



THE PLANNING  
AWARENESS CLUB  
OF EASTERN

### Special points of interest:

- Showcasing student, alumni, faculty and other compositions
- 100% student produced
- Dedicated to diffusing information, innovation and inspiration

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# The Journal of PLACE

Volume One Issue One

February 2004

## Our Vision

It is with great pleasure and excitement that The Planning Awareness Club of Eastern welcomes you to the premier and introductory issue of our monthly publication, *The Journal of PLACE*. A significant piece of literature should have its own distinctive characteristics; qualities that separate it from other work and endow it with that sought-after element of uniqueness. This Journal will attempt to be unique inasmuch as (and this is perhaps with a bit of urgency) we will work to inspire you. This is the simple yet essential source through which all branches of our Journal will grow. We want to stimulate your minds. We want to remind you incessantly of the passion that first begot you seeking the art which infuses our urban spaces. It is deceptively simple to forget the foundation which our conceptual knowledge is built upon: that

momentously abstract mental event termed inspiration. Through student, alumni, faculty and other commentaries, theoretical and temporal articles and interesting news ranging in origin from our own back yard to the other side of the world, we will serve as a medium through which you can be reminded, however subtly or profoundly, of the essence and perennial mystery of what we have created: the spaces through which thrive the Human Community.

This Journal wishes to put significant emphasis on presenting writings from students, alumni, faculty and others to our readers. We strongly encourage anyone who would like their papers to be seen by a large, focused Planning audience to submit their writings to the PLACE Journal Staff ([placejournal@sbcglobal.net](mailto:placejournal@sbcglobal.net)) in order to be included in an upcoming Journal publication. We



are offering a medium through which people can have their compositions read on a large scale.

## In This Issue

Our introductory issue features commentaries from a student and an alumni, Andrew Armbruster and Rodney C. Nanny, respectively. Mr. Armbruster explores the apparent paradox of Tokyo's urban-philosophical ideal of 'permanence through impermanence', and Mr. Nanny introduces an intriguing concept outlining a technique for the

reinvention of traditional zoning, identified as "place zoning". We also present you with information concerning this month's PLACE Events, a preview of the contents of next month's Journal, a breakdown of PLACE and the Planning Programs three primary mediums of information display, information on how to apply for the PLACE (Robert M.

Ward Endowed) Scholarship, and more. You should thoroughly enjoy the following pages...

## Student Composition: “The Fundamental Impermanence of Japanese Urban Space: Metropolitan Tokyo”

By Andrew Armbruster  
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### Introduction

The Kanto Region of Japan, which is host to the largest metropolitan area on Earth, is uniquely built. To the same degree and perhaps to a more startling degree, it is also uniquely maintained. The Tokyo urban structure is so complex that to present an adequate breakdown of its myriad layers would require the binding of a doctoral thesis. However, the scope of this paper will not explore the physical structure of Tokyo but rather how it can exist. Tokyo is built to be continuously and mercilessly rebuilt, in fashions that almost never correspond to one another. Considering this how can Tokyo as an urban whole survive, let alone be successful?

### Urban Impermanence

This continuous renewal of physical space amounts to a philosophy in the Japanese culture that is fundamental to their traditional structure of beliefs. Impermanence as a continual state of physical inconstancy and mutability, or *Mujo*, underlies the state of the Japanese cultural mind, and it serves as a medium through which Japanese cities exist. Still, what are the ingredients of such a philosophy, and how can it permit an urban space to function when it is the polar opposite of every proven European system?

*Andrew Armbruster is an undergraduate Planning student at Eastern Michigan University. Japanese urban space provides particular intrigue to Mr. Armbruster in part, he says, because he likes to observe the interaction between western elements and ancient eastern philosophical principles. Mr. Armbruster will present this paper at this year's Undergraduate Symposium.*

That is to say, their urban landscape changes not so much in space as in time. The Japanese feel a persistent need to be surrounded by novel physical forms and an almost culturally intrinsic need to replace ‘outdated’ structures. They are perpetually migrating to the ‘here and now’, and one of their mediums of transportation is their urban space. The Japanese seem to design their buildings and urban

spaces to last not for epochs but rather decades. This philosophy attempts to realize the concept of ideal functionality through novelty and a practical design created for the needs of the current generation. Adaptive reuse has no effective application in the Japanese urban landscape.

### The Causal Foundations

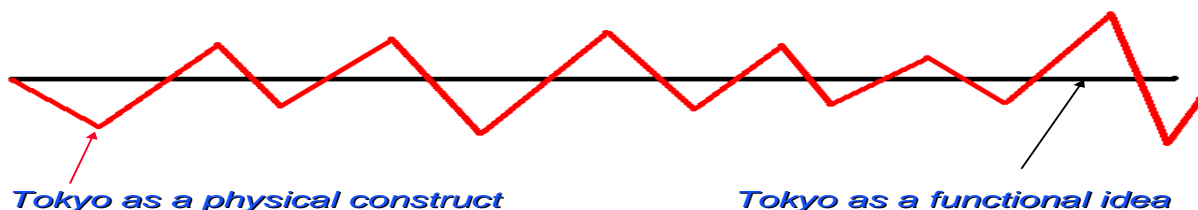
One can trace fairly well the foundations of this unique philosophy, which stems from such causes as cultural importation, geographical constraints, and a history of natural disaster. However, other cultures around the world have experienced similar mixes of unmanageable and uncontrollable circumstances, yet they have not produced a philosophical product akin to that of the Japanese.

The reason for this anomaly is primarily that of the pre-existing, anterior components that amalgamate with these aforementioned factors. The Japanese have their exclusive culture that affects the results of the introduction of all other exterior influences. In their socio-cultural tapestry the Japanese practice, as they have always practiced, the art of subtlety, the contemplation of the macrocosmic scope of nature and its relation to its microscopic components (in whatever form it takes as it has evolved through history), and a deep appreciation of the balance that comes from the mixture of two extremes. One can trace the product of impermanence in Japanese culture in part to this unique combination of foundational cultural characteristics.

### An Explanation of the Unique Japanese Philosophy of Mujo: Root Culture

The cultures of today have been weaved by enormously intricate layers of the evolution of a smaller number of root cultures. The Japanese culture began in its earliest forms alone and, as has any other given culture, it built certain archetypal algorithms and semi-axiomatic beliefs. Through time this culture has built upon itself, both in enhancements, completely new ideas, and, later, (not building upon itself but now rather enhancing or degrading itself) through the diffusion of other cultures. Each of the world's root cultures is completely unique, and the extent and influence of this root culture is in direct proportion to its existence in isolation from external cultures. In another context of cultural influence, the physical geography of the Kanto Region has forced the Japanese to periodically

### Flux and Stability through Time



## Student Composition: "The Fundamental Impermanence of Japanese Urban Space: Metropolitan Tokyo" ...continued

rebuild their cities. However, this in itself does not lead to the sure existence of the current Japanese mindset of permanence through novelty and a functional balance through the interplay of nature and asymmetry. In other words, the Japanese were not forced by their calamitic geographical position to incorporate the philosophy of *Mujo* into their urban space. One cannot prepare a fine cuisine utilizing only one ingredient, however crucial that ingredient may be.

### The City as an Idea

The Tokyoites believe their city to be a conceptual structure that is almost axiomatic, and in doing so (when viewing this concept in its purest form) they have built a completely unique definition of the concept of "City". In the ideal philosophical sense, it is not necessarily the physical structures that the Japanese see around them that they call Tokyo, as much as it is Tokyo, the Idea. Something lives

...Just as Le  
Corbusier thought  
Paris would  
remain an  
axiomatic center  
because he believed  
that the Idea of the  
city could survive  
physical  
transformation."

until it exceeds the moment, and then it is replaced by something else. But the idea that these physical structures occupy never exceeds the moment because they exist exclusively there. Something that is not physical is gifted with the ability to be eternal by embracing and intentionally succumbing to its very transience. This is how the Japanese view their cities, and as a consequence it is in fact how those cities exist.

### A City at All?

At one point the question must arise: Can one even call Tokyo a city? We in the western world tend to think of the concept of 'City' as a

permanent physical construct, both in space and time. With this essence there must exist a sort of rigidity, in some qualitative degree, in how the construct responds to physical, social and economic change. If the strain is too powerful for the rigid form, the form fails. One might also think of Tokyo outside the normal limitations of the concept of 'City'. It is an organism that has evolved to respond to the moment.

### A City or a Metamorphic Organism?

How can Tokyo succeed if her composition is always changing? An underlying principle to this theory of the relationship between Tokyo and impermanence is the fact that, in definition and in practice, Tokyo as an idea has remained essentially the same. That is to say, the role of Tokyo as the vital center of a metropolis has remained

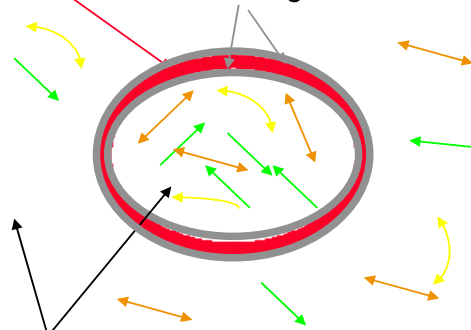
constant. Tokyo remains the same in idea because the city is, as all cities are, a product of the culture of their population. Tokyo exists in a metaphysical (used in the linear sense, *more-than-physical*) construct in the minds of her people, and it is a construct that remains constant because certain aspects of the Fundamental Culture of the Japanese requires it to be constant.

The fundamental goal is to produce a balance between purpose and chaos, linked in perpetuity to the transience of all things. The metropolitan area of Tokyo is essentially this: impermanent and thus experimental chaos that retains function, creating a balance and producing a laboratory (The idea of Tokyo, which manifestly remains constant) within which an infinite number of experiments in novelty and function (the physical structure) are taking place.

### Conclusion: An Archetype of Static Fluctuation

Tokyo exists in the form of a successful yet ever mutating physical construct while maintaining a harmonic and absolute metaphysical state. Concluding from this, the Tokyo metropolitan region could be termed an *archetype of static fluctuation*. The archetype is a permanent quintessence, an original model of the axiom of *mujo=kawaranai*, or 'impermanence=permanence'. The paradoxical *static fluctuation* is the embodiment of a philosophy (impermanence is permanence) that allows its physical particulars to change as they will (physical impermanence), as long as those particulars always conform to the same end, which is the permanent vitality of Tokyo.

The Archetype: Perpetual Center/Tokyo  
Ideological Permanence



The fluctuation that in the end effects stability

"Tokyo + Axiomatic Vitality + Physical Impermanence = Ideological Permanence"  
An attempt to diagrammatically interpret the idea of "impermanence equals permanence". In this context physical instability ensures the stability of the metaphysical idea it represents.

## Alumni Commentary: “Zoning Without Boundaries”

By Rodney C. Nanney, AICP  
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A key objective of community planning is the building of healthy, vibrant, and distinctive communities. Zoning ordinances are one of the more important ‘tools’ in the planning toolbox to achieve this objective. Zoning is a widely accepted land use control, but for some planners the traditional zoning ordinance is a dysfunctional community-building tool. At the beginning of the 21st Century, it’s time to reinvent zoning as a flexible tool for preserving rural areas, providing for a human-scale environment, and accommodating a healthy mix of land uses in the community. This article introduces the concept of “place zoning,” which is zoning without boundaries, allowing a community to change, grow, and re-invent itself over time.

### Traditional Zoning

The core principle underlying traditional zoning is that the solution to all land use problems is spatial; through segregation of land uses into large single-use zones with wide setbacks and extensive land use “buffers.” The result is that compatible living, working, shopping, recreating, and worshiping activities are often widely separated, forcing people into cars and inhibiting face-to-face contact.

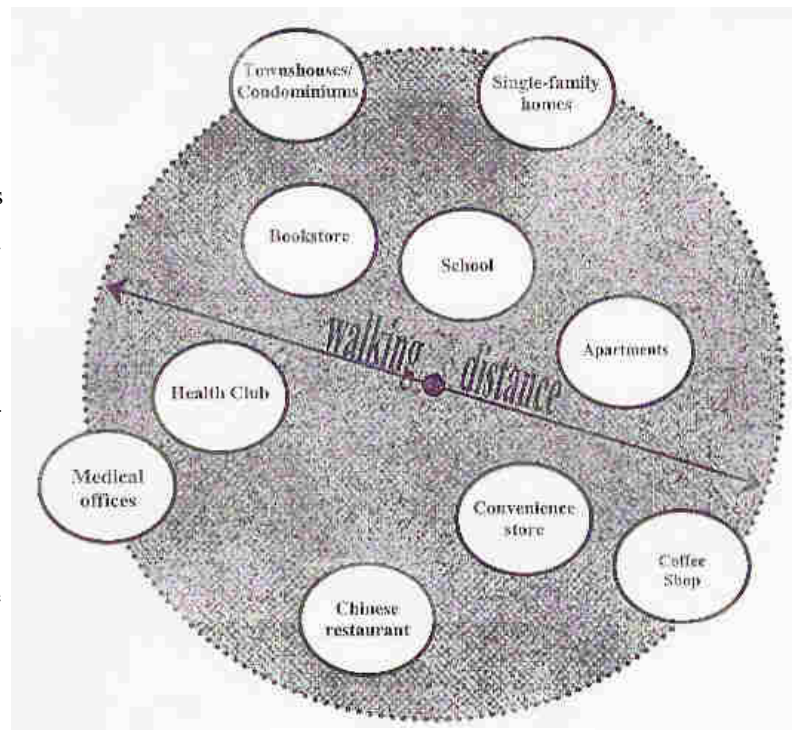
Proximity, association, and accessibility between uses of land are essential factors in building places with a strong sense of community. Single-use zoning districts, wide setbacks, and segregation of compatible land uses tend to reinforce an inflexible and unhealthy development pattern. The nature of where we live and work affects our sense of self, how we interact with other people, and even our ability to function as citizens in a democracy. In *A Pattern Language*, Christopher Alexander advocates for a comprehensive change in the nature of zoning, where:

- Every home is within 20-30-minutes of many hundreds of workplaces,
- Many workplaces are within walking distance of children and families,
- Workers can go home casually for lunch, run errands, work half-time, and spend half the day at home,
- Some workplaces are in homes; there are many opportunities for people to work from their homes or to take work home, and
- Neighborhoods are protected from the traffic and noise generated by "noxious" workplaces.

To accomplish this, planners must seek to change the heart of zoning, which is the separation of uses into zoning districts.

### Associated Uses

The growing popularity of “traditional neighborhood developments (TND)” and “smart growth” ideas reinforce the urgent need to improve our local land use controls. Traditional zoning threatens the future of our communities by promoting isolation and segregation of individuals and neighborhoods. The core principle of place zoning is the concept of building communities through proximity, association, and accessibility between land uses. Under place zoning, single-use zoning districts are replaced with a requirement that new uses be located near compatible “associated uses.” Associated uses are those uses that complement, support and provide benefits or services to other compatible uses in the community. When combined and interconnected in close proximity, associated uses form the essential building blocks of community life.



*An example of associated uses.*

**Alumni Commentary:**  
**“Zoning Without Boundaries” ...continued**

**Opposing Uses**

Zoning was originally established to primarily segregate and control certain undesirable land uses, including industrial uses that emit odors, dust or smoke, or are sources of noise, air or water pollution. Zoning evolved after World War II to embrace segregation of virtually all uses from one another. At the same time, industrial processes were improving so that, today, many “industrial” uses are clean, quiet and compatible with other community-building uses. Place zoning defines as “opposing uses” those few uses that cannot be placed in close proximity due to health, safety or welfare concerns.

Examples of opposing uses include steel mills (noise, air and water pollution), trucking terminals (outdoor storage, truck traffic, noise and light pollution), sexually-oriented businesses (crime, immoral behavior), airports (noise) and intensive livestock operations (odor, insects, water pollution). Under place zoning, opposing uses are required to be set back a minimum safe distance from other uses that would be impacted by the opposing use.

**Where do we go from here?**

Place zoning is a community-building zoning tool that complements community design strategies like traditional neighborhood development and smart growth. Built upon the foundations of such past zoning innovations as performance zoning and planned developments, place zoning provides a framework for testing the concept of zoning without boundaries. Like traditional zoning, place zoning can be customized to the specific needs of rural, suburban, and urban communities. It’s time for planners to reinvent zoning for the 21st Century; to mold it into a tool for building healthy communities. After all, under traditional zoning, our communities may have no future.

*Rodney C. Nanney is a professional planner in Michigan and author of the “Zoning Basics” column for the Michigan Planner magazine. He is a graduate of Eastern Michigan University, with a Master’s Degree in geography and urban and regional planning, and a Bachelor’s Degree in earth science and historic preservation.*

## Our Three Mediums of Information

PLACE and the Urban and Regional Planning Program at Eastern Michigan University are further integrating and connecting their three primary mediums of information. The website, this Journal and the bulletin board in Strong Hall are serving more and more as a powerful interface between PLACE, the Urban and Regional Planning program, and those interested in wanting to be a part of its ever-developing structure. Each channel compliments the others; they do not try to replace or reproduce each other.



The PLACE Bulletin Board in Strong Hall was recently redesigned in order to enhance the image of the club through the use of attractive and visually powerful media.

### Our Three Mediums of Information

For years EMU's Urban and Regional Planning Program website has been the primary diffuser of Planning Program information, including event news, alumni updates, student information and much more. It always contains up-to-date information and it includes a page for PLACE. For the most up-to-date information about PLACE, the Planning program, and all events, please visit the site often at <http://planning.emich.edu>

### The PLACE Bulletin Board

Our recently renovated bulletin board is an exemplified combination of organization and minimalism. We feel that such a combination allows for a powerful attention-getter, allowing us in effect to 'direct' the eye to certain areas of the board in order of their importance. But don't take our word for it; please visit the southern corridor of Strong Hall to see for yourself!

### The Journal of PLACE

With the introduction of The Journal of PLACE, a key component is added to this existing network of information conduits. With every month our subscriber base will build, and *The Journal of PLACE* will be a legacy for all future members of this student club. It all begins with us, right here, right now.

*“These three mediums of information are a powerful interface between PLACE, the Urban and Regional Planning Program, and those wanting to be a part of its ever-developing structure”*

## WebPolis Topic Web Pages

We welcome you to visit the Topic Web Pages of the WebPolis Consortium project, where you will find many web pages created by graduate Planning students here at Eastern Michigan University, including PLACE President Devany Donigan's page about the conceptual Aerotropolis projects. You can see it all here: <http://webpolis.info> > Take a Look > Search

## Inside Next Months Issue

Next month you can look forward to a student as well as a faculty commentary, the introduction of our monthly “Exploring Our Ideal Cities” piece, the introduction of our monthly poll, as well as other articles now in development that we will reserve disclosure until the issues release date. After all, we must keep some secrets so that your imagination can keep you guessing!

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The Planning  
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Eastern



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Club of Eastern

### A Note About PLACE

**PLACE** is a 100 % student-led organization. Leadership and membership change from year to year with students graduating and new students arriving. Therefore, the goals and objectives of the organization change annually. This provides members with a unique opportunity to become involved in an organization that regularly encourages and welcomes new ideas and change. The mission of **PLACE** 2003-2004 is to provide its members with opportunities for personal and professional growth through special events, conference and workshop attendance, fieldtrips, networking, scholarships, and a medium (this Journal) through which their opinions and passions can be stated and respected.

### The Officers of PLACE



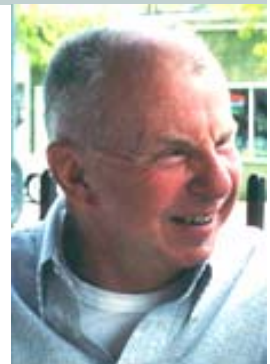
From left to right: **Bonnie Wessler**, *Treasurer*; **Andre Stone**, *Vice President*; **Devany Donigan**, *President*; **Andrew Armbruster**, *Director of Marketing*

### Contributions Welcome

Long-time faculty member Rocky Ward was recently honored at his retirement party with notice of the renaming of the Planning Program Scholarship Fund as the Robert M. Ward Endowed Scholarship. In response, he gave a significant personal contribution to the fund.

Would you like to honor Rocky by also giving a contribution? Because we didn't hold the golf outing this year, the fund's new contributions are down and the number of scholarships for the coming year may need to be cut back. Help restore the fund by making a tax-deductible contribution of any amount.

Send your contribution to the EMU Foundation, 1349 S. Huron Street, Ypsilanti, MI 48197. Indicate it is for the Urban and Regional Planning Program (Robert M. Ward) Endowed Scholarship and put the Account No. R28750 on the check. Or contact Norm Tyler at [ntyler@emich.edu](mailto:ntyler@emich.edu) for further details.



**Robert M. Ward** founded the Planning program at Eastern Michigan University

### The PLACE Scholarship

Need Money? You've come to the right PLACE!

Each year PLACE gives scholarship awards to qualified students in the Urban and Regional Planning Program. The next issue of The Journal of PLACE will contain information on how to apply for a PLACE Scholarship. Information will also be posted on the bulletin board and on the planning website.