

Listen to an interview with an architect who explains about the trend of New Urbanism

Interviewer Contemporary architecture is getting more and more spectacular. Developments in computer technology mean that it is now possible to build things which would have been impossible twenty years ago. However, while the great signature buildings like Gehry's Bilbao Guggenheim and Foster's "gherkin" make headlines, there is another important trend in contemporary architecture. It's called "new urbanism". Kevin Whitehead is a young architect from Manchester, and also a "new urbanist". Kevin, is "new urbanism" just a way of reacting against important and expensive signature buildings?

Architect New Urbanism isn't a reaction against flashy signature buildings, but it is a completely different way of approaching and thinking about architecture.

Interviewer How do you mean, exactly?

Architect Well, I'm a practising architect, but I have no interest in building something that's big and expensive. In fact, I'm not really that interested in making new buildings at all really...

Interviewer So what are you interested in then?

Architect I believe that architecture should be about people first, and about people's relationship with the space around them with their environment. Us New Urbanists aren't so interested in these great aesthetic triumphs, big names making big signature buildings and trying to transform a city with one flashy museum or office block. New Urbanism is more about trying to build communities.

Interviewer Could you give us an example? Perhaps the project that is currently taking place in Ancoats in Manchester...

Architect Ancoats is an example of an area that was really depressed, a lot of old empty buildings and a terrible 1970s housing estate. The "New Islington" project is going to redevelop the whole area.

Interviewer How are you planning to do that exactly?

Architect We are restoring old buildings to attract new people to come to the area, but we make sure we are keeping the old community there. It's not just about one building there will be a mixture of housing, shops, businesses and public spaces. New Urbanism creates the opportunity for communities to take root and develop.