

# THE WAGNER PLANNER

Newsletter of the NYU Urban Planning Student Association



March 2007

## INSIDE THIS ISSUE



**Boston Goes Green**  
by Michael Daniel Davis p. 1



**Metro Line Opens in New Delhi**  
by Vanessa Roy, p. 3



**Interview with Prof. Lee Sander**  
by Christopher Gorman, p. 4



**Commuter Vans in NYC**  
by Michael Kodransky, p. 5



**Robert Moses Exhibits**  
by Carrie Knudson, p. 7



**Urban Legends**  
Poem by Becca Nagorsky, p. 8



**Global Climate Change**  
by Sara Clark, p. 9



**Planner Poll**  
Quotes compiled by Susanne Huerta, p. 9



**Research Assistantships**  
Compiled by Michael Kodransky and Carrie Knudson, p. 10



**Remembering Charles Balton**  
by Carrie Knudson, p. 11



**New UPSA Board**  
Position Announcements, p. 11

## BOSTON'S CITYWIDE GREEN BUILDING POLICY

By Michael Daniel Davis (MUP '07)

**B**oston recently took center stage in the movement for sustainability by becoming the first major city in the country to require private developers to adhere to green building standards. Any new building over 50,000 square feet will have to meet the new green building requirements before building permits are issued.

While Boston's new standards do not require Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) certification, they ensure that any building constructed is LEED certifiable if the owners want to pursue this designation from the US Green Building Council.

Boston's green building standards, which mandate that new buildings meet requirements in at least 26 of 70 areas of design and construction, were the result of a number of recommendations made by a task force appointed by Mayor Thomas Menino in 2003. The Boston Redevelopment Authority (BRA) then incorporated the green building standards into the city's municipal zoning laws. According to John Dalzell of

the BRA, Boston expects to approve over 6.5 million square feet of construction that will meet the new green building criteria in 2007. Green building projects in Boston will not receive an expedited review because the city did not want developers using green development as a shield to avoid other significant impacts.

Also as part of Boston's Green Building Task Force recommendations, the city will initiate efforts to increase public awareness about

**"Boston's green building standards mandate that new buildings meet requirements in at least 26 of 70 areas of design and construction."**

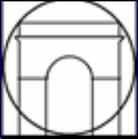
the benefits of green buildings by establishing a "Green Home" standard to recognize best practices and design innovation. This residential branding strat-

egy, along with partnerships with area trade and labor associations to identify new business opportunities, products and markets, will help push Boston into the forefront of national green building leaders.

While Boston has embraced public and private green development as a strategy to foster new business growth and job creation, New York City has taken a more limited approach with the hope that its public efforts will spill over to the private

*(Continued on pg. 6)*

Urban Planning Anytime at: <http://www.nyu.edu/wagner/urbanplanning>



MARCH 2007

## THE WAGNER PLANNER

[http://www.nyu.edu/wagner/](http://www.nyu.edu/wagner/urbanplanning)

urbanplanning

Volume 3, Issue 3

March 2007

## CHIEF EDITORS

Carrie Knudson

Michael Kodransky

## CONTRIBUTING EDITOR

Kate Bender

## COPY EDITORS

Denali Dasgupta

Yvonne Martinez

Susan Willets

## PHOTOGRAPHY

Susanne Huerta

## CONTRIBUTING WRITERS

Sara Clark

Michael Daniel Davis

Christopher Gorman

Becca Nagorsky

Vanessa Roy

*The Wagner Planner* is the independent student newsletter of the Urban Planning Student Association (UPSA) of the Robert F. Wagner Graduate School of Public Service at NYU.

All currently enrolled MUP students, alumni and faculty are encouraged to submit material to *The Wagner Planner*. Please email letters to the editors and any other contributions to: [wagnerplanner@gmail.com](mailto:wagnerplanner@gmail.com)

## A LETTER FROM THE EDITORS

Two issues that frequently emerge in today's planning conversations are sustainability and community involvement. These themes will likely play significant roles in our future planning efforts.

Green building is increasingly becoming the standard to which developers and planners aspire. The City of Boston's major step to incorporate green building standards into the city's municipal zoning laws sets a bar for cities across the world. Sustainable development and the reduction of human impact on the natural environment are especially relevant in the face of global climate change.

Cities in the developing world that are modernizing at an rapid pace can also help with the effort to decrease the impact on our worldwide ecosystem. The opening of a new metro line in New Delhi, India as a way to ease street congestion and provide an alternative to private vehicle use is an example of a modern amenity that also has environmental benefits.

Urban areas underserved by public mass transit, whether in the neighborhoods of New Delhi or those of New York City, sometimes have transportation options outside of the formal framework. Dollar vans, for instance, are an alternative mode of transport found in Queens and Brooklyn neighborhoods where Robert Moses diverted public funds from mass transit extensions to build highways.

Recent exhibits on the life of Robert Moses have renewed a city-wide discussion on the projects he completed and his unilateral approach to urban development. Large-scale development projects currently taking place across the city and the power of their proponents seem to recall the days of Moses.

Finally, the recent death of Ibo Balton, a beloved planner and NYU grad, points to another type of legacy. His work to redevelop Harlem building-by-building stands in contrast to the wide-scale demolition and mega-projects of Moses. Both men left their own significant mark on New York City.

We hope you enjoy this edition of *The Wagner Planner*.

Carrie Knudson and Michael Kodransky





MARCH 2007

## THE METRO TO NEW DELHI'S HEART

by Vanessa Roy (MUP '07)

*In the winter of 2005, Vanessa Roy (MUP '07) traveled to New Delhi, India to visit family and explore one of the planet's most populated cities. While visiting, she witnessed the opening of New Delhi's newest metro line, and here she reports on her impressions of a city, its people and its transit.*

New Delhi, India's national capital and historically one of the nation's most congested cities, until recently, depended almost entirely on buses as its sole mode of mass transport. Consequently, bus services in the city became inadequate and heavily overcrowded. This attributed to a proliferation of personalized vehicles, exacerbating already stifling road congestion in the capital.

As a result, New Delhi government administrators and planners began construction of a new rapid transit system, of which three lines have now been completed. The Blue Line, or the Indra-prastha - Dwarka Line, opened in December of 2005. The line is 32.1 km long and consists of 31 metro stations. Planning for the Blue Line was very involved, incorporating both current and future means of public transit in the city.

I attended the inaugural celebration of the Blue Line, which was held at Connaught Place, the city's main commercial district. The celebration included a street parade, participation by prominent government officials and dancing. Upon arrival, I was impressed by all aspects of the new metro. It was clearly built with expansion in mind and aesthetically, it was very pleasing. The station was modern, surprisingly spa-

acious and clearly marked.

Metro ticket fares are priced based on zones, and trains run at approximately ten minute intervals until 10:00 PM. Electronic indicator boards show destinations and announce the time remaining until the next train arrives. Each carriage is 4 km wide and contains enough



A passenger waits at a metro station in New Delhi to board the Blue Line, which opened to great fanfare in December, 2005.

space for 60 riders to sit and 325 to stand.

At the opening, station guards assisted passengers with the electronic tokens at the entrance gates and guided indecisive riders standing in front of inscrutable escalators. Upon first attempt, I was not able to penetrate the ferociously passionate crowd to purchase a ride—queuing, even at the best of times, is not one of India's strong points—though I did get close enough to see the train's clean and sleek design. It was easy for me to understand the crowd's excitement for the Blue Line. It was expected to be the busiest corridor of the whole metro system.

In a country where endemic traffic congestion dominates the urban fabric and causes significant disrup-

tion for retail and business activities, it was refreshing to witness the incredibly warm welcome the Blue Line received from its everyday users. Indisputably, urban transportation policy is a tricky affair; however, it was remarkable to observe the overwhelming public support to greet this mass transportation solution.

With the addition of the metro, commuting in New Delhi is really two separate and distinct worlds: some sit in modern, silver, spacious, air-conditioned Metro trains for a short period of time, while other commuters sit in taxis and auto rickshaws (a three-wheel motorized car) at street level, waiting for a chance to make way into one of the many roundabout junctions. For these riders, the typical street scenario includes an incensed honking of bicycles and cars; mopeds carrying three men or women riding sidesaddle and holding babies (all without helmets); and buses merging at top speed into a single lane. Gazing upon all the chaos with unimpressed composure are New Delhi's 2,800 cows, revered by Hindi religion, which also use street roads and medians for their travel.

Even though my trip was more of a vacation, replete with friends, family, Palak Paneer, reading, and Bollywood, it was eye-opening to witness first hand how other parts of the world so enthusiastically welcome new public transportation. These accounts stimulated my imagination for other possibilities here in New York: if the City can close off Avenue of the Americas on weekends so that street vendors can sell socks and falafel, why not greet the 2<sup>nd</sup> Avenue Subway Line, when it opens, New Delhi style? ■



MARCH 2007

## AN INTERVIEW WITH ADJUNCT PROFESSOR ELLIOT "LEE" SANDER

by Christopher Gorman (MUP '08)

**E**lliott "Lee" Sander is the Executive Director and CEO of the Metropolitan Transportation Authority (MTA). At Wagner, Lee is an Adjunct Associate Professor of Public Administration and is the Director of the Rudin Center for Transportation Policy and Management. He also serves as advisor to the Wagner Transportation Association (WTA).

**CG:** You were an international studies major in college. How did you get turned on to transportation and what drives your passion for transportation issues today?

**LS:** I have always had an interest in transportation issues. Ironically, the transportation mode that interests me the most, aviation, I have not had responsibility for in my career. I had a great time at Georgetown, and while there had an opportunity to work as a research analyst at the State Department. But I found that I was attracted to management and ultimately would pursue a career in local and state management. Later, I worked as a budget analyst at the New York City Office of Management and Budget (OMB), and for the City Council President. A friend at New York City Department of Transportation encouraged me to take a management position at NYC DOT running the parking division, which is responsible for maintaining 55,000 parking meters and 45 lots and fields.

**CG:** You recently became the Executive Director and CEO of the Metropolitan Transportation Agency (MTA). What must you do differently from you predecessors to ensure the success of the MTA?

**LS:** A number of my successors did successful things. I credit Peter Kalikow and Katie Lapp for their stew-

ardship of East Side access and the Second Avenue subway. Richard Ravitch, Peter Stangl and others were very successful in rebuilding the MTA. So, to frame it properly, combining the successful elements of my predecessors will make the MTA successful today.

**CG:** In your opinion, what future transportation project is the most



important for the City of New York?

**LS:** I had a role in drafting Governor Spitzer's speech to the Regional Planning Association, where he outlined the MTA priorities, and these are the same for me. Most important are the Second Avenue Subway and East Side access, which are related. It is difficult to do them alone. These are most important because the capacity and health of the central business district is the foremost concern. It is the economic engine for the state, the region, and the country, and we must sustain it from a transportation stand point.

**CG:** The MTA has deficits on its horizon. Other than traditional forms of raising revenue such as fare increases, what method shows the

most promise to ensure the financial stability of the MTA?

**LS:** That is a conversation that we are just beginning to have. We will go public in July on how we are going to address that, looking at both traditional and non-traditional methods of funding. But it is too early to have to have that conversation now.

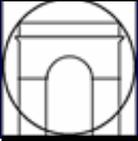
**CG:** You recently had lunch with Roger Toussaint, President of the Transit Workers Union. Can you talk a little bit about what was discussed, and do you feel that there is residual strain between the Transit Workers Union and the MTA resulting from last year's transit strike?

**LS:** No question that when you endure a strike there is an effect and that is the case here. Mr. Toussaint has communicated, along with rank and file members of the union, a strong desire to move on and everyone is willing to take the steps necessary to do that.

**CG:** I am sure that you ride the subway/bus system. First, do you do this incognito? Second, as the Director of the MTA, what do you look for while you ride?

**LS:** I generally take the LIRR and subway to work. I need to take both systems to get home and to the office at 347 Madison Avenue. So far, my sense is that some people recognize me from seeing me on TV. But I'm not sure that I have enormous face recognition. We'll see how long that lasts. In using the system, the only time I take the car is when I travel to a location that is not publicly accessible. When I ride, I look for what the customers look at; is the train on time, general cleanliness of equipment and station, employee interaction, are employees personable, occasionally what the signage looks like, the basics.

*(Continued on pg. 5)*



MARCH 2007

## ALTERNATIVE TRANSPORT: THE COMMUTER VAN INDUSTRY IN NYC

by Michael Kodransky (MUP '08)

**O**n a small, unassuming side road off of Main Street in Flushing, three tinted-window, twelve-seat passenger vans wait to be filled with travelers. Mandarin is the dominant language in this section of Queens and the driver's speak limited English. Their dialogue frequently includes the word "Manhattan," repeated again and again to passersby.

For the next few weekends until March 26th, the number 7 train—which connects midtown Manhattan to Main Street in Flushing and is the sole subway serving many neighborhoods along the way—will be out of commission on much of the line from 12am to 5am as the MTA upgrades aging signals, switches and tracks. Commuter vans, such as those in Flushing, are an example of how the independent transportation industry can fill service gaps and satisfy transit demands unmet by regulated public transportation.

During the eleven day NYC transit strike in 1980, enterprising owners of 9-20 seat passenger vans stepped up to fill the service voids in their

communities. Even after the strike was resolved, the van service continued to operate in minority and immigrant neighborhoods underserved by public mass transit. The community transportation industry, as it came to be known, created both jobs and transit opportunities for residents in African-American, Caribbean, Latin-American and Asian neighborhoods. Northeastern sections of Queens such as Jamaica, where Robert Moses famously redirected funds meant for mass transit to highway projects, are typically where commuter vans have a large ridership. Other areas include Far Rockaway, Queens, Flatbush, Brooklyn and many more.

In 2002, van operators relieved stranded commuters during the Queens bus strike. They could be seen again during the three day MTA strike in 2005, picking-up and packing-in distressed straphangers along the way to the East River bridges. Aside from easing the burden on commuters during a transit strike, they also offer a lower-cost and at times more convenient mode of transportation.

A typical trip on these commuter vans, commonly called "dollar vans" or "jitneys," can take 15-20 minutes to get from Main Street in Flushing to East Broadway in Manhattan during off-peak hours. On the subway, the same trip can take over an hour. When the city still had two-fare zones, the vans provided service at a more competitive rate—in some cases, they still do. Before the creation of the MTA metrorcard, residents living far from a subway station paid two fares if they transferred between the bus and subway. A ride on a commuter van was \$1 in contrast to the \$1.50 charged by city buses. After the MTA revised its fare system and offered free transfers between bus and subway, dollar van ridership



Travelers headed to Sunset Park, Brooklyn board a dollar van on East Broadway and Forsyth Street.

declined. Today, however, ridership is high, partially resulting from service expansions into more neighborhoods.

As it has grown, the industry also diverted some jobs and revenues from the formal transit system. In an attempt to regulate it, Local Law 115 was passed in 1993, requiring commuter vans to obtain a license from the New York Taxi and Limousine Commission. While most vans now operate legally, some are still under the radar. Though regulatory measures have had some success, illegal practices—such as the hailing of vans by would-be customers along common travel routes—still persist. The New York City Council began a discussion in 2006 about possibly requiring commuter vans to be painted an identifiable color, much like yellow taxi cabs.

Planners expecting to attend the American Planning Association Conference in Philadelphia this coming April will likely rely on Chinatown buses, the regional version of commuter vans. They provide travelers with a connection between Chinatowns in cities on the eastern seaboard and beyond, serving as competition to commuter rail and Greyhound. Alongside the Manhattan Bridge on East Broadway, listen for shouts from two competing fleets above the hustle and bustle that sound like "Philadelphia." ■

### Sander

*Continued from p. 4*

CG: You teach Transportation Policy at Wagner. Do you find teaching challenging? I imagine that after a long day as MTA Director, teaching a class would be cake. Am I wrong about that?

LS: I enjoy teaching immensely. It is one of the best things I have done in the last ten years. It is a challenge, and it is stimulating to share with and teach our students the fundamental elements of the field which I have spent my life in. And I also like to think that I have a few good stories to tell. ■



MARCH 2007

## Boston Goes Green

*Continued from p. 1*

sector. In early January, New York City ended the public comment period for Local Law 86, which will require city capital projects with construction costs of over \$2 million to be LEED certified. Renovation projects in city buildings that cover 50% or more of the building's floor area will also require LEED certification. Officials estimate that Local Law 86 will affect approximately \$12 billion in construction over the City's ten-year capital plan. The New York City Economic Development Corporation and the Department of Housing Preservation & Development are working with private developers to create green building designs that could total nine million square feet and over \$2.5 billion.

Other major cities are also requiring LEED certification or green building guidelines for city-owned buildings, including Atlanta, Austin, Boulder, Chicago, Dallas, Los Angeles, Portland (Oregon), San Diego, San Francisco, San Jose, and Seattle. In addition, eight states, including New York, have begun utilizing LEED for state-owned buildings. These local and state initiatives are important first steps, considering that an estimated 40% of raw materials consumed globally are used for buildings. In the US, commercial and residential buildings are responsible for approximately 65% of electricity consumption, 30% of greenhouse gas emissions, 12% of potable water use and 136 million tons of construction and demolition waste annually.



A rendering of the Macallen Building (right) in Boston, MA, one of the few residential buildings in the nation to gain a gold LEED rating. The City of Boston recently incorporated green building standards into the city's municipal zoning laws. Image courtesy of Pappas Enterprises, Inc., [www.papent.com](http://www.papent.com)



PHILADELPHIA

APA's 2007

National  
Planning  
Conference

April 14-18, 2007

These public sector efforts will only reach so far. In New York City, for example, the Battery Park City Authority utilizes green building guidelines based on LEED for the commercial and residential projects developed within its geographic mandate. However, the direct impact of this effort is limited to households that can afford to pay \$2,350 per month for a 500-square-foot studio or up to \$6,500 per month for a 1,400-square-foot three-bedroom apartment.

The pressing question that planners, public health advocates, and environmentalists should be asking is how long will these spillover effects take to reach low- and moderate-income households in New York City? New Yorkers of means can now effectively purchase the health benefits of green buildings by renting green, healthy apartments at The Solaire or Verdesian in Battery Park City. But how long will families and children in the South Bronx have to endure asthma rates that are eight times above the national average before green buildings become commonplace in New York City?

New York City should be commended for stepping up its green building efforts to catch up with other major US cities. However, a truly innovative green building policy is conspicuously missing from the city's new sustainability effort, PLANYC 2030. The phrase "We should be proud. But we should not be complacent" is featured prominently in the PLANYC 2030 brochure. This motto seems to fit better with Boston's efforts than with New York City's. Mayor Bloomberg, an outspoken advocate on national issues like gun control and education, should also lead the fight for New York to adopt standards as tough as Boston's. By doing so, he could leave New Yorkers with a legacy that would be felt for generations. New York is viewed as an international city, wouldn't it be great if our city acted as an international leader on green building innovation? The health, economic and environmental benefits for our city and region would be breathtaking. ■



MARCH 2007

## THREE-PART EXHIBIT CALLS FOR RETHINKING ROBERT MOSES

by Carrie Knudson (MUP '07)

**W**ith the February opening of a three-part exhibit on Robert Moses and his influence on New York City, planners, policy makers and local residents have been given an opportunity to re-examine the legacy of one of the City's most influential figures.

Three museums - the Museum of the City of New York, the Queens Museum of Art and the Columbia University Wallach Art Gallery - are offering exhibits on Moses's role in the development of modern-day New York City. The exhibits, which run through May, provide a wealth of information on Moses's work, from the development of the beloved Brooklyn Heights promenade as part of the Gowanus expressway project to the slum clearance and superblocks of urban renewal.

The exhibits feature displays that will excite any urban planner, including maps, photographs, video, diagrams and 3-D models. Copies of old news articles and PR for the projects ("The Circumferential Highway!") give the viewer a sense

of the time in which Moses was working. The sheer number of bridges, roads, parks and housing developments for which he was responsible, let alone their collective impact on the City, is simply astounding.

In response to the exhibits, local media have also taken the opportunity to compare and contrast Moses and the projects he initiated with some of the large-scale developments currently facing New York. In a recent article, the *New York Observer* went so far as to call Deputy Mayor for Development and Rebuilding Daniel Doctoroff a "modern-day Robert Moses." Much like the mega-projects of the Moses era, today's massive development projects like the Hudson and Atlantic Yards, rebuilding at Ground Zero and rezonings across the City have the poten-



Robert Moses and his influence on New York is the subject of a three-part exhibit running through May at museums across the city. Image courtesy of Wallach Art Gallery, [www.columbia.edu/cu/wallach/](http://www.columbia.edu/cu/wallach/)

tial to change New York significantly.

With any conversation about Robert Moses comes the inevitable comparison to Jane Jacobs. *New York* magazine took such a route in its interview with Sustainable South Bronx founder Majora Carter, whom they called the "Jane Jacobs of the South Bronx." Carter agrees with the characterization of Dan Doctoroff as Robert Moses: "The problem with the big projects of Moses and now Doctoroff is that they don't think about what the long-term impacts are of exercising that much power on people who have none. It's the idea that people are in the way."

Doctoroff, however, thinks that a comparison of today's development environment to that of Moses's time is irrelevant. "The biggest difference is the need [today] for community input," he said. "Moses was a believer that it was experts who were able to divine what was best for the community or the City on the whole."

However, Moses was not unaware of

(Continued on p. 8)

List of Moses's official positions and dates of occupancy, originally taken from the 1981 edition of *Who's Who in America*, the last version that Moses composed before his death in 1981. Republished in the 2007 exhibition program, *Robert Moses and the Modern City*.

New York City Department of Parks, Commissioner, 1934-60  
Triboro Bridge and Tunnel Authority, Member 1934-; Chairman, 1936-68  
Henry Hudson Parkway Authority and Marine Parkway Authority, merged into New York City Parkway Authority, Sole Member, 1934  
City Planning Commission, Member, 1942-60  
Mayor's Emergency Committee on Housing, Chairman, 1946  
New York City Construction, Coordinator, 1946-60  
Mayor's Committee for Permanent World Capitol, Chairman, 1946  
Mayor's Committee on Slum Clearance, Chairman, 1946-60  
Arterial Projects City of New York, Coordinator, 1960-66  
New York World's Fair 1964-65 Corporation, President, 1960-67



MARCH 2007

## Urban Legends: The Ballad of Robert Moses and Jane Jacobs

by Becca Nagorsky (MUP '07)

Their passion burned with the intensity of  
One thousand octagonal sodium-vapor street lights,  
Illuminating the Verrazano Bridge.  
Unlikely as Bed-Stuy gentrification,  
Their love was an enigma,  
Shrouded in secrecy more impenetrable  
Than the smoke-filled rooms that birthed the Cross-Bronx Expressway.

They met on opposite ends of a megaphone,  
United by a magnetism  
More powerful than the Triboro Bridge and Tunnel Authority  
(Before it was folded into the MTA).

She armed herself for their first date with charming tales  
Of bustling sidewalks, local hardware stores, eyes on the street.  
"Surely I can break through that icy,  
Indifferent façade with the power of the vignette."  
He consulted charts, maps and spreadsheets  
Of Floor Area Ratios, Levels of Service, the perils of non-Euclidean zoning.  
"Surely I can penetrate her flighty, impractical idealism with the logical  
Might of regional transportation planning."

Each anticipated whisking the other away,  
To some metaphorical cross-town.  
But he didn't know how to drive  
And she balked at leaving streetwall for superblock.

Bound by psychic chains of ideology,  
The couple (a Matalin/Carville prototype)  
Shared a yearning more relentless than eminent domain.  
Adversaries by day,  
At night she was all Tower in the Park  
And he was all hole-in-the-wall.

### Robert Moses

*Continued from p. 7*

the community's opinions of his projects. As detailed in Robert Caro's biography *The Power Broker*, residents of the Bronx's East Tremont neighborhood fought diligently to change the proposed route of the Cross-Bronx Expressway. They pleaded their case to the Bronx borough president, the City Planning Commission, the Mayor's office, the press and even the highway's engineers. Despite their efforts, which included a for-

mal engineering study of a feasible alternate route that would have saved 1,530 apartments, Moses had his way.

Similarly, public hearings in the City's ULURP and CEQR processes give current residents a chance to voice their opinions on public development plans in New York. However, the power that Moses wielded lay not in the lack of community input, but in the autonomy of the public authorities that he controlled. A recent *New York Times* editorial noted that this

autonomy continues today, as public meetings laws and freedom of information rules do not apply to authorities that are public-private entities.

Recent events have shown that a Moses-like concentration of power exists in the Public Authorities Control Board (PACB), whose five-member board is appointed by the governor. This board governs the project-related financings for the 11 statewide public authorities. Its recent decision to approve the acquisition and construction of the Atlantic Yards project and denial of the financing for the Moynihan Station project are just two examples of plans whose fates were determined by a group of experts, despite community input. In the case of Moynihan Station, the vote (or non-vote) of one man, Assembly Speaker Sheldon Silver, determined the future of the project. Perhaps here a comparison to Moses's power is apt.

Despite all this talk of concentration of power and the benefits of community input, one place where perhaps "too many cooks in the kitchen" has taken its toll is in the rebuilding of the World Trade Center. A relatively open process that has included relatives of those killed in the attack on Sept. 11, 2001, the plethora of architects and public officials has stalled efforts for contextual, practical and meaningful development on the site. However, with such an emotionally charged project, there is a natural difficulty in finding the right balance between community-led development and Moses-type control.

No doubt Robert Moses left his mark on New York City. The discussion of his work continues, as does the evolution of his legacy. Only time will tell of the legacies that today's developers and planners will leave behind. ■



MARCH 2007

## PREVENTION AND PREPAREDNESS IN PLANNING FOR CLIMATE CHANGE

by Sara Clark (MUP '08)

For those who have followed the global climate change saga, it certainly seems like the times, they are a-changin'. By the time the International Panel on Climate Change released its Fourth Assessment Report, including the statement that "warming of the climate system is unequivocal," even President George W. Bush had acknowledged it, citing the "serious challenge of global climate change" in his 2007 State of the Union Address. Seven different climate change bills are currently being debated in the House of Representatives, and the mayors of 402 U.S. cities have pledged to reduce carbon dioxide emissions within their jurisdictions.

As cities and states enact regulations on climate-changing gases like carbon dioxide and methane, planners have a role to play in ensuring that land use and transportation plans help meet these new goals. The impact of the built environment on climate-changing emissions is substantial; therefore, much room is left for improvement. Cities designed to decrease reliance on private transportation can cut emissions from automobiles. By discouraging sprawl and protecting forest cover, cities can ensure that carbon dioxide is cycled out of the atmosphere. According to the U.S. Energy Information Administration, 48% of energy consumed in the United States is in the building sector, more than both transportation and industry. By encouraging green building through zoning codes, effective funding mechanisms and policy incentives, planners can have a significant impact in fighting climate change.

Eliot Allen of Criterion Planners ([www.crit.com](http://www.crit.com)) in Portland, Oregon has established concrete methods that planners can use to help cities

address climate change. In particular, Allen says that planners should "[teach] citizens that there is a very long connection [between emissions and design]. A lot of people don't understand that when you design a new neighborhood, you live with it for 100 years." Planners can also help provide qualitative information about the impact that development has on climate-changing emissions. Using sophisticated modeling techniques and GIS software, the staff members at Criterion Planners illustrate to policymakers from

Florida to Washington the specific impacts that different development alternatives have on their carbon emissions.

Allen argues that planning with climate change in mind has other important benefits to communities. Higher density development often translates to increased convenience and quality of life, especially for groups that face accessibility issues.

As the baby-boomer generation

*(Continued on pg. 10)*

### Planner Poll:

Do you think the US needs a comprehensive national plan for climate change strategies to succeed?

Compiled by Susanne Huerta (MUP '07)



I think there's A LOT that can be done on an individual or household basis. Then there are cities and states which have the ability to implement some pretty creative solutions if they want. Nevertheless, a strong federal policy would send a powerful message.

Alex Blei (MUP '08)



I do think the US needs a comprehensive plan, but given the current administration, I doubt that is happening. Hopefully, a few local governments will take the lead on this and provide a model for others to follow until there is a more comprehensive national plan.

Tara Duvivier (MUP '08)



It is critical to work from both the bottom-up and from top-down to come up with real policies that effect change. Local governments can serve as models to each other and to the nation. There needs to be a comprehensive national plan, but even then, local governments will be responsible for implementing whatever strategies come about.

Arturo Espinoza (MUP '08)



## Climate Change

*Continued from p. 9*

ages, Allen says "higher density communities are going to be especially important as boomers can no longer rely on their cars." In addition, higher density development can also decrease fiscal costs for city governments, especially in terms of infrastructure.

The reduction of emissions within the planning framework is not without difficulties. Most communities are still hesitant to move away from plans that focus on auto-dependent transportation. Higher density developments can be politically difficult, as residents worry about the impact of density on traffic congestion, schools, local air quality and crime. However, Allen and a number of other academics, planners, and communities are beginning to show that "the benefits of

[sustainable development] really outweigh the negatives."

Another interesting shift is beginning to occur at the intersection of planning and climate change. For as long as planners have been engaged with this issue, most have sought to mitigate the impact that land use and transportation choices can have on the environment. But now some cities, notably Boston and a number of communities in Florida, have begun to shift their thinking away from preventing climate change toward dealing with it once it occurs. This type of work, with roots in natural hazard planning, evaluates how communities can prepare most effectively against rising sea levels and more intense weather events. Some planning decisions, such as preventing sprawl in important wetlands, can be seen as both prevention and preparedness. As the impacts of climate change po-

tentially become more widespread, the use of more of these win-win decisions will become increasingly important.

It seems then, as communities and citizens move to address climate change, through both mitigation and hazard planning, the most important role that planners can have is helping communities understand the multiple benefits that climate-conscious design can bring, as well as the ways that potentially adverse impacts from such a design can be mitigated. By facilitating such discussion, planners can assist communities in reaching consensus and moving forward. As the political community steps up and sets targets for reduction, the planning community should be prepared to offer concrete advice for how to most effectively reach these goals in their own localities. ■

## STUDENT ASSISTANTSHIPS AT WAGNER RESEARCH CENTERS

Compiled by Michael Kodransky (MUP '08) and Carrie Knudson (MUP '07)

**Alison Culpen** (MUP '08) is a Research Assistant at the Institute for Civil Infrastructure Systems (ICIS) headed by Professor Rae Zimmerman. She works on projects related to energy, transportation, and the environment. Alison collects and interprets data as well as researches project topics. She also attends relevant lectures, conferences, and events. A few of the studies she has been involved with include: analysis of vulnerabilities within critical infrastructure systems; resource allocation and alternative energy sources; and the relationship between air quality, traffic, waste transfer, and child asthma rates in the South Bronx.

**Brian Ross** (MUP '08) is a Research Assistant at the Rudin Center for Transportation Policy and Management. He is currently involved in a study funded by the New York Metropolitan Transportation Council (NYMTC) as part of a 9/11 memorial program. The study hopes to identify obstacles to effective urban-suburban and sub-urban-suburban coordination in transportation and land-use. The results will be used to develop an inventory of best practices for more effective inter-jurisdictional coordination on transportation and land-use related projects.

**Christine Riordan** (MUP '08) is currently doing research with the Taub Urban Research Center and Professor Natasha Iskander on skill acquisition of immigrant workers in the urban economy, specifically within the construction and building trades industry in Philadelphia. Due to the erosion of workplace protections, skills are one form of leverage that many workers have been using to improve their working conditions. Christine is looking at the role of skill in the building trades, which is often classified as low-skilled and low-wage, and how skills of immigrant workers are often left unrecognized and unacknowledged, creating standards and conflicts for both the industry and its workers.

**Grant Poujade** (MUP '07) has been working on the website PlanNYC.org since it launched in December of 2005. Now sponsored by the Furman Center for Real Estate and Urban Policy, PlanNYC was the end product of a Wagner planning Capstone project. The website tracks rezoning, real estate developments, environmental and transportation projects throughout New York City. Grant is in charge of managing the team responsible for updating content and for implementing major site changes.



## REMEMBERING A HARLEM COMMUNITY PLANNER

by Carrie Knudson (MUP '07)

Charles D. "Ibo" Balton, Harlem Planner and Housing Advocate, 52, passed away in early February. Balton, a 1982 graduate of NYU's Urban Planning program, played a significant role in the City's efforts to improve housing and economic conditions in Harlem. Starting in 1986, he worked for the Department of Housing Preservation and Development (HPD) as an urban planner in HPD's Bronx and Brooklyn offices. In 1995, Balton became director of the Harlem Neighborhood Preservation Office and was later promoted to director of Manhattan planning for HPD.

Balton's crucial role in the redevelopment of the Harlem community included building a partnership between City government and residents that persists to this day. Under his guidance, property owners and developers used a number of city programs to revive distressed

buildings and restore entire neighborhoods. Balton's efforts, together with those of Harlem's housing and community development advocates, produced thousands of new and rehabilitated housing units, and Harlem is thriving today largely as a result of this work.

In response to his death, Shaun Donovan, HPD Commissioner, noted that Balton's "tremendous legacy of working with developers, community organizations, elected officials and residents" helped "to make possible perhaps the greatest urban renaissance story in American history."

In honor of Balton's memory, the Citizen's Housing and Planning Council (CHPC) and Harlem Congregations for Community Improvement are creating the Ibo Balton Community Planning Award, to be presented annually at the CHPC Luncheon.

## Congrats to the New UPSA Board!



Newly elected UPSA board members, from left to right:

Yvonne Martinez, VP of Professional and Public Affairs  
Emre Edev, VP of Internal Outreach and Media  
John Bozek (sitting), VP of Operations  
Alison Culpén, VP of Academic Affairs  
Colin Leary, VP of Professional Development  
Michael Lear, President  
Denali Dasgupta, VP of Events and Development  
Harry Ostrander, VP of Financial Affairs

## Have you seen me?



The Romanesque arch and sculptural faces belong to the Schermerhorn Building at the corner of Lafayette and Great Jones Street. Designed by Henry Hardenbergh, the architect of the Dakota Building and Plaza Hotel, the building was a commercial venture by William C. Schermerhorn, and was built on the site of the Schermerhorn family's mansion. Completed in 1889, the building's original tenant was a boys' clothing manufacturer.

Source: [www.nyc-architecture.com](http://www.nyc-architecture.com)