

CAN WE DESIGN AND BUILD FOR QUALITY OF LIFE?

This book provides a set of tools, processes and patterns to enable ordinary people and professionals to design and build a 5,000 to 10,000 person Village that is culturally enriched, never boring, architecturally authentic, beautiful, environmentally balanced, prosperous to thrive for many generations and economically secure for all.

The Village began as a question: *Can a host of problems facing modern society be overcome by how we design and build our communities?* Seeking to raise the bar, it then asked, *beyond overcoming problems, what if we zone, design and build for Quality of Life?*

Quality of Life starts with freedom from want and fear. It extends to good health, economic security and a place to stand tall. Finally it is a fulfilling life, which for each person is different. It may be freedom from boredom, a life of love, service or a higher level of consciousness – intellectually, emotionally and/or spiritually.

That question *What if we zone, design and build for quality of life* arose from another question: *Have 50 years of suburbs delivered on their promise?* Conceived after World War II, suburbs were offered as utopia. They have consistently failed to deliver this. As a model for living, their unanticipated negative side effects have greatly outweighed their benefits. It now seems that this was the product of tunnel vision, where decision makers strode forward with blinkers that allowed them to see only single issues rather than a complex system of interrelated issues.

Suburbs answered the wrong question. Because the decision-makers at the end of World War II were businessmen, they proposed an economic transformation of America that would be good for their businesses. The suburban utopia would build bedroom communities, office blocks and shopping malls accessed by motor vehicles driving 3.7 trillion miles a year on 3.9 million miles of roads. Other nations, even ones that did not make cars or have oil, rezoned land to build suburbs.

The cause was tunnel vision. The suburban solution answered a narrow question, and in doing so produced a host of new problems for society – unanticipated negative side effects. Beyond those problems, life lost its flavour as its potential richness was supplanted by franchises seeking profits through standardisation. Humans deserve better.

How can we redesign communities not only to address a host of major problems, but engender a much higher Quality of Life? To find the answer we must look at scale and scope: the critical mass required to make a place interesting as well as economically viable, and a range of activities, industries and opportunities to make it a wonderful place.

We should look both to history: timeless patterns and to technology: new potential. In proposing an answer,

this book names this new form of living as *The Village*. The Village targets the 20th century suburban development, declaring it obsolete. In its place, the Village allows for a higher density, fully functioning, self-contained community with lower impact on the environment. Distinguishing features of the Village include:

- *The Village prohibits cars within. Instead, everything is within a 10-minute walk with a motorpool outside the Village gate*
- *The Village is micro zoned with homes, offices, shops, schools and recreation all built around plazas & pedestrian streets*
- *Parallel real estate markets provide affordable housing for teachers, elders, youth, artists & other target groups*
- *Planning for a local economy is essential, so a Village requires a critical mass of 3,500 to 10,000 people*
- *A Village brings to the region a valuation of around \$1 billion with about 2000 jobs (\$100 million/year) on 100-400 acres*
- *As it has its own local economy, a Village can be set in a rural area as far as two hours from a city or large town.*
- *A Village can be carbon neutral or even qualify as earning carbon credits for countries participating in the Kyoto Protocol.*

In *A Pattern Language*^{*}, Christopher Alexander wrote “...people should design for themselves their own houses, streets and communities. This idea may be radical (it implies a radical transformation of the architectural profession) but it comes simply from the observation that most of the wonderful places of the world were not made by architects but by the people.”

Because the intent is for Villages to be wonderful places, it takes a strong lead from Alexander’s work in proposing how to get there. To achieve goals that conventional developments do not address, different tools, different models and different patterns are needed.

We are entering a new era, one in which the effects of corporate tunnel vision, the obsessive, blinkered pursuit of power and profits, is beginning to bite back. The alternative to tunnel vision is to ask broader questions. Understand where business fits in the bigger picture of human evolution and make intelligent decisions accordingly.

We now stand at a point of unprecedented material wealth with the tools, systems and resources to secure quality of life for many and eventually for all. In order to secure it, however, we need to ask the right questions. We cannot look at human beings as slaves, pawns, machines, consumers or, our latest analogy, like computers. Humans are far more than this. We are all part of a living system called Planet Earth. For this living system to work well we need to focus on true quality of life: social, economic, cultural, spiritual and environmental. Quality of life happens in wonderful places people love. Can we build such places?

If you want to live in a Village, if you own or know of a great site to build a Village, if you are a government official or an investor wanting to sponsor a Village, or if you are a professional wanting to become involved, this book is only the beginning. To actual connect with others to build a Village go to www.VillageForum.Com.

^{*} Available at www.patternlanguage.com ISBN 0-19-501919-9

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