

Creating Friction with Real Estate Development Logic and Corporate Architectural Practice

The East Bayfront Precinct Plan for Toronto, completed by Koetter Kim & Associates in November 2005, confronts several of the issues already raised, such as the open space/development parcel balance. The project narrative is organized around the by-now requisite sustainable design theme. What is notable about this proposal is the balance it achieves between the generic Battery Park City master planning language of other similar proposals (including the West Dons Precinct Plan by Urban Design Associates, located on a large parcel adjacent to the East Bayfront Precinct Plan) and the overtly architectural proposals of Thom Mayne and Peter Eisenman. Koetter Kim's interest in looking more seriously at the architectural implications of urban design decisions is partly the result of pedigree. Fred Koetter was originally in Colin Rowe's orbit at Cornell and wrote *Collage City* with him. In the late 1970s and early 1980s, Koetter, Susie Kim, and their team produced several urban design proposals for central Boston that owed their architectural specificity to the contemporaneous urban proposals of Léon Krier.⁵ Importantly, Koetter and Kim's proposals were as much a mandate for typological innovation to solve specific urban problems as an ideological position about style.⁶ (Koetter and Kim's Boston proposals predate and perhaps influenced Andres Duany's first formulations of the New Urbanism.)

The architectural language depicted in the East Bayfront Plan is generically contemporary, the kind of soft Neomodernism prevalent in large corporate work. Bits of green fuzz are visible on roofs and setbacks in the renderings to signify an affordable green agenda. The overlap between architecture and urban design is best represented by the prescription for a south-facing arcade system that can be converted to enclosed pedestrian walkways during cold weather—an excellent example of the role of urban design as a discipline distinct from generic planning and the one-off specificity of architecture. The message here is that it is the strength of the urban framework rather than the quality of the architecture that matters.

The East Bayfront Plan tackles the interrelationship between block size and building typology specifically rather than generically. The plan includes a taxonomy of residential and commercial building types and how they might be accommodated within a block plan with more dimensional and proportional variety than most. In fact, the