

that hardwires all the planning intentions within the infrastructure plan itself and then allows free reign for each individual development/design team. The hope is that by eliminating the possibility of design guidelines as a safety net, the infrastructure plan will need to work harder to generate a successful urban realm and will yield a higher degree of variety than the typical master plan/design guidelines framework.⁹ This results partly from the additional responsibility of the master planner to design an infrastructure plan that is preloaded with juicy architectural opportunities rather than a plan that in its even-handed “correctness” can only produce monotony. In other words, one goal of the urban designer could be to set up a provocative and compelling game board for the participation of architects during the multiphased implementation of large-scale development.

Berkeley Investments Fort Point Portfolio, Boston: Gentrification Producing Fine-Grained Planning

Berkeley Investments, a Boston-based real estate development company, bought thirteen buildings, two parking garages, and several vacant parcels in the Fort Point District, a dense neighborhood of turn-of-the-century brick loft buildings immediately adjacent to downtown Boston. My firm, Utile, Inc., was hired by the developer to do a comprehensive master plan that would look at reuse options for the existing building and development opportunities for the development parcels.¹⁰ Utile established a methodology that linked urban design to phased retail lease marketing as a way to create a neighborhood with a supportive and character-defining retail mix. The details of the plan hinged on the concept that cultural and economic reciprocities between retail at the street level and the addition of housing above would be set in motion by the establishment of the first retail.

Although there is a small residential population, the existing neighborhood is dominated by office uses; as a result, the streets are mostly deserted at night. Utile proposed new restaurants and cafés, lured to the neighborhood by below-market rents and the quality of the existing loft architecture, as a way to generate activity in the evening and create a market for condominium conversions. The plan suggested that Berkeley Investments would introduce neighborhood service retail such as a grocery store, dry cleaners, and pharmacy after developing a critical mass of residential units in existing loft buildings. Berkeley Investments would then develop residential, hotel, and