Another space for contemporary art will open in Chelsea, some three years from now. More coals in Newcastle? The Dia Foundation and Skidmore, Owings & Merrill (SOM)—a firm better known for its corporate practice than gallery designs—took a step closer toward building a new Dia space in Chelsea, releasing a rendering of the facade of Dia’s projected expansion on West 22nd Street. The image of the project that unites three brick buildings across the street from Dia’s previous gallery space in Chelsea puts a face on the site’s future. Construction is expected to begin in 2014, with completion envisioned for 2016, said Dia’s director Philippe Vergne, who would not disclose the budget for the project.

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EAST RIVER BLUEWAY PLANS FOR ACCESSIBLE WATERFRONT

East Side Story

The waterfront of Lower Manhattan, a vestige of maritime commerce and industrial conditions suitable for the dockworkers of centuries past, is slated for yet another face-lift. The East River, a tidal strait connecting the Harlem River to the Upper Bay of the New York Harbor, has been in the limelight recently.

MUSEUM EXPANSION KNITS TOGETHER YALE’S ARCHITECTURAL PAST

GALLERY GRADUATES

University building projects can have unfortunate consequences for diligent undergrads only on campus for four years. At Harvard, for example, the Fogg Art Museum closed for renovation in June 2008 and won’t reopen until 2013, meaning a whole class will have come and gone without ever walking through the doors of the university’s oldest museum. When Yale University decided to expand and update the home of its acclaimed collection, Jock Reynolds, the director of its art gallery, wanted to do it differently. “We were determined to keep the museum open to students and faculty throughout the project,” he said.

Yale could realistically promise this because the museum was composed of two adjacent buildings and was incorporating a third: Egerton . . . continued on page 10

As a campaign-money scandal threatens to engulf D.C.’s Mayor Vincent Gray, there’s some good news from the city’s Office of the Deputy Mayor for Planning and Economic Development (DMPED). Its plan to erect an “innovative and aesthetically unique” temporary pavilion on the campus of historic St. Elizabeth’s Hospital . . . continued on page 4

Above: St. Elizabeth’s East Campus.

Catalytic Competition

As a campaign-money scandal threatens to engulf D.C.’s Mayor Vincent Gray, there’s some good news from the city’s Office of the Deputy Mayor for Planning and Economic Development (DMPED). Its plan to erect an “innovative and aesthetically unique” temporary pavilion on the campus of historic St. Elizabeth’s Hospital . . . continued on page 4

Atlantic City is going for the convention and casino gold. See page 7.

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Architect: Arquitectonica

100 Park Avenue
Developer: St. Green
Architect: Moed de Armas & Shannon Architects

221 Main Street
Developer: Capelli Enterprises, Inc.
Architect: Costas Kondylis & Partners
From my bedroom window, I look out onto Broadway. Over the past five months, I have been watching the slow reveal of a storefront construction fence going up and now finally coming down. The site at the corner of 81st Street and 91st Street on Broadway, or the so-called "beached whale," is about to open. In the ten blocks between 81st Street and 91st Street on Broadway, there are ten banks; three of them are already banks of America.

In June 28, City Council approved the zoning change. Fast but not fast enough for my block.

Last November the Architectural League and the Citizens Housing and Planning Council held a joint symposium to develop innovative housing options; the hands-on favorites were micro-units. And on July 9, with astonishing speed, Mayor Bloomberg announced adAPT NYC, a competition to develop a rental building concept “composed primarily, or completely, of micro-units” according to the RFP. No need to revisit this original DOP Commissioner Sadik-Khan’s combat readiness when it comes to launching quickie pilot programs.

This is a responsive administration. In fact, it sometimes seems to operate on emergency room protocols. Or perhaps it’s simply the ingrained trait of our entrepreneur mayor’s DNA expressing itself: Identify; Do it.

Not everyone thinks rapid response decrees are the way to go. The Pratt Center for Community Development has cautioned in the past that the Bloomberg Administration has launched a lot of plans without sufficient neighborhood input and that the city’s own strategic plans are not transparent enough for communities to understand and respond with their own feedback. No sooner was the complaint lodged online than City Planning upped the number of plans emerging “pursuant to 197-a,” the City Charter amendment that fosters public participation in planning. One of the latest, Partnership for the Future: a 197-a Plan for Revitalization of the Bronx, just came out in May.

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There is not a scene-chewing Moses among them.

And so as the Bloomberg Administration starts its ride into the sun, it is no surprise that the architecture and urban planning communities are concerned. Already, the anxiety about what lies ahead is palpable. The next team will need performance enhancers to match this band of bureaucrats with shared purpose who believe that new participation in planning. One of the latest, Partnership for the Future: a 197-a Plan for Revitalization of the Bronx, just came out in May.

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BEAUTIFUL, NATURE INSPIRED DESIGN.

FROM SUN CONTROLS TO CURTAIN WALLS, YKK AP's enerGfacade® SYSTEMS DEFINE BUILDING ENVELOPES
Time for Asymptote’s 2.0. While Asymptote Architects continues to produce designs for elaborate projects in Asia and the Middle East, the studio has also recently had the uncommon opportunity to renew a past work, updating the interior of the Alessi store in Soho. Located on Greene Street, the store was originally designed by Hani Rashid of Asymptote in 2006. Central to the renovations was a change in the programming of the store. Retail has been expanded to the front, which had originally been a café. Where the store had been divided into differentiated front and rear sections, there is now only a panel of glass. This change opens and unifies the space, revealing its most significant design feature: the sequence of backlit ribbing along the length of the store and the geometric impressions sweeping diagonally across the ceiling. “The open store is now getting to the point of the design,” Rashid said. “It is coming of age in a way.”

The wallpaper and color palate of the interior has been redesigned as well. The complex pattern is reminiscent of Louis Sullivan’s tracery work, which Rashid sees as appropriate inspiration for cast-iron Soho, a sort of “Chicago meets New York situation.”

Lumber certification is one of the most controversial environmental topics today and an upcoming decision by the federal government on green building certification systems could have a big impact on how we maintain the health of the world’s forests. A recent report by the U.S. General Services Administration (GSA) compares green building certification systems. It found that the Green Building Initiative (GBI)’s Green Globes rating system aligns better with federal high-performance building requirements for new construction than does the U.S. Green Building Council’s LEED system, the system that the GSA currently requires on most of its new buildings. The GSA report, however, does not address the debate about which standard is more environmentally sound when it comes to wood sourcing. The reasons are raising eyebrows: the president of the Green Building Initiative is Ward Hubbell, a former vice president at the Louisiana-Pacific Corporation, a building materials company with a notorious reputation among environmentalists for clear-cutting forests. Many in the environmental community allege that GBI, which is used for certifying new buildings by the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs and companies such as Whole Foods, lobbies on behalf of “green-washing” timber companies. Two main competing forestry certification standards are at issue. One is the Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) certification, which is used for certifying new buildings by the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs and companies such as Whole Foods, lobbies on behalf of “green-washing” timber companies. Two main competing forestry certification standards are at issue. One is the Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) certification, which is the only standard allowed in the U.S. Green Building Council’s LEED rating system. The other is the Sustainable Forestry Initiative (SFI), which is one of four forestry certification systems allowed by GBI’s Green Globes rating system.
MAGIC CITY?

With casinos and convention centers becoming the catchall answer to urban-planning problems up and down the East Coast, the new Revel in Atlantic City may prove an influential model. It merges several markets under one roof in a smoke-free environment (a novelty in casino land) including hotel resort, casino, theaters, and convention space.

The $2.4 billion project designed by Arquitectonica was supported in part by $261 million in New Jersey taxpayer incentives and is a cornerstone of Governor Chris Christie’s attempt to turn Atlantic City around. But there are signs that the complex is not playing nice with its urban context. Developers of the Revel said in an interview that they weren't even aware of the Casino Reinvestment Development Authority master plan designed by Jerde Partnership and announced in March.

On a recent visit, initial views of the Revel from Pacific Avenue revealed only a massive parking garage—the podium to a future 47-story slab—offering no hint of Arquitectonica’s impressive wave-like curtain wall on the boardwalk. Revel CEO Kevin DeSanctis explained bluntly, "You need to have a back of the house somewhere," adding that scenic views of the ocean and an inlet to the north needed to be maintained. "You sort of run out of sides pretty quick," he said.

And the priority was to give the casino floor not only plenty of natural light but also ocean views. In a shocking departure from casino protocol, players can look up from the roulette wheel and see the Atlantic Ocean. The Philly-based architect of record, Arquitectonica's impressive wave-like structure, was supported in part by New Jersey taxpayer incentives and is a cornerstone of Governor Chris Christie’s attempt to turn Atlantic City around. But there are signs that the complex is not playing nice with its urban context. Developers of the Revel said in an interview that they weren't even aware of the Casino Reinvestment Development Authority master plan designed by Jerde Partnership and announced in March.

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No diving. That’s the rule in most all of the 50 public outdoor swimming pools of New York City, including the McCarren Park Pool between Greenpoint and Williamsburg in Brooklyn. The pool was recently reopened with a $50 million renovation by Rogers Marvel Architects after a near-30-year dry spell. And yet there’s something about the new outdoor changing pavilions, the most visible part of the renovation that has all the poised tensile exuberance of a leap into space. Their white, plasterly canopies narrow in profile, diving-board-like, toward their perimeters—the soffits tilting up more gradually poolside, more steeply behind—and their supporting columns are similarly skinnier closer to the water and stouter closer to the existing building—reinforcing an impression of embodied potential energy. Incisions and gill-like fins guide daylight into the interiors, and a generous gap between the underside of the canopies and the top of the partitions and lockers below bring sparkle and spaciousness to what would otherwise be dour transitional spaces.

They also echo the crisp clerestory canopy over the existing entry to the complex, a monumentally moderne triumphal arch in Roman brick by Aymar Embury II, the notably skillful in-house architect for then-Parks Commissioner Robert Moses. Funded by the Depression-era Works Progress Administration, McCarren was one of ten city pools that opened in the summer of 1936, the hottest on record at the time. It closed in 1984, the victim of recession and a flashpoint for tension and crime in neighborhoods going through demographic change and economic decline. This summer’s reopening, following the well-known hipster-driven development of the area, is the first of eight large-scale park refurbishments planned between now and 2030 under the city’s PlaNYC program. Opening day on June 28 saw that gorgeous mosaic of New Yorkers of all shapes and colors filling the million-gallon cobalt-blue pool to its 1,500-person capacity. And while the subsequent heatwave saw assaults and arrests ascending out of the usual watery mayhem, the pool has become an instant mainstay, both athletic and democratic, establishing what designer Jonathan Marvel has described as “spaces that inspire community involvement and face time.”

Some of those spaces are elegantly poetic, like computer labs, meeting rooms, and small-scale gymnasiums tucked into the existing non-nonsense bar buildings that flank Embury’s fantastical arch. The pool itself, once a massive rectangle with enough water for four Olympic-size facilities, has been reconceived with a central peninsula (an ice rink in winter) that configures the now C-shaped complex into a sloping inlet for kids, a 25-meter-long area for laps and lanes, and a big expanse for everything else. Fountains and mist machines turn that central peninsula into an uncanny beach. A subtle arrangement of gates and fences allows parallel indoor-outdoor circulation for swimmers and patrons of the community facilities.

Some of the spaces are more poetic, like the restored atrium inside the entrance pavilion topped by a skylight worthy of James Turrell, or the adjacent moody lobby, lined in horizontal hardwood boards salvaged from Coney Island’s demolished boardwalk. In another charming instance of adaptive reuse, hundreds of baskets, recovered during construction and that once stored swimmers’ clothes and belongings, are now inverted and affixed to the lobby ceilings in a shimmering metallic matrix. Those overturned baskets send you on a different kind of dive, swooning deep through the history of the city: it’s easy to see descending from them, in the mind’s eye, decades of shoes and glasses, treasures and trinkets, cascading through almost a century of summer.

Rogers Marvel Architects, in projects like Upper Manhattan’s Stephen Gaynor School at one scale and the Mulberry Street Branch of the New York Public Library at another, have demonstrated an increasing interest in the dignity to be found in public space and civic life, and the thoughtful infill to be discovered between old and new. That’s all too rare in a New York firm, and indicates a practice that, despite its admirable formal restraint and drily understated style, is ready to make a bigger splash. THOMAS DE MONCHAUX

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Great Access

On July 17, Gehry Technologies released GT Team, their new web-based project management platform. GT Team is not a new variant of Digital Project, their signature 3-D authoring application, but rather a set of tools to manage files, providing web-based access to 3-D models and their datasets and an auditable history of every step in the process of designing, engineering, constructing, and operating buildings. GT Team is a stand-alone platform, which means it can be useful to firms that don’t use Digital Project, especially in situations involving multiple authoring environments.

When it comes to file sharing in GT Team, imagine Dropbox souped up with the security and navigation you have wished for. That means role-based access, synchronization, and an auditable history of design versions along with comments and markup. There are also thumbnail images of picture and 3-D files, so you can find your way around in those very large file menus that can accumulate in a complex project. Its 3-D model navigator is also impressive: with any web browser on any device, an authorized viewer can fly around the whole model, select subsystems or sections, and extract specific information about which it is possible to approve, bid, or make comments. The GT Team back-end will accept files authored in anything from Digital Project, Revit, ArchiCAD, Rhino, and Sketchup, along with standard formats like IGES, STEP and IFC. Not only will it display the models together in the browser, GT Team can also export back to those formats and to OBJ, Collada, or STL for CNC fabrication or presentation models, renderings, and animation.

The tracker component looks and works a little bit like Facebook on performance enhancers. You can browse forward and back through past versions of particular files, see the changes posted by particular team members, file types, and so on. Gehry Technologies has gone to a great deal of trouble to make the tools simple to use for nontechnical team members, but also wildly versatile and powerful. GT Team is cloud-based, so there are no in-house software skills or hardware to maintain. Licensing is by subscription. Pricing won’t be official for a while yet, but a pre-release will be available for free for now until October at gehry.com.

Friendly advice: think through the potential value of key GT Team features to your current workflow as a thought experiment before downloading the trial. You might get hooked.

CARL SKELETON

CAN YOU GO HOME AGAIN? continued from front page

A new Diane Chelsea museum is on its way.

The SOM partner designing Dia: Chelsea, Roger Duffy, dismissed the prevailing notion among many architects that his firm was an unlikely choice for a relatively small project like Dia: Chelsea.

“Dia just put the art first, and I think very few institutions are putting the purpose first in the architecture,” Duffy said, echoing Gluckman’s approach to Dia’s galleries in 1987. Critics of the decision to hire SOM may read his remark as a diffident preemption of the reproach that the project’s design is unavuncular and will be a place like DIA, whose mission has been supporting experimental work.

“How do you measure that?” Vergne asked. “From time to time, going with the obvious, even if the obvious seems more eccentric, could be more conservative than the decision we have made.”

Vergne admitted that Dia: Chelsea had not yet found a donor equivalent to Leonard Riggio, the Barnes & Noble baron who gave $35 million for the reported $50 million construction cost of Dia: Beacon. In 2006, Dia killed ambitious plans for a space at the southern end of the High Line when Riggio resigned as board chairman. “But I can say that our board has raised a significant portion of the budget figure, which I won’t give you,” Vergne said.

DAVID D’ACY

Since its construction in 1982, the Jacob K. Javits Center has been one of the world’s leading examples of space-frame design. But the I.M. Pei & Partners-designed exhibit space needed updating to put its best face forward for the 3.5 million visitors it receives each year. So owners engaged Epstein Global and FXFowle Architects, who developed the reconfiguring program that is dramatically increasing the building’s transparency and energy efficiency. Targeting LEED Silver with a glazing system that will enable the building to exceed energy code requirements by 25 percent, the new face of Javits proves that being old doesn’t have to mean retiring.

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Swartwout’s 1928 neo-Gothic galleries (the “Old” Yale Art Gallery); Louis Kahn’s 1953 addition (the architect’s first museum commission); and finally, the 1866 building by architect Peter Wight, known as Street Hall, which formerly housed the art history department.

With some adroit planning, parts of this museum mash-up could always remain open throughout a substantial renovation and roof-top addition by Ennead Architects.

The Kahn building was the first renovated in 2006, and Swartwout and Street, which are linked by an enclosed bridge, are now being completed and set to reopen in December. The gallery will have 64,000 square feet of display space in total, allowing substantially more of the collection, which ranges from ancient Chinese bronzes to postwar Pop art and beyond, to be on view. Such upgrades may go unnoticed by visitors, but farther inside the walls of Swartwout and Street, the change is dramatic: warrens of makeshift offices were removed to restore the buildings’ generous rooms and gallery sightlines, and original architectural details were recovered and reused. “When you approach the renovation of a building, you do a lot of forensics, probing and poking around, and it was a pleasant surprise discovering a great deal of original material,” said Duncan Hazard, the Ennead principal managing the project, describing how the architects restored original wainscoting on the gallery walls.

A spectacular glass elevator now connects the above ground floors with an extensive new education center in the previously unused basement level. At the top of Swartwout, Ennead added a floor and a half, which will provide space for temporary exhibitions and a dedicated study gallery, where every semester professors can request art to be displayed for use in their courses. The new zinc- and glass-clad addition is pulled back from the original facade to create a terrace with panoramic views of New Haven and a new home for a Henry Moore sculpture and other large-scale pieces.

Ennead began working with Yale in 1994, when the firm was Polshek Partnership, as master planner for the so-called Yale Arts Area, and the $135 million museum renovation is the plan’s centerpiece. The expanded gallery is free and open to the public, but its primary audience is students. If Yale generates more art aficionados, a further expansion may be on the distant horizon: donors, both alumni and friends, have given the museum 57,000 new works of art since the renovation project began. MOLLY HEINTZ

From left to right: New gallery on the roof of the Old Yale Art Gallery; a view into the new European galleries; stairwell in the new addition.

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THE ARCHITECT’S NEWSPAPER JULY 25, 2012
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City-mandated parking minimums are set to be lowered in one corner of Brooklyn, but many say the proposal is too timid for one of New York City’s most transit-rich neighborhoods.

Under a plan released June 4 by the New York City Department of City Planning (DCP), parking minimums in Downtown Brooklyn could shrink by half if no objections are raised during a 60-day review period by Brooklyn Community Board 2 and the Brooklyn Borough President. Currently, zoning in the district requires a 40 percent parking ratio for market-rate housing units—in other words, four parking spaces for every ten units. Under the DCP plan, the minimum would be lowered to 20 percent. For affordable housing, the current required ratio of 25 percent would be eliminated entirely.

Some transit advocates wonder why a district with 13 subway lines needs parking minimums at all, especially given that new garages often sit largely empty. Noah Kazis, a reporter with the transportation news and advocacy website Streetsblog explained, “There certainly isn’t any technical explanation for why Downtown Brooklyn needs 20 percent parking minimums. By DCP’s own admission, the lower minimums would still force developers to build more parking than they can rent out. DCP still will be pushing up rents and car-ownership rates, in contradiction of stated city goals.”

Asked how they arrived at the new minimum threshold, a representative from the DCP explained that the proposal to reduce parking from the current 40 percent requirement down to 20 percent for market-rate units is a balanced response to the concerns they heard from local developers and stakeholders on parking utilization in Downtown Brooklyn.

Major residential development in recent years has softened Downtown Brooklyn’s reputation as a sterile business district that shuts down at the end of the workday. Under current zoning, however, new developments often include garages and curb cuts that dominate a building’s street presence and compromise the pedestrian realm. Further, housing advocates argue that garages—one of the most expensive parts of a building on a per-square-foot basis—raise the cost of construction and thereby contribute to New York’s perennial lack of affordable housing.

New York lags behind other cities in parking reform. Kazis points out that “cities from Washington, D.C. and San Francisco to Seattle and Buffalo are eliminating parking minimums outright in neighborhoods with far worse transit than Downtown Brooklyn.”

Albeit timid, the Department of City Planning’s proposal to reduce parking minimums in Downtown Brooklyn is a step toward enhancing vitality in the city’s third largest business district. The DCP continues to study residential parking in areas outside of, but close to, the Manhattan core, and expects the data to inform future policy. Given Downtown Brooklyn’s exceptional transit connections, however, the DCP’s latest plan seems to indicate that truly progressive parking reform is unlikely to benefit any of New York’s more distant outer borough neighborhoods anytime soon.
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this year. Set to begin transformation by the end of the Brooklyn Bridge to East 38th Street is a 3.5-mile stretch on the river’s western edge that has been far more sparse, until now. A new class of recreationalists and market-rate dwellers alike. However, development on the river’s eastern edge has been far more active. Some of the city’s waterfront parks, namely, Brooklyn Bridge Park; Williamsburg, East Side Story continued from front page

EAST SIDE STORY continued from front page

The result is the East River Blueway Plan—a community-based planning initiative named for its focus on access and connectivity on the water. Adam Lubinsky, a managing partner at WXY, believes in a comprehensive planning strategy. “The East River Blueway Plan will be the foundation for an interconnected network of waterfront sites.” Easier said than done. Much of the waterfront is severed from the city by the FDR Drive, a high-speed roadway that soars and dips. The focus, according to Lubinsky, “is on those who can walk there.” WXY, with Borough President Stringer and Assembly member Kavanaugh, have publicly engaged the communities since September of 2011, often hearing about local desires to cross the highway. Unfortunately, the FDR Drive is not the only obstacle. Superblocks of towers-in-the-park housing, poor drainage, a mixture of active and inactive waterfront industry, and many other factors add up to discourage development on this site. ADA-inaccessible overpasses; narrow, collision-inducing bike lanes; and combined sewage overflows have also been identified as key issues. However, in a recent interview, Lubinsky spoke optimistically of the site’s conditions. “The infrastructure there creates a really hard edge, and all of the buildings built over the past 80 years have turned their backs to the river.” The challenge, he continues, “is to get residents to turn around, to realize the river is there, to be aware of it and to start to use it more.” Soon, if the hopes of community members are realized, New Yorkers may be biking along and even kayaking and swimming in the East River.

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CROPPED BOOMERANG

On July 17 two subcommittees of New York City Council approved NYU’s expansion plans with yet another round of modifications, virtually assuring approval by the full council on July 25. Council Member Margaret Chin, who represents the Greenwich Village neighborhood, said that the modified plan “will not overwhelm the community,” and that it is an appropriate balance between the integrity of the Village and the needs of NYU. Changes include a 20 percent overall reduction, bringing the gross square footage from 2,130,000 to 1,918,000. This cutback will be concentrated in two locations: on the northern section of the Twizler Building, the bulk of which has been shifted from the corner of Mercer and Bleeker streets towards Houston, and at the Mercer Street Boomerang building, which has been reduced in height from 11-stories to a squat four; the second Boomerang building remains at eight stories. Council Member Vincent Ignizio said that the challenges that face NYU and Village residents are far from over. “Now the real work begins for the community and for NYU,” he said. “This community clearly has an issue with you, and now is your opportunity to begin a new day, wipe the slate clean and say we are going to be responsive.”

STUNTED ABI

The Architectural Billings Index (ABI) for June fell for the third month in a row. Last month AIA chief economist Kermit Baker expressed concern that the summertime doldrums might mirror a 2011 trend when the ABI lullled after an initially healthy first quarter. Now it looks as though the index is doing just that. “While not all firms are experiencing negative conditions, a large share is still coping with a sluggish and erratic marketplace,” Baker said in a statement. All regions of the country and all industry sectors remained in negative territory with the overall index barely budging from May’s 45.8, with June registering at 45.9 (any score below 50 reflects a decrease).

ONE HALF FULL

After fits and starts, the federal General Services Administration (GSA) finally signed on the dotted line to lease 270,000 square feet at One World Trade, pushing the tower over the symbolic 50 percent leased mark. “The fat lady sang,” Senator Charles Schumer told the New York Post. The GSA joins Condé Nast and Chinese real estate giant Vantone after a protracted negotiation that was stalled by Beltway bickering.
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Enclose features the lowest base detail in the market: it’s just 1 inch off the floor, providing the maximum transparency and the ability to run in infinite spans. The system includes several panel options with enhancements from Haworth’s Workware product line.

haworth.com

Using parametric technology, these non-loadbearing walls can be customized into a variety of forms in two new substrates (solid resin and metal composite) in addition to 100 percent recyclable cellular resin. Winner of a NeoCon 2012 Silver, Architectural Products.

seeyond.com

MOVING ON

Movable walls and demountable systems offer highly adaptive low-impact solutions. By Perrin Drumm
This pre-assembled glass wall system with unlimited butt-glazing, a thinner rectilinear profile, and no vertical posts allows for seamless spaces. It can be integrated with KI’s Genius wall to accommodate solid panels. Winner of a NeoCon 2012 Silver, Movable Walls. ki.com

This new collaboration offers completely customizable, durable, easy-to-clean, and versatile walls, an ideal choice for healthcare that can also be retrofitted to support hanging plants with Dirtt’s Breathe Living Walls. It’s supported by the ICE interactive 3-D software platform, making ordering a snap. dirtt.net

This seemingly invisible roller fitting runs on a shallow floor-integrated track. These flush-fitted tracks are installed in the ceiling to hold the panel, but the weight is taken by the floor, eliminating the need for complex support installations. index-d.com

Frameless glass walls install twice as fast with a unique built-in scissor lift mechanism that levels the glass within the floor. Exceptionally soundproof and customizable, Beyond can be fitted with Allsteel’s Breathe plant units. Winner of a NeoCon 2012 Gold, Architectural Products. allsteelooffice.com

Silent Wall Box provides privacy with a modular, flexible, and portable solution that’s easy to integrate into Vitra’s Silent Wall system. The Boxes boast excellent acoustics and can be connected to a power supply and fitted with lighting. vitra.com
AGENCIES OF CHANGE

The Bloomberg Administration is arguably one of the most pro-development governments in city history. Since he took office, the Mayor has used city agencies to unleash the forces of New York real estate while also steering those forces to meet goals for a cleaner, greener, and more equitable city. PlaNYC, the catch-all name for the Mayor’s bundle of 132 sustainability initiatives, creates a framework for over 25 city agencies to collaborate on a vast array of projects, from the new East River Ferry service to a $187 million investment in green infrastructure. While some programs such as MillionTreesNYC, are making streets leafier one tree at a time, many of the Mayor’s initiatives have reshaped the city in profound ways. As the administration counts down its remaining days in office, AN checks in with the individual agencies whose projects have had the most impact on development in the city.

By Alan G. Brake, Molly Heintz, Julie V. Iovine, Branden Klayko, Nicholas Miller, and Tom Stoelker

NEW YORK CITY ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION

The New York City Economic Development Corporation (NYCEDC) is not a city agency at all but a non-profit with a mission to spur local development, but the Mayor appoints seven members of the organization’s board of directors, including the chairperson. The NYCEDC, which has grown from a staff of 200 to over 400 during Bloomberg’s tenure as mayor, has its hand in hundreds of projects across the city. “Our goal has been to diversify development across five boroughs,” said NYCEDC President Seth Pinsky. And just because Bloomberg’s term is coming to a close, don’t think things are winding down. The Applied Sciences campus on Roosevelt Island is just getting underway and, as of June, the city had acquired 95 percent of the land required to move forward with Willets Point, a five million square foot development that includes the remediation of a contaminated site.

Major Initiatives: According to NYCEDC, the Waterfront Vision and Enhancement Strategy (WAVES) Initiative is a “sustainable blueprint for realizing New York as a premier waterfront city.” Under the umbrella of the initiative are 130 projects across more than 500 miles of city coastline. Twelve city agencies are involved along with investment of $3 billion over the next three years. The City’s Coney Island Revitalization Plan calls for a mixed-use neighborhood with 5,000 new units of housing plus retail, an effort the city predicts will generate 25,000 construction jobs and 6,000 permanent jobs. The South Bronx Initiative was launched by the Mayor in 2006 to create a strategic plan to support private investment, development, and infrastructure planning in that area. Working with HPD, NYCEDC developed retail corridors that would support new housing. NYEDC has also increased outreach to communities impacted by its projects. The State says too much, recently citing EDC for playing “a behind-the-scenes role in the lobbying activities” on behalf of Willets Point and Coney Island developments.

Status: The statistics on WAVES initiatives are detailed: 34 projects completed; 71 projects on schedule; 14 projects with delays; 5 projects reconsidered; 1 project not yet started. Projects include New Stapleton Waterfront, a seven-acre development on the site of the former Navy Homeport in Staten Island, featuring 900 rental units, retail, and a waterfront esplanade. “The RFP was issued in late 2007, then the financial crisis hit causing us to lose all the original respondents. But we managed to persevere. We found a new developer, Ironstate Development of Hoboken, broke the projects into phases, and rejiggered some of the site uses,” said Pinsky. At Coney Island, before construction can start, the proper infrastructure has to be in place—namely sewers. “A lot of the areas had never had substantial development, and in order to build housing and retail, you need to have adequate infrastructure,” said Pinsky. As part of the Coney Island plan, the City is putting $150 million into infrastructure alone.

Impact: “There used to be vacant lots in the South Bronx, and now there’s density, a hustle and bustle. I wish that EDC and HPD would work together more to do mixed-used projects—that’s the type of synergy we need.” —Magnus Magnusson, Magnusson Architects
Major Initiatives: Under the Bloomberg Administration, the Department of City Planning has been more active than at anytime since the days of the Lindsay Administration’s vaunted City Planning Commission. Since 2002, 40 percent of the city has been rezoned (115 rezonings covering more than 10,300 blocks). Under the direction of Commissioner Amanda Burden, the department has adapted for the 21st century many of the initiatives first conceived under Lindsay, including large-scale mixed-use developments such as Hudson Yards (with customized zoning and financing mechanisms for infrastructure improvements) and Willets Point while amplifying community involvement through intensive public-private collaborations—the High Line, South Street Seaport—and enabling coordinated efforts across agencies in order to address sustainability goals and open space and streetscape improvements. In Greenpoint/Williamsburg, planning partnered with HPD to structure a new Inclusionary Housing Program along the waterfront, while collaborating with the Parks Department to ensure that the new two-mile waterfront esplanade would remain fully accessible to the public. But it will most likely be the attention to detail that will be remembered most about Burden’s reign, from the creative zoning encouraging cultural uses on 125th Street to the bar-style balustrades along the East River Waterfront Esplanade.

Status: Subject to major rezonings, some neighborhoods are already reaping the hoped-for rewards although not always as originally envisioned. A 2004 rezoning of Downtown Brooklyn to transform it into a major business hub has been slow to take off, even as it has triggered a residential boom—26 new buildings; 5,200 units. This summer, the emergence of the Brooklyn Tech Triangle, New York University’s Center for Urban Science and Progress campus, and MakerBot’s move to MetroTech are adding some momentum. The 2005 rezoning of the Greenpoint/Williamsburg waterfronts has added fuel to the ascendance of the Brooklyn waterfront, while rezonings of Bedford Stuyvesant North, West Harlem and the South Bronx will inevitably take much longer to catch on. Attention is currently focused on a big final push to rezone East Midtown and redirect development towards the East Side triggering changes with potentially more impact on the core skyline than anything along the waterfronts.

Impact: “Mayor Bloomberg restructured city government by having agencies responsible for land use and economic development report to a single Deputy Mayor. Strong leadership at City Hall has coordinated multiple Mayoral agencies, not just those concerned with economic development, to help shape and realize our ambitious rezoning initiatives. It has been through the coordinated and directed efforts of multiple agencies that we have been able to achieve adoption and ensure implementation of our ambitious plans.” Commissioner Amanda Burden, Department of City Planning
NEW YORK CITY DEPARTMENT OF PARKS AND RECREATION

Major Initiatives: New York City comprises 29,000 acres of parkland. Over the past decade, the Bloomberg Administration has added more than 730 acres. While Central Park has long been a major economic generator of funds ($656 million in increased tax revenues in 2007 generated by adjacent properties increasing in value by proximity to the park), increasing riverside accessibility at Greenpoint and Williamsburg’s former industrial sites, Hunters Point South, Hunts Point and along the city’s 520 miles of waterfront have become key initiatives of the administration, and the progress is notable. Commissioner Adrian Benepe has made no secret that the administration’s definition of success lies in creative financing with a bedrock of public-private partnerships. The commissioner pointed to the Central Park Conservancy as the great “friends of” model, but hand-in-glove cooperation with City Planning and the Department of Transportation has reshaped waterfront parks and their upland streetscapes by courting development.

Status: There are 160 active capital projects in the parks department. Of several near-term priorities, three waterfront projects are engaging in public-private developer involvement. In Greenpoint/Williamsburg the city is cobbling together parcels to create public parks linked with privately owned public spaces (POPS). A 2005 rezoning required developers to build the POPS at the river’s edge in return for substantial floor area ratio increases. The zoning encouraged Toll Brothers to build Northside Edges, Douglaston to create Williamsburg Edge, and JMH to restore 184 Kent. The 30-acre Hunter’s Point South allowed for park designs by Balsley/Weiss/Manfredi with Arup and residential towers developed in part by Related and designed by SHoP. In the Bronx, a grass roots riverside cleanup eventually led the Department of Environmental Protection to supply land for Barretto Park.

Impact: “The difference between now and 1979 is that you didn’t have the dozen or so major nonprofits involved, so that I think that will insure that whoever takes over at Parks, maintenance will not be an afterthought.” Commissioner Adrian Benepe, Department of Parks and Recreation

“Before we bought the Banknote Building we were certainly aware of what had been accomplished at Barretto Point and Hunts Point and saw that as a tangible sign of the city’s commitment to the peninsula. It was a strong symbol that things were happening here.” Jonathan Denham, co-president of Denham Wolf

In Williamsburg, developers of the Edge (top, left) and Northside Piers (above) were required to build waterfront esplanades (top, right) as public amenities. The city is building parks at Hunter’s Point South to facilitate development (below) compatible with an urban waterfront.
HISTORIC DISTRICTS AS OF JULY 2, 2012

Clockwise from top, left: Though Landmarks has added 31 new historic districts, landmarked structures represent a tiny fraction of the city’s buildings (above); LPC has approved both contextual such as St. Vincent’s and contemporary designs like One Jackson Square; protected buildings in DUMBO; the new DUMBO historic district.

NEW YORK CITY LANDMARKS PRESERVATION COMMISSION

Major Initiatives: Though landmark districts encompass a mere three percent of the city’s landmass, their effects can stretch beyond landmark borders. Developers argue that the districts inhibit growth and preservationists believe they spur it. Under Mayor Bloomberg, the Landmarks Commission has been known to allow huge projects within districts, such as the Rudin Management’s St. Vincent plan, especially when highly contextual. At other times, new buildings are allowed to challenge the status quo, as in Hines’s One Jackson Square, which sits just up the street from St. Vincent’s. To make for a more transparent process, Commissioner Robert Tierney said that new rules will be introduced next year to codify procedures and allow online permitting. But this has not mollified concerns from developers. Two Trees owns more than 2 million square feet within the DUMBO historic district. Two Trees’ Jed Walentas. “The fact that it’s landmarked just makes it more expensive.”

Status: Pre-Bloomberg, there were 77 historic districts and 9 historic district extensions, encompassing approximately 22,400 properties.

Currently there are 108 historic districts and 18 historic district extensions, encompassing approximately 28,500 properties.

There are 30,000 landmarked sites throughout the city, including 1,316 individual landmarks, 10 scenic landmark sites, and 114 interior landmarks.

Impact: “Yes, it’s a process that requires significant resources and time, but maybe for the developers who are able to work through our process, it’s worth it.”

Chair Robert Tierney, Landmarks Preservation Commission

“There’s a time and a place for landmarking; when it becomes scary is when it becomes an anti-development tool during a hot real estate market.”

Brooklyn developer Jed Walentas.
THE ARCHITECT’S NEWSPAPER JULY 25, 2012

NEW YORK CITY DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

Major Initiative: Pedestrian Plazas

Status: Recognizing that streets in New York account for 25 percent of the city's area yet pedestrian amenities were scarce, DOT created Sustainable Streets, a multimodal transportation policy for the city, calling in part for improving streetscapes for pedestrians and cyclists and creating new public spaces from underused roadways in targeted locations such as Times Square, Herald Square, the Flatiron District, and now Vanderbilt Avenue. Also in 2008 and 2009, DOT undertook the Green Light for Midtown program to improve the streetscape along Broadway, created new plazas at Madison Square’s iconic Flatiron Building, and built a ribbon of new public space along a new Broadway Boulevard connecting Herald and Times squares. In June the study, “If You Build It: The Impact of Street Improvements on Commercial Office Space,” showed how improvements work together to create a backbone along Broadway. Hotels, in particular, are taking advantage of older building stock. In recent years, the Ace Hotel, the NoMad Hotel, and the Flatiron Hotel have all opened in previously overlooked blocks of Broadway; Marriott plans an Edition Hotel in Madison Square’s Clock Tower Building. Astor Place may be the next hot spot. With over eight acres of new pedestrian space planned there, it is the site for one of the first new spec buildings in the past 20 years.

Impact: “Once it was valuable to be right on the park, but now it’s also valuable to be near the park as the pedestrian improvements and bike lanes connect everything together. It’s not just Broadway, but areas around them forming a cohesive whole.” Janet Liff, a commercial broker in Midtown South

NEW YORK CITY DEPARTMENT OF HOUSING PRESERVATION & DEVELOPMENT

Major Initiative: The New Housing Marketplace Plan calls for the creation and preservation of 169,000 units of affordable housing by 2014.

Status: HPD counts more than 125,000 units towards this goal. By the end of fiscal year 2011, 35% of housing started under the plan was new construction, 65% preservation. The agency has been more successful at preservation of affordable housing than new construction, due in part to the real estate downturn. HPD is currently “getting started on and finishing community” many new construction projects and closing in on construction, according to Deputy Commissioner for Development RuthAnne Vishnauskas. “You will definitely see progress towards getting towards the marquee goal for new construction sites.” Seward Park (now in ULURP) on the Lower East Side and Hunter’s Point South (under construction) in Queens are major new developments that the agency hopes to complete by 2014, each of which will include more than 900 units of affordable housing.

Impact: "New York City is lucky and unique in that we have a very strong for profit sector that builds affordable housing. That part of the sector never really wanes. There were for-profit developers doing affordable housing even when the economy was low."

RuthAnne Vishnauskas, Deputy Commissioner for Development

NEW YORK CITY DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION

Major Initiative: DEP signed a consent agreement with the New York State Department of Environmental Protection (which enforces federal EPA standards) to comply with the federal Clean Water Act standards, improve the health of the city’s waterways, and dramatically reduce the number of combined sewage overflows.

Status: DEP is currently developing Long Term Compliance Plans (LTCP) for ten New York City Waterways as well as a citywide LTCP, the first of which will be completed in 2013 and all of which will be finished by 2017. DEP is also expanding gray and green infrastructure throughout the city—including bioswales, and green and blue roofs—moving from pilot projects to larger scale implementation.

On July 1, DEP mandated a ten-fold increase in the amount of stormwater that must be retained on site for all new construction projects, dramatically reducing stormwater flows. DEP worked with the real estate and development community to create flexible options for retention systems, including pervious surfaces, green and blue roofs, storage tanks, and recycling systems. Cleaning New York’s waterways, from the Gowanus Canal to New Town Creek to the Bronx River, will also open up desirable waterfront sites for redevelopment. Investing in green infrastructure will in general benefit the development community, according to DEP Commissioner Carter Strickland.

Impact: “We spent a lot of time doing outreach to stakeholders, including the real estate community. They wanted more options and more guidance for how to meet the new standards. Green infrastructure improves the social spaces of the block and makes them more desirable. It improves the triple bottom line.”

Commissioner Carter Strickland, Department of Environmental Protection
NEW YORK CITY ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION/DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION/PRIVATE OPERATORS

Major Initiative: East River Ferry Service

Status: A three-year pilot program for East River ferry service connecting rapidly developing sites in Manhattan, Brooklyn, and Queens including Hunter’s Point South and the Williamsburg waterfront launched in June 2011. The public-private partnership is part of Mayor Bloomberg’s Waterfront Vision and Enhancement Strategy (WAVES) calling for sustainable development along New York’s waterways. Initial projections estimating 409,000 annual trips were shattered as over one million rides were logged in just over a year of service. Responding to the popularity, private ferry operator, the BillyBey Ferry Company, began offering local food options on all of its 149-passenger ships and launched larger, 399-passenger boats on weekends.

Impact: “The East River Ferry Service is still in a trial period, but so far it’s exceeded all our expectations.” EDC spokeswoman Jennifer Friedberg

“The early signs are remarkable in terms of economic vitality. The life that’s been embedded into the neighborhoods along the ferry service is remarkable. At the Edge development in Williamsburg, once ferry service was in place, marketing for the Edge worked much better. I’ve heard interest from developers in Long Island City on being near the ferry. It’s easy, frequent, steady transportation, especially when the only alternative is the overcrowded 7 line in Queens. Now, we’re looking for a permanent form of subsidy to keep the pilot going. The cost is one third of the subsidy of the average express bus service, so it’s a real bargain.” Roland Lewis, President of the Metropolitan Waterfront Alliance

BACK TO BUILDING

MEANWHILE, private development is beginning to rally on its own, whether driven by an economic upswing or the irresistible momentum of the pendulum swinging back into action. Condominiums and tall towers are leading the way, more than a few on 57th Street, propelled apparently by that incomparable shaper of urban form, commercial competition:

Pyramid
12 Avenue & West 57th Street
35 stories
Durst

The Willow
120 West 57th Street
29 stories
Ark Partners

The Willow
120 West 57th Street
29 stories
Durst

One 57
157 West 57th Street
90 stories
Extell

The Sheffield
322 West 57th
58 stories
UT Borrower

The Sheffield
322 West 57th
58 stories
Durst

105 West 57th Street
52 stories
JDS Development

432 Park Avenue & 50 East 57th Street
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39 stories
Boston Properties

Tour Verre
53 West 53rd Street
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Hines

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157 West 57th Street
90 stories
Extell

Tribeca
297 West 57th Street
52 stories
Tribeca

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Pink Stone Capital

56 Leonard Street
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Courtyard & Residence Inn
1716 Broadway
68 stories
Granite Broadway Development

Extell
80 stories
99 Church Street
Four Seasons
80 stories
Silverstein Properties

MEANWHILE, private development is beginning to rally on its own, whether driven by an economic upswing or the irresistible momentum of the pendulum swinging back into action. Condominiums and tall towers are leading the way, more than a few on 57th Street, propelled apparently by that incomparable shaper of urban form, commercial competition:
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JULY WEDNESDAY 25 EXHIBITION OPENING Urban Fabric: Building New York’s Garment District 12:00 p.m. The Skyscraper Museum 39 Battery Pl. skyscraper.org LECTURES Decorating Surface and Wholeness: College and Assembleage 11:30 a.m. MoMA 11 West 53rd St. moma.org Alice Tupper: White Noise—Exploring the Use of White in Minimalist Painting 3:30 p.m. MoMA 11 West 53rd St. moma.org WITH THE KIDS Crafternoon in the Building Zone 11:00 a.m. National Building Museum 401 F St. NW Washington, D.C. go.nbm.org EVENT Perelman Building Architectural Tour 1:00 p.m. Perelman Building 2525 Pennsylvania Ave. Philadelphia, PA philamuseum.org SATURDAY 28 LECTURE Maya Jimenez: Ericatic Alphabets/Heaps of Language 11:30 a.m. MoMA 11 West 53rd St. moma.org WITH THE KIDS Art Trek 2:30 p.m. The Metropolitan Museum of Art 1000 Fifth Ave. metmuseum.org EVENT East Meets Green 12:00 p.m. The Greenwich Village Society for Historic Preservation 232 East 11th St. gvsp.org MONDAY 30 FILM Days of Heaven (Terrence Malick, 1978) 9:00 a.m. MoMA 11 West 53rd St. moma.org TUESDAY 31 EVENT Constance Rosennubm Book Talk 6:30 p.m. The Skyscraper Museum 39 Battery Pl. skyscraper.org LECTURES Diana Bueh: Century of the Child—Growing by Design 1:30 p.m. MoMA 11 West 53rd St. moma.org Matteo Ghioldini: Arguments 4:00 p.m. Columbia GSAPP Wood Auditorium, Avery Hall arch.columbia.edu AUGUST WEDNESDAY 1 WITH THE KIDS Getting Around: How Transportation Shapes the City 10:00 a.m. Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum 1071 Fifth Ave. guggenheim.org EVENT Social Hour with the BSA and Livable Streets 5:30 p.m. Boston Society of Architects 200 Congress St., Boston, MA bsaspace.org THURSDAY 2 EVENT Conservator’s Eye: Art of Another Kind 2:00 p.m. Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum 1071 Fifth Ave. guggenheim.org DIMENSION: Masters of Light 12:00 p.m. Arthur Ross Gallery University of Pennsylvania 220 South 34th St. Philadelphia, PA upenn.edu SUNDAY 19 WITH THE KIDS Family Workshop: Found-Object Sculpture 2:00 p.m. The Baltimore Museum of Art 300 West Mt. Royal Ave. Baltimore, MD baltimoreart.com TUESDAY 7 EVENT Directed Tour of the 19th-Century Industrial Workmen’s Homes at Potters Park 10:30 a.m. The Skyscraper Museum 39 Battery Pl. skyscraper.org CENTURY OF THE CHILD Museum of Modern Art 11 West 53rd Street July 26 through November 5 Is design for grown ups? Hardly. While a child’s own designs might be limited to block towers or crayon masterpieces, design touches nearly every part of early life. Children use toys, wear clothing, play in playgrounds, use furniture, and sit in classrooms, all of which are created specifically for them. Opening at the Museum of Modern Art, Century of the Child: Growing by Design, 1900–2000 surveys the material world constructed for the child over the 20th Century. Visions of children and how design has followed or shaped their perceptions over the past century are considered in the exhibition. Taka Frederich Froebel, whose famous toys (a gift box edition, pictured above) were favorites of Frank Lloyd Wright as a child, Froebel designed his blocks to be given in a sequence, educating children as they learned and matured over time. The exhibition identifies and merges the many facets of design that consider children, presenting these products together and revealing the ideas and ambitions of the designers who created them.

JOSEPH ALBERS PAINTING ON PAPER The Morgan Library & Museum 225 Madison Avenue Through October 14 Josef Albers (1888–1976) was both a student and professor at the Bauhaus, one of the most influential art and design schools of the 20th century. Known for his precise use of line and unparalleled sense of color, Albers meticulously worked through his ideas in successive studies on paper. Josef Albers in America: Painting on Paper is an opportunity to see Albers’ process at work. The exhibition features approximately 60 studies spanning most of Albers’ career, from the 1920s through the 70s, many of which include handwritten notations, including architectural inspirations. The studies, evidence of his mind and hand working toward large-scale abstracts, are expressive and moving on their own right. The Morgan exhibition is the only US venue for the show, which will travel to several European cities.

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American planning impulse and public governance policy in force today. The gated community, the BIOS, universal access, and permissible activity all emerge from the record presented by Longstaffe-Gowan, who unmask the seasaw of intentions both venal and benevolent that add up to the volume’s dynamic thematic paradigm. A discerning reader will draw comfort from the fact that such a formative mishmash can still result in a beautifully refreshing and even joyous model for contemporary urban dwellers.

The author does swerve occasionally into the salubri-ous inquiets allowed by squares, especially once they have been converted to the verdant naturalistic English style. Think Central Park’s Rambles section in contrast to Le Nôtre’s parterres with their relative dearth of secret sanctuary. Whether by errant resident servants, who shared the household key, or various other opportunists looking for some sort of quick, shrub-shrouded thrill, the point might have been made stronger in this context with a greater measure of levity, or irony.

Perhaps planning advocates, preservationists, and assorted civic-minded fellow travelers have most to gain from Longstaffe-Gowan’s rigorous discovery. They are most likely to sort the trees from the author’s forest in terms of applicable contemporary lessons. Regardless, the read is well worth it or any who care about architecture in the public realm.

Paul Guenther is the president of the Institute of Classical Architecture & Art in New York.

Horseshoe arch trusses in the Central Building.

View of Queen Square, Holborn (1812) by an unknown artist.
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Every year the City of Vienna builds about 5,000 new units of public housing. While the process to create housing is much like the way “affordable” housing is done in the United States, the architectural quality of the projects is unparalleled.

AN's William Menking, together with Wolfgang Foerster, a senior officer in the Department of Housing for Vienna, and New York developer Abby Hamlin are curating a traveling exhibition on the Austrian city's extraordinary achievements in this field in the past five years. They invited some of New York's best minds involved in the field of housing to a round table with Foerster about the relevance of Viennese housing to projects in this city. Housing in Vienna will tour the United States in 2013 and 2014.

William Menking, 47th Executive Editor: In Vienna, the city essentially controls the housing market. That's obviously very different than in the United States. There's a process by which these different projects take place that has some resonance with projects like the Hoyt Schermerhorn Urban Renewal area in Downtown Brooklyn, Via Verde in the Bronx, and other new projects in New York.

Wolfgang Foerster, Head of Housing Research Department, City of Vienna: At the moment, Vienna has 1.7 million inhabitants. It's growing very fast. We expect to have 2 million in the next 15 years or so. About one third of the city lives in the private housing market and about 60% live in some sort of public housing. The city feels responsible and the people also expect the city to provide housing. If someone can't afford housing they go to the city and say, “It's your task.” We build something like an average of 5,000 units per year in the subsidized sector, which is something like 82–85% of the total new housing construction.

Vienna is independent from the national state and we have our own housing laws and budgets. One of the goals of the Vienna housing program is not about showing the nice facades—but the nice facades. You can find anywhere in the world—but it requires a process behind it. One of the biggest challenges at the moment is the population increase of 20,000 people per year. This is a big challenge. There are two people, which is more or less the same all over Europe, so 20,000 per year means 10,000 new apartments needed every year, which is quite a challenge for a city the size of Vienna. We're building a lot of mixed-use housing projects. There is one new mixed development that includes normal housing but also special-care housing for people with Alzheimer's who need permanent care. The interesting thing is the concept and orientation system the architects developed with specialists in health care. These people who have completely lost orientation and need a continuous way to walk, so all the ways inside and outside the building are built in a form of a ring system so they can continue to walk in a figure eight form.

We also want to stop suburbanization, so we have some places that are well connected to public transport, but are not right in the city center. On the outskirts of Vienna, we also can build some low-density developments. This is a particular way of living and not everyone would want to do this, but at the same time this sort of dense, low-rise development is a way of stopping suburbanization and keeping people somehow in the city and connected to public transport so they don't need a car.

Overall I find the failure of many public housing programs, including probably some in New York, is that they are too uniform. They have one type of building that they repeat and repeat. So we wanted to introduce competition into the planning in Vienna. We do with an area of say 20 apartments: it is divided into different plots. One plot should not have more than 300 flats; it’s an unwritten rule.

For each of these plots we have a developer's competition with a four-pillar system that consists of planning, cost, ecology, and social sustainability going beyond the apartments. It’s about how people live together.

David Burney, Commissioner, New York City Department of Design & Construction: I can’t decide whether this is inspiring or depressing given the lack of investment in essential housing in this country.

One of thefailures of some of the public housing programs in this country has been lack of integration of economic diversity and things like social services and the silo-ing effect of different types of housing. You can just honestly tell you’ve really helped to work towards solving that problem. If we could get to even a fraction of where Vienna is doing this would be tremendously helpful. Abby Hamlin, President, Hamlin Ventures: I think what I see is the notion that housing is a cultural resource as well as a social resource. I love the fact that housing is a catalyst for neighborhoods, for social issues, and also for cultural integration within a city. And I don't think that that opportunity is often talked about here. We tend to segment. There needs to be a cultural, political, and socioeconomic shift to see housing not as just a silo of housing but as something that stabilizes communities and can also be used as a catalyst at Schermohorn, to integrate cultural and artistic uses within the same building as housing.

Rosanne Haggerty, President, Community Solutions: I think we all have the same question about how is this financed? Is this publicly owned land? What participation is there from the government? How does this happen?

Matthew Wambua, Commissioner, New York City Department of Housing, Preservation & Development: What tends to be the nature of the housing stock? Foerster: We already have existing public housing stock. What we are building now is affordable housing based by nonprofit housing associations, which keep it, so it’s forever belongs to the nonprofit housing associations. It’s rental housing and there are income limits for the people that move in, not for people that live there. The income is only checked at the moment when people move in, but then they can stay there forever.

The financing is a state subsidy, which is given in the form of a long term, low interest loan for a period of normally 35 to 40 years with a 1% interest. That is given, depending on the type of housing, for between 1/3 and 1/2 of the total construction. The rest is then brought up by the housing association. They have some resources of their own from rent, and from housing where the loans have already been paid back. Because they’re nonprofit they’re not allowed to consume the income. They have to reinvest it. This doesn’t explain the whole financing because there’s still a gap, and this gap [financed by] normal bank financing at a lower interest rate than by specialized housing banks.

Paul Freitag, Managing Director, Jonathan Rose Companies: How do new housing associations compete with the larger, more established housing associations? Foerster: It's not easy to be honest. In Vienna we have something like 30 to 40 housing associations of different sizes. The smallest one would have something like 4,000–5,000 units, and the largest 50,000–60,000. Haggerty: And the land? Is that publicly owned? How does the process work?

Foerster: The land is normally already owned by the city. The city has its own housing fund, which is again a nonprofit organization owned by the city, but is not part of the city administration. They were founded in 1985 and they were given start up capital in the form of land, and since then they have been working with their own means—buying, developing, and reselling the land. Whoever wins the housing competition, the city gives them a subsidy or the city sells them land at a price that has already cleaned the land before. For the housing subsidies the total budget is €600 million per year, about €700 million, Charles Laven, President, Forsthy Street Advisors: So it’s four times our budget. Our question is how do you control cost? In New York City, 70–85% of our housing system is private. It’s higher nationally. That means we control cost because there’s a tyranny of feasibility, and a tyranny of government regulations, and costs are controlled by those two tyrannies.

Foerster: In the subsidy law there’s a maximum cost per square meter. But that wasn’t so successful because everyone reached this maximum level. That’s why in 1985 we introduced this competition. There is a maximum cost in the law still, but in order to win a competition you must always be better than the law. So now we have a system where they’re far below the maximum cost, so costs have been reduced year by year. As far as the land is concerned, we have to buy the land on the free market, but at the same time we’ve also introduced a maximum cost which we’re willing to pay for the land.

Freitag: What do you spend per square foot for construction?

Foerster: The average is now something like €1600 per square meter, so that would mean $200/square foot.

Laven: In the private sector, the unregulated market place of New York, people can build a pretty nice building for $150 or $160/square foot. Hamlin: At that cost we can build a safe building, a functionally, appropriately designed and affordable market rate housing (5, 6, 7-story, $180-200 per square foot in New York and in other parts of this country architecturally are generally pretty dismal in terms of the level of design. So when we get to affordable, the market starts out, in my opinion, at a different place in terms of architectural quality. But the other piece of it is that the HPD regulations. To what degree are there city regulated ‘shoulds’ or ‘musts’ in terms of the plan review? How do you do the plan review process for HPD-funded projects enters into the innovation vs. lack of innovation category?

Wambua: Let me start by creating some context. First of all, I was especially impressed with the level of integration [with housing in Vienna]. Not just the affordable housing but the notion of artistry, aestheticism, multiculturalism. And I personally think one of our biggest shortcomings is the decision-making because it’s been bureaucratic and inflexible, and I don't think that historically has been well-aligned with thinking about lots of the issues we’re talking about now. There are shortcomings from the standpoint of efficient production and what looks good and what makes sense. What I would say is that we’ve changed leadership. We have a spectacular head now who I have a great amount of faith in.

Freitag: How does subsidy work once the units are placed in operation? What do you control in the equity situation and what is the subsidy situation for the renters?

Foerster: We have two types of subsidies. One called Object Subsidies, which go directly to the housing association to reduce the financing cost for new construction. That’s what I was talking about before. Then we have an innovation fund, included in the $600 million, of course, which is individual rent allocations to households.

Wambua: I feel vindicated, because we throw in our rental subsidy.
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