



URBANISTS INTERNATIONAL

A non-profit urban planning exchange for developing countries

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Photo courtesy of Stuart Franklin

Sao Paulo, Brazil. Urban Sprawl Gone Awry.

BACKGROUND

Urbanists International was founded in 2002 to offer pro bono urban design, city planning, and economic development services to developing countries, and exchange information in places where effective planning and preservation activities are already taking place — and where there are lessons to be learned that can be broadly shared. We believe that globalization can become a positive force if proper plans are made and effective rules established to respect, preserve, and enhance the cultural and historical fabric of cities and cultures around the world.

Our volunteer corps — comprised of experienced architects, urban planners, educators, preservationists, economists, mayors, and policy makers from the U.S. and other countries — will create international partnerships through which we will share experiences, ideas, design concepts, economic models, industry contacts, and other valuable resources with our professional counterparts in host countries.

Urbanists International, a non profit organization, was initiated as a project of the Center for International Policy in Washington, D.C.

The activities of Urbanists International are raising global awareness about:

- the critical role that good urban planning can play in a country's development;
- the benefits of a comprehensive master plan for the preservation of a city's cultural and historical identity;
- the harsh ramifications of not controlling growth, and
- the existence of good projects around the world that are both profitable and respectful of a region's culture.

This is not about stopping economic growth. While advance planning is the key to avoiding the overwhelming problems of haphazard development, it is also true that contextually designed projects that respect cultural attitudes are more profitable than the fast track, "cookie cutter," modern solutions found in almost every developing country. Quality projects that respect the heritage of a region will increase land values and sustain cultural health. In short, economic development can be achieved while ensuring that cities around the world retain their unique identities.



Brussels, Belgium: New construction can reflect local building customs.

Urbanists International: Supporting Economic Growth without Sacrificing Cultural Identity

Cities in developing countries are losing their identities at an alarming rate

Most new buildings around the world today — whether they are corporate hotels, fast food outlets, office buildings or retail malls — look like they are emerging from the same mold. The signage is the same, the goods for sale are the same, and the targets -- the lifestyle of the quintessentially hip consumer -- are also the same. Local values and long standing cultural legacies are being cast aside as tired and passé, while sterile, international-style prototypes are promoted as vehicles for bringing a society into the "modern world." Sadly, with every insensitive new "foreign intervention," the unique identity of a city is substantially diminished.



Bangkok, Thailand: The culture of commerce vs. the culture of design.

Before long, the image of a country shifts from being a unique destination to being just another resort or tourist destination with a sideline district of quaint historic buildings.

A volunteer corps of experienced planning professionals making a difference

Many developing countries could benefit greatly from collaborating with outside professional urban planners, but do not have access to professional expertise. Urbanists International is a new organization offering a broad range of urban design, planning, and economic strategy assistance, at no cost to the benefiting country consistent with applicable laws and customs. * We are a worldwide non-profit, volunteer corps of accomplished architects, urban designers, city planners, educators, preservationists, economists, mayors, policy makers, and other global thinkers from the US and

around the world. Our advisors offer their professional skills pro bono, to help countries in need, and to

exchange information in places where local authorities are already working successfully to preserve their heritage. The impact of sharing and exchanging information with local government officials, architects and planners can be profound, and this collaboration allows lessons learned from projects that have succeeded or failed in places around the world to be broadly shared. Our hope is that this information exchange will help prevent the negative effects of globalization from corrupting the cultures of all urban environments.

** Although UI offers these services to developing countries, our work with the Cuban government is substantially limited, in keeping with U.S. Treasury Department restrictions. In Cuba, UI advisors will engage with their Cuban counterparts in an information exchange only. All UI advisors participating in the Cuba Project understand the restrictions on discussions about economic development and on the provision of free services.*

A worldwide campaign for promoting good urban planning

One of the principal missions of Urbanists International is to raise public awareness of the need for governments to control development before the integrity of their cities has been compromised. UI supports the creation of government endorsed comprehensive master plans and design guidelines that recognize the importance of preserving the cultural and historical identity of urban centers and that optimize the contributions of local architects, planners, preservationists, and others.

Visionary politicians connecting with talented urban planners Urbanists International believes that good city planning can only take place with the support of forward-thinking government leaders. Conversely, visionary politicians need creative designers and planners to help them realize their goals. Quality investment groups are attracted to stable partnerships between talented planners and supportive political leaders. Urbanists International believes that working in close collaboration with government officials and their planners demonstrates that globalization can be a positive force. But the success is contingent upon public officials insisting on formulating proper strategic plans, establishing rules, and enforcing customized design guidelines that respect, preserve, and enhance those characteristics that make each of our world's cities unique.

Altering the destiny of a city or country: implementing a realistic set of objectives

The mission and goals of Urbanists International are real. Our experts and advisors are individuals who have played effective roles in shaping the built environment. Our collective vision is not an academic exercise; it is not meant to be a forum for architects to talk amongst themselves about the future of design. We are volunteering our time to realize the tangible results that will stem from our ideas. We believe that by raising awareness about the public's interest in good urban planning and the important role of political leaders as the keepers of their city's heritage, we can make a difference. At this moment in time, good design ideas are the easiest part. Creating legally binding design guidelines, and motivating political leaders to enforce these protective policies are the real challenges. Preservation of our cities' identities is truly at risk. But workable solutions are there for the asking.



Leveraging few dollars to buy thousands in free consulting time

Contributions to Urbanists International can be viewed as highly leveraged investments.** Each contribution can translate into thousands of dollars in donated services. For the cost of travel expenses and modest operating costs, Urbanists International is positioned to provide consulting time worth thousands of dollars. More importantly, if advisors' time collaborating with local architects, planners and others is spent effectively, the value added to the future of the target cities can be immeasurable. There are few non-profit worldwide assistance organizations with the

Beijing, China: Worldwide, cities are gaining a million people per week.

ability to attract experienced advisors who are willing to donate their time.

potential to accomplish as much with so little funding. In essence, the real value of Urbanists International is our

*** Since Urbanists International's project in Cuba is fundamentally limited in scope (in keeping with US Treasury Department regulations), contributions to UI may support travel for advisors participating in informational exchanges, but will not support the provision of any services to the Cuban government or people.*

Our full website is currently under construction. Please [contact us](#) for more information about our organization and let us know how you'd like to get involved.

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MISSION STATEMENT

September, 2002

Urbanists International is a non-profit organization offering urban design, planning, and economic development assistance to developing countries. We are primarily a volunteer corps of accomplished architects, urban planners, educators, preservationists, economists, mayors, policy makers, and other global thinkers from the US and other countries around the world. The goal of Urbanists International is to assist countries with emerging economies by:

- Raising public awareness of the need for governments to empower planners to properly control development before the integrity of their cities is compromised;
- Supporting the creation of comprehensive master plans and design guidelines that recognize the importance of preserving the cultural and historical identity of urban centers;
- Offering new concepts for streamlining urban planning reviews, and the building approvals process for all new projects;
- Developing strategies for attaining sustainable economic growth by identifying pre-approved building sites that will attract investors and create jobs;
- Exploring appropriate strategies for ensuring that all new development ventures directly benefit the affected communities.

Critical to the mission of Urbanists International is the belief that good city planning must be supported by forward-thinking government leaders. Conversely, visionary politicians need creative designers and planners to help them realize their goals. Quality investment groups are attracted to stable partnerships between talented planners and supportive political leaders. Working in close collaboration with government officials and their planners, Urbanists International will attract well-respected international investors who understand that significant profits can be realized from projects that complement a culture and support its social agenda. Urbanists International believes that globalization can become a positive force if proper plans are made and rules established to respect, preserve, and enhance those characteristics that make each of our world's cities unique.

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BIOGRAPHIES

UI Working Committee Members

Jeffrey Horowitz — Executive Director/ Founder Urbanists International

Mr. Horowitz founded Urbanists International in September of 2002, seven months after visiting Cuba as part of a small U.S. Congressional delegation. The delegation was organized by the Center for International Policy in Washington, D.C. Mr. Horowitz has since become a board member of CIP. As an architectural designer, he has directed a wide variety of large-scale urban projects with the firms of Skidmore, Owings, and Merrill, and Kaplan, McLaughlin & Diaz. His projects include commercial centers and high-rise office towers across the U.S. and in Paris, Barcelona, Brussels, Milan, Jakarta, Hong Kong, and Singapore. A graduate of Queens College, (City University of New York), Mr. Horowitz received his Master of Architecture degree from the Harvard University Graduate School of Design where he founded The Harvard Architecture Review. At the time, Mr. Horowitz was also appointed a Harvard teaching fellow, a Graham Foundation Scholar, and was the recipient of Harvard's Appleton Award for architectural scholarship. From 1991-1996 he served as Chairman of the Planning Commission of Berkeley, California, developing master plans for the city including a Civic Center Plan, a Housing Districts Plan, and Berkeley's Downtown Revitalization Plan, and streamlining the building approvals process with the creation of a "One Stop Permit Center". Mr. Horowitz currently serves as Chairman of the Board of Trustees for the Head-Royce School in Oakland, California. He owns and manages Rio Lago Ranch and Vineyard, growing high-quality grapes for Clos du Bois Winery of Sonoma, California. Finally, Mr. Horowitz directs the Rosengarten/Horowitz Fund, a non-profit family foundation focused on local and international humanitarian causes.

Wayne Smith — Cuba Project Advisor

Dr. Smith is currently the most respected U.S. authority on Cuba. Dr. Smith is visiting Professor of Latin American studies at Johns Hopkins University, where he directs the academic exchange program with the University of Havana. Serving 25 years with the Department of State, he worked in the Soviet Union, Argentina, Brazil, and Cuba. As Executive Secretary of President Kennedy's Latin American Task Force, in 1961 Dr. Smith was cited as one of the outstanding young Foreign Service officers in the Latin American bureau. In 1973, he received the Meritorious Honor Award for sustained excellence in political reporting from Buenos Aires. When he left the Service in 1982 he was Chief of Mission at the U.S. Interests Section in Havana, and recognized as the Department of State's leading expert on Cuba. Dr. Smith holds bachelors and masters degrees from La Universidad de las Americas in Mexico City, a masters from Columbia University, and masters and Ph.D. from George Washington University. While in the United States Marine Corps from 1949 to 1953 he saw combat during the first winter of the Korean War. From 1982 until 1984, Dr. Smith was a Senior Associate at the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, and since 1992, he has been a Senior Fellow at the Center for International Policy, both in Washington, D.C. He has edited or co-edited many books, most recently The

Russians Aren't Coming: New Soviet Policy in Latin America (Lynne Rienner, 1992), and, with Esteban Morales, Subject to Solution: Problems in Cuban-U.S. Relations (Lynne Rienner, 1988), winner of the Critic award in 1989 for being one of the best academic books reviewed that year. Dr. Smith's article, "Lies about Nicaragua," that appeared in the Summer 1987 Foreign Policy, was cited by several congressmen as a key document in the debate over aid to the Contras.

Sam Farr — Honorary Governmental Advisor

Representative Farr (D — Carmel) is a fifth generation Californian from the 17th district of the state's central coast. For his work, he has been recognized as an "Environmental Hero" by the League of Conservation Voters, garnering a perfect voting record in 1996 and 1998, and has received perfect voting scores by the Center for Marine Conservation and the Children's Defense Fund. He was named 1996 Legislator of the Year by the American Planning Association. Before being elected to the House of Representatives in 1993, Sam Farr served more than 12 years in the California State Assembly, where he took a leadership role in causes for educational excellence, environmental protection, economic development and new technologies, and was named Legislator of the Year nine times. Graduating from Willamette University in Salem, Oregon, with a B.S. in Biology, he later attended the Monterey Institute of International Studies and Santa Clara University. Congressman Farr began his career in public service in 1964 in the Peace Corps in Colombia, developing fluency in Spanish. In 1997 he re-established the Travel and Tourism Caucus, which he co-chairs with Representative Mark Foley of Florida. The caucus plays a key role in developing tourism-related policy. He also serves on the House Appropriations Committee.

Lee Cott — Architectural Advisor / Educator

Mr. Cott, FAIA, is a founding principal of Bruner/Cott and Associates in Cambridge, Massachusetts, whose designs for housing, large-scale adaptive re-use projects, and buildings for academic institutions have been widely published and received numerous local and national awards, including a P/A Design Award and a 2000 AIA Honor Award. He is currently Adjunct Professor in Urban Design at the Harvard Graduate School of Design and a faculty member of the Joint Center for Housing Studies and the David Rockefeller Center for Latin American Studies. A twelve-time visitor to Cuba, Mr. Cott has lectured widely on its architecture and urban design, using sites in Havana to teach studios at Harvard over the past four years. In June 2002 he was Urban Design co-chair in Havana for the Association of Collegiate Schools of Architecture (ACSA) International Conference: "Architecture, Culture and the Challenges of Globalization." A Master of Architecture and Urban Design from Harvard University, he is a Fellow of the American Institute of Architects and a former president of the Boston Society of Architects.

Lee Tawney — Strategic Planning Advisor

Mr. Tawney is presently Starr Foundation Visiting Fellow at Lady Margaret Hall, University of Oxford, and Co-Director of the UK-US Center for Local Government at the Rothermere American Institute, University of Oxford, and at the Institute for Policy Studies, Johns Hopkins University. He served in the office of the Mayor of Baltimore City as Director of International Programs & Protocol from 1988 to 2002 and as Staff Director & Ombudsman from 2000 to 2002.

Peter H. Brink — Historic Preservation Advisor

Peter Brink joined the National Trust for Historic Preservation in October 1989 as Vice President of Programs. The National Trust for Historic Preservation is a non-profit organization of more than 250,000 members that provides leadership, education and advocacy to save America's diverse historic places and revitalize communities. Mr. Brink directs field services, training and information programs, organizational development programs, and specialized programs in heritage tourism. He was also responsible for the National Main Street Center for 10 years. Prior to the National Trust, Mr. Brink served as Executive Director of the Galveston (Texas) Historical Foundation, a city-wide non-profit historic preservation organization of 3,000 members and an annual operating budget of \$2 million. The organization spearheaded revitalization of the 19th century

Strand commercial district, attracting more than \$100 million of capital investment, restored the 1877 Barque ELISSA, stabilized residential neighborhoods, and operated museums and public events serving more than 300,000 people annually. From 1969 to 1973 Mr. Brink worked as an attorney in Washington, D.C. with Verner, Lipfert, Bernhard and MacPherson, and with Boasberg, Klores, Hewes and Kass. He received his B.A. degree from Dartmouth College and his LL.B. from the Harvard Law School.

Harrison S. Fraker, Jr. — Architectural Education Advisor

Dean Fraker is the William W. Wurster Professor and Dean of the College of Environmental Design (CED) at UC Berkeley. Educated as an architect and urban designer at Princeton and Cambridge Universities, he came to Berkeley in 1996 after 11 years at the University of Minnesota. When he created a new College of Architecture and Landscape Architecture at Minnesota, he was appointed its founding Dean. His research interests include affordable housing, sustainable development and ecological design. In Berkeley, Dean Fraker has focused on urban design issues by sponsoring and participating in national urban design conferences at Harvard, Berkeley, Michigan and Columbia. He has also served as a faculty resource on NEA-sponsored, innovative Mayors Institutes on City Design. Currently he is pursuing his environmental concerns by leading an EPA-funded analysis of sustainable development strategies for the UC Merced campus and a multi-university, multi-national laboratory green building materials initiative. Throughout his career, Dean Fraker has maintained a small award-winning design practice. He is considered a pioneer in passive solar, day lighting and energy conservation research and teaching.

Richard D. Kaplan — Architectural Advisor

Mr. Kaplan, AIA, is an architect and city planner, and is Senior Trustee (and former Co-Chairman) of the J.M.Kaplan Fund, a private New York-based foundation established in 1947, noted for its commitment to innovative projects in urban affairs, human rights, the arts and the environment. In 1994, Mr. Kaplan set up a three-part initiative to promote and assist the revitalization of lower Manhattan, which included helping develop a Master Plan for the area; the creation of a computerized three-dimensional Geographic Simulation System (GIS) model of the district, produced by the New School's Environmental Simulation Center (which Mr. Kaplan co-founded); and the establishment of an innovative not-for-profit organization, Heritage Trails New York, to increase public awareness of the history, architecture, sites and attractions of Downtown New York. Heritage Trails has created a system of four color-coded trails on the streets and sidewalks of the area, installed 42 permanent site markers that provide on-the-spot histories of local landmarks and which display its specially designed 3-D way-finding map of Lower Manhattan. Mr. Kaplan has received the City Club of New York's Albert S. Bard Award for Merit in Civic Architecture and Urban Design; the George S. Lewis Award from the New York Chapter of the American Institute of Architects; and additional awards and citations for his distinguished designs and projects in New York City, the Nation, and overseas. Mr. Kaplan graduated from Harvard College, and received a Master of Architecture degree from the Harvard Graduate School of Design. Mr. Kaplan served as the first Chair of the Alliance for Downtown New York's Committee on Tourism, Historic Preservation, Urban Design and Parks. He currently sits on, among others, the Boards of the Institute for Urban Design, the Skyscraper Museum, (of which he was a co-founder), and is Special Advisor to the President and the Executive Committee of The Regional Plan Association, the leading civic organization concerned with the rebuilding of Lower Manhattan.

Dean Macris — City Planning Advisor

Mr. Macris served from 1980-1992 as the City Planning Director for the City of San Francisco, where he oversaw the development of a Master Plan for the city. He was responsible for planning much of San Francisco's growth. Previously, he acted as Director of Community Development and Director of Economic Development for the City of San Francisco, and Associate Executive Director of the Association of Bay Area Governments. He also served as Assistant Commissioner of Planning in Chicago from 1965 to 1968. Since 1992 he has served as a planning consultant on a number of urban projects, including the rebuilding of the California Academy of Science's museum and facilities, the construction of the new waterfront downtown

baseball stadium for the San Francisco Giants, and downtown development of Portland, Oregon. Mr. Macris received his B.A. in Political Science at Westminster College, and his Master of Science in City Planning at the University of Illinois.

John Kriken — Urban Planning Advisor

An internationally known city planner and urban designer, Mr. Kriken founded the Urban Design and Planning Studio in the San Francisco office of Skidmore, Owings & Merrill, LLP. He has designed plans for a wide array of clients, including municipal, institutional, private, and public entities. He is well respected for his work on large-scale commissions, having designed large districts within cities, vast undeveloped parcels of land, and entirely new cities. Mr. Kriken has also served as design advisor to the cities of Beijing, China, Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam, and São Paulo, Brazil. His Saigon South Master Plan won both an urban design award from Progressive Architecture magazine and a National Honor Award from the American Institute of Architects. Both his Shanghai and Hong Kong Waterfront plans won National Honor Awards from the AIA in 2000. Altogether he has received 25 National Design Awards for his work. His current work includes authoring a Design for Development Document for the Transbay Terminal Area in downtown San Francisco.

Dan Solomon — Urban Designer / Architectural Advisor

Mr. Solomon, FAIA, is the Principal of Solomon E.T.C. Architecture and Urban Design in San Francisco, California. The main focus of his work has been residential architecture and the interaction between housing and urban design. Having lectured widely throughout Europe and the United States, he is now Professor Emeritus at UC Berkeley, where he received his Master of Architecture degree and where he taught from 1966 until 2000. Mr. Solomon was named to the Architectural Digest list of foremost architects in 1991 and 1995, his work receiving more than seventy design awards. He co-founded of the Congress for New Urbanism and is the author of, *ReBuilding* (1992) and the forthcoming *Global City Blues* (2003). Professor Solomon earned his Bachelor of Architecture degree from Columbia University and a Bachelor of Humanities degree from Stanford University.

Herb McLaughlin — Architectural Advisor

Mr. McLaughlin is Chairman and Design Principal of Kaplan, McLaughlin & Diaz, the largest architectural firm headquartered in San Francisco, with offices in the U.S., Mexico, Europe and Asia. He oversees all KMD design and research projects. Under his direction, KMD has won more than 100 design awards, including 30 from the AIA. As Director of Research, Mr. McLaughlin has led more than twenty research projects. The quality of virtually all of these has been recognized by publication. He has also been a visiting critic and lecturer at Harvard, Columbia, UCLA, UC Berkeley, the University of Illinois, the University of Wisconsin, and the Stanford Business School.

David Dreyer — Communications Consultant

Mr. Dreyer is a Principal at TSD, Inc., a firm that specializes in communications strategy and information technology, and advises a diverse group of clients including the Athens 2004 Summer Olympic Organizing Committee, Chartwell Investments, and the Freedom to Travel Project, run under the auspices of the Center for International Policy. Before joining TSD, he served as Deputy White House Communication Director under President Clinton and as Senior Advisor to Treasury Secretary Robert E. Rubin. From 1978 to 1993, Mr. Dreyer worked in senior legislative and communications positions for six members of the U.S. Congress including Senator Gary Hart, Majority Whip Tony Coelho and House Majority Leader Richard A. Gephardt.

William Goodfellow — Political Advisor — Center for International Policy (CIP)

Bill Goodfellow is Executive Director of the Center for International Policy, a Washington-based research and advocacy organization he helped establish after the Vietnam War to institutionalize the methodology of the anti-war movement and the lessons of the war. For a decade, CIP dedicated its efforts toward promoting reconciliation between the U.S. and the countries of Indochina. After the U.S. normalized relations with

Vietnam, the center turned its attention toward Cuba. In 1973 Mr. Goodfellow worked at the Indochina Resource Center, which provided scholarly critiques of U.S. policy toward Vietnam, Laos, and Cambodia to the anti-war movement.

Stephen Rivers — Media/Policy Consultant

Mr. Rivers is a communications/marketing/policy consultant and political activist based in Los Angeles, California. He has collaborated on projects with many well known figures in politics and entertainment, from Jane Fonda, Kevin Costner and Robert Redford to Tom Hayden, Senator Gary Hart, Governors Jerry Brown and Gray Davis and the late Cesar Chavez. He has organized events for Queen Rania of Jordan, former Soviet President Mikhail Gorbachev and President Bill Clinton. For the past three years he has been a frequent traveler to Cuba, organizing trips there for Kevin Costner and Steven Spielberg, collaborating on projects with the Cuban film institute, participating in U.S. congressional delegations and in meetings with a wide range of high level Cuban government officials.

Pam Barry — Governmental Consultant

Ms. Barry is currently Executive Director of the California Democratic Congressional Delegation, a caucus within the House of Representatives made up of the 32 members from the state. President Bill Clinton appointed her Director, Office of Congressional Relations, Immigration and Naturalization Service, and Director, Office of Public Affairs, Federal Railroad Administration. Ms. Barry started her career in public service in the Peace Corps, teaching English in South Korea from 1977-79. Afterwards, she worked as a Public Information Officer for California Governor Edmund G. Brown, Jr. Ms. Barry holds a Master of Public Administration degree. She is also a professional photographer.

Sarah Stephens — Political Advisor / Funding Consultant (CIP)

Since August 2000, Ms. Stephens has been a consultant for the Washington Office on Latin America, the Center for International Policy, and the Fund for Constitutional Government. She has focused mainly on developing strategies for changing U.S. foreign policy towards Cuba. As director of CIP's Freedom to Travel Project, she has led five influential delegations to Cuba in the last year, with members of Congress and prominent members of the business and entertainment communities. Prior to her work on Cuba, Ms. Stephens worked on foreign policy and human rights issues for two entertainment industry organizations: the Hollywood Women's Political Committee and Artists for a Hate Free America.

Deenie Yudell — Design Consultant

Ms. Yudell is Design Manager for Publications at the J. Paul Getty Trust in Los Angeles, a position she has held since 1990. Since joining the Getty, Deenie has been the principal creative director for several hundred books and catalogues, as well as programmatic and marketing ephemera, merchandise development and the Getty's branding and identity program. Under her art direction, Getty publications have garnered over 150 design awards. Prior to her position at the Getty, she served as Head Designer at the Los Angeles County Museum of Art; established and managed the design groups for the Mayor's Office of Communications, Boston City Hall and for Boston 200, the city's Bicentennial Commission; served as Head of Design and Production at the Boston Children's Museum; designed publications and environmental graphics for the Urban Design Department at the Boston Redevelopment Authority and for Cambridge Seven Associates, Cambridge, MA. Deenie received an MFA degree in Graphic Design from Yale University. She has taught design at Boston University's School of Fine and Applied Arts and at Otis Parsons Art Institute in Los Angeles.

John Ellis — Urban Designer/ Exhibition Coordinator

John G. Ellis is an architect and urban designer. A graduate of Cambridge University, England, he has lived and worked in the San Francisco Bay Area since 1977. He is Director of Urban Design for Solomon Ellis Torney Corporation, a WRT company that specializes in housing and urban design. The firm is one of the charter members of the Congress for the New Urbanism and has won more than seventy design awards. For the prior

ten years, Mr. Ellis was Senior Designer at the San Francisco firm of KMD, where he was responsible for several major large-scale, high-rise projects including the Oakland Federal Building. Mr. Ellis is Adjunct Professor at the California College of Arts and Crafts and a contributing writer to the London-based Architectural Review.

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Photo courtesy of Robert Polidori

The Cuba Project: Havana Case Study

A comprehensive strategy for promoting
culturally sensitive growth in a Post-US embargo Cuba

Why Cuba?

Cuba is a country with a rich cultural identity, an impressive architectural urban heritage, highly educated people with advanced social ideas, and very much in need of economic growth. Notwithstanding the US embargo, foreign investment in Cuba is leading economic development in ways that have a direct impact on the nation's architecture. With the U.S. economic embargo likely to be lifted in the not-too-distant future, Cuba is fast approaching the time when it must evaluate its role and identity as a partner in the global economy. Like most Cubans, UI is deeply concerned about the preservation of the country's built environment during this period of impending change.

What will become of Cuba after the US Embargo is lifted?

Once the U.S. embargo ends, the pressures on Cuba to accept additional economic investment, regardless of its implications for the urban fabric and heritage, will be enormous. Projections indicate that the number of visitors to Cuba will skyrocket from 2 to 12 million a year. Like other countries in this position, Cuba is facing the dilemma of how it can accept new economic investment and growth in ways that are compatible with its cultural heritage and identity without losing its magic as a unique, culturally rich country. All of Cuba's cities will face these pressures, but Havana will be especially affected. While UI is focusing on Havana as a pilot project, representatives from other cities in Cuba will be involved in our Cuba project.

Havana: an historic city emerging from a time capsule

Havana is in far better shape than most historic cities around the world because it avoided many of the poorly conceived urban design trends of the last 40 years. Havana does not have major shopping malls, elevated highways, segregated cul-de-sac neighborhoods, and endless impersonal office buildings. For many, discovering Havana is like uncovering a "lost city," a fascinating, preserved city from another era, but one that is desperately in need of repair. With the lifting of the US embargo, Havana will undoubtedly become a prime target for new investment.

The restoration of Old Havana: the brilliant work of the City Historian

While many old structures still await refurbishing, enormous progress has been made to save this part of the city. The brilliant restoration being accomplished there by the Office of the Historian of the City of Havana today provides a textbook example for preservationists around the world. The success in restoring Old Havana's buildings is consistent with the City Historian's plan to turn it into a "living city." This sensitive restoration will benefit both the people who live and work there and the tourists who flock there for a glimpse of the Cuban way of life.

Retaining the distinct identity of the rest of the city

Outside of Old Havana, the remainder of the city's commercial and residential neighborhoods features a wide range of architectural styles — colonial, art deco, eclectic, and modern movement — and a few international and sometimes inappropriate hotels and housing projects. The Cuban architecture and planning community attributes great significance to their existing buildings and neighborhoods, which are in need of repair and often surrounded by future development sites. Preserving the legacy of these "newer" old buildings is one of the added complexities Cuban architects and preservationists will face as they plan for the future. How to create an atmosphere for sensitive growth and development in Havana is the ultimate challenge. And the creation of a new "Cuban" urban design and planning aesthetic that respects the context of the city while fostering creativity is vital to the preservation of Havana's distinct identity.



Photo courtesy of Robert Polidori

Cuban Partner Organizations

City Historians Office (OHCH)
Institute of Physical Planning (IPF)
Casa de las Américas
Group for the Comprehensive Development of the Capital (GDIC)
Physical Planning of the City of Havana (DPPF)
Faculty of Architecture, Ministry of Higher Education
The Housing Institute (INV)
Front for Projects (Frente de Proyectos), Ministry of Construction
Landmarks National Commission (CNM)
Center for the Conservation, Restoration and Museology (CENCREM)
Ministry of Construction (MiCons)
National Union of Construction Architects and Engineers (UNAICC)
National Union of Cuban Writers and Artists (UNEAC)
Cuban Commission of UNESCO

Supporters from Cuba

Hon. Dr. Ricardo Alarcón, President of the National Assembly

Hon. Dr. Carlos Lage, Vice President, Republic of Cuba
Hon. Esteban Lazo, First Secretary of the PCC, Havana
Hon. Felipe Pérez Roque, Minister of Foreign Relations
Hon. Fernando Remírez de Estenoz, First Vice Minister of Foreign Relations
Hon. Rafael Dausá, Director of North American Division Foreign Affairs
Hon. Abel Prieto, Minister of Culture
Dr. Eusebio Leal, Historian, City of Havana
Mr. Rafael Rojas, Director, Master Plan, City of Havana
Ms. Patricia Rodríguez, Master Planner for the City of Havana
Dr. Roberto Fernández Retamar, President, Casa de las Américas
Ms. Marcia Leiseca, Vice President, Casa de las Américas
Ms. Margarita Alarcón, Foreign Relations, Casa del las Américas
Hon. Fernando Vecino, Minister of Higher Education
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Mr. Carlos Martí, President, Union of Artists and Writers (UNEAC)
Dra. Graziella Pogolotti, Vice President, UNEAC
Dr. Miguel Barnet, Vice President, UNEAC
Ms. Ana Cepero Acan, Director, CENCREM
Hon. Juan Contino, Mayor of Havana
Mr. Héctor Cuervo, President, Institute of Physical Planning
Ms. Mirta Hernández, Vice President, Institute of Physical Planning
Prof. Rúben Bancroft, Dean, Faculty of Architecture
Mr. Julio Reyes, Director, GDIC
Prof. Mario Coyula, GDIC and Faculty of Architecture
Mr. Miguel Coyula, GDIC
Prof. Víctor Marín, Faculty of Architecture
Mr. Eduardo Luis Rodríguez, Architectural Historian
Mr. Enrique Lanza, National Physical Planning Institute
Mr. José Antonio Choy, UNEAC
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Dr. Josefina Rebellon, Coordinator, Experts Committee, MICONS



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