

propositions is too monolithic. In contrast, I and others are supporting a method of urban design that benefits from the ad hoc compositions that naturally arise from the pragmatic planning of street networks and development parcels on complex urban sites. Our hope is that urban framework plans that aim to produce a rich enough “context” will spawn subsequent development projects that avoid architectural and social monotony. The aim is not to apply design guidelines to resolve differences but rather to put the responsibility back on the quality of the plan and thus eliminate the need for guidelines altogether. This will encourage a flowering of programmatic and aesthetic variety, and it implies that from an urban designer’s perspective, architects need to be trusted more than Andres Duany would recommend but not to the degree that a single architect should design an entire city district.

This reformed planning methodology needs to be organized around a sophisticated understanding of the real estate market and justified by financial models that favor a variety of parcel sizes over a monotony of buildings and uses. A new paradigm for urban design can arise only with a careful coordination between building types, parcel configurations, and a larger urban design framework, and it requires a collaboration between architects and real estate finance analysts who are not satisfied with the status quo. Architects, after at least fifteen years of neglecting urban design, need to follow the lead of landscape architects and reengage it as a territory for creative practice.

Notes

1. An impressive level of discussion about best-practices urban design approaches was in evidence at the Congress for the New Urbanism held in Providence, Rhode Island, June 1–4, 2006.

2. Stern’s comments were made during a question-and-answer period at “On the Waterfront,” a conference on large-scale waterfront development held at the Yale School of Architecture on March 31 and April 1, 2006.

3. Alexander Garvin was the organizer of the Yale School of Architecture’s “On the Waterfront” conference and introduced both the general session on Queens West development and Thom Mayne, one of the speakers.

4. The Northpoint master plan team was led by Ken Greenberg and included CBT Architects of Boston and Michael Van Valkenburgh Associates, Landscape Architects, of Cambridge and New York.

5. See “The Boston Plan: Fred Koetter and Susie Kim” in *Modulus 16*,