

potential for one group or type of stakeholder to dominate local planning and design politics.

New Roles for Planners and Designers

If eliciting a broader spectrum of public input leads incrementally to better urban form, then planners and designers will need to participate in more of the events (and, properly, be paid to do so) that people are already attending—not only the neighborhood council meetings but also the school meetings, church events, local festivals, and block parties constantly on the calendar of daily life. The resources demanded for this enterprise need to be understood as equivalent in importance, if not in fiscal impact, to infrastructural projects like airport expansions, downtown revitalizations, and even the proper form of hedge rows. Promoting the development of the infrastructure of process in turn suggests new opportunities for planners, additional roles for architects and landscape architects, and challenges for urban designers.

As the older advocacy models of the 1960s lost their currency in the 1970s and 1980s, planners were increasingly reduced to performing the driest forms of zoning and land-use entitlement administration. In fact, by the 1990s planners were no longer needed to educate and lead citizenry; one heard, at least among some architects, that planning was dead.⁵ Today, with the need to manage the collection and interpretation of data, administer and facilitate ongoing public processes, and generate policy in response to public demands, an ever-higher level of professional expertise is again needed. In essence, planning has evolved from a generalist's occupation that sought to lead people to environmentally based solutions—utilizing a bit of law sprinkled with a bit of physical design spiced with a bit of facilitation—to a highly specialized and demanding profession that partners with local communities to manage the complex ins and outs of a transparent and public development process. That this process is often confusing and contradictory reinforces the idea that planners are needed to better manage the discursive process. Planning again assumes a central role in the development process.

Interestingly, visualization and physical design are once again becoming key tools of planning after years of being marginalized by planners. As the public demands more and more information about