

and design direction of the city to its will. Individual developers and home owners who just want to build an addition onto their home may bemoan the process, particularly when they are caught in its web, but to date the voters, as well as many pragmatic politicians, seem perfectly content to arrive at a regional definition of the good city by designing a consciously conversational system that micromanages the planning and city design process from the bottom up.

### **The Rise of the Citizen Expert**

One obvious potential result of the public's micromanagement of urban production is physical fragmentation. Small is indeed beautiful. Yet this is a different type of small than the 1960s Jane Jacobs's or the 1970s ecological versions. If those versions were based on a core efficacy that had as its basis an ideal formed by Modernism—smaller is healthier—today's small is dominated by quests for personal convenience, safety, and comfort. This again parallels an evolution in the democratic landscape anticipated by Tocqueville, who suggested that democratic nations will “cultivate the arts that serve to render life easy.”<sup>3</sup>

When Tocqueville was writing in the early nineteenth century, the facts that shaped city design were either nonexistent or accessible to a few. In a digital age, the democratization of planning is accelerated through ever-increasing availability of information systems that laypersons use to accurately interpret the impacts of alternative design approaches. At LAX, citizen groups poured over noise studies that measure the effect of moving the runway fifty feet to the south. In Glendale, alternative designs, real estate pro formas, and tax increment projections accompanied electioneering for and against the Americana. In Santa Monica citizen planners have the skill sets, or at least the digital cameras and software programs, to perform rudimentary design analysis, for instance, determining the mean height of front-yard hedges on a block-by-block and parcel-by-parcel basis. This newfound ability to micromanage planning from the public dais does slow the development and design of urbanism to a crawl. Yet despite the sluggish pace, inexorably mass transit gets built, the Los Angeles river resurrected, sewer systems imagined, master planned developments projected, and ten of thousands of housing units constructed. With all this infrastructure being implemented it is easy to overlook the most critical infrastructure being formed in this