

thus tends to favor shapely spatial figures such as Bath, England-like circles and crescents. The *École des Beaux-Arts* technique of giving the poche of the plan a pink tint was adopted by urban designers, who made the buildings in their urban plans a uniform pink in contrast to the lush, green, and shapely public spaces that were to constitute the “urban realm.” Projects as recent as Cooper, Robertson’s draft master plan for Harvard’s Allston campus still deploy this conceptual framework and representational technique—buildings-as-poche, figurative urban spaces, and all.

Soon after these approaches became mainstream in the mid-1980s, these tenets were quickly adopted in the Northeast by both planners and architects embedded in municipal governments. Commonly held assumptions included the notion that the primary goal of city design was to create an “active urban realm” achieved by maximizing “active ground floor uses” along the edges of streets and open spaces that in turn were conceived as outdoor rooms carved from the fabric of the city. In fact, the virtues of this conception of urbanism persist to this day as the physical antidote to both postwar Modernism and suburban sprawl—its figure-ground and ideological opposites.

In addition to the unquestioned appropriateness of the urban design principles, another reason the Battery Park City method has endured in almost all urban plans of comparable scale is its real estate development logic. The breaking up of large development parcels into independent “blocks,” each earmarked for a single building project, achieves two objectives: the overall development can be divided into flexible phases that can easily adapt to the changing real estate market, and by dimensioning blocks to correspond to the optimum parcel size for a typical residential or commercial development project, the resulting building is guaranteed open exposures and free access on all sides, thus promoting its value on the market. The parceled, multiphased development has the ability to attract capital on an ongoing basis. Interestingly, the flexible phasing logic of a long-range commercial master plan—“In this cycle, it will need to be commercial, but in the next residential”—all but codifies a block size that persists from plan to plan. This ideal block type is typically configured for nearly square large-floor-plate office buildings. The double-loaded corridor building, the multifamily building type preferred by developers, can also be efficiently accommodated within the parcel configuration by wrapping and bending the plan around the outside edges of the parcel.

The aesthetic monotony of Battery Park City and other similar,