

## Town Planning That Pays

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This thing which for want of a better name they call Town Planning is in reality as old as the centuries, yet it is only in recent years that it has been forcing itself steadily forward upon public attention and recognition until it bids fair to assume the proportions of a great popular movement.

It must be something more than a fad, to begin with, and the vogue which it has attained must also be something more than the work of mere vapory propaganda.

The reason is plain; it goes to fill a "felt want." We know and feel that in the hap-hazard and uncontrolled development of our villages into towns and our towns into cities things are not as they should be. There is a tendency towards congestion and dislocation of traffic, overcrowding and the cankerous growth of slums, and altogether a general air of unsuitability and misappropriateness.

And we have repeatedly tried by desultory and piecemeal attempts at street widening, extensions and so forth to remedy some of these ills, and we have found the tremendous cost of these attempts quite disproportionate with the meagre measure of success attained.

Now, it may be asked, "What is Town Planning going to do for us?" And the answer is "it depends very much on the kind of Town Planning." For it has more than one side and there is so much diversity of views regarding it, even amongst its exponents and devotees, that the general understanding about it is far from clear, clean-cut, or uniform.

I don't myself believe that is going to do all or nearly all that is claimed for it by some of its more enthusiastic disciples who proclaim it as a sort of sociological cure-all, and maintain that good planning and housing conditions are going to regenerate the world, and make us all healthy, wealthy, happy, wise, and good. We fancy we know lots of people who live in fine houses with most beautiful and hygienic surroundings who are not so very much better or healthier than others less favoured; and I fear they are rather overlooking the innate perversity of human nature, and the fact that among any collection of humans there will always be a certain proportion of those who seem to rather enjoy wallowing in the mire, and positively prefer it. Like most beautiful theories it becomes somewhat illusory in getting down to hard practice, and the most we can do is to try what we can to get things going right, so as to give every man a chance towards a higher and more wholesome scale of living.

Then again there is the Apostle of the beautiful who concerns himself more with "looks" than with the underlying organic causes and conditions, and I am afraid that is the most common and widely prevailing interpretation of Town Planning.

For, is it not a fact that the mere mention of the word conjures up in the minds of most people pictures of wide magnificent Boulevards, stately and imposing Civic Centres, spacious Plazas, and Public Parks and Gardens resplendent with luxurious foliage, fountains, and monuments.

Is it not a fact that there have been towns and cities in Canada, both in the West and in the East, that have gone to considerable expense in getting plans prepared, some of the most beautiful and elaborate plans it is possible to imagine, plans that were hailed at first with delight and viewed with admiration akin to awe. "Where are these plans now? I believe in most cases you will find them reposing in their last resting places in the vaults covered with dust. "And why?" For the plain and simple reason that we were attempting to put the cart before the horse, and trying to sport ourselves in glad raiment when we should really be wearing our overalls.

That is the kind of Town Planning very much in vogue amongst the Architects and Landscape men in the great republic to the South of us, and even to some extent on the other side of the water, where it has simulated a sort of pseudo-medievalism that is scarcely in keeping with the spirit of these practical, bustling, work-a-day times, and in this country.

At the very commencement it defeats its own object by acting as a scarce and deterrent to the investment of money seeking a tangible and reasonable return, more especially when as at present there are so many mouths to be filled, and so many pressing necessities to be satisfied.

And thus on the one hand we have the esthetic idealist with his visions of beauty and embellishment, and on the other the cold calculating business man with his remorseless standard of dollars and cents, and between them there is a great gulf fixed that can hardly be bridged.

And the stoniest thing about it is that while the first may be wildly fanciful and extravagant in his notions, it is our would-be economist who is by far the biggest spend-thrift after all, and who leaves a burden if not for himself, at least for his successors, of wholesale, accumulative, never ending waste and prodigality, which is all the more insidious because it is at first unseen.

A city or town is not a mere promiscuous conglomeration of bricks and stones, it is a living, breathing, pulsating organism like the human body. It must have a head and heart as the centre of active life and business, and the fountain of regulating government, lungs to breathe with in its parks and recreation grounds, a nervous system in its postal telephone and telegraph arrangements, blood in its traffic, propelled through its veins and arteries, the streets, and muscles in its factories and industrial establishments. Each different organ should be shaped fixed and co-related so as to perform its separate yet inter-dependent function with the greatest ease and efficiency and the least liability to dis-location or breakdown.

Usefulness must be the prime requisite, usefulness based on sound economic considerations, and it can easily be seen that we can hardly hope to be very successful or accomplish anything worth while without some planning.

We Canadians are great go-ahead fellows, and have surmounted huge obstacles and accomplished things that are classed among the wonders of the world. But, we don't **Plan** enough, we don't **Look Beyond**. We have hardly time to stop and think because we are so busy getting things done, and we seldom ask ourselves the question "How much more and better could we do with careful consideration and the expenditure of the same amount of energy and money?" If for instance, we had not blindly and recklessly gone ahead with that craze for Railway Building, instead of improving our Roads, would we today be burdened with hundred of miles of useless competitive railway lines now streaked with rust, and a load of debt and obligation that hangs like a millstone round our necks? Unfortunately what we have done has been largely on the "hit-or-miss" principle. We are always putting things up and pulling them down, rebuilding again possibly a little better each time but never with a clear view to the future or to things that will endure. Fortunately we have the faculty of always getting there in the end, but with the needless waste and expenditure of time, energy, strength, and money.

If this is true of anything it certainly has been so with our towns and cities, for we have let them grow up unwatched untended and uncontrolled, till we are no longer the masters but the victims of our own handiwork. And all this could have been avoided by a little mature deliberation forethought and planning.

There is no great trick to this Town Planning. After all it is neither more nor less than plain ordinary sense with sufficient knowledge and understanding to size up and seize the trend of things in a town's development and turn them to the best possible account. If it means anything at all it is simply the axiomatic "Everything in its place and a place for everything."

The trouble is our minds by habit and usage have become incrustated with so many of these hide-bound, rule-of-thumb notions and customs, that fetter our free movement and impede our progress at every step. And if we are to get anywhere at all, and still keep out of the ditch, we will have to divest our minds, and break away, from some of these.

For instance, we are usually so glad and thankful to get a Railway at any cost that we do not for a moment stop to inquire what harm will be done as well as what good by cutting up our town and blocking and dislocating our street traffic. It is pretty much a case of "Open your mouth and shut your eyes and see what heaven sends you." But after the track has been laid and you find that the station has been located to suit the Railway people themselves and their grades and curvature, but with small consideration for the convenience of the town's people, and