

Heritage by Design

Previous titles in this series

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The Parasites Outnumber the Hosts
People Do It All the Time
Hindsight on the Future
Canadian Settlement and Environmental Planning
An Urban/Economic Development Strategy
for the Atlantic Region

Other titles to follow

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some evidence. Despite our being surrounded by the built environment, little attention is paid to it. The results of extensive design seem to be perceived as boring, effete, and of interest only to a few. Architecture makes its appearance only in the real estate section of the newspapers. As one of America's few architectural and urban design critics put it, calling the section "real estate" is like calling the entertainment section "tickets". The other section in which the issue makes an occasional appearance is the entertainment section—this is even more difficult to understand. Until the environment is considered newsworthy, the actions undertaken on its behalf are, along with related economic, political, and social issues, likely to remain a source of mystery and of only occasional concern to most of the public. There is a need to provide a platform for broader public debate of our environmental heritage, and this will come about only when it ceases to be invisible in the eyes of the press and broadcasting industries.

Urban Prospects

Heritage by Design

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hundred expended blue stamps might even entitle him to pile his two gold stamps atop one another. There might also be green stamps for trees, purple for recreation, et cetera. In fact, all the planner's land-use colours could be issued as stamps, and the developer who held only a limited amount of property would have to find ways of integrating all these uses on one parcel of land. Imagine, trees, schools, working, shopping, and living accommodation all on one site!

In addition, a variety of other, more simply stated but equally dramatic programs might be undertaken to accomplish similar ends. Out of the idea of planning fixes might come suggestions or even planning legislation aimed at creating agreed upon vocabularies of architectural styles, of materials, of building heights over limited or broad areas of our cities. When only local materials could be used, every region had a distinctive look. Just because any material can be transported to anywhere doesn't mean it has to be. Maybe mirror glass should be rationed? Highly specific guidelines as to fenestration, scale, and related design issues have been employed to good effect since the Middle Ages. These place certain limitations on design freedom, but the payoff is in the outcome—Europe's public squares for instance—and there is still tremendous freedom with respect to other aspects of building design. It would be wise to construct models of neighbourhoods in which new construction was planned and to examine carefully how the new will influence the old—not only in terms of sunlight, shadow, and microclimate, but in terms of proportion, accessibility, colour, et cetera.

Finally, there is lack of media coverage of most environmental issues. This is singularly ironic. Our ability to appreciate city scapes—such as those of Venice, Paris, old Québec, San Francisco—is largely a function of their having been seen, seen by many eyes, at different times and in different lights. What we see and record is our only basis for comparison; we cannot know how well we have done nor where we have failed unless there is