

effects of building, in piece-by-piece urban design it is used to encourage the construction of specific building types and/or other facilities within a particular precinct. Such areas are designated 'special planning districts'. Incentives are drawn up for the sought-after buildings or facilities to be built, not in any specific location but somewhere in the district. In this way the district either retains its existing character or attains a new one. As it does not involve the design of specific buildings on specific sites or elements of the public realm, many people would not regard such an activity as urban design but rather as some aspect of planning. Jonathan Barnett refers to it as 'building cities without building buildings' – urban design as public policy (Barnett, 1974, 2003).

Another special type of planning district is a Business Improvement District (BID). There are over 1000 in North America and hundreds more elsewhere. In Britain they are called Town Centre Management Programs. Business people create such districts to enhance the locations where they conduct business. The goal is to make being in the district for work, shopping or entertainment a pleasant experience in safe, congenial and well-maintained surroundings. Legal mechanisms have to be established at some governmental level to enable business people in a precinct to tax themselves in order to: (1) improve the ambience of their districts, (2) run special events to attract people and (3) maintain the district after improvements have been made. Much of the design work involves landscape architecture – improved street lighting, better paving, the inclusion of trees and other planting, coordinated signage, etc. The objective is to improve the area piece-by-piece through direct action and indirectly through the catalytic effect of an improved physical environment on enhancing investment opportunities.

Three case studies of piece-by-piece urban design are presented here. They are very different in character. One has received widespread publicity – the special districts of New York City. They were first established in the 1960s when it was feared that the character of specific precincts of the city would change as the result of investment pressures. It was expected that if unchecked the result would be a significant loss of what makes New York 'New York'. The second is closer to traditional concepts of urban design and could be regarded almost as an all-of-a-piece urban renewal scheme. It deals with the central core area of Bellevue in Washington State. The public policy goal was to make it a more traditional pedestrian-friendly city centre. The third case study requires some imagination to be included as an urban design project in the terms described in this book. It is a BID dealing with central Philadelphia.

### *Major references*

- Barnett, Jonathan (1974). *Urban Design as Public Policy*. New York: McGraw Hill.  
 Houston Jr, Lawrence O. (1997). *Business Improvement Districts*. Washington, DC: Urban Land Institute.  
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