.... but what is good urban form?

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ABSTRACT

This thesis takes a look at the evolution of
urban design ideas - Schools of Thought, as we
will refer to them - in New York City over
the last two decades. The transformation of
the "image of the good city" from the Modernist's
sleek, abstract, and minimalist towers-in-parks
to a less visionary, people and street centered
urban fabric is the focus of this evolution. The
state of the art in urban design resulting from
the experiences of the last two decades is taken
as the position from which we begin to answer the
question, ... but what is good urban form?

Three themes are woven together; 1 Good urban form
is essentially a question of a good public
environment, ie. the street, 2 Building activity
needs to recognize and relate to the setting or
"context" in which it occurs, context- sensitivity
being an essential urban form consideration,
3 Building regulations such as zoning have been
recognized as design tools, an innovative or
sophisticated approach to their use is a possible
way to promote/achieve an improved urban environment.
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This thesis is both a story and a story about a story. The story is told in the Framework section of the thesis. It is essentially a declaration of principles on urban design; what it needs to recognize and respond to. The story about a story unfolds around the two case studies used in this thesis, the Battery Park City landfill development and the Times Square/42nd Street Redevelopment, both in New York City. Through them the evolution of schools of thought in urban design and city planning can be seen. This evolution of urban design philosophy in N.Y.C., the story about a story, is also the foundation for the story told in the Framework; its principles growing out of the experience which the case studies document.
The Cooper/Eckstut plans for Battery Park City and the Times Square Redevelopment, 1979 and 1981 respectively, are taken as examples of the state-of-the-art in urban design and it is argued that they have a positive urban vision and that they represent appropriate approaches towards intervention in the urban environment. The four Battery Park City plans which precede the Cooper/Eckstut plan illustrate a movement away from the Modern Movement's view of the city to a context-sensitive urban design ethic, from the sleek, abstract, simple city to a rediscovery of the phenomena of the city experience and the street as the heart of the urban environment. It is from this position that the Framework/manifesto is written and from which the succession of proposals for Battery Park City will
be critiqued.

The focus of "... but what is good urban form?" is the evolution of the image of the "good city" from one school of thought to another; Modernist to a Jacobs/Lynch, the major transitions in this evolution, and the resulting urban design ethic growing out of this experience.
... but what is good urban form?

For most of its history, New York has carried on a romantic, not to say intimate, involvement with congestion. To be New York was to be crowded - out of crowding came energy, ideas, excitement, power. If traffic was a bit slower here than elsewhere, if tall buildings gave you less sun and sky than there was in Des Moines or Dallas - well, who really cared about moving fast once you were already here? And who came to New York in search of sun and sky anyway?

Paul Goldberger

"The Limits of Urban Growth"
It goes without saying that the New York, Manhattan to be precise, environment is dense and despite its all too rational street pattern life and activity on its streets is bustling, at times hectic, rarely rational. There is something vibrant to be found in New York City. Its people and form are flexible, they can adjust to a broad range of changes. Change, those who would change parts of the city, however should not take this adaptability as license to intervene, without careful thought and study, in the urban environment.

The physical form of an urban environment is the product of a dialogue between building and context, object and subject. The architecture of a building, defined in a far too narrow sense, is the product of the discourse between internal form and internal use; internal as in a logic specific to a building proposal such
as site, program, budget, users; not in the sense of "interior" space. The architecture of an urban fabric is the result of the architecture of buildings in dialogue with external relations; external meaning issues not immediately part of the architectural program.

The external relations of a building is its context. Context is people, buildings, places, character, image. Context is location specific. Ideally, the internal dialogues of architecture reach out to external relations, if only limited to a degree. An urban fabric, and urban design, thus becomes a complex interaction of a series of three-way architectural dialogues. The internal discourse of the architecture of one building becomes the context - external relations - of another. It follows that an architecture which is in dialogue with its context is in communication with the forms and activities which surround it.
This thesis asks "How does one build in a way that is sensitive to context?; indeed, What does it mean to be sensitive to context; What does it mean to be sensitive to the crowding, energy, ideas, excitement, and power of New York City?" It aims its questions particularly at large-scale developments, because of their ability to change their settings more than any single conventional structure. Two current large-scale developments in the city, Battery Park City (92 acres) and the Times Square/42nd Street Redevelopment (13 acres), are employed to illustrate possible answers and approaches.

In the two case studies, the use of design and development guidelines are the focus of our attention. The 42nd Street case poses the urban form question within an existing, built-up urban fabric. The guidelines regulate not only land-use and building location, but
building configuration and image as well, to yield an integrated development of individual structures, new and existing, without, indeed, executing the redevelopment as a single architect/developer project. The Battery Park City case poses the urban form question in a situation where a major land-fill development is to act as an addition to an existing urban fabric. Its guidelines seek to break down the "project" into "neighborhoods" and connect the land-fill development with the street pattern of Lower Manhattan.

In both cases it can be argued that good urban form is essentially a good street/public environment resulting from a thoughtful design process. In both cases the design process is guided by design regulations as a way to promote attention to the urban design issues each case presents. Throughout the thesis we will explore
the use of regulation as a design tool, its evolution and current state in N.Y.C., and as one way to achieve good urban form.

When we ask the question, ... but what is good urban form?, it must be recognized that the definition of "the Good City" has changed over time and indeed there have been and are multiple rather than singular definitions of good urban form. The Beaux Arts "White City" and the Modernist (C.I.A.M.) "Radiant City", as pure types, espouse theories of good urban form which are in conflict with one another. So too would an "organic model" of urban form conflict with a "machine model" of urban form. Clearly our thinking about urban form and intervening in it is in a constant state of change; ideally we learn from our experiences and adjust - change our thinking in response.
As our conception of good urban form is transformed over time a period of transition results whereby old and new ideas are in dialogue and conflict. Such a period is rich in information. The Battery Park City case allows us an opportunity to examine one of these periods, the late '60's/early '70's, via a progression of plans for its development spanning over 17 years. The 42nd Street case allows us to examine where the experiences of this period have brought us; to the rediscovery of the street as the essential unit of design in an urban environment.

This thesis is divided into four major chapters: Framework, The Battery Park Case, The Times Square/42nd Street Redevelopment Case, and Conclusions.

The Framework covers, the use of Zoning, that is, built form regulations, As An Urban Design
Tool and as an indication of the essential urban form issues-of-the-day which the various zoning ordinances were legislated to address; The Social Critics of City Planning, essentially a look at cities from a non-formal perspective; The Street As Place, an argument for the importance of the street to the urban environment; Good Urban Form Is ..., an encapsulation of an urban design ethic, and The U.D.C., a look at the powerful development agency controlling the development of the two interventions used as case studies in this thesis. The case study chapters present a body of information on the current state of urban design thinking about the perception/conception and execution of large-scale urban planning and design efforts. In the Conclusions, we reflect on the meaning of the changes in the definition of good urban form exhibited in the case study plans.
framework
In *Urban Design as Public Policy* (Architectural Record Books, 1974) Jonathan Barnett asked the question "If a city can get the buildings it asks for, why can't it get the buildings it wants? ... while it is easy to blame greedy real-estate developers for row after row of "ticky-tacky" look-alike houses, in many cases the combination of street grid and zoning setback lines has left the builder no alternative ... (if) you find the skyline of the average American city to be full of unimaginative boxy buildings, the combination of zoning rules and street grid must, again, bear at least part of the blame".

Zoning regulations are taken for granted, so much so that their utility can be ignored. They are not however a natural working of the market system, but an imposition on it, intended to protect public health and safety in addition to private property values through
the control of built form.
Zoning today limits or structures what can be designed and built. It has been and remains as the most versatile tool of urban designers in New York since Barnett and company took a close look at who and what exercise the greatest influence over the form of a city.

New York City has used zoning regulations in 1916, 1961, and 1967 to control the form of buildings in light of broader, city wide considerations. The ordinances espouse at least mid-level theories of good urban form; there is an image of the city they seek to achieve. An examination of these ordinances is due because of the potential such regulations to achieve a new urban vision and because the ordinances and their related views of the good city relate to the evolving urban design ethic explored in the case studies.
Studies by Hugh Ferriss showing building masses are "carved" out of the zoning setback lines of New York City's 1916 ordinance.

The 1916 Zoning Ordinance was in reaction to the laissez-faire role of public authority on private development. Its regulations sought
The second Equitable Life Assurance Building, 1915, violates the bulk that was a year later allowed to the site by the zoning ordinance of 1916. The solid-line outline is the building as built;

to protect both private property heights and the public's right to light and air; buildings were held to the street - their mass carved by height and setback requirements. The "public interest" was served by countering the increasingly canyon-like pattern of development Manhattan was experiencing; the Equitable Building, 1915, being the quintessential example of this - its footprint covering in excess of 90% of its site, and bulk rising in an uninterrupted line from street to roof 36 stories above.
The Equitable building was not an isolated event but a symbol of a building and "type", the pure block, and it was this building type which the 1916 ordinance rejects in favor of the integrated block and tower; Cass Gilbert's Woolworth Building, 1913, being cited by Stephen Zoll in Space and Society # 18 as an "ideal" model of this type.
Already, we can begin to see the link between design and regulation. However in the early 1900's it was design which influenced regulation. A choice was made between the two predominant high-rise building types and legislation written to encourage the desired type. In turn, regulation influenced the form of future design. The same scenario can be written about the 1960 resolution. The tower/plaza relationship exhibited by the Seagram Building, 1957, was adopted as the new desired "type", and then regulation was effected to promote design in this direction. Design influences and is influenced by regulation.

The 1916 ordinance was a first step in the regulation of built form in the city. The actual bulk of buildings however was not directly addressed. Granted, the tower section of a building could not exceed 25% of
its site, but this meant that the larger the site, the larger the tower could be. In addition the lower, non-tower floors were left free to, potentially, cover the entire site. As development in the city continued under the ordinance, its limits were pushed; buildings literally filled the maximum zoning envelope, resulting in dense and overbuilt streets.

In the space of two decades, five proposals were made to limit the bulk which buildings in N.Y.C. could achieve, residential as well as commercial:

1936 Regional Plan Association, Information Bulletin No. 20, Zoning Revision to Limit the Bulk of Buildings Proposed for New York City Business Districts
1939 N.Y.C. City Planning Commission, Rexford Tugwell, Commissioner, Minutes,
Meeting of May 3, 1939

1944 N.Y.C. Planning Commission, Robert Moses, Commissioner, Report on the Amendment of the Zoning Resolution

1950 Harrison, Ballard and Allen, Plan for Re-Zoning the City of New York


All plans, with the exception of the 1958 one, were defeated. The Voorhees, Walker, Smith and Smith proposal became the base new zoning of 1961.

The 1961 Comprehensive Revision of N.Y.C.'s zoning was a major step in the City's use of zoning as an urban design tool, a step further developed in 1967 with Special Design Districts. Instead of working in a restrictive manner, zoning was asked to encourage, via "incentive" bulk bonuses to developers,
The Seagram Building, 1957, shows, against the legal zoning bulk envelope for the site, just what the building gave up of its allowed bulk in order to achieve its design.

A new building type. A developer could achieve up to a 20% increase in FAR, a device introduced by the '61 resolution to set a bulk limit/gross floor area buildable on a specific site in any given zoning district, contingent upon the provision of public plaza space. Later covered, i.e. interior galleria, were also allowed. Four years after the '61 revision, John Lindsay was elected Mayor of N.Y.C. "New York was a glorious place to live in 1965 - anything seemed possible, even the purification of the air and the reconstruction of vast deterioration ... it wasn't completely ludicrous to refer to New York as Fun City ... (Lindsay) was elected because of a wide-spread optimism about the city's future as a place to live [S. Zoll et al]". It is from this spirit of optimism that Special Design Districts evolved.

Special Design Districts are a product of the
Urban Design Group. The Urban Design Group was established, circa 1967, as a force within the City Planning Commission in response to the Paley Report, *(The Threatened City)*, a document issued in '67 by a twelve-man committee appointed by Mayor Lindsay to study urban design in N.Y.C. Two major observations of the report were:

1) the City's ability to control both public and private design under the current zoning law and, 2) "...The City's endless process of redevelopment was conceived piecemeal, a building at a time, and lost valuable opportunities to coordinate, through design, an increased ease of use and style of place."

In recognition of these points, the Urban Design Group used the influence which the zoning law allowed the city, the granting or withholding of bonus FAR, as their principal bargaining tool with developers to get desired
The Lincoln Square Special Zoning District shapes private development in the area surrounding the Lincoln Center for the Performing Arts.

public amenities.

Special Design Districts set forth urban design objectives for a part of the city in zoning language. The five most important such districts in NY.C. are, in chronological order: the Theatre District, Lincoln Square, the Fifth Avenue District, Greenwich Street, and the Lower Manhattan Districts. In each, zoning regulations were recognized as both part of the urban design problem (i.e. the zoned/segregation of land uses usually associated with zoning is counterproductive in complex and diverse urban areas), and solution. In the special districts, zoning was explicitly used as a design and negotiation tool. "In each of the special districts, individual proposals had signaled the need to reconsider land-use controls for a particular area, and negotiations with a developer were used as a
test case for the new controls. The intent was to create an improved set of regulations which would operate without additional new legislation and would require the minimum of individual, ad hoc decision making [Barnett, *Intro to Urban Design*]."
The drawings describe some of the improvements that are rewarded with bonus points in the Greenwich Street District.

The developer's reward can take the form of increased tower coverage, as well as bonus floor area.

Map of Greenwich Street Special District shows mandatory and elective improvements based on a predetermined design plan.
The zoning districts adopted for the lower Manhattan perimeter required that visual corridors not only be left open but defined by new construction, through the use of "build-to" lines.

The 1916 ordinance by no means solved all of the city's planning problems. It allowed the construction of tenement buildings with poor light conditions and segregated land uses into near mono-functional districts with the
result being parts of the city which are vibrant and others which close down after business hours. The urban fabric continued to be developed both higher and denser. It, therefore, was not unreasonable for the '61 revision to provide a mechanism, such as negotiable zoning, for the relief of congestion and excessively crowded streets. The plazas provided by incentive zoning developments or the quais-public gallerias can potentially be enjoyable urban amenities. However the '61 revision provided no means of "placing" such amenities where they are needed, other than confining their use to a district; however district boundaries too became negotiable.

The promise and problem of negotiable zoning as a design tool on a city wide basis is that it provides or allows random or accidental
yet intentional development. As mentioned previously, much of a building's form in N.Y.C. is determined by the zoning regulations it is subject to. In this respect, the building is the product of the intent of zoning - what the city asked for. However the particulars of a building - the client, the program, the architect, the degree to which it simply conforms to the zoning requirements or pushes their limits or tries to get around them, its site, the fit with its context, are all fairly random. There was no way to place a single open space in an area via incentive zoning without opening the possibility of 6th Avenue, that is a proliferation of so-called plazas in series, providing little more than expanded sidewalk without a further level of development and identity. The Seagram Building may have been the model for the '61 resolutions building/plaza relationship and its intent, but the
accident of 6th Avenue - half a dozen Seagram Buildings with their plazas unboond - is also within the possible outcomes of the translation of this desired outcome into zoning law. The formal coherence of development which resulted from the 1916 ordinance, though admittedly too bulky when it filled the maximum zoning envelope, was eroded by the 1961 resolution, which could be argued to have been at odds with the context it was proposed for. In adopting the Seagram Building as a prototype, the assumptions about good city form it held seem to be "... based upon the 'revolutionary' concepts of architecture expounded by LeCorbusier and others during the Nineteen-twenties. Their vision of the city of the future as a series of towers set in parkland does not seem to be adaptable to implementation on a lot-by-lot basis [Barnett, 1974 etc.]." In effect the layering of the
Stages in the development of the tall building in New York.

1. First Equitable Life Bldg., 1870, block
2. Second Equitable Life Bldg., 1915, tall block
3. Metropolitan Life Bldg., 1890, block
4. Singer Bldg., 1899, block
5. Metropolitan Life with tower, 1909, block with added tower
6. Singer Bldg. with tower, 1908, block with added tower
7. Woolworth Bldg., 1913, integrated block and tower
8. Seagram Bldg., 1957, tower
9. U.S. Steel Bldg., 1972, slab or tall block
modernist ethic over the existing city fabric produced built events in which new buildings pulled away from old ones, standing isolated in their plaza/parkland waiting for more towers in a park to connect to, an impure version of the modernist city waiting to grow. If the obstacles in this new city, that is, the current city, could be cleanly and quickly removed then a Corbusian future may be at hand, but it may well be without the potential for an active and human public environment the current city possesses. The current use of streets, definition of turf, and associated expectations/meaning of life in an urban environment may well be lost.

Questions of good urban form are an ideological discourse between problems of spatial form, the production of spatial form, and the society which produces spatial form.
doesn't exist in and of itself or for itself. It is a product of economic, political, social and ideological structures interacting. There is a social base to the question of good urban form, rooted in the experience -- of individuals and groups with city form. In the next section of this chapter we look at the criticisms of city planning with respect to this view of the city as more than a formal exercise.
the social critics of city planning
FIG. 35. The Boston image as derived from verbal interviews.

FIG. 36. The Boston image as derived from sketch maps.

FIG. 37. The distinctive elements of Boston.
The critics of city planning who emerged in the 1960's focused their attention on the social phenomena and networking which define and energize neighborhoods and communities. They noted city planning/planner's insensitivity to such matters. The human qualities of place, street, and city need to inform city planning and design, and should be translated into requirements/goals for the planning process.

In the 1950's Boston's city planners took a look at the city's West End and saw a slum: density was too high, physical condition of the housing stock was below their standards, open space was lacking. The West End was leveled and the new vision of the good city erected, highrise buildings sitting in open space contained. As the West End neared death Herbert Gans took a look at this "slum" and saw a viable community. The residents of this
urban village had a way of life and a vitality which simply didn't register with the city's planners. The social grouping and community institutions - church, school, social, civic and political organizations, commercial establishments, shopping streets, etc., which Gans saw mean as much to community as the physical condition of housing and proximity to open space, if not more so. We view the West End as an example of city planning at its least sensitive to the social base of urban form.

Jane Jacobs, in her poetic ballet-of-the-street analysis of New York's Greenwich Village addressed similar issues as did Gans, and actually Jacob's Death and Life of American Cities was published in 1961, four years before Gan's The Urban Villagers recounted the West End saga. The Village
CONDITION 1: Most blocks must be short; that is, streets and opportunities to turn corners must be frequent.

CONDITION 3: The district must mingle buildings that vary in age and condition, including a good proportion of old ones.

CONDITION 4: The district must have a sufficiently dense concentration of people, for whatever purpose they may be there. This includes people there because of residence.

- Jacobs

Fortunately did not suffer the fate of the West End. She brought to our attention the phenomena of neighborhood, the activities of people preparing for the day and their use of the street. The city, Jacobs contended, is a work of life, not a work of art. In her prescription for what ails city planning and development, Jacobs made reference to diversity of land-use, street and block system, and building-street relationship -- all easily within the province of the urban designer to understand, observe, manipulate or leave alone.

In books from *Image of the City* to *Site Planning* to *Theory of Good City Form*, Kevin Lynch has continued to call for sensitivity in urban planning and design to human needs and qualities in urban form. The human experience, he contends, should be the central
consideration. Recently, he has proposed five dimensions of performance and two meta-criteria by which the quality of spatial form can be measured for the humanness of its making. They are:

"1) Vitality - the degree to which the form of the settlement supports the vital functions the biological requirements and capabilities of human beings ...

2) Sense - the degree to which the settlement can be clearly perceived and mentally differentiated and structured in time and space by its residents and the degree to which that mental structure connects with their values, and concepts - the match between environment, our sensory and mental capabilities, and our cultural constructs,

3) Fit - the degree to which the form and capacity of spaces, channels, and equipment in a settlement match the pattern and quality
of actions that people customarily engage in, or want to engage in - that is, the adequacy of the behavior settings, including their adaptability to future actions,

4) **Access** - the ability to reach other persons, activities, resources, information, services, or places, including the quality and diversity of elements which can be reached,

5) **Control** - the degree to which the use and access to spaces and activities, and their creation, repair, modification, and management are controlled by those who use, work, or reside in them,

6) **Efficiency** - (a meta-criteria) the cost, in terms of other valued things, of creating and maintaining the settlement, for any given level of attainment of the environmental dimensions listed above,

7) **Justice** - (a meta-criteria) the way in
which the environmental benefits and costs are distributed among persons according to some particular principle such as equity, need, intrinsic worth, ability to pay, effort expanded, potential contribution, or power [K. Lynch, Theory of Good City Form, M.I.T. Press 1982]."

Lynch's Performance Dimensions take us from a social criticism of city planning to a prescription for evaluating urban form in social and human terms. From them, particularly Sense, Fit and Access, we can generate a set of questions to ask of the urban form proposed in the two case studied.

1. What is the primary public, people-centered environment? What/Where are the public places?
2. What is the role of Streets? How are they used? How are they detailed?

3. What is the relationship between building and building, building and street, building and person?

4. What function does existing development and pattern have in the generation of form for the new development?

Questions 1 and 2 draw upon a streets-as-the-measure-of-good-form theme, while 3 and 4 are questions exploring urban fabric/pattern issues and the relationship of building to place to pattern. The four questions will be invoked recurrently as a running dialogue throughout the two case studies.

The theme which questions 1 and 2 explore
will be further elaborated upon in the following section, The Street As Place. In so doing, our social critique of physical form planning which has moved to method of evaluating the socialness/humanness of physical form takes yet another step in exploring the interaction of form and human response.

Streets in cities serve many purposes besides carrying vehicles, and city sidewalks—the pedestrian parts of the streets—serve many purposes besides carrying pedestrians. These uses are bound up with circulation but are not identical with it and in their own right they are at least as basic as circulation to the proper workings of cities.

A city sidewalk by itself is nothing. It is an abstraction. It means something only in conjunction with the buildings and other uses that border it, or border other sidewalks very near it. The same might be said of streets, in the sense that they serve other purposes besides carrying wheeled traffic in their middles. Streets and their sidewalks, the main public places of a city, are its most vital organs. Think of a city and what comes to mind? Its streets. If a city's streets look interesting, the city looks interesting; if they look dull, the city looks dull.
The Battery Park City and 42nd Street cases both accept the street as an integral part of their developments. In the former, the street gives order to a tabula rasa site, in the latter it provides a means to hold together existing and proposed new development. In both cases Street is given its traditional form: a mono-level circulation and communication artifact. This is in contrast to projects which create interior realm and leave the street's function unaddressed - such as the 1969 plan for Battery Park City - or seek to separate pedestrians and the auto into their own mutually exclusive zones.

The street, the most public of public spaces, is a mixed bag of stimuli, possessing varied and possibly conflicting meanings. This makes the partial rejection of the street by planners and critics easy to understand and the necessity
of its acceptance seems all the more important.

When we speak of the rejection of the street, as in the traffic-free super-blocks of a Garden City or the self-contained, inward-looking Modern Movement projects such as the Prudential Center in Boston, we mean the cognitive omission of it as a place for human activities. Street, after all is plural in nature. "Part of the nature of a street is that it serves as a physical connector, a link, among various places. Another part of a street's nature is that it is more than just a link, more than simply a path. A street is framed and influenced by that which it passes through and modifies its character in response to the aforementioned [W. Benjamin and O. Canalis, "A Street in Depth: the Via Raffaello - Reformatorio Link" ILAUD '81, Language of Architecture]."
Street, seen in this fuller sense, is place as well as link. It is an urban element interactive with its context. "We thus define "street" as an element within the larger, three-dimensional communication artifact called the city: an element which, in being both place and link, supports movement, access, and local activity, an element which can serve in radically different ways as its public use boundaries refine the meaning and location of public and private places and activities [S. Anderson Streets Phases 1-2, Institute for Architecture and Urban Studies]."

The rejection of street-as-place by planners when rebuilding parts of the city leaves us with street-as-link. It leaves us with a mono-dimensional element whose sole function is movement; thus the design of street
becomes a technical exercise in efficiently accommodating traffic. Supporting human activities is left to the private realm; the public realm – the street – at best provides access to the private. We lose both a unique institution and the heart of an urban environment. Let us not, however, romanticise the street. Its reality and connotations: to be put on the street, mean-streets, street people, street life, etc., can be harsh. But likewise and conversely, the connotations of a street fair, streetscape, stoops, a cafe, a promenade, are all positive. The existence of such opposite interpretations/uses of streets are an indication of the interplay between the physical environment and human behavior. One sees physical form, be it a car or a street, from a subjective position of expectations and experiences, financial and psychological security, health, age, race,
gender, et al. Who we are affects how we interact with the street. Two people can feel quite differently about the same street.

Anderson, in Streets Phases 1-2, defines three levels of physical environment and speaks to the fit between physical form and its meaning. The levels are: the potential environment, the affective environment, and the latent environment. The potential environment is the physical environment, an environment created and altered only via physical form manipulation, a forum for human activities. The affective environment is "that version of the potential environment that is manifestly or implicitly adopted by users; the societal conception of the man-made environment ... (the) potential environment ... reinterpreted by each user, thus yielding his subjective environment
Within the same physical place, different individuals have different affective environments. The affective environment, the subjective environment which can see mean streets or streets paved with gold in the same place, can change without physical form manipulation, a changed attitude is all that is required. The latent environment is "those aspects of the potential environment that are not assimilated by society (unrealized potential, if you will). "Latency" in the environment allows for societal change without physical change. Latency can be increased (or decreased) by physical change.

Place, drawing upon the above definitions of environment, comes into being when an actor(s) is put in a physical setting. What one does in "Place" is framed by perception of place
which is in turn framed by a broader societal perception of place and the rules which should govern it. Multiple actors yield multiple affective environments of a single potential environment, implying a socio-physical interdependency of man and form, but in a non-deterministic manner, given multiple rather than singular perceptions of place. "Multiple affective environments imply no strict relationship, but rather a loose fit among physical form (potential environment), use and meaning. Within this loose fit, whatever is not realized in the affective environment is an "unrealized potential" of the environment in relation to society ... the latent environment [Anderson Streets... et al]." Place, to be versatile and flexible, needs to be designed for a broad possibility of activities. The street needs to be the primary public environment, recognized as possessed with
a broad range of potential and affective environments, lending to a better fit with more of the needs of users than a less diverse public setting.

In both the 42nd Street and Battery Park developments, the street is the primary focus activity. The proposed potential environments are similar to those possessed by the City in general; i.e. private bounded by public, street framed by building, street forming a matrix of settings. The potential environment of a shopping mall or incentive zoning amenity galleria are of a different nature. First, the latency in the environment would no doubt be decreased due to "management's" imposition of its restrictions upon those of society. Second, these potential environments would close, unlike a street. Third, an increased sense of private rather than public space may
arise from being enclosed affecting one's perception of place and thus one's affective environment.

To be good, urban form needs to exploit the publicness that streets afford. The amenities brought to the urban environment via incentive zoning have not always lived up to their promise. The CitiCorp Center may well be an asset to midtown, though it is far too inward looking, as the branch of the Bronx Botanical Garden at the IBM Tower should prove to be, but many of the interior public spaces, like that of the Olympic Tower (and there is a growing matrix of such galleria amenities in the East 50's, brought on by the office building boom) are, at best, grand corridors from one street to another, offering little activity. Life has come to such spaces by means of private concessions: salad bars,
croissant shops, et al., leased in this supposed public place. As a result the author's perception upon entering is similar to entering a private eating establishment. As public potential environments these amenities must take a back seat to the street; while a galleria amenity holds the activity generated by private concessions, cafes, shops, pedestrian movement et al., to the interior of a building, the street allows such activity to be visible and to animate the public realm.

The general point to be drawn from this glance at the study of streets is that the physical environment is interactive with human behavior. We are not disinterested about where we live and work. The potential environments with which we interact help shape our attitude about the city and the quality of life it
The physical matters. Community exists in a physical as well as cultural context. Street needs to be understood as an element in the socio-physical construct known as City; sensitivity to the quality and use of its context is essential. The distinctions between contextual design as a style and as a process will be discussed in greater depth in the 42nd Street case. The concept of contextualism has already been introduced as the external relations which the internal form and use dialogues of architecture reach out to yield urban design. Street and context form the network of public places which are the setting for human activities.
We've looked at zoning as a means to make physical form development conform with ideas of good urban form; in the next section, the implementation of regulations to this end, via a development agency, will be discussed. Physical form as a social act, interactive with human behavior has also been reviewed. Where has this brought us? Now, in response to the question, ... but What is good urban form, we can reply: an urban fabric which "... directly attends to the issues of livability ... encourages public places and a public life (and) also creates a setting which is more meaningful to the individual inhabitant and small groups [D. Appleyard & A. Jacobs "Towards an Urban Design Manifesto" U.C. Berkeley March 1980]." Such an environment should emphasize the human experience of the city; its sights, smells, sounds, glamour, grit, feel, moods, features, places, and
people. Multiple values and priorities must be taken into account. The good city must offer its best to all. Streets need to be recognized as valuable assets.

The professional and layperson must read and critique the city as a city; not a medieval hill town, a village, a suburb, a garden, or utopia. In a city people live and work in close proximity. City implies some degree of density though this need not be taken to extremes. "Density of people alone will account for the existence or non-existence of certain uses and services we find important to urban life. (T)he number and diversity of small stores and services - say groceries, bars, bakeries, laundries and cleaners, coffee shops, second-hand stores, and the like - that will be found in a city or area is in part a function of density. The via-
bility of mass transit ... is in part dependent on the density of residential areas, and in part on the size and intensity of commercial and service destinations [Appleyard & Jacobs "Towards a ..."]."

Good urban form must be communication with the forms and uses of the city. It must respond to the urban life that urban residents seek. It will not satisfy all, no place does. The good life, like good urban form, is a plural concept. Thus city planning and design need concern itself with promoting the good urban life, understanding that urban life is not suburban life is not rural life.
To the professional practitioner having a theory of good urban form is not enough, answering the question, ... but what is good urban form? is only a first step. There needs to be a way to achieve the vision of good form. Zoning, conventional - incentive - special design - we have shown, is one such implementation tool. It has had the problem of being unable to address specific urban design issues without having the intent of building regulations twisted.

Urban renewal is another implementation tool by which a city can obtain land through compulsory purchase, demolish buildings, adjust the cost of land to make desirable development which the city may want to occur, and set what ever conditions it deems necessary to the sale of land. In practice urban renewal has been abused, in theory it is a
useful tool.

The design guidelines for Battery Park City and the Times Square Redevelopment are a combination of special urban design district-like zoning used in the legal framework of city power and control afforded by urban renewal. The New York State Urban Development entity, has used its urban renewal powers to package the development guidelines in both of our case studies. The degree of site and form-specific regulation exhibited by the guidelines is both bolder and more explicit in intent than anything the city has attempted in the past in a similar vein.

Since the 1916 zoning ordinance, building form regulations have been legally bound to be equitable, every property owner in a district had the same development rights. Today,
guidelines are used when a greater degree of explicitness and public control of private development is desired.

In the two case studies "the urban design controls are a paradoxical combination of complete discretionary authority expressed as explicitness, and apparently unchangeable, series of building descriptions [Barnett ... Intro to Urban Design]." They use zoning within an urban renewal context - with which the UDC has been well-equipped to operate.

One of the many semi-autonomous state agencies spawned by the Rockefeller era in the Empire State, the UDC is a super urban-renewal agency initially headed by urban renewal czar Ed Logue. With the powers granted it by the State Legislature the UDC can in theory, and in essence, operate outside of a city's building regulations...
and approval process. It is an extreme or aggressive form of planning as-an-activity-of-a-planning-commission, outside of the mainstream of political activity and is one possible answer to the question "Where should/does planning occur?" - as an independent activity of a planning commission, by an aide to the Chief Executive, as a policy-making activity of the city council.

A look at the abilities of the UDC, the means used to control physical form development and promote a vision of the city, is in order. "The formidable powers of the (UDC) are described in broadly inclusive, positive, and permissive terms. There is the power to condemn, to clear land and to relocate displacees ... UDC, its lessees and successors in interest are specifically exempted from municipal permitting powers and certificates of occupancy
(it is) authorize(d) ... to waive local laws, ordinances, zoning codes, charters and construction regulations, substituting compliance with the state's own building construction code 'when, in the discretion of the corporation ... compliance is not feasible or practicable'... UDC and its subsidiaries are granted exemption from local property taxes on value added after acquisition ... (it can) create limited profit subsidiary corporations, enter into contracts for purchase, lease, sale or mortgage property, promulgate regulations, and issue general revenue, or project-secured bonds and notes [W.K. Reilly & S.J. Schulman, "The State Urban Development Corporation: New York's Innovation" The Urban Lawyer Summer 1969, American Bar Association]." No mechanism, however, was provided to write-down land cost, a familiar and useful renewal tool, or provide housing subsidies beyond those which
The point of all this is that the UDC is capable of executing any and all of the tasks associated with urban land development. It can legally require the urban form under its jurisdiction to be manipulated in specific ways, in compliance with the corporation's goals. The site specificity of the Battery Park City and 42nd Street design guidelines are an example of this.

It seems ironic that the chosen, and assumed most effective and flexible, way for the City to address the issues presented in these two large-scale developments is to step outside of the structure of city government. As Rockefeller was pushing the UDC legislation through the State government, opposition to it on the grounds of home-rule and municipal
integrity came from many directions, including the city government. Then Mayor John Lindsay was quoted in the N.Y. Times (which was also opposed to the legislation) of April 12, 1969, as follows: "At a time when we are trying to make democracy work in the streets of our cities, the legislature has decided that the answer is greater, more distant authority. That, in my judgment is asking for trouble [Urban Lawyer, etc.]."

Today, the City makes use of this greater and more distant authority to give itself a streamlined development process/mechanism.

A last note on the UDC would be a mention of its accomplishments to date and commitment to quality architecture and environments. Given the scope of its work the quality of it assumes great importance. In addition to Battery Park City and the 42nd Street Redevelopment, the
Urban Development Corporation: A Range of Projects

The extent of U.D.C. assistance ranges from partial investing to the lending of technical help. Figures for total value are estimated, in millions of dollars.

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Project</th>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Total Value</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>New York Convention and Exposition Center</td>
<td>West Side</td>
<td>$375.0*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>42d Street redevelopment</td>
<td>Times Square</td>
<td>1,000.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rochester Riverside Convention Center</td>
<td>Rochester</td>
<td>40.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Facade Improvement</td>
<td>Manhattan, Bronx, Brooklyn, Nassau County, Buffalo</td>
<td>6.5</td>
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<tr>
<td>Farberware renovation and expansion</td>
<td>South Bronx</td>
<td>18.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fordham Plaza</td>
<td>Fordham (Bronx)</td>
<td>45.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute (development of high-technology center)</td>
<td>Troy, N.Y.</td>
<td>65.0</td>
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<tr>
<td>Federal Archives Building conversion</td>
<td>Greenwich Village</td>
<td>52.0</td>
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<tr>
<td>Nettleton Shoe Company renovation</td>
<td>Syracuse</td>
<td>2.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South Street Seaport/Schermerhorn Row</td>
<td>Lower Manhattan</td>
<td>115.5</td>
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<tr>
<td>Carrier Dome stadium</td>
<td>Syracuse</td>
<td>28.5</td>
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<tr>
<td>Grand Hyatt Hotel</td>
<td>Midtown Manhattan</td>
<td>100.0</td>
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<tr>
<td>Albee Square shopping mall</td>
<td>Downtown Brooklyn</td>
<td>22.5</td>
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<tr>
<td>St. George Hotel renovation and conversion</td>
<td>Brooklyn Heights</td>
<td>11.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sheraton Motor Inn</td>
<td>Utica, N.Y.</td>
<td>7.5</td>
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UDC has Roosevelt Island - a 2100 unit residential development between Manhattan and Queens - to its credit and had undertaken the development of N.Y.C.'s $400 million convention center (Pei's design for it is reputed to be a landmark for convention center design), due to be completed in the mid-80's. "The UDC has ... produced (in excess of) 34,000 units of housing and other construction worth close to $300 million. Many of these projects have won awards for design excellence; the corporation received a 1974 A.I.A. citation as an outstanding client. One project, Metro North by architects Conklin and Rossant scores highest in a New York City quality survey [Charles Hoyt, "Crisis in Housing: What did the new super-agency mean to the architect", Architectural Record Oct. 1975]." In fact, the number of UDC developments which have been honored for their design and urban qualities
number over a dozen. "The UDC has come in for criticism by housing experts for its insistence on thoughtful planning and fine architectural design, showing a kind of social recidivism garbed in concern for cost cutting. (It however) was able to demonstrate that good architecture amortizes in more than just the matter of revenue return - that amortization consists also of having a quality environment that can pull people in, keep them there, and impel community participation [William Marlin, "After the Pitfall: UDC Dusts off the Debris of Default", Architectural Record Oct. 1975]."

Before we move on to the case studies, let's restatate what has been said.

The question of good urban form is essentially a question of a good public and street
environment. Buildings, streets, and the urban fabric respond to one another.

Urban form has a social base. It is created for and used by people, regardless of any other singular issues which may claim to be its cause. It needs to respond to the presence, activities, expectations, and diversity of individuals and groups.

As one means of promoting urban form development to attend to the essential urban design issues of the day, regulations can be employed and tailored to the problems at hand.
battery park
City

New York Harbor
The history of Battery Park City goes back almost two decades. We can identify five plans/schemes for the development of a new residential development on land-fill along the western edge of Lower Manhattan. Growth via land-fill is not an alien idea to the Lower Manhattan context. Between 1650 and the present, extensive landfill operations have contributed 200 acres to the current 560 acre land area of Lower Manhattan. With reach of the five schemes the commitment to this new community has held firm. But for nearly two decades the schemes for Battery Park City have been just that - plans on paper.

"Battery Park City is a paradox; it occupies one of the most spectacular and potentially valuable sites in the world, yet it has been unable to generate development activity."
(Since the early to mid '70's) its landfill has stood substantially complete, but unused. Rarely has such a development opportunity - 92 acres of vacant land immediately adjacent to downtown Manhattan - gone unheeded [Battery Park City Draft Summary Report and 1979 Master Plan, Cooper/Eckstut]."

The 1979 Master Plan prepared by Cooper/Eckstut Associates analyzes this paradox and seeks to resolve it. To put this plan in perspective we take a look at the procession of Battery Park City Plans which are the ancestors of the 1979 Plan. As mentioned earlier, the four questions developed in the Social Critics of City Planning Section will be used to measure the proposed urban environments of the five plans.
In 1963, the Downtown-Lower Manhattan Association, Inc., chaired by David Rockefeller and having such members as AT & T, Manufacturers Hanover Trust, the American Stock Exchange, Consolidated Edison, The Wall Street Journal, Irving Trust Co., First National City Bank, and the Chase Manhattan Bank, issued a report entitled *Major Improvements; Land Use, Transportation, Traffic - Lower Manhattan*. Their planning consultants were Skidmore, Owings, and Merrill. The Association contended "that commercial occupancy of the greater part of Lower Manhattan will represent the most logical and economically sound use of the land in the area, but that provision should be made for as high a proportion of residential
One such provision, consistent with this principle, was the Hudson River Landfill project; a 65 acre proposal advanced by the Department of Marine and Aviation, consisting of six lateral commercial pier slips, a hotel, 4.5 million square feet of commercial space, and 4500 apartments. The Association found the hotel and residential components of the proposal "highly desirable" in that it would stimulate more shopping outlets, service facilities, and provide advantages for those who work in the area. Lower Manhattan as an around-the-clock-living center for people was the espoused goal.

The business-oriented Association, however, objected to the commercial piers as "inappropriate" and the commercial space as "unnecessary". When this report was written Lower Manhattan had occupancy as is consistent with this principle."
witnessed the construction of "over 8 million square feet of commercial space over the last five years ... since 1950 a total of 13.5 million square feet of office space (had) been built or (was) under construction ... Further, some 16 million square feet, in existing buildings had been modernized [Major Improvements: Land Use, Transportation, Traffic - Lower Manhattan]." Why were commercial piers inappropriate or commercial space unnecessary given this context? One can only speculate that whereas residential development on the landfill site was an asset to the existing commercial establishments, commercial development was strong competition.

In any event, the Association and their planning consultants, S.O.M., did not discuss in any detail how they envisioned the development of the landfill project to proceed or what its
character would be, and why, when completed. We have only a photo-montage in the report of Lower Manhattan indicating the Association's recommended major improvements. In it, there appears to be no distinction between commercial and residential development in terms of form, scale, or siting. Though only a representation of the development in gross terms, its intent, appears clear - the landfill development formally is an island unto itself, isolated towers sitting in acres of space, community defined by project name.

This first scheme for Battery Park City, not at this point so named, represents the very essence of the Modern Movement's vision of the City. Its form is simple, sleek, abstract, and minimalist. On its 65 acre site, a land area rivaling the Wall Street Business District in size, two basic building types rise above an
undifferentiated and unarticulated horizontal plane which seems to innocently float on the Hudson River, not really addressing Lower Manhattan or the river.

The primary public environment, we must assume, is the horizontal plane, the towers clearly are, not. As a place-for-people, this vast flat slab makes no provision for its use as such. Where would one sit to eat lunch or stop to talk? Are there parks and plazas or is the plane really monolithic? What is the transition between public and private space? Is there Place or merely space?

The role of streets is simple, they have none - they do not exist, or at least none are indicated. There is, in fact, no sense of connection, pedestrian or auto, between the new development and the existing. This lack of streets is consistent with the Modernist vision
of the City. Towers were to sit in parkland, expressways innocently roamed the parkland giving access, a means to get from A to B, but they were not to invade the Tower/Park relationship.

An individual would feel lost in the urban form this scheme proposes. The open spaces are, in general, the size of entire blocks in Lower Manhattan. Perhaps one such major space would be useful, it would have to be detailed, broken down. What, however, would over half a dozen major open spaces in series be used for?

The size of the development allows the internal dialogues of architecture to apparently reach out to external relations without truly considering context. The scheme, as a single project, has an internal logic but not an external one. What is the edge condition?
The form is generated solely from a stream of design and planning theory, showing no response to its setting. Perhaps it is unfair to contend that the proposed urban form is not "good"; we could argue that the form is not urban at all. In either case, the central point is that as a response to a city of buildings, streets, parks, neighborhoods, etc., the proposed form is inappropriate. It distances itself from its setting, provides little diversity in building form, leaves space without a developed identity, and really does not explore the human experience of inhabiting Place.

The concept of a major landfill development on the Hudson River side of Lower Manhattan is carried through all five plans. The form and sponsors of development are the factors which change and which we study. The first plan was
a combination of the business community's inventory of development activity or proposals in the Wall Street area and a further expression of their desire to see development continue to serve their interest.

The second plan follows up on the Department of Marine and Aviation's landfill proposal, supported for the most part by the Downtown-Lower Manhattan Association, keeping it as a mixed-use development.

The second plan, of early 1966, was a State initiated action. Sponsored by Governor Nelson Rockefeller, the plan was prepared by Wallace K. Harrison and proposed "a surprisingly complete community for 63000 people to be built on "air rights" over the Hudson River ... the scheme is a two-level one, with major buildings and parks, and pedestrians on the
upper surface; light industrial, automobile, and garage areas are below under a concrete platform.

Landfill for the project will comprise some 98 acres [Architectural Record July '66, "The Changing Job To Be Done", Herbert L. Smith, Jr.]. The concept of a 24-hour, multi-function community "to inject vitality into the night and weekend vacuum of the Wall Street area" remained a primary goal.

The second plan for Battery Park City is in some respects the reformed child of the Radiant City. It still exhibits a similar "conceived and executed with a single pattern (cookie cutter)" mentality as the first plan: similar towers march one after another down the site. There is, however, another level of thought in this scheme as represented by the smaller scale, various shapes, buildings
Most of the facilities needed to form a complete community are included in this big scheme by Wallace K. Harrison for Battery Park City in Manhattan. Sponsored by Governor Nelson Rockefeller, the project would be built on fill over the Hudson River.

between the towers, the indication of building/land use and planted areas. This is the reform, the relationship between buildings and setting in recognition of the necessity for varying degrees of openness and size of public space. The texture of buildings and space defines smaller groupings of built form which come together to compose the whole.

There are still no streets indicated, they are not the primary public place. Streets are recognized in that vehicular access points disappear into the lower deck of this two-deck scheme. The streets that exist in Lower Manhattan are allowed to approach Battery Park City, then they are devoured. The upper deck is the primary public space; public if you are a pedestrian, inaccessible if you are in a car. The length-wise promenade is almost a main-street for the development - a mainwalk -
but without the romantic landscape one associates with the car-free pedestrian environment, or even a grand tree-lined boulevard. We move from cluster to cluster, use to use, along this main-walk but the public place, by virtue of being isolated from the existing network of public space(s), that is, the street pattern one level below, becomes a quasi-private terrace and the added level of thought and articulation of the built form relationships simply looks onto Lower Manhattan, connecting to it only visually, and from a safe distance.

Little is published on this plan, at least not in the form Harrison set down; the fourth plan is also, partially, a state effort and Harrison was also involved with its planning, so there may be some design considerations carried over, but the form of the fourth plan is clearly
different than that of the second. There are two points to remember: 1) Unlike the first plan, which was the business community's recommendation for physical improvement, this plan is a State government-initiated proposal, sponsored by a strong Governor who would, in three years, give birth to the powerful development entity - the New York State urban Development Corporation. The UDC's powers and record has already been discussed. 2) This 1966 plan makes a far more sincere attempt at organizing the urban form of a new community than does the first, as evidenced by its greater attention to texture and detail.

In the midst of the proposal to develop Battery Park City as an autonomous State effort, the City of New York issued its plan for future development in Lower Manhattan,
The Lower Manhattan Plan. It addresses not only what is to be developed but also the guiding urban design principles to be followed. In this respect, the City has begun to look at the questions of formal relationship of old and new development, something the first two Battery Park City plans did not.

PLAN 3 - 1966, Lower Manhattan Plan
Sponsor: City of New York Planning Commission, Wallace, McHarg, Roberts, & Todd/Whittlesey, Conklin & Roussant proposal

The third plan, also issued in 1966 (perhaps an indication of contending interest around this waterfront development) is a City-sponsored effort. The Battery Park City plan is part of a general strategy for the growth of Lower Manhattan. The plan, by Wallace, McHarg, Roberts, and Todd/Whittlesey, Conklin and Roussant, proposed a process/approach which put development activity within the framework of problem statements, goals, and guiding principles. The Battery Park City
site becomes a part of a nearly continuous Waterfront development.

"The plan begins with an analysis of the inner city: historic downtown, the financial district, with its great canyons, its dense network of subway lines, its position in the national economy. Long-term goals are outlined for this core, as well as the surrounding areas. Areas of growth and change are demarcated and formed into a coordinated pattern in which each improvement has a related and multiplying effect ... . Proposals for the new Waterfront are set within the context of this analysis: each link in the conceptual plan - pedestrian routes, waterfront plazas, the peripheral highway, the housing and office groupings - are all related to the core, as well as to each other [The Lower Manhattan Plan: Summary Report, prepared for the N.Y.C. Planning Commission 1966]." Problems are
separated into three categories: 1) Function, 2) Environment, and 3) Access and Movement. The problems of function concentrate on the decrease in Lower Manhattan employment in spite of office expansion and the lack of diversity in the area and thus its inability to compete with Midtown locations. The problems of environment focus on the peripheral and waterfront areas, pointing to the remnants of once-thriving establishments (e.g. the fruit and fish market, obsolete piers, the elevated expressway, and poorly organized subway stations as the cause of an "uncongenial" atmosphere. Access and movement problems for the most part center on the conflict between the area's narrow streets as "natural pedestrian ways" and the necessity of their handling heavy vehicular traffic.
The major goal of the plan was the strengthening of the business core "... by providing for prime office expansion, improving its working environment, diversify its business life - reducing its vulnerability to the decisions of a single institution, improving internal transportation, and enhancing the city's economic and tax base [Lower Manhattan Plan et al]." Three other goals which, once again, support the residential waterfront development are: a) the provision of a "powerful magnet for housing in the City's core area, b) the introduction of new housing in the vicinity of major existing and expanding employment centers and c) "to take maximum advantage of the great beauty of the downtown's waterfront and its striking physical plant."

The plan calls for the development of "a downtown waterfront residential community of
80000 to 100000 people ... the new community is to be composed of six interconnected development areas ("neighborhoods") of 10000 - 15000 people, each centering around waterfront plazas at the ends of the major downtown streets and axes: Wall, Broad, Chambers, Fulton, the World Trade Center ... These plazas will form "windows on the waterfront", broad openings into the very heart of the city ... each development district (or "neighborhood") will contain a mixture of housing at the water's edge and offices next to the existing business core [Lower Manhattan Plan]."

The analysis for and form of the third plan for Battery Park City, now a part of an overall strategy for development in Lower Manhattan, is the first to ask questions about building, street, and pattern relationships. The Waterfront development along the edge
of the island is an extension of the uses
and pattern of development in the financial/
civic core. Although it remains a two-deck
scheme, the new development addresses setting,
new context, and the waterfront. Streets as
 carriers of cars and people is still lacking.
Cars, again, are only allowed to occupy the
lower level of the development. The public
environment remains a somewhat private terrace,
mimicking a street pattern. However, the con-
nections from the core to the waterfront, the
extension of old into new, begins to open up
this upper terrace and bestow it with a less
removed feeling, thus old and new are bridged,
not separated.

The proposed buildings in general recognize
their dual relationship to setting and inter-
vention. They face the river, existing
buildings across-the-street, and the plazas
and paths which form the new public environment. There is a sense of neighborhoods, at least defined in physical terms. The parts of the proposed form are understandable and suggest larger relationships without pushing the scheme to the extent of being a single "project". There is a sense of a wellthought out, diverse exterior environment. Most of all, there is a sense of dialogue between context and intervention.

Although the site plan for the development is typical of master plans, i.e. an illustration of what the development should/will/would look like when complete, the plan's report does recommend that the City put in place a development agency "with broad powers to carry out the major elements of the plan", which would establish the basic form, sequence, and control of the development projects. In the
next two plans the Battery Park City
Authority and the UDC serve such functions.
Implementation becomes part of the develop-
ment plan and strategy.

The Lower Manhattan Districts, discussed
earlier in the Framework section, as one of
the products of the Urban Design Group's use
of negotiable zoning to achieve urban design
goals, are not a plan for Battery Park City,
but rather the most complex of N.Y.C.'s special
design zoning districts. They are related to
the third plan in that they were designed to
transform the Lower Manhattan Plan's intent
into zoning law; "while the Lower Manhattan
Plan was expressed in the traditional illus-
trative site drawing ... the special districts
undertook to identify the essential design
elements and express them in legal language.
These design elements were defined as:
Design Continuity, Visual Corridors, and Visual Permeability ... Based on these concepts, a text and illustrative drawings were devised to control the essential aspects of the new building without prescribing the design of buildings ... The City government seeks to define only those elements of concern to the public, leaving the developer to operate at will within these clearly stated constraints ... The elements of the plan are tied back into the pre-existing fabric of Lower Manhattan [J. Barnett, Introduction to Urban Design]."

With these zoning controls augmenting the Lower Manhattan Plan, achieving its vision of improved urban form becomes structured, general, and understandable. But then comes forth the fourth plan.
The fourth Battery Park City Plan by Harrison and Abramovitz (Harrison prepared the second plan), Conklin and Rossant (Architects and Planners associated with the third plan), and Johnson/Burgee, is a later, 1969 version of the third plan. It is a joint City and State venture which focuses, again, on the 91-92 acre land fill site, now known as Battery Park City. The scheme proposed 19000 apartments for 55000 residents - one third of them to be subsidized - and 5 million square feet of office space to generate 35000 new jobs.

"The land has been divided into two principal parts ... The southernmost portion (ten acres) for the ... office space (and) the remainder (for) high density residential (development) including shops, plazas, greens, coves, and an esplanade along the river's edge,
Battery Park City: A proposal for new housing, new jobs, and new land ... perhaps a new kind of urban life

[Architectural Record June 1969 "Battery Park City: A Proposal"]. The total cost was estimated at over $1 billion with cost to the city being $100 million for depressing the Westside Highway, and projected revenue to the city between $25 and $35 million annually. The early 1980's was the slated completion date. It wasn't.

The form of the '69 plan is rigider, less integrated into the existing, than the third plan, the Lower Manhattan plan. Like the second plan, Harrison's, it takes the southern tip of the site to concentrate its office space onto isolated "pods". The proposed "City" works as a single "Building", its core a shopping and circulation spine/mall running the length of the site - pedestrian activity drawn into the building-as-city and isolated from Lower Manhattan's core. It is not a
series of neighborhoods. In 1973 the scheme was modified in response to financial and market conditions. "The spine was shortened and the multiple uses along it simplified. The housing was moved onto pods, and the shopping center became a separate, though connected, unit. The office buildings (remained) to the southern end of the site [Battery Park City Draft Summary Report and 1979 Master Plan]." One of the housing pods was constructed, to keep the Battery Park City Authority financially afloat, but executing the entire plan was given up on.

Although the 1969 plan is a version of the 1966 (Plan 3) Lower Manhattan Plan, which takes on part of the proposed waterfront development, it violates the '66 plan in many respects. Mostly, it doesn't fully respect the "essential design elements" -
design continuity, visual corridors, visual permeability - of the Lower Manhattan Districts which were designed to translate the '66 plan's intent into zoning law. (This probably is due to two factors: 1) as a partial State effort the 1969 Plan did not have to obey the City's zoning law, and 2) there was room in the zoning laws translation of the third plan's intent to interpret the "essential design elements" and degree of compliance with them). The '69 plan treats the site as a single building/project with an internal logic which sets it apart from the pre-existing context. It, like the plans before it, is a multi-level deck scheme - for service, parking, and shops - and thus effectively cuts the new places for pedestrian activity and the waterfront - its new plazas, parks, and esplanade - from the Lower Manhattan core,
which, since 1963, the waterfront development was intended to reinforce. It isn't clear if the primary public environment is intended to be the Waterfront esplanade and plazas or the shopping and circulation mall/spine. Clearly streets do not serve this function. Although the Lower Manhattan Plan, Plan 3, also proposed a two-level car free scheme for Battery Park City, it did, as mentioned before, begin to mimic them and open up the new urban development to the street. Instead of building upon this theme, the 1969 plan, Plan 4, ignores it; its rigid wall of development serves to disconnect rather than connect the waterfront pedestrian amenities from the Lower Manhattan core.

The first plan for Battery Park City structured the development as an isolated building event, a single-minded project. The fourth plan
conceives of the development as a single structure. Buildings related to each other in a tight all too literally formal sense. The general pattern of development which results from this rigid building to building relationship sets this megastructure apart from its setting as much as the First Plan's pure, sleek and minimalist ethic set it apart.

As a megastructure, the new development does not pick up on any cues from the existing urban fabric. Building to street relationships do not exist because there are no streets, building to context relationships do not exist because the development reflects solely on the internal logic and order it creates, and there are no neighborhoods because "neighborhood" is not contained by four walls. The fourth plan takes a step backwards from the
context-sensitive foundation laid down by
the Lower Manhattan Plan (Plan 3).

The problems of the 1969 plan set the stage
for the current 1979, Cooper/Eckstut plan.
In their review of the 1969 plan Cooper/
Eckstut examined the real and perceived
problems associated with the '69 plan and
thus hampered development. The "real"
problems are: 1) Market uncertainty,
2) Overly complicated planning and develop-
ment controls, and 3) Questions as to the
financial stability of the Battery Park
City Authority. During the mid-1970's
Lower Manhattan experienced a glut of
commercial office space and had a weak
residential market. "During this period of
uncertainty, the City's large developers
were unwilling to build in Battery Park
City. These developers, though few in
number, are influential in the construction of high-rise, large-scale properties that the Master plan called for [1979 Master Plan Draft Summary Report, Cooper/Eckstut]." Problems arose with the development controls and controlling agencies. By law, the Battery Park City Authority must have all of its major expenditures approved by the State's Financial Control Board. This is a possible source of delays in appropriations. In addition, the Lower Manhattan Special Zoning Districts, which cover the site, is administered by the City Planning Commission and Director of City Planning. The multiple approvals needed may also be a possible source of delay.

"As the Authority began to negotiate with developers, difficulties arose with the special zoning district provisions. The prescribed elevated pedestrian system proved
cumbersome and expensive. The pedestrian connections and overhead bridges only worked when linked to other sections of the development. The plan was clearly not geared to an incremental building program scheduled to last more than a decade. Most importantly, the District's rigid requirements encouraged developers to propose buildings that met the requirements in the most literal way. The design quality suffered. The regulations caused developers to give first priority to minimizing their risks, and the broader design considerations were lost [Battery Park City Draft Summary Report and 1979 Master Plan]." 

The Authority, which depended on the revenue from development activity to cover the debt service on its bond issues and administrative expenses, was put in a position where it was unable to meet its financial obligations,
due to the lack of development activity.

"Since the provision of infrastructure to support development has to be carried out by the Authority, private developers required complete confidence in the ability of the Authority to finance such improvements [...Draft Summary Report and 1979 Master Plan]."

The "perceived" development problems are in part out-growths of the "real" problems. They are: 1) Lack of assurance about the timely provision of infrastructure, 2) Uncertainty about Westway and, 3) Lack of construction by an initial developer.

As mentioned above, the Authority's shaky financial picture raised questions as to its ability to provide infrastructure for the '69 megastructure scheme when needed. As a megastructure, much of the internal circulation
space, e.g. the spine, became public space and infrastructure for private development, the way a new road would be, and thus an item of public expense.

"The state of uncertainty that surrounds Westway (the depressed expressway to replace the deteriorated West Side Highway) has created doubts about future access to Battery Park City. One doubt relates to access to and from Battery Park City if Westway is not built. Another doubt concerns the potential impact on Battery Park City during the construction period if Westway is built [1979 Master Plan]."

Finally, as with many large-scale projects, no developer wanted to be first on an unbuilt uncertain site, especially with the economy in a state of recession.
Comprehensive City project (Mike Mitchell and Dave Boutwell, 1969). If the idea of a single building stretching right across North America now looks ludicrous or - worse - old-fashioned, it is the more important to remember that this kind of proposition was in fashion and credible less than a decade ago, at least as a 'vision'. Nor was it alone: by that date the Austrian Raimund Abraham had already proposed a structure covering the entire surface of the globe!

The 1969 plan is a product of its time. It comes at the beginning of a period of transition in thinking about the city, society, and city building. The urban design concepts in good currency were framed by a booming expansion-oriented can-do economy and mind-set. 20/20 hindsight shows us that this economic prosperity was about to change as we entered the transition period - the 70's - but in the late 60's, when this plan was produced, we could still conceive of building bigger and better. New York was "Fun City".

As a product of its time, Battery Park City as a single building - a framework of retail, commercial, and residential uses - a mega-structure, should not be looked at simply as a rigid costly scheme, the product of architectural and planning ambition. To do so would be to forget the complexity of its
context, its time. "The megastructure ... symbolized the libertarian aspirations of a whole post-Beatles generation. Cities, as found in real life or envisioned in conventional town planning wisdom, were perceived to be too lumberingly unmanageable to satisfy the demands of what was described 'the Now Generation'. Why they wanted was 'instant city', and although megastructure proved incapable of delivering it fast enough, it had seemed - as of 1964 - that it might [R. Banham, Megastructure: Urban Futures of the Recent Past, 1976 Thames & Hudson, London]."

Megastructure can be seen as the Modern Movement's vision of the city in the 60's. "As a way of imposing a form of order on 'the chaos of our cities' it was an invention of architects, whatever other tides of opinion
appeared to support it; and it was finally abandoned by them because it offered to generate a form of order that they themselves could not manage [R. Banham, Megastructure...]"

The context of the sixties both nurtured and attacked the permissive promise of instant/compact/plug-in/flexible city. Megastructure was an interpretation of the mood of the "now generation". But, the management and capital investment required to realize megastructure linked the concept too closely with "the establishment", the antithesis of the "now generation".

"Megastructure, almost by definition, would mean the destruction or overshadowing of small-scale urban environments; those who had just rediscovered "community" in the slums would fear megastructure as much as any other
Walking City project (Ron Herron and Brian Harvey of Archigram, 1963). Most celebrated of early Archigram projects, largely because of the alarm caused among the older planning Establishment by the thought of 'elements of the capital city' being put on legs and set to roam the world. Their location here in the East River, with the towers of Manhattan in the background, suggests a deliberate challenge to older visions of the future — but it was always dangerous to take Archigram too seriously, or at apparent face value.

kind of large-scale renewal programme...

For the flower children, the drop-outs of the desert communes, the urban guerrillas, the community activist, the politicized squatters, the Black Panthers, the Middle-Class amenitarians and the historical conservationists, ... the art-school radicals, and the participants in ... street democracies. Megastructure was almost a perfect symbol of liberal-capitalist oppression. It was condemned almost before it had a chance to happen [R. Banham, Megastructure ...]."

Given this changing social climate could commitment to the '69 plan's Megastructure have held firm for over a decade to see it through? Given this changing social climate, is it a wonder that the fifth, 1979, plan for Battery Park City goes back to the contextual aspirations of the 1966 Lower Manhattan Plan?
Changes Since 1969
The fifth and current Battery Park City plan is a cooperative effort between the U.D.C., The Battery Park City Authority, New York City, and New York State. The UDC acquired title to the landfill site, in late 1979, through the use of its power of eminent domain. This was done in cooperation with the City, which until this point owned the site.

The Battery Park City Authority, now a subsidiary of the UDC and having the same Chief Executive Officer, has leased the site from the UDC and is required to develop it in compliance with the new, 1979, Master Plan prepared by Cooper/Eckstut. The City is given the right to re-acquire the development area within 18 months of notice of the date upon which all notes, bonds, and other indebtedness of BPCA and advances made by New York to BPCA
are repaid, subject to existing leases, tenancies, etc. The Governor, Hugh Carey, and Mayor, Ed Kock, are to propose and support legislation to make an $8 million fund available to BPCA bondholders for amortization of outstanding BPCA obligations. The Authority is given the power to reduce ground-rent and in-lieu-of-real property tax payments as incentives for commercial development.

The 1979 Plan for Battery Park City calls for the development of: a maximum of 6 million square feet of office and commercial space, 16,000 apartment units, and 65 acres of open space ranging from public right-of-ways to parks, building courtyards, and esplanades at a projected cost of $53,200,000 in 1979 dollars.

In this fifth/Cooper/Eckstut/1979 plan, design, and development guidelines are used to control
the generation of the overall pattern of development, map open spaces, locate structures, control building form, and develop a detailed street environment. The general pattern of development of the '79 plan calls for a system of streets and blocks consistent and continuous with the existing level and grid pattern of the immediate area as a structure for development. Streets are the "spine" of activity and movement. Buildings are to occupy locations on these blocks and are regulated in their form by near-conventional, though site-specific, bulk controls. The building-as-city concept is rejected in favor of a series of smaller development areas, an idea the Lower Manhattan plan advances, by various architects and developers. The street system is the framework in which development occurs and human activity takes place, as the 1811 plan for Manhattan set the pattern for
the City's development to date.

Open space occupies close to 70% of the site but it is broken down to a familiar urban scale; special outdoor places, arcaded streets, parks, waterfront coves, are created which buildings enclose and reinforce: attention is given to access points to retail and residential uses, the location of building lobbies, planting, and street-wall dimensions and character.

The basic image of the plan is clear, the best that New York has to offer in buildings and streets serve as a model for designing this addition to the city. The use of zoning regulation, building height restrictions, build-to lines, setbacks, in conjunction with urban renewal mapping of streets, parks, and arcades, has allowed the Cooper/Eckstut plan
to directly address the site and location specific design issues of the development. Clearly the design approach of the 1979 plan best answers the four questions asked in this thesis of the proposed Battery Park plans. The street is the primary public environment, it holds the development together. As an organizing element, both in terms of urban form and development phasing, this thoughtful comment on and replication of the Lower Manhattan street pattern is certainly a less expensive, more flexible form of infrastructure than what was proposed in the 1969 plan (Plan 4). Finally we have a plan which gives the street its multiple purpose, link, access to place, and place. Its form and place in the urban environment is consistent with our expectations of it from experiences in the City. Context and consistency are key words in the
In fact, it proves interesting to note what other key words and phrases are used, in terms of their physical form and urban theory implications. "The (1979) Master plan takes as its theme the acceptance of all that is desirable about New York's basic pattern of development." Implicit in this theme is a contextual approach to urban design. Pattern and grid are recognized as generators of urban form. These form generators are "extended" to achieve a development that is a part of a whole. This extension of pattern and grid will "easily integrate its building forms with adjacent area's existing development". The extension and integration of the existing and the proposed should yield a "recognizable and more understandable form". Basic circulation access should "emphasize the ground level". "Visual corridors connect" the pedestrian, the building, the new, the
existing, the context. "Battery Park City should reproduce and improve 'what is best about New York's neighborhoods ... neighborhoods being the product of 'incremental development' ... having ... 'intense mixture of land uses, special character, small scale spaces, and intimate texture."

We have in the 1979 plan an approach to urban design which roots itself in an existing context, investigates/reads its structure, searches for strengths and proposes to act in a way familiar to the existing context. Like the Lower Manhattan Plan, the '79 plan continues the pattern and forms in the context into the intervention. The major public and pedestrian realm is the street or the waterfront amenities. Sense of place is structured in a similar fashion in the intervention as in the context: by street relating
to building relating to block. There is a sense of continuity of pattern and access. The building/street relationship allows for a familiar use and control of street-as-place. The principles of the '79 plan can provide for a more sensitive plan, a site specific response, than can those of the '60's. Today we contend that context is essential to architecture and planning. We (should) fault the Modern Movement City Planning, or the 1969 Plan not for their vision, for without vision where are we, but for the exclusion in their vision of the complexity of context.

One can question the degree to which an urban environment designed in a contextual manner can avoid the flaws of its context. We can ask this of the '79 plan, in particular to its allocation of land-use and its scale of development/buildings.
The concept diagram shows that the development is basically a commercial core flanked by two residential areas. Despite its praise for the intense and varied/mixed land-use offered in New York's neighborhoods (Greenwich Village, Brooklyn Heights, and the Upper East Side are cited as examples), the '79 plan segregates the residential and commercial/retail uses to their own "neighborhoods". A closer look at the Lower Manhattan Context reveals a possible influence - the World Trade Center.

Battery Park City's commercial core seeks to relate to the Trade Center, thus its location as directly opposite. The trade center is essentially a commercial super-block. It possesses none of the qualities the '79 plan espouses, yet its influence is felt in the '79 plans proposal for the commercial center. The clearest sign of this influence is the
fact that a commercial center is proposed. Why couldn't there be several smaller commercial areas? Why couldn't commercial activity occur along a "main street"? Why couldn't there be the mix of land-uses the plan in theory admires? Clearly to do so would be to propose the exact opposite of the World Trade Center, but isn't this what the plan has as its intent?

Given a commercial core, why is it a super-block? Granted, it isn't a super-block which is insensitive to its context, but why is there a need to create an isolated commercial island which cannot be penetrated by car? Why should the two residential areas be separated in such a fashion? Neither midtown nor Lower Manhattan are super-blocks but they are, nonetheless, major commercial centers. Why couldn't Battery Park City's commercial
The actual design for the commercial core of Battery Park City. Cesar Pelli is the architect for Olympia & York Properties. Above: the whole complex as it will be seen from the Hudson River with the World Trade Center towers in the background.
Given a commercial center which takes the form of a super-block, why are the proposed structures the size of entire blocks in the surrounding area? They are huge and their size does not seem warranted given that there is 13 acres of open site on which to array them. Don't they violate their context? Do they accept and reproduce the best or the worst in the context?

In context there are conflicts. There are developments/buildings/events which go counter to the majority. We cannot of course assume that the majority of anything is necessarily "correct", the exceptions may well be the best that context has to offer. But, in a specific case, if we contend that positive urban qualities are in the majority, then qualities
counter to these should not be "extended and integrated" into the intervention.

Ideas in good currency are not cure-alls. They do not replace thought. Although we may agree that the Lower Manhattan Plans initial contextual concerns which was later picked up by the 1979 plan is indeed an appropriate way to intervene, physically, in the city, the acceptance of context without thought is as much a fault as its rejection without reason.

Throughout the procession of plans for Battery Park City the changes in the proposed urban form has been the focus of our attention. From this examination of physical form we have commented on the implicit urban design ethic. Three basic city planning approaches are evident: The self-contained Modern City,
The Megastructure, and the Extension of existing setting into intervention. The first two plans are variations on the minimalist modern city, the third and fifth plans fall into the third, contextual category, and the fourth plan stands alone as the only attempt at a true megastructure.

The first four plans were conceived in a time of optimism - Watergate and Vietnam were not yet household words, the age of Camelot lingered on, the economy was booming, we had the confidence to build "bigger and better", as the saying goes. The '69 plan comes near the end of this era. As the sixties gave way to the seventies, a booming economy gave way to recession, building activity in the city came to a near halt, N.Y.C. flirted with bankruptcy opposition to the war mounted, and the White House was scandalized. The mind-set of
American society experienced changes felt by professionals and non-professionals alike. To the City/planner, the plurality of public interests was formally recognized as a part of the planning process. Advocates for the rights of the under-represented gained support. Community and neighborhood re-emerged as participants in the planning process.

The urban form changes exhibited by the procession of Battery Park City plans suggests a growing sensitivity to the public environment and existing development, greater attention to implementation means, and a more sophisticated use of public control of private development. Planning a part of the city is a complex undertaking; appropriately enough, the plans become more complex with each successive iteration - the fourth plan
pushes formal complexity or at least rigidity to an extreme and in so doing ignores the complexity of relationships with its setting.

From 1963 to 1979, the schemes for Battery Park City have been a design inquiry into the planning of a city. The driving force behind this inquiry is the dialogue amongst proposed intervention, means of achieving the new urban vision, and evolving urban design theory. It has been, and is, a learning experience for the city planning profession and students of the city. The new direction taken by Cooper/Eckstut in the fifth, 1979, Battery Park City plan is further developed in their plan for the redevelopment of Times Square. In that proposal, which we examine next, the new direction in urban design in N.Y.C. is brought up to date.
The purpose of the 42nd Street Redevelopment is self-explanatory. Times Square is synonymous with entertainment and tourism in New York City. Worldwide, along with the Manhattan skyline, it is the image and signature of the city. Times Square and 42nd Street have also become synonymous with crime and pornography. As a place for business or tourism, the area is currently less than attractive. Its potential however is great; there are of course the theaters and restaurants of Broadway; there is the ease of access provided by the numerous subway lines in the area as well as the Port Authority Bus Terminal, Grand Central Station, and Penn Central Station; there is a growing amount of office development around it, and a gigantic convention center being constructed just blocks away. With a joint City/State (via the UDC) effort, a major intervention
is proposed for the area to stimulate development and realize its great potential. The 42nd Street case doesn't have a history as long as that of Battery Park City's, nor a procession of plans leading to the present. Its sole and direct ancestor is the "City at 42nd Street", a plan/study executed by Richard Weinstein (a former director of N.Y.C.'s Urban Design Group), Donald Elliott, Davis Brody & Associates, and Jaquelin T. Robertson. The current plan, by Cooper/Eckstut, "accepts most of the original design concept, but translated it into a series of explicit descriptions of building shapes, elevator cores, facing materials - in other words, almost to the level of detail that would be described in an architectural contract as the schematic phase of design [Barnett ... Intro to etc."]."
Model of the original design concept for the 42nd Street redevelopment, made under the direction of Richard Weinstein and Donald Elliott. Urban design by Davis Brody & Associates and Jaquelin T. Robertson.
The history of Battery Park City is that of a progression of plans which, in the end, seek to control the public-oriented aspects of the development without designing the buildings past the stipulation of bulk, setbacks and arcades. In the 42nd Street case design of buildings also falls into the realm of the public's concern; architectural design becomes development requirements. The redevelopment proposal calls for the development of up to 7 million square feet of new office and commercial space, the improvement of the numerous subway stations in the Times Square area, and the renovation and re-use of nine theaters. "The design guidelines, which serve as a framework for developers ... are intended to keep 42nd Street and Times Square a vibrant and public space. Diversity in ground floor retail space, directly visible and accessible from the street is
required. Designed to frame the public spaces to Times Square and 42nd Street through bulk, height, and setback requirements, the guidelines will coordinate the development of separate buildings and assure an integrated urban approach [UDC Press Release, "Governor Carey and Mayor Kock release a request for proposals for the redevelopment of the 42nd Street/Times Square Area", Thurs. 6/4/81]."

The most striking feature of the design guidelines is their translation of a contextual design/planning ethic into what appears to be a design proposal rather than guidelines. In these tightly crafted guidelines we see the UDC's ability to impose its own building regulations used boldly and creatively. On any parcel in the development site, the allowed building envelope is described in detail. For example, if we look at the office structures
proposed for the Times Square intersection, the intended outcome is: "... the design of the office building group at the southern end of Times Square shall give special emphasis to the proportions of the building facing Times Square and shall incorporate prominent features in their exterior treatment of highlight corners, edges, and roof tops visible from Times Square [42nd Street Development Project, Design Guidelines, Special Features Supplement]."

As a statement, there is room to interpret the desired outcome. This is often the case if we seek to achieve a physical/visual result using solely text. However these guidelines go beyond a statement of intent to a fine-tuned series of bulk and elevation controls which both sculpt and give image to the buildings.
The bulk controls "have been established to enhance the pedestrian environment, take advantage of prominent and highly visible locations along the street, and to provide appropriate transitions between preserved buildings and adjacent new development ... there are typically no coverage requirements, rather, coverage is treated indirectly through control of street walls, setbacks, and building heights; ... street walls, particularly in the mid-block, are the key to maintaining the low-rise character of the street. The articulation of those walls can also reinforce important height relationships with surrounding buildings, capitalize on highly visible locations, and break down the size of larger building surfaces ... The height of new buildings is controlled to ensure the integrated development of separate buildings; ... New developments should avoid
scale conflicts with adjacent buildings ...
where the height of buildings change at the
boundary between sites, the street height
wall of the building to be preserved shall be
continued for 30 linear feet into the new
development. This will ensure continuity and
a sufficient transition to the smaller scale
of the mid-block [42nd Street Development
Project, Design Guidelines]."

The bulk controls seem akin to end requirements
or performance standards which yield the basic
physical form configuration of the development.
This configuration emphasizes three levels;
the street-as-place/the pedestrian level, the
Times Square zone of prominent buildings and
views within the square, and the city-wide
scale of the skyline. To enhance the building
configuration from the bulk controls, Special
design features - elevation controls - are
layered over the bulk requirements.
Together the two seek to produce a New York art deco-ish type of skyscraper, occupying a middle ground between N.Y.C.'s landmark early skyscrapers and the curtain-wall structures currently erected.

"Several principles underlie the special features controls: 1) Incorporation of changes of scale in order to highlight the most prominent building faces visible from Times Square, to vary wall surfaces and to provide appropriate transitions from avenue developments (where bulk is concentrated) to mid-block theaters, 2) Diversity and contrast in the use of materials, colors, and finishes to develop such scale changes, to prevent a monolithic appearance in any of the buildings, to emphasize building elements such as entrances, retail spaces, public
circulation areas, or other prominent parts of buildings, to achieve visual variety along the street, 3) Greater transparency of glass surfaces near the street level, than on upper floors to maximize visibility of activities from the street, 5) Incorporation of prominent signage and dramatic lighting techniques in order to maintain the 'bright lights' character of the street, 5) Use of reflective or highly polished surface materials in order to enliven the daytime environment of the street, and 6) Retention and restoration of historic masonry facades as places of special emphasis along the street  [42nd Street ... Special Design Suppl.,]." The concept of contextual design plays a more central role in the 42nd Street case than it does in Battery Park City. In the latter, the problem posed was that of addition to an urban fabric, the former asks for a method of intervening
within the fabric of a city. Although the site of the 42nd Street proposal, 13 acres, is only 14% of the 92 acre Battery Park site, it is 13 acres in the very heart of the city, having the potential of severely affecting, in a positive or negative way, a physical setting important to the city. Sensitivity to context is demanded if good urban form is to result. The proposed guidelines exhibit such sensitivity, from its recognition of the site as three places - the dense, active, visible 7th Avenue-Broadway intersection with 42nd Street, the low-rise, mid-block theaters which give the area its night life, and the 8th Avenue corridor dominated by the Port Authority Bus Terminal - to the balance between new construction and renovation and preservation.

Contextual design today can probably be put
into two categories: 1) Contextual design as a process which seeks to mimic the form, scale, texture, and aura of its environs or,
2) Contextual design as the expression of an historicist impulse to recapture the vocabulary of forms rejected by the modern movement. The first strand produces buildings which seek to fit into their context. It recognizes the location-specific nature of a site. The second strand produces buildings in context with a stream of architectural theory and forms, but not necessarily, the context of the site. Although there may be similar intent in the two strands, the second category of contextual design, i.e. Context as Style, can easily be at odds with its context if the context in question is not within the vocabulary of forms in vogue.

A local case of contextual-design-as-style
is One Seaport Plaza, advertised in the New York Times as New York's first contextual office building. The context is the South Street Seaport, a collection of low-rise buildings circa early 1800's and the focus of one of the lower Manhattan waterfront developments set forth by the same strategy which proposed Battery Park City. The so-called contextual office building is a 34-storey, very modern structure with strip windows. The supposed contextual part of the building is the east facade which faces the seaport buildings and, in response to them, changes from strip windows to individual ones - 34 stories of individual windows. "The fact of the matter is ... it is a big, modern office building. There is real reason to question whether any 34-storey tower, no matter how thoughtfully designed, can be fully 'in context' with a group of
small and fairly delicate 19th century buildings. But to claim that this building is contextual architecture is to cheapen that valuable and important concept [P. Goldberger, "When Architect's Labels Don't Mean What They Say", N.Y. Times Magazine]."

Arguments can be made against contextualism or for limited contextualism. My critique of the World Trade Center's influence on the commercial core of Battery Park City can be seen as such an argument. One can also propose a non-contextual intervention for polemical purposes, to question the status quo of context. It is clear however that a project the scale of the 42nd Street redevelopment, in a location as landmark, in all senses of the word, as Times Square calls for, is an intervention which responds to its physical form as sensitively as we
argue city planning should respond to the needs of communities.

To understand the urban form of Manhattan we must realize that real estate deals are the force which drive it. A European city such as Paris has a long history of slow, steady growth, with the exception of the Haussmann and post-WW II interventions, whereas New York turns over its urban fabric at a far more rapid pace. The Lever Brothers Building, a landmark of Modern Architecture and a mere 25 years old, is currently threatened by destruction to make room for a larger, more profit-maximizing structure. Paris indeed may have experienced major growth since WW II, but not for the most part in historic Paris. It accommodated a population increase of 3 million in the suburbs of Paris. The island of Manhattan has experienced
such growth within its borders. "The immediate office boom after World War II in Manhattan, variously estimated at between 57 million square feet to 70 million square feet, was more than twice the amount built in the same period in the nine cities ranked in size below New York: Los Angeles, Chicago, Philadelphia, San Francisco, Boston, Washington, St. Louis and Cleveland. [S. Zoll, "King Kong in New York" Space & Society, 18, M.I.T. Press]."

In the process of this perpetual destruction and rebuilding it appears that "(t)he city has fallen prey to an attitude that can be called Urban Darwinism - the survival of only the most lucrative use of any given plot of land. It gives us not a city of Brownstones and large buildings in balance with each other, but a city of huge towers crowded
one upon another, filling block after block. It's a different kind of mid-town altogether - one with vastly greater numbers of people crammed into what feels like less and less space, of choking traffic. It is, in short, a place in which the quality of life - which is presumably the reason any one who has a choice in the matter settles in cities in the first place - inevitably must decline [P. Goldberger, "The Limits of Urban Growth" N.Y. Times Magazine, 11/14/82]."

In New York it becomes easy to violate the "existing city" because others may soon follow with similar outlaw developments, thus changing context and producing a "New City", a new status quo it seems. Oddly enough, the fairly sensitive 1966 Lower Manhattan Plan is an example of this. To counteract the effect of the mammoth World Trade Center
on the area's scale and skyline, the plan recommended the construction of more mammoth buildings.

The total demolition of the 13 acre Times Square site probably was not possible given strong support for the theater and historic preservation groups, but certainly, as in the case of John Portman's New York Marriott Marquis Hotel, a handful of blocks north of the 42nd Street site, we could have lost some portion of the theaters which the Cooper/Eckstut plan saves. Portman's project isn't contextual at any significant level. Contextual design doesn't prevent new development but it does suggest appropriate and in appropriate actions. Portman's hotel — his work in general — has an insular, imported, dropped-in feel. As a mode of urban intervention, this is insensitive; one starts from
scratch - scratch achieved by leveling the site. This is, of course, the way development occurs in general. However, the Portman project is in the Theater Special Design District which seeks to avert the destruction of existing theaters and promote the construction of new ones via incentive bulk bonuses to developers. Portman's scheme does have a theater in it but it also destroys two of them. When Radio City Music Hall, during the mid '70's, was in danger of falling prey to what Goldberger calls urban darwinism [note: "In the legal battle to exert control (over real estate via zoning in the early 1900's) - or to avoid it - Darwin was evoked by both sides. The biological battle for life developing into a way of interpreting the social sciences, of which life in the city was a chief topic of concern [S. Zoll, "King Kong in New York", Space and Society, 18].")
Innovative schemes were prepared to explore the feasibility of office structures rising above the music hall with minimal disturbance to its landmark Art Deco interior. Similar schemes could have been executed for the Portman project, indeed the Helen Hayes and the Morosco, the theaters razed, are/were less sensitive than Radio City in terms of landmark status. But, in Portman's words, "... the foot-print of the structure made it impossible to build over and still handle the logistic of all that has to move in and out of a facility of that size [Skyline, Jan. '83, "Interview: John Portman and Peter Eisenman"])." The problem with this argument is the the "foot-print" existed only on paper whereas the theaters which it stamps out existed in full-scale, three-dimensional reality. Paying attention to its place in the theater district - especially the
'matched pair' relationship of the Helen Hayes and the Lunt Fontanne Theater, across the street, a sensitive intervention would have sought to maintain and modify rather than eliminate the theaters.

The irony is that the Portman Hotel is a neighbor of One Astor Plaza, an early development under the Theatre District Zoning. Here, the developers were required to building a theater although the construction of their office tower did not destroy one. In this case Broadway gained a new theater. In the Portman case Broadway gains a new Theater and loses two.

Given the status quo method of development, as exemplified above, the Cooper/Eckstut plan - a plan despite its architectural specificity is more conventional than the
special design zoning districts - seems justified. Perhaps, in this instance, the essential urban design elements are indeed the buildings. Together, the parcel specific bulk and elevation controls refine our definition of a contextual approach to intervention within an urban fabric, but also brings out some of the complexity in the concept.

The approach is illustrated by a look at the words and phrases used throughout the master plan: incorporate, preserve, character, maintain, reinforce, character of streets restore, transition, appropriate, relate, articulation, relationships, perception, integration, avoid scale conflicts, continuity, highlight, avoid undifferentiated, scale, historic, place. Like Lynch's dimensions of performance these terms call for place to have
vitality, sense, fit, access, efficiency, and justice. Like Anderson's Streets Phases 1-2, they call for the recognition of street as a complex setting for human activities.

The complexity of the concept is a product of questions raised by the design-specific nature of the guidelines: 1) How much of the physical form prescription is essential to a contextual approach and how much is subjective? 2) Why should one firm's interpretation of contextual design be enforced as law?, 3) How have the guidelines selected influenced from its plural context to yield its physical form requirements?, 4) How has context-perception of context - shifted over the last decade or two?, 5) When are design-specific guidelines warranted?
The retention of the mid-block theaters is the least contestable requirement of the plan. Without them the City and State's talk of returning Times Square to its former glory would be without foundation for we would have no Times Square. The transition in scale of the new buildings as they approach the theaters is also fairly straightforward. What however determines the 30 linear foot dimension as the appropriate dimension of transition area within which the height of the buildings to be preserved is to be respected? Are the facades of the theaters best "highlighted" by contrasting them with highly polished, reflective surfaces on the new developments? Could the bulk controls alone have sufficed? Could the elevation controls alone suffice? Clearly, the different controls serve various purposes, pay attention to different features of the
The Kohl, Pederson, Fox entry in the Batten Park City competition.

The Aitchell/Giurgola entry in the &tterv Park City competition.

development, but we have little idea of where they come from. They seem to make sense but it isn't clear what else might make sense.

The commercial center in Battery Park City is equal in size to the 42nd Street site. For it, Cooper/Eckstut prepared a set of design guidelines which were written into the lease between the Authority and the developer for the site, Olympia and York. The developer then held a limited architectural competition using the design guidelines as its foundation. The selected scheme, by Cesar Pelli, differs somewhat in form and orientation of its buildings but, as one might argue in a court of law, it is within the intent of the guidelines. The other submitted schemes are all markedly different from Pelli's and from one another. The multiple interpretations which can result from a competition avoid the issue of having
one form's parti taken as law without considering alternatives. In addition, whole or partial schemes can be selected, or none.

The third and fourth questions are linked. The selection of physical form elements/considerations from context are guided by a perception of "what's good about context" that is in a constant state of change. The vaguely Art Deco buildings presented as illustrations of what the design guidelines could/want to yield are certainly influenced by the late and post-modern rejection of the skyscraper-as-cigarette-box. In form, the illustrations are closest to the RCA Building at Rockefeller Center or the old McGraw-Hill Building, just one block west of the Times Square site. In surface treatment however, they are closest to curtain-wall structures such as the Olympic Tower, Lever House, and
the Grand Hyatt Hotel - all unequivocally modern buildings which take the Miesian facade and smooth it out into a more two-dimensional mirror surface. The public's interest is no longer served by setting buildings back from the street and providing plazas and gallerias, but by holding them to the street and providing a diverse and visible range of activities along it. Good urban form, we contend, is contextual. Contextual urban form, by the above example, is plural; making "sense" of the many trends occurring in an area. By what process is this sorting-out of context done remains a question.

We have touched upon an answer to the fifth question. Design-specific guidelines may be warranted when buildings are the essential urban design elements, as in a historic
district. Place depends heavily on the potential environment. If manipulation of it threatens to damage or alter a strong, vital and valuable place then we need to pay close attention to physical form changes. Coming to this point, like determining when a building is a landmark, is an artful task. it is an architecture of resistance - resistance to the tendency to reduce city building to single issues - ignoring its complexity. It isn't an architecture of nostalgia, imagery, kitch, futurism, or rigid conservationism, but rather a critical look at context in the perspective of the job to be done, the qualities of context, and time.
What is the meaning of the procession of Battery Park City Plans? Are the differences in the schemes simply the result of the architect/planners involved, their style? What is the connection between the 42nd Street plan and the Battery Park City Plans?

The Five Battery Park City Plans and the 42nd Street plan give an account of the evolution of urban design thinking in N.Y.C. over the last two decades. The changes in the basic approach to an urban intervention suggest a transition in schools of thought.

Battery Park City plans 1 and 2 are variations on the Modern Movement's view of the city; free standing buildings sit in large open spaces, the good city is composed of abstract towers and free-flowing
parkland. The Cooper/Eckstut plan for Battery Park City, plan 5 - 1979, and Times Square belong to a real streets with context-sensitive buildings school of thought, the good city has active and diverse streets with human scale public places. BPC plans 3 and 4 are a mixture of the above two schools, real streets are mimicked but are within a framework which does not accept the street as a multi-functional element in the city, the good city has car free places for people.

These differences are not specific to the planners involved; they represent streams of thought to which the planners belong. In other words, it is not at all a surprise that Harrison was the designer of the second BPC plan. He is known for
the type of late 50's/ early 60's Modern architecture which he proposed and which was the city building approach in good currency. Likewise, it is not a surprise that Cooper/Eckstut are the planners for the fifth BPC plan and the Times Square redevelopment, they are from the school of thought which has come into currency from the experience of the last two decades.

There are two major transition points in this evolution from one urban design school to another; one circa 1966 and between Battery Park City plans 2 and 3, the other in the mid-70's and between BPC plans 4 and 5. Many of the forces behind the changes in the first transition period have already been discussed in the Framework section.
The new critics of city planning, such as Lynch, Jacobs, and Gans had emerged and although their influence will be felt more in the second transition period clearly they began to present alternative ways of viewing the city and city planning. The election of John Lindsay as mayor of New York City, a young, liberal, progressive mayor, must also be cited as a factor causing change. It is under his administration that the Urban Design Group was formed as a force in the City Planning Commission as a direct attempt to address the urban design issues of the day. The Urban Design Group too is a new factor in this period; their creative use of zoning in special design districts and the City's ability to regulate the form of development given the 1961 zoning
resolution made achieving a new urban vision possible. Members of the Urban Design Group such as Barnett, Cooper, and Eckstut did much to influence urban design in New York in the direction it currently follows, as exemplified in the Cooper/Eckstut plans for Battery Park and Times Square. In fact, the Urban Design Group in conjunction with the social critics of city planning can be thought of as the two major "departments" in the current context-sensitive school of urban design.

During this first transition period, new institutions such as the U.D.C. and the Battery Park City Authority were created by the State to finance and execute major city rebuilding efforts. The agencies were given a broad scope of authority and
powers and were intended to streamline the city building process. The economy during this period was strong and expanding and the new institutions could expect to command major capital resources.

The proposals for Battery Park which come during this period, plans 3 and 4, exhibit the duality of schools of thought mentioned earlier. They break with the conventional Modernist city image but in principle they still seek to be strong, bigger and better, gestures in city building.

The third plan, Conklin/ Roussant and others, did begin to mimic the scale and texture of streets and buildings existing in Lower Manhattan but the new urban fabric was placed on a deck. The deck was a continuous structure, a large scale development which
makes attempts at breaking down its scale. This hybrid school accepts the street as a part of the good city, but they are to be for people only. The city of Jacobs and Lynch is accepted in part but "improved" by removing the car and service spaces from sight. The-street-as-pedestrian-path however brings with it images which contradict the Jacobs/Lynch image of the city; images of networks of pedestrian only streets, malls, gallerias - just the type of environment proposed in the 3rd and 4th BPC plans, the latter's Megastructure pushing the pedestrian only/deck scheme to its limits. During this period there was a desire to improve the urban fabric and the ability to do so boldly. The combination resulted in
schemes which despite their good intent opened the possibility for a separation of new and existing urban fabrics rather than the integration of new and old to their mutual benefit.

The second transition period, mid-70's, gives us the Cooper/Eckstut plans and "real streets" in the urban environment. Here, the social critics have become household names in the planning and design community, not to say that all city planners accepted the arguments they presented. The sleek and simple city was giving way to the city of historic preservation and restoration, neighborhoods, and community. Urban renewal was out of favor and concepts of defensible space and turf definition were being used to critique the environments produced by public housing and urban
renewal agencies produced; new models of public housing environments were explored by these agencies as discussed in the academic community. Neighborhoods like Greenwich Village and SoHo experienced increased growth and popularity, supporting the Jacobs/Newman/Lynch/Gans et al image of the city.

Again the economy also proves to be a major factor affecting the changes in this period. In the first period the economy was booming, in this second period the nation was experiencing a major economic crisis; New York City flirted with bankruptcy, the agencies created during the first period, the U.D.C. and the BPC Authority, did go bankrupt. The ability to command major capital reserves to support extensive city building efforts was no longer a given.
It is not a coincidence that the Cooper/Eckstut plan for Battery Park City, executed during this second transition period, calls for a traditional system of streets and blocks to structure the development. In addition to providing a place for active and diverse human interaction the street is also an efficient, flexible, and moderately priced form of infrastructure. By regulating the location and character of the street, the City or development agency can structure the urban fabric without committing major capital expenses, as would be required for the infrastructure for the '69 Plan's Megastructure. It also provides a familiar way of dividing a large site into smaller developments to be executed in an incremental manner.
In the 42nd Street proposal, the street is again used in its traditional form — as a means to structure the overall development and as the primary public environment, private development is again publicly regulated to attend to the character and quality of the public environment without public authorities taking on major financial obligations, the street is again real, active, and diverse.

The evolution of urban design schools of thought in N.Y.C. has brought us to a rediscovery of the street as an integral part of the city, as a place for people and a means to structure the pattern of development. The current image of the good city is somewhat eclectic; the good city is beautiful, the good city is picturesque, the good city is intimate, the good city
has tree-lined streets, arcades and parks. Perhaps theories of good city form are cyclical or perhaps there are some basic scale, texture, and use considerations which must be addressed regardless of what the image of the good city is. Models of the good city must be viewed in the context of events which framed the basic urban questions of their time. The perspective on the evolution of urban design ethics in N.Y.C. explored in this thesis suggest that the definition of the good city changes with the ability to affect change, achieve an improved urban setting, and the evolving questions asked about and demands made on the urban environment. There will continue to be changes in city planning, its critics, and the forces which influence. There will continue to be
transition periods in the evolution of urban design philosophy. There will continue to be the need to rethink and restate urban design manifestoes in light of these changes.
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