

catalyst

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THE AMERICAN ARCHITECTURAL FOUNDATION



The Accent on Architecture Gala, hosted annually by the American Architectural Foundation (AAF), is the nation's premier celebration of leadership in the design of cities and schools.

On the evening of March 9, 2012, national leaders in design, government, education, and the media will gather in Washington, D.C., for the 23rd annual Accent on Architecture Gala. Please save the date and join us to honor the 2012 award recipients, recognized for their innovative leadership in architecture and urban design.

The Gala celebrates the power of design to improve lives and transform communities. Proceeds

from the Gala help support AAF's national education and leadership development programs, including Great Schools by Design, the Mayors' Institute on City Design, the Sustainable Cities Design Academy, the Richard Morris Hunt Fellowship, and more.

Opportunities to sponsor the Gala are available now. For more information, please contact AAF's Development Office at jmarks@archfoundation.org, or call 202.626.7477.

SAVE THE DATE SAVE THE DATE SAVE THE DATE

THE AMERICAN ARCHITECTURAL FOUNDATION
ACCENT ON ARCHITECTURE GALA

2012

GALA



THE 23RD ANNUAL
ACCENT ON ARCHITECTURE GALA

FRIDAY, MARCH 9, 2012

THE ANDREW MELLON AUDITORIUM
WASHINGTON, D.C.

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ABOUT AAF Beautiful functional sustainable design

improves our lives and strengthens the communities that bind us together. It inspires us to imagine a better world and empowers us to pursue that vision. For nearly 70 years, these principles have guided the **American Architectural Foundation**.

We all share the responsibility of making good design decisions for our communities. The key to success is an informed, collaborative design process. AAF helps make that process happen. It seeks to inspire public-spirited leaders to use design to create better communities.

AAF assembles design teams of diverse expertise; connects them with government officials, educators, business

leaders, and others whose daily decisions help determine the design of our cities; and engages them all in a collaborative design process that responds to some of the most critical challenges facing our nation.

The experience awakens these leaders to the transformative power of design, demonstrates how to apply that power toward solving real-world problems, and generates the momentum necessary to effect rapid, innovative change in cities across the country.

AAF neither sells a product nor advocates a particular design style. It instead creates unique opportunities for the free, interdisciplinary exchange of ideas around the vital issues that shape

our cities and define our society. Participants gain the knowledge and resources necessary to realize creative design solutions as well as the motivation to promote a vibrant design culture when they return home.

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e·volve

VERB
To develop or achieve gradually.
To work (something) out.

PRESIDENT'S LETTER

Cities continually evolve. They respond to socio-economic dynamics, cultural change, and political shifts. They adapt to accommodate new attitudes. They struggle to cope with new stresses.

The American Architectural Foundation is dedicated to helping cities thrive by working with leaders whose everyday decisions help shape the design of their cities. For decades, our programs have guided local leaders to embrace design as a means to transform communities and improve lives. Programs like the Mayors' Institute on City Design, the Sustainable Cities Design Academy, and Great Schools by Design have demonstrated, in cities across the country, the value gained when leaders understand that design is an essential tool in their leadership portfolios.

We have been fortunate to have outstanding partners in our work. Many of them are highlighted in this special issue of *Catalyst*. Across America, the philanthropic community in particular has emerged as an essential partner in addressing the needs of our cities and their residents. In older industrial cities, foundations are leading the way to recovery and renewal. AAF has instilled design thinking in mayors, demonstrated how design can help public/private partnerships achieve their project goals, and inspired school superintendents to create 21st-century learning environments from their aging school buildings. In each city, philanthropic partners have helped these leaders to create lasting, positive change by informing and supporting their design decisions.

Even in the midst of these difficult economic times, there is a resurgence of hope and pride in America's cities. AAF is proud to be a part of this movement and to join with all our colleagues in The Funders' Network for Smart Growth and Livable Communities in strengthening and revitalizing our communities.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Ronald Bogle", with a stylized flourish at the end.

Ronald E. Bogle, Hon. AIA
President and CEO
American Architectural Foundation

The Heart of A New MANUFACTURING ECONOMY

HOW TOLEDO IS BUILDING
A GREEN ENERGY FUTURE ON
ITS AUTO PAST



BY KRIS SMITH AND BEN STARRETT

a single smokestack still towers over the now empty 111-acre Jeep Parkway site in Toledo, Ohio, the birthplace of the civilian Jeep. Since 1915, the smokestack has been one of Toledo's most recognized landmarks; now it is all that remains of North America's oldest manufacturing plant.

Some might see a solitary smokestack on an empty expanse of land as a potent symbol of the decline and fall of America's manufacturing might. To the city of Toledo and its residents, it is a powerful symbol that Toledo's storied manufacturing legacy is currently being reborn on the site of its industrial past.

Prior to the recession, auto communities had already been coping with a years-long decline in the industry. In 2008, when GM and Chrysler collapsed, 334,000 jobs were lost, with more to follow. Robustly middle-class families, employed for generations by the auto industry, saw their livelihoods and lifestyles swept away. Their communities were left with rising poverty rates, vacant properties, a significantly reduced tax base, and few prospects to recover their former prosperity.

Toledo has been no different. "In a way, Toledo is akin to a poster child for what happens during a recession," says Keith Burwell, President and CEO of the Toledo Community Foundation. "It wasn't a city in decay, the downtown wasn't crumbling, but the recession and the auto difficulties have put the city in a position where it's struggling economically."

The impact on auto communities could have easily been dismissed as a regional problem. Instead, it became a focus for coordinated action. In 2006, spurred by the steady decline in some older cities and manufacturing jobs, the

Funders' Network for Smart Growth and Livable Communities oversaw the formation of the Restoring Prosperity in Older Industrial Cities (OIC) working group to help these cities face new economic realities. In the wake of the recession, there is a new urgency to this work, but there's also an unlikely bright spot on the horizon: auto brownfields, abandoned or idled former industrial sites where redevelopment is complicated by the presence of pollutants, contaminants, and/or industrial waste.

The shuttered auto plants that dot the industrial Midwest are increasingly becoming the center of creative thinking about smart growth, design, and just what it means to "revitalize." Jasmine Thomas is a program officer for the Surdna Foundation, a founding member of the OIC group. "At Surdna, we've long believed in and supported initiatives that help America's older industrial cities become laboratories for innovation and create sustainable economies," Thomas says. "The bottom line is that we can no longer delay transforming brownfields, idle factories, and plants to a more productive use. We need them in service, providing quality local jobs and realizing robust local economies."

Toledo's Jeep Parkway site is one of the more revolutionary brownfield revitalization efforts. It's here that a diverse group of collaborators are envisioning the creation of a Jeep District that will encompass work, home, education, and recreation.

The Jeep Parkway site is public property owned by the Toledo-Lucas County Port Authority. The Port Authority is independent; it isn't under the control of the county, the city, or a company, and that has opened the door for a unique type of

Left: For Toledo residents, this solitary smokestack on the Jeep Parkway site symbolizes both their city's rich manufacturing legacy and the potential for a green energy-driven renaissance in the Glass City.

Left: Workers celebrate the millionth Jeep to roll off the assembly line (1952).

Right: The initial plan for the Jeep Parkway brownfields redevelopment.



Photo courtesy of the University of Toledo Libraries

teamwork. The Toledo Community Foundation has assisted as a neutral convener of stakeholders. “Everyone is included,” Burwell says, “from the Port Authority to the University of Toledo to the Chamber of Commerce to the Urban League to TRACE (Toledo Regional Architects, Contractors and Engineers). We are moving from talking to doing.”

Toledo had already decided it wasn’t turning its back on what it does best—manufacturing. Instead, it would shift focus from cars to emerging technologies. It was already the center of solar panel production in America. The University of Toledo has been an established leader in solar cell research for more than two decades and runs an active and established incubator service. That made the Jeep Parkway site, strategically located near expressways, railways, and the river, the perfect place for Toledo to once again take a manufacturing lead.

New technologies need state-of-the-art plants, and the new site will embrace the most forward-thinking sustainable design and technology available. A solar farm, bioswales, LED solar lighting, native vegetation and rain gardens,

porous surfaces, and LEED certification will help establish it as a premier physical plant that will meet the needs of modern manufacturing and make it an anchor of sustainable industrial redevelopment. The stakeholders are working to establish a Toledo Build Fund to finance and construct spec buildings for businesses that require a different kind of facility.

While building to attract business is central to the American mindset, it’s usually not one that encompasses restoring vitality to neighborhoods impacted by job loss.

“When a business goes away,” Burwell says, “it’s more than just a loss of jobs at the plant. It’s also about the commerce it created in nearby neighborhoods. Those neighborhoods lose their sandwich shops, their corner stores, their barbers—places workers go to do the everyday errands of life. The shutdown of a plant impacts the neighborhoods that surround it in unexpected ways.”

Two neighborhoods border the Jeep Parkway site: Willys Park and Liberty Park. Both grew in tandem with the Jeep Parkway facility over the 96 years it rolled out cars. Now, however, they

grapple with a 35 percent poverty rate. As the process of revitalizing the Jeep Parkway site began to move forward, it became clear that to make it a true success meant not leaving the neighborhoods behind.

“If you want to revitalize a neighborhood,” Burwell says, “the first place you start is with jobs. The goal now is to be very intentional in linking jobs at the Jeep Parkway site with the neighborhoods. In that respect, this isn’t a typical brownfield redevelopment. We are purposely looking to create anchors and workforce development in Willys Park and Liberty Park that will lead to jobs for the residents and stabilized neighborhood economies.”

Part of connecting the neighborhoods to the site is reducing barriers that are in place. An existing park on the west side of the site stops at the expressway. Local bike trails currently stop short of Willys Park and Liberty Park. In the revitalization, these features would be extended into the neighborhoods. Plans also include landbanking and taking infrastructure no longer suitable for housing to create green space for urban agriculture and public use. The addition of green space is a common thread throughout.



The initial plan for the Jeep Parkway brownfields redevelopment sets aside up to 80 percent of the site for long-term public use and/or green space, including a 30-acre waterfront park that will showcase the remaining smokestack. A riverfront walk that offers interpretive stops will guide walkers through the history of the site and Jeep. Recycled Jeep headlights, powered by solar LEDs, will illuminate the footpaths. Multi-modal trails for biking, running, and walking will give the public space a sense of ruggedness long associated with the Jeep brand. A new trail will provide access to the residents of Willys Park.

Next steps also include working with an EPA planning grant for the neighborhood as well as reaching out to the Green

and Healthy Homes Initiative to explore best practices and leverage support to make homes in Willys Park and Liberty Park safer and greener. Local educational institutions are on board to create on-site training and workforce development for local residents so that the talent the new Jeep Parkway industries need will be homegrown.

In reclaiming the Jeep Parkway site for its future, Toledo is creating something that will continue its manufacturing evolution: if you imagine it, then you will be able to design it, create it, and send it to market—all at Jeep Parkway. “Welcome to the Heart of the New Manufacturing Economy” is the tagline of the Toledo Region Brand. At the Jeep Parkway site, Toledo is laying out a green welcome mat.

Ben Starrett is the founding executive director of the Funders' Network for Smart Growth and Livable Communities, created in late-1999 to inspire, strengthen, and expand philanthropic leadership and funders' abilities to support organizations working to improve communities through better development decisions and growth policies.

Kris Smith is Director of Leadership Development at the Funders' Network. He provides staff leadership to the Restoring Prosperity in Older Industrial Cities funder working group and also manages the Network's philanthropic leadership development program, PLACES.



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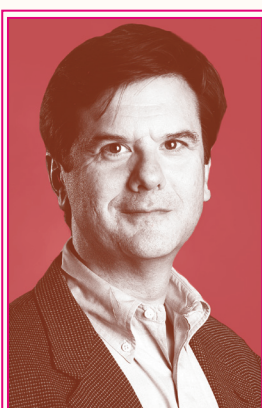
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ICLEI USA

THE SUSTAINABLE CITY: SOLVING FOR THE WHOLE

BY JOHN SYVERTSEN, FAIA, LEED AP

In December 2010, the American Architectural Foundation (AAF), in partnership with UTC, organized a forum of 25 internationally recognized sustainability thought leaders in Washington, D.C., as part of its Sustainable Cities Design Academy (SCDA). The purpose of the forum was to wrestle with a series of questions vital to the evolution of America's cities:

- What is a "sustainable" city, and what trends yield successful solutions?
- What challenges stand in the way of urban infill projects?
- What incentives will catalyze and support the creation and maintenance of innovative public/private development partnerships?

Let's put these questions into context. For the first time ever, over half of the world's population lives in cities; by 2050, world population is projected to rise from 6.9 to 9 billion. The additional demand for energy and food will be daunting, and if we really do care about future generations, inaction is not an option. Building cities will either be a major contributor to the problem or the vehicle to help us solve it.

On the first day of the SCDA forum, Uwe Brandes gave us an excellent description of where we are now, providing statistical information and proposing goals to be achieved by 2050. The conclusion—we must move fast. As Uwe noted, 2050 is only two development cycles away.

What stands in our way? For one, there was general agreement that cities, for the most part, are hindered by the incapacity of government to take on the complexity of their evolution. This simple realization was one of the most striking of the day, and we came back to it a number of times. It was noted that we are missing levels of "governance" (which I might define as effective government) at the scale of the metro area, or region, and at the level of "place," or town centers. It has been a long time since I have heard the name of Jane Jacobs mentioned so many times.

In my city, Chicago's Metropolis 2020 is an example of a strong effort to address our regional challenges. I believe that good progress is being made in the areas of transportation, education, and social equity, though movement is slow due to



our state's budget problems. If Metropolis 2020 is ultimately successful, it will be in spite of the fact that we have more than 400 governing bodies to bring into alignment. This could be an excellent model.

During the forum, our discussion of social equity was also compelling. In a supply/demand world built on capitalist underpinnings, mobility and choice are not as available to the underprivileged. So, as we discuss the incapacities that already plague government, we also have to be concerned with who makes decisions and how they make them. As we guide the evolution of our cities, we must not segregate social, environmental, and economic issues. We must instead be holistic in our thinking, basing our decisions on serious consideration for the interests of all stakeholders. This is not business as usual. And to make it the norm will be a challenge.

Looking back on the forum, there was a moment when we all felt a bit like we were chasing our tails. There are as many ways to characterize the challenges we face as there are people doing so. We all had a chance to give our own particular

take on these issues ... again. And we always seem to have trouble sorting out the relationship between the global and the local.

The challenge of sustainable cities is in fact a global challenge. Yet the world that we ourselves can impact is relatively local. To have a positive global impact, we need to accumulate and share knowledge of successful local outcomes and the processes that brought them about.

The presentations at the forum were excellent examples. John Hynes' and Charlie Reid's description of the Boston Global Investors' Seaport Square project in Boston was an example of what can be accomplished if we take the long view and work patiently in public/private partnerships. While challenging, the notion that value is created by assembling capital, time, and stakeholder interest will result in the rebuilding of an important part of Boston. And that interest is generated by connecting with the community groups who truly care about the development and its meaning to the city.

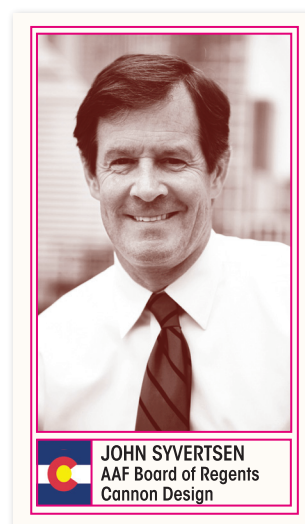


Mami Hara's presentation about green municipal policies and principles in Philadelphia—and the parks that in part resulted from them—stimulated a fascinating discussion about the unintended consequences of single-purpose actions. One participant suggested a guiding principle from an essay by the poet Wendell Berry: the concept of “solving for pattern.” An investment that creates not single but multiple benefits, and minimizes the creation of new problems, solves for pattern.

The simple, beautiful parks in Philadelphia have allowed property values to increase, thus growing the tax base and reducing the impact of infrastructure costs on the individual. Solving for pattern thus has multiple, positive, and sometimes unintended—or at least unanticipated—consequences. Of course in this example, we also have to be concerned about the impact on the underprivileged. An increase in property value is not all good news.

Our discussion at the SCDA forum was wide-ranging indeed. This was natural given the wide range of focus and constituencies of the individuals present. We tried hard to settle on organizing principles and found, not surprisingly, that there are many. Clive Crook, our perceptive moderator, suggested that if there were one such principle, would it not have to be “quality of life” as it embraces all?

In the end, I was most taken by Kevin Kampschroer's notion that the organizing principle of the city *is* the city—that we need to solve for the whole. While energy, water, light, and transportation each pose enormous challenges, our decisions regarding each of these must take into account the others—and be in just service to all people. This service to people and community is a compelling cause that underlies sustainability and gives meaning to the term “sustainable cities.”



John Syvertsen is a senior principal of Cannon Design with overall authority for overseeing the firm's environmental sustainability and community outreach efforts. He is also secretary of the AAF Board of Regents.



Something About Amanda

BY CHARLES LINN, FAIA

The recipient of the 2011 Keystone Award was Amanda M. Burden, FAICP, Hon. AIA, director of the New York City Department of City Planning and chair of the New York City Planning Commission. The Keystone Award is a national honor presented each year by the American Architectural Foundation (AAF) to an individual or organization from outside the field of architecture for exemplary leadership that increases the value of architecture and design in our culture. The winner of the Keystone Award shares AAF's vision of a society in which architecture enriches lives and transforms communities. Past recipients include Chicago Mayor Richard M. Daley, Rick Lowe, Charleston Mayor Joseph P. Riley Jr., the Office of the Commissioner of the Public Buildings Service of the U.S. General Services Administration (GSA), the Pritzker Family, Save America's Treasures, the Museum of Modern Art (MOMA), and former Miami Mayor Manuel A. Diaz.

Amanda Burden does masterfully what any driver of change should do: she looks ahead and anticipates. But as the director of the New York City Department of City Planning and chair of the City Planning Commission, she has been entrusted by Mayor Michael Bloomberg with doing the impossible. She's spent the last nine years anticipating the future of a full-fledged, mega-scale, perpetual motion machine. From New York City's garrets, neighborhoods, factories, and office towers, the most culturally diverse collection of people anywhere churn out novels and fashion, tremendous food, boatloads of money, and the intellectual capital that invigorates the world.

It's a job that would overwhelm most people. Any local will tell you it takes the better part of a lifetime to even begin to comprehend the forces that drive this multilevel urban machine in all of its wonders. Most of the cabbies and food cart operators whose experience at the street level has enlivened their senses of what makes the city great will never have the power to do much about it. In contrast, most who have the authority to shape the future through the powers of public policy live in many ways separated from the city. Amanda Burden is different.

2003

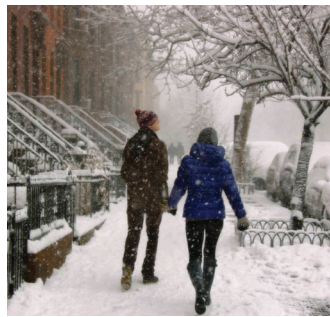


The 2003 Frederick Douglass Boulevard rezoning was the first comprehensive revision of south-central Harlem zoning since 1961. The rezoning preserved the neighborhood while also allowing for new housing opportunities. *Photo by NYC Department of City Planning*

2005



A 2005 rezoning has encouraged housing growth and entrepreneurship in Port Morris, attracting small businesses and a growing community of artists to this neighborhood in the Bronx. *Photo by NYC Department of City Planning*



A young couple enjoys a walk in the snow in Park Slope. A 2003 rezoning helped preserve the neighborhood's historic brownstones. *Photo by David Minder* ©

"She lives a place," explains Ann Pasternak, president and artistic director of Creative Time, a New York-based non-profit arts organization. "She walks from door to door and watches how people engage with a place, and she listens. Zoning maps are certainly important but only a small percentage of the picture. Because she is a great listener and so open-minded and so curious, she's also creative. She's looking for solutions that may not be expected."

This fascination with New York City's close to 200 neighborhoods allows Commissioner Burden to grasp the need for things that might elude the classic planner whose focus is solely zoning maps. At the same time, it gives her the creative vision required to see where there is the potential for economic development to occur and what needs to be done to make it happen.

"Amanda is an urbanist," says Elizabeth Diller, FAIA, a principal of Diller Scofidio + Renfro, whose firm played a major role in a number of projects that Commissioner Burden directed, including the High Line and the redevelopment of Lincoln Center. "She understands large-scale urban issues. But, she doesn't really see urbanism as a standalone discipline. She appreciates that architecture is one of the building blocks of

great urbanism. She involves herself in a project in a way that's so intimate that she knows what's going on to the inch."

FROM THE BEGINNING

This amazing ability to see into the future seems to have colored Commissioner Burden's career choices. From the time she was a young woman, she began assembling the kind of experience that would one day lead her to chair the Planning Commission.

"I always knew I would be in public service, from the time I was a little girl," she says. "And in 1976 I started working for my first mentor, William Holly Whyte." Whyte was a New York City urbanologist, researcher, and teacher. His Project for Public Spaces was one of the first attempts to document what makes public spaces successful. His 1980 classic text, *The Social Life of Small Urban Spaces*, examined such things as whether men or women use parks more, the role of food vendors in making a plaza successful, and which types and sizes of benches and chairs work best.

"He taught me that you could measure the health of a city by the vibrancy of its streets and public spaces. I saw how much



The High Line is not only a unique and exhilarating park but also a catalyst for private investment. It has triggered more than 30 new development projects. *Photo by NYC Department of City Planning*



The 2005 Hudson Yards Master Plan promises to expand the Midtown business district and provide over 24 million square feet of office space and more than 13,000 units of new housing, including affordable housing, an open space network, and the extension of the number 7 subway line. *Photo by NYC Department of City Planning*



“She involves herself in a project in a way that’s so intimate that she knows what’s going on to the inch.”

people needed public spaces and how important they were to city life. And I said to myself, ‘this is how I can do public service. If I can help shape cities and public spaces, I will have achieved something fabulous for the city.’ And this really became my dream.”

In 1979, after a year at the architecture and planning firm Gruzen & Partners, Commissioner Burden became the vice president of architecture and planning for the New York State Urban Development Corporation. When Mario Cuomo became governor in 1983, she became the Battery Park City Authority’s vice president for planning and design.

The project’s 92-acre site was created with earth that came from the excavation of the World Trade Center. “It was just a pile of sand then,” she says. The Cooper, Ekstut Associates’ master plan, developed under her direction, became a perfect test bed for many of the ideas she had accumulated since working for Mr. Whyte.

“It was revolutionary in modern times to connect a major site to the city by extending the street grid through it. The previous plan had been a megacity without streets, almost like a battle-

ship hooked to the side of Lower Manhattan.” On the contrary, Commissioner Burden specified design details at the micro scale, such as making sure the railing at the esplanade was just low enough for a clear view of the Hudson when sitting at the water’s edge. She also specified that the sea wall would be made of the same black Canadian granite chosen by William S. Paley, her late stepfather, for the headquarters of his corporation, CBS.

In the 30 years that have elapsed since Commissioner Burden took the Battery Park City job, the project has become one of the most successful new urban developments anywhere, financially as well as from the standpoint of those who visit and, most importantly, those who live there. It proved that good architecture and urban design is not only satisfying from an aesthetic and functional point of view; it also stimulates long-term economic success.

“Her work at Battery Park City, with its parks and the esplanade along the river, really shows that she understands how the city knits together,” says Rick Bell, FAIA, executive director of the New York Chapter of the American Institute of Architects.

2007

In 2007, the Department of City Planning crafted a rezoning proposal for Bedford-Stuyvesant South to preserve the neighborhood's brownstones and provide opportunities for permanently affordable housing and growth along wide corridors. *Photo by NYC Department of City Planning*



2008



The 2008 rezoning of the Rockaways protects the scale of the peninsula's distinctive housing stock, including nearly 200 of the Rockaways' famed bungalows. *Photo by milkmit* ©



In 2008, new zoning was put into place for Harlem's historic 125th Street to strengthen it as a regional business district and bolster its role as an arts, entertainment, and retail destination. *Photo by Begoña Valverde* ©

While still working at the Battery Park City Authority, Commissioner Burden earned a master's degree in city planning from Columbia University, graduating in 1992. She resigned from the Authority in 1993 to become a member of the New York City Planning Commission and took a job as the director of planning and development for the Manhattan Community Court Project. She designed two award-winning community court facilities where low-level, non-violent offenders receive a range of essential social services as part of their arraignments and sentencing.

"She was the one," says Mr. Bell, "who said that there needs to be dignity and respect given to a fare-beater, even if what you are doing is giving him a slap on the wrist."

A NEW, MORE POWERFUL ROLE

In 2001 Michael Bloomberg became the mayor of New York, and in January 2002 he made Commissioner Burden chair of the Planning Commission and director of City Planning. Mayor Bloomberg is a pragmatist whose vision aligns beautifully with her priorities. As Commissioner Burden recalls, "In terms of design, he always said, 'good design, great design is a priority for the city. It is essential for physical and economic and

social wellbeing.' He said we had to raise the bar for what's expected, for both public and private development."

That appointment enabled Commissioner Burden to achieve things she had been dreaming of for decades. The city's zoning manual was rewritten to eliminate its enigmatic language. Her planning department took New York City by storm, re-examining neighborhoods that hadn't received attention in decades. Plans for Coney Island in Brooklyn, Hudson Yards on Manhattan's West Side, the Rockaways in Queens, Port Morris in the Bronx, and St. George in Staten Island show the commitment of both Mayor Bloomberg and Commissioner Burden to improving life in all five boroughs.

Her personal, boots-on-the-ground examination of each of these sites has changed the way Department of City Planning staff approach their jobs. It gives their opinions great credibility at community board and City Council hearings. In the last eight years, the Department has accomplished over 100 neighborhood rezonings, which include over 9000 blocks. Many areas were down-zoned to preserve neighborhood character, concentrating new residential and commercial development around transit hubs.



The 2008 St. George plan is centered on the waterfront community's existing strengths—as a civic center, a neighborhood, and a transit hub. It also provides rules that foster a pedestrian-friendly business and residence district. *Photo by Daniel P. Hetteix ©*

“It’s simple as projects move along to just go with the easy way out, the way it’s been done before, and she doesn’t do that.”



2009

The 2009 Coney Island plan aims to preserve the amusement district in perpetuity, catalyze the development of a year-round amusement and entertainment district, and provide much needed housing and services for the neighborhood. *Photo by NYC Department of City Planning*

“I learned from Amanda to walk every block, but also to understand what the long-term interests of the city are. Sometimes things conflict, but there’s a way to talk through that and bring all the stakeholders to the table,” says Vishaan Chakrabarti, AIA, the Marc Holliday professor at Columbia University’s Graduate School of Architecture, Planning and Preservation. He worked for her as director of planning for the Borough of Manhattan.

“Not everyone walks away with 100 percent of what they want,” he continues, “but I think the process of making everyone feel heard, from community members to local officials, is a real art form. Amanda is the master of that art form.”

Commissioner Burden also brought a level of scrutiny to the design and development approval process that it had never had before. Mr. Bell says, “Architects who go into her office with their drawings expecting either accolades or an easy conversation are challenged. Some complain, and that’s good. She knows when people are cutting corners and taking the easy way out, claiming it’s the economy. And she knows that precludes design quality. But, she insists on design quality and she gets it.”

SAVING THE HIGH LINE

Both Mayor Bloomberg and Commissioner Burden will be remembered for saving the High Line, an abandoned rail line perched on steel trestles 30 feet above street level in Chelsea and the Meatpacking District. For nearly 45 years, it enabled freight to be shipped for miles along Manhattan’s West Side without interrupting traffic. Gradually, wildlife and native plants reclaimed the platform after it was abandoned in 1980, transforming it into an accidental, man-made park that was, unfortunately, accessible only to trespassers.

Landowners had called for the demolition of the abandoned tracks and supporting structure so that the land under the High Line could more easily be developed. But two neighborhood residents, Robert Hammond and Joshua David, were inspired to take a stand. They co-founded Friends of the High Line, but they needed a powerful ally with the creative vision to see what could be. They found one in Commissioner Burden.

One snowy winter’s day in the late 1990s, Mr. Hammond invited her on a tour of this wonder, and she instantly became a convert. “Without her, the High Line would not have been saved,” he says. Mr. Hammond is now the executive director

Commissioner Burden considers the water to be NYC's sixth borough and is working to implement Vision 2020, a comprehensive plan released last year for the city's more than 500 miles of waterfront
Photo by Steve Hardy ☺



2010

of Friends of the High Line, which operates the park under license from the City.

Commissioner Burden is modest regarding her contribution, saying, “At the time I wasn’t even chair of the Commission, and I had no power to save it. But I knew it could be done by structuring a transfer of development rights for the land under the tracks, which would gain the support of the landowners who wanted it torn down. What I didn’t know was that it would become a mecca for great architects and that the value of the land would skyrocket once a rezoning plan was in place.”

In the end, experience has exceeded Commissioner Burden’s expectations. Restaurants, bars, shops, art galleries, and a luxury hotel have sprung up under its span. The High Line has become a destination for people from all over the world and a new economic generator, proving again the value of imagination empowered by great design.

The first section of the High Line from Gansevoort Plaza to 20th Street opened in 2009; the second section will open this coming spring; and the third will tie into the planned Hudson Yards development at 34th Street.

Mr. Hammond says, “Her vision encompasses the small and the large, from details like seating and benches to whole rezonings and urban plans. It’s simple as projects move along to just go with the easy way out, the way it’s been done before, and she doesn’t do that.”

THE SIXTH BOROUGH

In April 2010, Mayor Bloomberg announced the release of Vision 2020, another project that has been stimulated by Commissioner Burden’s vision for New York. It’s a comprehensive plan for the more than 500 miles of the city’s waterfront, and its impact on the overall city will likely rival the High Line’s.

“That is one huge thing that I’m involved in right now,” she says, “and it’s going to really change how people perceive and experience the city. The city’s water is really its sixth borough, and we should spend as much time planning for the water as we do for the land.”

Mr. Bell says, “It was not just her force of will and clear vision but also her design sensibility that stressed integration of public open space and accessibility to the waterfront, including for major recreational uses. The plan lets people get closer to the water and enjoy it more. She sees what people need and is satisfying those needs.”

LONG-LASTING IMPACTS

From the beginning of New York’s existence, not much has slowed the city down. Those who work at jobs such as Commissioner Burden’s can generally be regarded as insignificant blips in its 400-year history, but certainly the impact of projects like Battery Park City, the High Line, and Vision 2020 will be felt for centuries.

But, perhaps Commissioner Burden has been so focused that she hasn’t yet realized what may be one of the most significant aspects of her legacy. She has reinvented the ways in which city planning is done—not just in New York City, but around the world. People who have worked under her leadership are taking positions elsewhere, books and papers will certainly be written about her contributions, and teachers like Mr. Chakrabarti and Ms. Diller are carrying her message to the next generation of design professionals.

“Since the failures of Urban Renewal, the profession has really struggled with the way it works,” explains Mr. Chakrabarti. “We can’t be satellite view, top-down planners. At the same time, purely community-based planning also has its limitations.”

“Amanda represents a new paradigm in the design professions because she strikes a balance. She simultaneously understands the needs of the city on a long-term basis as well as the details and sensitivities of communities where a lot of these changes will occur. She’s been a mentor for our city planners, and I hope she will lead urban design education in a new direction.”

And surely she and Mayor Bloomberg will inspire community groups and governmental officials (not to mention cabbies and food cart operators) to insist on the high-quality design and architecture that has become the trademark of the Bloomberg administration over the last nine years. It has proven to work.

Charles Linn has specialized in architectural journalism for the past 25 years. He has written and edited countless stories for the most prestigious magazines in the field, including Architectural Record, where he was an editor for 20 years. He played a leadership role in the startup of several magazines including SNAP, GreenSource, Schools of the 21st Century, Laboratory Planning and Design, and Architectural Lighting. He is currently a New York City-based freelance writer.

THE ART OF BEING A MAYOR

The Design Leadership of Chicago Mayor Richard M. Daley

BY MAYOR JOSEPH P. RILEY JR., HON. AIA

The recipient of the 2011 Joseph P. Riley Jr. Award for Leadership in Urban Design was the Honorable Richard M. Daley, then mayor of the City of Chicago. The Riley Award, presented by the American Architectural Foundation and the United States Conference of Mayors, recognizes mayors whose commitment to excellence in urban design reflects the outstanding example set by the award's namesake.

BY MAYOR JOSEPH P. RILEY JR., HON. AIA

Mayors—great, successful mayors—are artists. They see their city as a canvas and understand that a bold vision can lead to a compelling composition. As Daniel Burnham, the father of urban planning and famed son of Chicago, once said:

“Make no little plans. They have no magic to stir men's blood and probably will not themselves be realized. Make big plans, aim high in hope and work, remembering that a noble, logical diagram once recorded will never die, but long after we are gone will be a living thing, asserting itself with ever growing insistency.”

How fitting that Richard M. Daley, the mayor of Chicago, has always intuitively known this tenet of mayoral leadership and has lived it better than any mayor I know. Many of his ideas, big in both ambition and scope, will continue to shape Chicago as long as it graces the shores of Lake Michigan.

And as these ideas go through this process of becoming, his attention to detail makes all the difference. Great painters press brush to canvas with purpose, trying to make each individual stroke perfect: the just-right weight of a line, the pure color of a tree leaf, or the sure placement of an eyelash on a face. And that's exactly what Mayor Daley has done for Chicago. With a view toward the larger composition, and with the guidance and support of many topflight design professionals, his detailed and deliberate brushstrokes have brought beauty and inspiration to his city and its residents. From countless perspectives and in countless ways, Chicago, under his leadership, has become a more beautiful work of art each day, enriching the lives of its citizens.

Mayors have the opportunity to be the lead designers of their cities. They have significant influence on what will go where, what buildings will be torn down or preserved, when and where parks will be built, how residential and commercial neighborhoods are to be restored, and so much more. Attentive mayors will even involve themselves in the smallest details of these decisions to make sure they are just right. With each engagement, they change the composition of the city—and the experience of the citizen.

So, in a sense, mayors also become the de facto artists of their cities, creating with every decision. The greatest gift a mayor can give a city is beauty. And I know that Rich Daley is a firm believer in beauty as an integral part of Chicago. Chicagoans see that every day in their city.

As mayors, there is no one else in our community who does what we do. That is why meetings of the U.S. Conference of Mayors and sessions of the Mayors' Institute on City Design present such important opportunities to interact with others who are leading their cities. Whether it's at a committee meeting discussing policy, sitting next to one another at a luncheon, or sharing design challenges at the Mayors' Institute, we're always sharing ideas. We are teaching each other and learning from each other, often without even knowing it. We gain insight from and inspire one another, and friendships form because we start with this commonality.

I first met Mayor Daley when he came down to Charleston for a U.S. Conference of Mayors meeting in 1989, his very first year in office. Since then, I've seen him demonstrate

Mayors have the opportunity to be the lead designers of their cities.



Top: Northerly Island Park, a 91-acre peninsula that extends into Lake Michigan at the heart of the Museum Campus, provides both residents and visitors with walking and biking paths, play areas, and a breathtaking view of Chicago's skyline.

Bottom: An aerial view of Northerly Island.



Top: The rooftop garden at Chicago's City Hall was started in 2000 as a part of the City's Urban Heat Island Initiative to test the effects of green roofs on air quality and temperature. Over 20,000 plants from more than 150 species now grow on the roof.

Bottom: A green roof at the Irene C. Hernandez Middle School for the Advancement of Sciences helps students better understand the connections between the built and natural environments. Around 500 green roofs are spread across Chicago, the most of any American city.





Nobody who works for him wants to let him down.

his design leadership on countless occasions. It didn't take him long to establish his reputation as a champion for good design. In 1999, the American Architectural Foundation created its Keystone Award to recognize a non-architect for design leadership. The first one went to Mayor Daley. And he has continued to push himself to bring better design to his city—for example, through his participation with the Mayors' Institute. I have also worked with him in giving direction to the U.S. Conference of Mayors, as we are both past presidents of the organization. As a result, over the past two decades, my colleagues and I have had the pleasure of becoming his friend.

All Chicagoans know that their mayor is a forceful, creative, and aggressive leader, but he is also filled with a genuine humility that makes him approachable and intensely in tune with his constituents. Very good leaders get their inner strength from such reserve. In addition, when he's talking with constituents and advisors, he's really there with them. He is a careful listener eager to learn. That's valuable—and a splendid example for other mayors.

Mayors of cities both big and small have developed relationships with Rich Daley because he recognizes that we are all in the same profession of making our cities better and more beautiful. Great leadership, like Mayor Daley's, inspires. America's mayors know that Chicago is a remarkable city and that it didn't just become one by accident. Rather, its ascent has been catalyzed by a mayor who exercises extraordinary leadership in urban design. They look to and learn from his projects and initiatives, seeing the enhanced beauty and quality of life in Chicago.

Of course, every mayor doesn't have 25 acres of railroad tracks that can become a downtown public park, but many mayors have big, bold, ambitious initiatives that they haven't quite had the nerve to pursue. And Mayor Daley has always given other mayors the inspiration to move forward.

And now, as his 22-year administration draws to a close, mayors across the country will continue to have a dialogue with his legacy as they study his leadership and accomplishments for generations to come.

We all know of such iconic Chicago projects as Millennium Park and the Navy Pier, the public art displays throughout the downtown, and the green rooftops, parkland, and building initiatives that have made Chicago among the most environmentally friendly cities in the world. We also know about such audacious and ambitious initiatives as the closing and

conversion of the former Meigs Field airport on Northerly Island. Mayor Daley will surely be remembered for these considerable undertakings. For mayors, thinking big and acting big is important.

But Mayor Daley is also attuned to the scale of the individual and the experience of the individual in Chicago. From the flowers on the street medians that he made certain were there, to the neighborhood initiatives in parks, to the smaller gardens and gathering spaces, he pays attention to the small things because he realizes that small in size or scope does not mean small in importance.

With his focus on the micro and the macro, the visionary and the pragmatic, the today and the tomorrow, Mayor Daley inspires mayors from cities of every size in our country. He is successful because he understands that a city must be beautiful and livable. And all mayors, no matter the size of their cities or the length of their time in office, can benefit from committing to those ideals. A mayor need not be in office for long to create a vision or develop momentum or put into practice processes that are so good that the next mayor will want to follow them. Whether it's the future mayor of Chicago or the mayor of a small town a thousand miles away, Mayor Daley and his legacy will continue to inspire.

Of course I don't know all the details of some of the things he does. But I do know this: nobody who works for him wants to let him down. He assembles strong, smart people around him—great architects, landscape architects, urban designers, engineers, builders, and others. They all know that this man's heart and soul are dedicated to the city. And he listens and gets ideas from them as well. It's part of his humility.

And he is quick to act on good ideas. Many of these have been his; many have come from others. Who comes up with them doesn't matter. What does matter is that as mayor, he has recognized their value and worked tirelessly to shepherd them into reality.

Mayor Daley's determination and boldness to carry out initiatives makes him an exceptional leader in design, but it's also his will to think creatively in the first place. To think big and to ask "Why not?" By giving license to others to help him create and design, he himself becomes the city's most influential artist.

Mayor Daley always makes sure the designers, planners, builders, and others working with him know that he really cares and that the details of the final product need to be





Left: Cloud Gate, unofficially dubbed "The Bean," is a public sculpture by British artist Anish Kapoor in Chicago's Millennium Park.

Next Page: One of the many public displays of art around the city, "Daphne Garden," by Dessa Kirk, stands on Northerly Island.

He is an artist because he uses his power to create the city as a work of art in itself.

just right. Why? Because he will notice. And he will notice because he knows his constituents well, and he knows what they want. He puts a positive pressure on those working for and with him, a reminder to create and keep the city at all times as something beautiful.

You want your city to be so beautiful that if you didn't live there, you'd hope to visit it. As residents go to school, work, worship, or play, they should be exposed to places as nourishing, optimistic, and inspirational as those that they seek out on vacation. Mayor Daley has helped make Chicago such a place, a city that people want to both live in and visit. It's admired.

It seems to me that Mayor Daley has always been in the people's corner. He's always tried to make decisions in their best interest, never thinking or acting like he was wiser than they. Rather, he has been positively infected with their wisdom. Mayors need to know where their constituents' hearts are and what their hopes are, what their fears and desires are. Anytime Mayor Daley talks about the city of Chicago, you can tell he means the *people* of Chicago; he is thinking of them when he says his city's name. He understands the common-

ality of their hopes and aspirations. In his unwavering efforts to make Chicago a well-designed city, he has made it beautiful, and a beautiful city is the greatest gift a mayor can give. It is nourishing to all of its citizens—every day and for all days. A beautiful city is a work of art. In Chicago, the artist—a great artist—is Richard M. Daley. His work of art will be studied and will inspire mayors and their cities forever.

Mayor Joseph P. Riley Jr. was first elected by the residents of Charleston, S.C., in 1975 and is serving an unprecedented ninth term in office. Under his leadership, Charleston has developed nationally acclaimed affordable housing and has experienced remarkable revitalization of its waterfront and historic downtown business district. As a founding father and champion of the Mayors' Institute on City Design, a leadership initiative of the National Endowment for the Arts in partnership with the United States Conference of Mayors and the American Architectural Foundation, Mayor Riley has also helped provide critical urban design support to mayors across America. For his efforts, he is widely recognized as one of our nation's most visionary civic leaders.



BY JEFF SPECK, AICP, CNU-A,
LEED AP, HON. ASLA



as city builders of the first rank, Chicago Mayor Richard Daley and NYC Planning Commissioner Amanda Burden no doubt have a lot in common. One experience they both share is having attended the Mayors' Institute on City Design, a National Endowment for the Arts program that is run in partnership with the U.S. Conference of Mayors and the American Architectural Foundation. For a quarter century, this program has been putting mayors together with designers to rethink the physical form of their cities. Its impacts across the nation have been profound, the longer-term benefits of which are just beginning to be documented.

In my four years at the Endowment, I did not miss a single Mayors' Institute, despite my extremely tight travel budget. They were just too good. As the representative of the program's lead funder, I was always welcome to speak, and, as a city planner, there was always too much that I wanted to say. But after a few of these sessions, I got a strong sense of what most of the mayors needed to hear. That most of these exhortations are common sense does not alter the fact that city leaders every day make decisions large and small that violate them outright. So, for all the public servants today who want to make better places, and for the citizens who want to help, I would like to share the following ten city design resolutions.

1. Design Streets for People. What attracts people to cities? For most, it is the public realm, with the vibrant street life that phrase implies. A successful public realm is one that people can inhabit comfortably on foot. Unfortunately, most cities today still allow their streets to be designed by traffic engineers who tend to ignore the needs of pedestrians. For example, parallel parking, essential to protecting people on the sidewalk, is often eliminated to speed the traffic. Every aspect of the streetscape, including lane widths, curbs, sidewalks, trees, and lighting can be designed to the needs of either cars or people. Too many cities favor the former.

2. Overrule the Specialists. Engineers are not alone in their quest to shape the city around specialized needs. The modern world is full of experts who are paid to ignore criteria beyond their profession. But the specialist is the enemy of the city, which is by definition a general enterprise. The school and parks departments will push for fewer, larger facilities, since these are easier to maintain. The public works department will insist that new neighborhoods be designed principally around snow and trash removal. The department of transportation will build new roads to ease traffic generated by the very sprawl that they cause. Each of these approaches may be correct in a vacuum, but is wrong in a city. Cities need generalists like mayors to weigh the advice of specialists against the common good.



Right: Langham Court in Boston provides subsidized housing that fits seamlessly into its surroundings.

P. 30 Top: Miami Beach's popular "Chia Pet" garage delivers patrons to a sidewalk lined by storefronts.

P. 30 Bottom: Milwaukee's downtown art museum provides everyday moments of beauty that many cities lack.

Build Normal
(Affordable) Housing
1, 2, 3, 5, 8, 15, 20, 24, 35, 89

3. Mix the Uses. Another key to active street life is creating a 24-hour city, with neighborhoods so diverse in use that they are occupied around the clock. Eating, shopping, working, socializing—these activities are mutually reinforcing and flourish in each other's presence. Moreover, many businesses such as restaurants and health clubs rely on both daytime and evening traffic to cover their rent. When considering the future of any city district, the first step should be to ask what uses are missing. In many downtowns, the answer to that question is housing, and cities from Providence to San Diego can point to new housing as a big part of a recent turnaround.

4. Hide the Parking Lots. If they are to keep walking, pedestrians must feel safe, comfortable—and entertained. And nothing is more boring than a parking lot. Whether they are open-air or six stories tall, parking lots must be banished along any street that hopes to attract walking. Happily, parking lots are easy to hide. It only takes a 20-foot-thick crust of housing or offices to block a huge asphalt lot from view, and new parking structures can easily be built atop ground-level shops. Smart cities across the country are putting these requirements into law.

5. Small is Beautiful. People are small, and the most walkable cities acknowledge this fact with small blocks, small streets, and small increments of investment. Portland owes much of its success to its tiny blocks that create an incredibly porous network of streets, each of which can be quite small as a result. Similarly, a healthy real-estate development community is one of chipmunks, not gorillas. Do not tie the fate of your city to a single corporate juggernaut with its silver-bullet megamall when you should instead be leading the way for the local investor who wants to renovate a rowhouse.

6. Save That Building. How many buildings do we need to tear down before we learn our lesson? Almost every city that deeply regrets the 1960s destruction of its 1900s structures is happily permitting the current destruction of its 1940s structures. Historic preservation may be our best way to respect our ancestors, but it can also be justified on economic terms alone. Don Rypkema reminds us that in market economies, it is the differentiated product that commands a monetary premium. This is why cities like Savannah and Miami Beach can point to historic preservation as the key ingredi-

ent in recent booms. It isn't always easy to find a productive use for an empty old building, but tearing it down makes that outcome impossible. In these cases, remember this twist on the old adage: "don't just do something; stand there!"

7. Build Normal (Affordable) Housing. Affordable housing remains a crisis in many cities, but the solution is not to build more housing projects. Rather, to be successful, affordable housing must do two things: be integrated with market-rate housing and look like market-rate housing. The most effective affordability programs combine housing with preservation by building houses on "missing tooth" empty lots in historic neighborhoods. These houses provide smaller-than-standard apartments, but they are stylistically compatible with their neighbors. Despite the best-intentioned efforts of three generations of architecture students, affordable housing is exactly the wrong place to pioneer new design styles. As Andres Duany says, "Experiment on the rich. They can always move out."

8. Build Green/Grow Green. People have been talking about sustainability for decades, but that movement has finally passed the tipping point with the success of the U.S. Green Building Council's LEED standards. There is no longer any excuse for not building green. That said, individual buildings have less of an impact on our carbon footprint than urban form; a LEED platinum house in the suburbs is an energy hog compared to a conventional urban rowhouse, once you take transportation into account. If you want to save the ice caps, invest in public transit and bike lanes first. Oh, and while we're on the subject of green: Plant more trees! If urban leaders truly understood the correlation between tree cover and real estate value, our cities would look like forests.

9. Question your Codes. A "dingbat" is an apartment house on stilts floating above an exposed parking lot. The construction of one dingbat on a street of elegant rowhouses is enough to send property values plummeting. Why, then, do most city codes make no distinction between rowhouses and dingbats? Conventional zoning codes, made up of complex statistics like floor area ratio, ignore the differences between pleasant and unbearable urbanism. More often than not, they also make a city's traditional urban form—short front setbacks and mixed uses—illegal to emulate. For these reasons, a new generation of design ordinances has gained



Photo by Speck & Associates LLC

Hide the
Parking Lots



Photo by David La Haye

Don't
Forget
Beauty

favor among planners. Called “form-based codes,” these ordinances regulate what really matters: a building’s height, disposition, location, and where it puts the parking. Cities from Petaluma, Calif., to Miami are implementing these codes. Is yours?

10. Don’t Forget Beauty. Mayor Joe Riley of Charleston reminds us that cities should be places “that make the heart sing.” For many of our citizens, especially those too poor or infirm to travel, the city is an entire world. For this reason, it is our responsibility to create and maintain cities that not only function properly but also afford moments of beauty. Yet how many communities today routinely award to the lowest bidder their contracts for schools, parks, and government buildings—the only investments that belong to us all? In the interest of short-term parsimony, we cheat ourselves out of an honorable public realm and a noble legacy. This did not use to be the case, and it need not continue. Many of the

nation’s most beautiful buildings and parks were built during periods of unparalleled adversity. What matters is not our wealth, but our priorities.

Cities are the largest and most complex things that we humans make. Despite evidence to the contrary, the knowledge exists on how to make them well. To the leaders—and citizens—who want to create better places: please start here.

Former design director at the National Endowment for the Arts, Jeff Speck is principal of Speck & Associates LLC, a city planning firm based in Washington, D.C. He is co-author of Suburban Nation and The Smart Growth Manual.

BY RON BOGLE
PRESIDENT AND CEO OF THE
AMERICAN ARCHITECTURAL FOUNDATION



Something profound is happening across America. During a historic economic recession and against seemingly insurmountable odds, local leaders in some of our nation's hardest-hit industrial cities are making progress toward revitalizing their communities—and *design has emerged as an essential strategy in addressing these challenges.*

While these cities vary widely in size, history, and circumstances—think Baltimore, Buffalo, Detroit, and Youngstown—they tend to share a set of interrelated challenges, what Kresge Foundation President Rip Rapson calls the “wicked problems” of their condition:

- Long vacant or underutilized land where heavy manufacturing once thrived;
- A prevalence of empty and/or decaying buildings;
- Diminished tax bases that make it difficult to fund even basic municipal services;
- Aging inner-city populations; and
- High rates of poverty and unemployment/underemployment.

Despite the complexity and gravity of these problems, Rip remains optimistic. He sees transformative potential in those cities that have been called rustbelt, frostbelt, weak-market, and post-industrial. He sees an opportunity to realize a new vision of beauty, sustainability, livability, and economic vitality built on “radically different concepts of the city’s physical form.” And he’s not alone—neither in his optimism nor his call for an overhaul rather than a tune-up.

Toni Griffin is a highly skilled urban mechanic. She is an architect, urban designer, educator, and two-time alumna of the Mayors’ Institute on City Design (MICD). With support from the Kresge Foundation, Toni has worked with Detroit Mayor Dave Bing to develop a comprehensive, citywide strategic plan. Her advice ... think BIG. Whatever the individual circumstances of these older industrial cities may be, they’ve all reached “a moment in time when large, transformative change is required to improve the overall health of the city.”

Of course this begs the question of where to begin. Fortunately, we don’t have to start from scratch. As Don Carter of the Remaking Cities Institute at Carnegie Mellon’s School of Architecture points out, these cities are already primed for smart growth, with walkable neighborhoods, affordable



housing, historic downtowns and main streets, strong universities, leading medical centers, established philanthropic groups, beautiful city parks, and celebrated cultural amenities.

They also have the development density needed for public transportation; the space to grow internally on underutilized land without having to spend money on new sewer, water, and road systems; and an abundance of water that is the envy of sunbelt cities.

In addition, and perhaps most importantly, they have the spirit of the people who have remained. As Don explains, “Call it strength, resilience, persistence, bull-headedness, whatever—they’re still there. And they’re saying, ‘Well, we must be able to do something to fix this.’”

Of course transformative change doesn’t just happen. It requires leadership—strong, persistent, diverse leadership—which is exactly what Phil Henderson and his colleagues at the Surdna Foundation look for when selecting communities to support. In particular, they search for a combination of three groups of leaders.

- **Political leaders**, including mayors and other elected officials;
- **Third-sector leaders** from philanthropic and nonprofit organizations; and
- **Business leaders** with demonstrated interest and commitment.

Through national design leadership programs, including the Sustainable Cities Design Academy, the Mayors’ Institute on City Design, and Great Schools by Design, the American Architectural Foundation helps to establish these critical leadership assets in more than 70 cities each year.

Jay Williams—executive director of the Office of Recovery for Auto Communities and Workers, former mayor of Youngstown, and an MICD alumnus—echoes the need to cultivate a diverse network of leadership, stressing the role that local leaders play in helping guide residents through the psychological process of accepting change. This point is well worth a moment of reflection. Transformative change, no matter how beneficial, demands sacrifice, compromise, and reinvention.

As Mayor Williams explains, “One of the things I’ve found most rewarding as a mayor is that once you decide—and I mean decide collectively—to lead a community through that change, they can realize that while things are different, it’s not necessarily the end for their community.” Without that realization, residents may fall victim to inertia, holding onto the past rather than contributing to a vision that moves the city forward.

Not surprisingly, when I interviewed Rip Rapson, he too trumpeted the virtues of diverse yet collaborative leadership: “When the problems are as densely interrelated as they are in any urban context—transit is related to land use is related to education is related to safety—there needs to be a response that is similarly cross-sectoral, cross-disciplinary, and ultimately able to integrate a wide variety of potential responses, not just a single response.”





Top: A public art installation in a vacant office building in downtown Detroit stands as a testament to the determination of the city's residents.

Bottom: Street artist Banksy sparked a community conversation with his addition to a wall covered with gang tags in northeast Detroit.

Previous Page: City Councilwoman Carol Rimedio-Righetti inspired 34 Choffin High School students to transform this abandoned Youngstown gas station into a message of hope.



Are you starting to see a pattern here? Design challenges are by nature complex. We will need a complex matrix of design leadership to address them. AAF is helping to create that matrix, by educating local leaders about the power of design and inspiring them to take up the mantle of design in their communities.

THE PHILADELPHIA STORY

Budget shortfalls, higher than average crime rates, historic unemployment—in such a climate, many local leaders in older industrial cities dismiss design as a luxury. Not Philadelphia Mayor Michael Nutter (who is also an MICD alumnus). He preaches that design has a fundamental influence on the full spectrum of urban life, and he is committed to leveraging design for the benefit of his constituency.

In April 2010, Mayor Nutter addressed some 300 mayors, federal officials, design professionals, and other key decision makers in the design process at the National Mayors Summit on City Design. Convened in Chicago by the National Endowment for the Arts, American Architectural Foundation, and U.S. Conference of Mayors, the Summit marked the 25th anniversary of MICD. Mayor Nutter framed his comments around a phrase as powerful as it is simple: “design matters.”

According to John Grady, senior vice president at the Philadelphia Industrial Development Corporation, Mayor Nutter practices what he preaches: “For Mayor Nutter, first and foremost, it’s all about leadership. He has put his credibility and energy behind a lot of these initiatives in a way that shows people that the design process is going to be important. He has re-energized our entire Planning Commission and given them a role and the resources to think about a comprehensive plan for the first time in 50 years. And he’s been extremely smart and thoughtful in the whole approach to the issue of sustainability.”

For much of his first year in office, Mayor Nutter focused on sustainability, stressing equity, open space, management of resources, the economy, and development of the skill sets necessary in such an economy. These efforts led to the production of the Greenworks blueprint, which is in the process of transitioning from paper to place. Some initial achievements include new bike trails all over downtown Philadelphia, the expansion of the Schuylkill River Trail, and enhanced access to the city’s waterfronts for city residents. Reclaiming and repurposing the waterfront has incredible potential to reinvigorate Philadelphia.

As John explains, “Huge stretches of Philadelphia’s 36 miles of waterfront used to be heavy industrial areas: railroads, shipping, ship building, petroleum refining; nasty, noisy enterprises that were deliberately isolated from most of the population. Today, people want to recapture those areas for modern use. It’s a huge design challenge—but we’ve learned that we can turn away from the old kinds of heavy industry and still retain a focus on industry.” Through design, the Philadelphia waterfront is gaining a new identity, and the changes already achieved are only the beginning.

THE PROBLEM OF THE THIN BENCH

Any city with strong design leaders in the public sector is fortunate—particularly if that strength extends beyond the mayor’s office to the other halls of city government. For cities struggling to revitalize and reinvent themselves, this leadership base is critical. Herein lies a problem for many older industrial cities.

As Phil Henderson explains, “One of the observations we have is just how thin the bench sometimes is, particularly in the political arena behind these visionary mayors, into the political leadership teams—just how few people there are, in some cases, who are really interested in and able to sustain high-quality, innovative work over time.”

In other words, a visionary mayor is essential but not sufficient. To tackle the long-term process of transforming a city, it takes a village. Building civic capacity and engaging citizens broadly is critically important. According to Toni Griffin, “the city leaders need committed partners who are dedicated to creating a shared vision. A city government, particularly in these times of constrained budgets and capacity, cannot do it themselves. And cities aren’t built by the public sector alone.”

ADDING TO THE DEPTH CHART

Phil Henderson and Rip Rapson believe philanthropic foundations are well positioned to become a new locus of design leadership, especially in older industrial cities. These stable institutions, anchored in the communities they serve, are capable of seeing long-term initiatives from start to finish. As Rip explains, the philanthropic world is in many ways uniquely qualified to catalyze collective action:

“Like the private sector, it has discretionary capital to contribute to a project. Like the academic sector, it has a long timeline and is very comfortable creating a sound empirical base underneath whatever needs to happen. Like the government, it’s able to pull people together in common purpose, communicate the work, do the convening, articulate the notion of a broader community, and present a set of ideas.”

Philanthropies also typically have close ties to some of the most disadvantaged communities in cities—exactly the communities that tend to have the most difficulty realizing transformative change.

BUILDING A CULTURE OF DESIGN LEADERSHIP

For more than a decade, the American Architectural Foundation has been on the ground in cities across America helping decision makers understand the critical role that design must play in their leadership portfolios. AAF also strives to provide them with the knowledge and momentum they need to realize the potential of design in their cities. We are energized by the efforts of our partners in the philanthropic community to help promote design as a driver for a new era of urban vibrancy.

For example, the Surdna Foundation has been focusing on sustainable communities, emphasizing sustainable environments, strong local economies, and thriving cultures. To

help fuel these initiatives, they are turning to the process of community-driven design. As Phil Henderson explains, “If you care about having high-quality places for people to live that offer economic opportunity, have low environmental impact, and embrace the local culture, design is both a tool for achieving that and an expression of that goal.”

ASKING THE RIGHT QUESTIONS

A successful design process starts with good questions. For Detroit, Rip Rapson and his colleagues at the Kresge Foundation have posed some compelling ones. For example, “How will the community use the process of design to re-imagine connective tissue within a civic infrastructure created to serve two million people, not the current population of 800,000? What are the design moves that the city will need to make in order to mesh that new system with the old one?”

These are difficult questions, but Rip is confident that the design process can help us find the answers we need: “In Detroit, the power of architecture and design to either reinforce form, fill in form, or create new form is extraordinary.” In search of solutions, Rip believes design will be “phenomenally important.”

AN URBAN MOMENT

While the challenges facing older industrial cities at times seem overwhelming, we have great cause for hope. After several decades of suburbanization, cities are rapidly coming back into favor. As John Grady explains, “Retiring baby

boomers are coming back downtown, and young professionals graduating from college aren’t viewing it as the American dream to move out onto a three-acre piece of land with a new house on it. That’s a huge opportunity for cities.”

With the necessary support, local leaders can seize this opportunity to use design as a catalyst for transforming their communities.

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- **Phil Henderson**, President, Surdna Foundation
- **Rip Rapson**, President, Kresge Foundation
- **The Honorable Jay Williams**, Executive Director, the Office of Recovery for Auto Communities and Workers; Former Mayor, the City of Youngstown, Ohio



Ron Bogle became the seventh President and CEO of AAF in July 2002. During his tenure, he has developed and launched five national design initiatives, including the Sustainable Cities Design Academy and Great Schools by Design. He has also guided AAF in its role as the manag-

ing partner of the Mayors' Institute on City Design, a leadership initiative of the National Endowment for the Arts in partnership with AAF and the U.S. Conference of Mayors.



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