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FRANK PALERMO

The direction has always been clear: to make a difference through design. The starting points were obvious: a degree in Architecture from U of T, and in Urban Design from Harvard. The actual course of events can only be described as delightfully complex: filled with remarkable opportunities as well as the occasional distraction.

As a new architecture graduate, WZMH Architects provided an immediate testing ground for **Frank Palermo**. The 2 1/2 years in the large Toronto architecture firm were filled with challenging projects around the world, unreasonable deadlines and responsibility beyond the boundaries of comfort. It also led Frank to the realization that the city matters not just as the sum of its (architectural) parts, but also as a whole. Its streets, public spaces, organization, intensity, mix and quality constitute its life and spirit. In fact they serve as the context for individual buildings. Graduate school provided a break from the pace of practice and an opportunity for reflection.

Graduate studies in turn led to Calgary. Here Frank was charged with leading a team responsible for Calgary's new Downtown and Inner City Plans. The city was perceived as a land of opportunity in the midst of an oil boom. In this climate, planning, urban design and even architecture have to justify themselves every day. This is the world that free enterprise and the marketplace built. Still, after hundreds of small gatherings and large meetings, after open houses and debates, after appearances on local television and radio talk shows, and opening a storefront office, and after several years of intense work, thousands of Calgarians demonstrated their support for ideas, which continue to transform the city.

As the economic boom in Calgary subsided, Frank moved east and finally came to Halifax. TUNS provided an opportunity to be involved in teaching and practice, Architecture and Planning. For Frank these were natural extensions of his

interests and outlook, which sees the world as whole, interrelated and multifaceted. He served as Head of the Planning Department, Dean of the Faculty, Chairman of the City of Halifax Planning Advisory Committee, member of the National Capital Commission Advisory Committee on Planning and Design, and Director of a CIDA funded project in Brazil.

The Brazil project had many repercussions. In Brazil, at the Federal University of Viçosa, it led to the establishment of a new Department of Architecture and Planning, training programs for people working in municipal government and extensive outreach efforts by the University. In Canada, the project served as a catalyst for establishment of the Cities and Environment Unit. It is engaged in research/outreach efforts in Atlantic Canada and internationally. The unit is based on the premise that the university has a responsibility to help the larger community and to make a difference on the ground. It also supports the idea that research and teaching, action and reflection should happen together.

The Cities and Environment Unit has worked on a variety of projects including establishing an approach to tourism and community development in Canada and Brazil, school grounds improvement, community plans, and most recently a series of First Nations initiatives. The Unit has completed a First Nations Community Planning Model and is now engaged in working with 15 reserves throughout Atlantic Canada in providing training, developing pilot projects and increasing awareness of Planning.

Frank continues to serve as Director of the Unit, which has grown to employ up to 5 full time staff and up to 7 graduate students. The work has been recognized with a Canadian Institute of Planners (CIP) Award of Excellence (1996) and the CIP Award of Excellence Grand Prize (2001).

Frank can be contacted at <frank.palermo@dal.ca>.

