

Norm's Modesty

Testimonial for Norman Krumholz

John Forester

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Norm and I were having dinner in Bertucci's, a pizza place in Somerville; Norm was about to go to the American Academy in Rome, and I was on a sabbatic leave at MIT. "Every time I start to write," he said, "all I see is Cleveland—will outsiders care?" I told him, "Every time I write about general lessons, readers ask me, 'But where is this?'" In that moment, years after others had suggested that we should collaborate, Norm and I hatched the plan to write *Making Equity Planning Work*. He went to Rome and sent me a list of chapters with short descriptions. Two years later we had the book, and I and others were astonished at how much more Norm had to say—and show—than even his equity planning mantra, "more choices for those with few" had suggested.

Norm's modesty, sense of humor, and gregariousness were equal parts of his charm. He would rarely talk about himself, but the stories of his staff's work told us volumes about what he wouldn't say more directly. When he characterized his chief of staff Ernie Bonner as playing "Mr. Inside" to his own "Mr. Outside," he told about the marriage of political information and technical analysis, about networking and identifying problems of far broader scope than planners traditionally had done. When he spoke about his work with John Mauro, and then Roldo Bartimole, he told us not just about the importance of planners' writing but his own commitments to organizing public attention, publicity in several senses. When Norm described meetings with strange bedfellows to oppose the Clark Freeway's threatened displacement, he told us not just about a vision of "more choices" but about lobbying and, more, about coalition building even with people less concerned with choices for those with few. When Norm wrote of failures with police deployments ("we deserved to be ignored") and successes with routing garbage trucks, he taught us less about the rhetoric of social justice and more about the effective pragmatism of improving urban service delivery and efficiency and equity too (not squandering the public purse).

Norm's stories concern not just the vision of social justice but the long, slow, hard work inside and outside of city hall, with allies you don't always agree with, integrating timely information with excellent professional analysis, expanding planners' scope to vulnerabilities including far more than land use, working with the press and media to educate public attention, and more still. Norm's modesty sometimes hid from our view how much more than his articulate equity goals he really cared about, how much more he did practically as he pursued the vision he shared with us.