples illustrate how public space produces this expanded public sphere:

## THE FREE UNIVERSITY AT MADISON SQUARE PARK

Madison Square Park began as the first potter’s field in New York City in 1686, and became a public park in 1847. In the late 19th century it was the center of an elite neighborhood and important commercial district. William Grant and Ignatz Pilat redesigned the park in 1870 with formal carriage paths and pastoral landscape elements to frame the area’s elegant mansions and architecturally acclaimed buildings. In the 1990s it was renovated with funds raised by the Madison Square Park Conservancy to restore its 1870 design.

On September 18, 2012, the day after the one-year Occupy anniversary, the Free University hosted more than 100 workshops and free educational events “occupying” Madison Square Park. Classes included the gift economy, debt, how to “cop-watch,” what it means to “occupy” space, horizontal pedagogy, direct action tactics, social-movement building, and non-violence. These were held alongside university courses led by professors who moved their regular classes to the park and opened them to the public.

The goal was to build an intentional space of radical free education in an existing public space. Considerable thought went into how the design elements of the park would be used to accommodate activities. The southern side was avoided because it was crowded and noisy. The curvilinear paths of the 1870 design provided landscaped “rooms” where groups of varying sizes could comfortably gather. On the open lawn, yoga and capoeira classes took place, and a Care station was set up with blankets, food, books, and arts-and-crafts supplies. On the north side around the fountain and on the steps in front of the Admiral David Farragut Monument, large general assemblies were held.

Throughout the week, the park’s everyday uses were transformed as were those at Zuccotti Park during Occupy



Wall Street. Although the Free University participants did not stay overnight, they “occupied” the park by changing the nature of civic engagement, creating a place where people could build political projects and enact their vision of what higher education should be. This experiment in radical, free, open, and accessible education, and the use of a public space to enact it, was an explicit critique of higher education that is increasingly privatized and inaccessible. Along the shaded pathways, on the open lawns, at tables set around the fountain, and at the base of the American flagpole, participants created a space where they felt they could disagree, imagine, and dream.

### SOCIAL UPRISING AT SYNTAGMA SQUARE, ATHENS

Originally, Syntagma Square in Athens was located across from the royal palace, built by the newly formed Greek state during the 1830s to '40s. “Syntagma” means “constitution” in Greek, and the square took its name after the movement of September 3, 1843, when the people of Athens revolted against the first king of the Greek state, demanding a constitution. A century later the palace became the House of Parliament, maintaining its role as the symbolic and spatial center of state power.

The social movement of Syntagma Square began in May 2011, when tents were erected, and culminated in the general strikes in June, when thousands of protestors clashed with the police to object to the government’s new austerity measures. During the first days of the movement, many young people said it was the first time they had spent more than a couple of minutes at Syntagma. Few used the square during the 1990s and 2000s. Throughout this era of “modernization,” glorified by the 2004 Olympic Games, public works construction became the economic engine driven by neoliberalism. Syntagma became a symbol of neoliberal urban development being transformed into a construction site every few years; between 1990 and 2004, the square was redeveloped three times. Since the building of the Syntagma Metro station

underground complex, the passages to and from the square became subterranean spaces controlled by private security guards, police officers, and CCTV cameras. For most users, Syntagma was a passageway leading to shops during the 1990s to 2000s.

In May 2011, however, the same square came alive with daily political activities, and thousands gathered to hold open assemblies and shout slogans. Just as Syntagma Square had previously been emblematic of urban neoliberalism, the social movement of the summer 2011 – through its materiality and spatiality – constituted an opening up of the public sphere to those located outside.

Madison Square Park and Syntagma Square, two different public spaces in very different cities, highlight the importance of public space in producing and expanding political citizenship. Both enabled a new public realm to emerge and extended the public sphere by incorporating social groups that are usually passive receivers of policies and decisions. They become places to make a political statement, have and share dreams, and provide a forum for civic engagement, cooperation, contradiction, and dissent. ■

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June 28, 2011: A general strike at Syntagma Square, Athens, Greece.



January 2014: A quiet evening at Syntagma Square.



# GATHERINGS OF ONE

In NYC's Riverside Park South and at Havana's Malecón, solitary moments are everywhere.

By Michael Sorkin, with photographs by Belmont Freeman



©Belmont Freeman

**W**e're born alone and we die alone. In between, we get some choice. I, for example, thrive in the jostling, crowded city. Still, I sometimes want an experience of solitude, here in town but outside my apartment. It's possible to feel pleasurably and purposefully alone almost anywhere, even on a thronged subway platform, because solitude is a mindset, an interior condition. Yet some public spaces have exterior conditions that are especially conducive to a meditative privacy, even with other people around. Perhaps that state is evoked best by places such as Riverside Park South, designed by Thomas Balsley Associates, which occupy a particular sort of edge, between natural and built realms, and between water and land.

Of course, Riverside Park South is much used by couples, nannies and parents with kids in tow, and groups of friends strolling, chatting, playing ball, and snacking at the outdoor café. One afternoon last fall I enjoyed watching a dozen high schoolers with a boombox practicing a dance routine far out on spacious Pier 1, where they had ample room to strut and kick. People also go to the park alone. They bike, jog, read on benches, and sunbathe on chaise lounges. The park incorporates a section of the pathway that runs nearly the length

of Manhattan's Hudson riverfront, so it is also a transportation corridor, with plenty of those bicyclists regular commuters. But people also go there for solitude.

Certain physical and design features help conjure that up. From Riverside Boulevard, the park's bordering street, there is a steep 40-foot descent to the river. Thus, separation from the city is tangible, something accomplished with a sense of departure, of leaving the everyday behind. The sense of retreat from urban experience is reinforced by the park's network of paths and boardwalks, which give intimate connection to a shoreline softened with little sculpted coves and beds of wavy marsh grass; unbuilt land and water seem to merge there. The river itself, so majestic in scale, alone invites contemplation. From out on the pier, the view back to the towering city is equally vast and compelling. You can find yourself feeling held in suspension between these two mighty things, one primordial and of the earth, the other temporal and civilized – both unrelenting in their flow and so much bigger than yourself.

Reverie can also be prompted by the vestiges of the site's history that were retained, gantry towers and old pilings, and by the activity of the river. Sometimes a huge ship glides



(opposite page) The Malecón, Havana's seawall promenade traces the city's coastline.

by, a foreign port named on its stern. It may remind you that New York is a global node, and inspire thoughts of travel or even escape. In all of these ways, Riverside Park South reminds me of another public space that is not a park, or even a designed place: the Malecón – the seawall – in Havana.

The Malecón is a concrete wall that traces the city's coastline for about four miles. It rises 10 feet or so from a bed of porous coral rock, in and out of which the ocean sighs or seethes depending on its mood; there's no beach. The seawall's top is about a yard wide, and on the landward side stands about three feet above a very broad sidewalk. A heavily trafficked artery separates this linear arrangement from the city's dense grid.

*Habaneros* stroll to the Malecón for the same reasons Manhattanites go to Riverside Park South: for both exuberant interaction and serene withdrawal. Some lounge or play atop the wall, make music, and dance on the promenade. Some climb down to the rocks to spread a towel and sunbathe. The tensions of life in the two cities are different. In New York we may have overwhelming jobs or find ourselves distressingly underemployed in a world of pressured consumerism. In Havana, rewarding jobs have long been scarce, the pay is virtually worthless, and many must improvise and hustle every day just to eat. (Cuba is also a police state, and some have taken the longing to depart from its reality so far as to actually set sail from the Malecón – attempting real, not imagined, escape.)

Both places are conducive to finding people or private space in public. Both are conduits for travel along the urban edge, as the city is always whizzing by. Each interposes a distinct transition zone – steep slope, busy avenue. The Malecón has no piers extending into the water, but since the shoreline curves, it offers wide panoramas of skyline. Moreover, Havana, like New York, is a hive of urban energy where a lavish history of global connection is recorded in the architecture. Riverside Park South and the Malecón both mediate between forceful cities and forceful bodies of water. By their settings, these two narrow linear spaces are rendered enormous. Settings of dramatic enormity – natural, built, or both, like here – can induce an awareness of one's smallness in the landscape and a mental state that transcends awareness of self.

The Malecón, more a piece of necessary infrastructure than an intentionally created public space, demonstrates that the ability of a place to allow or even inspire meditative solitude is not dependent on design. But it takes only a visit to Riverside Park South to imagine the richer possibilities of experience along Havana's seawall, if it were afforded a thoughtful plan and amenities, and officially treated as a park. There have been many proposals. The late Lebbeus Woods, for one, sketched an idea for a terrace cantilevered over the water running the Malecón's length – "an abstract beach." A ballast system activated by the not infrequent



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©Michael Koontz, Thomas Balsley Associates

(above, top) Designed by Thomas Balsley Associates, Riverside Park South's public promenade along the Hudson River features overlooks, shade structures, and custom furniture.

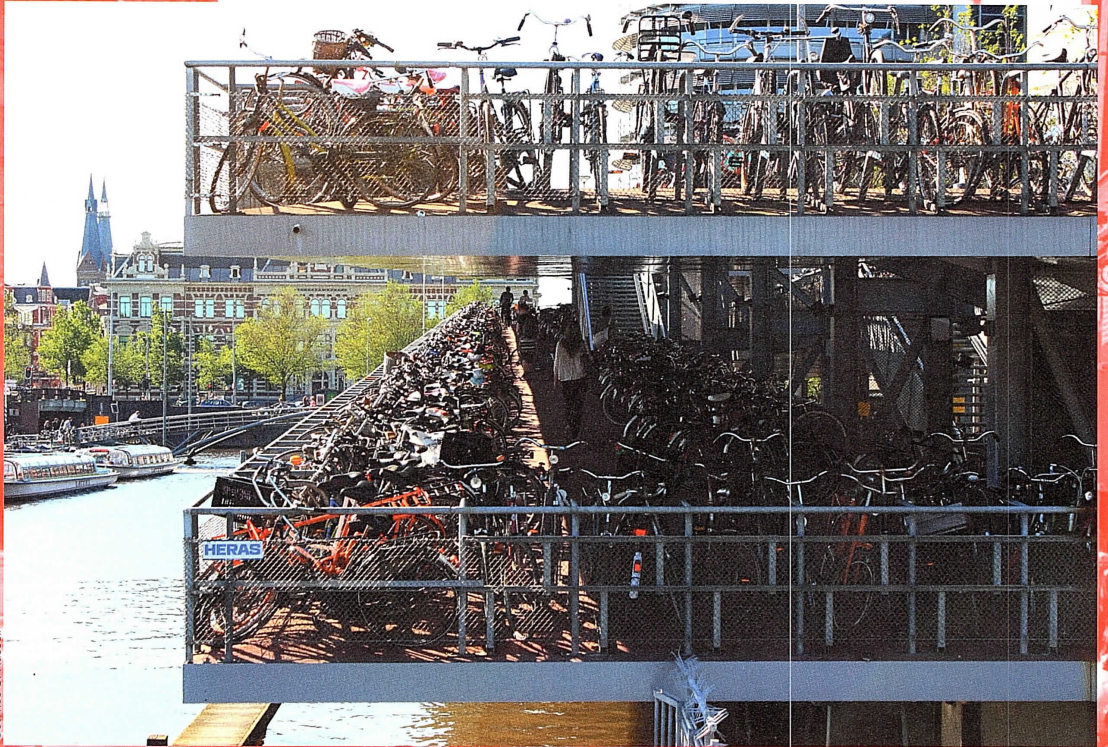
(above, bottom) A raised promontory overlook offers a quiet space apart from the busier park below.

storm surges would rotate its sections vertically to serve as a temporary higher barrier. But with fabulous historic buildings throughout Havana crumbling for lack of resources to save them, it's no wonder that nothing has been done to improve the Malecón.

As is, the Malecón works as a traffic artery and a seawall. And it functions as a park even if it isn't one, thanks to the irrepressible need and ingenuity of the city's people. The pity is that just a little architectural intervention could make this already eloquent public space sublime. ■

**JONATHAN LERNER'S** articles on architecture, urbanism, and design have appeared in *Landscape Architecture*, *Metropolis*, *Pacific Standard*, *Modern*, and many other design and mainstream magazines. He is also a communications consultant to design professionals and developers at [www.urbanistcommunications.com](http://www.urbanistcommunications.com).





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# TIME TO WELCOME WOONERFS

The pleasures – and perils – of pedaling, and why we need “living streets” in New York

BY MICHAEL SORKIN

I've become a reasonably devoted user of the Citi Bike system. My situation is ideal: I live on Chambers Street and work just below Houston, so the ride is brief enough to beat virtually any other form of transportation and long enough to impart a sense of virtue and, on a warm day, break a mild sweat. I like these bikes for a number of reasons, beginning with the fact that they are on the front lines of the struggle for our city's largest public space, its streets. It warms my heart to see a row of parking spaces appropriated for a row of bikes. The pleasure is not simply in seeing the new means available, but the excision of the old, the capture of a portion of the street from the storage of private vehicles to a higher public use.

My route, however, is perilous. I go up Church Street – which can be hairy – and generally angle onto West Broadway, hang a louie on Prince Street, and look for a space on MacDougal. The only portion of the trip that takes place in a designated bike lane is the three short blocks across Prince at the end. While it's bracing to see the ever-increasing numbers of bikers using the lane –

©Daniel Carlson



(opposite page, top) A 5,000-bike parking structure at Amsterdam's Central Station, designed by VMX Architects.

(opposite page, background) Bicycle rush hour in Amsterdam.

which consists of nothing more than green paint – we are at an early stage of developing the routines and protocols of sharing, and there seems to be virtually no enforcement of violations. More often than not, a delivery truck is stationed in the lane and cabs pull freely to the curb. The space is only theoretically privileged and is often contested.

Of course, bikers are not blameless, and we are in the process of negotiating what class of mobility a bike belongs to. At the moment, the tacit assumption is that the rules lie somewhere between those of pedestrians and vehicles. I am fairly punctilious about this and glower at delivery people riding in the wrong direction and tourists pedaling on the sidewalks. Of course, I violate these strictures myself and, like so many, define the terms of my own exceptions. For example, MacDougal is a one-way street heading south. When I approach the bike station from Prince, I must either travel a bit in the wrong direction or go all the way around the block, which includes negotiating the perils of Houston Street. A combination of self-preservation and the small scope of the transgression allows me to justify this tiny act of insubordination.

## ACCEPTABLE INFRACTIONS?

In New York, the question of the legal status of the biker is complicated by the unusual latitude we enjoy as pedestrians. Few of us on foot would hesitate to cross against the light, to weave our way between stalled cars, or to jaywalk, and this is unofficially sanctioned by the live-and-let-live attitude of the police, who seldom penalize such infractions. As a biker, I also often cross against the light if there's no traffic, which lets me get a jump on the cars waiting with me at the intersection who put me at special risk as they accelerate, change lanes, and jostle for position when the light goes green.

There are parts of the city where streets have been more extensively designed to provide protection for bikes, in which elaborate horizontal lamination has been imposed, similar to many European cities, including Amsterdam and Copenhagen. While this is a decidedly superior arrangement for bikers, the striation of the street space into sidewalk, bike lane, parking lane, automobile lane, tram lane, and then the whole thing again in mirror image, models efficient isolation perhaps too literally. Like those turn-of-the-last-century fantasies of vertically laminated transport – subways below grade, cars at it, pedestrians on catwalks a level up, autogyros whirling in the middle altitudes, and dirigibles gliding above – the fantasy is simply too rational, too predicated on segregation, too mechanical.

But there's another idea out there, often referred to as the "shared street" or, in this country, "complete streets." I've been thinking about these places for a long time, certainly since the revelation of my first trips to India. Here was an environment in which the space of public circulation, from

building front to building front, was shared by every conceivable mode of movement: from pedestrians to buses to trucks to rickshaws to elephants to cars to scooters to those ubiquitous cows which, in exercising their right to plop down and lie undisturbed anywhere were, in effect, the enablers and guarantors of the system. This slow-moving mass struck me as democratic, not simply in the idea of shared access, but in the requirement for constant negotiation to traverse the space.

The Dutch are the greatest exponents of this idea and their *woonerfs* – or "living streets" – are predicated on the idea that a street can function without division into zones for different modes, without signs or traffic signals, without lane or other street markings, and with an absolute primacy given to pedestrians and bikes, with motorized vehicles either excluded or severely restricted in speed. By reversing the hierarchy to make the least energetic means the alpha



Citi Bike corrals have replaced parking spaces around New York City.

mode, these places can be truly said to radically increase the public character of the space of circulation. There are now more than 6,000 such zones in the Netherlands. The late Hans Monderman is the legendary guru and theorist of this system, and his revolutionary insight was simply that by removing hierarchical regulations and limiting speed, people would be encouraged to interact in their mutual interest, to be careful. What could be simpler or, it seems, more difficult?

I am giving a lecture in Delft in March and look forward to getting on one of those clunky Dutch bikes and pedaling down the nearest *woonerf*. I'll make careful observations because it's well past time for us to bring a few to New York. ■

**MICHAEL SORKIN** is the principal of the Michael Sorkin Studio, president of Terreform, and distinguished professor of architecture and director of CCNY's Graduate Program in Urban Design. He is the winner of the 2013 National Design Award in the "Design Mind" category.





# Redesigning the Crossroads of the World

An impressive team of NYC firms comes together to reinvent the public spaces at Times Square

BY FRED A. BERNSTEIN

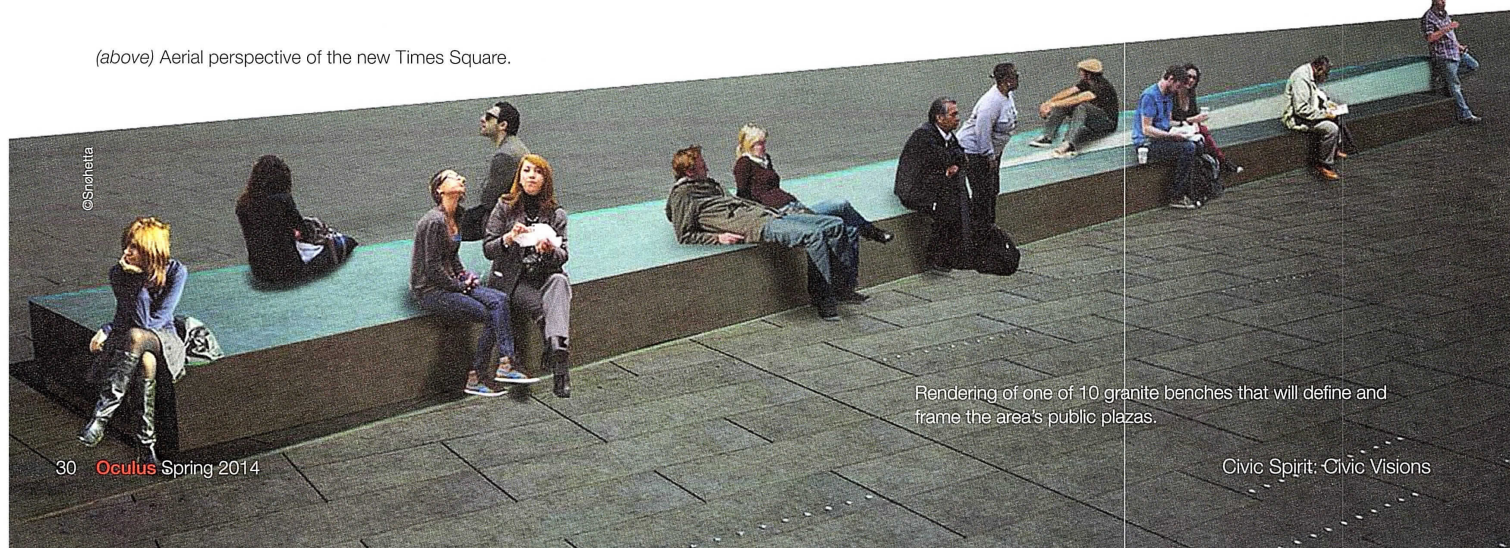
In 2009 the Bloomberg Administration, through its energetic transportation commissioner Janette Sadik-Khan, took a bold step toward making Times Square pedestrian-friendly, closing Broadway between 42nd and 47th Streets to traffic. The resulting plaza was a practical success but an aesthetic failure. Tim Tompkins, president of the Times Square Alliance, called the layer of scuffed and peeling paint that marked the plazas “dumpy looking.” He was being kind.

Now the other shoe has dropped, with the elimination of curbs that had separated the one-time traffic lanes from sidewalks. When people see curbs, says Craig Dykers, AIA, a founding partner of Snøhetta, “they think road, and when they think road, they subconsciously think danger.” Snøhetta leads the team that is addressing that problem with a repaving program that eliminates vestiges of the years when cars careered down Broadway. During the brainstorming phase of the \$55 million project, which includes \$27 million for the new plazas and first comprehensive subsurface street reconstruction in more than a century, Dykers says, “we discussed the psychological effects of small design moves on large groups of people.” With that in mind, he resisted pressure to maintain even the outlines of Broadway in the new scheme. The team eventually decided to “weave Seventh Avenue and Broadway into the shapes of the new concrete pavers,” he says, “but you’re never aware of the actual street line itself.”

The first section of the new plaza, between 42nd and 43rd Streets, was unveiled last year; the remaining sections won’t be completed until 2016 or later, since the resurfacing has to await below-ground infrastructure repairs.

Though the Times Square Alliance will manage and maintain the plaza, it was the city’s Department of Design + Construction, headed by another Bloomberg standout, David Burney, FAIA, that chose Snøhetta for the job. (Snøhetta was

(above) Aerial perspective of the new Times Square.



Rendering of one of 10 granite benches that will define and frame the area’s public plazas.



prequalified, as part of Burney's Design Excellence program, for projects of \$15 million or more.) It helps that Snøhetta's calling card, the Oslo Opera House, is "one of the very rare projects that is both building and topography," says Claire Weisz, FAIA, a founding principal of WXY architecture + urban design.

Weisz has more than a passing interest in Snøhetta's work. In an astonishing demonstration of the depth of New York City's design talent, the team Burney assembled includes Weisz's firm, whose civic projects include the Astor Place refurbishment now underway in the East Village, and Rogers Marvel Architects, responsible for the renovation of the McCarren Park Pool in Brooklyn. (The Rogers Marvel partnership disbanded in 2013, and is now Marvel Architects and Rogers Partners.) In all, the team includes nearly a dozen highly regarded firms (see credit list).

The team made some surprising decisions, including sticking to a gray-on-gray palette for the new pavement. "This being Times Square, thought was given to using colorful materials and even LEDs," says Dykers. But he preferred "a surface that is muscular, heavy, and monolithic" – a reference, he says, to the noir-ish, "mid-century Times Square of our imaginations."

The dark concrete pavers are meant to avoid "pulling focus" from the real stars of Times Square: huge LED billboards and the stepped roof of the TKTS building. "The red stairs are still going to pop," says Weisz. In one concession to locale, small metal disks are inserted into some of the pavers. The disks, Dykers says, "reflect the marquees above without the need for electricity."

Another decision was to dispense with vegetation. Planters already in Times Square had too often been used as wastebaskets and viewing platforms, especially on New Year's Eve. Instead, to separate pedestrian zones from traffic lanes, the architects created a series of granite benches, some as long as 50 feet. The benches, in a stroke of genius, contain what Ellen Goldstein, vice president of Policy, Planning and Design for the Times Square Alliance, calls the "event infrastructure system" – power and fiber optic cables that make it possible to turn Times Square into a concert venue or TV studio without the need for additional wires. Also, "you can step on the benches and look around and see where you are," says Dykers. "People don't mind crowds if they can get a little elevation." The site's natural topography – Times Square is a gentle valley sloping down to 45th Street – gives pedestrians the opportunity to see more than they would on a level surface, he adds.



(above) Rendering of pedestrian plaza looking south.

(right) Two-toned custom pavers embedded with steel discs will reflect the glow from Times Square's billboards.

CLIENT: NYC Department of Transportation and NYC Department of Design + Construction  
 ARCHITECT: Snøhetta  
 URBAN DESIGN CONSULTANT: WXY architecture + urban design  
 LANDSCAPE ARCHITECT: Mathews Nielsen Landscape Architects  
 LIGHTING DESIGN: Leni Schwendinger Light Projects  
 BROADCAST ENGINEER: BEXEL  
 STRUCTURAL ENGINEER: Buro Happold  
 INDUSTRIAL DESIGN: Billings Jackson Design  
 GRAPHIC DESIGN: Pure + Applied  
 SECURITY CONSULTANTS: Ducibella Venter and Santore; Rogers Marvel Architects (now Marvel Architects and Rogers Partners)  
 CIVIL & SECURITY ENGINEER: Weidlinger  
 ELECTRICAL ENGINEER: Wesler Cohen



At every step, the NYPD weighed in on security; the goal was to protect pedestrians from wayward drivers as well as more exotic threats. Rogers Marvel had designed the security barriers arrayed on Wall Street after 9/11. There, according to Jonathan Marvel, FAIA, the goal was to block traffic entirely, while in Times Square provision had to be made for emergency vehicles and trucks for sanitation, sign maintenance, and other functions. So while the granite benches run north-south, rows of 30-inch stainless-steel bollards – some of which unscrew – follow the cross-streets. "We came up with the thinnest possible custom steel bollards, so as not to compete with the benches," says Marvel.

Weisz knows that when the project is complete, people will look at the colorless surfaces, monolithic benches, and unobtrusive bollards, and ask, "Where's the design?" But, she says, "things that are too designed become disposable." According to Dykers, "People find it very restrained, and we like that." Indeed, with so many design stars working on one project, the unshowy result is no small feat. ■

Fred Bernstein, an *Oculus* contributing editor, studied architecture at Princeton and law at NYU, and writes about both subjects. His work appears regularly in a number of publications.



# A Magical Place on the Water

Abandoned and ignored for years, Governors Island is being reborn as a beautiful, lush park and recreational area

BY CLAIRE WILSON

You could almost say it was hiding in plain sight. Abandoned by the Coast Guard and closed down in 1996, Governors Island was something of a mystery footnote in New York Harbor. No one really noticed it in recent years, not even ferry passengers, who were distracted by the sight of Lady Liberty. The island's majestic historic buildings were hidden from view, and the boxy, low-rise modern housing you did see from the water was unremarkable at best.

Beginning this spring a new Governors Island will be hard to ignore. The 172-acre mass is at the close of the second phase of an ambitious three-phase conversion that will turn it into a lush, green park in the middle of the harbor, and it is expected to attract roughly 450,000 visitors per year. Part natural island and part landfill, its topography will change to include hills and dales and vast lawns for lounging. The plan also includes the creation of a forest of native trees, luxurious plantings, fountains,

bike paths, and walkways, as well as slides, swings, and hammocks for children and adults. Landmarked historic buildings, although not under the new park umbrella, will be adapted for educational and arts programs and administration purposes.

The project's lead designer is West 8 Urban Design & Landscape, which also led in the master planning, working in association with Rogers Marvel Architects, Diller Scofidio + Renfro, and Mathews Nielsen Landscape Architects. Robert M. Rogers, FAIA, principal of Rogers Partners (and formerly with Rogers Marvel Architects), calls the beginnings of the project "a *tabula rasa*" with which they could do just about anything. Its biggest challenge – adding the hills to the flat topography of the landfill portion – was also its biggest opportunity and a critical feature of the design, he says. "The park needed to have physical and volumetric presence to be a complete experience," Rogers explains, "and mark the transformation of the island from landfill and military base to a place that imagines a new life for the next 100 years."

Construction debris from the demolished modern apartment buildings was used to create the four hills of varying heights, one of which reaches 80 feet above sea level. Each has different features, including a 48-foot-long slide, paved and unpaved paths, an art installation, and unparalleled harbor views. Most of the 51 species of new trees are planted on these hills; some will be hickory in a nod to the island's original Native American

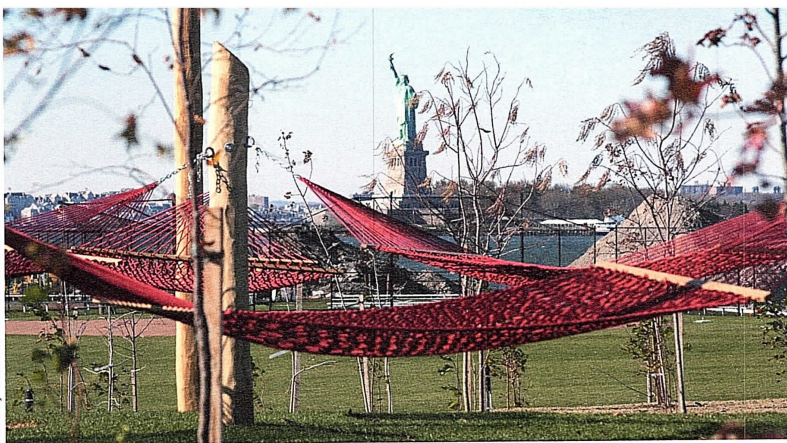


(left, above) Site plan of the first phase of the Governors Island Master Plan.

(left, below) Liggett Terrace is a lively six-acre plaza featuring movable seating, plantings, and play fountains.

(above) Hammock Grove is a shady 10-acre space with more than 1,500 new trees.





name, Nut Island, according to Kim Mathews, RLA, FASLA, principal, Mathews Nielsen Landscape Architects. About 30,000 shrubs will also be in the mix around the park. Trees on the hills are planted in a grid to provide sight lines to the Statue of Liberty wherever possible – a key feature of the design. “It’s as if we are bringing the Statue of Liberty back to New York,” says Leslie Koch, president of The Trust for Governors Island.

The island was originally inhabited by the Lenape Indians, who shared it with Dutch settlers until the British takeover in the late 17th century. It evolved into the hands of what became the U.S. Army, which created the landfill addition with debris from the construction of the Lexington Avenue subway. The island remained in Army control until it was transferred to the U.S. Coast Guard in 1966. Many of the buildings left behind are part of a leafy, park-like 22-acre historic district managed by the National Park Service. It includes two forts, the 1794 Fort Jay and the 1911 Castle Williams.

While Phase II of the Master Plan was the creation of the hills, Phase I was the design of other recreational areas and the ferry slips for service between Manhattan and Brooklyn. The latter is served by the area known as South Battery, a green entry point that will welcome visitors with art and wayfinding information, while Soissons Landing serves Manhattan traffic. It has visitor services and a welcome wall with wayfinding information designed by Pentagram, which did all the island signage. Rogers believed the visitor access point had to be something special, enhancing the bond that travelers seem to have when going back and forth across the water, whether it’s to Fire Island or Staten Island. “You want to arrive and realize you are in an extraordinary place,” he says. “You know you have to let go of your preconceptions and feel what a magical and exceptional place it is.”

Perhaps the most extraordinary experience on Governors Island is walking from the historic area through the magical arches of McKim, Mead & White-designed Liggett Hall and onto Liggett Terrace. This six-acre public plaza promises to be a main gathering place where visitors can relax,

(above) Hammock Grove features 50 hammocks to relax and enjoy spectacular views of the Statue of Liberty and New York Harbor.

CLIENT: The Trust for Governors Island  
MASTER PLAN: West 8 Urban Design & Landscape; Rogers Marvel Architects; Diller Scofidio + Renfro; and Mathews Nielsen Landscape Architects  
PHASE ONE LEAD DESIGN/PRIME CONSULTANT: West 8 Urban Design & Landscape  
ASSOCIATE LANDSCAPE ARCHITECT: Mathews Nielsen Landscape Architects  
CIVIL AND STRUCTURAL ENGINEER: MKA  
LOCAL ENGINEER: AKRF  
MEP: Dagher Engineering  
WAYFINDING AND SIGNAGE: Pentagram  
LIGHTING: Tillotson Design Associates  
IRRIGATION: Northern Designs  
WATER FEATURE DESIGN: Fluidity Design  
GEOTECHNICAL ENGINEER: Hart Crowser  
SOIL SCIENTIST: Pine and Swallow  
CODE CONSULTANT: Code Consultants Professional Engineers  
COST ESTIMATING: Faithful and Gould  
O + M: ETM Associates  
SPECIFICATION WRITER: Construction Specifications

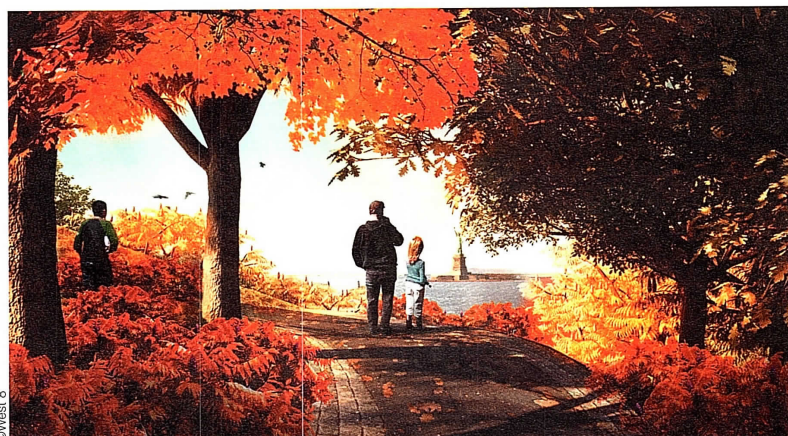
cool off in the water features, and enjoy beautiful perennial flower plantings and low, evergreen boxwood hedges trained into unusual angles and shapes. There will also be art installations and performances in the open spaces. The island offers log benches and molded concrete seating at the edge of green lawns, but much of the furniture is off-the-shelf and movable to provide flexibility of use, according to Koch. “You can have a birthday party or any event, pick up the chairs, and group them however you like,” she says.

The vista that unfolds past Liggett Terrace is a landscape of hills, harbor, and sky. There’s a whimsical colony of red hammocks hanging from trees at the base of the incline, with swings and playground equipment nearby. Cyclists and pedestrians share all the paths that circulate around the island.

The Governors Island master plan was devised in 2009, well before Hurricane Sandy, but presciently anticipated an eventual 100-year storm and contains measures against it, including a rebuilt sea wall along the periphery, according to Jamie Maslyn Larsen, RLA, ASLA, principal and partner at West 8 New York. New topography is above the flood zone, as are root zones of new tree plantings. Details of Phase III of the plan have not yet been finalized, but will focus on 33 acres of development zone. This will likely include boutiques, restaurants, a spa, and perhaps a 100-room boutique hotel.

However it evolves over the next decades, the park’s *raison d’être* will remain the same: walking up the hills and taking in the views, a much more romantic notion of park space than the usual hyper-programmed notion so popular today. Says Rogers: “It will give you a powerful sense of the vibrancy of the city while you are in a relaxing and quiet mode.” ■

Claire Wilson writes for the *New York Times*.



Outlook Hill is one of four man-made hills where, from the top, visitors will see a 360-degree panoramic view of New York Harbor.





©studio a+i

## How to Remember a Plague

Two New Yorkers form a coalition of individuals and organizations to memorialize the city's AIDS crisis with a special place for remembrance, reflection, and education

BY RICHARD STAUB

Mortality statistics for the early days of the AIDS epidemic are sobering. Prior to 1981 there were 49 diagnoses of AIDS and 15 deaths in New York City. But with no effective treatment for the disease, the number of diagnoses and deaths rose to a 1994 peak of 11,598 new cases and 7,725 deaths, or 21 deaths per day. The majority of them were gay men.

The response by the gay community and its friends was forceful. The epicenter for AIDS care was St. Vincent's Hospital, New York's third oldest hospital, located in Manhattan's West Village and near Chelsea, both areas with large gay male populations. In Chelsea, a group of gay men founded the Gay Men's Health Crisis in 1982 to provide crisis counseling, legal aid, and social work for people with AIDS. Approximately a block away from St.

Vincent's at the LGBT Community Center, the activist group ACT-UP formed in 1986 to challenge the slow response of drug manufacturers and local and national governments to the crisis. Other AIDS-focused groups, such as Housing Works and AMFAR, emerged as well.

Fast forward to 2010. While there was still no cure for AIDS, a variety of treatment options meant that the disease was no longer a certain death sentence. In a controversial move, St. Vincent's was declaring bankruptcy, with luxury housing, designed by FXFOWLE, being planned for the site by Rudin Management Company. Christopher Tepper, a 29-year-old urban planner, having read Randy Shilts's seminal history of the AIDS crisis, *And the Band Played On: Politics, People, and the AIDS Epidemic*, began talking with fellow urban

(above and opposite page)  
The New York City AIDS Memorial by night and by day.

CLIENT: New York City AIDS Memorial

ARCHITECT: studio a+i  
DESIGN TEAM: Mateo Paiva, RA, Lily Lim, RA, Esteban Erlich, RA

STRUCTURAL ENGINEER: Robert Silman Associates

GRAPHIC DESIGN: 2x4

LIGHTING DESIGN: Fisher Marantz Stone

WATER FEATURE: Delta Fountain

ELECTRICAL ENGINEER: Jaros, Baum & Bolles

CIVIL & PLUMBING ENGINEER: Langan

COST ESTIMATING: Ellana  
RENDERINGS: a2t



planner Paul Kelterborn about what was for them the unknown history of the AIDS epidemic and the gay community's response. "I was angry there was no institutional exhibit or conversation about it," says Tepper, "and it seemed important to start one. With St. Vincent's pending demise, a visible part of that history would be gone."

Using the development of the High Line as their unofficial playbook, Tepper and Kelterborn built an influential organization, NYC AIDS Memorial (NYCAM), committed to remembering the crisis and educating people about the history and current status of AIDS. "We discussed a variety of ways to memorialize and open discussions about that era," says Kelterborn, "but we knew they had to be grounded in a physical location."

After exploring several options, they focused on the 17,000-square-foot triangular block across Seventh Avenue from the hospital, which it had used for oxygen storage and as a loading dock. The developer had promised to landscape the parcel as an open park for the community, but NYCAM proposed it as the site for the memorial. Keith Fox, president of McGraw-Hill Construction, who volunteered early on to be the chairman of the board and work on fundraising, says, "We knew we were late to the game, so we decided to hold an ideas competition for the site to offer a sense of possibility."

Sponsored by *Architectural Record* and *Architizer*, the competition drew close to 500 entries from around the world. The prestigious

13-member jury, chaired by Michael Arad, AIA, LEED AP, designer of the World Trade Center Memorial, included Barry Bergdoll, Elizabeth Diller, High Line co-founder Robert Hammond, and Whoopi Goldberg. They selected the submission by Brooklyn-based Studio a+i.

"We created a design for a walled grove of remembrance that reflected the simplicity of the site," says studio a+i Principal Mateo Paiva, RA. The exterior of the thick, 12-foot-high walls was to be solid slate for people to write their memories on. The interior was to be clad in highly polished stainless steel that would reflect a grove of 20 birch trees. There were entrances at each corner, and a stairway and ramp at one end leading to a below-ground multi-purpose space.

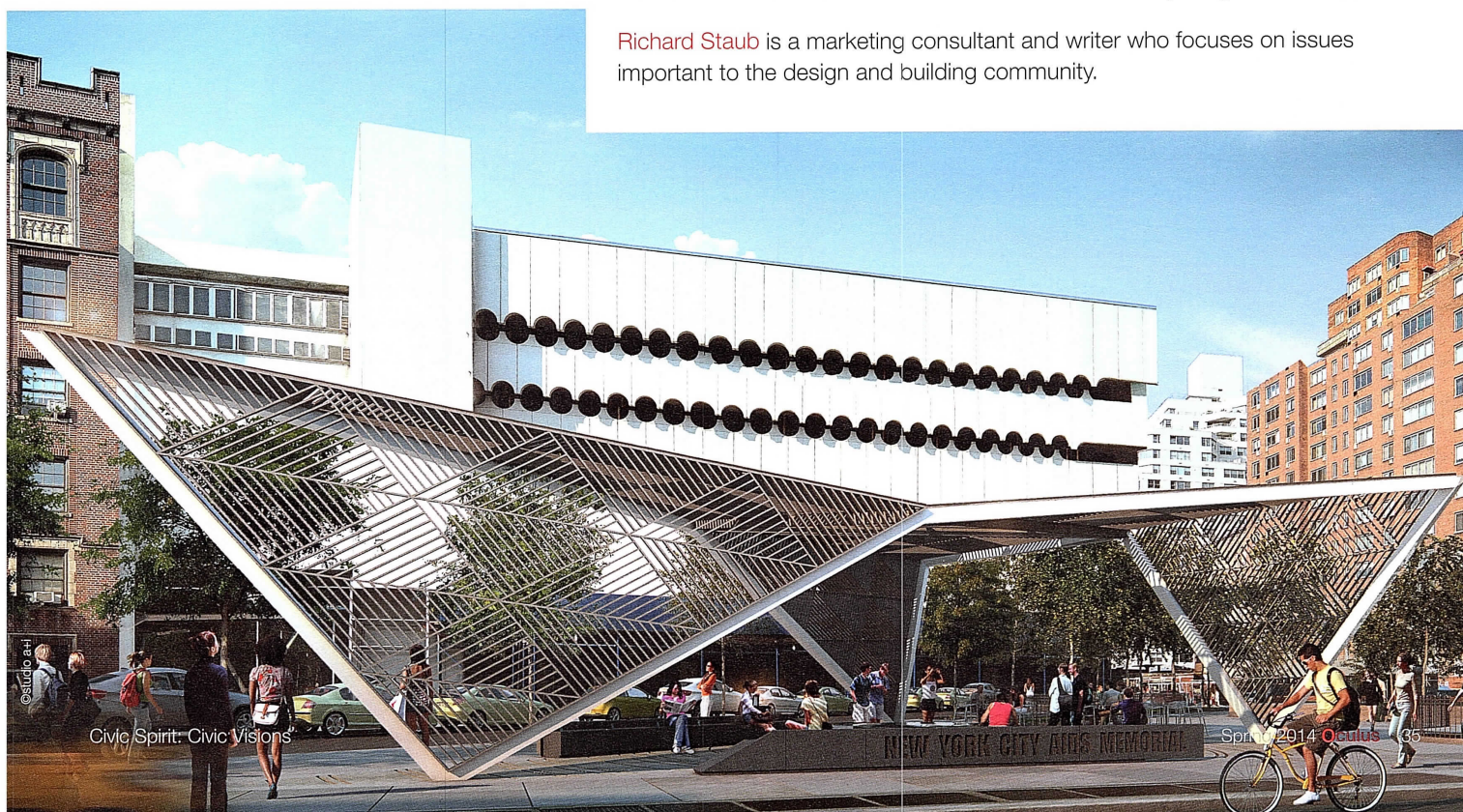
As poetic as the concept was, the community objected to having one of its few new green areas walled off, and Rudin said it planned to go ahead with its own concept. But that was just round one. "The great benefit of the competition was that it made the idea of a memorial very real. It gave something tangible for supporters within the community and city government to rally behind," says Tepper. "People at all levels still wanted a memorial to happen."

The compromise was a 1,700-square-foot triangular pavilion at the block's westernmost corner, also designed by Studio a+i. It would go ahead if in one year NYCAM could raise the \$4 million needed to build the project and get approval from city agencies and the local community board. The group did it.

The airy, 18-foot-high canopy is an elaboration of the triangular form, with triangular struts supporting it at three corners, and the canopy's open pattern of steel slats divided into triangles. At the memorial's center is an 18-inch-high granite cylinder with water continuously overflowing its edge. Granite paving that radiates out from the water feature will have embedded texts emblematic of the crisis. Two granite benches at the site's perimeter will face into the space to allow moments of reflection. "New York City AIDS Memorial" will be engraved on the outside of the benches. The memorial's opening is planned for 2015. In the meantime, NYCAM's board is meeting to develop ongoing programs and events to be announced this spring.

Finally, there will be a place in the city for remembrance, reflection, and education about New York's loss to AIDS – and the community's response to it. ■

**Richard Staub** is a marketing consultant and writer who focuses on issues important to the design and building community.





# Sustainable Models for a Just City

At the J. Max Bond Center on Design for the Just City, faculty and students collaboratively pursue research, ponder possibilities, and integrate ideas into practice

BY MICHAEL J. CROSBIE, FAIA

Architect and planner Toni L. Griffin's career made her a natural to head the J. Max Bond Center on Design for the Just City (JMBC) at the City College of New York's Spitzer School of Architecture. After studying architecture at the University of Notre Dame, Griffin worked for SOM in Chicago for a dozen years, then did a stint as a Loeb Fellow in Urban Planning at the Harvard Graduate School of Design (GSD). Next was a move to New York City to work at the Upper Manhattan Empowerment Zone Development Corporation. Positions in the planning sector in Washington, DC, and Newark, NJ, prepared her to launch her own practice, Urban Planning and Design for the American City, in 2009, which she combined with teaching at the GSD.

J. Max Bond, Jr., FAIA, was a mentor for Griffin throughout much of this time. She became aware of his work through the landmark book, *African American Architects*, by Jack Travis, FAIA. Griffin met Bond in 1991 and was molded by the conduct of his own practice and approach to architecture. "He had a

subtle and light hand, and saw the focus of practice as social uplift," explains Griffin. "Bond was collaborative, he cared about the design of cities" and the power of architecture to achieve social justice in the context of the urban condition. A principal of Davis Brody Bond in New York, Bond received the Whitney Young, Jr. Award from the AIA in 1987 and died in 2009 at age 73.

Establishing the JMBC was an opportunity for CCNY to not only honor the memory of Bond (who was dean of CCNY's architecture school from 1985 to 1992), but also a way to propagate his mission of social uplift through architecture. A phone call to Griffin from architecture critic Michael Sorkin, who heads CCNY's Graduate Urban Design program, about her interest in becoming the center's first director resulted in her coming on board in May 2012.

Griffin (center) greets Bruner Loeb Forum on Legacy City Design participants who spent the first day of the forum riding The Detroit Bus Company to visit Detroit neighborhoods, including the new blue and green infrastructure installations in Brightmoor.

©June Lee, Bruner Foundation



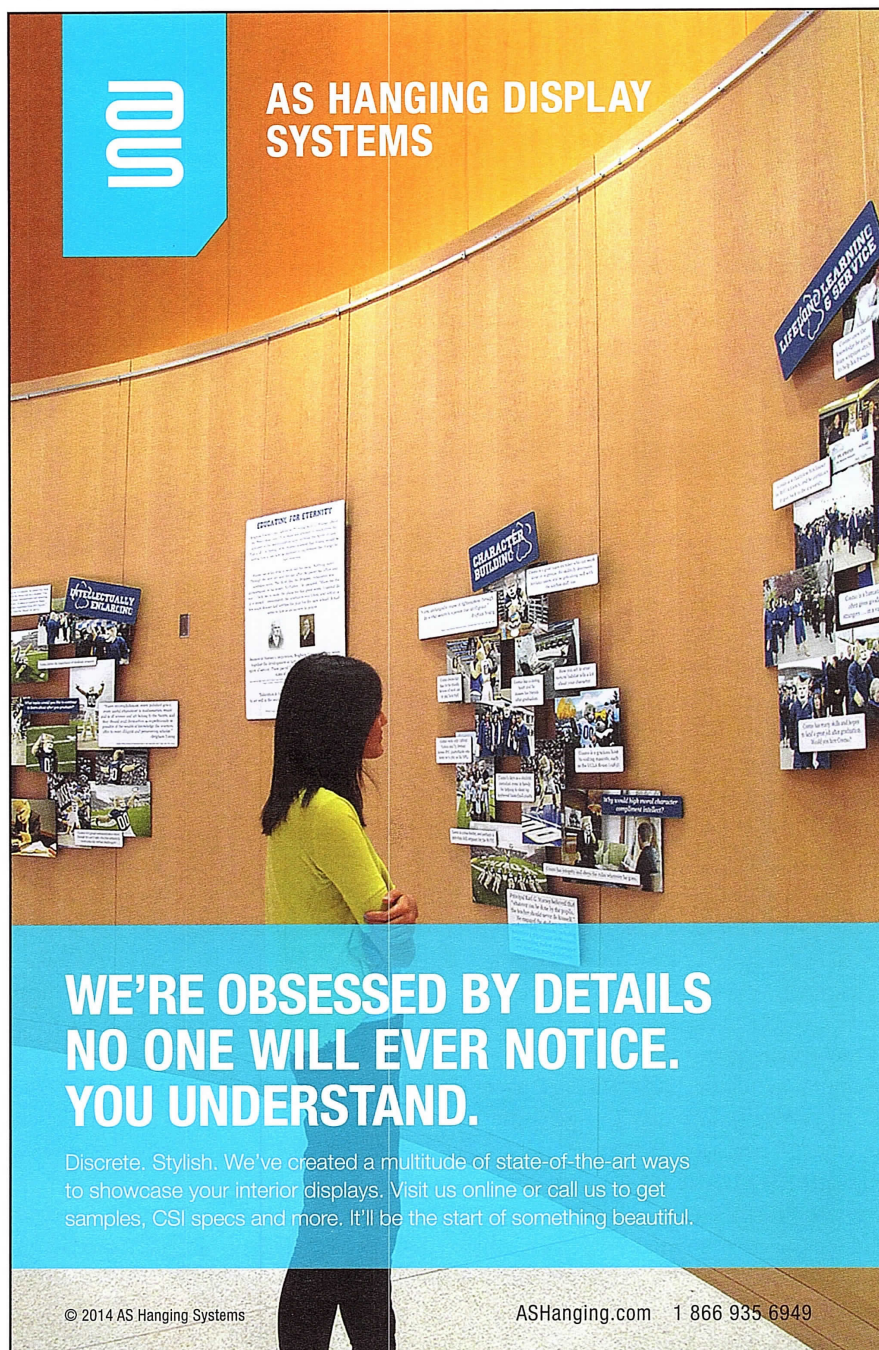


©Burcu Ozturk

The center is supported by CCNY through two staff positions (Griffin and Associate Director Esther Yang), grants from Davis Brody Bond, the Bond family, and fund raising. Griffin notes that the goal was not to rely on fees for services, as many community design centers do. "We wanted a sustainable model that would have a national impact," says Griffin. The center is currently pursuing a number of initiatives around the big theme of the Just City, which link to the school's curriculum, allowing students to take a very active part.

The "Inclusion in Architecture" project addresses the very question of who isn't studying architecture and why. Out

(above) JMBF Founding Director Toni L. Griffin welcomed more than 300 guests to celebrate the JMBF's 2012 opening at the CCNY Spitzer School of Architecture. Other speakers included former CUNY Chancellor Matthew Goldstein; CCNY President Lisa Coico; J. Max Bond's former design partner, Steven M. Davis, FAIA; Bond's wife, Jean Bond; their son, Carey; and Dean George Ranalli, AIA.



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The advertisement features a large, curved wooden wall display system. A woman in a yellow shirt is looking at the display, which includes various informational cards and photos. The top left corner has a blue logo with the letters 'AS'. The bottom section has a blue background with white text.





(left) JMBC's collaboration with the Harlem School of the Arts and the Spitzer School of Architecture brings young visual arts students together with architecture students and faculty to explore what an architect does and how one can shape space.



(above) Bruner Loeb Forum on Legacy City Design participants visited Detroit's Eastern Market neighborhood, where creative strategies for food production and retail are reclaiming vacant spaces, such as the "Make and Stay Place" repurposed shipping container by Detroit Collision Works.

of the 27,000 architecture students in the U.S. enrolled in about 120 programs, about 1,300 are African-American, and a little over a third of this number are enrolled in the eight historically African-American institutions of higher learning. This works out to about eight African-American architecture students at schools outside of the historical black colleges. Griffin notes that architecture is not perceived as a career choice by many African-American teenagers because there are so few black architects: less than 2% of the registered architects in the U.S. Why are careers in architecture not seen as desirable or attainable? Data are being collected on African-American architects, coupled with surveys of black teens and architecture students, their parents, school counselors, and teachers to understand how the profession is perceived. The center is also working with the nearby Harlem School for the Arts to introduce design skills to students, working with third-year CCNY architecture students who are exposing their young charges to what an architect does and how one can shape space.

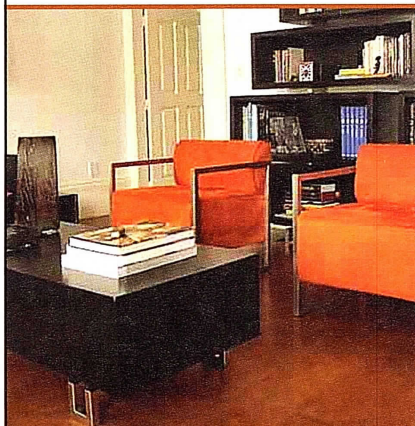
The "Legacy City Design" initiative is an ambitious effort in partnership with Columbia University's The American Assembly to research and catalogue the efforts of those working in Legacy Cities to share information, techniques, interventions, and outcomes in making a difference. Legacy Cities are defined as those with more than 50,000 residents that have suffered a peak population decline of 20% or more. This past November, the three-day Legacy City Design conference in Detroit brought together 80 participants from 13 cities. "The goal was to get these groups to share the work they were doing: what was working, what was not working," explains Griffin. Nearly 200 projects and ideas were presented. Griffin says that a network of shared practice will be launched as a resource to promote innovation in Legacy Cities around the country.

The close connection between the center and the architecture school affords many opportunities for students who could benefit from architecture's uplift to take a leading role in research, design, assessment, and interaction. There is the "JMBC Talks" series, organized by students and faculty to provide a forum to discuss issues in architecture and city design. Griffin says the approach is to make students more aware of what their contributions to a Just City can be.

"Students have an incredible need to know what practice is like," says Griffin, "how to use the skills they've learned, and have an impact." Griffin sees the JMBC as a place where faculty and students can collaboratively pursue research, ponder possibilities, and integrate ideas into practice. "We are trying to push that further and export it to the rest of the world. Students are excited that their work can have an impact." ■

**Michael J. Crosbie, FAIA**, is associate dean and chair of the Department of Architecture at the University of Hartford, and editor-in-chief of *Faith & Form* magazine.





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# Urban Design and Civic Engagement: A Bibliographic Essay

BY STANLEY STARK, FAIA

Due to the interest in the new mayor's development agenda, and in recognition of AIANY 2014 President Lance Jay Brown's theme of urban design and civic engagement, we present a range of books, both old and new, that offer insight and guidance on these issues.

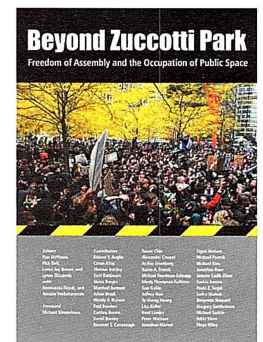
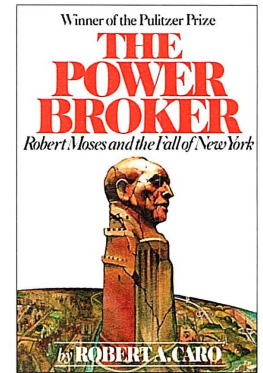
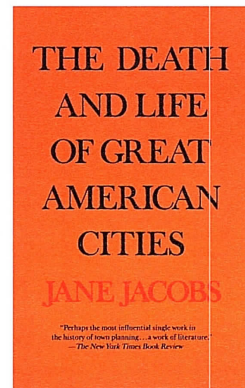
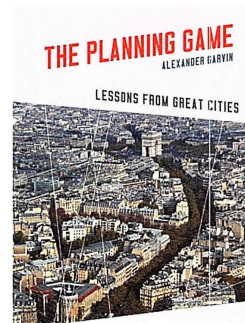
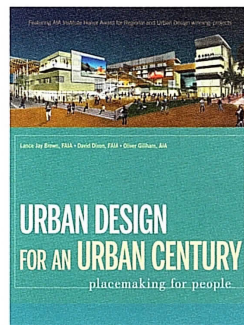
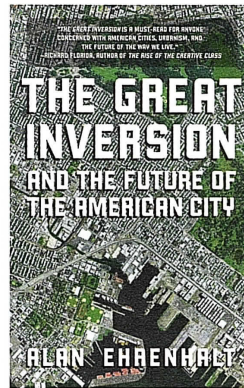
The intense interest in urban design is a direct response to the dramatic population shift from exurban to urban environments in America and much of the world. Both architecture and urban design are highly people-centered pursuits. Because urban design operates on a much larger scale, it has assumed tremendous importance as a linchpin of success for cities nationwide.

One good overview of the drive toward urbanism is Alan Ehrenhalt's *The Great Inversion and the Future of the American City* (Vintage, 2013). He examines the dynamics of urban change, how the roles of cities and suburbs are changing places, and the implications of a more residential city and a more urbanized suburb.

The library of studies of urban form is rich. Sibyl Moholy-Nagy's *Matrix of Man: An Illustrated History of Urban Environment* (Pall Mall Press, 1969), Steen Eiler Rasmussen's *Towns and Buildings* (The MIT Press, 1969), and Edmund N. Bacon's *The Design of Cities* (Penguin Books, 1976) are three seminal texts on the evolution of city form.

Jan Gehl's *Cities for People* (Island Press, 2010) and William H. Whyte's *The Social Life of Small Urban Spaces* (Project for Public Spaces, 2001) both study and illuminate how, at an intimate level, people perceive the urban environment and engage in public spaces. Both studies are observant, insightful, and wise in their recommendations and applications. Michael Webb's *The City Square* (Watson-Guptill, 1990) examines this major focal urban space and its many variations.

The tools, tactics, and preoccupations of urban design, particularly its political and interpersonal dimensions, are examined in *Urban Design as Public Policy* (McGraw-Hill, 1974), by Jonathan Barnett; *The Planning Game: Lessons from Great Cities* (W.W. Norton, 2013), by Alexander Garvin; and *Urban Design for an Urban Century: Placemaking for People* (Wiley, 2009), by Lance Jay



Brown, David Dixon, and Oliver Gilham. All show how grand aspirations are translated into reality.

Two clashing worldviews of the practice, conduct, and objectives of urban design are presented in Robert Caro's *The Power Broker: Robert Moses and the Fall of New York* (Vintage, 1975) and Jane Jacobs's *Death and Life of the Great American Cities* (Vintage, 1992). Moses's top-down monarchical view was ultimately thwarted by Jacobs's community-based planning approach. The footprints created by both are large, and we yearn for a melding of both views.

Design and civic engagement come together most dramatically in the face of an existential threat. Two versions to consider: *The Resilient City: How Modern Cities Recover from Disaster* (Oxford University Press, 2005), edited by Lawrence J. Vale and Thomas J. Campanella, explores how cities restore themselves following a catastrophe (war, storm, cataclysmic occurrences), and how planning, design, politics, and clashing interests interact. *Beyond Zuccotti Park: Freedom of Assembly and the Occupation of Public Space* (New Village Press, 2012), edited by Rick Bell, Lance Jay Brown, Lynn Elizabeth, and Ron Schiffman, with contributions from 40 others, explores the definition, use, and role of public space for freedom of assembly and expression. This study places civic engagement back at the center of the discussion of urban design.

Stanley Stark, FAIA, is Principal, Science and Technology at Francis Cauffman, and served as chair of the Oculus Committee from 2005 to 2007.



# A 1964 civic center plan,

a product of fierce debate, would have radically transformed New York's City Hall district

BY JOHN MORRIS DIXON, FAIA

Ever since the unification of the five boroughs in 1897, there have been proposals to glorify New York City's municipal government center with nobly-proportioned open spaces and imposing new buildings. The City Hall completed in 1811 (Joseph F. Mangin and John McComb, Jr., architects) was joined during the 1800s by related courthouses and jails, and in 1914 by the commanding 40-story Municipal Building (McKim Mead & White). The only significant open space, however, remained the appealing but unimposing City Hall Park.

In the 1920s, a variety of grand civic center schemes appeared. Planning recommendations from the AIA New York Chapter were behind a 1928 proposal by architect Francis Swales for a gargantuan structure, north of City Hall on its axis, covering two city blocks and rising over 1,000 feet. From there, an axial landscaped mall would have extended four blocks farther north. This scheme, and subsequent master plans, called for razing the Tweed Courthouse, which still survives (*Oculus*, Fall 2013, pg. 49).

While the area was subject to planning studies and street widenings in the late 1940s, it was decades before a comparably ambitious civic center scheme was initiated. In 1962 the city commissioned a proposal by architects Max Abramovitz, Simon Breines, and Robert Cutler for the entire area from City Hall Park north to Canal Street. Widely known as the "ABC plan" for its authors' initials, this plan would have created a superblock, with no through streets. A landscaped pedestrian mall extending three blocks north from City Hall was to be set atop a 1,100-car parking garage and a retail concourse. Terminating its uptown end would have been a 40-story city government building.

Objections to the ABC plan quickly arose, issuing mainly from the architectural community. The Action Group for Better Architecture in New York (AGBANY) and the New Yorkers for a Civic Center of Excellence (NYCCE), both led by AIA members, claimed the plan suffered from too many city-imposed limitations. The AIANY Chapter was divided, some demanding a design competition to replace the plan, others opposed to denouncing members' work. Pressing for an alternative proposal, philanthropist J.M. Kaplan organized a group called Architecture 13, which included Walter Gropius, Marcel Breuer, I.M. Pei, and Paul Rudolph, as well as the editors of *Architectural Forum* and *Progressive Architecture*. Faced with such formidable challengers, Mayor Robert Wagner commissioned the team of Edward Durell Stone and Eggers & Higgins to draw up a revised plan, which was released in 1964.

Their new plan called for razing more existing buildings than the ABC plan, and withdrawing earlier proposals to build others. Municipal functions were now to be centralized in a single



The 1964 New York Civic Center model, designed by Edward Durell Stone and Eggers and Higgins.

54-story tower. The elevated mall of the earlier plan, which would have obstructed the view of City Hall, was replaced with a sunken plaza lined with shops and restaurants. From there, grids of trees reached west to Broadway and east to Centre Street.

The Architectural 13 called the revised scheme a "considerable advance" over the previous version, but expressed reservations about its central tower. In June 1966 Mayor John Lindsay approved the new plan, and the city acquired properties needed to carry it out, but funds to execute it were never appropriated. It became just another civic center pipe dream.

John Morris Dixon, FAIA, left the drafting board for journalism in 1960 and was editor of *Progressive Architecture* from 1972 to 1996. He continues to write for a number of publications, and he received AIANY's 2011 Stephen A. Klimont Oculus Award for Excellence in Journalism.



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## LETTER FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

## Bridging Two Cities



Bell on the Brooklyn Bridge.

Cities may be looked upon as large assemblies, of which all the inhabitants are members; their populace exercises a prodigious influence upon the magistrates, and frequently executes its own wishes without their intervention.

—from *Democracy in America*, by Alexis de Tocqueville, 1835

We need a dramatic new approach – rebuilding our communities from the bottom-up, from the neighborhoods up. And just like before, the world will watch as we succeed. All along the way, we will remember what makes New York, New York. A city that fights injustice and inequality – not just because it honors our values, but because it strengthens our people. A city of five boroughs – all created equal.

—from NYC Mayor Bill de Blasio's Inauguration Speech, 2014

The opening of the Brooklyn Bridge on May 23,

1883, physically united the separate and distinct City of New York and City of Brooklyn. Work started in January 1870 and, when completed, cost an astronomical \$15.1 million. According to David McCullough in *The Great Bridge*, 20 lives were lost during its construction. The spectacular umbilical infrastructure displaced the ferries that had inspired Walt Whitman in 1856: “A hundred years hence, or ever so many hundred years hence, others will see them.” Ken Jackson wrote in *The Neighborhoods of Brooklyn* that by 1860 there were 33 million passengers a year making the ferry crossing.

But it was the Consolidation of 1898 that changed our multicentered region into one characterized as Manhattan-centric, where Brooklyn's power as the third largest U.S. city in its own right has been forgotten. Before the ballot to unify the city, a vote only narrowly approved by the citizens of what became Kings County, the population of Brooklyn had been doubling every decade.

The Manhattan Municipal Building, completed in 1913, served as a pedestrian and trolley portal between the newly united city's two largest boroughs. It was the winning entry in a competition organized by the NYC Commissioner of Bridges. McKim, Mead & White's triumphal arch was designed to greet pedestrians and vehicles at the foot of Chambers Street. The gilded copper statue of *Civic Fame* by Adolph Weinman stands 25 feet tall atop the 40-story structure allegorically describing the city's aspirations. Weinman's model, Audrey Munson, also posed for the Brooklyn and Manhattan sculpture by Daniel Chester French located at the Brooklyn Museum.

The first conference of the Center for Architecture took place at Baruch College on November 16, 2001, and was called “1=5: Creating a Multi-Centered City.” In the aftermath of the World Trade Center attack, speakers posited exponential growth for downtown Brooklyn, Long Island City, St. George, and the Bronx Hub. Some of the outlines have been built, from Metrotech to Queens West. Others are awaited. The late Margaret

Helfand, FAIA, 2001 AIANY President, wrote: “At the start of this new century, we are searching for ways to accommodate continued growth and more equitably distribute benefits. The obvious solution is to look again at a decentralized model.”

What defines civic equitability in the 21st century? NYPD Commissioner William Bratton said at his swearing-in in January: “Every day you get the opportunity to do good. It doesn't get any better than that.” Reformers and do-gooders noted in Mayor de Blasio's inaugural remarks included Jacob Riis, Frances Perkins, Eleanor Roosevelt, and Al Smith. Our city, the New York of Fiorello LaGuardia – and Franklin Roosevelt – is not the White City of civic monuments in a millennial park. Nor is it the Emerald City of green-backed skyscrapers gesticulating for more air and space. It is a city that harmoniously bridges brown and black, yellow and white, working together to create the architecture of well-being described in the AIANY's “Platform for the Future of the City” (available at [www.aiany.org](http://www.aiany.org)).

As former President Bill Clinton most eloquently said at the City Hall inauguration of his former HUD Regional Director Bill de Blasio: “This inequality problem bedevils the entire country, and, I can tell you from my work, much of the world. It is not just a moral outrage, but impedes our ability to tackle problems like climate change. We cannot go forward if we don't do it together. This is a gift we could give not only to New Yorkers, not only to the state, but to the country and, indeed, increasingly to the entire world. We are going to share the future.”

When the Progressive Coalition of the New York City Council met at the Center for Architecture in December 2013 to celebrate the election results, the work needed to create a city of social and environmental justice was articulately described. To join the skills of architects and designers to the challenges put forward, we aspire to be with our new mayor at the center of this debate.

Rick Bell, FAIA  
Executive Director, AIA New York Chapter



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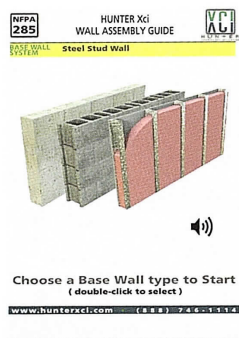
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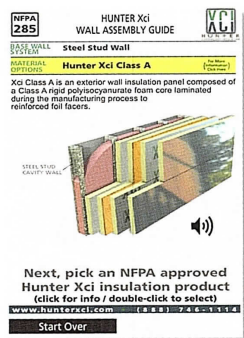
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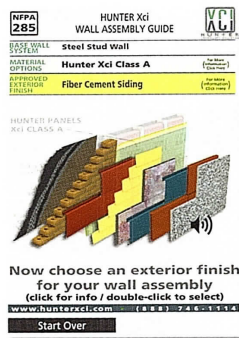
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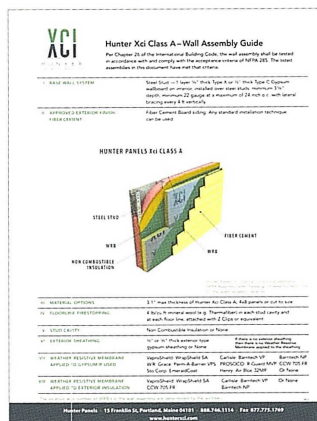
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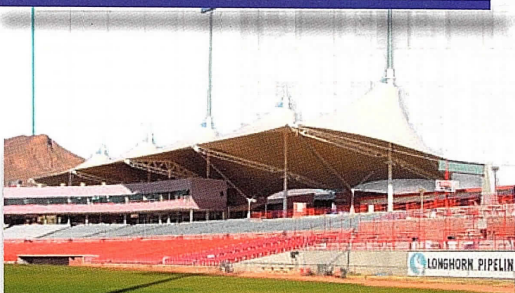
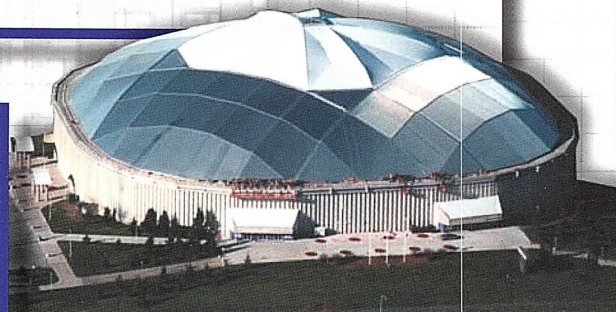
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