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From the Editor

Having spent a grand total of sixty-three seconds with her, I feel confident saying that Kat Taylor is a great person. But the inaugural Editor of the *Review* also happened to set the bar fairly high when it came to standards for the journal. Success is tricky like that. Luckily, the thought of 'what had I gotten myself into' hadn't entered my mind until about April, when of course it was too late to turn back. Regardless, I'm really glad to be on board for the next phase of the *Urban Review* and hope you enjoy this issue.

I would like to use my "soapbox" time to thank the outgoing GUAPA officers. Sandy Pan, Dan Ross, Ali Hirschenbaum and Shannon McCue deserve a pat on the back, at the very least, for all their work helping the Department and its formerly wide-eyed new students. So be sure to thank them before they strut across the Radio City Music Hall stage next month. After all, they were the ones that got you the occasional free glass of red wine or bite to eat!

I want to thank the authors for a truly diverse collection of articles, but what else would you expect at Hunter? You the students deserve this. You the authors created this and most importantly, you the faculty inspired this. So whether its building homes in a foreign land or connecting with resources here at 68th Street, get busy because there's plenty to do.

Enter to start,



Ryan Herchenroether

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The Grand Concourse: A Brief History of the Bronx Most Famous Boulevard

janet hines

A Beginning

The Grand Concourse is possibly the most famous boulevard in the Bronx. One with the most colorful past, and according to local historians, the brightest future. The roadway has evolved from a rural stretch surrounded by farmland and open fields to a thoroughfare in today's bustling urban environment.



The Grand Concourse near Bedford Park Boulevard, 1915
*Bronx Chamber of Commerce Collection, Courtesy of
Lehman College Library/CUNY Special Collections*

Originally named the Grand Boulevard and Concourse, it was later shortened to the Grand Concourse and is known to the locals as simply “the Concourse.” A trip along this grand boulevard provides visitors with views of some of the city's wonderful landmarks that include, Yankee Stadium, the Bronx County Building, the Bronx Museum of the Arts, the Edgar Allan Poe Cottage and while not a landmark, Fordham Road—a popular retail hub in the Central Bronx.

The Concourse was designed by civil engineer Louis Aloys Risse in 1882, whose concept was to build a thoroughfare modeled on the Champs-Élysées to connect Manhattanites to parkland in the north Bronx. Construction began in 1892 and the Grand Boulevard and Concourse opened in 1909.

The characteristics of Risse's design were considered remarkable at the time due to the boulevard's width, 182-feet across, which was con-

sidered extreme during that period. He also included the use of varying elevations with underpasses at large intersections that allowed for an “express” lane of uninterrupted traffic. This was a design feature that many Bronx historians believe was borrowed from architects Frederick Law Olmstead and Calvert Vaux's design of Central Park decades earlier. The boulevard was separated into three roadways that ran between tree-shaded islands, which provided pathways for horse-drawn carriages, bicycles and pedestrian traffic.

The four-mile road was dotted with wood framed Victorian homes and small cottages, however, the landscape changed at the start of the 1900s when mass transit arrives in the Bronx. A housing boom was initiated along the Grand Concourse between 1920 and 1930, and by the mid-1930s, almost three hundred apartment buildings had been



Concourse Plaza Hotel, Grand Concourse, ca. 1930
*Bronx Chamber of Commerce Collection, Courtesy of Lehman
College Library/CUNY Special Collections*

constructed along the boulevard. To allow for continued development, New York City zoned the boulevard to allow for the construction of taller buildings.

While developers were constructing apartments to meet the needs of the growing middle-class, architects designed buildings to reflect the prosperity of the era. The Grand Concourse has a substantial collection of neo-classical and Moorish style buildings that was typical at the start of its development. However, it is mainly known for its

small collection of Art Deco style buildings, characterized by highly stylized and colored ornamentation, ironwork doors and mosaics, and Art Moderne buildings, noted for striped block patterns, cantilevered corners, stylized letterforms and a streamlined appearance.

The Fall

The Concourse, like much of the Bronx, experienced decay and decline during the 1960s, 1970s and the 1980s. "The groundwork for the Concourse fall is really laid after World War II. GIs coming home from the war are given incentives to move to the suburbs and what we see is the start of "white flight," explains Sam Goodman, Bronx Historian and urban planner with the Bronx Borough President's Office.

By the 1950s, property owners start cutting back on amenities and are not keeping up with maintenance of the apartment buildings, and the Grand Concourse's allure begins to wane by the end of the decade. When the 1960s arrive its demise is evident, Mr. Goodman said. At the same time, more than 100,000 people were displaced by slum clearings in Manhattan. As a result, mostly black and Puerto Rican residents are being placed in the South Bronx. During this period, the city, under the direction of Robert Moses, also adopts policies of relocating welfare recipients to the Grand Concourse, paying fees to landlords to place them in vacant apartments. Another development that helps facilitate the movement of the few middle-class residents out of the Grand Concourse was the construction of Co-op City in the northeast Bronx.

"Co-op City provided the last nail in the coffin for the deterioration. It basically helped drain the area of the few remaining middle-class residents and by the late '60s and early '70s; the middle-class that once dominated the Grand Concourse is gone. There really was nothing left to keep them there," Mr. Goodman concludes.

What is interesting is despite the decline of the neighborhood, and buildings being torched in surrounding neighborhoods, the Grand

Concourse had one salutary effect— almost no buildings were razed to redevelop the boulevard.

The Grand Concourse is located in Community District 4, one of the poorest and most neglected areas in the South Bronx today. But conditions have begun to improve due to campaigns by local advocacy groups and politicians to generate economic and cultural revitalization.

The Grand Concourse has been designated as a special preservation district, meaning the city recognizes the boulevard's unique character and design features of its structures and seeks to protect it from out of scale development that would destroy the traditional residential character. Any new development that is proposed for any area along the Concourse would have to include design features and guidelines that would not alter the neighborhood.

Unfortunately, the Grand Concourse's architecture has been compromised in recent years with the replacement of the original steel casement windows with aluminum windows on some Art Deco and Art Moderne buildings. The neighborhood's significance has already been recognized by its listing on the National Register of Historic Places. However, the protection afforded by a New York City landmarks designation is needed to prevent further changes to the buildings and encourage careful restorations.

Movement is underway to restore and preserve the Grand Concourse, however, there are concerns that the boulevard may suffer the same fate other revitalized areas have – gentrification.

"People realize that the Grand Concourse is a beautiful piece of architectural ingenuity. It's filled with beautiful apartments, parkland is abundant, and it's accessible," Mr. Goodman said. "The same reasons that attracted people to the Concourse at the start of the 20th century are the same reasons that are attracting them at the start of the 21st." Hopefully this renewed interest will not result in a loss of the architectural character that made the Grand Concourse an icon in the Bronx, as it remains to this day.

Industrial Gowanus faces Redevelopment Pressure

michael kent

The future of Brooklyn's historically industrial Gowanus neighborhood is in question, as residential developers have eyed the area for re-development, while many of the organizations representing area businesses fight for it to maintain its industrial character. The possible redevelopment of Gowanus, juxtaposing residential with industrial uses, poses an interesting contrast of two land uses viewed by 20th Century zoning policy as conflicting.

The neighborhood earned its reputation as a hub for industry and manufacturing shortly after the 1848 expansion of the Gowanus Creek into the Gowanus Canal. To this day the canal, known as Lavender Lake to some, has been renowned for its odor and high amount of pollution, despite efforts to clean it. The southern portion of the neighborhood, south of 7th Street, contains a small amount of housing, and the northern portion features two large public housing projects. The central portion of the neighborhood, though, along the main stretch of the canal, is almost entirely industrial, with little residential development.

According to 2000 U.S. Census, 14,153 people live in Gowanus, 46.7 percent of whom were Latino, 25.6 percent single-race, non-Hispanic black/African-American, and 19.6 percent single-race, non-Hispanic white. Median household income in the neighborhood was just \$25,842, which was lower than the borough of Brooklyn and citywide figures.

Over the past three decades, the neighborhoods bordering Gowanus, such as Carroll Gardens, Boerum Hill, and Park Slope, have gentrified, leaving Gowanus an isolated island of industry. As real estate prices have increased, a small number of artists began to set up shop in Gowanus, and some moved in. The neighborhood is rapidly becoming a target for both new housing construction and conversion of formerly industrial-use buildings to residential use. Whole Foods specialty supermarket has already purchased property at 3rd Avenue and 3rd Street, along the canal, for a coveted Brooklyn location. This site is currently undergoing a massive clean up.



Industrial use of the canal has waned, though the occasional tugboat still passes beneath the Hamilton Avenue Bridge.

According to Tom Chardovoyne, Executive Director of the Gowanus Canal Community Development Corporation (GCCDC), many of the warehouse and other industrial business-owners in Gowanus have in the works plans to redevelop their properties for residential use. The GCCDC is putting the finishing touches on a report proposing

Source: Michael Kent a comprehensive community plan to

allow the neighborhood to retain its industrial businesses while ceding somewhat to the pressure for residential re-development. If the neighborhood is going to transition, Chardovoyne said, it might as well transition with a clearly set plan.

The preservation of industry in Southwest Brooklyn is not, however, an entirely lost cause. In 2005, New York City founded the Office of Industrial and Manufacturing

Businesses (IMB) to cultivate economic growth in areas of the city with historical concentrations of industrial and manufacturing jobs. The IMB identified 16 Industrial Business Zones (IBZs), in which it would set forth initiatives to 1) forbid residential rezoning, 2) attract relocating businesses from within the City through a series of incentives, 3) conduct area-planning studies, and 4) market to new, expanding, or relocating businesses. The IMB identified Southwest Brooklyn as one of the 16 IBZs, but the zone's geography encompasses only the portion of Gowanus located north of 3rd Street, west of 4th Avenue, and almost entirely east of the canal.

Much of the rest of the neighborhood was declared an Ombudsman area, which would receive some of the business services that the IBZ would, but without the protection against rezoning. Such a designation could ease the efforts of residential developers such as Leviev Boymelgreen, whose proposed Gowanus Village would be located just south of 3rd Street, between the canal and 3rd Avenue.

Rachael Dubin of the Southwest Brooklyn Industrial Development Corporation (SWBIDC) says, however, that the Ombudsman zone designation for parts of Gowanus and neighboring Red Hook and Sunset Park is anything but the nail-in-the-coffin for industry in the area. A 2005 study by the SWBIDC of the industrial sector in Gowanus revealed a 25 percent increase since 1997 in the number of neighborhood industrial businesses. These 500 firms employ close to 3,000 workers, many of whom, she said, reside nearby. Additionally, re-zoning would require a petition to the Board of Standards and Appeals, the success of which is

far from a guarantee.

Bette Stoltz, Executive Director of the South Brooklyn Local Development Corporation (SBLDC), added that many of the Gowanus business owners live in nearby Carroll Gardens and Park Slope.

In response to the IBZ designation, SWBIDC Executive Director Phaedra Thomas applauded the city's efforts to protect historically



Brownfield remediation is currently underway along the canal near Third Street on the property that the proposed Whole Foods will occupy.

Source: Michael Kent

industrial areas, but recommended an expansion of the Southwest Brooklyn IBZ boundaries. If not, she wrote, it should be emphasized that the Ombudsman areas are zoned specifically for manufacturing, and that any "rezoning and variances will not be granted easily."

It remains to be seen whether Gowanus will resist change or

follow in the line of once-largely industrial New York neighborhoods such as Soho, Williamsburg, and Long Island City in a transition to residential land use. Clearly, many in the neighborhood are determined to retain the industrial identity while somewhat reluctantly incorporating a larger residential presence.

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The Cost of Empathy

jayson barry yager

Consequences are those intangibles one would normally like to ignore. They can be beneficial, but the term usually applies to something unpleasant. An action taken by an individual without consideration, even for the benefit of another, may be detrimental to a third party. But does it matter? Should it matter? Assume there are no legal or societal penalties to the harmful action or requirement to minimize its effect. Should the perpetrator recognize the consequences of the action?

The cost of empathy is the recognition of the moral consequences of an action and/or policy. In this context, "moral" is used extremely loosely. The morality of the planner/advocate may or may not be based on ethnic, religious, or other tribal affiliations. Morality may be nothing more than what the planner/advocate may consider ethically acceptable, given a finite number of outcomes. An action or policy taken that has an adverse unintended effect on a third party may leave the planner/advocate tossing and turning the night, or enjoying a restful slumber. The cost of empathy all depends on what one can live with.

Can one be so focused on serving the needs of a target constituency, to be oblivious to the second hand harm wrought by that service? Common law states that an agent may not have two masters, and that is certainly true for lawyers, religious guides, and political representatives. To defend the interest of a client, shepherd a congregation, or ensure governmental resources for a community requires significant blinders to what may befall third parties. Can a planner/advocate accept operating with blinders? Should the morality of the planner/advocate be static, or should it grow to consider the current reality of a situation? How much recognition is required to meet the cost of empathy?

One might consider the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act of 1996 an example of ignoring the cost of a policy. The act, also known as H.R.3734, and more publicly as "Workfare," made temporary government assistance a condition of some type of work activity. If an individual refused to enroll in one of the designated employment options, assistance would be reduced or terminated. The Congressional statement preceding the new requirements called for the need to strengthen the family structure and end a recipient's dependence on government benefits. The promotion of self-reliance and stable homes for children are certainly considered worthy objectives. Nearly ten years later, research has found that workfare has succeeded in giving some participants experience in self-reliance and a more cohesive family structure. But there is also evidence that there has been little or no impact on the lives of

other participants. On the surface, H.R.3734 appears to be a hit or miss approach to a larger problem being ignored.

In the case of H.R.3734, poverty is the cost of empathy not recognized by the Congress. Many beneficiaries of governmental assistance live in a state where the acquisition of basic items, such as food, clothing, and housing, would not be possible without a significant form of assistance. The daily act of ensuring one's own economic stability and mobility would not be the norm, but an exception. Poverty is a form of existence in which the basic need to survive can have a destabilizing effect on the family structure and the individual pursuit for self-improvement. Emotional support and personal growth may be secondary to meeting the basic needs that a majority of the population would take for granted. A state of poverty is not congruent to a lower economic class since economic class is subjective. One can be in a lower economic class and yet be able to ensure one's own economic stability and mobility.

Congress took pains to detail the need for job training and family education. But poverty is not mentioned anywhere in the H.R.3734 Congressional findings. Granted, poverty is a problem that has plagued societies in one form or another for thousands of years. There have always been individuals for whom daily survival in a time of peace was an extraordinary act. But for Congress to overhaul the welfare program without acknowledging poverty can be considered a failure to recognize the cost of their empathy. The Congress referred to this issue as a "crisis in our Nation," and yet there is no mention of the continuing cause of this crisis or an attempt to deal with it.

One would not expect Congress to resurrect the standard of the "Great Society" or end poverty as we know it. But to acknowledge it means dealing with it. Political representatives can operate with blinders, a luxury that should not be available to the planner/advocate. The planner/advocate is a problem solver. If one applies a formula to a problem, one does not ignore the permutations that result, especially if they can limit the effect of the formula or nullify the solution. Consequences must always be acknowledged. The planner/advocate may serve the needs of a target constituency based on moral judgment, but that same judgment should recognize the negative effect that action may have on third parties. In order to effectively reject and reduce human suffering, one should not ignore the possibility of being the source of that suffering.

Editor's note: The number of New York City residents receiving public assistance fell to 402,281 last month, the lowest number since December 1964. For more, see Sewell Chan's NY Times article, 4/6/06.

Building Homes, Building Lives
ali hirschenbaum

When most people think of going to Mexico for vacation they think of Cancun, Acapulco, or Cabo San Lucas, but for a special group of individuals, a small town outside Tijuana called La Gloria is their yearly destination. For the members of Building Beyond Borders (“BBB”), an organization dedicated to helping Mexican families build sturdy, decent homes, a yearly vacation does not include lying on the beach or drinking frozen margaritas poolside. These individuals spend their vacations helping families build new homes that will not flood when it rains, do not have a roofs held on by tires, and will help them live a healthier and happier lifestyle.

La Gloria is only 30 minutes from the United States/Mexican border, but the poverty, dirt roads and shacks that abound are shocking to those witnessing them for the first time. It is hard to believe that this kind of poverty can exist so close to the United States. In New York, poverty can mean living in an apartment that has been illegally converted into many units, sharing a bathroom with numerous other families or individuals, living in roach- and rodent-infested dwellings or relying on slum landlords. But in Mexico, living in poverty means building a house out of scraps of metal and wood found on the side of the road, sleeping on dirt floors, and using tires to hold a roof in place. The magnitude of destitution is almost unbearable. Given these conditions, it is easy to see why immigrants flood the United States every year, looking for a better lifestyle.



ed by Robert Katz, a Hunter College student studying Pre-Med. Robert, a former Marine, went on his first house-building trip to Tijuana, Mexico with a group called Club Dust, a Christian organization that he found out about while volunteering with Habitat for Humanity. Soon, Robert had enough interested friends to start a group of his own. At first, this new group was called Club Fiesta, a testament to the feeling of the trip, that it was a party. Later, when Robert and a few other volunteers from the trip decided to create a not-for-profit corporation, Building Beyond Borders was born. BBB consists of a group of friends who share a common goal: to help the people and the families that they meet. Each year there are many new faces that show up on

the build trips, but there is also a group of about 20 repeat participants. The group is very close and it often feels like a family. As one volunteer said, “it is hard to share this experience and not create a bond with the people around you.”

In the hillside section of La Gloria, where *Source: Ali Hirschenbaum* BBB usually builds, the government does not see the need to penetrate the area with infrastructure. Unlike the United States, where people and houses follow the infrastructure, in Mexico the infrastructure follows the houses and the people.

Therefore, the houses that BBB builds do not have running water, bathrooms or working electricity. In hopes that the area will shortly be wired with electricity, the houses are fitted with electrical boxes and light switches. Many residents in the area illegally and dangerously tap into the main electrical lines that run to the many factories located on the hilltops surrounding this rural neighborhood.

Building Beyond Borders was spearhead-

BBB builds simple wood-framed homes for the families they assist. The units are situated on 16x20 foot slabs of concrete and consist of 3 rooms and a loft area. In addition, BBB builds an outhouse for each family to use as its latrine. The original building plan was recently updated to include two vertical rows of cinderblocks along the outer edge of the concrete slab. This is intended to prolong the life of the house and add a more water-resistant border. The homes are finished with a shingled roof.

While BBB's main goal is to build a water-tight shelter for the family it is working with, its members take great pride in creating homes for their new friends. These homes are completed with insulation, sheetrock and windows, which are a rarity. If time permits, the interiors as well as the exteriors of the homes are painted. If the group members run out of time before they can fully complete the homes, they make sure that the family has all of the supplies necessary to finish the house and are sometimes able to find another group to finish the work.

The days are spent building and evenings are generally a time for relaxation and getting to know one another or catching up with old friends. The group stays at the City of Angels orphanage in La Gloria, and the children at the orphanage are always looking to play with the American visitors. Tacos La Gloria, a large roadside taco stand, is a favorite destination for the group and the conversations had over a few Tecates are always interesting for this diverse and eclectic group. Most of the participants are from New York and the group is almost as diverse as the city itself, consisting of all ages, races, ethnicities and religions.

Most volunteers show up without any formal construction experience, just the desire to help others and to make a difference. Many of them have learned about the trip from friends or colleagues but by the end of this journey they will have made new friends, learned new skills and



Source: <http://www.b3.mirandamedia.net>

have a greater understanding of what poverty means. Some people will experience this trip only once while others may become lifelong participants. No matter how many times one experiences this trip, the knowledge from it will impart upon each and every individual and will remain in each of their hearts and minds forever.

As a long time participant and volunteer with BBB, this journey has taught me that there is no joy like that of helping others and seeing how your gift can change their lives forever. This article is dedicated to Robert Katz, who always gives so selflessly to others and makes this opportunity possible to so many; I am honored to be his friend.

Building Beyond Borders' next trip is August 4-9, 2006. Visit their website at www.buildingbeyondborders.org for more information, including an application download. Nudge, nod, wink.

The Center for Community Planning and Development: Hunter Sets up Shop
dan ross

The Hunter Department of Urban Affairs and Planning is known for having programs that make their students get their hands dirty. With few exceptions, most classes involve helping real organizations do real work outside of the college. Our coursework and studio projects provide students a lot of contacts. New York makes this easy. If one imagines the city as an extended urban campus spanning in all directions from 68th and Lexington, then one quickly sees how spoiled we are. There's a lot of work in this town, it's a damned zoo. And that is nothing but good news for those of us who wish to make our living fighting to make it less of one. Luckily, finding a job is not a commonly reported difficulty among recent graduates of the Department.

However, knowing enough to pass an interview and knowing enough to do a job are not the same thing. As anyone who's interned can tell you, things work differently 'out there' when they're paying you. Even with a good amount of 'real world' experience, the learning curve for new professionals is daunting. As Hunter students, we manage to find work readily enough as community administrators, managers, planners, liaisons, and politicians. But are we really prepared? How much can we rely on a group studio project and a semester internship at a non-profit to sway an employer to hire us? What other forms of professional experience, save full-time employment, exist for students? What else can we show for our time at Hunter? Since the beginning of the Spring 2006 semester, the answers to these questions can be found on the 6th floor of the West Building.

That is the home of the new Hunter Center for Community Planning and Development (CCPD), which has been up and running in the old studio lab (W608) since January. Similar to the Pratt Institute Center for Community Education and Development (PICCED), the CCPD will function as the Department's community planning link to the greater New York area. It will be an ideal opportunity to promote Hunter's ideals, founded on

Paul Davidoff's notion of advocacy planning and pluralism, while functioning as a professional non-profit planning agency. The Center is still in its infancy and working to gather funds, find work, and promote itself. The eventual goal of the Center, according to Director Tom Angotti, is to help play a role "in making a qualitative leap in community planning in New York".



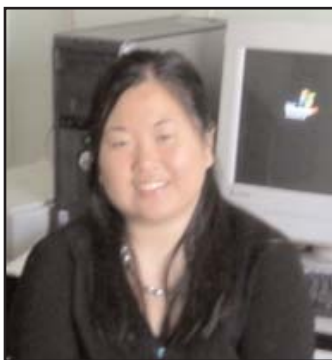
It will be an opportunity to learn and teach simultaneously. Unlike studio, it will be an entity for hire; providing

consultation services to communities either through grants or direct compensation. The community benefits by gaining a planning advocate. Students benefit by gaining essential professional experience in various aspects of service provision: business development, project manager, budgeting director, contract negotiation, etc. By promoting and practicing community planning throughout the region, it offers the chance to step beyond the confines of the classroom and experience community activism from a host of perspectives. Center students, many working as paid interns or staff, will be community consultants. They will have the chance to enhance existing skills and develop complementary skills by learning from other students and staff members. The Center offers the dual opportunity of producing the most marketable graduates in New York while nurturing the professional environment for their own future employment. It offers the greatest training imaginable to any student in this department and raises the bar for community planning in New York and the northeast. Ladies and gentlemen, this is unreservedly a good thing.

The center has been a speculative dream since Angotti's arrival to the Hunter Planning program in 2001. As former chair of the Pratt Graduate Center for Planning and the Environment, he had worked closely with PICCED while in Brooklyn. His arrival to the

Department coincided with that of several other new faculty members – Sigmund Shipp, Lynn McCormick, Susan Turner-Meiklejohn, and Jill Gross – who shared his goal of furthering the department’s mandated commitment to university/community integration. Establishing a center similar to Pratt’s became a quickly agreed-upon goal among them. And because of his prior community and administrative experience, they looked to Angotti as the most obvious candidate to spearhead the effort. To initiate things, Angotti successfully ran a series of Community workshops in 2002 and 2003 as a jumpstart to more fundraising. However, follow-up revenue did not materialize, and plans for the Center were put on hold. It would take several more years of grant writing and publicizing before the necessary start-up grants were delivered from a variety of public and private funds. Since then, several funding hurdles have been overcome, and with the help of several well-placed grants, some intense lobbying from Department Chair Stanley Moses, and a little help from the Hunter administration, the Center is now open for business.

The budget is currently about \$90,000. Aside from general funding grants, much of the Center’s funding comes from contracting to non-profit agencies needing assistance for particular projects in specific neighborhoods. Two of these projects, details of which will be released this summer, are to develop alternative neighborhood plans for Kensington, Brooklyn and Willet’s Point, Queens.



In February 2006, the Center’s first paid coordinator, recent Bernard graduate April Suwalsky, was hired to oversee the establishment of daily operations and outreach efforts. Among her first duties will be to set up the W608 lab as

Center HQ and building the website. The lab itself has also been fitted with new computers and furniture, thanks to the great diligence of Professor Laxmi Ramasubramanian and Social

Sciences computer lab Director Nick Trippell.

There’s a bit of uncertainty as to what the Center will look like when it is fully operational. There are no targeted staff or job budget numbers. Even Director Angotti doesn’t claim any far-reaching plans for the Center itself. Though he would eventually like to see some full-time staff coordinate a growing number of projects, the main goal is not in the size of the operation, but its significance. “It’s still in the process of formation”, says Angotti. “We’re kind of making it up as we go along.” Maybe so, but the existence of the Center as a vehicle for the promotion of both community planning and student development is anything but coincidental. Students would be well served to take advantage of it.

Tending the Garden: From Grassroots to Green Roofs, Planners Network Conference



Chicago, Illinois
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Hosted by: University of Illinois at Chicago,
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Please visit the conference website at:

<http://www.uic.edu/cuppa/upp/pn/index.html>

Reclaiming the Land: A Master Vision for the 21st Century

dara braitman

Nestled at the crossing of three valleys at the basin of the River Aire, Bradford, England, previously called 'Broad Ford,' boasts of prestigious universities, classic Victorian buildings, rich ethnic diversity, and cultural institutions including the National Museum of Photography, Film, and Television, its newest addition. What it does not boast of, however, is its deteriorating urban fabric, unsympathetic developments and road schemes, vacant office space, and a plentiful stock of surface parking lots.

After numerous waves of economic activity, flying under its new banner of 'One Landscape, Many Views,' Bradford City Centre is set to embark on what is likely to be one of its greatest journeys to date. This is the tale of Bradford and the vision of the Urban Regeneration Company to transform a seriously deteriorated urban landscape into a welcoming, vibrant, pedestrian-friendly city fully prepared to take on the 21st century and well beyond.

Once stifled by its location, the canal opening of 1776 and improved railway connections completed in

"...the Bradford City Centre Master Plan highlights the most crucial elements for creating and maintaining a sustainable, livable economic engine for today and tomorrow."

1846, allowed Bradford to prosper through the increased production of its natural resources, namely iron ore, coal, and soft water. The 1850s were marked by a large influx of immigration from all over Europe and Bradford's proud title as the undisputed wool capital of the world. Despite its prosperity, the beginning of the Industrial Revolution coupled with this intense growth further perpetuated the squalor, poverty, and filth that were only too familiar to urban life during this time.

Streets fell into disrepair, there was little sense made of continuing developments, and presumably much to the disliking of John Ruskin, the unrivalled architectural legacy built as the heart and soul of city laborers stood covered in soot and went untended.

Although able to hold on until the begin-

ning of the 20th century, the true downward spiral of Bradford, which would last well into the 1960s, began when new import tariffs were implemented, thus diminishing Bradford's importance in the international market. New immigration waves fueled by mill work during the 1960s helped breathe some life back into the city, when a small rebirth took place. The late 1980s and early 1990s were marked by much of the same success, but this short-lived upsurge was again halted before Bradford was able to achieve economic greatness.

While seemingly significant during their time, the developments intended to reconstruct the City Centre ultimately created a 'shatter zone' with buildings being replaced by surface parking and the shifting of the housing and industrial markets to neighboring areas. Despite the fact that retail, commercial, and administrative offices have remained within the city limits, the spider web of roads connecting the various parts of the city paired with this supposed facelift and vacant fac-

ories have only helped create an urban void unfriendly to pedestrians and limited accessibility of available open space.

At the bequest of the Bradford Metropolitan District Council and Yorkshire Forward, the Urban Regeneration Company was established in 2003 to tackle the significant challenges faced by Bradford. In seeking to unite and engage both the public and private sectors, a Master Plan was designed that would reposition the City Centre within the larger city picture, reveal many of its hidden qualities and attributes, reshape it through invention and inspiration, and rebuild the landscape in such a fashion that would not only be enjoyed upon completion but would likely withstand the test of time.

In order to redesign what has been called a polycentric city of various communities growing together to create the larger whole, the Urban Regeneration Company outlined the necessary components that would help redefine Bradford's

local, regional, and international strength. They did so armed with the participation of local businesses, investors, amenity groups, and numerous other representative bodies. With the intention of attracting economic activity in all sectors, the Master Plan represents the tangible start of a continuing dialogue between communities.



www.bradfordnewcity.com

Acting as the catalyst for future growth, the Master Plan envisions recreating the City Centre as the foyer or entranceway to the rest of the city, breathing life into the rich historic fabric that defines Bradford. Offering a new mental map of Bradford, an 8 by 8

grid has been outlined in which each box will be defined by experience, event, and activity. This perspective has generated a unique response that has further culminated into a smaller theoretical grid being superimposed onto the City Centre creating sixty-four 1km squares, each with its own attraction identified in one or more of the following categories: someplace to meet, something to see, something to do, and something to buy or sell. In seeking citizen participation, residents within each of the 64 squares were encouraged to provide an outline of the desired use of this shared space.

Additionally, in seeking to complement, not compete, with surrounding environments, the Master Plan identifies the City Centre as the intervention and the growth of four new surrounding neighborhoods as the inspiration for this design. Looking much like a futuristic city inspired by the Jetsons, the Masterplan will demolish many old, unused factories and surface parking lots in the city centre to make way for the refurbishment of the Bowl, the Channel, the Market, and the Valley.

Collectively, these neighborhoods will reintroduce a strong sense of public space including a butterfly garden, street interchange, cluster of small stores within a forest, and the

Garden of Tranquility. More accessible, multi-modal forms of public transit will be dispersed around the area discouraging auto-dependency and truly creating a sense of shared public space. The introduction of new housing is intended to fuel the use of this public transit system. Historic buildings will be preserved and woven into new design elements while undesirable big box stores will be discouraged. Lastly, water-rich resources including a pier, splash pool, canal, and wetlands for educational activities will not only increase small business ownership in these areas but also further contribute to the shared public space that so many Bradford residents are craving.

Like many other large-scale initiatives, the implementation of this plan will take place in stages and is slated for completion in 2020. Sadly, finding updates as to the current status of development is difficult but there are at least a few design elements stuck in the British version of ULURP.

Featured with twenty-two other projects, the Bradford City Centre Master Plan was presented at MoMA last Spring to celebrate the surge of creativity and critical debate in the design of public spaces. Cited for its decline during the abovementioned periods of economic turmoil, the selected projects represent some of the most significant new landscapes designs from sites that have been reclaimed from conflict, degradation, or abandonment. While not the most attractive design to be paired with the current landscape (photos can be found on the MoMA Groundswell exhibit from Spring 2005 or the Urban Regeneration Company website), the Bradford City Centre Master Plan highlights the most crucial elements to creating and maintaining a sustainable, livable economic engine for today and tomorrow.

Groundswell Exhibit

<http://www.moma.org/exhibitions/2005/groundswell/gs.html>

Bradford Centre Regeneration

<http://www.urcs-online.co.uk/companies/company.asp?id=15>

<http://www.bradfordnewcity.com>

421-a Madness

ryan herchenroether

Am I really voluntarily writing about a decades-old New York City tax code, in my spare time no less? Shouldn't I pick up a hobby or something? But seriously, as a newcomer to the city, there are some things to which I have not yet grown accustomed.

Article 421-a of the New York State Real Property Tax Law is one of these mysteries. Many housing advocates are similarly puzzled at the incentive program that seems to benefit developers in general, and less so affordable housing developers. The 421-a program provides tax exemptions for new housing developments with three or more units, located on sites that were vacant, underutilized or had "nonconforming" zoning uses. Over 100,000 units have been created using the program since it was created in 1971 to counter the city's fiscal crisis by stimulating housing production.

To receive 20-year tax abatements between 14th and 96th Streets in Manhattan, and now on the recently rezoned Williamsburg waterfront, at least 20% of the residential units developers construct must be affordable to middle or lower-income New Yorkers. The problem lies in Northern Manhattan and the outer boroughs, outside of this "exclusion area." Article 421-a applies, but any new residential construction is eligible for an as-of right 15-year property tax exemption, of which the first 11 years are full exemptions.

This puts affordable housing developers in a severely disadvantaged position. Already constricted by lower rent rolls and lender restrictions, affordable developers must compete for sites against market rate developers that know they don't need the affordable units to receive the abatement. Facing fierce competition, developers are leaning on these abatements more than ever, having obtained approval for 2,381 building exemptions in the past two years alone. One Brooklyn affordable housing developer concludes, "If I can offer a 25-year tax abatement, but the builder can get 11 years just for building market rate, which do you think they'll choose?"

Furthermore, this means the city is fund-

ing market-rate or even luxury housing. By no means inconsequential, the Pratt Center for Community Development estimates the exemptions cost the city \$300 million per year in uncollected tax revenue. I may be from 'nowhere', as a salty looking guy on Bedford reminded me earlier this year, suggesting I go back there, but even in New York \$300 million is a sum worth hanging on to.

Luckily Mayor Bloomberg, true to his New Marketplace commitment of creating 68,000 affordable housing units by 2008, established a task force in February to examine adjusting 421-a in this slightly less than scorching real estate market. Enter the slippery slope debate. Task force member Frank Braconi asks, "If the exclusion zone can expand outside of core Manhattan to the boroughs, why Williamsburg and not Park Slope? What's the rationale for that?"

Although it would be foolish to assume developers are as interested in building in Sunset Park as they are in Tribeca, people need reasonably priced housing throughout the city. Wherever development occurs, incentives in the form of foregone tax revenues should be used to stimulate affordable housing production and not luxury condos.

Altering 421-a represents a tremendous opportunity for affordable housing in the city. Already the largest municipal developer of affordable housing in the nation, curtailing or even removing market-rate abatements would set the standard for other cities to follow. But if the task force only provides incremental or cautious change, the tone will be set that the real estate industry holds significant influence at City Hall.

Keep an eye on this one because after all, you're the one paying for it. In the meantime, this newcomer is trying to wrap his head around how a \$3.3 million 3-bedroom condo in Manhattan is justified a \$209,310 tax exemption.

Sources available

View the 421-a report by the Pratt Center and Habitat for Humanity-NYC at:

<http://www.prattcenter.net/pubs/PrattCenter-NY421-aReport.pdf>

Alumni Update
ron oberlender

We want to hear from ALL ALUMNI! Please share with us your latest and greatest: new positions, recent projects, current issues in your area, etc. In addition, we are updating contact information to better share department news with alumni. Please email your contact information and any news to roberlen@hunter.cuny.edu.

Mitchell J. Silver, PP, AICP (1993)
Planning Director, City of Raleigh, NC

Mitchell Silver has made his mark on the planning profession since in graduation in 1993, becoming a fixture in the American Planning Association (APA). Silver has served on the Board of Directors of American Planning Association and President of the New York Metro Chapter. Most recently Silver was nominated for the 2006 APA Director-At-Large.

Silver is currently the director of planning in Raleigh, North Carolina. His prior experience includes positions with New York City, Washington D.C., and Irvington, New Jersey. He was also a principal at Abeles Phillips Preiss and Shapiro.

Phil Plotch (1992)
Director of Economic and Transportation Policy,
Lower Manhattan Development Corporation

Fourteen years after getting his master's degree from Hunter, Philip Plotch is preparing to take the AICP certification exam. In Plotch's own words: "I am actually enjoying my preparations for the exam. There's some material I had long ago forgotten (e.g, Euclid vs. Ambler), some things I'll always remember (like Ebenezer Howard's Garden Cities), and things I now know a lot more about than I ever thought I would (EISs). It's fun to be in a roomful of planners for my AICP Exam Prep class. But, best of all, I have gotten a much great appreciation for the role of planners in ways I never have. The preparation has given me a deeper understanding of a planner's role, the importance of land use decisions, and how our efforts are linked together."

Beverly Peyser (1978)
Habitat For Humanity, Sarasota Florida

Beverly Peyser has dedicated herself to Habitat For Humanity in Florida. In her own words: "I've been involved with Habitat For Humanity for over 10 years and we will be finishing our 163rd house before the end of 2006. We are also finalizing a 63-home development across from a local middle school and near Ed Smith Stadium, the winter home of the Cincinnati Reds. This fall Habit will begin to construct low price affordable condos, a first in the Sarasota area.

"Sarasota is booming with a concentrated critical mass emerging in the CBD with the new stadium, conference center, and concert hall currently being planned. There is increasing awareness that affordable housing must have a strong position in new plans of this city and advocacy is strongly emerging. Public support is also growing for controls on arcades, which increase FAR above to the advantage of developers but fall out of scale to Paul Randolph's concept of Sarasota, take up valuable sidewalk space, and are rarely used by pedestrians."

Laurence Frommer (2001)

Recent Hunter graduate Laurence Frommer has been intimately involved with a CUNY project many Hunter students may not be aware of: CUNY Sustainable Building Initiative (CUNY-SBI).

The charge of CUNY-SBI is to research existing CUNY resource people; surveying existing courses, trainings and programs; cultivating relationships with industry; developing structures to enable ongoing collaboration between CUNY and Industry; surveying business and industry's education and training needs in this field and forming new programs and workshops.

The CUNY Sustainable Building Initiative holds bi-monthly meetings for those who are interested in shaping educational opportunities related to Sustainable Building. The next meeting is scheduled for Thursday, May 12, 3-5pm at The Graduate Center, CUNY, 365 Fifth Avenue, Room 8201.

For more information about CUNY-SBI visit <http://web.gc.cuny.edu/cepp/courses/sustainableFuture.html>

Mary Alice Lee (1997)
City Spaces Program Director,
The Trust for Public Land

The Trust for Public Land's City Spaces program just opened a new school and community playground at P.S. 180 in Harlem on April 11th. We are currently building six other playgrounds at the following schools: CS 66-Crotona Park East, MS 216-Fresh Meadows, PS 217-Flatbush, Academy of Environmental Science/Manhattan East-East Harlem, PS 32-Gowanus, and PS 274-Bushwick. We will start construction in June at three other schools: PS 130-Longwood, PS 246-Kingsbridge Heights and PS 314-Sunset Park. Each of these schoolyards were formerly vacant asphalt lots. After working with the students and community to design the new playground over a three month period, we are adding items such as play equipment, artificial turf fields, basketball courts, tennis courts, handball courts, baseball fields, gardens, outdoor classrooms, trees, benches, water fountains and play spray.

Meet your 2006-2007 GUAPA Officers

Dara Braitman, President

Hello all! Being a third semester Urban Planning student, current GUAPA Secretary and regular on the 16th floor, I hope that I have met most of you. I earned my undergraduate degree in Urban Studies from Hobart and William Smith Colleges and upon completion, spent four years in Boston and nine months in Costa Rica teaching English. Once I started studying for the GRE's and reading books on Urban Theory while at the beach, I realized coming back to New York was the only avenue pointing straight.

I am interested in practically everything involving planning but find particular interest in transportation issues and low-income housing. I am currently interning at a transportation-based consulting firm downtown working on EIS chapters and projection measures for various projects across the City. During my free time, I enjoy running, swimming, and reading (but depending on what time during the semester it is, don't ask the last thing I read that wasn't homework). I am very excited about the upcoming year and hope that you will contact me with any questions, concerns, and/or ideas you have regarding the upcoming year and events.

Reza Tehranifar, Vice President

This year marks the tenth year that I have lived in New York. My stay here has allowed me to personally witness the City's famed rejuvenation on a daily basis. Approximately one year ago, I began to entertain the thought of being an active participant in this transformation. In order to do so, in the fall of 2005, I decided to return to Hunter College, where I completed my undergraduate degree in History and Black and Puerto Rican Studies, and later enrolled in the Urban Planning graduate program. I am originally from Iran, where I was born in Esfahan and grew up in Tehran. In the mid-1980s, my family and I immigrated to the United States, settling in Bergen County, New Jersey. In 1996, I left for New York when I enrolled at Hunter College.

I am an avid student of history, specifically in topics relating to New York, immigration, and 20th century America. Finally, cycling is one particular activity that I enjoy and partake on a frequent basis. I am happy to be joining the GUAPA team and hope to see all of you at upcoming events.

Stephanie Camay, Treasurer

I am a first-year part-time Urban Planning student. I earned Bachelors Degree in Urban and Regional Planning from Miami University of Ohio and am currently employed at URS Corporation as an Environmental Planner. While at URS, I have worked on environmental reviews based on CEQR regulations and ULURP applications for large-scale NYCDEP projects, facility planning for Stage 3 of the NYC third water tunnel and preparation and facilitation of a public participation work plan for the City of Newark.

Prior to working for URS Corporation, I worked for three years as a Planning and Special Projects Assistant for the Jamestown Urban Renewal Agency and Department of Development for the City of Jamestown in Upstate New York. There, I was responsible for managing GIS to support planning and grant seeking activities; preparing a Parks Strategic Plan; administering SEQR review and site plan approval; assembling and disseminating statistical data for planning/development projects; and maintaining planning records.

Tim Wilson, Secretary

In nearing the end of my first year in the Urban Planning graduate program, I've deeply enjoyed my time of study at Hunter--especially my interaction with fellow students, those of similar-minded pursuits and sensibilities. In being an active GUAPA member, I seek to become more centrally involved with students and faculty alike. My 17-year work history at a Manhattan law firm has given me valuable skills to contribute to the GUAPA team, including the ability to: synthesize large amounts of disparate information and to present it in an encapsulated, comprehensible format; work as a respectful, diplomatic team member; and shepherd complex projects from beginning to successful completion in a timely manner, under pressure. I look forward to meeting those of you I have not met and seeing everyone at upcoming GUAPA events.