

ensure the production of good, innovative, or progressive urban environments. It is the literal details of design that citizen experts never draw, that planners necessarily abstract, and that urban designers, if not expert in design implementation, defer to architects and landscape architects, who will remain the professionals that best integrate citizen-based planning concerns and practices into the actual bricks and mortar of qualitative place making. The challenge of the New Planning for urban “designers” is that it insists that they remain first and foremost creators and makers of urban environments.

Tocqueville noted that Americans “habitually prefer the useful to the beautiful.” He goes on to state that Americans will in fact “require that the beautiful should be useful.”<sup>6</sup> Surely in the absence of design there is little possibility for environmental delight. Perhaps this well explains the sense that much of the Los Angeles landscape, indeed, the American landscape as a whole, has been exploited almost to the point of no viable return. But it seems to me that in opposition to the processes that result in urban environmental degradation, there is a new and organized public planning consciousness resulting from the ever-increasing public use of information systems, including design-based information systems. This type of input increasingly guides Los Angeles toward democratic urban design that includes both the useful and the beautiful, urban design whereby approval requires the crafts of planning, architecture, and landscape architecture in the public decision-making process.

## Notes

1. Alexis de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*, vol. 1 (1835; New York: Vintage, 1990), 62.

2. “Democracy not only leads men to a vast number of inconsiderable productions; it also leads them to raise some monuments on the largest scale; but between these two extremes there is a blank”; Alexis de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*, vol. 2 (1835; Vintage, New York, 1990), 53.

3. *Ibid.*, 48.

4. While claiming the mandate of New Urbanism, the development was further shaped by production builders who were quick to reject some of the fine points of the original master plan and instead developed large-scale, internally oriented multifamily housing projects next to densely packed McMansions served by private auto courts, all sitting across a major boulevard from an office park—a little slice of putative suburbia in the heart of west Los