



CNU CHARTER AWARDS

2008 CONGRESS FOR THE NEW URBANISM

THE CONGRESS FOR THE NEW URBANISM (CNU) is the leading organization working to re-establish compact, walkable, and environmentally sustainable neighborhoods, cities, and towns. CNU's more than 3,000 members advance community-oriented principles of traditional town and city design. Their work promotes development that is walkable, provides a diverse range of housing options, encourages a rich mix of uses, and provides welcoming public spaces. In its fifteen-year history, CNU has helped shape a national conversation about the consequences of formless growth and the costs of barriers to the creation of enduring urbanism, while advancing an alternative vision for community development and regional sustainability based on the timeless principles expressed in the Charter of the New Urbanism.



CONGRESS FOR THE NEW URBANISM 2008 CHARTER AWARDS JURY

FROM LEFT FRONT ROW: **Katharine Kelley** President, Green Street Properties, Atlanta, Georgia; **Andrés Duany, Jury Chair** Principal, Duany Plater-Zyberk & Company, Miami, Florida; **Karen Parolek** Principal, Opticos Design, Inc, Berkeley, California
 FROM LEFT BACK ROW: **Peter Park** Community Planning & Development Manager, City and County of Denver, Colorado; **Ben Bolgar** Director of Design Theory & Networks, Princes Foundation for the Built Environment, London, England; **Victor Dover** Principal, Dover Kohl & Partners, Coral Gables, Florida; **Geoffrey Dyer** Placemakers, Director of Canadian Operations and Principal and Urban Designer, Tsix Urbanists, Calgary, Alberta
 NOT PICTURED: **Stefanos Polyzoides** Principal, Moule & Polyzoides Architects and Urbanists, Pasadena, California
 AND, SEATED ON LAP: **Eleanor** and **Alicia**

Administered by the Congress for the New Urbanism, the Charter Awards program rewards the best work of the new era of placemaking. Each year CNU convenes a jury of the highest caliber to review submissions and select winning entries that best embody and advance the principles of the Charter of the New Urbanism.

To have seen 135 projects is to have been exposed to a cross section of the CNU. It is therefore fitting that these be general remarks, as the subsequent pages address the particulars of each project.

With the exception of Stefanos Polyzoides and me, this year's was a young jury. So it is through the next generation's eyes that these projects were seen and awarded. Thus, these projects not only summarize where we are, but may also offer a glimpse into where the New Urbanism is going.

The projects were, on the whole, excellent. There is again a craft of urbanism and competence has become habitual. As always, many projects were certainly worthy of an award, but were not validated by the jury. Many of these projects were told "better to wait until it is further along." Re-submit them. You know who you are.

In general, we tried to apply Victor Dover's "Tail-Wag Test," meaning the jury tried to avoid the sway of projects only manifesting a single idea, however innovative or seductive. Thus, being a transit-oriented development was not enough. Being green was not enough. Such simplification trivializes the complexity of urbanism. Remember, New Urbanism is still about making the entire human community and this can only be achieved through the hard work of detail.

There were no projects forcibly discarded for displaying ignorance. Clearly, the Charter has been thoroughly assimilated into daily practice, as it continues to be comprehensive enough to deal with all situations. It is also simple enough to be an effective guide in the hands of practitioners. Indeed, it has become as natural as the language we speak.

The reviewed projects indicate how omnivorous we have become. They engaged very diverse situations, making the limits of our interventions hard to discern. Some projects even assimilated urban patterns outside the canon, suggesting a transformation.

While new urbanist architecture is indeed improving, we noticed a weakness manifested in the T-3 single-family houses. This is by no means a crisis, but there is a pervasive falling back on "the styles" rather than developing a vernacular. Victor Dover called the style of the houses "blandiose." Simplicity is in the right direction—but it is not enough. The search must continue for a truly urban low-density architecture.

Regarding the buildings of the higher T-zones, we were looking for the typical and the reproducible. Though it is correct to have a specific response to a site, the awards tended toward projects that held widespread lessons.

The student projects reminded us how powerful informally commissioned projects can be. These critical and persuasive "counter-projects" must not be forgotten. They were more common before the commissions became "real."

In this academic category, there was only one award given. The second tier was large and excellent, but the jury decided it was either awarding one or awarding the majority of the submittals. Notre Dame's and Maryland's projects were excellent as always, but Andrews University's set a whole new standard for thoroughness in process and product in a student-faculty project.

After reviewing the submitted projects, the jury noticed a few things:

- The small and highly defined urban space is underappreciated. These are what Stef Polyzoides calls "spatial compression." These spaces must be re-emphasized because wherever found—whether in Paris or Pasadena—they are a socially valuable (and marketable) commodity that costs nothing to produce.
- The Midwest is Awake. It has finally come alive with projects. Now only New England seems under-represented.
- Size was not as impressive as great execution. Small projects, the jury felt, can make a real difference.
- Projects that were "invisibly green" did not receive special consideration for being so. We looked beyond the intrinsic sustainability of New Urbanism for expressive, polemical sustainability; not gimmicks, but the search for proper expression.
- A warning: There is too often too little detail in the regional projects. Without codes, they skirt the pod approach of our conventional suburban plans.

While meeting in Miami, the jury toured the **Perez Architecture Center at the University of Miami** (below) and moved to recognize the Leon Krier-designed building with a Jury Mention.

- We were realists: any plan that did not show or make a statement about adequate parking or property lines, had difficulty being taken seriously. Similarly, a clumsy plan or a sub-par rendering is a symptom of insufficient competence. Both the art and the technique of urbanism go hand-in-hand. Having said that, we always looked closely at the quality of the regulating plans—illustrative plans and good renderings are not enough.
- As in the past, the description of the site's connection to its larger context, which was requested of this year's applicants, was generally not taken seriously enough. This reflects the otherwise fortunate architectural bias of the New Urbanism.
- The jury noticed a mastery of graphic technique, especially in the plans and the layout of the codes. Dare I say we recovered the drawing quality of the 1920s? There is an ambiguity, however, in the more urban T-zones. In particular, we noticed the Sketchup program becoming both a help and a hindrance. It is an efficient and perhaps even effective tool for representing the buildings of urbanism without the premature and underdeveloped commitment to architectural syntax. Yet it is too generic. We must continue to work on it.
- We could not avoid an unconscious bias against highly lauded typologies. This has long been the case with greenfield projects. This year the greyfield retrofits, or the good Hope VI projects were perhaps overlooked. Future juries must recognize this bias, as all project types continue to be important to an all-out campaign towards the urbanism.

In the throes of an exciting visit to the University of Miami, an initiative to confer a Jurors' Special Prize emerged. The first of which is being unanimously conferred on Léon Krier's Jorge Perez Center at the UM School of Architecture. This may become a new tradition, with the criteria being that the jury awards a project in the host city.

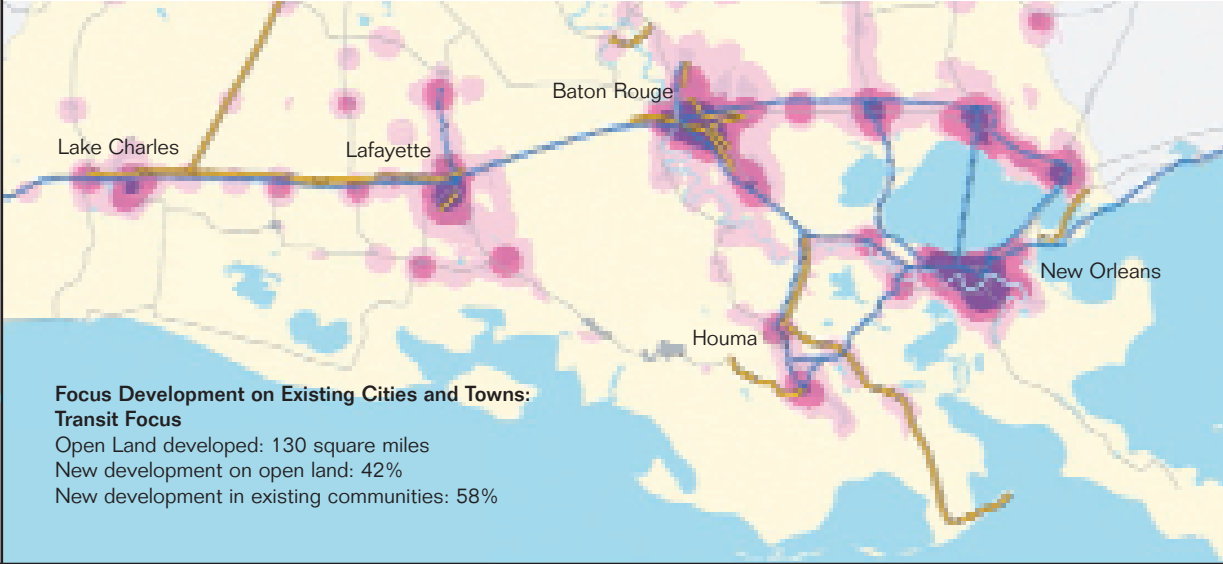
And finally, as a guest, Vincent Scully attended the preliminary survey for all of the award submittals. His comment was an amazed "But you are building the world!" Alas, we are not; but a better and more socially equitable and environmentally responsible world it would be.

Andrés Duany
Jury Chair, 2008



REGION: METROPOLIS, CITY, AND TOWN





Focus Development on Existing Cities and Towns:
Transit Focus
 Open Land developed: 130 square miles
 New development on open land: 42%
 New development in existing communities: 58%

SITE:
 The 35 parishes of Southern Louisiana.

PROGRAM:
 A regional land-use plan with a three-part focus — recover sustainably, grow smarter, and think regionally — reflecting residents’ desires to rebuild with minimal sprawl and maximum attention to environmental conditions.

LOUISIANA SPEAKS REGIONAL PLAN

STATE OF LOUISIANA



The last of four historic planning documents commissioned to help the citizens and communities of southern Louisiana recover from Hurricanes Katrina and Rita, the Louisiana Speaks Regional Plan significantly advances the state of the art. In terms of the number of people who participated (27,000), the size of the targeted region (all 35 southern Louisiana parishes), and the complexity of political, economic, demographic, social, and environmental factors at play, the plan breaks entirely new ground.

Its major achievement is not just in forging a civic consensus about future growth, but also in convincing disparate governments to collaborate in pursuing development that is much more mindful of wetlands, rivers, and the natural boundaries of ecological systems than jurisdictional lines.

The 2008 Charter Awards jury agreed this was top-notch regional planning meeting one of the places in the country most in need of it. A commitment to this plan will not only promote livability and sustainability, as would be the case anywhere, but actually help ensure the physical survival of the place and its fragile natural environment.

Calthorpe Associates led the creation of this plan (with the assistance of John Fregonese) for the Louisiana Recovery Authority and the Center for Planning Excellence. The planners, aided by the Brookings Institution and other partners, borrowed heavily from the inclusive public input process and data-driven scenario planning principles that Calthorpe and Fregonese pioneered in the 1990s in Envision Utah — a first-of-its-kind plan that is helping the Salt Lake City metropolitan area build more energy efficient, transit-oriented, and mixed-used neighborhoods that diminish traffic congestion and conserve precious rangeland and forest.

The Louisiana Speaks team engaged in polls, surveys, and six hands-on workshops that found southern Louisiana residents wanted to rebuild with a focus on environmental restoration and coastal protection. They also called for investments in public transit and other infrastructure to encourage development in existing communities and to minimize sprawl. The plan also envisioned zoning and master plan modernization to make it easier to build in areas that citizens targeted for growth and more difficult to develop in areas identified for environmental preservation.

In sum, Louisiana residents recognized two things. First, reasoned land-use planning formed the basis of a new economic development strategy that would leave them safer and more prosperous. And second, that their historic distaste for land-use rules and planning — along with the state’s aversion to environmental safeguards particularly for flood-absorbing wetlands — contributed to the damage wreaked in late-summer 2005 by Hurricanes Katrina and Rita.

Prompted by the plan’s recommendations, the Louisiana Recovery Authority has convened a high-level task force to make recommendations for a new Office of State Planning to coordinate the work of state, regional, and local agencies and governments. Model codes have been developed for local governments. A new passenger rail system between New Orleans and Baton Rouge is in the early planning stages. And authorities have approved Louisiana’s new storm protection and coastal restoration plan, which calls for ending the state’s war on its tidal wetlands.

The Louisiana Speaks Regional Plan, at least at this early juncture, represents a credible path for rethinking how the parishes of this Gulf Coast region rebuild and grow.

Planning (lead): Calthorpe Associates
Planning: Fregonese Associates Inc.; ABMB Engineers Inc.; The Brookings Institution; Metropolitan Policy Program; BROWN+DANOS landdesign, inc.; Kimley-Horn and Associates Inc.; LSU Coastal Louisiana Ecosystem Assessment and Restoration Group; PolicyLink

Outreach, Communications, and Survey Research:
 Collective Strength; EboNetworks; Louisiana Public Broadcasting; L Studio; LSU Public Policy Research Lab; Sides & Associates; Peter A. Mayer Advertising; Urban Insight
Project Clients: Center for Planning Excellence; Louisiana Recovery Authority



SITE:
 3,200 acres of coastal desert along the Red Sea, 50 miles north of Jeddah.

PROGRAM:
 A modern university and academically oriented, sustainable city that helps transform a national economy and higher education system.

KING ABDULLAH UNIVERSITY

OF SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY THUWAL, SAUDI ARABIA

Saudi Arabia is in the midst of the most ambitious campaign to build new college and university campuses of any nation on Earth. Before 2002, just eight universities served the oil-rich nation of 27 million people. Last year, the number was 22, including the new King Abdullah University of Science and Technology, which is quickly taking shape on a 3,200-acre stretch of coastal desert along the Red Sea north of Jeddah.

The master plan for the \$7 billion university — which will eventually house 2,000 graduate students, 600 faculty members, and 10,000 additional community members — is ambitious in countless ways, including its attention to detail and the human experience. The project’s buildings will contain 4 million square feet for research and other academic programs, and 2.5 million square feet for housing, recreation, shopping, business, and other public pursuits.

Intended to challenge the Massachusetts Institute of Technology and Stanford University among the finest and best-equipped research institutions, King Abdullah University has been designed by Hellmuth, Obata, and Kassabaum to ensure that this world-class facility functions as a community that encourages walking and human-scale interaction. The design includes a town center, harbor, theaters, a commercial center, and a retail square. Only by creating a vibrant sense of place and community will the university succeed in retaining the “the world’s best and brightest researchers, faculty, and students,” say project team members.

Jurors found this project an enlightened alternative to the nearby spectacle of Dubai with its gleaming new towers both connected and separated by highways. “My feeling is that in that neck of the woods, to have something of this type is really important,” said juror Ben Bolgar of The Prince’s Foundation for the Built Environment.

“The important thing about this is that it is not skyscrapers,” said juror Victor Dover.

With a \$10 billion gift from King Abdullah, the designers invested in the quality of life in the eight major sections of the campus and town, including a neighborhood on a nearby island, and a neighborhood near a golf course. A network of plazas, walks, connector streets, bridges, parks, and public spaces connects the sections, allowing members of the university community to flow easily between residential neighborhoods and the mixed-use commercial center, classrooms, libraries, and research buildings.



Major campus buildings are connected under two large roofs that provide shade while generating electricity from a bank of photovoltaic cells. In this arid setting, gray water will be used to flush toilets and irrigate gardens. Driving will be minimized, say planners, through urban proximity and ample use of shuttle buses, electric vehicles, and Segways. The designers also incorporated environmental safeguards into the plan to protect water environments, specifically the Red Sea beach, a shallow and rare mangrove lagoon, and a coral reef preserved as a marine sanctuary and research area.

Late last year, King Abdullah University for Science and Technology said it would be the first graduate school in Saudi Arabia to offer co-educational classes, one of many signs of progress associated with this forward-looking project.



Architects, Planners, Landscape Architects and Electrical Engineers:
 Hellmuth, Obata, and Kassabaum, Inc.
Civil Engineer:
 Jacobs Engineering Group, Inc.
Costing and Scheduling Consultant:
 Faithful & + Gould, Inc.



SITE:

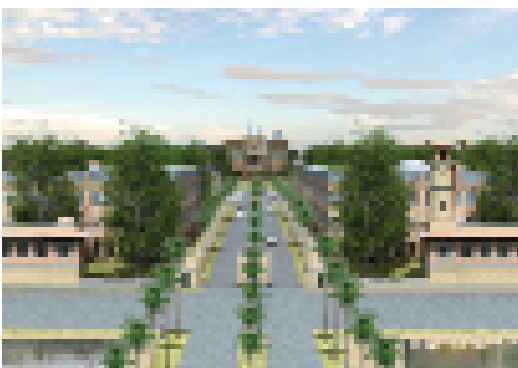
Approximately 8,700 acres of undeveloped greenfield between Puri and the state capital, Bhubaneswar.

PROGRAM:

A master plan guide development of one of India's newest universities and its supporting community over the next 15 years, in a way that is sensitive to place, culture, and environment.

VEDANTA UNIVERSITY MASTER PLAN

ORISSA, INDIA



About as comprehensive as projects come, the master plan for Vedanta University in Orissa, India, seeks to create a sustainable and pedestrian-tuned campus that will help alleviate India's need for educational facilities and affordable housing. To be built in three phases between 2009 and 2023, the planned campus and town will occupy nearly 9,000 acres of previously undeveloped land on India's east coast.

Vedanta University will serve a crushing educational need in a nation where thousands of applicants compete for few slots, and where university education is most often focused around a single discipline. Vedanta University therefore hopes to welcome 100,000 students per year to a uniquely interdisciplinary environment that bridges the gap between the humanities and the sciences, the arts, and engineering. Reflecting this commitment to cross-pollination, the university plan is based on a pair of two overlapping circles that represent — and compel communication between — these academic worlds.

To relate the university's plan to its cultural context, designers drew upon symbolic motifs. With a pedestrian pathway surrounding the intersecting circles helping to form a mandala — a symbol representing the world or universe in Hindu and Buddhist art — the designers argue the entire precinct plan can be seen as a transformed mandala. Beyond the symbolic, this urban design lends coherence to the project, guaranteeing the campus will remain compact and pedestrian-friendly as it grows to encompass 500 buildings. Jurors marveled at the complexity of the design and the way its rich visual texture advances the project's program.

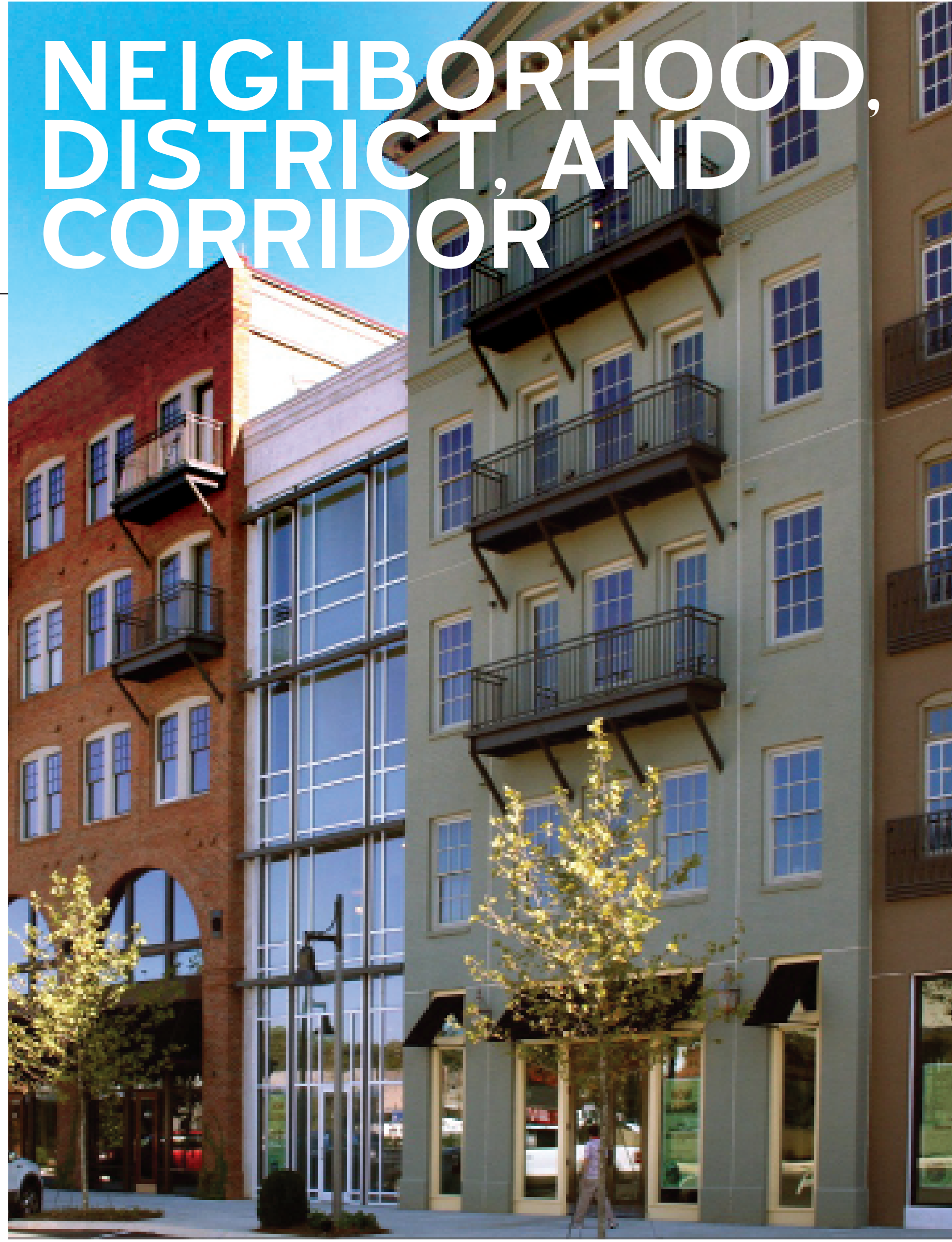
Perhaps most impressively, the project builds logically on aesthetics to respond to India's pressing environmental and economic issues. For instance, by orienting all buildings toward well-designed pedestrian pathways, keeping buildings closely spaced, and providing shade and landscaping, the planners create pleasing public spaces and free university members from relying on automobiles for daily transport. University buildings will also be energy efficient, utilizing green roofs to prevent water run-off and limiting radiant heat gain to keep cooling costs at a minimum. Planning ahead for the kinds of economic opportunities that the university hopes to provide, the designers also articulated their commitment to sustainable planning in the university's rural surrounds. University planners call for subsequent developments to be mixed-use, mixed-income communities — with adequate affordable housing — to prevent pockets of poverty from developing in the regions surrounding the university.

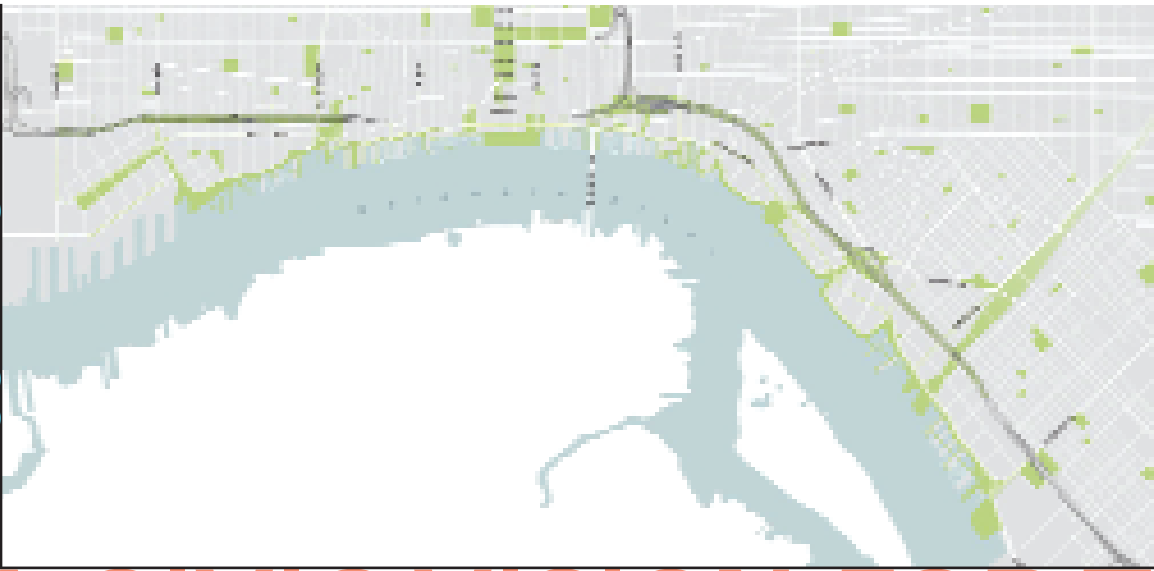
While responding to contemporary concerns within India, the plans for Vedanta University provide an impressive model for the kind of comprehensive, responsible design that is relevant for any regional planning project.



Designer:
Ayers/Saint/Gross INC. Architects + Planners

NEIGHBORHOOD, DISTRICT, AND CORRIDOR





SITE:
Approximately 1,150 acres of Philadelphia waterfront stretching for seven miles along the Delaware River.

PROGRAM:
Restoring historic street connections within a supportive urban framework to revitalize Philadelphia's underappreciated Delaware River waterfront.

A CIVIC VISION FOR THE CENTRAL DELAWARE

PHILADELPHIA, PENNSYLVANIA



Planning and Urban Design:
Wallace Roberts & Todd, LLC
Owner / Client / Design Team Leader:
PennPraxis- University of Pennsylvania School of Design
Public Process: Penn Project on Civic Engagement
Public Agency:
Philadelphia City Planning Commission
Economics and Financing Analysis:
Economic Research Associates
Transportation Planning:
Glattig Jackson Kercher Anglin
Public Policy Planning: May 8 Consulting, Inc.
Traffic Planning and Engineering:
Sam Schwartz PLLC
Civil Engineering: ARUP USA, Inc.
Ecology and Habitat: Andropogon Associates, Ltd.
Media Relations: Bellevue Communications Group

William Penn's master plan for Philadelphia in the late 17th century sought to make sure residents could reach the Delaware River from every nearby street — a focus that reflected the value of the riverfront in the city's first century, when every one of Philadelphia's 35,000 residents depended on it for jobs, trade, transportation, and cultural interaction. Over the next three centuries, the river receded from Philadelphia's economy and consciousness, diminished by shifts in transportation, manufacturing practices, and civic culture, walled off by contaminated industrial ground and a congested super highway.

On an evening in November 2007, though, more than 1,200 Philadelphians leapt to their feet, cheering a plan meant to restore Penn's vision along seven miles of the unkempt and disorderly city waterfront. The Civic Vision for the Riverfront called for tearing down the razor-wire fences, cleaning up the industrial sites, and removing some long-empty factory buildings that blocked access to the river. But it also described in stirring detail the construction of new streets reaching the waterfront, new neighborhoods, a linear park, marinas, a state-of-the-art port, and dozens of mixed-use commercial centers.

This is the first comprehensive plan for Philadelphia's waterfront in more than 30 years. What distinguishes it from its predecessor, much of which generated no traction, is that the new civic vision is exactly that. It was funded by a \$1.6 million grant from the William Penn Foundation, and overseen by the Philadelphia Planning Commission, Penn Praxis of the University of Pennsylvania School of Design, and a broad array of other civic institutions.

The skilled lead planners from Wallace Roberts & Todd convened more than 200 public meetings. Hundreds of residents testified. Hundreds more participated in planning workshops. Out of all the engagement came the vision's three primary goals: build new streets connecting Philadelphia to the river; build wonderful parks and trails and open spaces that allow people to enjoy the river, while simultaneously restoring the river's natural systems; and build new neighborhoods that are architecturally distinguished, mindful of Philadelphia's colonial history, and wonderful places to live for families at all income levels.

Although juror Ben Bolgar questioned whether the plan had "enough teeth" to actually be built, fellow juror Victor Dover defended the project. "This is much more than a parks plan. There is a greening of the city component to it, but there are also street connections and new development sites and brownfields."

Indeed, the plan can be executed, though the planners acknowledge that it will take decades. In its particulars, Philadelphia's Civic Vision reflects and builds on the changes in market signals for housing, transportation, jobs, technology, leisure time, and quality of life that are restoring the prosperity of many of America's largest cities. Its emphasis on parks and riverbank trails flanked by compact urbanism look a lot like what Chattanooga, Chicago, Boise, and Boston have pursued with remarkable results for their economies and the growing number of new residents working and living downtown.

The vision's call for new ways to move people along the waterfront and between neighborhoods and commercial districts, including a proposal to bury parts of Interstate 95, recalls similar work undertaken in Seattle, Milwaukee, Portland, and San Francisco.

And the vision stresses new design standards and zoning to encourage development that is neighborhood-scale, focused on great streets and manageable blocks, and flexible enough to incorporate historical and natural resources, parks, even how buildings align with the sun. It's Philadelphia's vision, and the kind of planning that does honor to Penn's legacy.



SITE:
35 acres (part of a larger neighborhood renewal program) on Chicago's south side.

PROGRAM:
A HOPE VI-funded redevelopment replacing high-rise public housing with a mixed-use, mixed-income neighborhood that re-establishes the traditional street grid and reconnects to surrounding neighborhoods.

OAKWOOD SHORES

CHICAGO, ILLINOIS

One of America's most dramatic neighborhood-wide transformations is underway on Chicago's near south lakefront. One catalyzing effort is reinventing the forgotten Madden Park, Ida B. Wells, and Clarence Darrow housing projects into Oakwood Shores, a mixed-income development funded through a HOPE VI federal redevelopment grant.

Oakwood Shores sits at one of the few junctions where Chicago's famous lakefront meets its park-like boulevards. A decade ago, this one was just a dusty intersection ringed with a trio of forbidding housing projects. Now, it's a green square bound by new mixed-income developments. The site sits at the southern edge of a two-mile swath of south side lakefront wiped clean by a succession of urban renewal projects—in fact, locals call one area "The Gap" because it was the only enclave not bulldozed in the name of progress. More than 100,000 residents fled the neighborhood amidst the twin calamities of urban renewal and decay.

The 455 housing units in this phase of Oakwood Shores, out of a planned 3,000 units to be built over 10 years, have rebuilt a piece of urban fabric in Bronzeville. The area's history as a prosperous hub of African American life still breathes in the limestone mansions and brick flats lining its lovely boulevards. Oakwood Shores replicates the neighborhood's broad range of low-rise housing types: small apartment buildings housing six or nine flats, narrow rowhouses ringing courtyards, wider rows facing the street, and detached houses. In keeping with Chicago tradition, larger buildings anchor and turn block corners, with entrances addressing both streets.

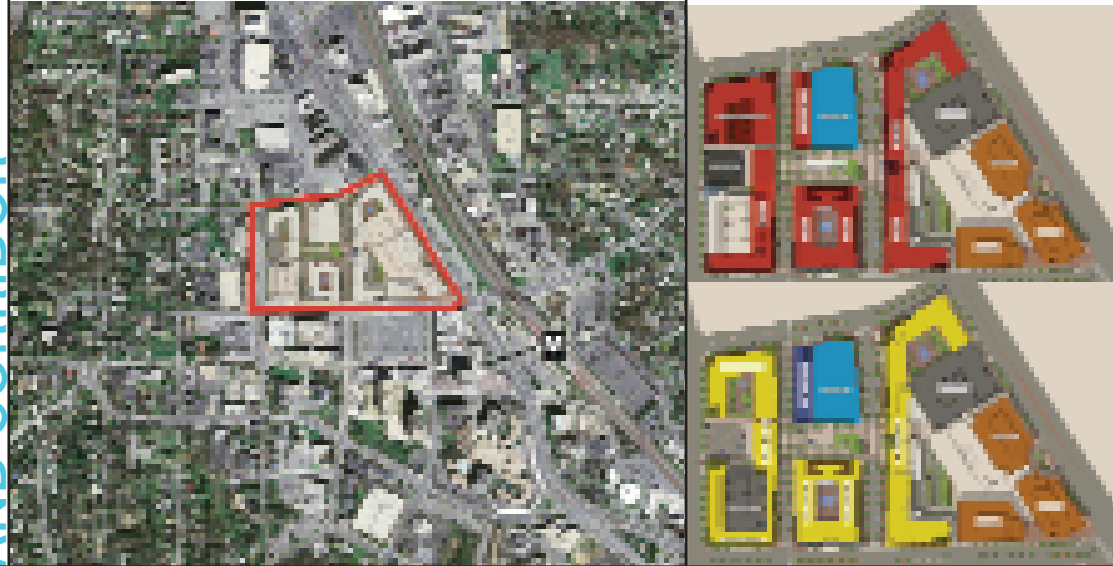
As at other HOPE VI projects, rental, for-sale, affordable, market rate, one and four-bedroom homes all mingle indistinguishably within buildings. Future phases will add to the land use mix with mid-rise lofts over retail and a charter school. Buildings are expressed in a handsome mix of styles; eaves, runcourses, stacked bays, and arched windows recall neighboring buildings by Frank Lloyd Wright and Louis Sullivan. This mix drew praise from juror Ben Bolgar, director of design theory and networks at The Prince's Foundation for the Built Environment: "I think it's quite rich—it's got different typologies. I think it will age very well too." A matrix of new streets and alleys distributes parking and links the green spaces that surround the site. A new Langley Boulevard pulls the axis of Drexel Boulevard—Chicago's grandest residential street—through the site, tying the neighborhood's small parks into the boulevard network.

Perhaps most importantly, this development's close coordination with a community working group helped solidify a consensus around New Urbanism that began with the 2002 Charter Award-winning HOPE VI redevelopment of Stateway Gardens and continued with a recently completed comprehensive community development plan. As neighboring urban renewal projects succumb to neglect, old age, and changing circumstances, New Urbanism is guiding the neighborhood's rebirth. Even the longtime owners of the city's very first urban renewal project—a 70-acre middle-income compound comprising ten glass slabs looking out across lawns and parking lots—have proposed a replacement project featuring a fine-grained mix of buildings facing streets, squares, and alleys.

The area's city councilwoman recently stood up to "architectural egotists" and demanded that a proposed 2016 Summer Olympics Village look "like a real neighborhood." Its designers would do well to look next door, to the "real neighborhood" of Oakwood Shores.



Architect/Planner/Photographer:
FitzGerald Associates Architects
Developer/Owner:
The Community Builders, Inc.; Granite Development; UJIMA, Inc.; MB Real Estate Services
Owner/Development Management:
Chicago Housing Authority
Structural Engineer:
Matrix Engineering, Inc.
MEP Engineer:
Building Engineering Systems, LLC
Civil Engineer:
McBride Engineering, Inc.
Landscape Architect:
Bauer Latoza Studio



SITE:
A 12.5-acre greyfield in downtown Rockville, Maryland.

PROGRAM:
Replace a failed mall with a residential-retail mix and cultural amenities that creates a new pedestrian-scaled focal point in a downtown dominated by a major regional arterial.

ROCKVILLE TOWN CENTER

ROCKVILLE, MARYLAND



A decade ago, the conversion of an enclosed mall to a mixed-use town center on traditional streets and blocks was an idea that caused jaws to drop. Since then, the *Greyfields to Goldfields* trend has become a CNU franchise (with three reports published), new enclosed malls have become nearly extinct, and a mixed-use town or lifestyle center has either arrived or is coming soon to a town near you.

As the trend has gone mainstream, however, what now causes jaws to drop is one of these projects that results in a truly admirable sense of place and high-quality public realm. Among them, Rockville Town Center in suburban Washington, D.C., is this year's Exhibit A: a case of good design and quality development rising to the occasion of a high-potential site near the Metrorail's Rockville station.

Rockville Town Center came to fruition through a unique partnership between the city and a private sector landowner. Both parties sought a geographically centralized town center equipped for a combination of private and public uses to replace a failed shopping mall from the 1970s, strip malls and a gas station.

Built on a 12.5-acre site, Rockville Town Center achieves this balance with 644 residential units in four, five, or more stories above ground-level retail. Its ample retail space, totaling 180,000 square feet, accommodates both local businesses and national chains. Montgomery County's 100,000-square-foot library and 40,000-square-foot Arts and Innovations Center grace a stunning WiFi-enabled public square that will host open-air community events.

"Not only is it terrific because it really is *big* buildings on a *big* square, but it was built very fast... right in the town," said Jury Chair Andrés Duany. "It's in the right place and it has tendrils into the entire city."

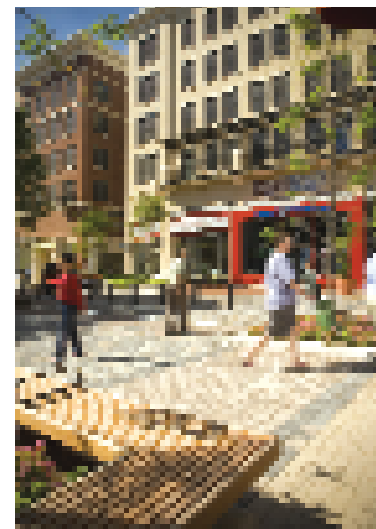
Courtesy of WDG Architecture, Rockville Town Center makes fine use of a number of mid-rise building types common in the metropolitan area. Where lesser projects half-heartedly vary design motifs to disguise large building masses, the 38 different facades here benefit from strong attention to detail on bays, building corners, rooflines, and vertical towers, yielding a higher level of cohesion.

The diverse building types—along with the carefully thought out mix of restaurant and retail stores, both local and national—represent a significant step forward for Rockville's downtown redevelopment efforts, as the town center is one part in a broader master plan for downtown Rockville and the Rockville Pike.

Diversity extends to housing, too. Prospective residents can choose from a broad range of housing sizes, from studios to three-bedroom units. And Rockville Town Center recently showed New Urbanism's ability to adapt to changing market conditions, as units previously marketed as condos were switched to rental apartments when the for-sale market slowed.

Rockville Town Center has the ability to significantly reduce its residents' carbon footprint. Its 200,000 square feet of office space is soon to be augmented by an additional 620,000 square feet in an adjacent complex. Some will be able to live and work in the neighborhood, while commuters can access regional transit via a pedestrian bridge that connects the neighborhood to Amtrak/MARC and Washington Metrorail stations. And, as jurors noted, parking is unobtrusive, though more apparent along the arterial roads on the project's boundaries.

That pedestrians rule the streets here is anything but accidental. Rockville Town Center was designed to put pedestrians first and vehicles second, and that's a key reason its value is growing.



Master Planning/Design Guidelines:
City of Rockville

Project Master Planning and Retail Development:
Federal Realty Investment Trust

Residential Development:
Ross Development & Investment; DANAC Corporation

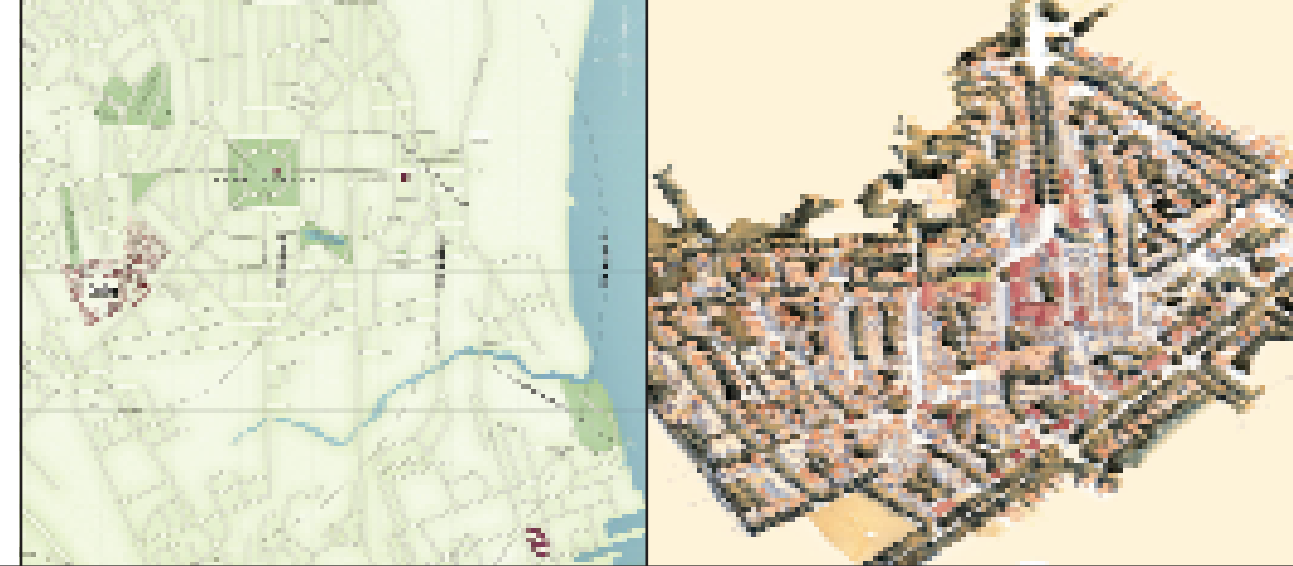
Office Development:
The Foulger-Pratt Companies

Residential, Retail, and Office Architect:
WDG Architecture

Rockville Library Architect and Interior Designer: Grimm & Parker Architects

Metropolitan Center for the Visual Arts at Rockville

Architect:
D'Agostino Izzo Quirk Architects



SITE:
A 44-acre infill parcel in North Charleston

PROGRAM:
The 20-year plan will result in a new high-density, transit-oriented neighborhood that qualifies for LEED-ND certification and includes churches, schools, parks, and a community center.

MIXSON

NORTH CHARLESTON, SOUTH CAROLINA

Cities that have endured fates like North Charleston's—a naval base closing in 1996 that left the town feeling depressed and residentially undesirable—often take whatever development they can get. But in Mixson, North Charleston is getting infill development of such exceeding thoughtfulness, craft, and quiet ingenuity that it is bound to be transformative beyond its borders.

The new neighborhood will rejuvenate 44 acres with a site plan and mix of uses patterned after a European village—walkable and bicycle-friendly with narrow, winding cobblestone streets. The project is notable for its density, small residences (ranging from 560 to 1,546 square feet in the first phase) and attention to green detail down to the low-VOC paint and Energy Star appliances in homes. Archways connecting streets and homes are inspired by old cities like Inverness, Scotland, and streets have an irregular grid with an organic design that allows parks, courtyards, and plazas to be built around existing geographic features. Juror Ben Bolgar described the plan as skillful, complex, and “legible, not rambling.”

The site of the new neighborhood has been through several distinct phases. Although original plans were influenced by the Garden City and City Beautiful movements, the site eventually was filled with barracks and cottages for military and industrial workers. With the closing of the naval base, the area fell into neglect. In 2005, South Carolina's *The State* newspaper described Mixson's crumbling barracks: Some were boarded up, some were demolished, and some still were home to residents. When I'On Group—the award-winning developer of a pioneering new urbanist development in Charleston—proposed its ambitious, transit-oriented and environmentally conscious development, *The State* lauded it as a “very urban, diverse neighborhood.” For I'On Group, which was stymied by local government in its attempts to include more affordable multi-unit buildings in I'On, Mixson is an opportunity to explore a more tighter-knit urbanism, affordable to people of average means.

In June 2007, I'On Group broke ground on the first phase of the project, but not without clearing some hurdles. Developers had to grapple with the problems the project's density caused for utility companies, the post office, garbage collectors, and others. They showed the companies and municipalities how less conventional design methods (for example, public lighting attached to homes) could work.

And the site was not a blank slate. Faced with the need to relocate some residents, developers took an unconventional approach to getting neighbors on board. It partnered with the non-profit Humanities Foundation in a housing fair to help residents find and pay for new homes. Then, before demolition, developers invited local artists and school children to use homes as canvases for an art installation that attracted many visitors, including former residents. This approach strengthened the relationship between the developers and the community.

The first phase, near the intersection of Mixson and Durant avenues, will take three years and include 266 one-bedroom units priced in the mid-\$150,000s. By 2017, the entire project will have six multi-use parks for dogs and children, and 950 residential units, including attached and detached condos, apartments, and single-family homes. Homes have porches leading onto streets and gardens, and the compact design gives neighbors ample opportunity for socializing. And unlike some traditional neighborhood developments that get more conventional at their mixed-use centers, where they accommodate larger surface lots, plans show Mixson gradually building in density and intensity around a very walkable core.

As Jury Chair Andrés Duany remarked, the project is “utterly wonderful,” and “extremely complex in a good way.”



Developer:
I'On Group

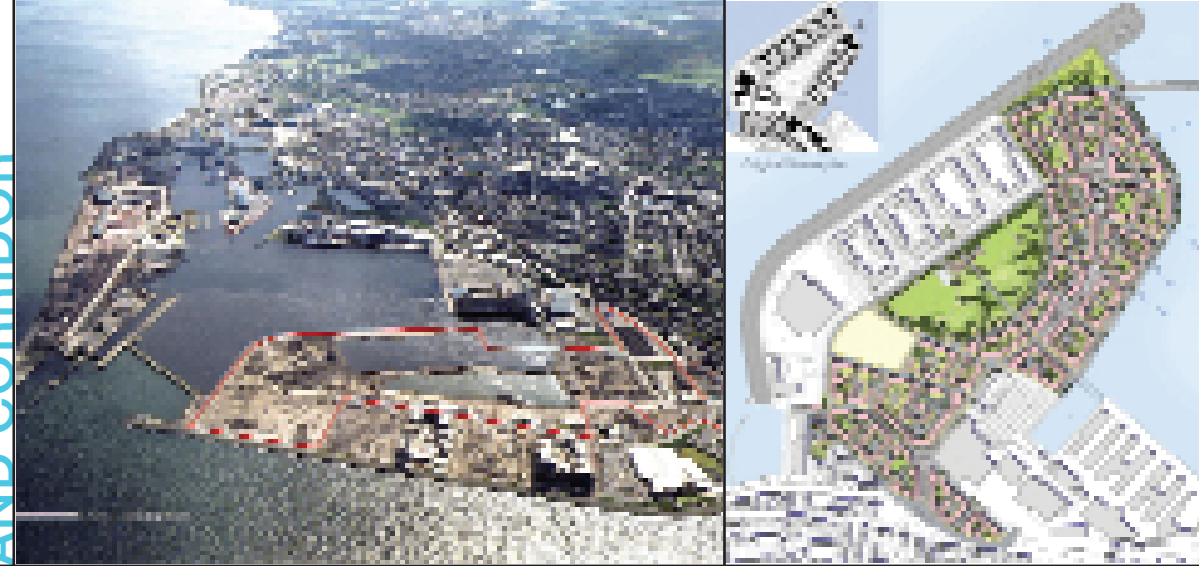
Architects:
McKellar and Associates, Inc.; Holt Design

Planners:
Keane Places; Holt Design

Engineers:
Seamon, Whiteside & Associates

Landscape Architect:
Keane & Co.

General Contractor:
I'On Build



SITE:

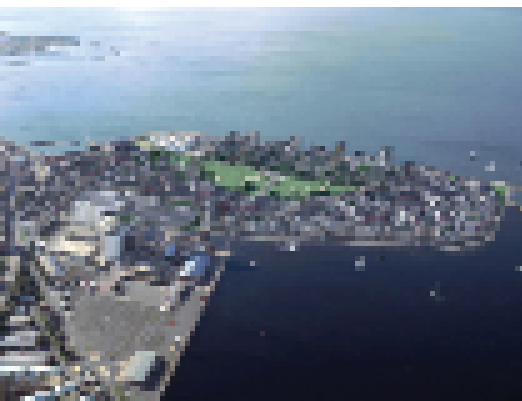
A 69-acre post-industrialized portion of harbour front in Scotland's capital city.

PROGRAM:

A master plan for compact, vibrant, transit-connected urbanism including affordable housing options and 22 acres of park and plaza space.

WESTERN HARBOUR MASTERPLAN

EDINBURGH, SCOTLAND



Like many post-industrial areas, Western Harbour in the Leith section of Edinburgh is home to a port that is largely out of use and to a depressed industrial quarter in need of rejuvenation. But unlike other easy-to-overlook areas, this one suddenly finds itself near the center of a country's political life. Following the devolution of many government functions from the United Kingdom to Scotland, the Scottish Parliament was re-established in an adjoining area of the city.

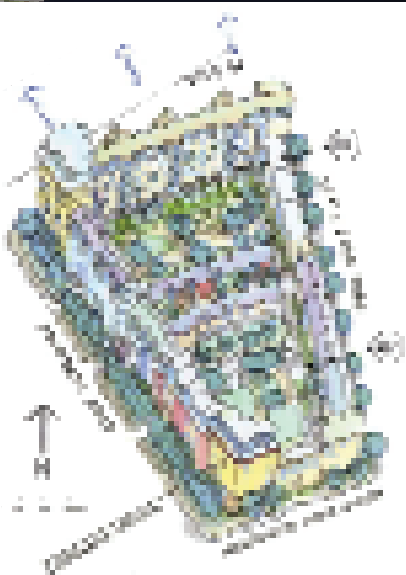
The project is a fortunate do-over for Edinburgh. There was an existing master plan for the site already approved: a regrettable first draft based on straight fast roads and large, mono-functional buildings on oversized blocks. Robert Adam Architects advised the developer, Forth Property Developments Ltd., that the proposed neighborhood, with its lack of identity and sameness of urban form, could create an unpleasant and even dangerous urban neighborhood. Working with Forth, the design team gamely took on the challenge of creating a truly urban master plan with the same number of residential units, same amount of commercial space, and same area of parkland. The contrast between the two plans is night-and-day.

The area of the master plan is adjacent to the ancient fishing village of Newhaven, with good road and public transport links on the southern edge of the new area. Since the plan supports expansion of bus and tram service within the site, a project with 152 houses, 1,367 apartments, 434 affordable housing units, 447,133 square feet of commercial space, and 72,656 square feet of retail space will require only 3,205 parking spaces. Public buildings include a local museum.

Through a joint effort involving the City Council and a series of design workshops, the design group studied and incorporated elements such as historic Scottish port design, climate and weather adaptations (to promote efficient resource use and protection of local ecology), mixed uses that could evolve as the community changed, and non-stylistic codes. The resulting street network will be easy to use, with a clear hierarchy of major and minor squares, open spaces, streets, and lanes. The mix of density and detail impressed jurors. "This got my thumbs up, partly because of the impressive level of detail," said juror Geoff Dyer.

This project gave the developer the ability to compare two very different master plans. One of the more fortuitous discoveries was that the shift from high-rise towers on superblocks to a traditional lower-rise scheme with a street hierarchy and localized use mix resulted in a \$20 million increase in land value, much of it coming from an improved ability to respond to variations in the market through a more divisible use and size structure. The value bump is more than enough to cover a \$5 million increase in infrastructure costs. In the words of the architects, "traditional urbanism pays."

The project also confirmed the value of non-stylistic coding. Based on character analysis of each street and space, of specific ranges of materials, and clear identification of type, this method has been widely accepted by the local architecture community regardless of design philosophy. Whether traditional or modernist, the architecture will fit the vision and help to bring the intricately imagined urban life of Western Harbour alive.



Client/Landowner:
Forth Property Developments Ltd.
Architect/Masterplanner:
Robert Adam Architects
Transportation Consultant:
Alan Baxter & Associates
Civil/Structural Engineers:
ARUP
Environmental Consultants:
Hoare Lea Virtual Engineering
Planning Consultant:
GVA Grimley Ltd
Executive Architect:
Gray, Marshall & Associates
Landscape Architect:
LDA Design
Quantity Surveyor:
Gardiner & Theobald LLP



SITE:

A traditional downtown and main street in a town nearly swallowed by Atlanta's sprawl northward.

PROGRAM:

The plan expands the capacity for compact, mixed-use development in character with a historic downtown, thereby helping to realize a regional vision to counter the effects of sprawl.

WOODSTOCK DOWNTOWN

WOODSTOCK, GEORGIA

With a prime spot on the I-575 corridor northwest of Atlanta, Woodstock is on the front lines of the struggle over sprawl.

Once an agricultural center in a rural region, the town has struggled to sustain its identity as the megapolopolis to the south expanded. What's more, like many small towns with low-density centers, there was reluctance to tackle growth challenges with urban-style solutions that might require growing taller and more dense. Woodstock could have been on its way to a familiar exurban landscape, retaining a museum of a downtown surrounded by congested suburbs where citizens commute between disconnected nodes of activity.

What diminished that threat was a process that began with the city's selection in 2002 by the Atlanta Regional Council for a study project on the fostering of "livable cities." That paved the way for this innovative, two-phase project to create "a natural extension of the city's urban fabric that... provides a variety of commercial and residential choices."

The project addresses a 64-acre plan area that includes both sides of Main Street in Woodstock's downtown. Upon completion—Phase 1 is 75 percent complete now and Phase 2 is underway—the project will add more than 427,000 square feet of commercial space and 976 residential units. Connectivity abounds. So does diversity, with housing choices that include everything from over-the-shop flats to single-family homes. To optimize green living, all the residences are certified EarthCraft homes.

More than 11 acres — 17-plus percent of the project area — is set aside for public realm elements ranging from squares, plazas, and neighborhood greens to a community amphitheater. So in the bargain, the old business district gets new life with an influx of residents and visitors.

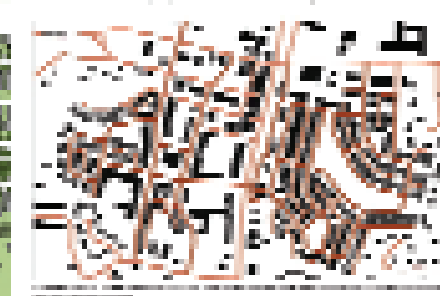
The project's success hinged on overcoming resistance to new approaches to scale and density by demonstrating the potential of design compatible with the look and feel of the town's historic core. It took eight months to gain approvals for the first five-story, mixed-use building. But the case for thoughtful urbanism prevailed. Where town officials struggled with the idea of increasing density from three to 11 units per acre in Phase 1, they were amenable to 20 units per acre by Phase 2.

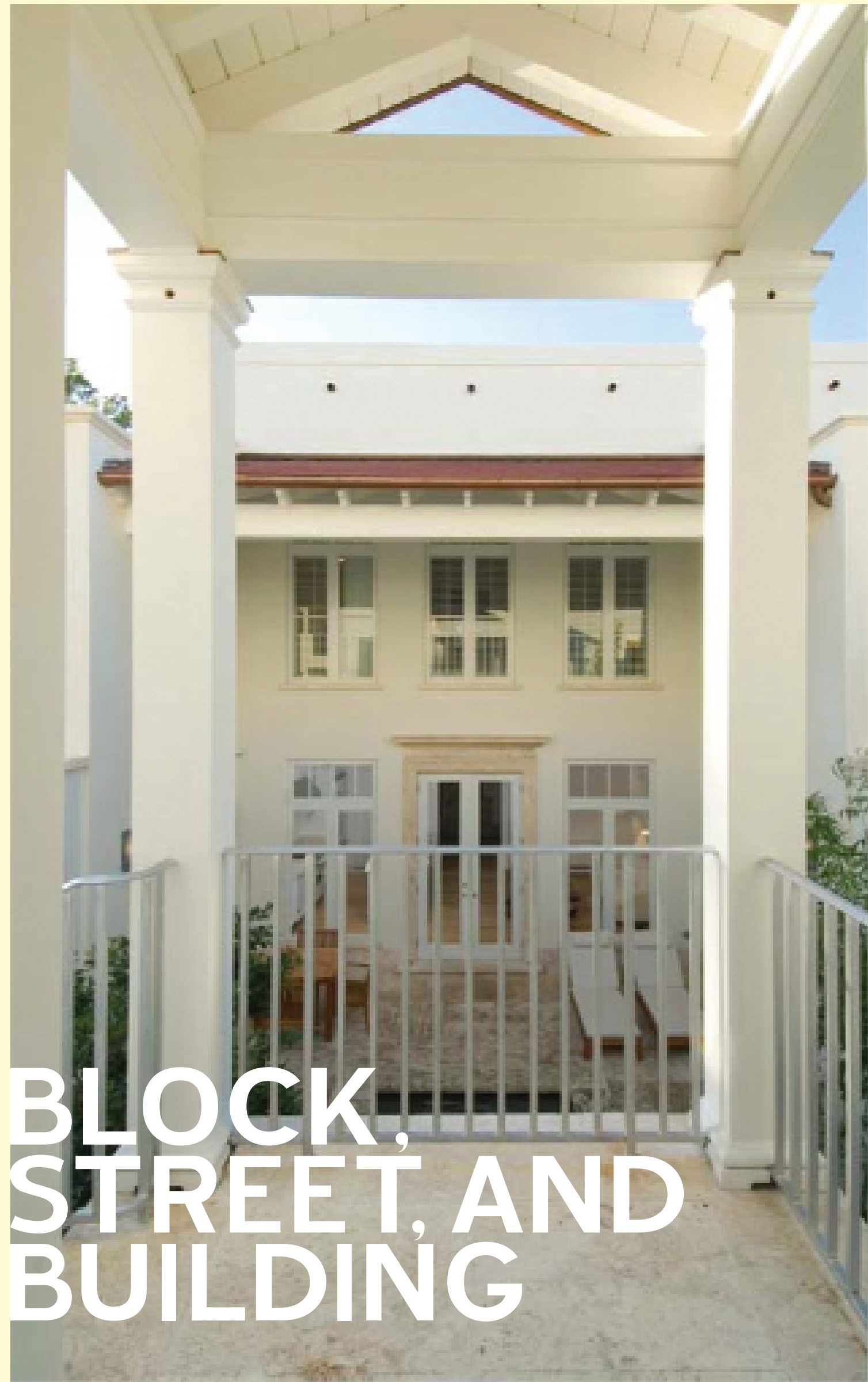
Woodstock is now a much-needed model for growing small towns in the path of sprawl into bigger towns that retain their historic character. "This project responds to a challenge in Sprawlville — what to do with all these little nodes outside a city," said juror Katharine Kelley. "Here they took a fragment of history and interest and built on it."

In doing so, the project team led by developer Hedgewood Properties demonstrated how well-thought-out urban design can accommodate dynamic growth without defaulting to the worst of suburban settlement patterns. Woodstock can show the way.



Developer:
Hedgewood Properties
Master Planner, Landscape Architect, and Architect:
Tunnell-Spangler-Walsh & Associates
Town Architect:
Lew Oliver
Architect:
Smith Dalia Architects
Landscape Contractor:
Scapes, LLC





BLOCK, STREET, AND BUILDING



SITE:

A 2.5-acre infill parcel, formerly home to a storage building and surface lots.

PROGRAM:

Bringing an artful mixed-use development, one of Montgomery's first in decades, to the frayed edge of one of the area's first inner-ring commercial main streets.

THE ATLANTIC & PACIFIC DEVELOPMENT

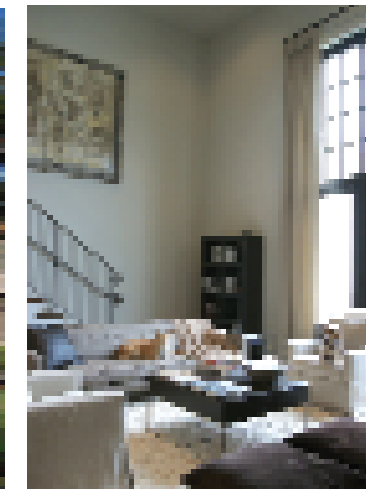
MONTGOMERY, ALABAMA

By the start of 2006, the once-thriving mixed-use heart of Old Cloverdale, an Olmsted-influenced Montgomery garden neighborhood, had suffered from decades of neglect, the discontinuation of “Lightning Route” streetcar service, and a loss of vitality to suburban areas. The street became identified with the kind of vacant asphalt that this project replaced.

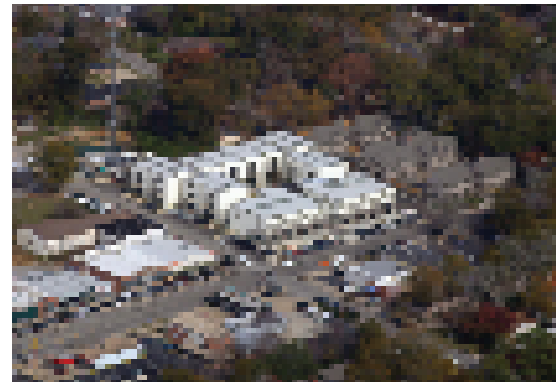
With this intimately scaled and carefully detailed mixed-use development, City Loft Corporation and its designer, McAlpine Tankersley Architecture, showed the impact that 2.5 acres can have in lifting the spirit of a neighborhood. The infill project uses two distinct sections to transition between two portions of Old Cloverdale. A mixed-use commercial and residential area borders the main street, while a neighboring group of cottages adjoins the district's more residential side. By so dividing the project, the site's developers sought to provide a variety of housing options—both for-sale and rental units, ranging from 1- and 2-bedroom lofts above the storefronts to 3-bedroom cottages next door — as they re-integrated the district's commercial and residential activities, thereby building a more walkable and vibrant community.

The onsite restaurant, coffee shop, salon, and gym—along with the nearby post office, banks, and neighborhood market—allow residents of the Atlantic & Pacific Development to handle many of their daily needs without car trips. Transit-supporting densities of 10-units per acre convinced the local transit company to add a bus stop. Community vitality is furthered by the public courtyard at the center of the mixed-use complex, where jazz nights, outdoor movies, and art shows have been held. The project has also already reinvigorated the commercial areas surrounding it, helping it carve out an identity as Montgomery's design district.

While the two portions of the project are quite distinct architecturally, CNU jurors praised both. Jury Chair Andrés Duany found the mixed-use building's courtyard exquisitely detailed and juror Victor Dover noted with pleasure the “old English romantic, revival architecture” of the cottages, a stylistic decision that kept those buildings “completely connected to the surrounding Old Cloverdale fabric.” The entire project also makes use of local- and craftsman-produced bricks, metal railings, and other materials to ensure a sense of continuity within their larger urban context.

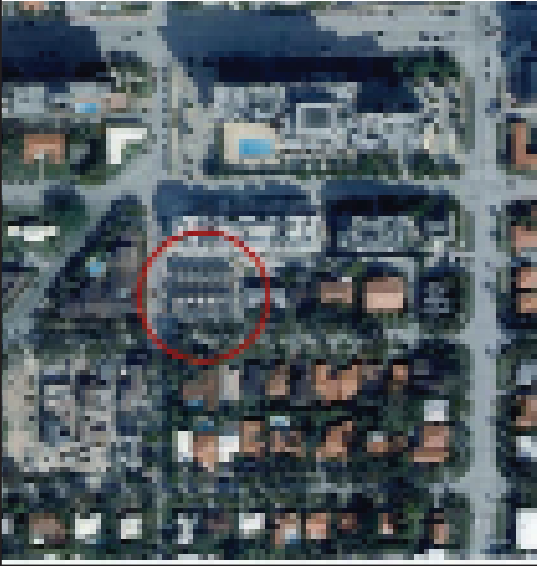


Built by young developers and representing the first such project in Montgomery, the Atlantic & Pacific Development restores great energy and sustainability to a long-neglected historic district. In so doing, the project provides a compelling model for infill development in neighborhood commercial settings like Old Cloverdale.



Developer:
City Loft Corporation
Principle Architects:
McAlpine Tankersley Architecture
Architects of Record:
Jones Pierce Architects

BLOCK STREET,
AND BUILDING

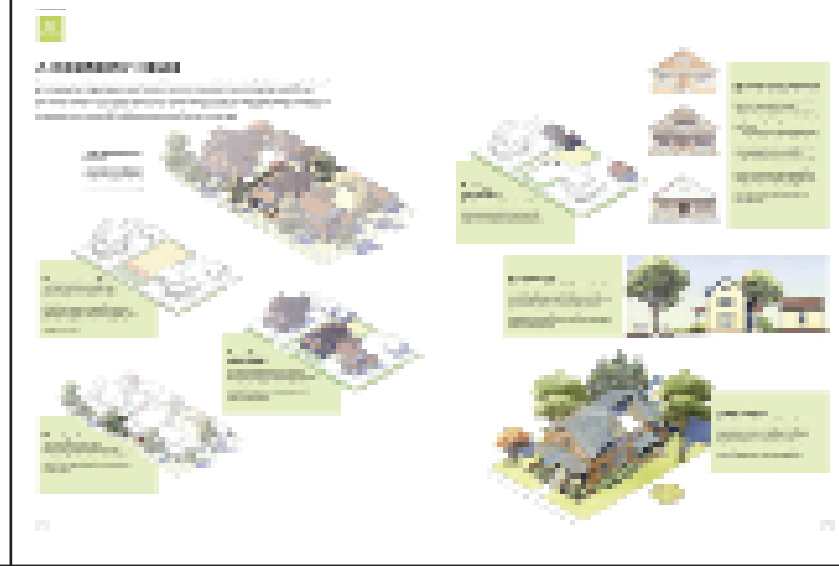


SITE:

A 0.7 acre infill parcel— rezoned into 10 fee-simple lots— in a historic garden city.

PROGRAM:

The return of a classic urban housing type to a Coral Gables neighborhood of apartment buildings and detached single-family houses.



SITE:

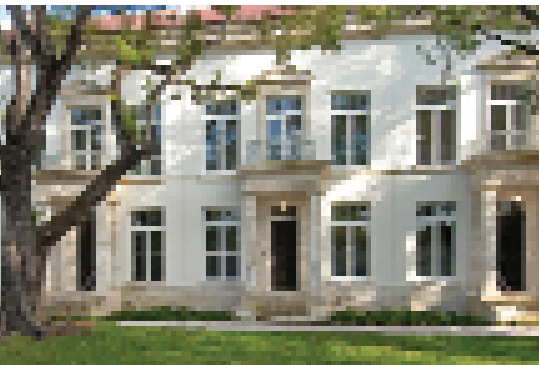
Traditional neighborhoods in the United States.

PROGRAM:

A design guide that helps developers design and build affordable homes that fit contextually into traditional neighborhoods across the United States.

ALMERIA ROW

CORAL GABLES, FLORIDA



Ten townhouses squeezed onto less than an acre in Coral Gables? Seventy years ago, it might not have been so surprising. But today, it is quite remarkable. Put that feat together with the considerable craft and grasp of history displayed in the project's design and execution and therein lie the reasons Almeria Row is among this year's Charter Award winners.

Before Almeria Row, Coral Gables' zoning code did not allow fee-simple townhouses on narrow lots. The owner, architect, and city officials collaborated to change the zoning code to restore to local use a classic urban housing type. (Indeed, George E. Merrick's original master plan for Coral Gables envisioned entire neighborhoods of townhouses.) The residences at Almeria Row are neither condominium units nor detached housing units but rather attached single-family townhomes.

Architects from the Coral Gables firm of de la Guardia Victoria Architects & Urbanists drew design inspiration from both northern and southern Europe, the architecture of Mott Schmidt and the Moorish district of Seville, Spain, to create a set of buildings that resemble the "classic" townhouse common in London and New York but function a bit differently from them.

The two-story townhouses on 23-foot by 120-foot lots range in size from 2,840 square feet and 3,037 square feet of living space. Inside each is a surprising revelation: a luminous coral stone courtyard with small pool, something unusual in northern townhouse types but more common in Mediterranean examples. Each connects the main house to the garage and a pair of above-garage guest bedrooms reached by their own stone staircase.

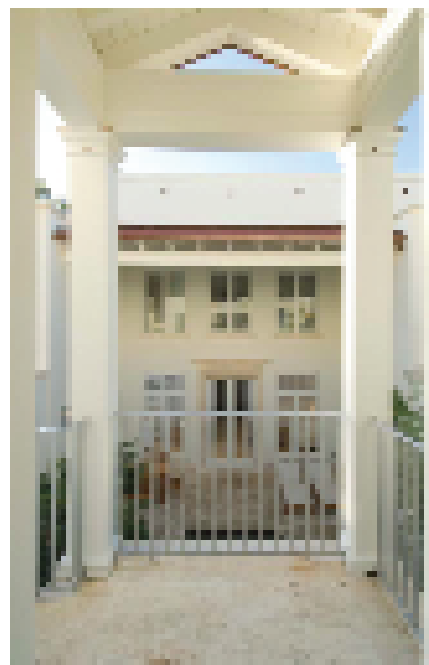
With its elegant stone exterior details and careful attention paid to height-to-width proportion and proximity of front stoop to the sidewalk, the project eases multi-family densities into a transitional area between Coral Gables' mixed-use city center and its streets of single-family homes.

While jurors would have greeted enthusiastically an effort to accommodate residents with a broader range of incomes— this is strictly an upscale project, after all—most were nevertheless impressed. "I think these buildings are just stunning, absolutely stunning," said juror Karen Parolek.

"What I liked especially," said juror Peter Park, "is how the zoning code actually changed. It set a new precedent and makes it easier for good development to happen in the future."

While the Florida garden city's architectural history is a proud one, distinguished work of this caliber has unfortunately been the exception in recent years, as the city has given height and apparently bulk allowances to towers designed in vaguely Spanish Revival styles that pay clumsy homage to local character.

Amid much "ugly" and "destructive" construction, juror Stefanos Polyzoides said, "This is an amazing project ... It is outright miraculous."



Architects: De la Guardia Victoria Architects & Urbanists, Inc.
Structural Engineer: Manuel I. Ortega, P.E.
Mechanical, Electrical Plumbing Engineer: Popov Engineers, Inc.
Civil Engineer: Vicente Cossio, P.E.
Pool Engineer: Natalia Ojeda, P.E.
Creative Director: Maria Cristina Longo
Client: Fernando Menoyo, Almeria Row, LLC

A PATTERN BOOK FOR NEIGHBORLY HOUSES

UNITED STATES

Powered by a workforce of committed volunteers and steered by a smart non-profit management team, Habitat for Humanity International has built a deserved reputation as one of the most prolific builders of affordable housing in the U.S. (and the world), with more than 225,000 homes to its credit. But Habitat often faces an obstacle familiar to other affordable housing providers: its "simple, decent, and affordable" houses aren't always welcomed into desirable existing neighborhoods.

While the reaction to affordable housing in the United States is a complex one, designers at Urban Design Associates—the team most responsible for the contemporary revival of pattern books after their distinguished run in the early 20th century—recognized that inferior, less-than-enduring design certainly accounts for part of the resistance these projects face and for some of the fears of falling property values they stir up. Indeed, according to national research studies, a large percentage of Americans would accept affordable housing in their neighborhood, as long as it fit in.

A Pattern Book for Neighborly Houses is the inspired response to this challenge. Produced through a partnership of Urban Design Associates, Habitat for Humanity International, and the Institute of Classical Architecture & Classical America, the pattern book is organized into parts including: a neighborhood patterns section that introduces the characteristics of all neighborhoods, along with the forms and patterns that create a unique identity for each place; a section on housing patterns showing how different types work in a variety of neighborhoods; and an architectural patterns section that reviews four primary architectural traditions found throughout the United States and the distinctive details that characterize them.

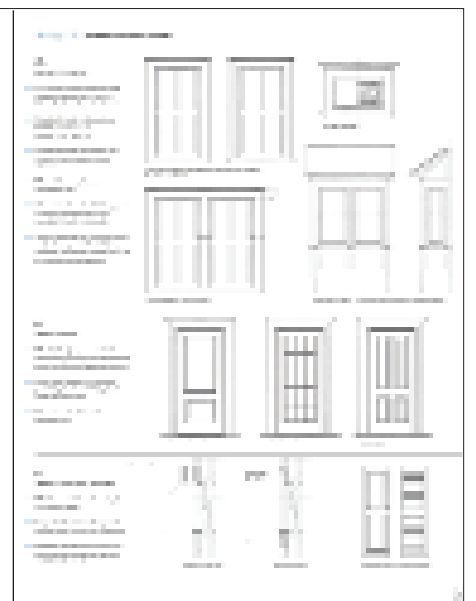
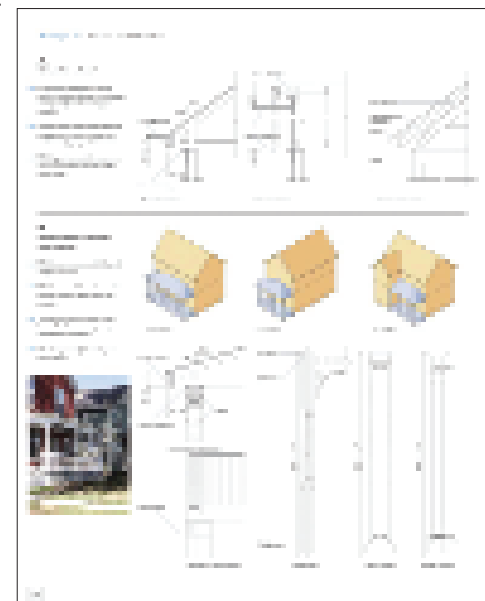
One of the book's strengths is its emphasis on context, from rural settings to city neighborhoods. The book makes suggestions on how to place handsome single-family homes that are within reach of working families seamlessly on rural or suburban streets. It makes similar design and placement suggestions for multi-family dwellings in inner-ring suburbs and city neighborhoods. "This is the first pattern book that is actually based on the rural-to-urban Transect," said Jury Chair Andrés Duany said. "It is also the first pattern book for affordable housing. It is an advance in the art."

Another of the book's benefits is the guidance offered for building environmentally sensitive and energy efficient homes for working people on a budget. Using a detailed cutaway drawing of a home, the authors describe the nuances of aligning urban buildings with both street and sun for natural day and task lighting, the techniques for proper insulation, the use of natural materials, the operation of greywater and catchment systems, and the use of drought-tolerant, water-conserving landscaping.

Jurors were convinced this pattern book will well serve Habitat for Humanity and other non-profit builders. And it just may become an invaluable guide for for-profit builders to use in recalibrating their products for a more dense, urban, mixed use, affordable, and neighborhood-focused 21st century. It is a potential game changer, one of many that will be needed if we are to reverse trends that have left too many wanting for a real place to call home.

"What I like about pattern books like this, as an educational piece, is the demand for quality and the demand for the technique that has been perfected," said juror Peter Park. "But on the other side of the equation is the capacity to deliver these things. Do we have the political leaders who will actually embrace diversity?"

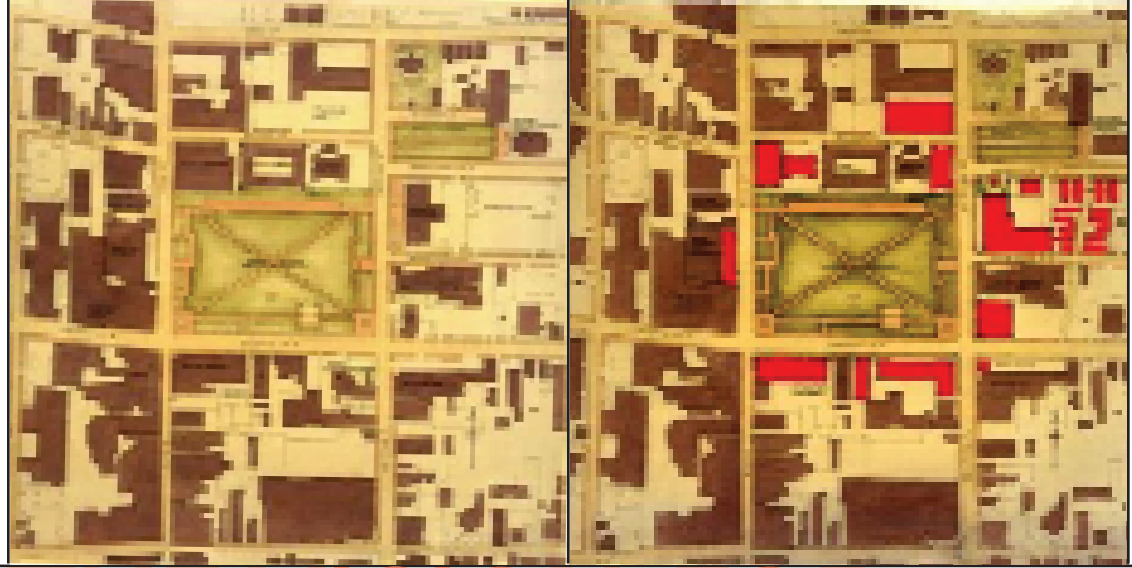
Consultant Team: Urban Design Associates
Client: Habitat for Humanity International; The Institute of Classical Architecture & Classical America;
Landscape Architecture: LaQuatra Bonci Associates
Graphic Design and Communications: Wolfe Design, Ltd
Editing: Zane Kathryn Schwaiger





SITE:
The neighborhoods of The Bahamas.

PROGRAM:
While providing "a graphic architectural code" for a specific Caribbean locale, this book models a novel approach for getting to the core of "what matters" in an architectural pattern language.



SITE:
An area ripe for redevelopment surrounding Marion Square Park, a 10-acre square in Charleston, South Carolina.

PROGRAM:
Using one of Charleston's "least attractive and most used public spaces" as a focal point, this vision project re-imagines the urban fabric around the square in order to provide an inspiring blueprint for redevelopment in harmony with the city's best architectural traditions.

ARCHITECTURE OF THE BAHAMAS

A LIVING TRADITION THE BAHAMAS



How is it that uneducated builders of a century ago, without access to tools we now take for granted, routinely built structures that are more beautiful, more practical, and more sustainable than most of what's been designed and built since World War II?

It may have been because their skills were honed by what we mistake as their limitations.

Lacking the wealth and technology that allow us to be unresponsive to our environment, earlier builders relied on forms and materials that evolved over time to adapt to place and climate. Multi-generational experience shaped the vernacular.

These traditions were not fixed. But to be included, variations had to satisfactorily complete this sentence: *We do this because...*

We do this because we need to capture—or avoid—the sun's rays.
We do this because humidity or bugs or the wind requires this coping strategy.
We do this because we need to be close to—or far from—another structure or a key landscape element.

Mouzon Design's revelatory *A Living Tradition* calls the "because" phrase the "Transmission Device of the Vernacular Mechanism." It is how time-tested design principles passed from generation to generation. And it is why those principles, evolving and adapting as required, were likely to produce intrinsically appealing and sustainable structures. "Objects created by Vernacular Mechanism," says *A Living Tradition*, "come as close to being organic as anything man-made."

If you integrated this mechanism into contemporary design decisions—including decisions regarding the design of neighborhoods, communities, and regions as well as individual buildings—it might be possible to code for relevance and sustainability. Mining the rich vernacular of The Bahamas, *A Living Tradition* explores such a coding process. The result is an illustrated pattern language, organized for immediate accessibility and application.

Where most pattern books are organized to provide guidance for building in the historical styles common in a region, this one codes for the great and evolving variety found within the vernacular as a whole. Rather than encouraging essentially similar structures decade after decade, this code allows buildings to evolve in ways that respect and honor history. It drills down deeply into architectural detail and codes for variation in form, type, and detail across the rural-to-urban Transect.

A few jurors thought that the complexity of this book's format—each page packed with explanations, diagrams, photographic examples, plus marginalia about achieving LEED credits through vernacular approaches—might undercut its author's hope of communicating with an audience that includes regular builders. But jurors agreed that the dense pages rewarded attention and were faithful in their plainly worded clarity to the "we do this because" credo.

Created for a private client who intends for it to receive broad circulation through government channels, this book should have influence in The Bahamas and beyond. What we have here is the organization, graphically rendered, of a vernacular overlay that can be re-calibrated for any tradition and replicated in any region.

"The important thing to remember is that this really is advocacy," said juror Stefanos Polyzoides. "It understands the idea of regenerating a vernacular is not a matter of form but it's a matter of understanding and seeing."

Author and Delineator: Stephen A. Mouzon
Photographers: Stephen A. Mouzon and Janna K. Whitley
Publisher: The New Urban Guild Foundation
Patrons: Charles & Rose Dana, Mark & Nancy Holowesko, William & Christine Hunter, Orjan & Amanda Lindroth, Tony Myers, Peter & Philippa Vlasov, Lyford Cay Property Owners Association, Old Fort Bay Property Owners Association, and the Village of Schooner Bay

THE VISION FOR MARION SQUARE

CHARLESTON, SOUTH CAROLINA

Although it has remained in constant use by citizens and visitors, years of neighborhood decline robbed Charleston's Marion Square Park of a meaningful urban context, especially when compared to much-admired structures and streetscapes only blocks away. This historic city and this gateway neighborhood deserved better.

Beginning in 2003, a New York-based volunteer design team from Fairfax & Sammons Architects launched the Vision for Marion Square and turned its unofficial status to its advantage. The project side-stepped the rancorous theoretical debate between modernists who dominate the historic district's approval process and advocates for traditional architecture by going straight to design. "The architects deliberately offered a proposal that was artful and demonstrative rather than diagrammatic and abstract," said project managers.

Without funding or implementation guidelines, designers felt constrained only by city ordinances. And ordinances for Charleston's historic district support "a general harmony as to style, form, color, proportion, texture, and material between buildings of historic design and those of more modern design."

The illustrations that grew from the vision process prescribe a denser urban environment around Marion Square Park to take advantage of a historic grid of streets underutilized in more recent times. Around the square, taller buildings could provide "a beneficial sense of enclosure." Mixed-use infill could be built where there are now parking lots adjacent to the square.

The team brought urban context to traffic and parking management, as well, suggesting more on-street parking to calm traffic and to promote a sense of safety for pedestrians on widened sidewalks. New buildings around the square were drawn facing it, reinforcing its function as a public front yard and gathering place for events such as the weekly farmer's market.

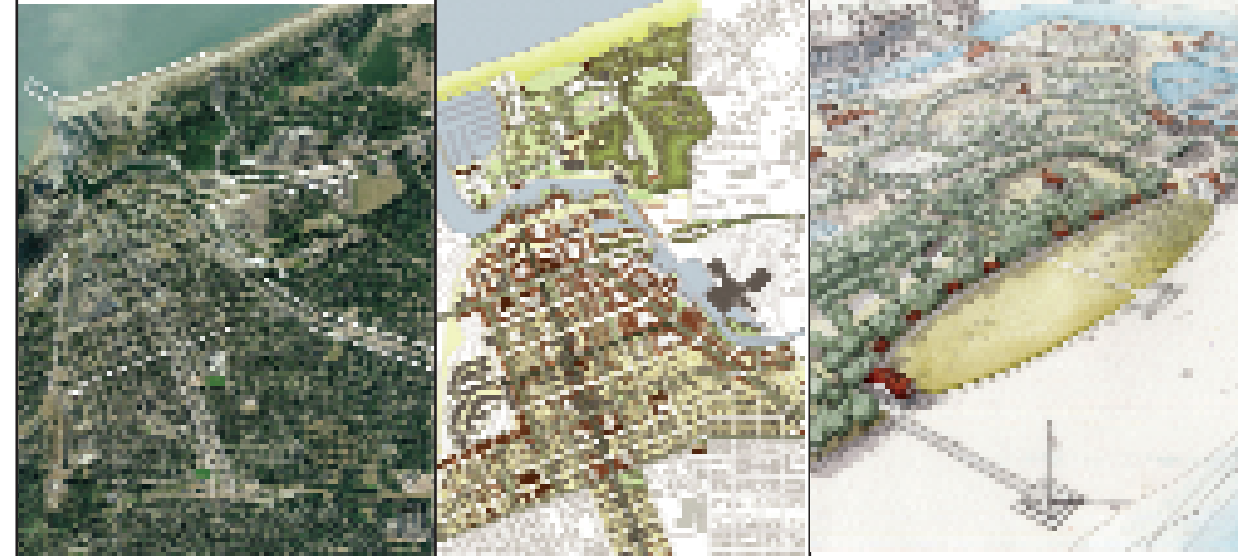
The plan encouraged adaptive reuse of historic structures and materials in harmony with the city's architectural traditions. And new commercial and civic structures in similar scale and style as older Charleston buildings were sketched to fill gaps and to provide examples of the neighborhood's potential vitality. By envisioning this authentic role for meticulously realized traditional design, Fairfax & Sammons offered a strong rebuttal to the many members of the historic preservation community, in Charleston and beyond, who dismiss the ability of new traditional architecture to do justice to its forbears and fear that extending it beyond historic buildings sends a confusing message about the passage of time.

The Vision Project drew popular support. The local press called it "a genuine citizens' effort." Team members have been contracted for projects inspired by the process. And private developers are working on proposals derived from project principles.

"The idea here is that in a small city a group of architects can make an immense difference," said juror Stefanos Polyzoides. By suggesting possibilities through illustrative design, this vision project accelerated a discussion that might never have taken place had it been forced to await official endorsement and financing.

Architects:
 Fairfax & Sammons Architects;
 Evans & Schmidt, Architects;
 Goff-D'Antonio, Associates;
 Randolph Martz, Architects;
 Ralph Muldrow
Community Groups:
 Mazyck Wraggborough Garden District;
 The Committee To Save the City





SITE:

About 670 acres in downtown Michigan City, Indiana—a city of 33,000 people, 60 miles from downtown Chicago and 40 miles from South Bend, Indiana

PROGRAM:

A detailed vision allowing Michigan City to reclaim its downtown from failed attempts at “urban renewal.”

NORTH END DISTRICT

MICHIGAN CITY, INDIANA

A boater approaching Michigan City, Indiana from Lake Michigan first sees a smokestack and cooling tower, then a broad, sandy beach crested by wooded dunes—with a large casino barge visible just behind. Just upriver from the marina stands downtown, now marred by insensitive urban renewal and ringed by underused industrial parcels. Franklin Street, the historic main street, stretches perpendicular to the shore into quiet, tree-lined neighborhoods. The city center remains economically moribund, in spite of considerable and irreplaceable assets—including six million tourist visits to downtown annually (most going right through downtown to the casino, an outlet mall, and to the lovely shoreline park), direct interurban rail service spanning the 60 miles to Chicago, and elegant historic houses.

The city sought out fresh new ideas in order to revitalize this crucial district, and turned to nearby Andrews University and its undergraduate urban design studio for help. Working as a single design team, the 26 students began the semester with an eight-day charrette at which they consulted with many residents and property owners; local planning, transportation, environmental, park, harbor, and transit officials; city council members; and accomplished practitioners in the field. The project requires the students to examine comprehensively the many competing interests that urban designers must balance.

The plan’s approach to redevelopment prescribes specific ways to heal the area’s many distinct neighborhoods, districts, and corridors. The plan’s signature move reorganizes and fills in the discordant civic center, creating a cohesive urban precinct that anchors both the waterfront and Franklin Street’s “downtown” end. It breaks the Gordian knot posed by an unloved 1970s public library that now impedes Franklin Street, clearing the way for a town square framed by a new municipal complex—and a gateway to the waterfront beyond.

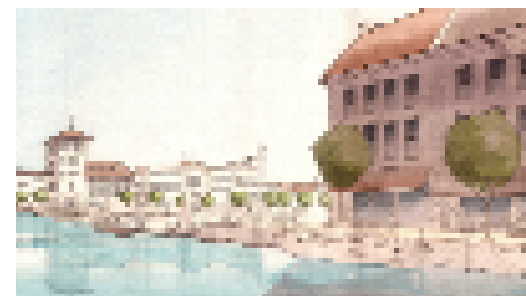
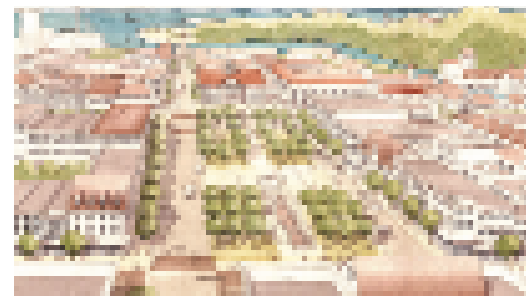
The plan anchors Franklin’s southern end with two multistory retail-parking buildings adjacent to a rebuilt train station and park—an urbane alternative to a current proposal that moves the station out to the parking-rich suburbs. Three commercial arterials reaching out from the city center become boulevards with tree-lined promenades.

Students conducted building surveys to document historic houses in the neighborhoods surrounding Franklin; the students created pattern books to promote contextual infill and incorporate energy-saving strategies outlined by the LEED for Homes standard. The new LEED for Neighborhood Development rating system also served as a pedagogical tool, suggesting new environmental strategies, design processes, and critiques of plan and rating system alike—a fact that didn’t escape the judges’ notice.

“The way it’s laid out is brilliant. It responds to the Charter and goes down to the small scales and LEED-ND,” said juror Ben Bolgar, director of design theory and networks for The Prince’s Foundation for the Built Environment. “They’re not just drawing images, they’re thinking. They’ve done everything they need to do for LEED.”

Lake Michigan and Trail Creek offer the city a chance to engage the water’s edge in contrasting ways. The city already recognizes the potential of the abandoned industrial facilities along the creek; the plan creates a mixed-use urban precinct there, with public frontages that welcome people, wildlife, and boats. On Lake Michigan, the students rearranged the lakefront park around an axis linking the zoo, a grand lawn, the beach, and the distant Chicago skyline.

In a location where several previous plans have failed, the Andrews team’s legacy of building consensus through active citizen engagement, proposing elegant and well-illustrated ideas, and including necessary implementation tools—including an overlay zoning code, pattern books, and a phasing strategy—have given Michigan City a useful proposal for post-industrial growth and renewal.



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STUDENT AWARDS

CHARTER OF THE NEW URBANISM

PREAMBLE

THE CONGRESS FOR THE NEW URBANISM views disinvestment in central cities, the spread of placeless sprawl, increasing separation by race and income, environmental deterioration, loss of agricultural lands and wilderness, and the erosion of society's built heritage as one interrelated community-building challenge.

WE STAND for the restoration of existing urban centers and towns within coherent metropolitan regions, the reconfiguration of sprawling suburbs into communities of real neighborhoods and diverse districts, the conservation of natural environments, and the preservation of our built legacy.

WE RECOGNIZE that physical solutions by themselves will not solve social and economic problems, but neither can economic vitality, community stability, and environmental health be sustained without a coherent and supportive physical framework.

WE ADVOCATE the restructuring of public policy and development practices to support the following principles: neighborhoods should be diverse in use and population; communities should be designed for the pedestrian and transit as well as the car; cities and towns should be shaped by physically defined and universally accessible public spaces and community institutions; urban places should be framed by architecture and landscape design that celebrate local history, climate, ecology, and building practice.

WE REPRESENT a broad-based citizenry, composed of public and private sector leaders, community activists, and multidisciplinary professionals. We are committed to reestablishing the relationship between the art of building and the making of community, through citizen-based participatory planning and design.

WE DEDICATE ourselves to reclaiming our homes, blocks, streets, parks, neighborhoods, districts, towns, cities, regions, and environment.

FOR THE COMPLETE LIST OF CHARTER PRINCIPLES VISIT:

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