

concerns such as improving neighborhoods, calming traffic, minimizing negative impacts of new development, expanding housing choices while keeping housing affordable, maintaining open space, improving streetscapes, and creating more humane environments in general.

In this newer, almost colloquial use of the term, urban design approximates what used to be called “community planning.” A young Jane Jacobs’s prescient comment during the 1956 conference comes to mind. “A store is also a storekeeper,” she said then, with the implication that her designer colleagues at the conference better remember that a storekeeper is also a citizen, and that citizens have a stake in decisions being made about their environment. Not much follow-up of her point was recorded in the proceedings. It would take another generation to bring this view to the foreground.

The association of urban design and citizen participation was finally the result of the gradual bureaucratization of the planning profession itself. Sometime following the social unrest of the 1960s and a growing consensus about the failures of urban renewal, the focus of planning began to shift dramatically from physical planning to process and policy formulation. If the architect and urban designer were hell-bent on producing visions of a better tomorrow, the theory went, then the role of the planner must be to determine need and rational process, not to pursue (the often illusive and sometimes dubious) vision. Indeed, a fear of producing more top-down, failed plans before an increasingly demanding, less patient public led the planning profession to embrace broad participatory techniques and community advocacy. But ironically the concurrent disengagement from spatial concerns on the part of the planner began to distance the activities of planning from the stuff the beneficiaries of planning wish for most: nicer neighborhoods, access to better places of work and commerce, and special environments to periodically escape everyday pressures.

As the planning profession continues to operate in the broader spheres of policy formulation, the focus of planning increasingly appears to the public as abstract, even indifferent to immediate concerns or daily needs. The urban design-minded planner who addresses immediate, often spatially related concerns has come to be seen as the professional most attuned to tangible urban problem-solving, not as the agent of bold urban transformation. In citizens’ minds, those who practice urban design are not the “shapers of cities”—in large part because such shapers, if they exist, are mistrusted. They are instead custodians of the qualities valued by a community, qualities that the