

## LETTERS

I was a Principal in the Landscape Architectural firm of Kiley Walker. Alistair Bevington—Architect Edward L. Barnes' former Partner—and I are very concerned about the fate of the Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception and its landscape. All too often the removal of a significant piece of the urban fabric is a drastic mistake in the continuum of the historic growth of our urban environment. The urban landscape is our greatest collective and cultural achievement.

The desire for the good life, at home, at work and opportunities for the pursuit of happiness, particularly for the enjoyment of the outdoors, have motivated people to come together and stay together. Such a sense of place is provided by the uniquely situated City of Burlington. The basic character of the "Queen City" derives from its site, at the edge of a historically important body of water. Consistent with its siting is the recognition of enhanced buildings and the provision of delightful outdoor spaces. Within the economic-political climate there must be a balance inclusive of the values of outdoor landscape spaces, established in an age of growth. The form of constructive environmental design cannot proceed by increasing development density at the expense of open space. The character of our age, the mood of urban life recognizes that an important, essential ingredient is that open landscape spaces be available and maintained, in the words of Olmsted, "for the enjoyment of scenery employs the mind without fatigue and yet exercises it; tranquilizes it and yet enlivens it."

The critical consideration, at this moment, is to save the Cathedral and its Park, from destruction by demolition or destruction by inappropriate development. Change in the use from the original function of the building does not necessitate its removal and the Townscape is enriched by retrofit, in which a building, having outlived its initial program is given new vitality. The Park can be retained as a simple retreat, open lawn, with places to sit under a canopy of mature trees.

There will be public debate about Cathedral/ Park and that should be encouraged, but the principle must be maintained that the City cannot afford the loss of this hallowed ground, a significant historical feature in the urban center of Downtown Burlington.

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