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Caring for Places: Staying on Course

In the last month we've seen the buoyant rise of a new political outlook, one suffused with a promise of renewed concern for the common good. It is a time for rethinking how we use resources; for looking at how we can all make more of what we have, and for investing in the future. This is not simply an injunction to do more with less (though that is certainly part of the charge), but to act more wisely and generously and in ways that give real and continuing benefits rather than spurious offerings to the gods of risk.

Let us all move forward with the hope and determination that were so forcibly demonstrated in the November election, and work to transform the public realm—the land and buildings and webs of communication that we share—into places that will form a common heritage, a connected realm that will sustain attention, create resources, and build benefits for all.

To stay on course, we must fill our minds, as well as our places, with people—people engaging in activities that nurture their souls, not simply pouring through channels of commerce. The growing abundance of people and their diversity are a fabulous resource of wisdom and initiative, as well as an overarching challenge.

Places is dedicated to things we need to be talking about:

- Stewarding environments in ways that will be sustained. Measuring changes in ways that account for their impact on the future of a dispersed population and the health of the planet. Developing sources of energy and nourishment that can be enduring.
- Making places that become valued parts of a larger environment. Caring for landscapes, urban form, buildings, the spaces between buildings—and the neighboring which all these entail—as elements of a domain in which everyone has a stake.
- Bringing the attention of those who make places to the crucial importance of thoughtful collaborative design. Architects, landscape architects, planners, civic officials, developers, builders and citizens all need to give caring attention to the places that become a part of our lives and which cohabit a world that is various and diversely experienced. Design can improve the public realm, both through far-reaching policies and in objects close at hand.
- Investing imagination in place—imagination that is rooted in a sense of human presence. We need sensibilities that value equally the discerning hand of craft (an essential aspect of enduring care) and the endless vitality of living with others. Learning fully from people who live lives differently requires seeking out ways to fill all lives with hope, realistically providing equity of consideration as well as opportunity.

We stand at a broad threshold, taking steps into a widened realm of possibilities. The bearings that led to this gate of hope in an atmosphere bordering on despair will help us stay on course, searching ways to embrace the common good and bring it into place.

As I pass the role of editor to Nancy Levinson, it is with gratitude and deep affection for the gathering of authors, readers, colleagues, and supporters who have created and who sustain this fine forum.

—*Donlyn Lyndon*