

one reason that Van Valkenburgh has recently found himself as the chief advocate of so many large-scale urban design projects.

The balance between parks and development can be heavily skewed one way or another depending on whether the developer is a private or public-private entity, by the organizational strength of the affected community, and by the original impetus for the project. It is certainly easier to add a park and reduce development rather than the other way around. The parcels reclaimed as a result of the suppression of the elevated highway that snaked through downtown Boston, for example, were finally designated in a simple 75 percent open space/25 percent building parcel ratio, despite several years of sophisticated urban planning initiatives. Michael Van Valkenburgh Associates' Brooklyn Waterfront Park project was stalled when a decision was made early in 2006 to carve several condominium development parcels out of the project to make it "financially self-sustaining." Two arguments were offered: revenue from the condominiums was needed to pay for park maintenance, and a residential constituency would be created for the park at Atlantic Avenue, planned as one of the major park entrances.

Unfortunately, what has resulted from these kinds of negotiations is a polarization of those who promote privatized development and those who promote unencumbered public space. The political polarization jibes almost perfectly with the one-fat-building-for-each development block favored by the Battery Park method, since in the minds of the public-space advocates, nothing within the development poche is of any public value. Yet the best models of urbanism grow from the messy overlap of private interests and public space, as Jane Jacobs and countless other social theorists have pointed out. What is being advocated is not the fully privatized "public" spaces of Boston's Quincy Market or New York's South Street Seaport but rather a finer-grained exchange between commerce and public space. The Italian café, the North African souk, and the Asian food market are specific examples of cultural/spatial patterns that are predicated on this condition. What is needed are urban design approaches that focus precisely on this condition of exchange rather than consider this a boundary between very different interests. This is a job for both designers and community-minded advocates. Fred Kent's Project for Public Spaces is one of the few groups that examine this grain of urban design; every city needs its own version.