

THE NEXT LONDON

Making 'places' key to our future

Paul Berton
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A successful city, it is often said, is a community of neighbourhoods. And successful neighbourhoods don't just happen.

That is what the "placemaking" exercise London has embarked upon is all about.

It asks whether our neighbourhoods are successful enough -- and the answer is they could be a lot better.

The placemaking exercise is all about changing the current culture; it's about a new way of thinking about planning, developing and living.

It can and should, if it gets enough support, change the way we view residential planning, finance developments and build subdivisions.

It doesn't need to cost more money, and developers around the country, and indeed in London, are enthusiastic about what is often called the new urbanism.

It's about making livable cities with successful, sustainable neighbourhoods. To that end, the placemaking exercise asks the following questions:



- Are we building walkable streets?
- Are we building great public spaces?
- Are we building communities for cars or people?
- Can people live in the same neighbourhood during different stages of their lives?
- Are we building civic pride?
- Are we building a beautiful city for the future?
- Will we attract a talented labour force in the future with our communities?
- Are we building healthy communities?
- Are we building sustainable, energy-efficient communities?
- Do our communities encourage enough social interaction?
- Are our communities distinctive, interesting, diverse and complete?

These are big questions and the answers are both simple and complex. With luck, London's placemaking exercise will answer them and plot a way forward for all of us.

It's all about creating neighbourhoods, communities, cities that will thrive centuries, not just decades, from now.

It's about building places to live -- forever.

Paul Berton is Sun Media National Comment Editor.

E-MAIL: paul.berton@sunmedia.ca