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Holding Steady

Places, like lives, evolve; sometimes uncertainly, sometimes abruptly, sometimes to good ends, sometimes for naught.

Places, though, carry our lives within them. They give structure to where we spend our time, what and whom we encounter, how much sky we see, how much green surrounds us, and how tightly or freely we conceive the community. Places form an armature for the imagination.

Because they affect so many, places deserve our attention. We need to see to it that the pace and scale of change is set to an appropriate measure. The multiple interests that converge in location must be transformed into palpable, imaginable places, places that many can inhabit and care for. Then, when such places emerge and attract our affections, we must learn how to keep them.

We must learn to hold steady those ideas about places that nurture and sustain a viable sense of community. But holding steady does not mean standing still. It means charting a course with resolution and consistency. Neither does keeping places mean embalming them in a moment of time. Places are sturdier than that. Keeping places means making deliberate judgements about sizes and uses and the quality of the investments that are made; fusing energies of change with a steady vision of communal purpose and identity.

In this issue we trace the handing on of such a vision from generation to generation of civic leadership in St. Louis. We also listen to the musings of a group of professionals confronted with an industrial path through the landscape, a singular vision that no longer has a singular purpose; we look through the selective eyes of a photographer at the ravages of extractive landscapes; and we wonder how plants and animals can find their place in the midst of relentless development enterprise. More intimately, we see in the work of two artists an attempt to use natural and industrial processes to turn new attention to instants of time that highlight our presence in place.

—*Donlyn Lyndon*