

PROSPECT AND REFUGE

Almost since the founding of the nation, a conflict between the ideals of freedom and safety has run through the American character. The founders wanted a land of liberty, but they had to secure it first. You see this tension today, in policy clashes from gun control to environmental regulations to mandatory seat-belt laws. Efforts to curb hate speech run afoul of First Amendment freedoms. Gated communities restrict the free movement of everyone outside. Even the compassionate impulse to bring the homeless in off the streets in winter conflicts with an individual's right to refuse shelter.

Architects, too, are grappling with these strains. How do you build a school whose perimeter cannot be breached by a madman with a gun, while still allowing students the intellectual and physical freedom to grow? How can an American embassy in a troubled nation be secure from terrorist bombers while projecting values of transparency and welcome? What of residents in chronically flood-prone areas who are relocated to higher ground “for their own safety”—where are their rights to live in the only communities some have ever known?

This issue of *ArchitectureBoston* examines how designers balance the competing imperatives of liberty and security.

Threats are everywhere. The four natural elements—fire, wind, water, and earth—contain a fury that, when unleashed on poorly planned or constructed communities, destroy livelihoods as well as lives.

In these pages we visit Puerto Rico, Haiti, India, and Japan—places that have endured more than their share of nature's devastation. We uncover

hopeful stories of social resilience helping communities rise from the ashes. But *physical* resilience is still key to planning for the known effects of climate change. At a minimum, let's not make things worse. Deforestation, fracking, loose or nonexistent construction codes, building luxury homes on sandy cliffs—these all exacerbate the impact of “natural” disasters. Despite what the insurance companies want us to believe, they are not simply acts of God.

Perhaps more difficult to plan for is a fifth element: mankind. The unspeakable violence that has rained on our communities this young millennium has tipped the scales of liberty. After the attacks of September 11, the question of how much freedom we are willing to give up for security became marbled throughout our lives, from the trivial (removing our shoes at the airport) to the profound (government surveillance; the Muslim travel ban). How we respond to these ongoing threats to freedom—with a wall or a bridge—will say everything about the resilience of the American project.

This is my last issue as editor of *ArchitectureBoston*. When I began this adventure seven years ago, I had no idea I'd find the work of Boston's design community so engrossing—and such an inspiration. The Boston Society of Architects/AIA gave me the rare gift of editorial autonomy even as it subsidized the magazine's costly production—sort of like combining freedom and safety! I was allowed to dive into 27 fascinating themes without ever feeling compelled to serve any favored interest. Some 40 volunteers cycled through the magazine's editorial board, cheerfully saving this nonarchitect from professional embarrassment. A more willing, accepting community would be hard to find. Can I say thank you?

In 2019, *ArchitectureBoston* will transform into an online design journal, with one print edition a year. The magazine's wonderful deputy editor, Fiona Luis, will continue on as editorial director. The change should make way for more timely and responsive content than we could offer in a quarterly print publication, plus opportunities to use video and other features of electronic media.

We like to say that *ArchitectureBoston* is where design and society meet: a mixture of public policy, advocacy, and aesthetics. Editors come and go. But the smarts, independence, and relevance of *ArchitectureBoston* stand strong. ■

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Editor



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