

development parcels that face it and functions as conceptual centerpiece of a broader sustainable design concept.⁴ Van Valkenburgh's design arguments for the park focus on its environmental and social virtues, although the published renderings of the project mostly highlight the role of the open space as a visual amenity for contiguous buildings. Certainly, a large park is an important amenity, given that three sides of the emerging neighborhood are surrounded by elevated transportation infrastructure; the park is being completed in phase one along with the initial development blocks. The sustainable design agenda became the primary marketing narrative to sell the project during the regulatory approvals process and to offer a lifestyle choice for condominium buyers.

The hurdles for regulatory approvals, already difficult given the number of jurisdictions overseeing the project, were even higher because the development entity, a joint venture between Guilford Transportation Industries of Portsmouth, New Hampshire, and Boston real estate firm Spaulding & Slye Colliers International, was private and not under the control of a quasi-public authority like the master developers of Battery Park City and Queens West. Without "public interest" represented within the development team, community groups and single-issue advocates had additional leverage to require development-subsidized "public benefits" in exchange for development approval. Atlantic Yards in Brooklyn, developed by Forest City, is another example of a large-scale project initiated by a private developer rather than a public-private partnership. Forest City had to partner with several nonprofit organizations and include a higher-than-typical percentage of affordable residential units to redress the perceived imbalance between the private and public benefits that would result from implementation.

More generally, the ratio between private real estate value and public benefits has become the central negotiating point between developers and single-interest advocates/activists. Each side provides its best-case narratives, with elected officials and the affected residential communities the prime constituency for swaying the decisions of the regulators. This fundamentally political and economic negotiation has prioritized new public parks subsidized by the development financing in recent urban design plans. In fact, the politics inherent in a "parks are good—development is bad" process means that a "pro open space" landscape architect is much more effective than a "pro buildings" architect as an advocate for urban design proposals. This is perhaps