

Winter Cities

VOLUME 24 * NUMBER 1 * WINTER 2005



Winter fun in Regina, Saskatchewan



Winter Cities

ASSOCIATION

PAST PRESIDENTS

Norman Pressman, Waterloo, ON;
Harold Hanen (dec.), Calgary, AB;
Pat MacMahon, Yellowknife, NT
Patrick Coleman, Houghton Michigan

OFFICERS

Michael Barton, Whitehorse, YT, President
Mayor Gordon van Tigham, Yellowknife, NT, Vice-President
George Paul, Prince George, BC, Treasurer
Deborah Poff, Prince George, BC, Secretary
Anne Martin, Prince George, BC, Immediate Past President

DIRECTORS

Barry Braitman, Regina, SK
Patrick Coleman, Houghton MI
Mayor Jerry Irby, Marquette, MI
Dr Jim McDonald, Prince George, BC
Mayor Tom Merz, Houghton, MI
Dr. Larry Neal, Eugene, OR
Professor Norman Pressman, Waterloo, ON
Mayor John Rowswell, Sault Ste. Marie, ON
Laura Ryser, Prince George, BC
Dr. Terry Weninger, Prince George, BC
Tony Zedda, Whitehorse, YT

EDITORIAL COMMITTEE

Barry Braitman; Patrick Coleman; Tom Merz; Norman Pressman

Members are encouraged to submit articles, book reviews, events and other news to the Winter Cities Magazine. We also welcome your suggestions for possible topics and authors you would like to see in future issues. The editorial staff may be contacted at bbraitman@accesscomm.ca.

The Winter Cities Magazine is published quarterly. The submission deadlines are the first day of the month of January, April, July and October. Articles are generally 1,000 - 1,500 words. Color images are preferred in a tiff format or high-resolution jpg. Scanned images should be set to 300 dpi (150 line screen) minimum.

BIENNIAL WINTER CITIES FORUM AND TRADE SHOW

Invitations are extended to North American municipalities to host a biennial (odd numbered years) Forum and Trade Show. Bidding criteria are available from the Association and via e-mail: nechakoriver@shaw.ca.

Web site: www.wintercities.com



Winter Cities

VOLUME 24 * NUMBER 1 * WINTER 2005

4 * Photo Feature

6 * Icicles

**8 * Reinventing the Winter City Landscape:
Prince George's sustainable landscape initiative**

By: BARBARA RAYMENT

**10 * Green Building Performance Criteria:
Eco-logical planning and design in the north**

By: MICHAEL L. BARTON, Dipl. Arch., M.A.

14 * Accidental Spaces: The Sussex Courts

By: REN THOMAS

On the Cover:

A slide made of snow offers fun for children of all ages on a sunny winter day in Regina's Victoria Park.

Photo: Barry Braitman

Photo Feature

Regina's Fire and Ice Festival



W I N T E R C I T I E S

‘This February saw a collaboration of City, downtown business and arts organizations to beat the winter blues in Regina. The Fire and Ice Festivals was the first of what is intended to be an annual event, and involved snow sculpture, family fun, hot chocolate, a roaring bonfire (see back cover) and evening costume ball. It took place in Victoria Park in the heart of the downtown, and the Cornwall Centre, Regina’s major downtown shopping centre. The event brought people out to enjoy winter, and broaden their perceptions of what can be done to celebrate the season.’



Icicles

2005 Annual General Meeting

Submitted by: ANNE MARTIN

The annual meeting was held on Friday, February 11th, 2005 at the Civic Centre, Prince George, B.C. the outgoing President, Anne Martin, reported on the activities of the Association over the previous twelve months.

The book “Shaping Cities for Winter: Climatic Comfort and Sustainable Design”, by Norman Pressman, was published in early 2004. Progress had been made on the website and the magazine is now online with colour photographs. Arrangements have been made with our editor, Board member Barry Braitman, to provide hard copies to those who need them, primarily libraries.

It proved impossible to find a host city for Winter City Forum 2005 so it was held in Prince George as part of a larger regional event called Winter Opportunities Summit, organized to explore economic opportunities in northern British Columbia arising out of the 2010 Winter Olympic Games. Without a major sponsor, although with considerable support from the City of Prince George, a local Winter Cities Association planning committee organized a successful event with a program of speakers for a one-day session and no trade show.

Concluding her remarks, Anne Martin encouraged the formation of local and regional chapters of the Winter Cities Association, as provided for in the Association’s bylaws. This will be helpful in acquiring more members and promoting the work of the Association.

The Treasurer, Mr. George Paul, commented on the income statement and balance sheet for the twelve



months ended December 31, 2004. He noted that the publication of “Shaping Cities for Winter”, and the Association’s presence at the Anchorage 2004 Conference (World Winter Cities Association of Mayors) depleted our financial resources. Without additional funds the Association will not be able to accomplish much in 2005.

Mr. Paul, who is also the City Manager, City of Prince George, B.C., reported on discussions concerning the development of the Circumpolar Municipalities Association (CMA). Discussions between Russian and Canadian representatives had been held and a draft constitution and bylaws have been developed. The objectives of the CMA are compatible with those

of the Winter Cities Association and the intention is to establish strong linkages with like-minded organizations. The Board of Directors asked Mr. Paul to write a letter of intent regarding the affiliation of the WCA and the CMA

The election of officers resulted in the following: Mr. Michael Barton, Whitehorse, President; Mayor Gordon van Tighem, Yellowknife, vice President; Dr. Deborah Poff, Prince George, Secretary; Mr. George Paul, Prince George, Treasurer; Mrs. Anne Martin, Past President, Prince George. Other Directors are: Barry Braitman, Patrick Coleman, Mayor Jerry Irby, Dr. J. McDonald, Mayor Tom Merz, Dr. Larry Neal, Norman Pressman, Mayor John Rowswell, Laura Ryser, Dr. Terence Weninger, Tony Zedda.

In other business, approval was given for the formation of a Prince George Chapter of the Winter Cities Association.

Winter Cities Forum 2005

Submitted by: ANNE MARTIN

Winter Cities Forum 2005 was held in Prince George, British Columbia, on February 9 and 10, 2005. This year, the Forum was scaled back to an opening reception and a one-day program of plenary and breakout sessions.

The Forum was planned in conjunction with members of a committee formed to explore economic opportunities arising from the 2010 Winter Olympic Games through a Winter Opportunities Summit. The games will be held in Vancouver and Whistler in southern British Columbia, but it is felt that northern B.C. communities can contribute to the success of the games as well as profit from them. The Winter Cities Forum was the first of four conferences that made up the Winter Opportunities Summit. Details of the Summit can be found at www.wintersummit.ca.

There are three supporting “pillars” to the Olympic movement, sports, environment and culture. The other three Winter Opportunities Summit conferences focussed on sport, so environment and culture were taken as themes for the WCA Forum.

Those of us who live in the north share the problem of high built-in northern costs and the challenge of making our communities more comfortable, convenient and aesthetically appealing. Several of our speakers presented ideas and examples of land use and sustainable urban planning and design that respond to our climate,



including BILL SEMPLE, architect and Senior Researcher, Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation, MICHAEL BARTON, architect in Whitehorse, and PATRICK COLEMAN, urban planner, Houghton, Michigan.

The incorporation of energy conservation into the urban planning process and community energy systems was discussed by RICHARD DAMECOUR, vice-President of FVB Energy Inc. and BOB RADLOFF, Director, Development Services, City of Prince George. DIANA THOMSON and JIM MCDONALD representing the University of the Arctic highlighted the application of modern communications technology in a presentation.

The benefits derived by northern communities investing in cultural infrastructure and institutions was discussed by DOUG NORD, Political Science professor and Executive Director, Centre for International Studies, Wright State University, Dayton, Ohio.

Opportunities that exist for cultural tourism were discussed by ANNE HARDY, Assistant Professor, Resource Recreation and Tourism Program, University of Northern British Columbia, and by a panel of speakers: GREG HALSETH,

associate Professor, Geography Program, UNBC; GAIL HUNT, Executive Director, Central Interior Regional Arts Council, Prince George; and DEANNA NYCE, President, Nisga'a University College in the Nass Valley, B.C.. Winter lighting displays were discussed by PETER VANDERGUGTEN, Councillor, City of Fort St. John, B.C. and KENNETH BRENNAN, Deputy Mayor, Portage la Prairie, Manitoba. GERALD CHRISTIE, planner, City of Prince George, B.C. talked about dog sled racing and the development of proper dogsled trail design. SEPPO MAKINEN, snow engineer from Oulu, Finland, talked about the historical use of snow and ice for construction purposes and gave examples of the unique and beautiful structures being built today for winter festivals and as tourist attractions. He also supervised the construction of a small snow building during the Winter Opportunities Summit. In spite of unseasonably warm weather and limited snow, he was able to illustrate the engineering principles and building techniques involved in snow structures.

With sixty-eight delegates, the Winter Cities Forum 2005 was small in comparison with previous conferences. The City of Prince George and Initiatives Prince George provided sponsorship and support. The budget was developed on a break-even basis. This was possible because of the generosity of our speakers and their sponsors. Their presentations were all very well received and the information provided was felt to be interesting and relevant. Delegates also commented on the valuable opportunities for networking.

Reinventing the Winter City Landscape

Prince George's Sustainable Landscape Initiative

By: BARBARA RAYMENT

What one person sees as a problem, another sees as a challenge. When a whole city rises to a challenge, the entire urban landscape can be changed.

Prince George's landscape is being dramatically affected by the removal of more than 20,000 mature pine trees fatally attacked by the Mountain Pine Beetle. Municipal budgetary constraints, rising costs, and growing concerns over water conservation and the use of herbicides and pesticides are also impacting the city's landscaping practices.

In any other community this might be adding up to a potential disaster for public green spaces, but in Prince George, it coalesced into a unique opportunity. A diverse group of organizations, government agencies and private individuals decided the time was right to reinvent the northern landscape, and on Feb. 7th, 2005 Prince George's Sustainable Landscaping Initiative was announced.

Three major partners have been working for months to pull the project and the funding together. The University of Northern B.C. (www.unbc.ca), the City of Prince George Environmental Services Department (www.city.pg.bc.ca) and R.E.A.P.S. (Recycling and Environmental Action Planning

Society) (www.reaps.org) have led the way in raising money and support to create a planned \$2 million dollars worth of renovated and sustainable landscaping around the city over the next five years.

Prince George's northern climate, short growing season and harsh winters have never encouraged public gardens, and there is limited information available on plants and methods of planting which can provide four season interest while offering minimal maintenance requirements.

The Sustainable Landscaping Initiative is seeking to change that, while demonstrating the beauty and diversity that can be offered in a winter city landscape.

"This is a great project that has really come along at exactly the right time, as we are dealing with the Pine Beetle aftermath," says Mark Fercho, Manager of Environmental Services for the City. "This initiative fits well with our existing programs, and gives our staff a chance to answer some important questions about pest resistance and different maintenance regimes."

The project will involve a mix of trial plots, demonstration gardens and laboratory research, focussed on discovering the most environmentally friendly and cost effective landscape treatments for a

northern city. Upwards of 30 acres within the city will be converted to low-mow grass and wildflower mixes in place of higher maintenance turf-grass boulevards and medians. The turf replacements are expected to require significantly less mowing and no watering, and ameliorate snow-melt and stormwater run-off problems. In addition, a number of public parks and green spaces will be planted into various combinations of native and north-hardy shrubs and perennials.

R.E.A.P.S. (Recycling and Environmental Action Planning Society) has been at the forefront of sustainable landscaping since 1995, points out Program Manager Terri McClymont. "This new partnership is very exciting for us, and we are looking forward to being part of a project that will help us, as a community, reduce the inputs needed to create and maintain landscapes. As part of Communities in Bloom, we are also delighted about the beautification aspect, of course."

In conjunction with the research and trials, a public perception and education component of the project will study existing public attitudes to traditional and non-traditional landscaping, and provide homeowners and the gardening public with practical information and workshops on what has been dubbed "northscaping". A variety

of sites are currently being evaluated for the project, including provincially and municipally owned properties, and the grounds of UNBC. At the core of the project, says Dr. Annie Booth, Ecosystem Science Management Program and School of Environmental Planning at UNBC, is always “answering questions”. All site selection, plant selection and landscape design choices are being based upon the need to answer a long list of questions posed by landscape professionals in Prince George and by researchers at UNBC.

“We don’t know what a sustainable landscape in a northern city is going to look like,” Dr. Booth points out, “but in five years we’ll have that information. We are looking at all aspects of this, from community acceptance and visual appeal to environmental benefits and long-term cost effectiveness.”

Some of the questions are very basic, such as “What type of surface mulch results in the lowest maintenance requirements for flower and shrub beds?” Other questions are more technical in

nature, and will need the full resources of UNBC’s research facilities to answer. Dr. Eric Rapaport, School of Environmental Planning, is interested in the relative carbon sequestration rates of traditional lawns vs. alternative groundcovers. The answer to that question could have wide-ranging impacts on broader issues such as global warming and climate change.

The major labour component of the project will be supplied by work crews from the Prince George Regional Correctional Centre and the Youth Containment Centre. As part of the win-win agreement, participating inmates from the centres will have an opportunity to earn education credits as well as practical on-the-job horticultural experience.

The project has come together very quickly “due to the foresight of the Prince George City Council and city staff, as well as our funders and partners” says Dr. Booth. The fact that there was already a network of existing relationships and a strong community spirit has helped. “Many of us having been talking about the need to do

something for a long time - when the time came, there was no hesitation.”

The project is being funded by the City of Prince George, the Vancouver Foundation, the Real Estate Foundation of British Columbia, the B.C. Ministry of Transportation, and UNBC. Grant applications to a number of other foundations and granting agencies are outstanding at the time of this writing. A long list of community partners include the David Douglas Botanical Garden Society (www.ddbotgarden.bc.ca), Prince George Communities in Bloom, and the Winter Cities Commission.

A web-site detailing the partnerships, research and result of this project is under construction, and should be functional sometime in the next few months. Look for a link on the UNBC website.

About the author:

Barbara Rayment is the owner of Birch Creek Nursery in Prince George, and a consultant and project manager for this initiative. birchcreek@telus.net



Green Building Performance Criteria

Eco-Logical Planning and Design in the North

By: MICHAEL L. BARTON, Dipl. Arch., M.A.

During the last five to ten years much has been written about “Green” buildings and architecture, as well as sustainable planning, design, and development. This evolution started in the North a few years earlier, with attention being paid to how the north, (and hence local-climate considerations), affected approaches to planning and design. More recently, there has been a movement to combine, (or synergize), all elements and components into a wholistic model.

The approach now being considered is an ecological one, meaning there is an automatic connection to the local and indigenous situation. It also means that developments are in harmony with seasonal changes. It is **Eco-Logical**.

Background

Before the recent development in sustainable planning and design, a considerable number of poor decisions were made with respect to public buildings and residences located in the north, especially during the period between the end of WW2 and the early 1980’s. Design was carried out in southern centres, and local planning was virtually non-existent. It was possible to see the same school design being built in Tuktoyaktuk, on the Beaufort sea, as was being

built in Vancouver. The building in the former location would have cost millions to operate over a twenty-five year period, (i.e. Life-Cycle costs).

Another aspect is that many building complexes in the north do not relate to the indigenous culture. Perhaps for this reason, a move towards “**Northern-Appropriate**” solutions began about 20 years ago.

When technical design criteria was added to the above approach, the term “**Climate-Sensitive**” was coined to describe it.

An ecological, or eco-logically balanced approach includes all of the above, as well as sustainable, ecological, and behavioural characteristics. (e.g.. attention to light, and shadows, land forms, sun-paths, prevailing seasonal winds, vegetation, and primary orientation characteristics of the site etc).

It seems that many examples of ecological habitation can be found in previous cultures, including the ancient ones, (Mesopotamian, Roman, Saxon etc), all used the knowledge of their eco-environments, as well as diurnal and seasonal cycles.

Modern civilizations started going off-track after WW2. The collective phenomena of endless

sprawl, unplanned residential subdivisions, business and industrial estates, and artificial zoning, are southern problems, which have been imported to northern communities.

None of this equates to a sustainable lifestyle. Nor does driving in and out of town from the suburbs 3 or 4 times a day, (especially driving an SUV to go to the gym).

As a professor at London University said recently:

“We cannot begin to talk about sustainable planning, design, or development, while we are living non-sustainable life styles”

Eco-Logical approaches

The opposite of the no-planning approach above, is to plan and design tight eco-logical community clusters, and incorporate all of the cyclical elements noted herein as components of an ecological model.

Other component parts of an ecological approach are:

Philosophical: Should be socially advancing and beneficial; a clear improvement on other models.

Technological: Cutting edge technology; complementary in the environmental sense.

Cultural: Expectations should be cohesive within a given cultural group.

All of these will combine to become part of an ecological approach. This approach enables the project team to pay close attention to the eco-locality, or the exigencies of the site and micro-conditions.

For any given project, the spatial parameters inherent in the site become elements of place. In the design sense, **Elements of Place** are:

- * **Fixed features**
- * **Loose parts**
- * **Natural phenomena**
- * **Populations**

These elements play a role in inter-related themes:

The eco-environment that contains the site and the project at hand; sustainable or eco-logic design; and design for public and community participation.

Research

Research is critical and deals with the cutting-edge of development, which is by definition, never static. E-Green technology is now evolving at a steady rate, and this information will obviously affect the direction to proceed in, and what to include. The preliminary research which emerges will materialize into **Design Principles**, and **Developmental Goals**.

Research is something that can proceed ahead of a project per se, or be the first component part of a specific project. The eco-logical

approach lends itself to an **Integrative Design Process**. This can also happen before a design team is “on board”, but is most effective at the commencement of a project, as soon as the team have been identified.

At an IDP Workshop, it is a fairly common practice to identify some fundamental principles of design, along with the most important goals, (development goals). When these sets of criteria are cross referenced, as in a matrix, it is easy to identify priorities for design, (or **design-relevant-information**). A few examples of each set are identified below:

Design Principles, (Examples)

- * Use of grade/slope for siting and drainage
- * Optimal use of passive and/or solar energy
- * Use of local or recycled materials
- * Low surface to volume ratios

Developmental Goals, (Examples)

- * Minimal ecological footprint
- * Energy Efficiency
- * All round benefit to Community
- * Prevention of pollution and use of toxic materials

The Site

The site does indeed determine the nature of the project, (as Frank Lloyd Wright said).

Sometimes there is limited choice and a given site may not have many good qualities, especially in a constrained urban setting.

Considerations may be generic or specific, and geared towards green sustainable options. Examples of site considerations are:

- * Site slope
- * General orientation
- * Protection
- * Sub-Ground conditions, drainage, permeability
- * Access
- * Topography
- * Wind
- * Sun-Paths and Shade

Also, for any given project, the usual site criteria which is identified, will be added to this list. That is, all natural features, (paths, edges, rock outcrops, cliffs, ravines, mounds, ponds etc), as well as artificial ones, (boundaries, rights of way, power lines and so on).

Programming

Programming begins with the IDP process above, after which a clear direction for the project is identified. The programming fine-tunes and consolidates the previous phases, and sets the stage for design per se.

Programming for any comprehensive projects should include some or all of the following:

- * Site evaluation criteria
- * Integration of e-green elements, and analysis of orientation possibilities
- * Behavioural requirements
- * Heliomorphic criteria, (sun-lines/daylight/shading data)
- * Wind patterns and potential snow-drifting

- * A project-specific space programme
- * A project-specific functional programme

There are many other technologically green options which may or may not be included in a given project. For the purposes of “green-certification” the Standard in Canada is now the LEED system, (**Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design**), which has recently been adopted by the Canadian Green Building Council. There are six divisions including Innovation and Design Process.

The LEED certification system is a progressive one, which allows for certification at four levels, (certified; Silver; Gold; Platinum). The certification is based on a rating process, based on points spread through the six divisions. Currently there are probably less than 10 LEED certified buildings in Canada, and none in the Yukon. However, ESC is working on three projects which are looking at certification, at the silver level. One of these will become only the second to be certified “north of ’60”.

The six divisions of LEED are:

- * **Sustainable Sites**
- * **Water Efficiency**
- * **Energy and Atmosphere**
- * **Materials and Resources**
- * **Indoor Air Quality**
- * **Innovation and Design Process**

The six divisions are sub-divided into various categories, which are pertinent to the overall division. There are a maximum number of

points available for each division, and the total possible for all divisions is 69. Basic certification is available for 26-32 points; 33-38 for silver; 39-51 for Gold; 52-69 for platinum.

The LEED project checklist sets out what the basic requirements are, and the credits available for each of the sub-headings.

There is not space here to list all of the sub-headings with descriptions. However, **the primary intent of the six divisions is set out, as follows:**

Sustainable Sites. The intent is to control erosion and reduce negative impacts on water and air quality.

Water Efficiency. The intent is the elimination, (or limitation), of potable water for landscape irrigation.

Energy and Atmosphere. The overall intent is the reduction, to a minimum, of the amount of energy used, together with the maximization of energy efficiency.

Materials and Resources. The intent is the reuse and recycling of materials where possible, as well as the use of local or regional materials and resources.

Indoor Environmental Quality. The intent in general, is to provide optimum air quality for the comfort and well being of building occupants.

Innovation and Design Process. Up to 4 (additional points), can be awarded for outstanding and exceptional planning and design performance. The intent for the

overall design should be identified, upon applying for LEED accreditation.

Technological features

The options available to be included in sustainable projects, can now be assessed within each of the above (LEED) categories. In general, the “Green” technology can be broken into Solar; Wind; Ground/Water source heat exchangers; Geo-Thermal; Micro-Hydro, plus water saving/filtering/recycling systems.

Solar, or, photo-voltaic panels are much more efficient than they were 10 years ago. Their use in the Whitehorse area of Yukon is steadily increasing. Their use above the arctic circle is very limited from November to February (inclusive). The same can be said for solar hot water systems, and for thermal massing, (passive solar), and the Roof air-flow system* in the higher latitudes. It is also feasible to design for solar orientated interior zones.

Solar lighting, (day-lighting), can be used with properly designed orientation and “intelligent” windows, plus ‘brise-soleil’ and light shelves.

Wind generators can be utilized for power, from the micro to macro scale. There are two large wind

*This system operates on the principle of taking solar heated air collected under the roof of the building, and then channeling this heated air, through a vertical duct, back down to beneath the ground floor to a heat storing concrete slab, (thermal mass). The slab warms the ground floor and also releases hot air through floor vents for distribution through the interior spaces. This system has variants, but the principle is the same.

turbines on a hill to the north-west of Whitehorse which supply about 185 houses during optimum conditions. Also, examples of micro units exist in this area. Wind and solar can work together, separately, or alternatively. ESC gathers wind monitoring data from specific locations, which is used to determine the viability of installing a wind system.

Ground Source heat-pumps systems, whether they are closed or open loop types can be used in the north. The smaller residential types are usually installed with horizontal loops, while the larger, (commercial), systems are more likely to be vertical systems. The capital cost for installation can be fairly high, but the ongoing running costs for a successful system are very economical. The technology is still being evolved and success is most likely with an experienced installer-contractor.

Geo-thermal systems may be utilized where warm aquifers are found, and may be used in connection with heat exchange systems. There are aquifers being used in the Yukon on some projects. A new Community Centre for the Village of Mayo, which is in the early design stage, will probably be using a combination of geo-thermal, heat-exchange system, and photo-voltaic panels. There is also a possibility of a partial green roof and a water re-cycling programme. This project is hoping to achieve LEED silver certification.

*The City of Whitehorse is now supplied by hydro-power, and a hydro-generating plant in Mayo is now supplying Dawson, via transmission lines (a distance of 230 kms. Approx.). Dawson formerly relied on diesel generation for electrical power.



The author, Michael Barton, is president of the Winter Cities Association, North America. He is shown here with Anne Martin, Immediate Past-President.

Micro-Hydro systems have also been used on some pilot projects in the Yukon, and are supplementing power requirements at these sites. Some fast flowing streams can be used for much of the year in this way. An analysis of flow dynamics should be carried out if this seems like it is a possibility.

About the author:

*Michael L. Barton, Dipl. Arch., M.A.,
Principal, Circumpolar Research and
Design for Architecture,
75 Walnut Crescent,
Whitehorse, Y1A 5C7 Canada
Tel 867 633 6539
e-mail Michael.barton@nrgsc.yk.ca*

The author will be retiring from his present position of Consulting Architect with the Energy Solutions Centre, at the end of June, 2005.

Subsequent to this date, he will resume his role as Principal of "Circumpolar Research and Design for Architecture", while also assuming the new position of President of Winter Cities Association, North America.

This article was presented at the Livable Winter Cities Forum and Summit, in Prince George., B.C., February 10th 2005.

Accidental Spaces

The Sussex Courts

By: REN THOMAS

If you are lucky, you might stumble into one of five little urban oases in downtown Ottawa on a walk through Ottawa's trendy Bytown Market area. The likelihood of finding a second courtyard are slim; as yet, I have met only two residents in the nation's capital who have walked through and observed all five. This remarkable fact is heightened by the obvious: the Sussex Courts are not new, they are well designed, and they possess all the qualities to which urban designers aspire. They are rare finds in any city in which I've ever lived: secret spaces that one happens upon accidentally.

The courtyards are located just east of Sussex Drive; the spaces are formed in part by the rear façades of these commercial and residential buildings. All five are interior-block spaces created from parking lots and service entrances formerly used for the three-to-five-storey buildings. The courtyards occur on the interiors of four city blocks; between George, York, Clarence, Murray, and St. Patrick Streets, from south to north. They are named Clarendon, York, Jeanne d'Arc, Tin House, and Beaux-Arts Courts, respectively.

Sussex Drive is one of the most historic routes in the country: since Confederation in 1867, it has been used as a ceremonial route from the Governor General's residence (Rideau Hall) to the Parliament buildings. Some of Canada's most historic built heritage is located along Sussex Drive, including the Prime Minister's Residence, the Royal Canadian Mint, the National Gallery, and the Canadian War Museum. Sussex Drive is also one of the oldest commercial streets in the city, with many brick and limestone buildings dating

from the latter part of the nineteenth century. The street forms the western boundary of the

Byward Market, a lively old farmer's market that boasts some of the city's best restaurants, clubs, and European specialty shops. The streets in the market are full of life, including so many pedestrians that cars move quite slowly through this historic part of town.

The National Capital Commission (NCC), whose mandate is to plan and develop federal lands and buildings in the Ottawa region, acquired many Sussex Drive properties in order to preserve and restore them as part of a "Mile of History".¹ The "Mile" (actually a quarter-mile) was conceived in the early 1960's and was to be at least partially in place for Canada's

Centennial in 1967.² The courtyard spaces were purchased, along with buildings fronting Sussex Drive, from 1960 to 1980,

Endnotes

¹ National Capital Commission and Dr. Lucien Brault, *The Mile of History*, p4.

² "Mile of History for Centennial," *Toronto Star*, October 13 1961.

but the NCC did not have a plan to develop the Sussex Courts until a couple of accidental catalysts so motivated them.

I will describe the courtyards as I first discovered them: despite their sequential geographical location, I happened upon them haphazardly through the processes of daily life. If one happened to eat at the Black Thorn Pub or visit the US Embassy for example, one would possibly walk through the Tin House Court, located between Clarence and Murray Streets.

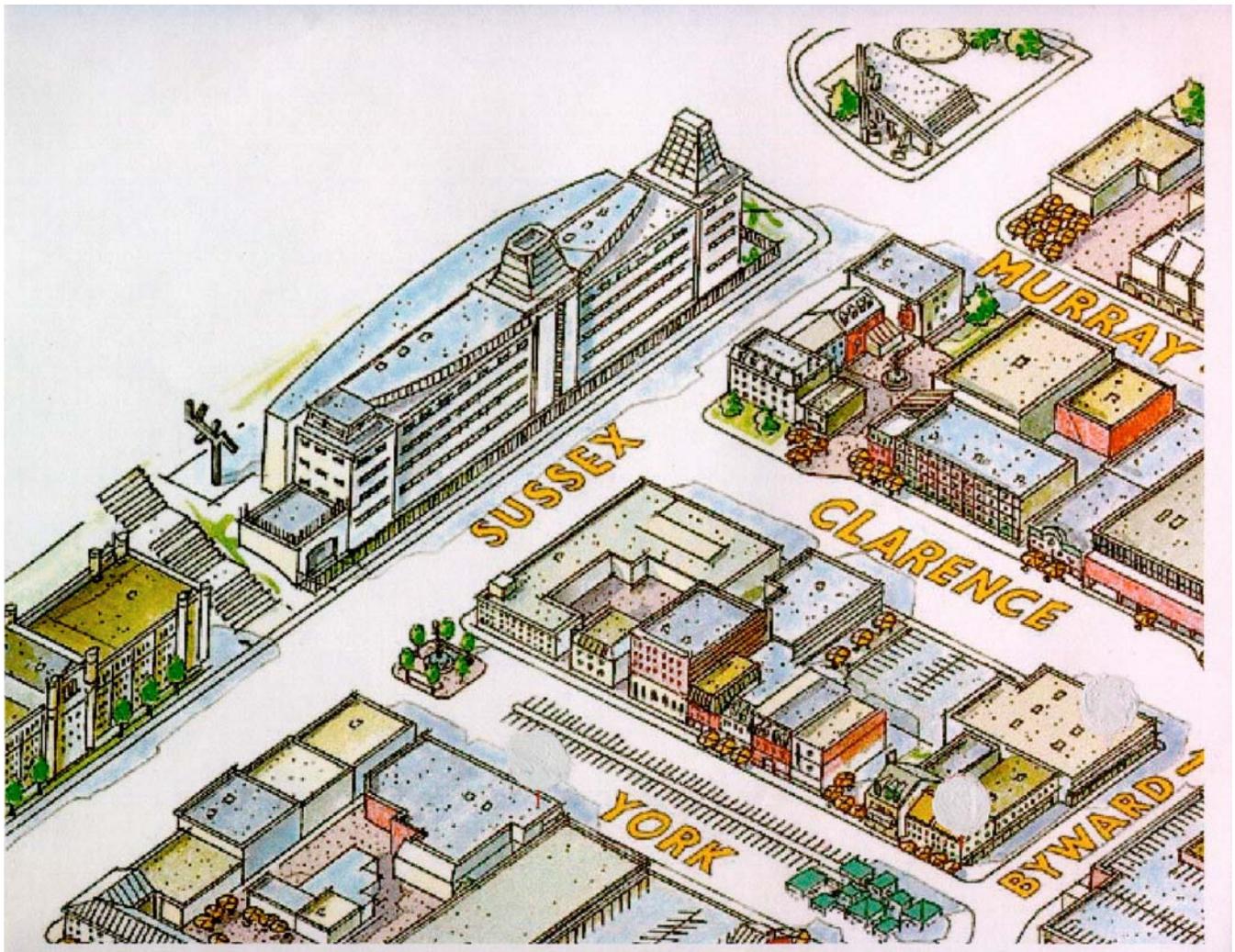
The largest of the Sussex Courts, the Tin House Court gets its name from an actual house façade hung on one of the limestone walls framing the courtyard. Decorated with tin by its owner Honoré Foisy, a tinsmith in the early 20th century, the Tin House was saved from demolition. An interpretive plaque informs the viewer that the Tin House was repaired and reconstructed by metalsmith Art Price in 1973; it has hung on a stone building at the north end of the courtyard ever since. In fact, almost thirty years after its creation, the design of the Tin House Court remains unchanged.

With broad entrances off both Clarence and Murray Streets, the courtyard is very well traveled. Three seasons of the year, there are people eating at the Black Thorn pub on Clarence Street, whose patio occupies half of the eastern side of the courtyard. The other buildings shaping the courtyard are a mix of high-end residential and ground-floor commercial uses, and range from turn-of-the-century limestone to yellow brick less than a decade old. A new residential building on the east side has its entrance off the courtyard. Paving is consistent with Jeanne d'Arc Court: multicoloured granite sets in a fan pattern bordered with sandstone. A large round fountain

sits in the center of the courtyard, creating background noise to dull any sounds of traffic. The northern side of the courtyard opens onto Murray Street with a healthy grove of honey locust trees. One might visit the Tin House Court for a children's book reading; these are occasionally held on the west side of the court at the back stairway of a gift/book store. And once a year the Tin House Court has cars in it: as part of the Byward Market Auto Classic, vintage cars are shown in the space and trophies are awarded in the courtyard. Visiting the Tin House Court after snowfall show that the quantity of pedestrian traffic doesn't taper off with the cool weather. The courtyard has a

European feeling with its paving, lighting, and its animated character lasting late into the night. Indeed, the sound of people laughing and talking outdoors on a warm summer night is a pedestrian attractor in any city.

A meeting at an office on Clarence Street introduced me to Jeanne d'Arc Court. I don't see how I would have found it if it hadn't been pointed out to me from an overlooking office window. If one was especially observant, one might notice two narrow blue entrance gates on the north side of York Street or a similar gate on the south side of Clarence Street. The narrow entry points are



sandwiched between buildings and not easily noticeable in the continuous street façades. This is perhaps fitting, as Jeanne d'Arc Court is the only courtyard of the five that is part private and part public. The gates clearly denote both the name of the courtyard and the times when it is publicly accessible (7:30am to 11pm). Outside of these hours, the residential units on the west and north sides of the courtyard have the space to themselves. The two narrow entrance points off York Street open into a delightful square space paved with granite sets. The surrounding buildings are a mix of limestone from the late nineteenth century to modern brick only a decade old. Delightful balconies overlook the space and since none of the buildings is over four stories tall, plenty of light floods the space and alights on two public art pieces, a semicircular pergola on the west side and detailed planting beds bordered with sandstone curbs. Seating is provided beneath the pergola. A statue of a dancing bear, by Inuit artist Pauta Saila, is the focus of the space; another figural sculpture is at the eastern side of the courtyard near a building entrance. Office and retail uses occur on the east and south sides of the courtyard, making it a popular space to linger.

One clear winter day, on a walk back from the National Gallery, I noticed Beaux-Arts Court. This small, narrow space is located between Murray and St. Patrick Streets and is named for the nearby National Gallery of Canada (Musée des Beaux-Arts du Canada). The north end of the courtyard offers a great view of the oldest Roman Catholic church in the city, Nôtre Dame Cathedral.

However, the courtyard is simply a pedestrian connection between Murray and St. Patrick Streets, and not an enclosed, intimate space. Despite the fact that the Earl of Sussex pub opens into the courtyard and that shop windows and residential balconies overlook it, Beaux-Arts Court feels like a space where one wasn't meant to linger. It is well-lit with the same pedestrian lighting used in the other courtyards and there are raised planters in the space where one might sit, but there is no other seating. In summer, with many tourists and locals visiting the Cathedral and the National Art Gallery, Beaux-Arts Court is still the least-used of the designed courtyards.

I will admit that I found Clarendon and York Courts only after I had decided to write about the Sussex Courts. I knew there were five courtyards of course, having done the research; I even knew they had to be located behind the Sussex Street façades. But the Bytown Market is so full of little alleys decorated with public art, tiny patios bordered with flowering baskets on low railings, and storefronts opening off pedestrian mews, that I somehow failed to notice the bronze plaques denoting Clarendon and York Courts.

Clarendon Court is one of the most charming spaces I have ever seen. Small, square, bordered on three sides by restaurants, its east side is framed by ancient stone archways. With the period lighting fixtures, granite setts, and restaurant patios, the courtyard is the essence of urban European sophistication. A few benches and a piece of public art are the only real design elements in the space--low metal

railings and flower boxes indicate the boundaries of the patios. The surrounding buildings are all limestone from the late nineteenth century with bright awnings and subtle lighting to draw the eye. At the northwest corner is a low archway that piqued my curiosity.

A moment later, I was in York Court. Undoubtedly less animated than Clarendon Court since no restaurants open onto it, York Court is still well-designed. A low stone building on the east side houses design studios and Heritage Canada is located in a modern building on the north side. The curving glass façade on the north and a piece of public art on the west wall do a good job of conspiring to hide the narrow courtyard exit onto York Street. From the street, one is utterly amazed to find that a nondescript brick building with a front arcade completely disguises the entrance to the courtyard. The only way one would find it would be if one was already deep inside Clarendon Court--or had an appointment with the Heritage Canada office. The entrance camouflaged by Heritage Canada's glass façade makes Clarendon Court a secret, especially since it is located on York Street, the busiest street in the Byward Market. In the mid-to-late 1800's York Street was occupied by farmers' markets, agricultural and livestock sales, and the hotels that supported these merchants.³ This gives the street its expansive width for its first block; currently this section of York Street has a central parking area and one-way traffic on each

³ National Capital Commission, *Federal Heritage Buildings Review Office*. 1989, p 80.

side. The wide variety of shops and restaurants on both sides of the street makes it well-travelled by people and slow-moving cars.

Research on the history of the courtyards does little to cast light upon these five little enigmatic courtyards. “Sussex Courts”, a planning report put together by Hotson Bakker Architects in 1989, states that “the existing fabric of the courtyards represents a most distinctive feature in the built form of the area. These courts should be enhanced as places of quietude and refuge from the highly active street spaces surrounding them.”⁴ In effect this has happened even without a master plan; the southern three courtyards are so secluded that few passersby would stumble upon them. The remaining two, by virtue of their adjacent uses and broader entrances, are well-travelled. The piecemeal acquisition and design of the Sussex Courts helps explain their unique urban charm.

The first accident was the Tin House. The majority of the house was saved from demolition by a local architect who had it photographed. The NCC then purchased the house, stored it for a few years, and then made the necessary decision of saving only its façade.⁵ Artist Art Price was commissioned to repair and reconstruct the façade and make it into a piece of public art, and the

⁴ National Capital Commission and Hotson Bakker Architects, *Les Courts Sussex Courts Urban Design Framework*, p10. The document contains sketches and proposals for the courtyards, none of which were ever implemented.

⁵ National Capital Commission. *Heritage File M12-013*. “Tin House Court”.

Tin House was, without any ceremony at all, hung on the back of one of the old limestone buildings at Sussex and Murray Streets. A reporter seized the story in 1973 and showed a photograph of the NCC model of the Tin House Court, noting that the new space would be “a dramatic transformation from its present untidy state as a parking lot.”⁶ The NCC seems to have designed the courtyard around the Tin House, an unusual proposition but nevertheless, a successful one.

It was a few years before the first concept of the “Sussex Courtyards” was made public. Other than the fact that they would be pedestrian spaces and that one could walk from one to the other, little was said or written about their proposed designs. Still, they were part of a Built Environment award from the Ontario Association of Architects in 1977; the concentration at that time was the architectural restoration of the Sussex Drive façades and the revitalization of the commercial area. A 1978 article commented on the planned restoration of the façades and the construction of the courtyards.⁷ It seems as if the Tin House was the catalyst for the creation of a series of urban courtyards that could provide a respite from the busy Byward Market streets. Shortly afterwards, Clarendon and York Courts were finished; the public art in these two courtyards was first shown at Expo 67 in Montreal.

⁶ Barbara Lambert, “Tin House of Lower Town Rises Again,” *Ottawa Citizen*, September 1, 1973.

⁷ Burt Kay, “Façades, courtyards: the NCC’s restoration of the Sussex area,” *Ottawa Review*, August 18, 1978.

Jeanne d’Arc Court appeared after a series of fortunate events unfolded. The Institut Jeanne d’Arc, a Roman Catholic establishment which offered inexpensive room and board to young working women,⁸ owned the five buildings on Sussex Drive between York and Clarence Streets. From 1917-1926, the five buildings were acquired and converted into a single building that could accommodate 115 young women. The true value of the buildings became known in 1962 when a restoration architect noted that they were considered “among the oldest of a dwindling number of nineteenth-century stone buildings in the city” and “an excellent example of commercial architecture from Ottawa’s Confederation period.”⁹ With this knowledge the NCC eventually acquired the properties in 1980, then restored them and leased them back to the Institut Jeanne d’Arc. When the Institut changed location in 1989, the buildings were renovated into a charming mix of ground floor commercial and residential units, and Jeanne d’Arc Court was born.

Considering the success of these five courtyards, one wonders if their accidental formation may have been more appropriate than an overall Sussex Courts Master Plan would have been. Twenty years passed between the establishment of Canada’s Mile of History and the completion of Jeanne d’Arc Court. There is

⁸ National Capital Commission, Federal Heritage Buildings Review Office. 1989, p 80.

⁹ National Capital Commission, Federal Heritage Buildings Review Office. 1989, p84.

something hopeful and exciting about a series of urban spaces that develops over time and seemingly without cause, something that gets people talking and visiting the spaces. To be sure, if one mentions the Sussex Courts to anyone in Ottawa one will get a puzzled look; mention the Tin House Court and one might get a glimmer of recognition. This seems a typical response of most city dwellers; often people are aware of public spaces, parks, and streetscapes but fail to really notice or observe them; rarely are they able to identify such places by name. The Sussex Courts are, like many urban squares and spaces, sometimes hidden in obscurity and other times thriving with activity. They do not function as a continuous pedestrian network (indeed such a network is not needed when Sussex Drive beckons a few feet away); they do not appear to lead from one to the next; they exist simply as individual little oases that one happens upon by chance. Perhaps this is part of their charm.

Master planning doesn't always produce the best results--more importantly, what is best at one time may not work a decade later. The piecemeal design of the Sussex Courts has allowed them to be flexible to changing lifestyle trends, real estate markets, and economic cycles. The design of the spaces has relied perhaps more on these factors than on design dogma. Rather than a snapshot in time, the courtyards embody a spirit of serendipity; like the buildings on Sussex Drive, they have ridden the wave of popularity more than once. Indeed as I write this, there are undoubtedly those who would decry the waste of

public land and funding that would be better spent on filling in the spaces with high-end condominiums, just as there were those who in 1965 opposed the preservation of the Sussex Drive commercial buildings. In fact, while there have been many changes in economy and politics, the property values around the Sussex Courts remain high almost forty years later, as evidenced by the quality of infill buildings in the Byward Market and the number of people who choose to live or work in this area. The NCC's ownership of the heritage properties along Sussex Drive undoubtedly provides them with enough revenue to restore and maintain both the courtyards and the buildings themselves.

The NCC has begun a study on the history of the Sussex Courts and prepare a series of proposals for their long-term use and management.¹⁰ Let us hope that the planned is as successful as the accidental.

Bibliography

- Canada. National Capital Commission. *Federal Heritage Buildings Review Office*. 1989.
- Canada. National Capital Commission. *File CP2920-2-58*.
- Canada. National Capital Commission. *Heritage Inventory File H12-348*.
- Canada. National Capital Commission. *Heritage Inventory File M12-013*.

- Canada. National Capital Commission. *Historical Data File H-20-12-14*.
- Canada. National Capital Commission and Dr. Lucien Brault. *The Mile of History*. Undated.
- Canada. National Capital Commission and Hotson Bakker Architects, *Les Courts Sussex Courts Urban Design Framework*, p10.
- Canada. Heritage Canada and P.J. Stokes. *Original Condition Survey of Sussex Street*. 1962.
- Canada. National Capital Commission and Urbanics Consultants Ltd. *Sussex Area Development Strategy Marketing Study--Part A*. August 1987.
- Daigneault, François. Telephone conversation with author, November 26, 2002.
- Kay, Burf. "Façades, courtyards: the NCC's restoration of the Sussex area". *Ottawa Review*, August 18, 1978.
- Lambert, Barbara. "Tin House of Lower Town Rises Again." *Ottawa Citizen*, September 1, 1973.
- Mannion, Shannon Lee. "Byward Market show adds classic motorcycles." *Ottawa Citizen*, May 31, 2002, D6.
- "Mile of History for Centennial". *Toronto Star*. October 13, 1961.
- Montpetit, Sister Denise. Telephone conversation with author, January 18, 2003.
- Prentice, Michael. "Michael Prentice's Ottawa Buzz." *Ottawa Citizen*, September 27, 1999, B8.
- "WOTS Happening on Clarence Street." *Ottawa Citizen*, September 25, 1999, E18.

¹⁰ Telephone conversation with François Daigneault, Landscape Architect at the National Capital Commission.



Winter Cities

A S S O C I A T I O N

c/o CITY OF PRINCE GEORGE, 1100 PATRICIA BOULEVARD,
PRINCE GEORGE, BC CANADA V2L 3V9

MISSION

The Winter Cities Association is dedicated to realizing the potential of all northern communities. Through publishing, networking, organizing conferences, facilitating research and other means, the Association seeks to make available northern solutions to northern problems and to promote awareness of opportunities associated with the winter season.

HISTORY

The Winter Cities Association was founded in 1983 by the late Jack Royle, a retired journalist and pioneer in the winter cities movement. The Association was incorporated in 1984. Professor Norman Pressman was its first President.

The purpose of the Association is to bring together professional, private, commercial and municipal interests and researchers who are committed to enhancing the liveability and quality of life in communities where winter conditions present unique challenges and opportunities. The Association seeks to support, and may enter into affiliations with, other associations that support its goal.

The Association publishes a quarterly magazine, periodically sponsors other publications dealing with winter issues, and promotes a biennial “Winter Cities Forum and Trade Show” in partnership with a host city/corporation.

The head office of the Association is currently located in Prince George, British Columbia.

MEMBERSHIPS & SUBSCRIPTIONS

Annual membership fees in the Association are by category:

INDIVIDUAL - \$60.00 Cdn. STUDENT/SENIOR (OVER 65) - \$30.00 Cdn.
CORPORATE/INSTITUTION - \$125.00 Cdn. CITIES AND MUNICIPALITIES – based on population

All members receive the *Winter Cities Magazine* on-line.

Members are eligible for discounted registration fees at Winter City Forums, and may purchase books and other materials published or distributed by the Association.

Subscriptions for the magazine only are \$40.00 Cdn. for one year, \$75.00 Cdn. for two years and \$100.00 Cdn. for three years.

Visa and MasterCard are accepted. Cheques are payable to the Winter Cities Association,
c/o City of Prince George, 1100 Patricia Blvd., Prince George, BC, Canada V2L 3V9

“A winter city is one in which the average maximum daytime temperature is equal to or less than 0 degrees Celsius for a period of at least two months or longer”.

Pressman, Norman, 1988. “Images of the North: Cultural Interpretations of Winter”, in Winter Communities Series, No. 5, Institute of Urban Studies, University of Winnipeg.

W I N T E R C I T I E S

A roaring bonfire helps warm the soul, and the hands, in Regina's Victoria Park.

