

Green city only good for the rich

WASTE-FREE, ENERGY-EFFICIENT, AND CARBON-neutral are all terms thrown about by environmentalists to describe ideal urban development, and the recently unveiled plans for Masdar City incorporate all of those buzzwords.

The community, planned for construction in Abu Dhabi, promises to include natural air circulation, a high-efficiency desalination plant, and an extensive public transit system that precludes the use of automobiles within city limits. It's being touted as being a shining example of man living in harmony with nature.

Why, then, is this proposed green city, designed by a renowned British firm, being built in one of the most desolate places on earth? Consider some of the United Arab Emirates' other megaprojects: historically, they haven't hesitated to give Mother Nature the finger when it comes to building yet another astoundingly expensive artificial island resort. And that's exactly why this city is being built where it is: the desire for rich oil tycoons to assuage their collective consciences and get on the hippest new trend of the 21st century.

Sustainable development is never carried out the way it ought to be, and while it's not sexy to talk about primary energy sources, chicks are more likely to dig you if you drive a hybrid.

In a similar vein, the Century Park community now under construction in the hole that once was Heritage Mall is sometimes cited as an example of environmentally conscious living. It's a great example of transit-oriented development, a definite step in the right direction—and it also stands in contrast to the clusterfuck that is the rest of south Edmonton.

The problem, then, is in the approach: Century Park is a luxury resort, with units selling in the half-million-dollar range. This isn't about living sustainably—it's about impressing one's friends.

Sustainable development isn't supposed to be only for the rich and only because it's sexy. It's about substituting our use of fossil fuels with renewables such as wind and solar with a minimum of societal change. Selling expensive condos to those with a poor grasp of such issues is a good way to make money and grab a spot on the evening news, but it does nothing to solve the problem in a meaningful way.

Masdar City promises to do it right: completely environmentally neutral development. Undoubtedly, it will be an impressive example of alternative energy technology and urban design. But that's also part of the problem: Masdar is, in spirit, much more of a planned community than it is a city—it's an example of precision engineering at a high price.

Designing a city from the ground up and incorporating an extensive public transit system is trivial. What's hard is incorporating sustainable technology into our lives as we live them now. With any luck, the technology and lessons from the giant science project that is Masdar will make their way into the real cities we live in.

As the plan stands right now, there are still many questions. Will Masdar be able to handle growth? Will it have vibrant entertainment and cultural districts? Cities are very much living things, growing naturally over time and developing a unique personality. The risk exists for Masdar to be a Frankenstein of sorts, meticulously constructed and shocked to life, but remaining in many senses dead, serving purely as a corporate hub with attached residences—on the opposite end of the spectrum from the work camps in Fort McMurray, but roughly the same idea. Not exactly good symbolism for our sustainable future.

MIKE OTTO
Photo Editor

Dirt off our shoulders

The dance-off was rigged.
CUP won't follow its own laws.
Fuck the Ubyssy.

PAUL OWEN
Managing Editor



CONAL PIERCE

LETTERS

Le deserves better, Mastel

We were very disappointed to read Jon Mastel's Opinion piece "Cutting Council seats will only serve to silence student voices" in the 17 January edition of the *Gateway*.

Jon frequently visits our office, reads our reports, and has even propped on Council, which would leave us to believe that he possesses a first-hand knowledge of the hard work that Chris Le has done this year. You can imagine our surprise when we read Jon's accusations that Chris does nothing more than make paperclip animals and supervise staff.

Chris has spearheaded initiatives regarding the University Health Centre, the ongoing implementation of the U-Pass, and Aramark food services on campus. Furthermore, he has effectively made a number of simple improvements, such as providing more microwaves for students.

Chris documents these activities on his exec page—is fact checking a little too much to expect in the pages of the *Gateway*? Jon took one sarcastic comment and used it to debase the hard work Chris has done on behalf of students all year.

Jon Mastel needs to do the right thing and issue an apology to Chris Le for the mischaracterization of Chris' comments and thereby his efforts as a member of our executive this year.

MICHAEL JANZ
SU President
STEVEN DOLLANSKY
VP (External)
EAMMON GAMBLE
VP (Operations & Finance)

VPSL much more than a simple paperclip artist

Mastel's criticism of reducing the size of Students' Council involved a series of personal assessments of several members of the SU Executive Committee. Being that I'm no longer a councillor and was not in attendance at this meeting, I don't purport to know the rationale for most of these comments and their relevancy to the issue at hand, but I do take exception to the attack on VP (Student Life) Chris Le.

The author claims that Le has admitted to doing nothing outside of major events but "make paperclip animals." I suspect that most individuals would realize that this is an attempt at humour, as opposed to a serious declaration. The author further insinuates that the role of VP (Student Life) involves nothing but overseeing the work of other staff. This is not only a drastic misrepresentation of the portfolio, but also a very poor assessment of the diligence with which Le approaches his work.

The Student Life portfolio is focused on improving the undergraduate student experience outside of the classroom, and involves some of the most relevant activities of the SU to its members. Le has been an active component of this executive's advocacy efforts, and is a strong representative of students on the numerous University councils and committees of which he is a member. He has helped to enhance the capacity of student services—most notably Student Group Services—by working toward the creation of the first-ever Student Group Summit. He has also

introduced a more practical element to solving some perennial resource shortages on campus—like microwaves.

Le is an extremely committed executive officer, and being that I highly value student life in my university experience, I feel that the SU and its membership have benefited from his serving in elected office. Come on, he even grew a moustache.

JUSTIN KEHOE
Science IV
VPSL 2005/06

More seats makes for a more democratic council

I'm glad to see that the *Gateway* has decided that the question of how many seats there are in Students' Council is an issue worth sharing with the student body.

Mr Mastel suggests "the number of councillors doesn't have any bearing on their efficiency or lack thereof." He goes on to suggest that these changes can only make the Executive stronger. With respect, I don't think either of those statements are accurate.

If the number of votes needed to support an executive decision drops from 22 to 17, so does the number of votes required to defeat it. Any councillor who disagrees need only convince 16 others (as opposed to 21) that they're correct. So councillors are made stronger also.

As for the lack of bearing on efficiency, organization behaviour studies have suggested that the net effectiveness of a deliberative body falls after the size of the body exceeds twelve.

Now, none of this is to say that the proposal is necessarily good. The Students' Council must ask itself whether there's a benefit to be gained from this that is sufficient to justify the loss in representation.

JASON MORRIS
Law I

Gateway sucker-punched mixed martial arts

As an avid fan of combat sports, I was perturbed to see the misinformation being peddled as fact by Derek Bates in his asinine commentary entitled "No art in mixed martial arts" (17 January). To put it bluntly, Mr Bates doesn't have a clue when it comes to mixed martial arts and has an overly romanticized view of boxing (also a subject which he demonstrates zero knowledge about).

In his criticism of MMA, Derek makes use of certain intangible buzz words such as dignity, tradition, honour, and respect. He insists that these are integral parts of classic combat sports and that MMA has removed these to produce a "ruthless bloodbath." Still, he fails to offer any explanation as to how the combination of striking and grappling martial arts has resulted in a loss of these so-called pillars of sport, or even provide any proof that this is actually the case.

Furthermore, he decries MMA as taking place in a "rule-free environment." That's an utter falsehood and demonstrates that the author has neither researched nor fact checked his poorly conceived article.

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