

Address

by

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at the

CAP Regional Meeting

Theme:

“Reshaping the Planning Agenda: Experience of Small Island States”

Accra Beach Hotel

Barbados

June 25, 2007

*“Reshaping the Planning Agenda: Experiences of Small Island States
-the Barbados Case”*

The National Strategic Plan of Barbados 2006 – 2025 envisages a Barbados that is a fully developed society. It promises a quality of life to our people, which is fully on par with the best anywhere in the world. It is a quality of life experience to be under-pinned by the protection, preservation and enhancement of our physical infrastructure, environment and our scarce resources. It demands that we find the right balance between our development and the preservation of our physical surroundings. It calls for adequate water and energy supplies, well-managed transport systems, development and maintenance of sound infrastructure. It implies adequate access to quality housing. It speaks of a Barbados that is a premier tourism centre with all the modern refinements, but which yet reflects the enduring beauty of the traditional Barbadian social and physical architecture. It speaks of a socio-economic circumstance in which the traditional character of agrarian innocence is not consumed by urban opulence. The planning process is critical to all of this.

The relevance and usefulness of this forum is underscored in the fact that, Physical Development Planning, in the context of the small state is not of the nature of incidental exercise. It is one of the imperative elements of first consideration. In this regard let me join with Mr. Gill in offering you, those who visit with us, a warm welcome to these shores and to this place. May I wish both you and those who are resident here, three days of highly successful discussions, with ultimately meaningful conclusions.

May those of you who visit with us make discovery of the greater Barbadian fare beyond the confines and precincts of the Accra Hotel.

Small Island Developing States

The common characteristics of small island states as identified in the relevant literature and which constitute the core of discussion in any forum on small island developing states issues include:

“limited natural resources and limited prospects for agricultural development and food security; vulnerability to natural hazards such as hurricanes, volcanic eruptions, earthquakes and climate extremes; fragility of ecosystems with potential for loss of biological diversity; risk of long term damage from rising sea levels associated with global warming and climate change; inappropriate tourism development, difficulty in retaining skilled human resources; extreme dependence on and vulnerability to external economic factors; and high costs of transport and communication.”

Barbados is subject to much of this typicality.

The Barbados Physical Development Plan reflects sensitivity to the peculiarities occasioned by our small state circumstances. There are some basic Planning Principles which serve as a foundation for the Barbados Physical Development Plan :

- A National development strategy which aims to minimize the negative environmental and social impacts of scattered urban development by concentrating new growth into a defined urban corridor.
- Protection of agricultural lands from incompatible urban development.

- Promotion of a strong, diversified economy through land use policies which encourage a wide variety of employment opportunities in mixed-use centers and corridors and in key employment areas in a variety of locations throughout the Island.
- Maintenance of Central Bridgetown as the National Centre and primary location for financial institutions, offices, shopping and other commercial activities.
- Promotion of the tourism industry by encouraging redevelopment and modernization of older beach front properties and providing opportunities for other visitor experiences in the National Park;
- Emphasis on the protection of the natural environment and cultural heritage resources;
- Establishment of criteria and guidelines for Environmental Impact Assessments.

Sectoral emphases

The Barbados Physical Development Plan 2003 applies critical planning emphasis to key sectors of our national development architecture.

Agriculture

- Within the agriculture designation, the Government is seeking to ensure that agricultural practices are appropriate, sustainable and designed to protect and preserve natural resources.
- The Government will promote increased food security through continued emphasis on crop diversification and the balance of domestic food production with selective importation .

- The Government will promote research and technology to minimize the impact of agricultural activity, notably the use of pesticides and herbicides and the nation's natural resources.
- Generally, the intrusion of urban land uses into agricultural areas is not to be encouraged. Redesignation of agricultural land to other purposes shall be by amendment to the Physical Development Plan.
- The land designated agricultural within the Urban Corridor must be protected, especially in instances where the lands have been irrigated and used for market gardening. The conversion of these lands from agricultural use should be subject to an Environmental Impact Assessment, which takes into account the public investment in irrigation.
- Non-arable land within the agricultural belt, such as plantation yards, sour-grass patches and areas of rock outcrop should be reserved for non-arable agriculture, such as agro-industry, the housing of livestock, equipment storage, even warehousing, and such like.
- Agricultural land use within the National Park shall seek to preserve the existing agricultural land base; encourage the adoption of more environmentally sustainable forms of agriculture; and ensure that new agriculture buildings are compatible with the visual and landscape objectives of the National park

Tourism

- Major beach-oriented hotel and tourism development is concentrated primarily along the south and west coasts. To supplement the ancillary sectors now located in these major developed areas it is Government's intention to facilitate the

development of similar ancillary services in the south-eastern region of Barbados.

- All new development and redevelopment in coastal tourism areas will be consistent with the policies of the Integrated Coastal Zone Management Plan.
- Proposals for development of new accommodation, resort facilities and other tourist-oriented uses, such as restaurants and stores will be subject to the following policies:
 - In tourist areas where community plans have not been undertaken, a traffic study which addresses the impacts of the proposal on the existing road system and the improvements necessary to accommodate the proposal;
 - Development or re-development of waterfront properties shall be designed to maintain and enhance views and public access to the beach and water;
 - Development or redevelopment proposals should incorporate measures to improve the pedestrian environment along the frontages of their properties, including the provision of sidewalks, screening from parking areas and appropriate lighting.

Golf Development

Golf course development is a major reality of tourism centres in the developing country context. Their related land use includes naturally bars, residences, retail shops, club houses and restaurants. In order to minimize the potential for negative impact the Barbados Government mandates that proposals for any such development are subject to an Environmental Impact Assessment which addresses issues of water

supply, sewerage, natural heritage, soil stability, agricultural impact, financial impact.

Golf course development will not be permitted:

- In areas where its presence may impede surrounding agricultural operations
- In Zone-1 Water Protection Areas
- On erosion-prone soils where the proposal would add to the existing soil instability problem
- In natural heritage conservation areas and other areas containing sensitive environmental features and ecological habitats.

Preserving our Heritage

The Barbados Government places great premium on our heritage assets. That value is to be assessed in both tangible and intangible terms. It is to be appreciated both in terms of its historical educational value and its economic value. The greater Bridgetown area which includes Bridgetown and the historic Garrison area constitute one of Barbados' premier heritage sites. The process of modernization and physical development of this area must be necessarily the subject of careful planning scrutiny.

Perhaps some greater appreciation for this position may be excited by a brief excursion into history. The first major settlement by colonizers in Bridgetown may be traced back to the year 1628. Settlers financed by the Earl of Carlisle had established this settlement (on July 25) to stake a rival claim to that established at Jamestown (Holetown) by colonists representing the Earl of Pembroke.

The Carlisle settlement appears to have been located by the mouth of the 'Constitution River'. The name Bridgetown is derived from 17th century usage which refers to the town, variously, as 'the Bridge', 'the Indian Bridge' or 'the Indian Bridgetown'. It was also called St. Michael's town after the parish in which it was situated.

The importance of historic Bridgetown is also reflected in its population growth. By 1712 Bridgetown's population was some 10,641 which compared with Boston (9,500) Philadelphia (6,500) and New York (5,700). This population included enslaved Africans who had become the chief labour force. Indeed, the data show that a major portion of the slave trade from Africa to the English New World passed through Bridgetown. Perhaps, the port's place as a communication centre recommended it to slave traders as a place to gather the latest intelligence on market prices in the region.

Bridgetown as one of the earliest English ports in the West Indies reached a landmark anniversary of 375 years in July 2003. Founded in 1628 it grew to become the capital of the island and the most important town in the hemisphere for the British crown in the 17th century. It was the entrepot not only for goods and slaves for Barbados, but was the trans-shipment port for enslaved persons sent to South America. Its location coupled with its economic importance meant that the island became the Headquarters for the British Army until 1905 and Navy until 1805 in the eastern Caribbean. During all of this Bridgetown continued to grow.

Its outstanding universal value resides in its history and built environment, as noted by many historians, including Welch, "Barbados was the jewel in the crown" and as such shone its influence in the region as a legislative, economic and communication hub. The landscape and built environment of Bridgetown and its Garrison denotes a legacy and influence in the region and the Americas, and its importance cannot be

understated for it was the centre of the Trans Atlantic Economic Complex in an earlier age.

The preserved built landscape and its surrounding cultural landscape is witness to 300 years of change and adaptation in an urban context. Its Garrison area is one of only three such areas in the world and the only one in the Western Hemisphere. The “screw dock” the last of its kind in the world and its synagogue site the second oldest in the western hemisphere. This historic area represents human settlement and craft in the production and modification of buildings in a city that was the model of the Trans Atlantic economy.

The development of the town and its infrastructure has remained at the forefront of colonial architecture and is a wonderful example of the confluences of European and African architecture and engineering.

A town and port of 375 years, telling the story of the development of the most important regional centre in the Eastern Caribbean for shipping, commerce and military activity.

A rich collection of urban architecture and city scapes, surrounding a strategic waterway, where an Amerindian bridge determined the site chosen by the early settlers, and where a large national harbour (Carlisle Bay) provided an ideal merchant and naval centre.

Bridgetown’s story is that of the architecture and the culture of the model Caribbean plantation society “medieval” and 17th century Dutch influences, through classic/Caribbean Georgian, unique “Caribbean” gothic parliament buildings, houses of worship and unique Barbadian urban dwellings and sugar warehouses.

The associated Garrison and fortifications which protected the city and port of Bridgetown; from the early Charles fort and James fort on the Bay, to the fortified citadel of St. Ann’s Fort, multiple barracks in grand

Georgian style, cannon collection etc. the whole constituting the finest Garrison in the Caribbean

Physical Infrastructure and Preserving the Environment

The Barbadian economy is a coastal economy and as such it is subject to all the vulnerabilities associated with small island state context. I quote from the Conference Declaration of the Small Islands Developing States Conference in Barbados 1994.

“SIDS are especially vulnerable to climate change and sea-level rise because their populations, agricultural land and infrastructure tend to be concentrated in coastal zones. Sea level rise will inundate many low -lying coastal areas which will result in loss of agriculture land (a major concern since agriculture is a primary source of income in many SIDS), loss of exclusive economic zone and thereby a reduction in resource base, and the intrusion of salt water which would (negatively) impact groundwater development activities. The negative impact climate change and sea level rise will have on the tourism industry will be significant and many SIDS will suffer massive losses of both revenue and employment opportunities.”

The fragility of that coastal environment faces the obvious threat of both natural disaster and human induced damage. Planning policies must take careful cognizance of that fragility and those threats. It is Government’s intention to:

- Promote an expanded and more aggressive programme to protect and preserve our coastline

- Ensure effective conservation and enhancement of the island's coastal and marine eco-system and living resources

Government also has adopted clear policy postures with reference to the onshore environment. These include a green economy policy intended to facilitate the development of green and open spaces throughout the island.

It is also Government's intention to establish and strengthen appropriate administrative and legislative regimes to support national environmental management objectives while safeguarding and exploiting its essential resources. It has established a programme for the augmentation of the water supply to adequately accommodate the needs of domestic and commercial users and for irrigation purposes. It will review the existing groundwater protection zoning system to ensure long-term sustainability. It is pursuing the opportunity of offshore oil production by taking advantage of our extended ocean resources. It is seeking to diversify our energy mix to reduce the impact of world oil prices and vulnerabilities associated with supply.

In terms of built infrastructure it is continuing the construction and expansion of major modern roadways. It is developing a modern disaster management system with an appropriate legislative and technological framework. It intends to develop and enforce a comprehensive National Building Code.

Planning and Poverty Alleviation

Infrastructural environmental and heritage considerations are not the only variables in policy calculation. With respect to planning control and development Government is of the view that such policies must adopt a pro-poor posture. Development planning must not be a mechanism through which is created such societal dichotomy as would negate socio-economic gains as would otherwise have been facilitated by prudent utilization of the planning process. Barbadian tradition

reflects, to a large degree, mixed development. In as far as is practicable this is to be encouraged by the planning process.

In addition Government's socio-economic policies provide a framework for development which makes particular reference to the poor. Government is:

- Encouraging the sale of tenancies in the urban area to qualified tenants.
- Declaring community improvement areas, based on the existence of tenancies and on poor housing conditions, within which specified incentive packages will be implemented.
- Promoting the programme of renewal of the physical environment of those city districts that have suffered the greatest degradation.
- Promoting the re-use of vacant residential lots and vacant residences.
- Executing a programme of drainage improvement and up grading in the inner urban area.
- Promoting the improvement of private rental accommodation through a programme of incentives for specified structural improvements, while at the same time, recognizing the rights of the landlord and the tenant.

Further, Prime Minister Arthur in his Economic and Financial Policies statement of March 14th 2007 has proposed to address the housing and land challenge through a combination of policies and programmes. At the very foundation of the Physical Development Plan 2003 was its stated goal:

“ Provide adequate amounts of land in suitable locations to meet the demand for new housing and to provide opportunities to develop a broad range of housing types, prices and tenures to meet the needs of residents, thereby enhancing the opportunities for adequate housing as well as opportunities for home ownership.”

The Town and Country Planning Act, Cap 240 will be amended in order to empower the planning system to make provision for affordable housing through planning policy. The policy will be in the form of amended legislation which allows the Minister or the Chief Town Planner to enter into planning obligations.

The new policy is similar to the Section 106 Agreements used in the United Kingdom and among other things, will set out a requirement for the provision of an element of affordable housing in residential developments or mixed-use developments which have a residential component. It is proposed that developers who provide the “turn key” solutions will be required to ensure that a minimum of 25 percent of all completed units are dedicated to affordable housing. Those developers who provide “land only” will also be required to allocate a minimum of 25 percent to the total lots for affordable housing. Affordable housing will be land size of 400 square metres and under, and a combined house and land value of \$150,000 or less.

This approach will mandate developers, especially those providing upscale and luxury housing, to invest in the provision of low cost – affordable housing - as a condition for the grant of planning approval. This measure will aid significantly in meeting the high demand for low income housing.

Conclusion

Ladies and Gentlemen, Sustainable Development, as the World Commission on Environment defined it in 1987 is :

“that which meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of the future generations to meet their needs”. “Sustainable Development is a process in which economic, finance, trade, energy, agriculture and all other policies are designed to bring about development that is economically, socially and environmentally sustainable”

The Barbados Declaration on Small Island Developing States recognized the imperatives of pursuing sustainable development while preserving cultural heritage which is a country’s most valuable asset and raising the standard of living of its citizens.

In a small size context scarcity of land will constitute an issue of some significance in relation to the economic development agenda of any developing state. The fact is there is an opportunity cost in all land use decisions and trade-offs will occur with respect to competing sectors. The Barbados Government is firmly of the view that land must be put to its best economic use all factors considered. This in no way is to suggest that the land must fetch its highest price. These are two distinctly different variables .

Planning which is prudent and practicable makes the connection between people, economic opportunity and the environment. It is conscious of the force of modern market impulse. It should yield to that impulse when enhancement of the quality of life of a people is its likely outcome. It must resist those market forces when their impulse is likely to result in detriment to a people, their heritage or their environment.