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A Shift in Expectations

Sustainability has become a catch word of the times. It has been the motivating call for conferences, the theme for competitions, even the title for a President's Council on Sustainable Development. Happily so, we may hope, despite the recent elections, that this interest in sustainability reflects a genuine shift in expectations for the future.

That hope is buttressed by the scope of the dialogue that has been launched, by the extent to which the long-term and indirect consequences of environmental change are discussed in public policy and process, and by the questions now being posed by concerned citizens everywhere and within our schools and professional programs.

This issue of *Places* consists of articles submitted in response to our call for papers concerning sustainability. They address the creation and care of places that can support continued use and evolution, environments that can continue to be viable for our descendants.

The projects and processes we describe here are not millennial. They will not make our comforts secure in a future characterized by global increases in population, depletion of natural resources and changes in composition of the environment itself. Nor will they, by themselves, answer the justifiably

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widespread quest for an increased standard of living among those hundreds of millions of people who are less fortunate than our readers.

These articles do, however, show that there are good projects out there and real accomplishments that can implement the motivating words about sustainability and move us incrementally and with gathering speed towards constructive changes in the course of our common future.

Motivating words, after all, do create new realities; but not on their own. New realities emerge from the actions those words can provoke: intense dedication, patient reexamination, careful and imaginative exploration of how things fit together.

Much of that work lies before us. We need to trace relationships not previously noticed, forge patterns of attention that supersede convenient habits, and build with uncommon diligence. We need to engage the concerns of people who will steward their own resources and open new opportunities. We can begin now, as many have shown, to transform what we have into what those who follow us can sustain.

We need care now, informed care, for what our places shall become — for how the world will be.

— *Donlyn Lyndon*



The spartina marsh in Manteo, N.C., is both a sacred space for town residents and important for the ocean ecology. By setting aside the estuarine ecosystem and building in areas where development has less impact, Manteo is preserving for future generations the natural environment that surrounds the town and making itself more sustainable. (Jerry Blau)