

PRICE TAGS – Issue 4

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All the News ...

Yet another piece on Vancouver in the American media – but it's a biggie: the New York Times. Still, the story itself is not a big deal, just the usual nice clichés (boy, are we getting spoiled ...) and a guide for the traveler.

In Vancouver, Ski, Sail and Golf, in One Day

Vancouver, ranked second in quality of life behind Zurich among the world's cities in this year's annual survey by Mercer Human Resource Consulting, has a vibrant culture, an endless variety of restaurants and opportunities for adventure in the nearby mountains and Pacific Ocean.

The whole piece can be found at:

www.nytimes.com/2003/09/23/business/23grou.html?ntemail0

but you have to be a registered New York Times user. It's free and well worth doing (I still don't understand that economic model), providing you with access to one of the world's great newspapers.

A Toot from My Horn

The ** award-winning ** Plan Canada article -

THE VIEW FROM '56: Thoughts on the Short-Term Future of Transportation Planning

is now available on the web. Don Alexander was good enough to post it on the **New City** website (worth checking out on its own). It can be found at:

www.newcity.ca/Pages/price.html.

Or if you wish a Word copy, send me a request by 'Reply.'

Award-winning Lanes

Here's an idea that Vancouver might copy from Toronto: their **Architecture and Urban Design Awards**. A full-page spread in the Globe and Mail featured the winners, and you can find them at

www.city.toronto.on.ca/auda/2003/winners_2003.htm

The award for "Visions and Master Plans" went to the Faculty of Architecture, Landscape and Design at University of Toronto for:

Laneway Architecture and Urbanism

Professor Brigitte Shim (with Donald Chong) has taken the backlane house ... and asked her graduate students to imagine its larger implications for Toronto. The resulting study of laneway architecture and urbanism is exhaustive, inspiring and necessary if the city is serious about evolving its urban depth.

Vancouver, too, is a city of lanes, and this report sounds ideal for a CityPlan initiative.

Sidenote: The changing character of Canada's people is wonderfully illustrated by the names of the students who participated:

Steffanie Adams, Ali Abir, Kiran Chhiba, Laragh Halldorson, Jane Hutton, Al Kably, Adam Kanza, Selena Kwok, Christopher Routley, Kirsten Thomson, Seyedeh-zahra-de Yekrangian, Jingpi Zhuang, Karen Zwart-Hielema

Happy Anniversary

September 21 marked the official opening of the Stanley Park Seawall as we know it – that is, the construction of the last 5.5 km of the pedestrian/ cyclist pathway. (There's a plaque at Second Beach honouring the occasion.)

Can you guess what year that was? Russ Fraser was the Chair of the Park Board, if that helps.

Well, it was 1980.

We can't imagine Vancouver without the seawall, but we forget how recent its completion actually was - and what an impact it has had on our lives and arguably on our collective level of fitness. As the evidence mounts of rising obesity in our kids (not to mention our pets), the seawall is as much an investment in our health as in our parks.

Grades and Curves

The Chilco Interchange is finally open. Oh, some might call it an underpass, but it's much more than that.

It is definitely a major piece of engineering: three segregated paths have been provided at different heights for pedestrians, in-line skaters and cyclists. Each is smooth, wide and fast - curved and graded for each class of user.

It's a miniature freeway interchange for the motorless. Walkers, cyclists, bladders, runners, and babies in carriages will all coverage from seven different directions - brought together, sorted out, speeded up, and then disgorged in some other direction.

See for yourself at:

www.city.vancouver.bc.ca/engsvcs/streets/causeway

There's a problem, of course. All this human interaction, after being sorted out and speeded up, is dumped onto one narrow asphalt path with a yellow line down the middle and no instructions.

Apparently you just can't stop engineers from designing for speed (under the guise of safety), and the results can often be beautiful. In fact, the whole Causeway experience is now one of smoothly articulated curves and subtle grades that feed the drivers effortlessly onto the downtown grid.

Unfortunately, the traffic all comes to a crunch at the next signaled intersection. The underpass too is another exercise in overcapacity, and, like freeways, raises expectations beyond what can ultimately be satisfied unless the entire system is completely

rebuilt. God forbid we should try to rebuild the rest of the seawall to the standards of the Chilco Interchange.

I've been a strong advocate for a greater investment in bikeways, but I wonder sometimes whether we're succumbing to the same temptation to overbuild.

Threatening Clouds

Does this scare you:

www.nytimes.com/2003/09/22/international/americas/22CND-CLIM.html?tnmailto

Breakup of Ice Shelf Signals Climate Change, Scientists Say

What amazes me is how most of the leadership in North America is aggressively determined to ignore the issue of climate change. 'Record temperatures, forest fires, droughts and deaths – tragic, yes, but no proven connection to our generation of greenhouse gases. Therefore no need for action.'

Sure, it's a tough issue. It could mean uncomfortable changes in our comfortable way of life. But denial doesn't strike me as a good long-term strategy. And the long term seems to be getting closer by the day.

Back in 1990, the City undertook an initiative to deal with the implications of climate change. At the time, I thought the **Clouds of Change task force** might possibly be a decade ahead of itself. I was wrong. It's been practically a decade and a half now, and it still seems ahead of its times.

Comments, items and ideas always welcome. Want off the list?
Just let me know via 'Reply.'