

URBAN

columbia university's urban planning magazine

volume 8 issue 1

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NO TRESPASSING

is affordable housing
still welcome in nyc?

the profit question
gentrification in bushwick
homes that float
checking in on hotel living

Planning, like so many other things in life, is all about niches. Affordable housing, transportation, economic development, planning theory...the list goes on. Although they are related, as any master plan will show, most of us as students focus on one planning niche. This issue is all about niches. We emphasize affordable housing as one of many planning issues important to providing an equitable place to exist.

One can see just how far the lack of an affordable place to live reaches elsewhere in this *URBAN* issue. An anecdote about the human face of gentrification in Brooklyn, a chronicle of hotels as a forgotten form of housing and a look at the link between slum housing and health care in Manila provide other perspectives on the lack of a safe place to live.

For those other planning niches, we have plenty. Two contributors explore inter and intra-city transportation: rail in the United States and pedicabs in New York City. An exploration of two Moroccan cities may satisfy both the international and the economic development niche. Environmental planning buffs will appreciate the exploration of green roofs. And a theoretical take on Disney is a treat for fans of the authenticity debate.

Finally, a sampling of Kinne Fellowship reports shows how second-year master's students spent their summers exploring foreign cities from a planning perspective.

As the outgoing editors at *URBAN* magazine, we would like to thank everyone who has participated in its creation for the opportunity to produce a magazine for and by planning students. We hope that you will enjoy this issue as much as we enjoyed putting it together.

james, jessica and tanya

URBAN

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Cover photo: Tanya Saltzman

Manhattan as seen from the soon-to-be rezoned Williamsburg waterfront

Top 25 in the Last 25

Who are the new pillars of planning?

In its June 2004 issue, *Planning* magazine published a list of people who “significantly influenced the practice of planning” before 1978 (the year that the American Planning Association came into existence). The list of 25 names range from Hippodamus to Jane Jacobs, from Baron Haussman to Robert Moses. (For the full list, go to <http://www.planning.org/25anniversary/influentials.htm>.)

In response, our own Floyd Lapp asks readers of the current issue of *Planning* (November 2004) who might make the post-1978 list. He points out the complication that recent approaches such as smart growth, neo-traditional planning, and sustainable development are, to some extent, “old wine in new bottles.”

Professor Lapp bemoans the lack of true innovation in the field over the past quarter century, doubting whether anyone who has come on the scene in that time belongs with the all-time greats. *URBAN* decided to pick up his question and ask the students and faculty of Columbia’s planning program what they think.

Those who responded do, in fact, find inspiration in recent developments. They re-nominate some who appear on the pre-1978 list, pointing out the continued influence of their activities, and look toward the founders of new planning movements, academics who have shaped theory in a time of uncertainty for the field, and public officials who took action, despite that uncertainty.

Do these 18 (we didn’t quite make it to 25) planners’ activities represent nothing more than recycled ideas, or are they true innovators of the field? You be the judge.



Professor Floyd Lapp poses the question: who from the last 25 years would make the list of all-time great planners? This spring, he will lead a LiPS discussion on the subject.

- ▲ ● **Elizabeth Plater-Zyberk/Andres Duany** Architects, Private Consultants: Husband and wife team that pioneered the “new urbanism movement,” which has played a central role in re-invigorating the public discussion of urban planning.
- ▲ ● **Robert Moses** Public Practitioner: The so-called power broker, he was the master builder of twentieth-century New York City infrastructure as head of multiple city agencies and authorities.
- ▲ ● **Jane Jacobs** Author, Activist: City aficionado and critic best known for her book, *The Death and Life of Great American Cities* (1961), a harsh critique of 1950’s urban renewal policies that advocates for mixed-use communities.
- **Paul Davidoff** Activist, Academic, Lawyer: Considered to be the father of the advocacy planning movement, which holds that planners should be more than technicians; they should plan with social and political values.
- ▲ **Saskia Sassen** Academic: Former professor of Urban Planning at Columbia University best known for her writings about the importance of the global economy on cities.
- ▲ ● **Norman Krumholz** Public Practitioner, Academic: His influential equity planning work, both in the city of Cleveland and nationally, has added to the theory and practice of planning for the poor and working class of America’s cities.
- ▲ **Tom McCall** Politician: Former governor of Oregon who pushed through Oregon’s metropolitan government legislation, which created urban growth boundaries.
- ▲ **Fred Salvucci** Practitioner: Transportation civil engineer who masterminded Boston’s Big Dig.
- ▲ **Peter Calthorpe** Architect, Private Consultant: Played a key role, along with Duane and Plater-Zyberk, in founding the Congress for the New Urbanism.
- ▲ **Alfred and William Levitt** Private Developers: Brothers who built Levittown in Long Island, New York, marking the creation of the first mass-produced suburban subdivision-style development.
- ▲ **Allan Jacobs** Academic, Public Practitioner: Berkeley academic and former planning director who tells us that it may take vehicular and pedestrian integration on boulevards to have Great Streets.
- **Daniel Patrick Moynihan** Politician, Academic: Senator from New York who led legislation that shaped America’s cities, including federal architecture guidelines, ISTEA, the redevelopment of Washington DC, and the new Penn Station.
- **Joseph Riley** Politician: Mayor of Charleston, South Carolina since 1975 who dramatically revitalized the city and formed the Mayors Institute on City Design, which has educated mayors nationwide about sound design and planning.
- ▲ **Susan Fainstein** Academic: Professor of urban planning at Columbia University whose research has focused on urban political economy, comparative urban public policy, planning and social theory, tourism and urban redevelopment.
- ▲ **John Friedman** Academic, Practitioner: Best known for his 1993 article “Toward a Non-Euclidian Mode of Planning,” his recent work in development, theory and regional planning has expanded the field’s international scope.
- ▲ **Richard Florida** Academic, Private Consultant: Graduate of Columbia’s urban planning program whose study of the “creative class” has sparked a great deal of debate over the role of economic development in cities.
- ▲ **Sir Peter Hall** Academic: Prolific author, historian, and critic of European and American planning whose works have served as a cornerstone of the planning curriculum.
- ▲ **Jamie Lerner** Politician, Architect, Private Consultant: Famed “green” mayor of Curitiba, Brazil, who implemented one of the first bus rapid transit systems and now consults cities worldwide on sustainable growth practices. ✱

Weighing in on New York City

jessica neilan

Offering the expert opinion of its leaders is a large part of the American Planning Association (APA) NY Metro Chapter's everyday operations. According to Ethel Sheffer, chapter president, "planners have an obligation to weigh in on key projects so that the principles of comprehensive planning, smart and fair growth, public participation and social equity can be brought to the forefront of public discussion and education." The rebuilding of Lower Manhattan and the city's current proposal for the Hudson Yards on Manhattan's Far West Side are the chapter's two current epicenters.

Read on to find out what the organization has had to say about two of the most talked-about planning issues in New York City.

LOWER MANHATTAN

The APA NY Metro Chapter has been one of the loudest planning voices in the rebuilding of Lower Manhattan. The organization formed the Rebuild Lower Manhattan Taskforce shortly after the events of September 11, 2001. As a member of Imagine New York, the Civic Alliance and New York/New Visions, three civic organizations that formed in the aftermath of September 11th, the APA continues to ensure that the New York community has a voice in the rebuilding process.

Key Responses

- ◆ April 2002: the APA asserts its commitment to serving the people of New York in the rebuilding process in a letter to the *New York Times*.
- ◆ The Transportation committee releases *Moving Manhattan* in June of 2002, a white paper citing planning principles, issues, processes, tools and recommendations in rebuilding transportation infrastructure affected by the tragedy.
- ◆ The APA testifies in January 2003 to the Lower Manhattan Development Corporation (LMDC) that the state-sponsored development corporation places too much emphasis on the architectural possibilities of the site and not enough on the land use and transportation aspects.
- ◆ April 2003: the APA co-sponsors with New York/New Visions a panel on the next steps to rebuilding. The panel includes representatives from LMDC, the MTA, EDC and the Department of City Planning.

PRESS RELEASES OF NOVEMBER AND DECEMBER 2003:

- ◆ Criticizes the rebuilding as a process based on architectural design and private interest. The absence of design guidelines for new buildings, public space, streets and connections is a disservice to the public.
- ◆ Expresses that the finalists selected for the memorial designs were not reflective of the "harrowing events of 9/11." A memorial must be carefully integrated into the overall planning and rebuilding of the site and should also include the remains and remnants of the buildings to reflect what was lost on that day.

HUDSON YARDS

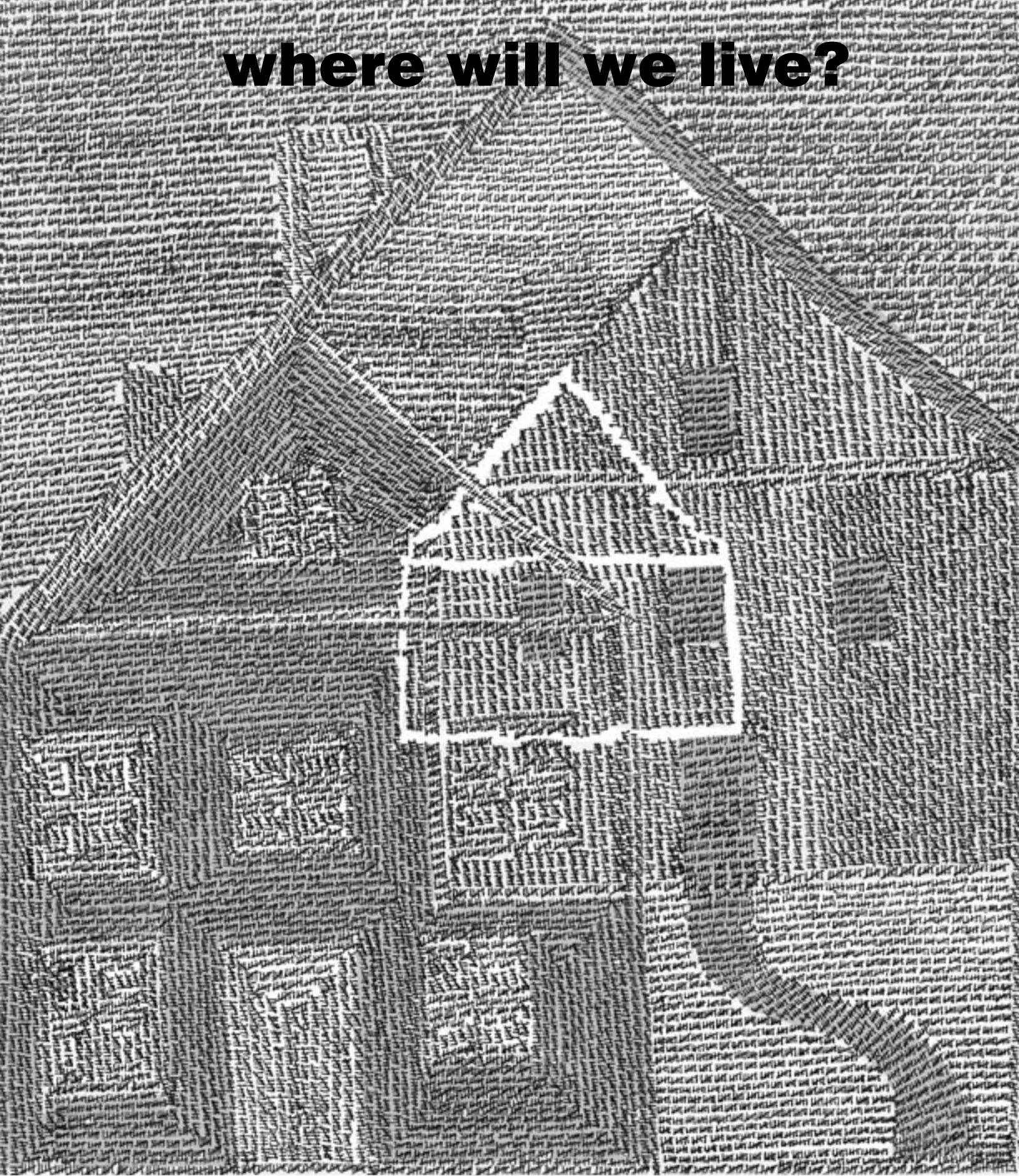
At the February 2004 executive board meeting, the Department of City Planning makes its presentation to the APA Executive Board. Just after the rezoning and the number 7 subway line extension proposals went into Uniform Land Use Review Process (ULURP) in June 2004, the APA formed the Hudson Yards Taskforce to come to an official consensus on the plan.

Key Responses

- ◆ The APA co-sponsors the February 9, 2004 event, "Future of the Far West Side," a panel with experts on both sides of the issue. The panel was moderated by the *New York Times*' Charles Bagli.
- ◆ In September of this year, the organization released its press release and position paper on the plan. Its main positions are:
 - ◇ Support of the extension of the number 7 subway line as a key to increased development.
 - ◇ Questioning of the proposed financing of the plan through payments in lieu of taxes (PILOT). The proposal assumes an overly optimistic view of demand for office space in Manhattan.
 - ◇ Criticism that the proposed New York Sports and Convention Center (read stadium) and expansion of the Javits Convention Center are not subject to ULURP because they involve state-owned land. The APA believes it is a necessity for the public to have the opportunity to formally review these major parts of the plan.
 - ◇ Questioning of whether stadium construction would be the highest and best use of the land. The benefits of stadiums and convention centers rarely overcome their high public cost. In this case, it is doubtful that the multiuse facility will attract the amount of business that the City expects. In this vein, APA would like to see "more systematic, objective and integrated data on the costs and benefits."
 - ◇ Criticism that the plan does not offer enough access to the waterfront, due in large part to the New York Sports and Convention Center.

Want to know more? Visit www.nyplanning.org for all of the latest information on the APA NY Metro Chapter. ✱

where will we live?



43,340 by Leah M. Meisterlin. Ink on paper with digital background. Fall 2004.

Named for the number of counted tallies on the page, *43,340* is the fifth in a series of work titled Project Six Billion, which incorporates collage and drawing and is soon to include three-dimensional work. Developed from a reaction to the world's population, the project began as an attempt to tangibly understand the size of a number. (At this density, 6 billion would require more than 2.06 acres of paper and over 12,000 years.) It quickly turned into a comment on how we manage this number, aiming to fit large numbers into predefined systems/designs, while questioning how well these systems support these numbers. Here, "fitting" and "supporting" are conceptualized as whether individual marks and whole designs are distinguishable, respectively. To view the full work and for further information and project updates, visit www.VeinteDeux.com. Follow the Project Six Billion link.

Introduction: Where Will We Live?

Mayor Michael Bloomberg recently observed that the city of New York is a luxury good: people are willing to pay more for it. That may bode well for the local economy, but what about those who can't afford luxury? Where will they live?

Affordable housing is at the nexus of this question. The mayor recently pledged to build 65,000 below-market units by 2008 and the Enterprise Foundation offered \$1 billion to help finance it. These resources are being rapidly funneled to New York's affordable housing developers. But many of the 15- and 20-year affordability deals the

city struck with developers in the eighties are ending and old units are being transitioned into market-rate almost as fast as Bloomberg and the Enterprise Foundation can create new ones.

In light of this, the following five articles look at whether this frenzy of affordable housing creation will truly spark a new era of livability in New York or if it's just more of the same old development cycle. Each article offers a critique and an alternative vision for some aspect of the current process for building affordable housing. Mostly, though, the authors of this theme section simply seek to understand where we will live.

Burying Affordability...Slowly

james connolly

Over the last two decades, affordable housing in New York City has been built and maintained by subsidizing private developers, usually through tax breaks and the transfer of city property. The infrastructure of below-market units has grown citywide and many properties have been rehabilitated in formerly declining neighborhoods. But like a gambler blinded by fleeting success, the city may be burying itself, unwilling to see that its own policies are doing the digging.

In a *New York Times* article last May, Desmond Emanuel, a local developer, boasted of the 50 two-family homes he built in the Morrisania section of the Bronx under a publicly subsidized affordable housing program. "That was 1996," he said, "and at the time they sold for \$147,000. Now they go for \$300,000, minimum." It seems the irony of this quickly unaffordable "affordable housing" stock is lost to Mr. Emanuel.

Often, though, the case is more subtle. Legal restrictions guaranteeing that affordability be maintained for a given period—usually forty years—are almost always written into deals that are publicly subsidized. The Cornerstone Program used by the Department of Housing Preservation and Development (HPD) works in this way. Through this program, HPD uses a competitive bid process to select a developer who receives a city-owned parcel of land for one dollar. In exchange, the developer offers below-market rents on a percentage of the newly constructed units. Since 1986, the city has reduced its stock of "in rem" (seized through foreclosure) properties by 92 percent, much of that through this process.

One former city official, as quoted by the *New York Sun*, describes the conditions of the Cornerstone Program in Harlem by saying, "When the city put the first sites up for sale,

the market was not strong enough, and the city had to give the sites to the developer for free. This was a way to get the first projects completed, which allowed Harlem to create a market which is self-sustaining." Makes sense, except when the city realizes that "the land they gave away for free has value today," as Vincent Riso of the Briarwood Organization observes in the same article.

Through this process of financing initial investments in an area by subsidizing that development, the city not only provides the land, but also the incentive and structure to rehabilitate the surrounding area. In doing so, the city sets into motion a cycle of development that spawns neighborhood change. Within the timeline of this development cycle, the city's forty year guarantee for affordable units comes to an end awfully quick. Just when the rehabilitation process is likely to reach a point of stability, offering permanent improvement, the public loses its legal ability to mandate that affordable housing remain in that area. This process emulates the same old urban renewal, only now with a middleman and a longer construction time—the effects of which may create an affordability hole that simply can't be climbed out of in areas like Harlem.

One solution that currently has a lot of force behind it is inclusionary zoning. This form of zoning, unused in New York but common in other parts of the country, would mandate that a certain percentage of new units in designated areas be permanently affordable. A coalition called the NYC Campaign for Inclusionary Zoning has been formed and the City Council has taken the issue under its wing.

The Department of City Planning, however, has given an icy response to this proposal.

As quoted recently by *City Limits* magazine, Rachaele Raynoff, the agency's spokesperson explains, "Our initial look at the numbers shows that inclusionary zoning may not be economically feasible."

Economic feasibility is the perennial knee-jerk response to real estate-related policies in the city. Although one can find studies that come down on both sides of this issue, the fact is that money will still be made and few other options exist for areas that have long since been out of reach in terms of affordability.

Inclusionary zoning does take a long term view. However, a question that remains unaddressed even by advocates of this policy is why the city is in the business of giving away property to private developers and, in doing so, subsidizing the means of increasing the property value. Why doesn't the city just maintain ownership of the property and lease the development rights? This removes the city from the direct management role that it clearly does not want, still facilitates financing in declining areas, and still allows private organizations to profit from the physical development of these sites.

The city should not be expected to control the large-scale economic forces that generate unaffordable housing prices. Neither, though, should it forfeit the only stronghold it has against these forces—land ownership. In doing so, it takes a gamble with the livability of New York. If a new process does not arise to replace the affordable housing that is being turned over to the private market and then lost in a relatively short time, no amount of policy will get back what is gone. If the city will not accept this stewardship role, who will? *

Aspen Extreme

Remember to Kiss Your Local Non-Profit Housing Company Goodbye

jake mckinstry

Welcome to the *Aspen*, the first large-scale mixed-income development in New York City. The building, which declares itself the “Upside of the Eastside” is in East Harlem, directly across the street from NYCHA super-block housing. Interestingly, its website¹ declines to mention this or show it on the map. Apparently, the “Upside of El Barrio Across the Street from Public Housing” was not sexy enough.

Rising seven sparkling stories into the Manhattan sky, the \$52 million *Aspen* features luxury amenities such as a 24-hour concierge, private shuttle service to the Lexington Avenue subway, a fitness center, a parking garage big enough to fit 116 Hummers or Prius’ (depending upon the tenant’s political persuasions), a specially landscaped outdoor garden, and 15,000 square feet of commercial space. Each of the 231 units is equipped with state-of-the-art stainless steel appliances, wood cabinetry, and oak floors.

The *Aspen* became mixed-income almost by accident. It was originally going to be an 80-20 (80 percent market-rate–20 percent affordable housing) project. However, the NYC Housing Development Corporation (HDC), along with Fannie Mae and J.P. Morgan decided to give the developers, Tri Venture L.L.C. and L & M Equity, \$44 million in tax-exempt bond financing for ensuring that 50 percent of the units be reserved for middle and low-income tenants.² This financing significantly lowered the market risk for the developers and gave the city an opportunity to showcase their new middle-income financing programs. As a result, 20 percent of the units will be affordable (\$399–\$653 per month), 30 percent middle income (\$1,025–\$1,775 per month), and the remaining 50 percent market-rate (upwards of \$2,500 per month).

In addition to the \$44 million in tax-exempt bond financing, the developers received \$2.75 million in subsidies from the HDC for the middle-income units.³ The rest of the development was financed using the developers’ own equity, and the vacant

land used for the development was sold to them for \$1 from the Department of Housing Preservation and Development (HPD) through the third party transfer program. The developers are likely to make

over \$5 million annually from the residential rentals alone, in addition to the significant rents generated by the commercial tenants. The affordable units practically pay for themselves due to the considerable cost mitigation from the subsidies in the deal.

Currently, there are many market-rate condominium and co-op developments in the lease-up stages in East and Central Harlem, such as *1400 on 5th* and the *Madison Buildings* between 116th and 120th. Obviously, all of these developments will have an impact on the Harlem community, but the *Aspen* is unique in that it is a for-profit development that relies on state and city financing. The fact that they are receiving this

financing has tremendous implications for non-profit housing companies in NYC. As the vacant land disappears and the property values rise, private acquisition of market-rate property will be the predominant method of procuring land in the future. This is a serious issue for non-profits who do not have the ‘war-chest’ built up from market-rate incomes needed to compete with for-profit developers when trying to purchase new properties in the New York City real estate game.

This is a grey area that delves into the ethics of housing development: Is it truly ethical for the *Aspen* developers to receive such a large amount of financing for the middle- and low-income units when the other 50 percent of units are market-rate and there is 15,000 square feet worth of commercial rent revenue?

Non-profit housing companies are mission-oriented, focusing solely on the creation of affordable housing and do not have the luxury of exponentially increasing their cash flow from market-rate units—they need all of the financing they can get. If non-



The \$52 million *Aspen*, New York City’s first large-scale mixed income development.

Aspen Extreme, continued

jake mckinstry

profit housing companies do try to increase their equity in order to purchase land for development through revenue generated from market-rate units it could jeopardize their 501C(3) tax-exempt status. Furthermore, it would be a complete departure from their goal to provide affordable housing to the community (and is generally seen as an unacceptable practice).

The rapid evaporation of vacant land in NYC means that the future of non-profit housing companies is in serious danger. No longer can they simply wait for

collide with market forces. In a rapidly appreciating real estate market, for-profits are more capable of efficiently harnessing the market forces and using government funds advantageously. Therefore, if the state and city are allocating funds to for-profit developers for the purpose of creating affordable and middle-income housing, then what is the role of non-profit housing companies?

There must be a component of 'worthiness' used in the allocation of financing when the choice is between funding a for-profit development such as the *Aspen*,

No longer can non-profit housing companies simply wait for HPD to transfer vacant lots to them, as has been the case for the last two decades.

HPD to transfer vacant lots to them, as has been the case for the last two decades. In a span of seven years from 1994 to 2001, East Harlem's vacant lot stock plummeted from 2,000 lots to just 294.⁴ In two years, from 2001 to 2003, the percentage of remaining vacant land dropped from 4.6 to 2.8 percent.⁵ The majority of the remaining vacant properties are privately owned, either by speculators, real estate companies, or absentee landlords 'sitting' on the property as real estate values rise.

For example, there are currently two vacant adjacent sites on the corner of 3rd Avenue and 124th Street (2279-81 & 2283-87) being sold for \$3.8 million (40,000 square feet at \$95 per foot) by Besen and Associates, a commercial real estate company. While this is an accurate market price for the land, it is a steep and often unrealistic acquisition price for any non-profit. Add to the equation that over 90% of the households in East Harlem are renter-occupied, almost 11,000 households have no credit history, the annual median income is one of the lowest in the city, and the rising real estate prices and rent inflation make for a very volatile situation.

While East Harlem is only one example of an area where non-profit housing companies face a serious uphill battle for their survival, it is a fulcrum with implications for surrounding housing markets as city policies

with only 20 percent of the units affordable, versus a non-profit development with 100 percent of the units affordable. If there are no project 'worthiness' metrics utilized on a policy level, then non-profits will continue to be at a serious disadvantage.

It is a safe assumption that the *Aspen* will undoubtedly lead other for-profit developers north of 96th street, where the border between East Harlem and the Upper East Side is rapidly crumbling, and beyond. However, for-profits will only create this housing so long as the market makes it profitable. If we are interested in sustainable housing options for low and middle-income earners, then non-profits must have an edge in competitive access to city and state financing programs. If for-profit developers continue to enter previously depressed housing markets and play the role of a non-profit by creating affordable housing, then it might be time to say goodbye to non-profit housing companies: the little trains that could,

whose hearts often chugged faster than their brains. ❄



20% affordable units: Is for-profit housing the future in East Harlem?

FOOTNOTES

¹ <http://www.aspenyhc.com>

² Middle-income housing is reserved for tenants making 100-250% of the Area Median Income (AMI) and low-income rents are reserved for tenants making 60% or lower of the AMI.

³ <http://www.nyc.gov/html/hpd/html/hpd-archive/jpm-organ-fmae2002-pr.html>

⁴ <http://www.nhi.org/online/issues/125/hopeCDC.html>

⁵ Real Property Assessment & NYC DCP (Dec.'02)

The State of the State

Moving Affordable Housing Outside of the City Center

matthew gebhard

As the best school districts and the majority of job growth continue to occur in suburban communities, it is imperative that affordable housing options not be confined solely to central city locations. The means for achieving this may lie within the state level of government.

Over the past two decades, the federal government has reduced funding for affordable housing and has shifted the burden for regulating and creating affordable housing to local level policymakers. In the current political climate, national legislators will likely continue to remove themselves from this issue. In fact, a key recommendation of the Millennial Housing Commission, appointed to advise the U.S. Senate on housing problems and solutions, suggested that the federal government should establish a broad framework for the provision of affordable housing, but that it should be state and local governments that directly administer, monitor and regulate these programs.

Under this structure, many private entities, non-profits and local governments have done a laudable job of creating more affordable housing. Unfortunately, though, local programs remain disjointed and vary significantly by municipality, with some municipalities precluding affordable housing construction through exclusionary zoning and strict land use controls. These regulatory barriers are a significant impediment to the creation of new affordable housing and to its equitable distribution throughout metropolitan areas.

The problem is further complicated by a predominance of homeowners in suburban communities and a belief, right or wrong, that allowing less expensive housing into a neighborhood will drive property values down. As homeowners are the dominant political force in the suburbs, local governments have no political incentive to change these regulatory barriers based on appeals to consider the societal benefits of such change.

A popular solution to this quandary is to recommend that an intermediate, metropolitan level of government be formed to provide coordination and promote equity. However, while there are many advocates of metropolitan level solutions, with few exceptions metropolitan governance has proved elusive. Statewide affordable housing laws are not without their own problems, as discussed below. Yet, they do offer a politically feasible and potentially effective method of encouraging affordable housing construction and distribution.

There are three methods of state affordable housing intervention that are often suggested. The most commonly used of these interventions—in states such as California, Florida, Vermont and Washington—is the requirement that municipalities develop a plan for providing affordable housing. The unfortunate reality haunting such interventions is that a plan is just that, a plan. Without some form of incentive or enforcement, even the best plans are often not implemented. Thus, these states usually afford some form of incentive. California allows density bonuses to encourage implementation. While some claim the law is a success since over 25,000 units of affordable housing have been constructed since the passage of the density bonus law in 1979, there is no evidence to suggest that this strategy has resulted in a large scale rethinking of exclusionary practices by local governments.

On the other end of the spectrum is the New Jersey Fair Housing Act passed in response to the Mount Laurel court decisions, which stated that New Jersey towns with zoning that excluded affordable

housing were violating the state's constitution. The Act requires that municipalities provide realistic opportunities for development of their "fair share" of affordable housing. The Council on Affordable Housing (COAH), an advisory board for the state, determines each municipality's fair share and certifies local housing plans. Cities with certified plans are immune to lawsuits from affordable housing developers. While a tough version of this law may force exclusionary municipalities to afford more options for affordable housing, any state level fair share law is likely to face vociferous opposition from local governments and homeowners.

A third variant is to create a system that allows developers of affordable housing who have applied for zoning and permit approval and have been rejected to appeal that rejection to a state level committee. Known as the Anti-Snob Zoning Act, the 1969 Massachusetts law is the longest running and best-known example of this strategy. Unfortunately, under this law only public agencies and non-profits employing a state or federal housing subsidy are allowed to appeal. Connecticut has a similar law, which allows an affordable housing developer to appeal the rejection of a development proposal in a city with less than 10 percent affordable housing to the Connecticut Supreme Court. This strategy is an extremely attractive solution to policymakers as it specifically targets exclusionary communities and relies heavily on the initiative of affordable housing developers for enforcement.

The most recent addition to the realm of state affordable housing laws is the Illinois Affordable Housing Planning and Appeals Law, which attempts to combine the best aspects of both the planning and appeals approach. Under it, municipalities over 1,000 people with less than 10 percent affordable housing—there are 49 of them, all in the Chicago metro area—must submit a plan for increasing affordable housing to at least 10 percent. Cities without an approved plan are subject to developer appeals.

Unlike the Massachusetts law, Illinois allows any affordable housing developer public, private or non-profit to appeal a rejection. The full law will not take effect until 2006, but early returns suggest that the threat of having state legislators making land use decisions within their community has prompted many exclusionary cities to seriously explore ways to increase their stock of affordable housing. As the newest of the state level affordable housing laws, the Illinois case warrants close attention as implementation begins.

State level laws targeting local methods of excluding affordable housing will not solve the problem on their own. Rather, these laws must be part of a more comprehensive strategy that includes resourceful financing (such as local housing trust funds) and creative incentive programs (such as density bonuses). Such a strategy involves removing regulatory barriers and eliminating or circumventing exclusionary local ordinances that prevent construction and an equitable distribution of housing that is affordable at all income levels.

As the federal government removes itself from affordable housing construction and regulation, state laws offer the best and most politically feasible opportunity to encourage affordable housing construction and to ensure an equitable distribution of affordable housing among all communities. ❄

Melrose Commons

Affordability Returns to the Bronx

roberta fennessy

New York City's urban planning history is tainted with copious accounts of successful urban development made possible only at the expense of expendable communities. There are, however, unique accounts of places and times when urban development was made successful only by the will of an unwavering community. In the 1950s, the South Bronx and Community District 3 found most of its neighborhoods scarred by the negative effects of previous city-sponsored planning initiatives. This led to significant efforts on the community's behalf to demand more integrated plans if the city were to decide how they should live. The area has since become a forerunner in the development of affordable, community generated plans including the Melrose Commons Urban Renewal Plan.

Following one of the most rapid periods of urbanization in the first half of the 20th century, the Bronx underwent a grave period of physical and social deterioration in the 1960s. This was the aftermath of an unrepresentative government led by Robert Moses, whose actions and policies had regional benefits, but failed to account for the good of the people in the neighborhoods of the South Bronx. One of his highways (like the Cross Bronx Expressway) cut off the community, and his housing complexes intensified poverty and segregation.

In the following decade, from 1970 to 1980, the South Bronx lost a significant amount of its housing stock as well as two thirds of its population.¹ Housing abandonment, arson and demolition during this time left the area vacant and underutilized. As the district faced increasing drug problems and crime rates, most of its middle-income residents relocated.

In the late 1980s planners for the City of New York were looking at the South Bronx and devising an urban renewal plan for a thirty-block area known as Melrose Commons. What they saw at the time was the poorest congressional district in the United States, and nothing more than a statistical inner-city ghetto with a large concentration of city-owned property. Its residents were the remnants of a small diminishing population where the median family income was less than \$12,000 a year. Melrose Commons was perceived as an impoverished community that could be easily "bought-out" in order to realize the full extent of their visions of redevelopment for the area.²

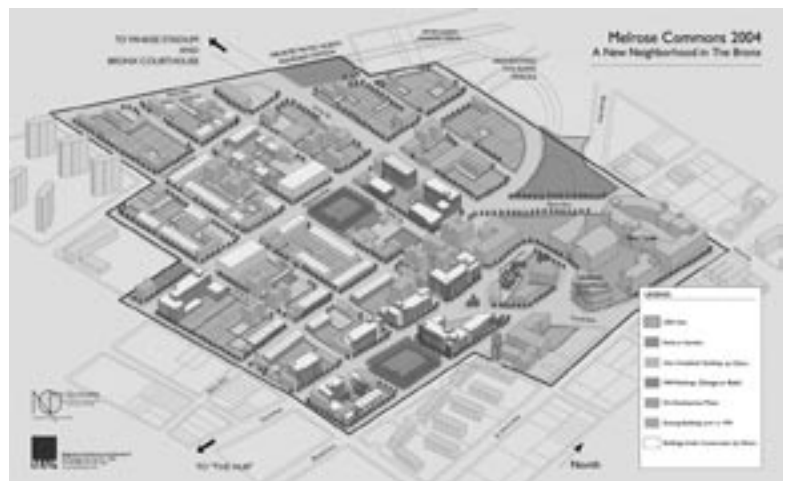
The city's vision for Melrose Commons was to create a new middle-income, homeownership-based community. In doing so, 78 private homes, 400 tenants, and 80 businesses would be displaced to make room for 2,600 new middle-income housing units, 250,000 square feet of commercial space, and a centrally located 4-acre park.³ Once again the city failed to account for the existing community, finding it easier to bulldoze its way over them than to provide them with more affordable solutions.

The reality for the people of Melrose Commons was a stark contrast to the city's perception. Despite the depopulation of the South Bronx in the 1970s, Melrose Commons remained home to over 6,000 people. Many local residents, some of over thirty years, had witnessed the area's transition from a vibrant community to one crumbling from municipal neglect. Schools were closed down and public projects abandoned. In the shadow of these events, the community had held fast to their roots in the area and was beginning to realize it was upon them to preserve what was left of this once prosperous Bronx community.

In early 1992, as rumors of this plan permeated the community, local residents and business owners began organizing to protest the city's radical plan. What they protested was not development in the Bronx, but rather the existing community's exclusion from it. Ongoing collaboration led to the formation of one grassroots organization named We Stay/Nos Quedamos, whose mission was to insure that their oppositions and concerns pertaining to the fate of their community would be voiced within the public domain.

Yolanda Garcia, president of Nos Quedamos, emphasized the fact

Ninety percent of housing created in Melrose Commons will be affordable.



“that the community was not opposed to prosperity, that indeed [they] welcomed development,” by making it their first issue to be heard. The members of Nos Quedamos began surveying the neighborhood to learn what changes residents really wanted in their community. In doing this, they were also able to boost their political presence through a major voter registration drive.



One of Nos Quedamos' first community meetings.

Knowing that their power would remain limited without enlisting professional help, they turned to key people and precedent organizations such as The Bronx Center, and eventually formed a coalition. With persuasion from Bronx Borough President Fernando Ferrer, the coalition was able to obtain from the city a six-month period in which to redevelop the Melrose Commons Urban Renewal plan.⁴

Nos Quedamos asked architects Petr Stand and Magnus Magnusson of Magnusson Architecture and Planning (MAP) for assistance in the vital job of redraft-

discourse was a potential for two-family, mother/daughter condos with two units on two floors so that a family could buy both, a sort of women's co-op.⁶

Today, the collaborative plan created for Melrose Commons is in its tenth year. While growth and development in the South Bronx has happened at a steady yet slow pace, its successes can be noted in numerous ways.

Improvements to the community infrastructure have been made in the building of a senior citizen housing complex along with a health care facility located on its ground floor. But the ways to measure the real success of urban development plans are often subjective and in most cases relative. In Melrose Commons, development can be deemed a success if for no other reason than its unifying impact on the community.

Jane Jacobs tells us that “a successful city neighborhood is a place that keeps sufficiently abreast of its problems so it is not destroyed by them.”⁷ In the South Bronx,

Another proposal to come out of this discourse was a potential for two-family, mother/daughter condos with two units on two floors so that a family could buy both, a sort of women's co-op.

ing an urban renewal plan that met the community's demands and satisfied the city's needs. The redrafting process began as a series of community meetings where the planners were quick to discover significant flaws in the city's master plan for Melrose Commons: displacement of residents and businesses, a lack of affordable housing, in addition to ineffective urban design elements.

The governing principles behind the new urban renewal plan were to avoid displacement of residents and businesses and to advocate for the return to affordable housing in the neighborhood.⁵ This was a major win for the South Bronx community, and after nearly two years of a collaborative effort between Nos Quedamos and the city, the Melrose Commons Urban Renewal Plan was signed into law in June 1994.

The community and MAP coalition created a high density, multiple-dwelling unit development. Of all new housing units currently in development for Melrose Commons, over 90% will qualify as unregulated affordable housing, protected for up to 30 years. The MAP plan recognized affordability as a major concern and began to further speculate about specific housing types and conditions that would better suit this community. The result was a series of flexible floor plans that could be combined or subdivided as families grew both in size and income. Another proposal to come out of this

only when the community found a common voice was it able to overcome the problems it faced, much like Jane Jacobs and Greenwich Village did when Robert Moses wanted to run a highway through their neighborhood. The community of Melrose Commons recognized that through development they could also preserve the affordability of their neighborhood. The true success of the coalition-generated Melrose Commons Urban Renewal Plan can be found in its approach. Unlike the city's original plan, it achieved affordable housing goals for the community without neglecting to ask: “Who are we planning for and how do we keep it affordable?” ❄

FOOTNOTES

- ¹ Chait, Jocelyn, Margaret E. Seip, and Pertr Stand. (2000) *Achieving a Balance*. New York: A Project of Design Trust For Public Space.
- ² Potteiger, Matthew and Jamie Purinton. (1998) *Landscape Narratives*. New York: John Wiley & Sons, Inc.
- ³ Figures taken from the Melrose Commons Urban Renewal Plan 10 year report as prepared by the firm of Magnusson Architecture and Planning.
- ⁴ Ibid.
- ⁵ As expressed in a report to Bronx Borough Presidet Fernando Ferrer from the Bronx Center Steering Committee, May 1993
- ⁶ Potteiger and Jamie Purinton.
- ⁷ Jacobs, Jane. (1961) *The Death and Life of Great American Cities*. New York: Vintage.

Water World

jeff geller

The Department of City Planning (DCP) calls the Hudson Yards development proposal “the last frontier available in Manhattan. Even as New York City’s population grows, there are fewer places for these new residents to live. Looking ahead over the next 20 to 30 years, planners and public officials will need to consider new approaches to increasing the city’s affordable housing stock, and the housing supply in general. In doing so, they will have to acknowledge one obvious fact: that while New York, especially Manhattan, is running out of developable land, the city has dozens of square miles of water with which it can work. We may find that the best way to meet the affordable housing demand is to actually create new land to increase the overall housing supply.

Some examples already exist in New York. Others seem more far-fetched, but are in the planning stages elsewhere. All will require a change in both the city’s and the public’s current view of the waterfront’s purpose.

One way to provide more space for housing is to literally create new land by filling in parts of the Hudson or East River, or New York Harbor. Battery Park City, home to approximately 6,000 people, sits on rocks and dirt excavated from the construction of



The city has many storage facilities on the water. Why not housing?

Another option is to construct apartment buildings on floating structures such as barges. Two small-scale versions of this scenario can already be seen in the city in the houseboat communities of the 79th Street Boat Basin, and Venice Marina in Sheepshead Bay, Brooklyn.

Serviceable barges can be found for sale in locations such as Louisiana and Florida through ship brokers. Most brokers list their barges on the web, and a recent survey of some of those available showed

many between 250 and 300 feet, or roughly the length of Manhattan’s short blocks. With prices often under \$1 million, the cost per square foot works out to a fraction of a similarly sized area of Manhattan. Creating cheaper land is an opportunity to create affordable housing. Tow the barges north using tug boats, construct simple

low-rise apartment buildings on the decks, link them all together with a series of docks, and a new neighborhood with potential space for potentially thousands of people appears.

One version of this concept on a larger scale is the proposed Freedom Ship. While the company’s website (www.freedomship.com) claims “it is actually nothing more than a big barge,” the ship, if built,

Tow the barges north using tug boats, construct simple low-rise apartment buildings on the decks, link them all together with a series of docks, and a new neighborhood with space for potentially thousands of people appears.

the World Trade Center in the early 1970s. If the city achieves its plan for Hudson Yards, a similarly massive amount of material will be available to create space for housing in addition to what is included in the plan itself. Instead of paying to haul thousands of truckloads of dirt out of the city, why not either extend the Hudson Yards area, or another location such as parts of the Brooklyn waterfront?

will be a floating city with 18,000 housing units, 10,000 hotel rooms and space for residents to operate small businesses. Though this project clearly targets a high income demographic (units range in price from \$180,000 to \$2.5 million), and the ship will not remain in a fixed location, the idea of housing a substantial number of people on the water is similar. Certainly, the city could provide developers with tax

incentives, as it currently does, to ensure that a certain percentage of new housing is affordable.

Along the same lines of building on barges would be to use piers extending out from the shoreline. Piers covered much of the Manhattan and Brooklyn waterfronts well into the 20th century. While the original maritime and industrial uses have for the most

included five residential towers plus office space and a hotel built on a wide pier over the East River between 16th and 24th Streets, became a victim of environmental and neighborhood protests. Manhattan's waterfront, once used almost entirely for commercial purposes, will soon be exclusively devoted to recreation.

The Department of City Planning's stated goal for the Manhattan waterfront is a continuous strip of parks, and does not emphasize housing. The Hudson River Park Act of 1998, a state measure which will create new green space from Battery Park City to 59th Street, specifically prohibits any residential use in that swath of the West Side.

part left New York, other cities have continued to use the structures for housing. Jersey City's Harborside Financial Center includes a Hyatt hotel and an apartment building, both recently completed on separate piers in the Hudson River.

Looking at the current zoning and political environment, it is clear that none of these scenarios are likely to occur in the near future. The Department of City Planning's stated goal for the Manhattan waterfront is a continuous strip of parks, and does not emphasize housing. The Hudson River Park Act of 1998, a state measure which will create new green space from Battery Park City to 59th Street, specifically prohibits any residential use in that swath of the West Side.

The most recent attempt to use landfill, the Westway proposal of 1974, was eventually defeated by a coalition of residents and environmental groups who argued that the development would disturb spawning grounds

of the striped bass. The plan called for extending the western edge of Manhattan enough to create an additional avenue, with buildings and parks at the surface and the West Side Highway submerged in a tunnel below. Likewise, the city's Riverwalk project of 1980, which would have

New York City's population grew by more than 13% from 1980 to 2000 according to the U.S. Census. A similar increase over the next 20 years would add an additional one million residents to the eight million already here. The city's plans for Hudson Yards call for millions of square feet of office space, in theory to meet the demand of companies moving to and expanding within Manhattan in future years. But if New York's housing supply can't keep pace and accommodate those who will fill these new jobs, companies may find it easier to move outside the city, where more of their employees would need to live.

Although the rezoning of Greenpoint and Williamsburg in Brooklyn to allow for housing construction in areas formerly limited to manufacturing is a start, Bill Woods, director of waterfront planning at DCP, acknowledges that it won't provide enough units to solve the problem. So



A relic of the past: NYC's unbuilt waterfront

choose your cliché: the business world's mantra to "grow or die," or Will Rogers' advice to buy land "because they aren't making any more of it." For New York, it may soon be time to start making more of it, or face a loss of competitiveness which threatens its future. ✱

Bushwick Immigrants Fight to Stay

Miguel Rivera was busy building homes for other people the day his own was threatened to be taken away. His aunt, Marta Reyes, came to the eviction hearing at the Brooklyn Housing Court in his stead. She skipped work at the garment factory that morning because Rivera couldn't afford to miss a day at his construction job. They both live in the same cramped, decaying, code-flouting apartment on 320 Harman Street in Bushwick, Brooklyn, along with three of Reyes' brothers. It was the usual charge of non-payment of rent. What was unusual was that all four of the families who lived in the building were sent notices simultaneously.



Harman Street, Bushwick

“It’s as if the landlord really wants them out of there, all of them,” says the tenants’ organizer-cum-legal adviser Rick Echevarria of the Bushwick Housing Independence Project (BHIP), alluding perhaps to the recent spate of eviction notices around Bushwick that were inevitably followed by an increase in rent values, and soon after, the appearance of strange new neighbors not from Brooklyn parts.

But Reyes emerged from the court attorney’s room with a victorious smile on her face. Outside in the hallway, Echevarria translated from Spanish what just transpired. The primary tenant, Rivera, was charged with failure to pay seven months rent, from January to July, amounting to approximately \$5,480.

Reyes would have forked over the balance in cash, right then and there, had she not been advised by the pair who head the BHIP, Echevarria and Father John Powis, who have almost a five-decade age

luxury or even right to lawyers who will fight for them when their day at housing court comes, an expected ritual of low-income tenant life.

Instead, Reyes was able to defend her case by providing official receipts that proved the family had indeed paid for three of those months. She also had papers showing how the rent charges kept varying each month, rather suspiciously. As a final coup, she held the official result of a positive test for lead paint in the apartment. After talking it over with the landlord’s lawyer, Echevarria said it seemed like the realty company was willing to write off nearly 50 percent of the remainder of the arrears.

So happy was Reyes with this unexpected windfall and regained home security that she treated everyone to coffee and donuts.

The Bushwick Housing Independence Project started when Father Powis, a retired priest, decided to move his ministry work outside the church to

help those without much to call a home. Father Powis, after 45 years of service at Saint Barbara’s Roman Catholic

> “Improvement means displacing the people who put up with it the most,” Father Powis says sadly. “Now they’re seen as part of the blight that needs to be removed.” <

gap between them. People like Reyes—and in the case of all the families of 320 Harman, undocumented immigrants from Mexico—don’t have the

Church in Bushwick, was not one to kick back with a round of golf or spend the day hanging out on stoops. Just last February, he delivered his final

Mass and turned to devote his free time to the issues he had always been involved in with the community—the plight of the neighborhood’s poorest residents.

Father Powis enlisted the help of NYU grad student and native Bushwick resident Rick Echevarria, and together they spent the last summer visiting 600 rent-stabilized apartments in Brooklyn, handing out legal information to tenants who might have otherwise been herded blindly into housing court with nary a defense.

“We want to empower the tenants,” Echevarria, a public policy student, explains. The Bushwick Housing Independence Project exists to educate the tenants about their rights, to organize them and provide advocacy and guidance for them. Most tenants do not have lawyers, green cards, or good command of the English language. Ninety percent of court cases like this are settled outside in the hallways, he says. “Tenants would be better off if they had representation, someone who will do the research and find out if the landlord is up to anything shady.”

The problems relating to eviction in Bushwick have reached a point of considerable concern, according to the two advocates. In the recent real estate boom, many buildings are hastily being renovated and converted into pricier artist lofts, pushing out the old tenants who have lived there, usually in atrocious conditions, for many years. Until recently, it was inconceivable for Bushwick to be considered a viable residential and commercial district, much less a hip and hap-

pening nabe like nearby Williamsburg. It was, in fact, a poverty-stricken and crime-infested pockmark from the 1977 riots until the current trend toward gentrification began. “Improvement means displacing the people who put up with it the most,” Father Powis says sadly. “Now they’re seen as part of the blight that needs to be removed.”



Thanks to the Bushwick Housing Independence Project, residences like 320 Harman Street are no longer “blight.”



Gentrification is often spoken of as a shadowy plague that spreads into neighborhoods, feasting on poor residents only to spit them out. Gentrification is also seen as a benevolent force, bringing good times, urban renewal and attractive people to once blighted eyesores. Either way, gentrification is often unavoidable, and the only possible way to deal with it is to minimize harm. “I’m not against gentrification,” Echevarria says. “I’m against the displacement it causes. Where are these people going to go? If they’re not doubling up in other apartments, they end up in homeless shel-

ters. They won’t be able to find any more affordable apartments.”

Father Powis cited the efficiency of the train system as a significant factor in the upscaling of East Brooklyn. “It takes only 15 minutes from Wall Street on the J,M,Z. It takes around 20 minutes from midtown on the L,” he says of the local subway lines. “You’ve got all these city folk only too happy to pay for the relatively cheap rents out here. It’s not hard to see why landlords have been viciously evicting tenants to raise the rent.” He tells the story of one unfortunate mother of five who was told to move out of her apartment

“temporarily” while renovations were being made. The landlord even offered to pay her. Once she moved out, however, she was legally unable to move back in.

Echevarria blames scamming real estate speculators for the mess. “There’s still a lot of bad housing conditions,” he points out. Increased, unregu-

fused by the numerous eviction notices and bills received from unfamiliar offices and people. Commonly, they do nothing about them, and usually end up in housing court. Some, if they are well-informed, will fight for their rights; others will just end up in shelters, or perhaps on the streets.

pay. The other families all had their court dates the previous week, and the resolutions were similar adjournments. They get to stay, for now.

In this eight-foot wide railroad apartment, two young children run around barefoot, oblivious and happy. The bathroom ceiling bulges under the

> Tenants are often confused by the numerous eviction notices and bills received from unfamiliar offices and people. Commonly, they do nothing about them, and usually end up in housing court. Some, if they are well-informed, will fight for their rights; others will just end up in shelters, or perhaps on the streets. <

lated lending in Bushwick in the past ten years has led to a rise in foreclosures and property flipping—the quick sale and resale of buildings. Property flippers, he says, have no interest in paying the mortgage or fixing the place up. “They buy and sell properties without ever making contact with the tenants, who are caught in the middle not knowing what’s going on, or even who the current landlord is.”

Buildings can pass through different hands as many as three times in six months. The last buyer gets stuck with a big mortgage, and so increases the rent to be collected, even on rent-stabilized places, where legally the rent should remain the same. But unscrupulous landlords can just send out a form to the Housing Preservation Department, describing certain scheduled improvements that warrant price hikes, and it will be logged into the system—no one’s going to bother to check.

If the mortgage on a property isn’t paid off, it will be foreclosed. Tenants are often con-

Back on 320 Harman Street, Clara Rivera, a resident on the ground floor, opens up her place for viewing. It turns out that all four of the families being evicted in the building are related. Clara is Miguel’s cousin. Maximino, another cousin, lives upstairs with his wife, four children and his brother-in-law; her Uncle Fabian lives across the dim and dank hallway. One of the men had recently been stabbed in the stomach just outside the residence, compounding his inability to work and



Pretty vacant

weight of some nasty-looking mold while the paint chips, as paint is wont to do. The floor sinks subtly to the right, skewing perspective and making the furniture unstable. The two middle bedrooms have no windows, yet another building code violation. On the HPD website, this address has lodged around 84 violations in the past year alone.

There are 600 buildings in a similar state of disrepair in Brooklyn, some better off, some much worse. “In a city consistently clamoring for resources, rezoning lines, and overhauling the old to create the new, it’s essentially a battle of space,” Echevarria says. “If you have it, keep it, fight for it.”

At a tenant meeting in East Harlem, a cranky old lady expressed concern about the tenants’ organizing, accusing them of communism. She, however, put it succinctly: “I just care about my space,” she said defiantly, drawing a little box of air in front of her. “My little corner. You can do what you want, but my space is mine.” ❄

Access for Whom?

Health Care Provision in Manila's Slums

ron h. slangen

The Philippines faces extreme urban poverty. Like most third world cities, Manila is experiencing a high rate of population growth in which poor rural workers in search of better economic opportunity flood marginalized areas of the urban boundary, increasing the growth of slum communities. Despite their urban locations, these informal settlements are commonly removed from basic service delivery such as health care, particularly reproductive health care. In cities throughout the developing world, the lack of access to reproductive health services, such as family planning, leads to a high number of unplanned pregnancies that exacerbates the overpopulation problem. Improving access to reproductive health services in poor urban areas can therefore play an important role in efforts to manage population growth as well as to reduce poverty.

The polarizing nature of reproductive health, however, is a clearly visible issue in the Philippines. With the recent pull-out of free contraceptive donations by the United States government, along with the refusal of the Filipino government to buy contraceptives, the Philippines is faced with the challenge of managing its population growth rate, one of the highest in Asia (Philippines 2.36 percent, Thailand 0.8 percent, and Japan 0.1 percent), on a Church-led policy of abstinence. A recently proposed two-child policy, modeled after China, has further polarized this debate.

The view from the ground clearly reveals the tangled political situation at the top. One-third of the population lives in poverty (Asian Development Bank, 2004). The inability of the poor to afford family planning, contraception (through private suppliers) and professional obstetric care results in the poorest twenty percent of women having three times as many children as the richest twenty percent. They also have a higher incidence of birth complications at delivery. Approximately 400,000 unsafe abortions take place each year, of which a good majority of the affected women are poor (World Bank, 2004). As this data indicates, the reproductive health of the poor is far worse than that of the rich, due in part to their inability to access contraceptives and family planning services.

In Manila, the lack of reproductive health service delivery is particularly noticeable. Unable to meet the rising contraceptive and family planning needs of expanding poor communities, the national government has informed Local Government Units (LGUs), the local governing bodies responsible for local health care initiatives, to distribute the remaining supply of U.S. contraceptives to those couples and families who truly cannot afford them (UNFPA, 2004). Given that contraceptive supplies will run out sooner or later, the foreseeable unmet reproductive health needs of Manila's growing urban slum population will need to be addressed.

Which characteristics of slum communities (e.g. cultural, demo-

graphic, spatial, etc.) exacerbate or alleviate their access to reproductive health services? Of significant interest is the role of LGUs in improving reproductive health service delivery, including family planning, health care information, and counseling.

Planners, along with public health specialists, can work together

to answer these questions. In order to gain local insights into the accessibility of reproductive health services in specific slum communities, planners can employ their analytical skills in demographic and spatial analysis, and participatory planning approaches to provide recommendations to improve the quality of life for these poor urban communities. Geographic Information Systems (GIS) is a particularly useful tool as planners can determine the physical proximity of health services to slums as well as spatial relationships that



Local Government Units (LGUs) play a significant role in delivering reproductive health services to slum communities in Manila.

exist between urban slums and population demographics, transportation infrastructure, industry availability and schools. These assessments can provide further insight into the connections between urban slums and the broader economic, social, and physical factors that may inhibit or facilitate access to reproductive health services. Lastly, planners can work with local community organizations to enhance their social capital and improve their positioning within the city's political structure. This can ultimately assist them in appropriating the necessary resources for health care delivery as well as local development.

The provision of basic health services to the poor will be a major challenge facing Manila in the 21st century. Within this complex social, political and economic climate, urban planners can play an important role in improving access to these services and help provide a voice for these impoverished urban communities. *

> The view from the ground clearly reveals the tangled political situation at top. <

Fes vs. Marrakesh

One of the main tourist attractions for Moroccan cities are the medinas, their historic centers. Overwhelmingly poor, they allure thousands of tourists each year. Balancing the effects of tourism on people's home environment and translating private investment into public improvements are just some of the most pressing issues facing the medinas today. Although both Fes and Marrakesh are former royal cities with a traditional medina, redevelopment initiatives have given each a starkly different flavor.

The French Protectorate coined the term medina, Arabic for city, to refer to the medieval walled cities of Morocco. The newer, more chic sections of the city constructed by the French are generally referred to as Le Ville Nouvelle, or The New City. In contrast to the other French colonies, the French Protectorate in Morocco practiced a policy of preservation vis-à-vis the medinas, rather than destroying these city centers as the French colonists destroyed the medinas of Algeria and Tunisia.

The result is the present day, often value-laden dual synergy of Moroccan cities—the medina vs. the new city; traditional vs. modern; conservation vs. innovation; darkness vs. light. The demographics of the medinas feed this dichotomy. The appealing French Villes Nouvelles creations coupled with the shifting of economic and political capitals encouraged the wealthiest families to leave the medinas. The medina's traditional upper and middle classes have generally lost their wealth or been replaced with new migrants from rural zones.

Founded in the 9th century and home to the oldest university in the world, Fes reached its height in the 13th and 14th centuries under the Marinids, when it replaced Marrakesh as the capital of the kingdom. The urban fabric and the principal monuments in the medina—madrasas,¹ fondouks,² palaces, residences, mosques and fountains—date from this period. Although the political capital of Morocco was transferred to Rabat in 1912, Fes has retained its status as the country's cultural and spiritual center. Fes, with about 250 mosques today,³ is often called 'The City of Islam.'

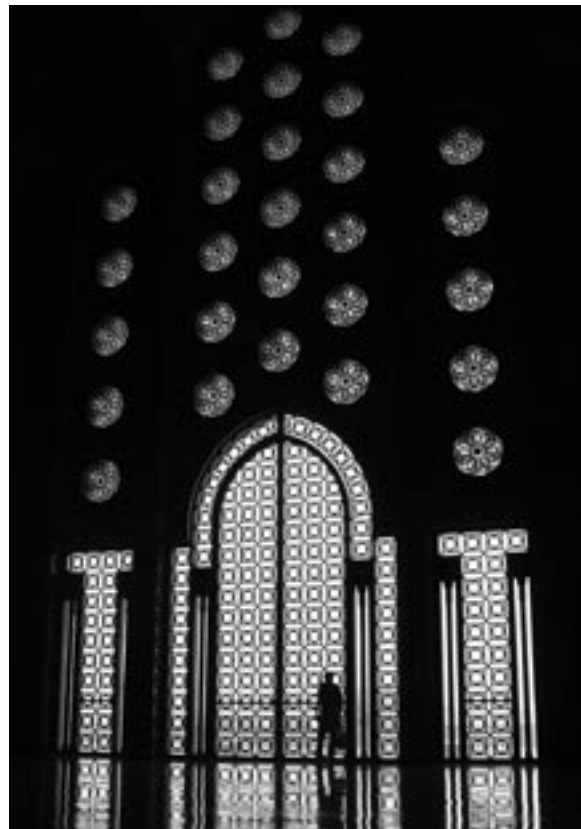
Marrakesh, on the other hand, is known as the playground of the Sahara. It is better known for its foreign-operated guest homes, lively

bazaar and happening nightlife. As foreign investments increase in Marrakesh, so do Western influences.

Once considered the culinary, artistic, intellectual and spiritual capital of Morocco, the Fes medina now suffers from an astounding poverty rate of 37 percent in the oldest quarters.⁴ Fes's 1981 designation as a UNESCO⁵ World Heritage site has helped attract preservation and tourism investments.

Stakeholders concerned about the future of the Fes medina often say that they do not want Fes to become like Marrakesh. Comparing one's city to another offers an interesting vantage point for self-reflection and a vision for what the future could, might or should entail. Here are a few opinions on what it means to become like Marrakesh.

> Fes reached its height in the 13th and 14th centuries under the Marinids, when it replaced Marrakesh as the capital of the kingdom. <



Fouad Serrhini, Director of ADER-Fes (Agency of De-densification and Restoration of the Fes-medina)

"Many of the Marrakesh restoration projects destroy everything in order to recreate an ideal. Historic preservation in Marrakesh is fantasia; it's not true historic preservation."

Aki Morad, Fes-medina architect, Agence Urbain

"Marrakesh is known for pornography, prostitution and homosexuality. Sexual tourism has replaced cultural tourism. This type of activity is just not acceptable in Fes."

Inside the Hassan II Mosque in Casablanca, the second-highest religious building and the only mosque open to non-Muslims in Africa. Photo taken by planning master's student Dio Chiu, who traveled to cities in Morocco—including Fes and Marrakesh—as a Kinne Fellow.

Left: Local residents walking through the medina in Fes. Right: the Jamaa el Fnaa market in Marrakesh.



Ouloul Hamid, architect, Agence Urbain

“Marrakesh is basically a speculation playground, a bazaar. Many of the riyads⁶ are being used as pornography studios. This type of capitalism is against Arab-Muslim tradition.”

Credit Agent, Banque Populaire—Fes medina branch

“The Marrakesh vs. Fes comparison is a false distinction. They are basically the same. They have the same types of commerce [referring to sex industry].”

“The real difference is that true Marrakshis still live in their medina whereas true Fessis have left to make money in Casablanca.”

Kassabi Abdelhak, urban planner, Ministry of Housing and Urban Development, Fes

“Marrakesh is too commercialized. Property prices are exorbitant—twice the price of a similar property in Fes.”

“In Fes, preservation and community responsibilities have precedence over individual ownership.”

Mostafa Zekri, Cabinet Chief, Ministry of Islamic Affairs

“Speculation is rampant in Marrakesh. Most people sell their homes to rich Moroccans or to foreigners. The new generation is motivated by money.”

Naima Lahbil Tagemouati, Economics professor, University of Fes

“What people mean when they talk about Fes vs. Marrakesh is that there are too many foreigners in Marrakesh. Personally, this doesn’t bother me.”

“What bothers me is that all of this private investment doesn’t translate into public improvements of space and utilities.”

“When discussing gentrification, one of my colleagues pointed out the need for a new term. The Moroccan phenomenon is not exactly gentrification, since it’s not rich Moroccans that are buying property in the medina—it’s foreigners.”

These initial comments taken from conversations with Fes planning and development experts characterize Marrakesh as containing an influx of foreign tourists, driving real estate speculation and the commercialization of the city. The Marrakesh phenomenon has not been studied closely enough. The comparison of Marrakesh and Fes is a case study that could provide many interesting lessons for the rest of Morocco and the Arab world, which is struggling to preserve its historic quarters.

*Vivian Castro is a second-year planning student who spent the past summer researching the relationship of property issues and land tenure with economic development in the historic Fes-medina. **

FOOTNOTES

¹ Madrasas are Islamic schools.

² Fondouks are traditional hotels that were frequented by caravans. The bottom floor of fondouks was used to store merchandise and house camels.

³ See www.muslimheritage.com. During the 12th-century reign of al-Mansur and his followers there were about 785 mosques and zawiyas (Sufi, or ‘mystic’ retreats).

⁴ In 1996, 37 percent of Fes-medina households lived under the determined poverty level. Tagemouati, Naima L. *Dialogue en Medina*. Editions Le Fennec: Casablanca, 2001.

⁵ See www.unesco.org to read more about the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization’s role in cultural preservation.

⁶ Traditional courtyard house or palace; often restored as guest houses.

Synthetic or Authentic?

Nostalgia, Mickey Mouse and Consumerism

The notion of authenticity in planning is often debated without first defining criteria for measuring it. With such a variety of social and physical applications, one wonders what authenticity actually entails when dealing with the complicated context of the urban environment. The criterion for true authenticity often includes a historic quality capable of evoking a sense of nostalgia. For example, we frequently use physical remnants of historic cultures to symbolize their social character. However, as we look to the past to satisfy our yearning for nostalgia, it must be noted that each day we are actually creating history. And in many cases, new planning movements run counter to—or actually destroy—the historic for which we have so much admiration. Herein lies the paradox: given our retrospective love affair with the historic, and by association the authentic, can we objectively view contemporary planning movements as truly authentic?

To better answer this question we must first create an expanded framework to define authenticity. Most importantly, we must attempt to critique recent planning movements through a contemporary lens, devoid of historical comparison. This approach will aid in determining which current elements of our culture shall be labeled authentic. Let us explore the Disneyfication phenomenon from this new perspective.

Disneyfication, defined as the imparting of Western values, specifically consumerism on all cultures, is analyzed in great detail in Michael Sorkin's *Variations on a Theme Park*. Sorkin speaks of the sanitized, synthetic experience of Walt Disney World as an easy stand-in for the complexities of a real city.

Based on Ebenezer Howard's Garden City paradigm, Walt Disney sought to recreate the natural environment to ameliorate the human experience. Just as the Garden City offered an escape from the rigors of the industrial city, Disney World was designed to serve as an escape from real life burdens. The theme park evolved as a physical manifestation of the original fantastical Disney movies and television shows. It is clear that television and Disneyland/World operate similarly, by means of extraction, reduction, and recombination, to create an entirely new, antigeographical space.

This method of place making, through simulation and fantasy, preceded Disney in the Great London Exhibition of Works and Industry over 150 years ago. The idea of simulated travel in the late 19th century sparked a plethora of similar exhibitions before the spread of railways made real travel possible. Sorkin highlights the irony that this relation between transportation and geography was most fully exploited by Disney in his parks, albeit with a futuristic flavor.

So how do we determine the authenticity of Disney World within such a context? While acknowledging the profound influence of the World's Fair on its creation,

we must consider Disney's unique branding of consumerism and fantasy. The genius of first creating nostalgia through story and subsequently fabricating a related place cannot be overlooked. Perhaps the authenticity of Disney is not so much in its form as a theme park, but as a machine for creating and then selling nostalgia.

Take for an example of this concept Disney World's Main Street U.S.A. Designed to portray a historic small town streetscape, Main Street utilizes several architectural elements to make pedestrians feel comfortable with its scale. Most importantly, the street is entirely dedicated to pedestrians, evoking a pre-automobile pace of life. Designers went so far



Main Street U.S.A.: five-eighths scale, except for the giant plush raccoon and the author's father (left).

as to create 5/8-scale facades to give visitors a more playful and comfortable street wall. Ironically, people visit Main Street U.S.A. to experience the very vitality that is being destroyed in their own towns. Viewed in this light, it is apparent that Disney was not only successful in modeling the early American townscape, but went so far as to create a utopian vision of what the town should be. With Main Street U.S.A., we again see Disney's successful strategy of inscribing utopia on the familiar. Developing this notion one step further, one can claim that Disney World's faux-utopian society is actually authentic in its creation as a pure place of transience. As Sorkin describes, "Disney invokes urbanism without producing a city...a place of a billion citizens (all of whom consume), but no residents." Moreover, the value in this sort of place is its ability to authentically provide visitors with a taste of inauthentic representations of culture and fantasy.

Never before has the line between tourism, consumerism and produced nostalgia been so blurred. Perhaps its success can also be attributed to the fact that Disney World lacks the hard edge of urbanity, namely the plight of the lower class. What can be more utopian than an egalitarian town vibrant with pedestrian activity? Essentially, Disney's simulation has substituted recreation for work. The market most often determines the organic fabric of place in capitalist society, and as a result, stark discrepancies between social classes arise. By replacing work with recreation,

Disney creates a sanitized environment in which all people congregate together, regardless of religion or class. It is as if the joy of place transcends any religious or cultural differences. For better or worse, visitors are reduced to worshiping one god during their stay—the all-powerful Mouse. Some claim that Disney's popularity rests solely on the common iconography its films have furnished on generations. However, in a country in need of religious and social cohesion, we must not overlook Disney's ability to provide a symbolic meeting place for a diversity of visitors.

> People visit Main Street U.S.A. to experience the very vitality that is being destroyed in their own towns. <

All this is not to state that Disney is entirely free from social criticism. After all, one must be able to afford a vacation to Disneyland/World and pay exorbitant entrance fees to have such an experience. But the shameless peddling of astronomically-priced souvenirs withstanding, we cannot ignore the fact that Disney World is the most visited tourist destination in the U.S., attracting more than 30 million people annually. But not all who visit the Mouse each year in Anaheim, Orlando, Paris or Tokyo are familiar with the movies and characters that built the Disney Empire. Disney has deftly utilized the language of the fantastic and selected imagery to appeal to the masses—a process that has created so many spiritual destinations throughout our history. Whether this is accomplished through blatant consumerism is hardly important, as few places on the globe share its widespread appeal. This alone is sufficient to conclude that while being purely synthetic, Disney World is remarkably authentic. ✱



Still life with bowl cut: the author at EPCOT. Not pictured: awesome knee socks.

FOOTNOTES

- 1 Sorkin, *Variations on a Theme Park*, pg. 31, 1992.
- 2 Kuntsler, *The Geography of Nowhere*, pg. 143.
- 3 Sorkin, *Variations on a Theme Park*, pg. 40, 1992.
- 4 Ibid.
- 5 Ibid, 173.
- 6 Sorkin, *Variations on a Theme Park*, pg. 30, 1992

City of Rickshaws

Anyone visiting Times Square or Central Park these days can hardly fail to notice the proliferation of vehicles offering “transpo-tainment.” There are, of course, the venerable horse-drawn carriages that roll along park drives giving passengers a taste of old New York. Lately, they have been joined by newcomers such as the “spider bikes,” those unwieldy red contraptions that allow seven people to pedal manically at once while a “captain” controls the steering wheel.

However, the fastest growing and most ubiquitous type of vehicle to hit the streets of late is the pedicab. In the past two years, these human-powered bicycle taxis have come out of nowhere and become one of the most recognizable features of the midtown streetscape. Although pedicabs have primarily been marketed to thrill seekers, they, unlike other types of “transpo-tainment,” actually present a practical, efficient transportation alternative that could potentially help the city battle pollution and gridlock.

Ironically, pedicabs, or rickshaws as they are sometimes called, are dwindling in number in countries such as India and China due to increasing dependence on automobiles, even as they are multiplying in places like London, Paris and New York. Many wonder why this odd borrowing of basic technology from the third world is occurring. After all, Westerners have grown accustomed to the convenience of automobile travel and come to expect the privacy and comfort that they bring. While pedicabs certainly hold an exotic appeal for many passengers, their real value and greatest potential lies in the ease with which they move through dense traffic.

In a tightly packed city like New York, where a significant percentage of passengers wanting for-

the number of pedicabs in the last two years in New York,¹ even hardened locals who try them admit that they are particularly well-suited to the congested streets of Manhattan. The facts that the island is relatively flat and that most popular destinations within midtown are concentrated together are factors that make New York an ideal place for pedicabs to operate.

Although the industry has expanded dramatically of late, pedicabs have been around since the early nineties. George Bliss of PonyCab and Peter Meitzler of Manhattan Rickshaw Company have operated their fleets for nearly ten years. When they began, passengers were primarily locals and most drivers worked below 14th Street. Until the World Trade Center disaster, pedicabs typically whisked business men and women along the narrow streets of the financial district during the day, and carried revelers between bars in Soho and the Village at night. Drivers were often part of the bicycling activist community, and felt they were making a statement by offering an environmentally responsible alternative to taxi cabs.

In the days following September 11, pedicabs transported emergency workers in and out of the frozen zone below Canal Street, but once the dust had settled, drivers found their downtown market

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hire transportation are taking short trips within the CBD, pedicabs have two obvious advantages over automobiles: their size and their speed. They are able to negotiate clogged cross-town arteries even when traffic is at a stand-still. More often than not, a pedicab will beat a taxi during rush hour for trips up to thirty blocks (one and a half miles).

While the tourist appetite for kitsch certainly accounts for the dramatic fourfold increase in

decimated. The next year, however, a few drivers decided to test the waters of midtown, and soon discovered that a vast, unexploited tourist market existed in Times Square and around Central Park. Particularly during theater time, but also at other times of day like rush hour, the city delivered a critical mass of people in need of transportation, and pedicabs, taking advantage of taxis’ inability to meet demand, picked up the slack.

While most New Yorkers still consider them strictly for tourists, they have proven particularly useful to locals on several occasions. During the 2004 Republican Convention media outlets like *NY1* hired pedicabs to transport their staff in and out of the security zone around

wide enough not to tip over. The industry's safety record is nearly perfect, with only a few minor accidents over the last ten years. Another myth that has spread among yellow cab drivers is that pedicabs do not carry insurance. However, the companies in operation today are insured to protect passengers in the event of an accident, often with policies that are more comprehensive than those of taxis and limos.

At the moment, the only real factor restraining the pedicab market is the exorbitant cost of a fare. Many drivers, who know that tourists will tolerate high prices, refer to their trade as "trans-

- > In the *New Yorker* recently, Adam Gopnik argued that the rise of pedicabs points to the ascendancy of feudalism in America, with wealthy tourists exploiting helpless laborers who must sell their sweat to make a buck. But in truth, most pedicab drivers will admit they make a very good living, and many even enjoy what they do. <



Pedicabs, a way of life in Nepal, have brought a bit of the third world to New York City.

Madison Square Garden. Last summer during the blackout they were the only vehicles moving on the streets, carrying stranded commuters to the far ends of the city. During the last two Christmas seasons, when cabs were scarce, shoppers piled into pedicabs with their bundles.²

Contrary to popular belief, pedicabs are not dangerous. While many passengers are hesitant at first to get in an open vehicle that operates in traffic, they quickly discover that the pedicabs themselves are large enough to be seen by cars and

plottation," and few will take passengers for less than fifteen dollars per ride. As a result they generally only get two or three five-minute rides per hour. Although business has been good enough during the last few years to support these prices, the increasing number of cabs on the streets has brought about greater competition. The logical assumption is that once the tourist market is saturated, drivers will eventually have to turn to locals for business and permit their prices to fall.

In the *New Yorker* recently, Adam Gopnik argued that the rise of pedicabs points to the ascendancy of feudalism in America, with wealthy tourists exploiting helpless laborers who must sell their sweat to make a buck. But in truth, most pedicab drivers will admit they

make a very good living, and many even enjoy what they do. Most would accept a slight reduction in their prices, say down to ten dollars a ride, if they knew that more people would use their service.

The city, oddly enough, has shown no interest in regulating pedicabs. The Department of Consumer Affairs met with several owners and drivers, and decided not even to set basic safety guidelines other than the laws already in place regulating bicycles. The city should recognize the growth of the industry that has already occurred in the last two years and embrace this new vehicle as an environmentally friendly alternative to motorized transportation. With a bit of imagination, pedicabs could one day become a positive force in the city and a boon for tourists and residents alike. *

FOOTNOTES

¹ There are approximately 150 pedicabs on the streets today.

² Most cabs have canopies that protect passengers in cold and wet weather, allowing them to operate from mid March to early January. Surprisingly, December is usually the most profitable month of the year for business.

Room for Growth

Green Roofs: A Top-Down Approach to Public Health

Green roofing, the practice of covering urban rooftops with vegetation, is one way of making cities more sustainable, and can have a positive impact on public health at a local, regional, and even global level. By helping to mitigate a variety of the small- and large-scale environmental impacts of urbanization, green roofs contribute to an overall improvement of public health by combating air and noise pollution, sewer overflows, and a number of other hazards that come with urban living. While they cannot eliminate these problems completely, green roofs do have the potential to lower exposure levels and create more livable cities.

WHAT ARE GREEN ROOFS?

Green roofs are engineered rooftop systems that allow for vegetation while preserving the integrity of the rooftop below. Green roofs, or vegetated roofs, as they are sometimes called, can generally be divided into two categories: intensive and extensive. Intensive green roofs most often resemble traditional roof gardens; with deeper soil beds, they can accommodate shrubs, trees, vegetables, and even human traffic. Extensive green roofs are lighter in weight, cost, and maintenance than intensive roofs: their soil can be extremely shallow—as little as 2 or 3 inches deep.

Plantings on extensive roofs are generally limited to grasses, sedums, and wildflowers, and thus require little care or irrigation. Extensive green roofs are generally not intended to function as a park or garden, but rather more for environmental purposes, which will be described below. In current literature, the term “green roofs” most often refers to extensive green roofs, which are the most cost-effective and have the most realistic chance of achieving large-scale implementation.

BENEFITS OF GREEN ROOFS

The primary link between green roofs and public health lies in the urban heat island effect. Anyone who has spent a summer in New York City has been a victim: while we go about our day-to-day activities, we grumble about how it's hotter in New York than in the

nearby suburbs. This is in fact true: the Columbia Earth Institute as well as the Earth Pledge Foundation estimate that summer temperatures in New York City differ from surrounding areas by as much as 3.6 to 5.4 degrees Fahrenheit.

The primary cause of this is the large surface area of rooftops, most often coated in black tar, which absorb and reradiate sunlight and heat. In New York City, roof-



How does your garden grow? An intensive green roof atop the environmentally friendly Solaire building in Battery Park City.

tops comprise between fifteen and thirty percent of total surface area, according to an EPA estimate, and represent a significant generator of additional heat. Of course, this means they also represent a tremendous opportunity for the reduction of the urban heat island effect. By replacing black-tar rooftops with vegetated roofs, plants' natural evapotranspiration cycles will help cool the roof and the building below, as well as the surrounding air.

The most direct public health danger from the urban heat island is simply from the heat itself. Every summer, extreme temperatures claim lives in cities across the country. In most cases, the people who succumb to heat exposure are those living at the edges of society, such as the homeless or residents too poor to afford air conditioning. While green roofs cannot address the larger issues of social justice and neglect involved in heat-related deaths, they do help lower the temperature in urban areas and can reduce the number of marginalized people who are exposed to the heat-related risks in the first place.

When temperatures are higher, the use of air conditioners increases. Green roofs insulate buildings and lower the amount of heat they absorb, consequently reducing the need for air conditioning. (In the winter green roofs have the opposite effect, preventing heat from escaping and keeping temperatures higher.) This benefits the public in two ways: first, on an individual level, residents see a reduction in energy costs. Landlords or building owners can pass savings on to the tenants of a building. It is important to note that financial independence is a strong determinant of population health, and a small difference in expenses can make a great deal of improvement.

Second, as the need for air conditioners is reduced, fewer ozone depleting pollutants are pumped out. Since air quality is not confined

to the borders of buildings and neighborhoods, this affects people of all ages and of every socioeconomic status. In this sense, green roofs move beyond the local realm and can have a positive impact on public health across the region. As cities grow, more buildings cough up more fumes, chemicals, exhaust, particulates, and attract more automobiles. Air quality and respiratory health hang in the balance of sustainable versus unsustainable growth.

Earth Pledge's green roof initiative notes that 1.5 square meters of uncut grass produces enough oxygen in a year to supply one person's yearly oxygen intake needs. In addition, one square meter of grass roof can remove approximately 0.2 kg of

est, most measurable benefits of green roofs, other, smaller benefits exist as well. Vegetated roofs not only absorb water, but also absorb sound; in a city like New York, noise is everywhere, reflecting off of buildings, streets, and sidewalks. While noise pollution sounds like a petty quality of life issue that government officials like to tout during election years, noise actually can have significant impacts on the health of human beings. According to the World Health Organization and the Center for Disease Control, noise can affect hearing loss, sleep disturbances, cardiovascular and psychophysiological problems, performance reduction, annoyance responses, and produce adverse social behavior.

- > Earth Pledge's green roof initiative notes that 1.5 square meters of uncut grass produces enough oxygen in a year to supply one person's yearly oxygen intake needs. One square meter of grass roof can remove approximately 0.2 kg of airborne particulates from the air every year. <

airborne particulates from the air every year. Studies have shown that air quality in urban areas has a tremendous effect on the respiratory health of children, hitting minorities and those living below the poverty line particularly hard. Combined with other measures, green roofs have the potential to curb the asthma epidemic, along with allergies, lung cancer, and other respiratory illnesses.

It is easy to take clean water for granted, particularly living in the developed world. Increasingly, however, clean water is becoming less of a sure thing, even in locations with highly developed infrastructures. Storm water runoff is an urgent public health issue in urban areas, particularly in New York. During heavy rains, sewage treatment plants—of which there are fourteen in the New York City area—cannot handle the increased capacity of the combination of sewage and rainwater destined for the plants. The result is that untreated overflow ends up getting diverted directly into the city's waterways, bringing with it carriers of disease, pollutants and chemicals from the flow over paved surfaces. Green roofs combat runoff by absorbing rainwater, thus reducing the burden placed on the city's sewage system during heavy downpours. The water that is stored by the green roofs is released over time as humidity, normalizing drainage; this also aids in the cooling effect of green roofs.

While reducing the urban heat island effect and regulating storm water runoff are two of the larg-

BETTER LIVING THROUGH GREEN ROOFS

Living in urban areas can be challenging for most everyone at times, but particularly for the poor and the elderly, who through a combination of discrimination, policy neglect, spatial distribution, or lack of finances, are more susceptible to environmental impacts of city living. Green roofs, while perhaps not the ultimate solution, address many of the ills of urban life. The beauty of green roofs is that their benefits truly serve everyone, rich and poor, and one doesn't necessarily need to be living underneath one to realize these benefits.

Policy favoring the implementation of green roofs should be encouraged. While the up-front cost of installation is more than that of standard roofs (the primary reason why developers shy away from them), the economic benefits are usually realized over the course of several years, thanks to reduced energy costs. More incentives should be developed in order to maximize the benefits of green roofs for the public and to encourage developers to use them.

Of course, the problems that green roofs seek to mitigate are large ones; ideally, we would be able to address them at the causal level where they begin, rather than simply addressing the effects. Nevertheless, until we can satisfactorily accomplish that, green roofs are a simple way to improve the public health of New York City residents from many angles. ✱

Book Review: *Living Downtown*

brian stokle

When you were growing up, what kind of home did you imagine for yourself after leaving college? A single-family home with a front and back yard? A one-bedroom apartment in a large suburban complex with pool and parking? Or maybe sharing a place with a group of twenty-somethings? Considering the high cost of real estate and apartment rents in large American cities, you likely ended up searching for shared living.

For 150 years, from the early 1800s to the 1950s, you would have had another option: living in a residential hotel. Paul Groth's book *Living Downtown: The History of Residential Hotels in the United States* chronicles the history of hotel living. Groth studies the history of hotels to better understand who has chosen to live in them and why. He breaks up hotel living into four different economic and social categories: palace hotels, mid-priced mansions, rooming houses, and cheap lodging houses.

Many famous Americans lived in palace hotels. Mark Twain, Alfred Vanderbilt, Herbert Hoover, and General Douglas MacArthur have chosen this type of living. Palace hotels attracted wealthy people largely because they "eliminated the routine responsibilities of managing a large house and garden, devising... dinner parties and supervising an unruly staff of servants." These hotels were also opulent and gregarious, while offering easy access to all the amenities of the city.

Groth goes on to explain that for similar reasons (apart from opulence and servants), many middle- and working-class individuals chose to live in hotels and rooming houses. After leaving their family home, women often worked at low-wage factory, retail or clerical jobs in or near downtown, and needed safe, affordable and convenient places to live. Residential hotels met these needs. (As an added bonus hotels had no restrictions on overnight visitors.) Due to lower wages, they couldn't afford to buy all the necessities for an apartment such as a bed, linens, tables and chairs. Living in a downtown hotel offered a clean place that was accessible to restaurants, work, shops and other destinations, all within walking distance. Likewise, hotels offered a place to live for people who took up seasonal or short-term work.

In the second half of his book, Groth effectively studies how reformers and progressives in the early 1900s "established the idea that hotel housing was a public nuisance" on Victorian moral grounds. Over the decades they helped change policy and, by 1932, President Hoover's Committee on Housing and the Community stated that "the ideal con-

ditions for any family would be a single detached house surrounded by a plot of ground, with adequate lawns and facilities for a small flower and vegetable garden and play space."

Groth points out that the policymakers could not imagine that people might prefer apartment or hotel life. As the book states, Hoover's 1932 Conference on Home Building and Home Ownership named "cheap hotels and mixed uses as their prime examples of neighborhood blight." With the growing number of federal housing policies, building codes, aid and tax preferences for single-family houses, the government established the single-family house as the "sole ideal for new American house types."

Because redevelopment was a popular way of "cleaning up" slums or blight, many neighborhoods including residential hotels were bulldozed. Despite their permanent status, hotel residents were not counted as part of the relocation. A 1970 planning study in San Diego determined only 100 people lived in the "large single workers district" up for demolition. After protests from housing advocates, a recount found 1000 people living in the district's hotels.

Groth's book provides a comprehensive survey of hotel living from the 1800s to the 1980s. The work also shows how reformers and the government, lacking an understanding of the people and conditions of residential hotels, actively set out to eliminate this type of housing. American cities have faced serious homelessness problems, due in part to the great reduction in affordable residential hotels. To confront this issue, their reintroduction into our expensive housing world would provide shelter for the homeless and the occasional starving college student. *

> Hoover's committee on city planning and zoning used cheap hotels as prime examples of neighborhood blight. <



Living Downtown: The History of Residential Hotels in the United States

Author: Paul Groth

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Kinne Report: Berlin

RAPID REDEVELOPMENT IN THE NEW CAPITAL

adam kelly

We rode into Berlin not on the collapse of Communism but on the unfortunate collapse of the Paris Charles de Gaulle Airport terminal. We were glad to be alive and celebrated with pilsner and wurst.

We were there to explore the planning issues of the day and through the abracadabra of the internet, had arranged to meet Deike Peters, a lecturer on planning theory at Technical University. We also hung out with a mysterious and disheveled conversationalist named Jens who had a penchant for cigarettes and booze. He brought with him Karen, an urban sociologist from former East Germany.

Berlin is situated in the northeast of Germany and, like many European cities, has a rich history that shows itself in the built environment. This is a city in transition—following the fall of Communism, Germany decided to move its capital from Bonn to Berlin. Consequently, a lot of energy went into development—there has been more recent construction here than in any other European city.

Most of the huge developments of the last two decades are complete. The surge in growth expected from the creation of a new capital city has not yet come and many of the buildings are mostly vacant. The city is suffering from a major financial crisis (the debt level is at about 47 billion Euros). In addition, it faces a stagnating population rate and high unemployment, while still dealing with residual issues from the communist era.

One continuing issue involves land ownership. Multiple parties who were on different sides of the wall are making claims on the same piece of property.



Top: Berlin, city of eternal construction. Bottom: Adam, James, Eumi, and friends propose a toast.



Also, the lingering conflict between East Berlin (statist) and West Berlin (democratic capitalist) styles of planning has remained, mostly with the challenge of combining the two very different physical forms. The communist-block housing stands as one of the most visible parts of Berlin's skyline, but nobody wants to live there. Reconciling the past with the present is certainly not a new challenge in Berlin, but it is a persistent one.

It will be interesting to observe changes in Berlin's population in the coming years. Our visit coincided with the annual Turkish festival in the Tiergarten, a vast park in the middle of the city.

We were told that Berlin has the largest number of Turks outside of Turkey, and we gobbled up delicious Turkish food every chance we got—that is, when we were not busy eating wurst that was available in every variety and at every corner.

We traveled around the city by foot, bicycle, and train—the U-Bahn and S-Bahn. The absence of turnstiles or gates suggested potential for a significant free rider problem. The municipal solution was not to prevent free riders by installing such gates, but rather to catch them through groups of jean jacket-clad gumshoes who rode around the city demanding to see riders' tickets and doling out fines to anyone without them. Perhaps this produces more revenue for the city. Perhaps it is silly policy.

Surprisingly, Berlin doesn't have a major airport. But it will soon. We flew out of the one it does have a little less ignorant, with a slightly larger vocabulary, and an interest in bringing German bike paths into our city.

*The Berlin group included: Adam Kelly, Eumi Ahn, James Connolly, Jeeyeop Kim, Haegi Kwon, Alex Schwarz. **

Photos: Haegi Kwon

Kinne Report: Cuba

PLANNING ACROSS THE DIVIDE

nisha baliga

Cuba es un lugar muy especial. With a planned economy from a bygone era that is being constantly challenged by the U.S. embargo, the country offers planners a peek at a dramatically different way of civil governance. Add the old cars, the architecture, the music, beaches and of course the rum, and you've got yourself the ideal Kinne Fellows trip. This summer, I was part of the group of twelve planners that visited Cuba for two weeks.

There is nothing like walking around the city of Havana to observe the complexities that define life in Cuba. Beautifully restored Habana Vieja (Old Havana) bustles with hordes of European tourists dressed

using a community planning and participatory model (see accompanying discussion of a trip to Alamar).

Even so, the Cuban system is far from perfect. While many of the problems facing Cuba can be attributed to the U.S. embargo and many of its government programs

US dollars. There are several supermarkets and malls that only take U.S. dollars, and most restaurants and hotels list prices only in dollars. In fact, while in Cuba, I only changed \$10 into pesos!

Overall, visiting Cuba was like visiting an alternative social reality. However, it seems as if things cannot remain as they are for much longer. Fidel Castro is an aging septuagenarian and when he is no longer in power, dramatic change will be inevitable. I hope that whatever does happen in this amazing country, its focus on basic education, health care, housing and community planning initiatives continues. I left Cuba feeling that for all the things the government might have done wrong since the Revolution, there were far more things that it had done right. *

> There is no denying that Castro's government—with all its idiosyncrasies—has achieved a gargantuan amount in terms of the basic standard of living. <

in linens and Panama hats parting easily with U.S. dollars at upscale restaurants and even a Benetton. In contrast, Centro Havana is marked by decrepit buildings, horribly lit streetscapes and large potholes in the middle of the street.

However, looks are deceiving in Cuba. While so many things might appear to be antiquated and dilapidated, the basic standard of living in Cuba is well above the poverty level set by the United Nations. There is no denying that Castro's government—with all its idiosyncrasies—has achieved a gargantuan amount in terms of the basic standard of living. Having grown up in India where poverty, homelessness, lack of healthcare and illiteracy is widespread, it is extraordinary to see a country like Cuba, having successfully lifted the lives of almost all of its citizens above extreme poverty in fifty years. It is even more incredible that many of Cuba's social programs were conceived of and are run

have succeeded (especially in terms of education, health services and housing), the truth is that prospects of real economic growth outside the realm of tourism are few and far between.

We talked to several over-educated taxi drivers who said that they had left jobs in management of government-owned enterprises because driving a cab for tourists was more profitable. We also talked to several young people, born decades after the fervor of the Revolution that changed Cuba, who were deeply concerned about the lack of job prospects in their future and were ready for a change in leadership.

These economic problems are further exacerbated by the growing dual economy in Cuba. While all Cubans are paid in pesos (1 U.S. dollar = 20 Cuban pesos) one cannot go far without



The Modernist Edificio Focsa, built in 1956.

Photos: Jennifer Traska Gibson

Kinne Report: Cuba

IN ALAMAR, MI CASA ES SU CASA

jennifer traska gibson



Top, bottom: Grassroots organization on a massive scale: Alamar was built by its residents, many of whom still live there today.

Alamar, a massive housing development built after the 1959 Cuban Revolution as a model of socialist cooperation, lies to the east of Havana. It is home to Bobby and Mirita, the aunt and uncle of dear friends of mine in New York City, and thus provided a rare glimpse into Cuban life for four American planning students during our Kinne Fellows visit in May.

Alamar is a product of the revolution. Before 1959, there was a severe housing shortage among the middle class and the poor in Cuba. After the revolution, the new Ministry of Housing provided materials and technical expertise to volunteer microbrigades willing to build housing

themselves. Cubans from all professions worked together to build massive apartment blocks, many without sufficient open space, access to roads or municipal services. Despite a lack of adequate planning, these housing developments have survived and residents have adapted. Alamar is perhaps the best example of these grassroots efforts. Though often criticized as prefabricated and grim, Alamar, which resembles Co-Op City in the Bronx in scale and design, may be most striking for its people and community spirit.

Most of the current residents of Alamar built their own homes and have lived side by side for over thirty years. Many fought together in the Sierra Maestre mountains during the revolution. Spending an evening with Bobby and Mirita, looking through stacks of black-and-white photos of them and their friends constructing their homes, we began to understand the overwhelming spirit of cooperation present in Alamar. It can be found at the community school and in the shared garden. It is seen in the tremendous hospitality shown to guests. And it is especially present when a taxi driver delivering a car full of foreign girls to an unknown address in the middle of a labyrinthine complex of apartment blocks need only ask a neighbor for directions and be invited in for dinner. In this way, Alamar is revealing not only as an example of Cuban housing and physical planning since the 1960s but also of the social impact of the revolution.

*For more on microbrigades, see "Microbrigades: Cuba's Experiment with Participatory Community Development," by Betsy Maclean, in the Fall 2003 issue of URBAN. **

> Cubans from all professions worked together to build massive apartment blocks, many without sufficient open space, access to roads or municipal services. <



Come Here Often? A Who's Who of the Urban Planning Program

first-year students

Marshall Adams is from Athens, GA, studied at Davidson College, and spent most of the last 15 years in Japan. He worked for Mitsubishi Motors in environmental and safety issues, then studied architecture and worked for a builder. He lives in Westchester (the suburbs, gasp!) with his wife, 2.0 kids and dog. Weekends he has soccer games, housework, etc. He's most interested in transportation and its related lifestyle issues.

Timothy Ballo is an environmental lawyer, and in his spare time he annihilates drum kits and works on cars much older than himself. Since he's from Virginia, to get back home for the holidays he only has to wrap himself in a garbage bag and sit out on the curb.

Silvett Garcia was born and raised in Buffalo, NY. She went to Cornell University where she studied urban planning as an undergrad. Upon graduation in 2002, she began working in New Haven at the School of Medicine at Yale University. Her research involved studying adherence to medical treatment by IV drug users infected with the HIV virus. There she became interested in public health and decided to pursue a master's in both urban planning and public health.

Gregory Hartman hails from Elyria, Ohio. However, he has spent several years wandering throughout the Sunshine State. He is interested in exploring the nexus that exists between transportation and environmental planning. Ultimately, he looks forward to the day in which he can spend long hours navigating the cerulean waters of the equatorial South Pacific in search of large pelagic gamefish.

Elizabeth Kays moved throughout the South and East Coast after graduating before being drawn back to her Los Angeles roots. She spent the last two years working in architecture and design in the suburban abyss of Orange County, California. Currently in recovery, she still experiences occasional longings for a good burrito and a traffic jam on the 405.

Megan Kelly is from Minnesota and thus loves to watch and play hockey. For all those dedicated fans, you can come see her play for the Columbia women's hockey team this winter in Manhattan. That's probably the most important thing you need to know about her.

Jennifer Korth is a first-year planning student from Miami, Florida. She graduated from New School University (BA Liberal Arts), where she focused on Democratic Theory and

Pluralism. Last year, she volunteered at Housing Works, a non-profit NYC agency that does HIV/AIDS homeless outreach. Her planning focus is international sustainable development.

Eric Mandel grew up in Portland, Oregon which is quite possibly the best city in the US. He went to the University of Pennsylvania and had a good time in Philadelphia. He enjoys soccer and other sports, pizza, traveling, and walking around cities.

Christie Marcella, currently a first year urban planning student, is part of the organizing committee for the New York City Social Forum (www.nycsocialforum.org), Founding Board Member of Et Per Se, Inc., a non-profit arts organization and Public Relations Manager for the fantastic arts journal & *Journal for the Arts* (www.etperse.com).

Leah M. Meisterlin comes to the UP program after varied stints as a molecular biologist, architectural history researcher, scenic carpenter, sculptural welder, and hostile waitress extraordinaire. In New York, she revived her design career as a member of the 20% Theater Company, where she is resident set designer. Having studied architecture and urbanism at Smith College, Leah's enthusiasm for set design follows her devotion to all forms of spatial design and coordination. Her current pet projects include decorating her apartment, seeing what fraction of six billion she can fit on an 8½ x 11-inch page, and feigning commitment to her blog, the Epicenter at VeinteDeux.com.

Jacob Press is a first-year planning student who is adjusting to a slightly less chaotic existence after spending a year roaming the streets of New York as a pedicab driver. He is interested in studying inner-city economic development, affordable housing and yes, transportation.

Ramon Munoz-Raskin comes from Spain, where he grew up in a beautiful city called Toledo. He studied civil engineering in Madrid, specializing in transportation. Thanks to his jobs and trips he lived in, or visited, more than twenty countries. Ramon adores traveling, Latin-American dancing, and chatting with people from all around the world!

Kate Scott is executive producer and project director for Multimerge. She has worked with over 300 topic experts and 20 educational institutions—including The New York Public Library and London School of Economics—to develop online education programs and interactive educational tools. She is a freelance journalist and photographer

who recently founded *Ginger Journal*, an international literary and arts print publication. Kate was born in Oakville, Ontario. She graduated with honors from Brown University and speaks three languages.

Alison Silberman is originally from Stamford, CT, and has been living in Boston for the past four years. She worked closely with the affordable housing and homeless community in Massachusetts through her work in Senator John Kerry's district office. Her planning interests lie mainly in affordable housing development. She can't wait to start traveling again, though it's going to be a while. She also loves running, skiing, and buying frivolous things to collect dust in her apartment.

Dan Wagner has this to say: "So we finish the eighteenth and he's gonna stiff me. And I say, 'Hey, Lama, hey, how about a little something, you know, for the effort, you know.' And he says, 'Oh, there won't be any money, but when you die, on your deathbed, you will receive total consciousness.' So I got that goin' for me, which is nice."

second-year students

Nisha Baliga grew up in India but has called these United States home for almost a decade. In her spare time at Columbia she enjoys soccer, grad school mixers and Kinne trips to Cuba. The highlight of her planning existence was meeting a dude dressed up as Pierre L'Enfant in DC at the APA Conference in April.

Vivian Castro is a 2nd-year student on hiatus. She won the 6th grade spelling bee. Ironically, Vivian is a fan of the spell check option.

Meng-Han (Dio) Chiu graduated from National Cheng-Kong University in Taiwan. His planning interests are international comparative and community planning. He loves swimming, idling and anything distracting him from school.

James Connolly once scoured the city of Austin in search of discarded mattresses to line the walls of his friend's music room. In the process, he discovered many little-known areas of town. Now, if anyone wants to know what a city is really like, he tells them to gather enough mattresses to fill a room...then they'll know.

Arish Dastur spent his first 18 years in Bombay, with regular and long visits to Bulsar—a rural town/village about 4

hours north by train. Through those 18 years he traveled to Finland, Norway, England, Kenya, New Zealand and the USA. His undergraduate degree at Oberlin College is a double major in neuroscience and religion. After three years of adventures and road trips, he started doing a master's in urban planning here at Columbia.

Jennifer Traska Gibson, originally from New England, graduated from Villanova University in 1996. Since moving to New York, she worked for the Soros Foundation coordinating a grant program in Eastern Europe. Currently a dual degree candidate in urban planning and international affairs, she is also the president of a homebrew club in Brooklyn, proving that sustainable development and local beverages go hand-in-hand.

Chris Gomez, a graduate of Lehigh University with a degree in architecture, has spent time working with the Council of Tall Buildings and Urban Habitat, the Building Architectural Technology Institute and as a Good Humor Man in the hot summer months. He currently works for the Commissioner's Office at the New York City Department of Transportation.

Adam Kelly would like to go to the Maldives before they disappear. He would like to create a Vespa society where conditions permit. And he is curious to see what his generation's "space shuttle" invention is.

Jee Yeop Kim, when working for the Seoul City Government, was seriously considering being a professional musician instead of an urban expert. At that time, he was indulged in playing the bass in his band. But, to be sad, it didn't take long to realize that he's not a genius in music. So he joined the Korean Navy as an officer to come here, Columbia. What's the relationship between a musician and a naval officer? Ask God.

Haegi Kwon says hello to all the UPer and wishes everyone a good time. Haegi's interests span far and wide, and she is currently trying to enjoy watching baseball on TV, as she is not accustomed to doing so. She would also like to thank the Kinne program for enabling her to discover the joys of wurst in Berlin!

Migi Lee is a one-year New Yorker who still gets confused by all those alphabetized subway lines. Originally from Incheon, Korea, she claims herself 1.5 generation Korean Californian. She plays tennis weekly. She loves Hwenaengmyun, a Korean cold noodle with raw fish

Come Here Often? [continued]

second-year students

soaked in burning spicy sauce. Migi is afraid of another cold winter in NY. Again, she loves daydreaming.

Stephanie Markison moved to Brooklyn after college. She spent three years working for a small philanthropic advisory firm in Manhattan. She learned about planning by volunteering for an organization that used history to examine communities. Stephanie helped create the Bowery Hall of Fame, a portable museum that looked at the Bowery's history.

Zineb Morabet received her B.A. in international relations from Pomona College, and then worked for an international development firm based in Washington, DC. Zineb later moved to New York City and worked in the public health field. She is currently pursuing her M.S. Urban Planning with a focus on housing.

Jessica Neilan was born on the Minnesota/Canadian border and grew up in the icebox of the nation, learning to fish and hunt with arguably the best sportsmen this country has to offer. Fast forward some twenty odd years and she's teaching English in Paris, working in an inner city welfare office, only to end up in NYC. When asked what's next, she replied, "I haven't been to a Nascar race yet."

Tanya Saltzman currently divides her time between environmental planning and burritos.

Laura Shifley is a part-time second-year master's candidate in urban planning, and is interested in urban design, GIS, and sustainability. She received her bachelor's degree from Hampshire College in Amherst, MA. She has lived in NYC since 2001 performing various jobs from bartending to administrative, and also plays classical and jazz violin.

Amy Schoeman, a dual degree planning/international affairs student, is originally a native of New Jersey, knows what it feels like to be a foreigner in the big city of New York. Such a feeling of difference has instilled in her a desire to learn more about cities near the Garden State and beyond. Amy graduated with a B.A. in liberal arts from Sarah Lawrence College. Between college and her current academic undertaking, she worked in a research and public affairs think tank, in an international development non-profit, and on a variety of successful and one "failed" political campaign (for Al Gore).

Ron Slangen graduated with a B.S. in biology from Dickinson College in 1998. His interests are in local economic develop-

ment and environmental sustainability. Most recently, Ron worked on pro-poor community health programs at the United Nations Population Fund in Manila, Philippines. His true passions are soccer and demographic analysis.

Cassandra Smith has a B.A. in sociology from Mills College in Oakland, CA. Before starting graduate school, she worked in the non-profit sector for Habitat for Humanity and Partnerships for Parks. She is pursuing the dual degree in urban planning and historic preservation.

Brian Stokle calls Northern California home, however he taught English to professionals in Paris and volunteered at San Francisco City Hall before coming to New York. His emphasis is transportation and land use. Last summer he interned at New York City Department of Transportation. He hopes to bring planners, architects, designers, politicians, and the public together to have a great festival of the city and its future. At least it could happen in the School of Architecture at Columbia .

Margaret Taddy was born and raised in rural Wisconsin, then moved on to Minnesota for her undergraduate studies in psychology. After teaching preschool at a homeless shelter for 3 years, she decided to address housing issues by returning to school. Margaret is also doing a dual degree with the School of Social Work.

Chia-Liang Tai realized he is not strong enough to be a professional baseball player, and so he decided to come to Columbia to fulfill his American Dream. He never, however, abandoned the dream and became a Red Sox fan because he still believes. He enjoys watching "Seinfeld," which brought him much planning inspiration.

Brian Tochterman was born and raised in Green Bay, Wisconsin. He has done a variety of work from amusement park retail, to working the line at an ice cream cone factory, to park inspector. Last summer he was a garbageman. On a whim he moved to New York in 1999 and among the canyons and crosstown traffic, fell in love with urbanism. His interest in planning transcends the four specializations. His thesis is on working-class taverns.

Yun-Myong (Yunnis) Yi, a native of Seoul, Korea, came to the States after high school. Her interest in planning developed through her experiences of living and traveling around American cities. Besides planning, she likes to spend time playing classical piano (pieces written by Debussy and Mozart are her favorite) and karaoke. *

Steamed, or Notes from Somewhat Underground

brian tochterman

Saturday, 10 A.M. Amtrak's regional service to Boston is cancelled due to downed power lines in New Haven. Stuck in appalling Penn Station, shrouded in gray and blue and the stench of franchise food and impending heart attacks. A perfect time to lament the passing of rail travel in America...or head over to the "Tiecoon" shop and hang myself from sheer boredom.

On my way to Boston to watch a baseball game. I could have taken the Chinatown Express bus for \$60 less than what I paid for the train ticket, but I hate buses. I deplore them. They make me sick. They smell. They bounce on potholes. Not to mention the fact that these Chinatown buses must navigate much of Manhattan before there is any semblance of smoothness, and then there's always the threat of highway traffic. I'm stubborn and neurotic.

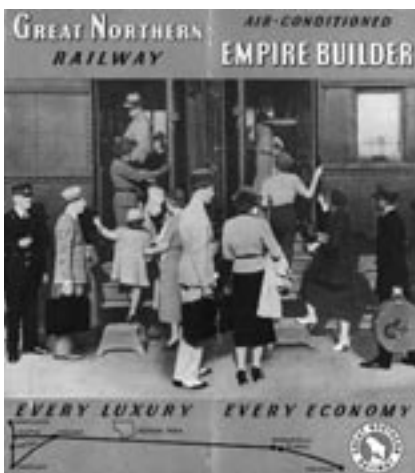
I want to support Amtrak. I want to support train travel even as the infrastructure fails, service drops, prices rise, and customers leave. Amtrak deserves a chance. Even if the ticket is a bit pricey for my graduate student blood, I want to see the country from New York to Boston the way travelers have seen it for ages.

On the train I can read, sleep (or try to anyway), converse (with myself or others), and go to the bathroom without having to exit the highway. I can take a seat in the snack bar, and let someone else drive. The train actually has a gliding tavern car, itself a vibrant public space where one could watch the game or shoot the breeze as the landscape flies by on the sides. I have this romantic vision of rail travel, from Hitchcock's *North by Northwest*, the old Penn Station, Pullman porters, of sleeping cars, and smoky bars.

Green Bay, where I grew up, is home to the National Railroad Museum, but there is little to see at this "national" venue. Three long garages are filled with engines and cars from various eras, a rather short, pleasant experience. Occasionally, a train will run the circle tour around the grounds, but like most trains nowadays, the trip goes nowhere. An observation tower overlooks the Fox River and the nearby interstate causeway, but one does not find any trains. Does it serve as a reminder? Smells like a boondoggle to me. In my 28 years I have been to this museum exactly once—to buy a couple of coffee mugs emblazoned with the logos of rail companies gone belly-up. Ironically, more people visit the local amusement park to ride the miniature train that

runs a short trip along the Bay than come to the National Railroad Museum.

Train travel is in my blood. My grandfather engineered the Chicago and NorthWestern 400 from Green Bay to Chicago. He would let my father, as a young boy, ride in the cab through the Fox River Valley and further down towards the border, and in Chicago they would catch a Cubs game. Alas, Chicago and NorthWestern had given up on passenger service by the time I was born. Green Bay's traditional train depot lay dormant for years with the ghosts of my grandfather and others. Today, debonair men and women in bonnets resurface in old photographs that adorn the interior of the brewery/restaurant that has successfully taken over the space. Above the dining area hangs a stunning art deco painting of the 400, the train chuggin' and choo-chooin' in from the distance in a way that conveys speed and power. Weeds sprout in the little-used tracks along the outdoor eating area.



High heels, hats, oddly-shaped luggage: train travel used to be a glamorous affair.

Long ago, the government and developers turned their backs on the railroad. This is what one sees from the seat. A ride on the rails takes the traveler past a lot of weeds. Trains travel through the industrial districts of old, a sad reminder of a time when tangible things were produced and distributed along the lines. Great factories and lofts with broken windows and crumbling brick lie latent in the areas where redevelopment has yet to come. These places are majestic and beautiful in their decay. Rail takes the back road through districts too unattractive for beltway locations. I wonder what Freud would say about nostalgic rail lovers—always wanting to see the country from behind.

In the distance are the shiny office towers along the highway, easily accessible via the on- and off-ramps of interstate America. You set your watch to them. You apply makeup in the reflection of their windows. People allegedly do stuff in them besides park their cars in the general vicinity. There's no room for rail in the American space of flows.

> I wonder what Freud would say about nostalgic rail lovers—always wanting to see the country from behind. <

Rail is incredibly successful in Europe, but in this country it has become a laughingstock. Amtrak became the national service provider in the 1970s and has never produced a profit. Not that Amtrak should necessarily have to make a profit. It's a nationalized rail service! It should be subsidized. Yet, the government fails to provide sufficient funding for the endeavor thus forcing Amtrak to raise prices—often higher than some airlines for similar routes. Amtrak invests its meager funds on newer, faster, European-style trains, but fails to update the track infrastructure to handle the high speeds. A true model of efficiency.

As the new Commodore Vanderbilt, I propose the following ideas to shape future rail travel:

◆ We must construct an entirely new rail network. Forget about existing infrastructure, we'll use it until the new system is constructed then we'll make cool bike paths. Procuring land will not prove necessary because available rights-of-way already exist. Where, you ask? In the large grass-strewn swath of medians and drainage ditches that separate directional traffic on our interstate highway system. High-speed rail service running along our highways may have a strong psychological impact when a lonely passenger stuck in traffic notices the train whizzing by and racing to their destination. *Hmmm...maybe I should have taken the train. That way I wouldn't have a headache from all the exhaust. Maybe I could have met someone. Maybe then I wouldn't be so lonely.*

◆ Each state receives a large amount of cash from the Feds for highway construction and rehabilitation. The federal government mandates that the legal drinking age is 21, but also says states can determine their own drinking age. However, if a state lowers its drinking age, they lose their highway money. The Tochtermann Doctrine (because nothing goes better than drinking and trains) says allow states to lower the drinking age (exactly how much sin tax revenue are states missing out on here? Are they nuts?), but if they do, they still receive the Fed's money, but it must go towards public transportation. Activist lawmakers and/or activist states should make this happen. Russ Feingold, Barney Frank, New York, California, can you hear me?

◆ Finally, like Europe, to make the new rail infrastructure work

there must be a move to use the lines for both passenger and freight service. Killing the proverbial two birds with one stone will decrease traffic immensely and will save business money on moving goods. Sure the Teamsters may try to kill me for this, but sleeping cars are much more comfortable than those little cabs truckers sleep in. Am I too optimistic when I envision the Cross Bronx Expressway rendered useless? We'll dig deeper and turn it into the Cross Bronx Canal and we'll have our own little Venetian Bronx, and we'll all get together for the booze cruise from Highbridge to Throgs Neck and we'll get (legally) drunk with 18-year-olds!

Honestly, I'm not that optimistic, in fact I'm pessimistic as hell. People will continue to use their cars, preferring personal space to public space. People will continue to die in traffic accidents and road rage duels. We'll continue to build more roads and more subdivisions, ensuring the certain death of a small percentage of the population, the increasing polarization/segregation of wealth, and the decline of social interaction and the ability to relate to the condition of others, because PLANNING DOESN'T EXIST, PEOPLE! How's that half-full for you?

Hmmm, it seems they are calling my train. It's ready for boarding. Maybe there is something to believe in or hope for after all. Kind of ironic that I'm on my way to a Red Sox game, innit? Someday, baby, someday. In a few moments I'll be humming that great Arlo Guthrie song.

Good morning America, how are you?

Say don't you know me, I'm your native son.

I'm the train they call the City of New Orleans.

I'll be gone five hundred miles when the day is done.

Your native fucking son, folks! ✱



Trains may no longer come to the Green Bay depot, but refreshing food and beverages are always on schedule.

Horrible disaster or apt metaphor?



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