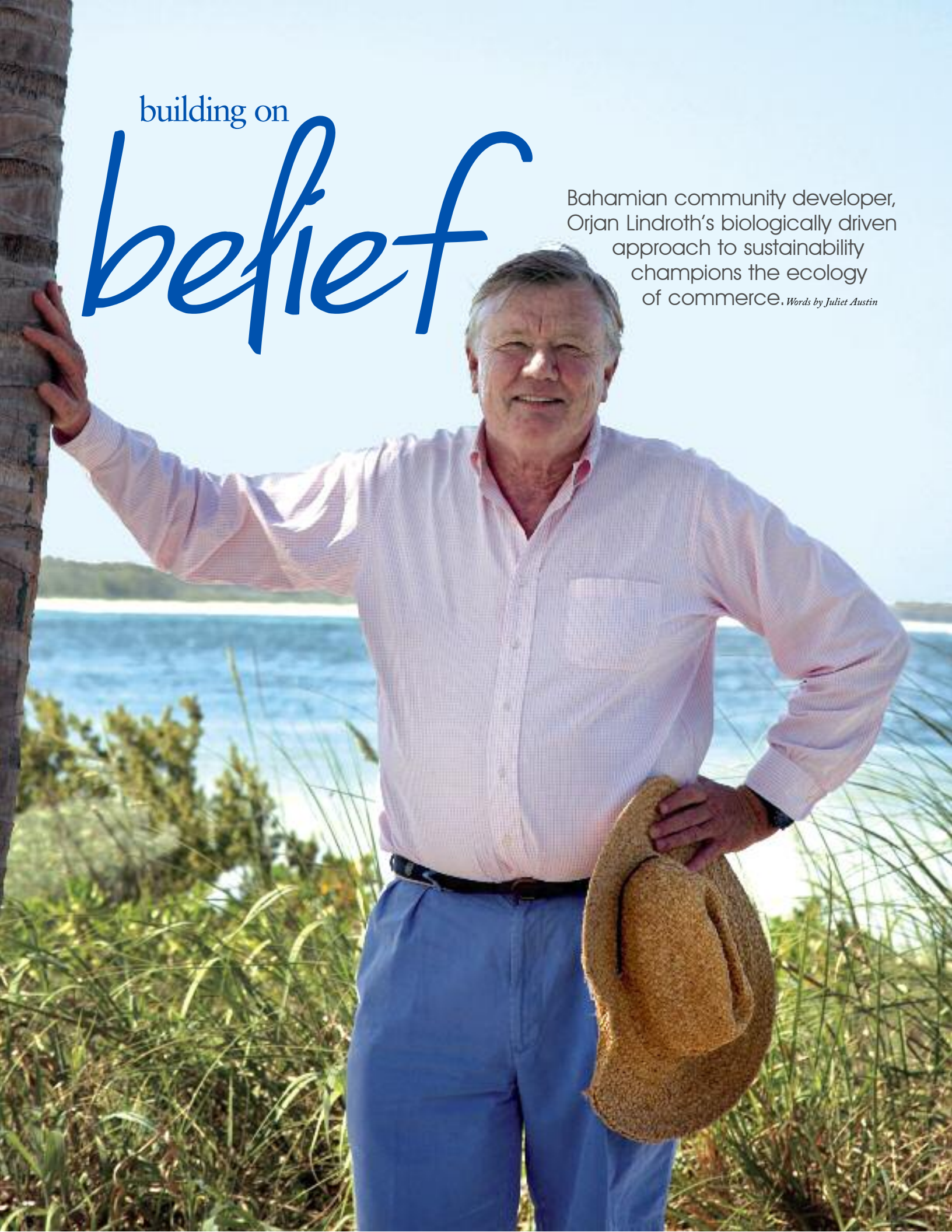


building on

belief

Bahamian community developer, Orjan Lindroth's biologically driven approach to sustainability champions the ecology of commerce. *Words by Juliet Austin*





Often viewed as a contradiction in terms, Swedish-born Orjan Lindroth is both visionary developer and ardent advocate for the growth of sustainable communities across the Caribbean. Moving with his parents to Nassau, The Bahamas at a young age, the archipelago of sun-kissed islands, inlets and cays became his true north – the adopted childhood home that would define his consciousness and shape his future. Moved by its celebrated colonial architectural heritage, the innate wisdom of vernacular styles and centuries' old living traditions, Lindroth evolved a model of fiscal and environmental sustainability and then set about building on his beliefs.

Graduating from the London School of Economics and Political Science, Lindroth's earliest forays into the world of place-making played out on a broad international stage with projects as far afield as British Columbia, Alaska and the south of France. Lured back to his island home, in 1993 he re-established himself in Nassau, founding the eponymously named Lindroth Development Company. A far cry from the charming, seaside town that had offered endless opportunities for play and exploration as a boy, he remained profoundly affected and influenced by the diversity of place and people. "It gave me the confidence to challenge the idea that monocultures that divide communities into different zones of use and demographic are an improvement," he expounds. "Time has shown this leading to the *destruction* of community." →



Opposite page: Orjan Lindroth
This page clockwise from left: Ca'Liza; Arne Lindroth, Orjan's father, with Axel Wenner-Gren, original developer of Paradise Island; Newspaper clipping featuring Orjan (far left) and his siblings leaving for Nassau from Sweden in 1952; and Gunnel Lindroth, Orjan's mother (far right) with friends, in the 1950's.

This page middle right: Aerial of Old Fort Bay marina community, New Providence.
This page bottom: Old Fort Bay beach cabana (left) and detail of Bahamian shutters (right).

Alongside his wife Amanda, an American interior designer with a flair for nostalgic elegance and authenticity, projects such as the Old Fort Bay Club and the Islands at Old Fort showcased a commitment to honouring historic context by connecting the dots between the built heritage of the past, the needs of the present and Lindroth's nascent design vision for a future, guided the time tested principles and practices of great place-making. According to him, "When buildings and places relate to people, they provide optimism, pleasure and function."

Awarded the highly prized Patron Medal for Classical and Traditional Architecture and the 2010 Philip Trammell Shutze Award for his private home, Ca'Liza, Lindroth's holistic methodology delivered a new generation of community: complex, civic-minded and anchored in space, place and time. "Look at any lasting community in The Bahamas and you will find a harbour as the wellspring," he reveals. "If we then apply the laws of nature as they apply to humans, we find we need diversity and connectivity with local cultures, economies and social and civic groups."

Yet, Lindroth's *magnum opus* must surely be his legacy-making Schooner Bay development, the flourishing low-impact harbour-side village emerging organically on the southeastern coast of Great Abaco. Pioneering a revolutionary sustainable development paradigm for the Caribbean, it promises to write Lindroth's name in history as one of the foremost proponents of what he calls the ecological dividend – an economy of green that attests to the fact that eco-prudence pays. "Aristotle reminded us," claims Lindroth, "that nature wastes nothing. It is a fundamental principle that transforms the current cradle-to-the-grave extractive, industrial machine into the economy of the future which will function more like nature in adopting cradle-to-cradle theories and practices."

Driven by what Jackson Burnside called, "the architecture



of common sense," Schooner Bay may well tick all the green boxes – community geothermal cooling system, million gallon rainwater collection cistern, solar hot water... the list goes on – thereby guaranteeing its creator a trip through the pearly gates, but as green building guru, Steve Mouzon, points out in the 2011 *New Urban News*, "Orjan isn't simply doing the right thing." Having analysed the social, environmental, architectural and cultural patterns, it is Lindroth's exposé of the staggering cost-savings of low-impact construction, that provide irrefutable proof that a green lifestyle is not only good for the soul, but not bad for the pocketbook either. Able to site hundreds of millions of dollars in ecological dividends, Lindroth's message is unequivocal: forests = equity.

"Instinct is nature's compass," states Lindroth, "and we follow nature. It does not waste; is resilient and diverse – able to grow and adapt. Nature can survive without Wall Street, but Wall Street cannot survive without Nature. It alone is the economy from which all wealth comes."

Establishing basic conditions to promote growth based on human scale and proportion, "Much like a sapling grows to a large tree," the Schooner Bay ethos empowers stakeholders to participate in building a community of worth over time. Anchored by the fourteen-acre living, working, recreational harbour that unifies and energises the community, lots and homes have grown into hamlets, and, in turn, a small village, in the hope of one day becoming a thriving, walkable town nourished by fresh, local produce from its organic gardens. Infused with green wisdom, responsive architecture

“When buildings and places relate to people, they provide optimism, pleasure and function.”



will form what Amanda Lindroth calls, “legendary places,” where workplace and neighbourhood are one, reducing driving by 80 percent and substantially easing reliance on gas. Deservedly, Mouzon credits Lindroth with, “Working harder than any New Urbanist developer... to create a local economy.”

Bolstered by the belief that common areas should be shared equally between big and small, out of two-hundred-and-twenty acres of land, more than half is being preserved as green space with plans to plant 200,000 more trees. According to Lindroth, “The outside realm of topography and landscaping, is a gift to the street; a carefully managed enhancement of the local transect.” Grown from seed at the in-house nursery rather than imported as mature trees, the ecological dividend runs at a staggering \$38.8 million.

Defying the modern throwaway culture (and saving himself a cool \$24.4 million in the bargain), no aggregate or sand is brought on or off site: every bucket moved is used to create an advantage elsewhere. A strong reduce, reuse, recycle policy turn wood scraps to mulch, while beaches, mangroves and the coppice remain untouched and the two-mile dune ecosystem is recognised for strengthening the shoreline, reinforced by the root systems of hundreds of native plant species.

Orjan Lindroth is undoubtedly a man of crystal vision and unwavering principle. Enshrined in his life’s work, a legacy of enduring communities stand: real places, built by real people, demanding the right to co-exist with the natural realm. If, as Professor Dr. Klaus Topfer believes, “Sustainable development is the peace policy of the future,” then one of the more remarkable ecological dividends of Lindroth’s work must be the truce he calls for between developer and environmentalist. Change is here and Lindroth is ready. 🌱



Opposite page top three: Club Villas, Old Fort Bay, New Providence.
Opposite page bottom: Sundowners at Schooner Bay, Great Abaco.
This page: Schooner Bay, Lindroth’s latest marina front development on Great Abaco.