>> From WXXI News it's 1370 connection.

[Background Music]

>> I'm Bob Smith and you may have noticed the building design, it's getting a little more adventurous than the old flat, steel and glass curtained and international style post war years. People are trying new shapes, new surfaces, new profiles even new colors to break the monotony of the stark steel with glass and concrete rectangle. Well, this hour you're going to meet one of people who is responsible for the greater variety in our skylines today. Architect Jeanne Gang is the head of Chicago-based Studio Gang Architects and the winner of the 2006 architecture prize of the American Academy of Arts and Letters. She's also the featured speaker this evening at 8 at RIT's web auditorium as part of the Caroline Werner Gannett Lecture Series and joins me right now. Jeanne, thank you very much for taking the time.

>> Thanks for having me.

>> Now, we started with a discussion of how architects today are starting to break the monotony of the recent past and it would be appropriate I guess, now, first of all to talk about, how monotonous it got and what you have to work against in counter point to--is by criticism fair in saying that we've got some pretty boring skylines these days in a lot of places?

>> Well, I think what happened was, a lot of people decided to moved back to the city in the last 10 years and there was a big demand for high-rise buildings in some of our bigger cities. So, they had to put them up fast and not--I guess a lot of the people didn't always consider design, they just thought of it as base. So, but--with our building and with other architects that are doing more adventurous buildings they kinda like tapped into a desire I think for more design and more interest.

>> Because, I think some of the things that I've thought, I've gone to a lot of cities and it reminded me of a trip I made to Russia about 20 years ago, where they had all these just flat, rectangular buildings so it looked like were built out of Legos and it seemed almost like God, why would you want to live in something like that? And I figured the only way is if you're inside it you don't have to look at it.

>> Right. Yeah, I think--they were just following the motto location, location, location and not really considering, you know, that they're making something lasting impression on the skyline.

>> So, are we finally getting beyond the old Eastern European, Utilitarian, Functional dull look?

>> I think so. I think people want their--the design IQ is much higher in the public today. It is evidenced by so many new magazines and there's just a lot more talk about design and how it affects, you know, your lifestyle and your state of mind.

>> It might be appropriate at this point to discuss one of your buildings which cracks the mold. You designed an 82-story, 864 foot tall hotel and apartment

tower. Opened up last year in Chicago, its' called the Aqua Tower. I guess 'cause it's blue and white in color and it's got wall surfaces that are kinda undulate like waves. It's an interesting, nice looking building that doesn't look quite like anything else you ever saw. The funny thing is I guess inside its very functional, very utilitarian and very logical and efficient but on the outside it sure look likes nothing else. Was that the idea to design something that's functional but doesn't look like it's functional?

>> Not really, the idea was really to make a place for people to be able to go outside. You know when you look a lot of the apartment towers and especially office towers it's not really possible to step out of the building unless you take an elevator right all the way down to the ground floor. And you know, for every day life it's nice to just have that connection to the city. So, the first thing was a functional thing, you know, how do you connect the inside to the outside and kinda blur the boundaries between the two. And then once we decided we wanna do that. How are you gonna do that? And you know we decided to make each floor slightly different. And they kind of transformed over the height of the tower and that's what gives it its appearance.

>> Which gives you the undulation of the surface and the profile or the building, as you're looking up at it.

>> Yeah.

[Inaudible Remark]

>> Because--'cause it's the appearance. The sculptural appearance of it comes from this oblique view of looking at the building, you know, looking up at it or looking down at it from another tower and seeing these floors slightly changing over the length. So, it's the composite of all the floors together that makes it look wavy.

>> And using surfaces almost like car designers you surfaced as the sculpt and metal it's doing some of the same things.

>> Yeah, and those things on it. When you put those curves on the exteriors balconies of the building it allows people to actually get views of things they ordinarily wouldn't see like around the corner or between two other buildings. Those balconies are extensions of the floors that really allow you to get these unique views.

>> It's got a little bit different color to it to as I mentioned, it's blue and white. And I guess--are we starting to see a little bit more color thrown in to the landscape into the skyline too, is that getting more important, so we're not just looking at brick and granite and plain glass?

>> I think a lot of the interesting innovations in architecture right now that are giving it color and interests come from design strategies that are about sustainability. So, for--in Aqua, you know the floor slabs actually shave the glass on the outside so they're--and they're whites so that they reflect heat away from them. So, you see less and less of the classic black, you know, skyscrapers of steel and glass as you mentioned 'cause those just really didn't work for--performed very well in terms of environment.

>> Does shape of a building matter to just in general? It used to be building had kind of interesting unusual shapes, then they got to be looking like stacked dominos, now we're going back to something that got shape to it.

>> There's a--I think right now, we're in the time where there's a lot of both and they're still very strong modern--connection to the modern movement. And there are some new experimental shapes that are really a result of our technology enabling us to make more complex forms.

>> So, we're going to see complex forms. There's another Chicago high-rise. I visited your website there's another building you did called Solstice on the Park. That's got all kinds of chiseled window surfaces I guess to catch more light inside and outside. Again, it's not the same as a flat wall.

>> Uh-hmm.

>> It's got all kinds of chiseled ins and outs [laughter] like, it's hard to describe unless you see it but it does look like someone sculpted it. > Uh hmm, yeah.

>> What's going on there? I guess that's got a reason for it other than just making it look interesting.

>> Right. I think after we designed Aqua we were really using the terraces to shade the glass. I got the idea to start thinking about sculpting the building for sunlight. And so what we did was we developed a series of base like bay windows but instead of just being extrusions they're sculpted in inward toward the floor. And what that does is allows the building to take in light during the winter when the sun is low like here in Rochester. And then in the summer because the glass is angled it keeps out the summer sun.

>> If you were doing a building with similar function in Los Angeles or Miami would you do it differently?

>> Well, we're all--we're all in the Northern hemisphere right now so we--we have--it's good to have south light and winter light and keep out the summer sun all--you know, in this general band but if the building were designed you know at a different for far different latitude it would change. So, I think I see in the future you know, possibly, bands of building typologies that correspond to like where you are in the planet.

>> So, a building that you did for Melbourne, Australia would be very different from a building you do for Chicago or Rochester?

>> Correct.

>> Or any place in the Great Lakes?

>> Yes, that would be the case.

>> But what works in Chicago could work in Rochester assuming you had enough people who wanted to build something big enough to occupy?

>> Correct.

>> Chicago is a big enough city, I mean any building you built is gonna occupy a lot more users.

>> It's true and I think what--another things about the tall building which I think is really important is that it, it is a kind of sustainable approach to a pattern for dwelling 'cause if you think about spreading way out, you know, in a suburban pattern that creates a lot more carbon per household or as if you put all the households in one little foot print people are closer to their jobs and walking distance to cultural events and so on. And it just reduces that amount of carbon.

>> Yeah, we're going kind of fast forward in our thinking here a little bit to the future of development but are you implicitly predicting that we're going to see a new renaissance of high-rises in a lot of places, a lot of urban areas that were just gonna end up building up instead of building out?

>> Yes. I think that will be, I mean we know now that over 50 percent of the world's population lives in cities and it will continue to increase and I think that we will see more high-rises but we're gonna see a more sensitive way that those high-rises are positioned in order to maintained light and air for all the people that are in them.

>> Okay, at the same time that implies and that's a good future for suburbs and big lawns and big sprawling houses. Are those gonna become increasingly a thing of the past and are we all gonna move back toward downtown?

>> Ah, that--I see that happening. I think that, you know, that just the cost and the upkeep and the amount of energy that it takes to leave in a big, sprawling house is not gonna be as attractive to people in the future. And they're gonna wanna get closer to those cultural events, closer to the happenings downtown.

>> How tall are we gonna get eventually?

>> Well, we are seeing some of the tallest buildings ever in the last few years like the Khalifa, Dubai Tower that was recently completed. There--I think it's still at some point the height is really just to see, you know, how tall can we go? It's not necessarily a sustainable approach anymore. It's really just about, you know, the high-rises have always been a symbolic building type. And Dubai really wanted to symbolize that they are moving forward that's why they went that tall.

>> Oh they were basically making a statement.

>> Uh-hmm.

>> Okay, Donald Trump likes making similar statements, you think he's gonna try to take the championship pretty soon? What would you do if he came to you and said, build me the tallest building there ever was.

>> Well, I know how I would start doing that, you know the thing about tall buildings, it's really a combination of the architect and the engineer and you can't do it without either one of those. And I'd be--my first phone call would be to my engineer and say now are we gonna top the Burj Khalifa?

>> You'd have to build something at least a half a mile tall wouldn't you?

>> Yeah.

>> I mean, is there--is there a need for a building that big?

>> I don't think there's a need. I think it's again, it's as you say, it's a statement, it symbolizes the progression of a city and I don't think that tallest building will be in the United States.

>> Why not? Why do you think it will be elsewhere? 'Cause certainly there has always been a lot of drive in this country to have the biggest and the best and you don't think it a guy like Trump will try to say, hey, I could top this?

>> It's possible but you know I predict it to be in more of, probably in a more of an emerging city that wants to show that it's coming out.

>> As opposed to a city that's already arrived like in New York or Chicago?

>> Correct.

>> Well, if you were going to do it. And let's say, for the sake of argument you're doing it in your hometown to Chicago or New York City or something like that. How would you create a building like that that would make economic sense? Or can you?

>> That's what you're gonna ask Donald. I mean [laughter]. I, you know, my specialty is the creative side and the design side and we work closely with all of those criteria that you get from the developer like, how may units need to be into that building and all the criteria of the structure. How does it go together and what is the timing of it? But I think the, as the architect, you know, our job is to really imagine what that space could be and how does it make your lifestyle better, better? How does it make the--how does it work with the environment? Those are the things that we put first.

>> So, if somebody comes to you and just with a dream or a vision, not necessarily one that's gonna work. But if somebody were to come to you and say, you know, I got to concentrate 30,000 people in my company in one place. Help me do it in a way that makes sense. And know, by the way, I'm in the middle of Manhattan I got a build up rather than out. So, that--that's when something like that can happen, I think?

>> Yeah, yeah.

>> And, and if you do something like that, is there a limit to how high you can go? I mean could you even go as high as Frank Lloyd Wright once thought and try to build a tower a mile tall or is there just a point where you say enough is enough I can't. I don't think we could make this things stay up.

>> I think you could go up pretty high. I think it's--it is possible whether it--you might have one small foot print per floor by window time you get that tall bigger at the base and getting tiny and needle-like as you get taller up. But I think that's--that's becoming a possibility. I mean one of the things--one of the big things that's changed and is constantly changing is the materials and we see that the strength of concrete and the combination of concrete and steel

together is getting better and better so, you know we--it makes it possible to achieve higher buildings.

>> So, the engineering isn't so much a challenge than it gets to either the aesthetics or the economics of it then?

>> Correct, yeah. I think that's--if you look at the, the type of buildings that people focus on over the last 10 years, there were very many tall buildings. And, you know then at 2008 it dropped off significantly. So, it really is a building type that reflects the boom, you know, years of an economy and then it'll drop back down. I mean, the type of things that we're focusing on now in the office include institutional projects. Projects for universities, were doing projects that are community projects and a lot of, you know, different building types that are more, you know, feasible at this point in time.

>> So, we're talking of nonprofit organizations, governments, educational institutions things of this nature because that's where the action is I take it. You're getting an economic parameter here then?

>> Yes, yes.

>> And when you start getting people coming to you with commercial structures either apartment residences, or hotels or office buildings. Then you'll know the economy is picking up again.

>> Yeah, yeah I think one of the--I guess a lot of people say that they follow the building cycle of architects 'cause that's--that is really, you know, the thing that's out in front in terms of what you're gonna see the economy doing.

>> Okay, well since you know that well, how strong is the economy right now? Is it still kinda flat on its back then based on the kinds of projects that you're being asked to do?

>> I think one thing that we've been--that we've stayed busy but our work is really spread out in different countries all over and in different building types. You know, I don't just, I don't specialize in high-rises. We do a lot of different building types and lot of--we're doing an interesting environmental nature project in South Carolina where we're really--it's more like a nature center and at whole environment about bringing people's awareness up about the environment. We're doing a social justice center at Kalamazoo College, doing a lot of different types of buildings in different markets.

>> 263-WXXI incidentally is our number. We are talking with the award-winning architect Jeanne Gang who is the latest speaker to get at Lecture Series of RIT. She's speaking at 8 o'clock this evening at RIT's web auditorium and talking to us right now on 1370 connection. We're WXXI AM and FM hd2 and that's city cable 12 in your time or the cable system this hour. Let's go to the phones at 263-WXXI, we have Royce in Rochester on the line. Hi Royce! You're on the air welcome.

>> Hi Bob. What's this lady's name?

>> Her name is Jeanne Gang. Yes, Royce, are you there?

>> How do you spell her last name?

>> G-A-N-G.

>> Okay, that's nice. Miss Gang, are you familiar with tetrahedral structures, Buckminster Fuller design?

>> I am--I am. I'm a big fan of Buckminster Fuller.

>> Well, I have it mind to build three pyramids in the Rochester. One in the inner city, one at Charlotte and one towards Henrietta marketplace mall and connect them with elevated rails so that you don't have to tear up this street and basically it's an open core structure and you can build it like Legos but instead using blocks used pyramid-shaped blocks, modules.

>> Sounds like almost like the Luxor Hotel at Las Vegas is it kinda like that?

>> Well, I don't know about that Bob, I really don't.

>> If you had seen it you'll never forget it.

>> Well, I understand what I'm--but if you've ever--Bob, if you were going to New York City there's a Holiday Inn at Times Square and there's no windows and you walk in stair--doorways or you drive your cars in and there's a central power with elevators in the center of it and all the buildings and rooms and activities are at balconies all the way around for 60-storeys high. Now, if you can imagine doing this in a pyramid shape and you can build something a mile or even two miles in dimensions because the more you put pyramid triangular tetrahedral things together the stronger they get, the bigger you can go.

>> That sounds like the Luxor on steroids. That really does and I didn't thank you for calling Royce. I don't have any billions of dollars it would take to build something like that and the kind of size that he is talking about but is the sky the limits structurally?

>> We--

>> Can anything that would make economic sense be built now?

>> Oh yeah, I mean this is a--actually it's a good time to build, think about when the Rockefeller Center was built, you know, that was a building project that really brought a lot of people jobs and helped move us and move us on out of the depression. So, it's a good time to build and it's a good time to create jobs. But, I think the pyramid, you know, it's one of the strongest type structures that he's talking about there.

>> Why is it that that kind of a shape has been so seldom used as a building theme since the Egyptians used it back 4000 years ago? Is there something about it that either doesn't work practically or it's difficult to execute properly?

>> No. I think if you are a developer, you'd rather see that pyramid turned upside down with more units on top than less down at the bottom [laughter].

>> And for economic reasons.

>> Correct.

>> You get, you get more bag for the buck up the further you go I guess.

>> Yeah, correct.

>> So, and I guess at the same time although if you're talking about something like that and I mentioned that one building is an example. There are a few others that are somewhat pyramidally shaped like the Transamerica Tower in San Francisco. Are those types of buildings structurally sounder or?

>> Yeah.

>> Or do they make more sense that way?

>> It's always, you know, high-rise really can levering out of the ground. So, you know, the wider the base the more support you have and you know, that's really just logical you could do it and experiment on your kitchen table, you know, stacking something up but, you know, wider base is more stable and tapering up to the top you get less wind resistance, so it's really, you know, a stable shape.

>> Does that explain why they're using a subtler version of that shape for that new World Trade Center Tower number one?

>> Yeah, that's--it has to do with that, it has to do with resisting, you know, like just tapering it to the top and getting less wind pressure at the top.

>> By the way I'd be curious to know. What do you think of that design the way it's finally evolved? It's a lot of different from the way Daniel Libeskind thought it was going to be but what do you think of it? Does it have anything to recommend and except gee, it's tall?

>> You know, I would say I've been--I have been disappointed in the way that that particular project has developed but, you know, we'll have to wait and see when it's all done. But, I think they were so much more aspiration in early designs then we're kind of just ambition.

>> How would you have done it? Let say, somebody came to you, knowing that you've had a lot of experience of designing very big buildings with a lot of square footage and a lot of height and said, we've have suffered a big loss here, we've gotta rebuild, we've gotta do something that'll house a lot of workers that will be residents to a lot o people and handle awful lot of business terrific. What would you do?

>> I think it's not something I could just pull out of my, you know, pocket. I have to probably spend some time researching, thinking about it, and I usually try to come up with 2 or 3 options usually and that's what I did with the Aqua Tower. We designed actually two different buildings to show to the client. And he picked the Aqua Tower. Although at the time it was called building P.

>> Was it your preferred design? Or did he pick something that was your second choice? Would you have done it differently? I'm curious enough you'd have--if you'd had your others?

>> I am, I actually I was--I've found two--we found two solutions that we were interested in pursuing. So, and it's a good way to work 'cause you don't get married to one, you know? As soon as you've come up with one then you make yourself put that aside and do another version. It was the first--Aqua was the first version that we did. But there was another version that was I think equally interesting and I'm saving it for later.

>> Well, what would it be like? So just in case it ends up being built in some time in the future somewhere, if not necessarily in Chicago or some place else?

>> Yeah. Well, I don't know if I wanna tell you the design yet. But it has to do with mass customization of the facade that is related to what the owners and the buyers want--wanted. So, it was totally different concept, you know, how you can customize your shoes online like Nike or something. This is possible today you can--you can customize something particular to who is buying it, being very specific and so that was the concept of the second project.

>> I'm not seeing a specific building in mind here and I take it I'm not meant to [inaudible]. That one may get rolled out sometime or another in the future.

>> Yeah, that's right I wanna try that at some point.

>> 263-WXXI we have Susan in Rochester on the line talking with Architect Jeanne Gang and talking with you Susan as well. Hi, you're on the air.

>> Hi, I have one comment and then a question. My comment is that one of my favorite architects is Hundertwasser, he builds building with--they're very organic and, you know, there's one apartment building where he put trees right into the walls of the place, I don't know what your building looks like but is it anything like what he does?

>> I know that architect you're talking about. That--in his--for the other listeners his architecture is really made by the people themselves really. A lot of times picked out the colors and is very vibrant and very organic and it almost doesn't look like it's designed it looks like it grew up over time. Well, the Aqua Tower doesn't really look anything like that I--I mean, I don't really see the connection but it does have an organic quality in that it has this variation and change in it, you know, instead of repetition.

>> Where can I see it online?

>> You have a website feel free to talk about the URL of it.

>> Okay, so our website is studiogang.net and it's called the Aqua Tower and it is at Lakeshore East Development in Chicago.

>> Okay, have a look.

>> Yeah and now here's my question now. I don't know what the income level is that one would have to have for this building, but I was wondering, what are the trends in architecture for low and middle income housing going into the future especially when we consider that we're trying to go green?

>> Uh-hmm.

>> And I'll hang up and listen.

>> Okay.

>> Okay, good question. Thanks for asking it.

>> It is a good question and some--a lot of practices like my own have a focus also in social housing or lower income housing and just market rate housing. The Aqua Tower is--does have low income units within it but it is pretty much a market building although there's a hot--there's gonna be hotels. So starting next year you could stay overnight in it and for a night or something but in other sectors like in low income housing, a lot of architects are focusing on making green buildings and making affordable buildings and good examples of that, you can see in some of the replacement housing that's been developed for New Orleans and the Biloxi, we actually did a small single family house there for a group called Architecture for Humanity that takes into account green building ideas and it tries to also design so that the houses can withstand if there's another hurricane there. But there are architects working all over the globe now trying to accommodate people that are living in these mega cities that I talked about earlier.

>> If, come to think of it, when you're talking about replacement housing if, let's say you got a call from Mayor Landrieu in New Orleans who said, I wanna try to rebuild the lower ninth ward, I need some help with some ideas for housing that we can build for people who can afford it on this land and these streets and--what would you tell him and how would you approach something like that?

>> Yeah, I mean those districts where single family homes and they were--but they are relatively urban still and there has been plans created to--of how to repopulate those areas. But I think one of the important things would be to design the homes so that they are passive solar so that they, you know, are oriented to the sun so they don't overheat. Putting in the adequate insolation that we can do these days that they weren't built with originally making it possible to conserve water by collecting the rain water reusing it for gardens, putting in windows that are really efficient and insulated and just, you know, making these homes so that they use a lot less energy than they once did.

>> We're going to assume that they'll build the levies stout enough that they're not gonna end up getting flooded again.

>> Yeah.

>> So that, that I guess is the assumption you start with.

>> Yeah.

>> That this is in a neighborhood that's gonna end up getting flooded out every few years.

>> Yeah, I think the greenest, you know, the greenest thing would be going forward, thinking about where we put these settlements because, you know, in wetland areas and areas that are sensitive ecologically and coastlines aren't exactly the best places for neighborhoods so, going forward I think, you know,

each as we build cities it's important to think about where the heavy settlements are located.

>> So, maybe not all of these areas should be rebuilt, at least the way they were?

>> Yeah, I think it makes sense to--to back off some of the edges and to think about how to reinstate, you know, some of the lost wetland areas down there.

>> Now a city that's struggling for a different reason as economic meltdown. Thinking about Detroit, I'm reminded of something that their current mayor Dave Bing said a few months ago after he was first elected to office that some of that city may have to be permanently cleared and turned into park space or even urban gardens, that it may never be rebuilt as neighborhoods as they knew it. Would you agree with that or can cities basically be revitalized and reclaimed as living neighborhoods and cities? I mean even if you may never get 2 million people in that city again, can you build it up to something bigger and better than it was?

>> I think so, I think like there's an opportunity in everything and the opportunity there is to find--to locate and plan ahead what areas, you know, could be depopulated or are already depopulated and would be good green infrastructure and plan a denser fabric and a more designed fabric, you know, in core areas where you're close to transportation and just to think for, that's what architect's do. We plan ahead and if they could develop a master plan and stick to it you could actually end up with a better city.

>> Chicago has already bottom and started to rise again population wise which I guess is the best early parameter of how a city's doing. Rochester appears to be hitting bottom right now and the trend may be up in the next few years, we hope so certainly. But it appears to have bottomed out. You take a city like that which has hit bottom or is about to and the likely trend is gonna be upward, what do you tell the city leadership in general about what kind of things they ought to do to take advantage of what they've got?

>> Uh-hmm. I think Chicago is a good example and it is a good success story within the midwest where there's a lot of other smaller cities that aren't doing as well. And what I always admired about Chicago is that it's never afraid to change its identity, you know, it didn't stick to being the steel mill capital. It moved on and found other industries to invest in and decided to become a green city. I mean who would think that 20 years ago and so it made itself into a place that has a quality of life that attracts a lot of young people and let's face it, you want immigration, you want young people to come to your city, you want people to move there to make it vibrant to live in it to work in it and it's competitive between the cities. So, I think, you know, Rochester could think about that too like how do you improve the quality of life, how do you kind of encourage some of the budding industries that are gonna be the next generation and not always, you know, just cling to what the identity is today.

>> These are things that city fathers talk about a lot.

>> Uh-hmm.

>> But turning man into action is a whole different thing. So, looking at it from the point of view of somebody who is designing the future urban landscape

in a way, what do you advice them to do to turn their aspirations into reality? What kinds of buildings should we be trying to build, what kind of standards should we set for redeveloping our neighborhoods or even our central business district?

>> Well I think the green infrastructure not focusing on, you know, buildings 'cause buildings are gonna happen, you know, with people that wanna build and then developers but what the city can do is focus on trying to alleviate some of the pressure of like failing older infrastructure. For example, if you think about water, you know, every time water drops on to the city it's just going into a big pipe and then it has to be processed and it's very, you know, it takes a lot of energy and it wears down over time. So, we're looking at now, in Chicago's green infrastructure where you use green spaces to be the collectors of the water and just hang on to that water and not dump it into the sewer system right away. So when you're replacing things, don't replace it the same old way, you know. Talk to these new experts and designers on how it can be done to be more effective, maintenance free and you know greener.

>> To not just pour it into the river which in turn pours it into Lake Ontario then.

>> You basically, no, you want to hang on to that water and, you know, when you think about it there's a lot of green spaces. You see trees all over the street but sometimes they are surrounded by a curb and so no water can actually can go into that planter bed 'cause it's, you know, it hits the curb so all you have to do is have gaps in the curb and let the water go in and suddenly you can start collecting it so that you can have paving that's permeable, not just run off, you know, and you start to--when you put replacing, if you're replace them in a green way, you know, it's gonna reduce constant on the long run.

>> So should we basically start tearing up some of our sidewalks? We have pretty broad sidewalks in the streets in the central business district. Should we start tearing them up and maybe and dispersing a little green space in addition to the walking paths?

>> You probably are already having to tear them up and replace them so just replace them with the green, with the permeable and green infrastructure.

>> So that sounds like a whole different kind of approach than any city that I can think of takes, are there examples of how they do that kind of thing that we could use to emulate?

>> Well, one thing that--an example in Chicago and I've also seen in cities like Vancouver is to make a green permitting process so when we architects and planners and clients go in for a permit you get a sped up process or you get some kind of benefit incentive if you do these green strategies versus not doing the green strategies. You get to got up to the front of the line and, you know, those kinds of incentives are really attractive for people who are doing buildings.

>> A lot of the incentives that are used traditionally to encourage construction happen to be incentives based around property tax abate and are reducing the rates or are only ramping up your tax bill very slowly giving you a break over the first few years and lifespan of the building. Is that a wrong approach? Should we do it differently? Basically create a set of--instead for the kind of

building you're doing rather than just being willing to show up and put something up there?

>> Yeah, I can--I feel for the dilemma because sometimes you just wanna get that building to fill that vacant lot, you know, so I think it's up to, you know, the strategists and city hall to find out what can we do to start converting some of these projects into greener projects. So, get out or the beggars can't be choosers kind of thing?

>> Yeah, yeah, I think you have to, you know, some of the stuff doesn't even cost more so it's really a no-brainer and--

>> Award winning Architect Jeanne Gang will be speaking this evening as part of the Caroline Werner Gannett Lecture Series of RIT, speaking with us now on 1370 connection from WXXI in city cable as well. I'm Bob Smith here, your number to call in to be part of the discussion is 263-WXXI, 263-9994, and Roger is on the line. Hello, Roger, you're on the air with us, welcome.

>> Bob, hi! Thanks. Great show as usual. My question revolves around some of the work that Jim Kunstler has written about in his book The Long Emergency and he doesn't have as let's say an optimistic of a view for the high-rise in the future as maybe Jeanne might have but my question is how will high-rises address dramatically increase energy cost in the not to distant future as it relates to energy requirements of running elevators and heating and air conditioning and maybe what does she think of the future of current high-rises in that economic climate?

>> Uh-hmm. Yeah, I think, my view is that the building should respond to its specific climate so there's kind of not one right answer or one wrong answer to the high-rise design. If it's in a very hot climate with a lot of sun, you know, it really does make sense to have more mass on the exterior building as opposed to all glass. So, you know, the wrong thing being done a lot.

>> So I think--but there is a way to respond to climate and there also is a lot of new technology and renewable energies that, you know, can help to offset the cost of or the energy cost of running an elevator. I think the--if you look at carbon equation it just--it's pretty obvious that spreading out in a low density mode is worse for the planet than a dense urban city. I'm not saying you have to build the highest building in the world to get that. I just mean that a compact, a compact pattern for development close to transportation, close to the place of work, close to the cultural activities is really a much better and greener way to go.

>> Are you sort of advocating the [inaudible] approach?

>> His approach was at that time, let's spread out the tall buildings and, you know, miles apart so I think it was equally dispersed as we saw with suburban development. So, and he was really focused on using the car as the vehicle to get between the high-rises so, where we differ from that is saying that we need walkable cities.

>> And thank you very much for calling.

>> Thanks.

>> In general are you saying though, that forget about Brasilia, bad idea, don't plan it that way. Go to Manhattan, go to Chicago, go to Toronto, that's the way it ought to be, in close together, easy to get to, quick distances?

>> Yeah--

>> Forty to 50 floors and one place is better than a whole lot of 5 or 7-storey buildings spread out on a campus?

>> That's exactly it, yeah. And, you know, you can do a pretty good high density with a lower type building as well. I've read recently that LA is perhaps--in some certain parts of LA are denser than parts of Manhattan and with low-rise structures. But the key is getting it--getting the public transport, making it possible for people to be mobile to go to their jobs without using cars.

>> So, essentially, any city that's compact and goes up rather than spreads out is by definition likely to be better ecologically than a spread out sprawling place?

>> Yes, let's say in general, yes, you know, the issue in emerging cities and countries like, I mean cities like Mumbai for example, there aren't enough green spaces, it's so dense, you know, there's not enough space and there's not enough amenities for people to have a good quality. So it's a balance too of having those spaces that make it possible to have a good lifestyle.

>> Now, I mentioned New York, Chicago and Toronto. I found out somewhere that those 3 cities have the highest concentration of high-rise buildings of I guess any city on earth, does that mean that they are basically getting it right or closer to right than a lot of places that don't?

>> Yeah, I think they have the right attitude but, you know, you see a city like Chicago and it might have a nice dense urban core but it still spreads way out. It's almost like you need boundaries around it, like Manhattan does a pretty good job 'cause it's an island, so.

>> Yeah, and you have these rivers that kind of get in the way [laughter]. And the outer burrows really can't spread out too far. They've got rivers to contend with tubes, so and then there is Long Island saddled so they kind of have the--geographically they have to spread out.

>> Yeah, maybe it's a boundary that could be created like a green belt that's a no build zone that provides maybe even the infrastructure of food, you know, local food that could be serving all the people living down town.

>> That sounds something like what Portland and Oregon did.

>> Uh-hmm.

>> Have they got something they can teach us?

>> Oh, that's a very good model. I'd say that is an excellent model for how to design a city.

>> What did they do right and is it something that we could easily emulate at Rochester today given what you've seen of our layout?

>> I don't know how they pulled it off politically but they were able to create this belt around the city and it is a place that people can access for recreation but also for access to fresh locally grown food and those farmers bring that into the city and sell their goods. So it's kind of a healthy thing. I mean if we start thinking about food as infrastructure I think it's really an interesting way to rethink the city.

>> Are there any other cities, we've talked about a few that have--that are successful. But are there any other cities that a medium-sized town like Rochester could go to look at that you'd say you can learn something from that?

>> One of the most interesting cities that I'd found in traveling and taking my students, you know, to different places is in Brazil. Actually it's Curitiba, Brazil. And in fact, their mayor there is--was an architect and so he was able to, you know, have some political power and also think about design and they didn't have enough money to build a subway system below ground so what they did was they designed a public transport route with the buses that really facilitates loading the buses and making it as fast as a subway. So it's almost like in a subway above ground. They built platforms and you pay your ticket and you get on to the platform then everyone loads in to the bus just like you would a subway system.

>> Would that be something that could be done with an already existing network of streets that--

>> Yes.

>> --you'd have to deal with?

>> Yeah, that was the brilliance of the scheme 'cause, Jaime Lerner who was the mayor and then he's an architect thought of, you know, they wouldn't be able to build all these new roads so they really just dedicated a central lane and out enough space on the other side to put the platforms and, you know, they basically solved a huge transportation problem with very low cost.

>> Are there North American cities--we've again mentioned a few, but are there North American cities that look like they could teach us a lot either in what to do or maybe what not to do?

>> I think, I've seen this a few really interesting things in contemporary cities and we talked a little bit about water and green infrastructure but, but it's also about making people feel comfortable in this city, in the down town and one city and I can't remember which one it was right now, basically instead of having police on every station they were having trouble--I think it was Philadelphia, having problems with people, you know, feeling safe going down town, they decided to put some money into having docents. And so there're people who are just visible and in the city that can always help people out and show them where to go, so when visitors come downtown they have an easier time. And I liked the idea because it really, you know, it's--that's what's interesting about cities is people and this recognizes that, this act of having docents and guides in the downtown that can help you point out the architecture or tell people how to get from A to B, how to take the subway, so it's kind of not a hard infrastructure cost, it's more of a soft cost.

>> Are there any cities that you just think to yourself, oh my God, why did they do that? A lot of people criticize Los Angeles for having sprawled out the way it did and basically in making you have to get into your car to go anywhere and I wonder, is it as much of a model of what not to do as a lot of even the comedians like to say it is?

>> You know I think that's--I actually like LA a lot, I think there's a lot of very culturally interesting parts about LA and that I think they're slowly turning it into a more transport friendly city. But one city that kind of--just always stuns me both because it's beautiful but it's also frustrating is Washington DC. They have a great subway system, they have great museums but in that city the thing that seems to be lacking--there's too much similarity between all the buildings. The building heights are dictated but it's almost like there's too much rules and it didn't get any individuality or it doesn't have that kind of spark to it.

>> They did that I guess because they didn't want anything to overshadow the Capitol building. Was that a mistake, should they have just let that city grow up like any other?

>> I think it might be a more interesting city today.

>> Because all the high-rises are across the way--across the river in Virginia.

>> Yeah.

>> And even they look just like a big glass wall.

>> Yeah, it seems like a missed opportunity.

>> DC, not your favorite?

>> There're parts I like but, you know, I'm a fan of cities, so any city you tell me about I'd probably find something I like.

>> Are we gonna see in the future, and this is getting back to your area, your professional area, are gonna see continuing--a lot more variety in the future of skylines over our cities, a lot less uniformity and maybe a lot more interest?

>> I think so, I think the real breakthrough is happening in our field in architecture because we're suddenly combining for a long time in the 20th century, you know, we had separated engineers, architects, builders and developers all doing their own specialty and now because of our tools that we have we're able to collaborate a lot more closely together and I think that's allowing us to really bring on a kind of a new level of design that you're gonna start seeing.

>> At the same time of course, we still have a pretty heavy built infrastructure already there and this gets back to something that a previous caller raised a question about, are we going to have to rebuild a lot of the things that have been build or some of the old high-rises, some of the old major commercial buildings, are we gonna find a way to improve them and let them survive?

>> I think it's important to keep some, I mean to keep the buildings that we can, keep the fabric that is there and to work with it and have news that right

along side old and that's gonna make the most interesting city and that it is a--it is a green approach to try to keep some of our structures.

>> A few people a few years ago went retro. That was kind of the first wave of breaking the monotony before we started getting more innovative structures like your work and when we went retro they were designing things on the--almost like on the Empire State Building in Chrysler theme. Nothing wrong with that, those were great buildings for 1930, but is the retro fad over with and should it be gone?

>> Yeah, I think the problem with that whole movement, post modernism was that it just relied on symbolism, you know, like symbolism of historic buildings on facades and when architects start focusing on that they kind of got relegated to just designing facades and not the complete building, the structure or the form. So now, like I said with our technologies, we are able to start integrating again and innovate on the level of the structure to not just the facade outside, So, I think we're going in the right direction away form that.

>> Are we gonna see some radically different buildings emerge in the coming years? What might they be like for us?

>> Yeah, I think we're gonna see, and we're already seeing buildings that are completely self-sustainable and hopefully buildings that are producing more energy than they use and that's gonna look different to us too. We're also, I mean, we're already seeing buildings--we have to look wider than our own immediate cities though because, you know, a lot of the new buildings are being done in places like China and we'll be seeing more and more coming out there.

>> I'm imagining buildings with spinning blades on top, I mean, are we gonna have wind mills, are we gonna look like giant beanies or what's--what's gonna happen?

>> I think we're gonna see [background music] not so much wind mills on buildings but buildings that are served by renewable power, fields of solar panels and fields of wind mills.

>> Should be an interesting landscape. Thanks very much for giving us a preview of it. Our thanks to award winning Architect Jeanne Gang who will be the featured speaker this evening at 8 at RIT's web auditorium, it's part of the Caroline Werner Gannett Lecture Series and thanks to all of you for tuning in on this hour 1370 connection WXXI AM and FM HD2 Rochester, for Dave Capo our technical director and the WXXI TV crew, I'm Bob Smith, it's been a pleasure.

[Music]