completely subordinate to the political agenda in many cases.

Design review is being performed by overworked and inexperienced staff. In the law, the wisest, most experienced minds are called to judge. In design review, the primary reviewer is far more likely to be a junior planner without design background or an unregistered young designer or a politically appointed committee with the common thread of community prestige and power, not design expertise. The staff planners around the country that I have met are tremendously sincere individuals—they study the issues, they work hard to make the right decisions, and they receive very little guidance or reward. They are often overwhelmed by the complexity of design review, which may be the leading cause in their cry for more and better design guidelines—number one reform of design review suggested by planners who review projects.

Design review is not an efficient mechanism for improving the quality of the built environment. Aside from being time-consuming and unpredictable, design review is usually limited to certain areas, uses, or sizes of projects. It is also limited, obviously, to projects undergoing change or being newly built. It is no more effective than zoning in controlling bulk, height, and setbacks (very important elements of urban design), but it is more complicated than zoning and more subject to interpretation and politics.

The endemic problems

I have separately organized the following sets of issues because they are much more difficult to describe fully and much more difficult to solve than the regulatory issues just mentioned. As it turns out, solving one of them tends to cause problems in another; for example, making design less arbitrary and more objective tends to reduce the flexibility to make discretionary decisions that are a necessary element of aesthetic judgment. I have organized them around the robust topics of power, freedom, justice, and aesthetics.

Power

The fundamental question in the issue of power is *who*—who will judge, whose tastes will matter, whose interest it is to control the aesthetic quality of building. Many people will support design review because they believe that it gives more community control over the environment, and in many places this is true. But does the design of urban buildings belong with the community (or rather, with their appointed planning representatives) or with those who are design experts involved in solving the whole building problem?

Design review is the only field where lay people are allowed to rule over professionals directly in their area of expertise. It seems odd that we as a society believe that the improvement of the physical environment can be made by reducing the influence of architects and increasing the influence of planners and lay appointees. As architects, we owe it to ourselves to investigate how this serious turn of events could occur. Are we being punished for the International Style? Are we seen as lackeys of the greedy developer/builder? Have we lost the respect of the public because we no longer even try to defend design excellence in the face of our clients' wishes? Are we elitist, making projects that only we can understand and interpret, without attempting to educate the public or even reach them?

It is certain that architects—even those who approve of design review—are not willing to concede the judgment of design to lay persons. The number one complaint of architects who answered our survey about design review was that the reviewers were not trained professionals with experience in designing buildings. Nearly every architect who cited an exemplary process told us that what made it exemplary was the presence of knowledgeable professionals as reviewers. Even the city agency planners complained about non-professional members of review boards. Yet about 45 percent of all bodies that review project design do not have even one architect on them. Architects whose experience includes being reviewed by other designers are more likely to accept design review, although they may still find it flawed. Several respondents lamented the lay reviewer by making comparisons to the medical world, where lay people are not permitted to interfere with professional judgments.

Design review is grounded in personal—not public—interest. Perhaps if there were a public realm, a sense of public responsibility about the environment that led to design review, it would be a more legitimate process. For now, it is recognizably not so, being more a matter of protecting private property values from "offending" intrusions rather than a genuine public-spirited activity (Scheer, 1992). When neighbors attend design review sessions, their comments, even the fact of their attendance and