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Paved with Good Intentions: Boston's Central Artery Project and a Failure of City Building

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Nationally notorious, Boston's Big Dig has over the past fifteen years invested \$14.5 billion in the new Central Artery Tunnel. Visionary in concept, the underground highway has spawned new development and urban parks that are falling markedly short of their promise. Why?

A generation ago, in the late 1960s and early 1970s, Boston was a place of pilgrimage for anybody interested in cities. Architecturally, the new City Hall and the New England Aquarium were star attractions, and the imaginative refurbishment of Faneuil Hall and Quincy Market showed cities worldwide what could be done with historic fabric. The Boston Redevelopment Authority (BRA) was created in 1957 under Mayor John B. Hynes, then in his third term. Hynes, having beaten the corrupt and charismatic James Michael Curley in 1949, was the first of a succession of reforming mayors. In 1965, under Mayor John F. Collins, BRA Director Monsignor Francis J. Lally unveiled the *1965/1975 General Plan for the City of Boston*, which almost instantly became an icon of city planning and of reformed and progressive city government.¹

As proposed in the *General Plan*, the aim of the Boston Development Program was "to strengthen those unique assets which have made Boston throughout its history the City of Ideas."² In the generation that has passed since those halcyon days of planning, the worm has

turned. The BRA, short-staffed and underfunded, is not what it was; planning in the city is once again “a piecemeal approach to a few urgent problems”;³ and the few works of architecture that inspire the new generation of urbanists are in the universities across the river. While Chicago, Portland, and Seattle now lead the country in city planning, Boston has settled into a mode of pragmatic expediency, the “City of Ideas” no more than a historical footnote. While there have been major political and economic shifts in the country as a whole, shifts that have favored free-market opportunism over central planning, Boston has had its own experiences over the past three decades that help explain this change in fortune and attitude. Foremost among these is the Central Artery Tunnel Project, at once the city’s most audacious planning initiative in the creation of a transportation infrastructure and apparently its biggest disappointment as urban intervention, for *lack* of planning. Thirty years in gestation from inception to completion, the life of the Artery straddles the generational change in outlook that has taken place in Boston and thus merits special attention.

In the Beginning

The depression of the Central Artery and the Third Harbor Tunnel were proposals contained in the *Boston Transportation Planning Review (BTPR)* of 1972.⁴ The *BTPR* was one of the first transportation planning documents in the country to reflect, albeit in diluted form, the groundswell of popular democratic action that two years earlier had brought to a halt the construction of yet another urban highway through the inner city. The plan was in the forefront of the new politics both because of its more democratic planning process—involving “ordinary” citizens and nontechnical participants—and its broader scope, which included evaluation of public transit modes in comparison with highways, as well as the social and environmental factors influencing alternatives. Transportation, economic development, and civic improvement were considered interdependent components in an urban ecosystem.

Tossed about on the seas of local politics for a decade or more, the Central Artery/Third Harbor Tunnel Project got seriously under way in 1982.⁵ The Environmental Impact Report (EIR) of 1985/1991 and the Record of Decision in 1991 inherited the genetic makeup

of holistic, democratic planning from its parent, the *BTPR*.⁶ Permitting documents were developed through an exhaustive process of neighborhood-based popular planning along with an open exposition of technical alternatives. Mitigation measures for land takings and the collateral hardships of construction, which included the monitoring of noise, dust, and air pollution, were supplemented by commitments to expand and improve public transit, subways, and commuter rail and to provide an additional three hundred acres of open space, including public parks in East Boston, Charlestown, and the downtown corridor and extensive additions to the Harborwalk pedestrian path. The rationale for the Third Harbor Tunnel was economic (connecting Logan Airport and South Boston with the hinterland), while the depression of the old I-93 viaduct was promoted not only as an improvement in traffic efficiency but also as an enhancement to the quality of the downtown urban environment. Under the guidance of Fred Salvucci, Governor Michael Dukakis's secretary of transportation, with significant (and sometimes contentious) input from John DeVillars, the secretary of environmental affairs, the EIR was comprehensive, detailed, and democratic, in itself a remarkable monument to planning vision and political will—a worthy, if somewhat unwieldy, child of 1970s thinking.⁷

Slouching toward Banality

At this stage of the story, we must fast forward to the finished product. Ignoring, if we can, the now weeping tunnel walls, we shall concentrate on the city-building aspects of the project and measure its fulfillment of the promise of civic improvement. It is from this perspective that we see inherent weaknesses in the implementation of the plan both as a coordinator of economic development and as a guide for civic enhancement.

The Central Artery project was intended at inception to provide economic stimulus to two major areas of the city: Logan Airport in East Boston and the South Boston waterfront.⁸ At the project's completion, both areas have been compromised by agency territorialism and the lack of a coherent vision.

In addition to the Massachusetts Highway Department, which was building the new highway, the three major protagonists other than private developers have been Massport, the largest single landowner

on the East and South Boston waterfronts and a self-financing state authority with considerable political autonomy; the Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority (MBTA), the state agency responsible for public transportation in the Boston metropolitan area, with a board appointed by the governor and dependent on the state for its budget; and the City of Boston, with a relatively powerful mayor under whose jurisdiction fell that land not under the control of state agencies.⁹

Within the terms of the *BTPR* and, more particularly, of the Record of Decision for the Central Artery, the Highway Department was extending I-90 to the airport and the seaport as part of a broader plan for economic revitalization and urban transformation. Underwritten by this massive investment in highway infrastructure, Massport embarked on a \$1.5-billion expansion of the airport facilities and a transformation of their seaport property into development parcels. To the extent that this had the makings of a textbook example for urban economic development spurred by public investment, so far so good.

Meanwhile, the MBTA, despite its commitments under the Record of Decision to provide transit connections to these sections of the city, has fallen short on two counts. First, a strategic decision was made to build an autonomous Bus Rapid Transit line (the Silver Line) as a relatively inexpensive alternative to a fully integrated branch of the Red Line, which already extends to the western and southern suburbs. Second, even this more parsimonious model stops short in South Boston (Phase 2), and it is a matter of conjecture as to if and when it will extend to the airport (Phase 3) or make the critical link between South Station and Washington Street that connects back to the South End and Roxbury.¹⁰ The consequences are that the airport remains relatively underserved by public transportation, job opportunities for the neighborhoods are unrealized, and the potential for development of the Boston Seaport is constrained by the limitations of the transit system.

Meanwhile the BRA, which for some years had failed to take an active role in planning this one thousand acres of real estate on the threshold of downtown, was prompted by the opening of the Ted Williams Tunnel in 1995 and the promise of its subsequent (2003) connection to I-90 to produce the *Seaport Public Realm Plan* in 1999.¹¹ Not only was this plan absent during the planning of the highway in the late 1980s (an absence resulting in an unfortunate siting of major ventilation structures), it also was published after Massport

had produced its own plan for the waterfront and was therefore reactive to the development plans of an agency operating under its own mandates.¹² The BRA was in consequence playing catch up to the Artery project, to Massport, to private developers such as the Pritzker family (intent on developing Fan Pier, still in limbo), and even to the state legislature, which in 1998 selected a sixty-acre site in the seaport for the new Boston Convention and Exposition Center without the benefit of a comprehensive transportation plan for this 1.7-million-square-foot facility.¹³ What could and should have been a comprehensive economic development plan for the South Boston waterfront, developed in parallel with the plans for the extension of I-90 in the late 1980s, amounted to no more than an urban design plan ten years later, worthy in its goals for streetscape and public space but necessarily reactive to projects already in construction and woefully inadequate in the collection and coordination of solid data serving longer-term principles of urban planning.

For the downtown, however, the weaknesses of city planning are as much aesthetic and programmatic as they are economic. In intention, the rejoining of the city with its waterfront remains close to what was originally planned and to the conditions of the 1991 permitting. Included in the EIR was the vision of the BRA for surface restoration known as the *Boston 2000* plan.¹⁴ In 1988 the BRA, under Stephen Coyle, invited urban design visions for the central corridor from the Spanish architect Ricardo Bofill and local architect



"A Park-like Boulevard," City of Boston, ca. 1992. Courtesy of the Boston Redevelopment Authority.



"The Seamless Web," Boston Society of Architects Central Artery Taskforce, Plan for the Central Artery, ca. 1992. Courtesy of the Boston Redevelopment Authority.

Alex Krieger. The Boston Society of Architects (BSA) invited themselves to the discussion with their own version of the future. Bofill, as one might have predicted, proposed a broad neoclassical boulevard replete with obelisks, amphitheaters, and triumphal arches. The BSA plan proposed a continuum of residential courtyard superblocs on the principle of maintaining a continuous urban fabric and populating the downtown. Krieger took the view that open space would be more successful if framed in a series of public squares, alternating block by block with built form that would generate active and populated sidewalks.¹⁵ The three schemes represented a spectrum of urban theory ranging from the formality of Bofill's grandiose neoclassicism to the pragmatic functionalism of the BSA's urban housing. Krieger's scheme embodied the implied vitality of an urban mixed-use program organized within the formal vocabulary of the urban square. The BRA, in its *Boston 2000* plan, essentially rejected both classical formality and programmatic reality, opting instead for neo-Olmstedian parkland punctuated with cultural pavilions and sidewalk cafés. At this stage there was no indication of how this or any vision might be implemented, either by the state or the city.

It was the BRA's vision, enticingly rendered, that became enshrined in the Record of Decision. Thus, the mandate of 75 percent open space and 25 percent built form became law, reinforced with the city's own zoning legislation that was a detailed textual description of that design.¹⁶ The zoning ordinance mandated, parcel by parcel,

specific uses for both open space and buildings, and in the case of buildings, plot coverage, height, floor-area ratio, ground and upper floor uses, and even degrees of transparency.¹⁷

This degree of prescriptive specificity was unsubstantiated by quantitative data (e.g., demographic projections and land-use inventories), qualitative values (e.g., an analysis of the role of urban open space in relation to the neighborhoods and the region), or a social and political vision that would underwrite this major city renovation. If the purpose of the urban design imagery was to place a foot in the door to reserve space, place, and function for future discussion and development, it had the unfortunate effect of becoming firmly wedged in position as the Massachusetts Turnpike Authority assumed dominant position during the construction period of the project, unwilling and perhaps unable to appreciate the complexities of city building as they encroached upon the prime imperative of getting the highway built.

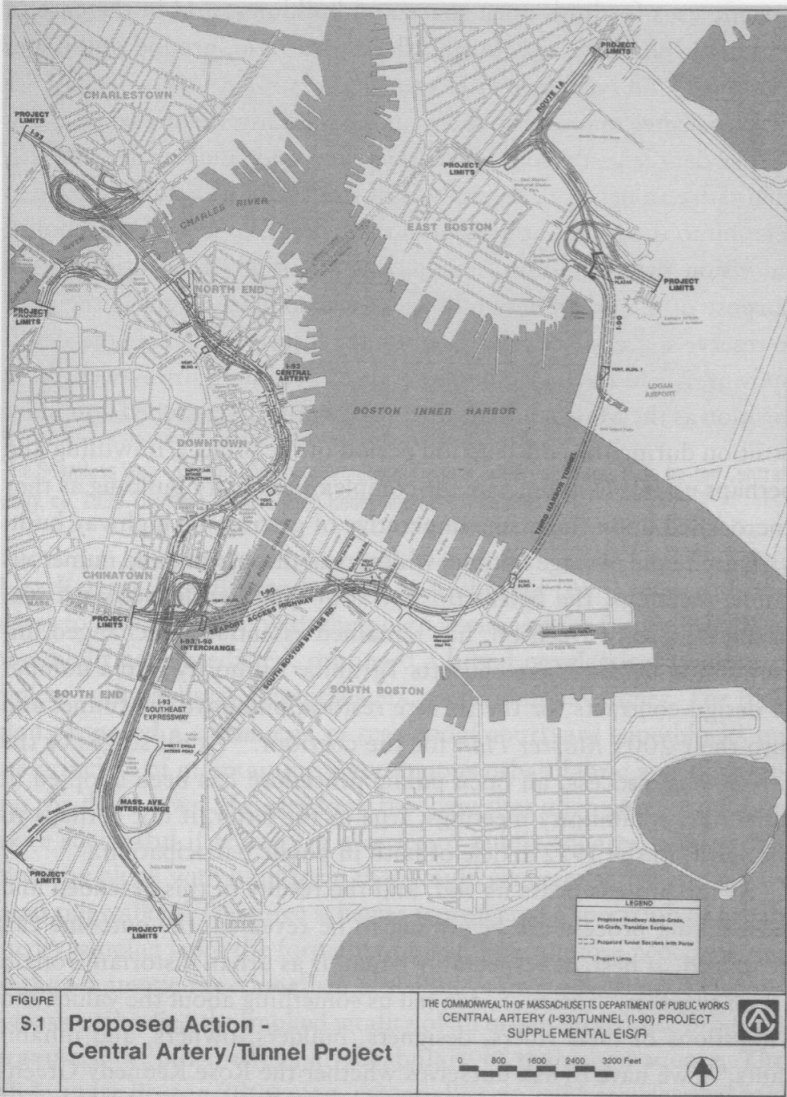
Despite the passage of time, widespread discussion, and numerous public meetings, the BRA's *Boston 2000* plan, enshrined as it was in the Record of Decision, has remained essentially unchanged, incorporated by the Massachusetts Turnpike Authority into a number of design contracts for the surface restoration above the tunnel and into their 2001 *Master Plan* for the corridor.¹⁸ At all stages of the fifteen-year process, an open public procedure has been adopted in numerous community meetings, true to the letter, if not perhaps to the spirit, of the 1972 article of faith in public participation.

As the process nears its end, and the results of this extended and painstaking process are beginning to be revealed, the outcome can be judged, at best, as respectably banal. If as urban historian Donald Olsen suggests, "Cities . . . can tell us something about the values and aspirations of their rulers, designers, builders, owners, and inhabitants,"¹⁹ we have to ask ourselves whether the Rose Kennedy Greenway does indeed represent Bostonians' highest values and aspirations, and if not, what happened? Reflection on what happened must be three-layered: methodological, conceptual, and political.

A Swarm of Small Ideas

Planning to a Design, Not Designing to a Plan

In the methodology of the Central Artery's process, design usurped planning. Notwithstanding Krieger's urban design studies on their behalf, the BRA led with a detailed image of green space punctuated by



Massachusetts Department of Public Works, Central Artery (I-93)/Tunnel Project, Supplemental EIS/R, Proposed Action, Bechtel/Parsons Brinckerhoff, November 1990. Courtesy of the Massachusetts Department of Public Works.

structures determined by prescriptive zoning but never seriously addressing the planning principles on which the picture was implicitly based. This preemptive rendering of a rosy future by the city's urban designers under Coyle's directive leadership was not only turned back to front in its methodology, it was also developed through a

planning process outside the realm of serious discussion, since any modification to the plan would have entailed a lengthy and bureaucratic Notice of Project Change. Granted, there had to be a “vision,” and that vision had to be effectively communicated in a public forum. The error was to confuse image with content and to engage the twin imperatives of schedule and cost in defending a plan that was more image than substance, detailed to a degree unwarranted by the data and wrapped in a process that was intended to foreclose further public discourse.

To exacerbate the contradictions of planning to a design rather than designing to a plan, the Massachusetts Turnpike Authority took it upon itself in 2001 to develop a master plan for the central corridor after significant portions of the original design had already been constructed in the form of sidewalks, trees, lighting, and street furniture, thus almost literally casting the urban design image in stone.²⁰ The planning consultants were under strict injunction not to depart from any of the facts on the ground nor from any designs in preparation. Furthermore, since the Turnpike Authority was directing the master plan, the consultants were limited in their scope to making proposals only within the project boundaries of the highway construction. Thus, adjoining streets and neighborhoods were considered off-limits, rendering the plan itself no more than an isolated object within the broader city fabric.²¹ Far from being a master plan, the resulting document was little more than a tightly circumscribed design guideline, again notable for its lack of research or analysis relating to land use or programming. When, finally, landscape architects were appointed to prepare design and construction documents for the parks, they were faced with a street environment already half-built. For the remainder of the Central Artery surface, visual cues were provided by the master plan in the form of renderings, but little hard data gave the projected design a fully reasoned basis.

A Swarm of Small Ideas

Conceptually, the project has suffered from being too much “fox” and too little “hedgehog,” with too many small ideas pulling in all directions and too few basic principles leading the way. There has indeed been consistent adherence to the program of public open space. This idea, however, has survived more thanks to the legal body armor of

the Record of Decision and subsequently to the focused will of the highway project managers, untutored in urban design and driven by the construction schedule, and rather less to established data, principle, or reason.

While the Boston Society of Architects, the business community, the local media, and other interested parties made proposals over the years to engage the public in a broader discussion on the surface restoration, the Turnpike Authority and its managers successfully curtailed those wider discussions, maintaining progress toward project completion in the face of issues that they regarded as obstacles or distractions in the pursuit of their narrow mission of highway construction. The key issues discussed as part of the ten-year public process focused principally on design and design details and much less on the principles for a broader plan. Sidewalk widths, pedestrian crosswalks, trees species, and curb alignments were the grist of the public planning process, not land use, open space programming, transportation, or even ways to make this new patch of urban space sustainable.²²

This focus on detail happened for two reasons. First, in public discussion it is easier for nonprofessionals to focus on the concrete issues (planting versus paving, brick versus granite) rather than the abstractions of what makes a city thrive. Second, by confining the discussion to details, the Turnpike Authority (who managed the public meetings) could maintain the project schedule. Thus were the serious issues for public debate not addressed, the boat not rocked, and the project not derailed.

Politically the project has been marked from the beginning as the child of separated parents, the state and the city. The highway project itself has come under the auspices of the Massachusetts Highway Department and later the Massachusetts Turnpike Authority. The main focus of the Central Artery Project has been to construct the highway. The highway is routed, however, through the city, which would, one might assume, give city agencies an equal voice at the table as planning and design progressed. The city, however, sold to the Turnpike Authority the air rights to the highway tunnel, thus relinquishing its rights as owner and placing the Turnpike Authority in control. This has meant that the city's institutional power over the planning and design has not been as strong as it might have been, particularly through the central corridor. By default the highway builders have been the city builders.

Ideally, the task of city building should have been separated from that of highway building. This arrangement would not only have had the advantage of allocating expertise and resources according to professional skill and institutional interest (the BRA and its planners would take care of the city while the Turnpike Authority and its engineers could concentrate on building the highway), it would also have relieved the necessarily extended city planning process from the intense political pressure attendant upon the highway construction.

Compounding this institutional misalignment is the anathema of the project itself, which has caused elected politicians—of all stripes—at city and state levels to avoid the “Big Dig” as much as possible. Unfairly or not, the project was perceived early on as a money sink and a liability, and, even at its best, a public works project that did not have a local neighborhood constituency that would directly translate into votes. For this reason, with isolated exceptions, both the governor and the mayor have sought to keep their distance from what has seemed, especially recently, a black hole. This self-isolation of the political leadership has therefore further undermined city officials in pursuing the cause of city building.²³ Thus, the Turnpike Authority, for (relative) lack of interest, and the city, for (relative) lack of power, have left a void in the planning and urban design process, particularly as it relates to the downtown corridor, which, as we have seen, is not without its inherent complexities.

This political void has been partially filled by substantial efforts from civic associations such as the Artery Business Committee, the Boston Society of Architects, the Boston Greenspace Alliance, and neighborhood-based interest groups. The *Boston Globe* has hosted conferences and published extensively on the remaking of the city, and this has undoubtedly raised the level of public debate. While these civic efforts have had some positive effects on the urban design elements of the greenway, notably the introduction of cultural and recreational buildings into the park corridor, these achievements have been made with great difficulty and over a long time.²⁴

As the project enters its final phase and landscape designs are carried into construction, it is hard to avoid the judgment that from one of the biggest and boldest planning moves in the city’s history—the radical extension and renovation of the highway infrastructure and the reuniting of the city with its waterfront—a well-mannered if unexciting landscape has emerged, one that will do little to transform

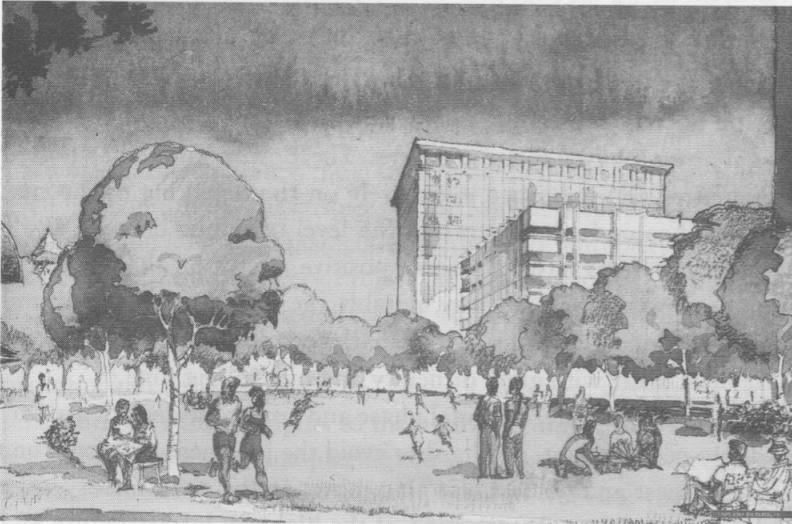
the city except insofar as there is no longer an elevated highway separating downtown from the harbor.

Lessons to Be Learned

Of the lessons learned from this lengthy and time-consuming process, some are specific to the Central Artery project and some to Boston itself, while others may have a broader application to U.S. planning and urban design. The following themes emerge.

Divided Responsibilities

The BRA, for all its vaunted powers combining planning and development, is but one of many planning agencies whose decisions affect the city and whose lack of unified leadership under a strong metropolitan authority eviscerates coordinated urban initiatives. It is a great misfortune for Boston that the Turnpike Authority took ownership not only of city land in the Central Artery corridor but also of the city-building project itself, operating outside its sphere of expertise. Similarly, Massport, as the major landowner in the seaport, has seen



Boston Central Artery Corridor, master plan, landscape design framework, lawn area on Parcel 17, 2001. Courtesy of the Massachusetts Turnpike Authority.

fit to develop South Boston in its own autonomous fashion, focusing on port issues, and in advance of the BRA's *Seaport Public Realm Plan*.²⁵

Last, the Massachusetts Bay Transit Authority (MBTA), custodian of public transit infrastructure and strapped for cash, has failed to live up to its civic responsibilities in implementing the transit improvements mandated by the Central Artery project. Perhaps more egregious is this agency's failure to proceed with the Urban Ring, a project for circumferential transit that in itself would have a transformative effect on the city's economy and its neighborhoods.²⁶ In the absence of such coordinated and complementary partnerships and in the absence of political commitment, the BRA and other city development agencies have their hands tied.

The Confusion of Planning and Design

While the highway infrastructure on the Central Artery project itself was meticulously planned, the urban design was not. The permitting of the highway was predicated on traffic projections, connections with other transportation modes, environmental impacts, air quality, and a host of other quantifiable parameters translated into goals and directives. On the other hand, land-use analysis, census and market data, and development principles are remarkably absent in the design proposals propagated by the city. Picturesque representation usurped the planning stage, so that Design became the proxy for Plan. City decoration—acting as a substitute for the planning analysis that necessarily underwrites and directs investment in infrastructure, economic development, and the creation of base conditions for successful urban living—now pervades the profession. Between the quantitative number crunching of the planners and the visionary renderings of the architects, between regional context and site specificity, urban design has to navigate a careful path based on the discipline of solid data infused with social and political vision to give substantial meaning to urban aesthetics. The work of Britain's Urban Task Force and Barcelona's Mayor Pasqual Maragall in transforming planning principles into stunning urban success are leading examples of the intimate connection between political leadership and successful urban design.²⁷ Those who say that this approach is not transferable to the United States are surrendering before the battle and forgetting the heritage

of cities such as Portland, Seattle, Chicago, and indeed Boston in former times.

Whereas the 1965 *General Plan* incorporated data on land use, employment, and infrastructure and was guided by clear goals and principles, the *Boston 2000* plan has no such comprehensive view. This observation is not meant to diminish the importance of the urban design issues posed by the greenway and the creation of meaningful urban space within the void left by the elevated highway. It is to place them in the wider context of the city's development goals. While urban design has grown and provides a much-needed antidote to the formless constructs of traditional planning, the balance may have gone too far in creating forms without content and concepts without analysis. As one of the city's consultants recently put it, the image must market the idea. True, so long as there is an idea to market.

Popular Planning, Political Timidity, and the Erosion of Professional Expertise

A legacy from the BTPR and the politics of the 1970s has been adherence to public participation. It is often remarked, with justice, that while "democratic," this process tends to dilute and diffuse quality and direction in design. The acceptance of the principle that whoever shows up at a meeting has an authority equal to anyone else in the room has led to timidity in politicians and designers alike and to an erosion of trust in professional expertise.

While the Central Artery project has over the past ten years consumed hundreds of thousands of hours in public meetings at great expense to the public and to people's time, the effect of this process on design has been to grind it down to a "lowest common denominator," devoid of offensive characteristics. Thus the Wharf District parks designed by EDAW have been relentlessly discussed and criticized in a series of versions unguided by clear program or principle and uninspired by creativity, with the result that in the view of some, they amount to an embodiment of the least offensive checklist of cumulative demands. As with speculative development designed to appeal to the widest market, the overall effect on the urban fabric is characterless homogeneity. Without the commitment of political leaders and without the trust in the technical and aesthetic expertise of design professionals, the process has drifted in a free market of

constituency opinion. Paradoxically, the democratization of planning calls for more leadership, not less. Not in the autocratic style of Robert Moses (whose wings would anyway have been institutionally clipped by federal environmental legislation enacted since his time) but more in the persuasive and charismatic style of city mayors such as Norman Rice of Seattle, Joseph Riley of Charleston, or Richard Daley of Chicago, each of whom has had a vision for his city and has led from the front.

Principle or Pragmatism

Principles of urban planning of any kind have been largely ignored in both the work and public discussion about the design of civic space on the Central Artery. Facing the need to complete the highway construction, the Turnpike Authority has often sacrificed principle for expediency as, for example, in the widespread downgrading of paving materials as part of a value engineering exercise, regardless of the commitments to a high-quality public environment. The city would be in a better position to promote and defend the quality of design in the face of such expediency had it been more willing to develop and adhere to principles at the planning stage, principles that might have included stances on programmatic research (the meaning of public space in "walkman" culture), transportation (the future of the private automobile in the city center), environmental policy (attitudes to surface water drainage and retention), the promotion of "front door" activity adjacent to public space, and a host of other items that could have acted as lodestars in the extended and pluralistic decision-making process. The city was not alone. The program for public art, never fully embraced by either the Turnpike Authority or the engineering culture responsible for designing and building the highway, was promptly dropped at the first sign of budgetary difficulties. Proposals for staging international competitions for the design of the central area landscape were effectively smothered at birth under layers of red tape, not to mention the profoundly off-putting complexion of Boston's politics. For all the ballyhoo about this "world-class project," opportunities for young designers as well as for established designers with international reputations have been scarce.²⁸

The avoidance of principle or purpose may be attributable at least in part to a cultural mistrust of "theory." It may also be the fear of

the city leadership that by adhering too closely to rules, by imposing top down what are often negatively characterized as “conditions,” investors will be frightened off and some public constituents enraged. Zoning, it is said in Boston, is where the conversation begins, leaving the field open to lobbying and the contingencies of political pressure. Expediency has become the governing principle of urban planning, and the art of the deal prevails.

The Contrasting Case of Chicago

The 1960s generation of urbanists showed that it was possible to capture the imagination with bold moves (such as the building of the new city hall or, later, the adaptive reuse of Quincy Market) to propel the city onto a new level. While Boston’s history of such moves has been episodic, Chicago, at least since Daniel Burnham, has the tradition of city building in its bones. Like Boston, Chicago has invested in its transportation infrastructure. Unlike Boston, Chicago has framed this development in a vision for the city as a whole, notwithstanding its seemingly intractable problem of impoverished neighborhoods. In the past few years, under the leadership of Mayor Richard M. Daley, Chicago has produced a plan for its Central Area, plans for neighborhood open space throughout the city, a sustainability program, and a series of design competitions that enshrine and promote the principles of all this planning activity.²⁹ Chicago may be one of the few cities in North America that would have no fear in inviting Anish Kapoor to place a 110-foot polished stainless steel blob in the center of its greatest public space. Quickly and relatively inexpensively, the City of Chicago has created Millennium Park, offering the work of great artists, architects, and landscape architects for its citizens’ enjoyment, no less.

The lesson from Chicago comes not so much from its architects and planners, engaging as their work may be. It really comes from the boldness of its clients. More than a hundred years ago, Chicago’s developers embraced the risk of building tall, installing the world’s first elevators, pushing the limits of modern technology in buildings that are now part of the nation’s heritage. At home, that same business class reinvented the house, and in so doing created a distinctly American architecture in the Prairie School. Mayor Daley and the city agencies he leads have inherited that tradition of bold thinking.

Urban planning and design achievements do not come without political conviction and steady commitment. It is perhaps not unjust to conclude that the city-building outcome of Boston's vast infrastructure project in its lack of coordination, political stasis, and cultural conservatism does indeed tell us something about the values and aspirations of this city-region. Boston may be excited about the accomplishments of its Red Sox, but if only half of that energy ("Believe!") were translated into civic and political leadership, the city might elevate itself to the level of Fenway Park, becoming once again a destination for urban pilgrimages.

Notes

1. Boston Redevelopment Authority, *1965/1975 General Plan for the City of Boston and the Regional Core* (Boston: March 1965).
2. *Ibid.*, 1.
3. *Ibid.*
4. A useful summary of the *BTPR* is available on the Web at http://libraries.mit.edu/rotch/artery/CA_1972.htm. An official overview of this period of highway planning is available on the U.S. Department of Planning Web site in *Urban Transportation Planning in the United States: An Historical Overview: Fifth Edition*, chapter 6. For earlier incarnations of this highway, see also Robert Whitten, *Report on a Thoroughfare Plan for Boston, City Planning Board* (Boston: 1930); Theodore T. McCroskey et al. *Surging Cities* (Boston: Greater Boston Development Committee, 1948).
5. See, for instance, Alan Altshuler and David Luberoff, *Mega-Projects: The Changing Role of Public Investment* (Washington, DC: Brookings Institution, 2003); Thomas P. Hughes, *Rescuing Prometheus* (New York: Pantheon, 1998); Jane Holtz Kay, *Asphalt Nation* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997). An excellent account of the planning process is contained in Karl Haglund, *Inventing the Charles River* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2003).
6. The Final Environmental Impact Report (FEIR) was approved by the Federal Highway Administration in 1985. The Final Supplemental EIR, in twelve volumes, was approved by the state Executive Office of Environmental Affairs and the FHWA in 1991 and is known as the Record of Decision.
7. While the scale and comprehensiveness of the *BTPR* was equal to if not greater than the scope of Boston's *General Plan* of seven years earlier, there was clearly a remarkable change in the politics of planning reflected in the mandated open processes embodied in the *BTPR*.
8. A third development area spawned directly by the Central Artery project

is South Bay, immediately south of Kneeland Street and adjacent to Chinatown's residential district. The BRA's South Bay Planning Study is under way. As with other city planning initiatives occasioned by the Central Artery, the advantage of preemptive or anticipatory planning has not been seized, with the result that the long lead time for development will result in intervening years of blight.

9. For the definition of Plan-A type local governance enshrining a strong mayor with a relatively weak council, see *Massachusetts General Laws: Title VII Cities, Towns and Districts*, chapter 43, section 1: Definitions.

10. This Phase 3 Central Artery commitment, together with an extensive list of other public transit investments that have been left undone, is the subject of intense current political debate. See *Boston Globe*, December 1, 2004, B1.

11. Cooper, Robertson & Partners, *The Seaport Public Realm Plan* (Boston Redevelopment Authority, 1999).

12. Massport, *South Boston Strategic Plan* (April 1999).

13. The Boston Transportation Department published the *Boston Transportation Fact Book and Neighborhood Profiles* in May 2002 and *Boston's Public Transportation and Regional Connections Plan* in March 2003, more than a decade after the Central Artery EIR and three to four years after the South Boston planning efforts referred to in this essay. The lack of a highway connection between the Convention Center and the Back Bay is to be remedied by the Turnpike Authority after considerable lobbying and research undertaken by the business community. The adequacy of the Silver Line to accommodate convention crowds may be less easily resolved.

14. *Boston 2000* (Boston Redevelopment Authority, 1991).

15. Chan, Krieger, Levi Architects Inc., *Urban Design Studies for the Central Artery Corridor* (Boston Redevelopment Authority, 1990).

16. The official documentation failed to clarify what area was the denominator of the 75/25 split, giving rise to various opportunistic interpretations (e.g., building face to building face, curb to curb, with or without the paved highway, etc.). Even the numerator has been in dispute. What has often been claimed to be twenty-seven acres of open space designated for parkland in the corridor is closer to seven acres.

17. City of Boston Zoning Ordinance: Article 49: Central Artery Special District, May 1991.

18. Since 1991 the Central Artery project has been managed and directed by appointees of Republican governors for whom such massive public investment was ideologically problematic. Regardless of individual talent and commitment, therefore, the guiding management principle has been to get the job finished and to avoid when possible any distraction. The clearest example of this approach was the decision by Secretary of Transportation James

Kerasiotes to preemptively override eighteen months of deliberation by the Bridge Design Review Committee, which was evaluating alternative means of crossing the Charles River at North Station. SMWM/The Cecil Group with The Halvorson Company, *Boston Central Artery Corridor Master Plan* (Massachusetts Turnpike Authority, 2001).

19. Donald J. Olsen, *The City as a Work of Art* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1986), ix.

20. *Boston Central Artery Corridor Master Plan*.

21. This particular matter is being addressed, albeit a little late, by the BRA's "Crossroads Initiative" of 2004, which explores opportunities for rejoining and upgrading those streets previously severed by the elevated highway.

22. In the absence of a program for the proposed open space coming from the Turnpike Authority or the city, the Artery Business Committee commissioned Sasaki Associates to produce one for the Wharf District. The ABC/Sasaki *Program and Design Guidelines for the Wharf District Parks* (September 2003) was incorporated into the EDAW design for that section of the Greenway. Worthy as this private effort has been, it remains unfortunately symptomatic that this programming exercise was not undertaken by the city prior to their development of the *Boston 2000* plan.

23. The recent tunnel leaks serve to illustrate this syndrome. The real damage incurred by these widely publicized construction faults is not the leaks themselves (which can be fixed) but the loss of faith in public investment, a far weightier political issue.

24. In a series of studies encompassing planning, urban design, financing, and governance, the Artery Business Committee and its consultants have undertaken research and developed new programming and design approaches to the development and management of the Central Artery corridor. This work has resulted in a series of planning and urban design proposals for Chinatown, the Wharf District, and the Bulfinch Triangle, a public open space and recreation program for the Wharf District, and a model for the financing and management of the park system when it is finished.

25. Cooper, Robertson et al., *The Seaport Public Realm Plan*.

26. U.S. Department of Transportation, *Environmental Impact Statement on the Urban Ring Project Phase 2*, 2001.

27. See *Towards an Urban Renaissance: Final Report of the Urban Task Force* (London: Department of the Environment, Transportation and the Regions, 1999).

28. Much to her credit, Kathryn Gustafson has been an exception to the rule in overcoming these vicissitudes. Her design for the North End Parks has more or less survived the public process under the guidance and protection of her local partners, Crosby Schlessinger and Smallridge of Boston. Private

initiatives have so far attracted proposals from nonprofit organizations with designs by Daniel Libeskind and Moshe Safdie.

29. For example, among a host of city planning and environmental initiatives are *Chicago Central Area Plan, 2002*; *CitySpace Plan, 1998*; *Chicago River Plan, 1998*; and the *Ford Calumet Environmental Center Competition, 2003*.