

The PLANNING OF A CITY

The keen sense of awareness one feels as soon as the aircraft door opens at Freeport International Airport is the pioneer atmosphere that pervades this sprawling Grand Bahama City.

Here the executives of the Grand Bahama Port Authority — the men like Wallace Groves who had the dream and the astute aides who toil well past five o'clock every evening in Port Authority headquarters — have been able to build up a community from scratch.

Stimulating architectural treatments for buildings like the championship golf course's clubhouse are making this a city like no other — one which has captured what Town Planner Peter Barratt describes as "The Spirit of Place."

Formerly associated with the Freeport office of the renowned American firm of city planners Harland Bartholemew and Associates, English-born Mr. Barratt since has become an employee of the Grand Bahama Port Authority and is responsible for putting the bold concepts of the investors into a harmonious and appropriate pattern.

Whether he gives critical examination to signs for a new skeet club, appraises the colour and symmetry of a spectacular new casino to be built on Ranfurly Circus, or jots down notes with regards to Port Authority plans for re-development of the downtown area, this idealist who came to the Bahamas by way of Canada always bears in mind his ultimate aim — to help create a city which though cosmopolitan in population is nevertheless Bahamian in overall feeling.

Standing up from his desk to look across the office balcony and over the central commercial area. Barratt elaborated: "What I think we should do is make Freeport Bahamian . . . It has to be a modern Bahamian because this is a modern city.



TOWN PLANNER PETER BARRATT
... *Discovering "The Spirit of Place"*

—Roy Newbold, Jr.

"History is an unmarketable product; you cannot buy it. This does not mean, however, that we have not a lot to learn from Bahamian tradition."

It was about a year ago when I first met him that Peter Barratt first mentioned his planning philosophy. At that time he said: "I'm particularly conscious of the need for architecture to be appropriate to its setting. We should, in short, invoke the spirit of place."

In one of several addresses he has given to the people settling at Grand Bahama, Mr. Barratt advised: "We must create a community which is appropriate to the Island of Grand Bahama, which should not lack for imagination and design, and yet it should also be a pleasant relaxing place to live."

The only inland city of consequence in the Bahamas, Freeport has been designed from the outset — when Jan Porel, an American, created the road plan and the commercial heart was fixed — to the best advantage of the

investor, whether shipping king or the owner of one building lot. Land which could have been valueless has been greatly enhanced.

Delighted with the enthusiasm shown by Kiwanis and Rotary in their support of the town planners—Kiwanis is undertaking a major landscaping project and Rotary is concentrating in amenities for youth — Mr. Barratt is engrossed at present with the plans his employers, the creators of Freeport, have for re-vamping the exploding downtown section — an amalgam of modern shops, offices, restaurants and imposing financial institutions.

Plans for the foreseeable future call for a three-block-long area incorporating a major cultural centre, bachelor accommodations, new shops, a parade ground with a battery of flagpoles, sensitive indigenous landscaping, a new multiple-story building for the city's administrative offices, the whole area devoted to the pedestrian "to create vitality in the downtown area which you have in an Italian piazza and which we could emulate here."