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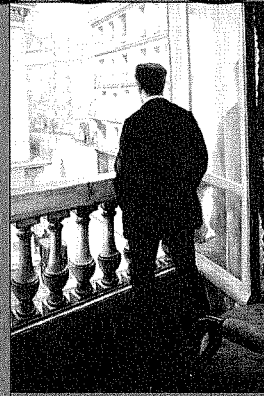
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Cross Section of



Gustav Caillebotte, *Man at the Window* (1875).

Addresses



Two women on a porch in Diggs Town, a public housing project in Norfolk, VA. Photos courtesy Raymond L. Gindroz/UDA Architects.

Young Man at His Window

The young man is looking through the window of his family's apartment in Paris. He appears to have jumped up from his chair. His body is tense and he seems excited. Does he recognize the young woman visible on the street corner a block away? Are his predatory instincts aroused by someone he does not know? Does he see something extraordinary happening on the next boulevard? Whatever has attracted his interest, he is keenly involved in the activity of the street while still inside the privacy of his living room.

Gustave Caillebotte's painting brings to life the relationship between the private spaces behind facades and the public spaces those facades create. The energy of the figure and the dominance of the window make us vividly aware of both inside and outside space, of the relationship between the public and private realms.

This painting enables us to visualize the three-dimensional form of this address in the city.

The details of the painting tell us about the quality of this address. All of the windows we see lining the streets outside have the same proportions, which contributes to the orderliness of the composition of the space. The facades have an almost equal or figure-ground relationship between the closely spaced windows and the solid walls between them.

The result is a glittering pattern of ornamented windows, all symbols of human presence. As we walk through these streets, we pass through spaces lined with visible symbols of that presence and experience Jane Jacobs's famous "eyes on the street" made manifest. The ornament on the windows and balconies, the elegance of street furniture and the gracious proportions of the public place, all tell us that this is a safe, orderly, fashionable address.

Two Women on a Porch

Two women lean on the rail of a front porch in an American neighborhood, looking across a front

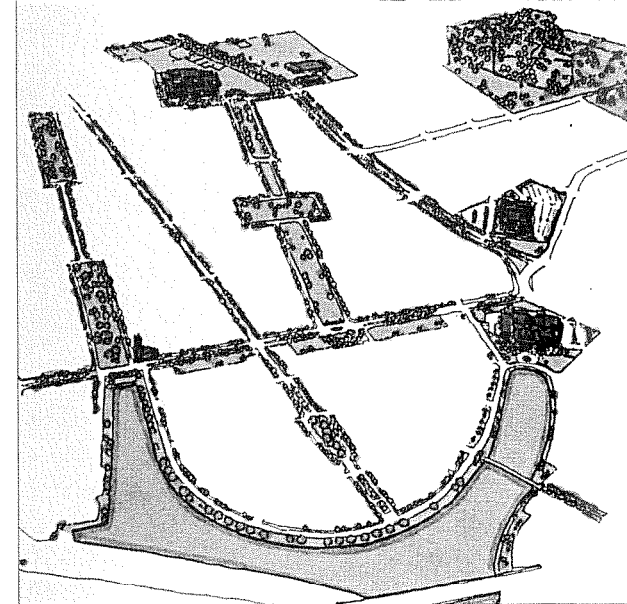
Top right: The Ghent neighborhood developed at the turn of the century in Norfolk, VA. Bottom right: Diagram of major streets, public spaces and institutions in Ghent—a network that connects to every block, establishing a visual and social anchor for the community.

lawn to the street. Are they watching children play on the street? Has some unknown person who looks suspicious ventured into this quiet neighborhood? While securely in the privacy of the front porch, the two women are actively engaged in the life of the street.

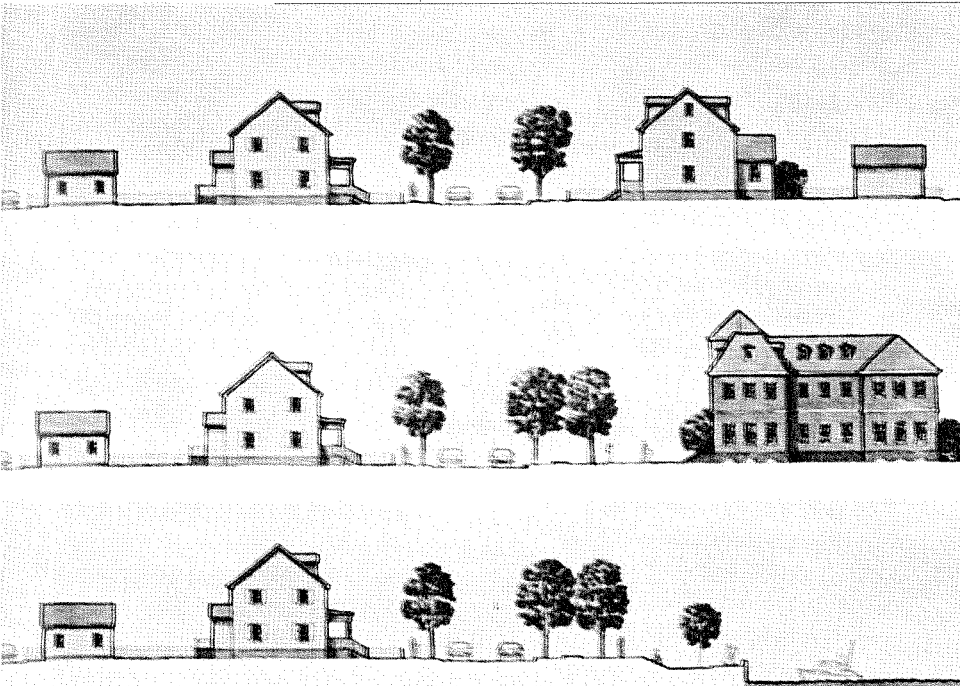
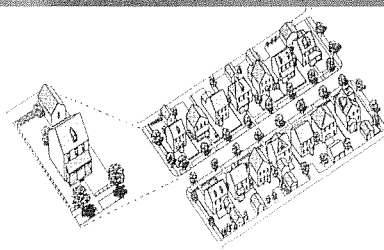
While the taut, uniform facades of Paris define a strong boundary between public and private, the traditional American neighborhood street is more complex. It is lined with two-story houses with porches, each of which stands as a symbol of the individuality of the family it represents. Together, the porches and brick facades of the houses loosely define the edges of the public space of the street.

A cross section drawing of a typical American neighborhood street illustrates this complexity. In the center is the cartway of the street itself, framed by a tree lawn and sidewalk on each side. The facades of the houses are set back from the sidewalk, creating a richly complex space. Porches extend the private zone of the house into this space, and front lawns further extend this personal territory so that it is visually part of the public space of the street. In spite of the overlap of public and private space, there is no ambiguity about ownership. Each individual's property is clearly marked by the edge of the front yard and, perhaps, by a picket fence or hedge.

This physical form reflects American urban culture and its concept of the relationship between the individual and society. We sit on



Below: A typical neighborhood block and sections of the types of streets commonly found in such areas. The street is the focus of the address; the facades of houses and institutions face the streets, and the streets define the edge of public spaces.



our front porches as individuals, looking across our lawn to the street. Our porches and lawns are part of the public space, contributing to its character and image. With our rights as individuals come responsibilities to contribute to the community by creating, maintaining and participating in the public realm.

The formal fronts of houses face each other across the space of the street, as if in polite conversation, creating the address of a group of individuals and courteously greeting passersby. The back yards, part of the private world of the individual families, are screened from the public realm by fences or by the houses themselves.

Never should a back yard face the street or the front yards of homes across the street.

Just as a residential street is a collection of individual house addresses, a neighborhood, in fact the whole city, is a collection of different types of streets and public spaces — each of which itself is an address. Some of these are very small-scale residential streets; others are large-scale boulevards lined with houses; still others are small parks, while others are civic squares.

For all of these addresses, the street is the focus of the address. The front facades of houses, with their porches and front yards, always face the street. Schools and other institutions also have an address on the street, with facades facing across the street to the facades of houses.

Parks and natural features, such as rivers and lakes, should also be defined by public streets, so they are connected to the whole community. They should not be next to someone's back yard, blocked from public access and view.

Creating an Address

When Baron Georges Eugene Hausmann built the boulevards of Paris, he created a series of dramatically new addresses. He accomplished this by cutting swaths through the city that included more land than necessary for the boulevards themselves. The additional land on each side of the street made it possible to build eight-to-ten-story buildings with handsome facades. The investment in the lavish landscaping and elegant street furniture in the public right-of-way was combined with elegant architecture to create a marketable address. Many new boulevards cut through unfashionable areas, but they succeeded so well that they transformed the whole city.

A superb application of this strategy of creating an address in an American city can be found in the Ghent neighborhood in Norfolk, Virginia. At the turn of the century, an entrepreneur decided to develop a new community at the edge of one of Norfolk's many tidewater swamps. He understood that he needed to create a great address and that the swamp lacked marketing appeal. So he dredged the swamp and installed a beautifully curving bulkhead to create a semicir-

cular canal. Along the bulkhead he built a linear park that was bordered by a street lined with the fronts of large houses. He named the canal The Hague, gave the houses Flemish facades and called the whole community Ghent.

Mowbry Arch, the street along the canal, is a truly magical address, whether experienced along its promenade or from across the water. At one end, the vista is terminated by the beautiful Chrysler Art Museum, and at the other, space is extended through the spaces of Stokely Gardens. It is the focus of a larger composition in which a network of parks and public gardens provide settings for major institutions and are connected to every neighborhood street and block, becoming visual as well as social anchors of the community.

This strategy can be helpful in making inner-city neighborhoods — many of which have deteriorated and become symbols of urban problems — safe, comfortable places in which people of different incomes will want to invest. We have found that by creating a series of addresses, with images based on the best, most stable neighborhoods of a city, it is possible to attract a diverse new market to the inner city. To do so, it is necessary to see the “cross section of the address” not as a two-dimensional technical drawing, but as a three-dimensional vision of the place to be created.

Creating New Addresses in Diggs Town

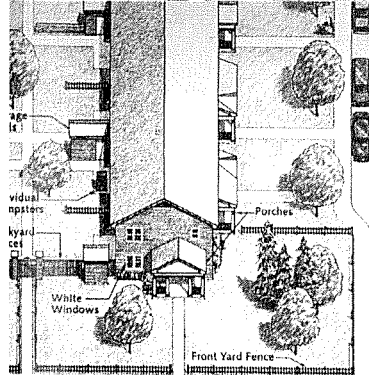
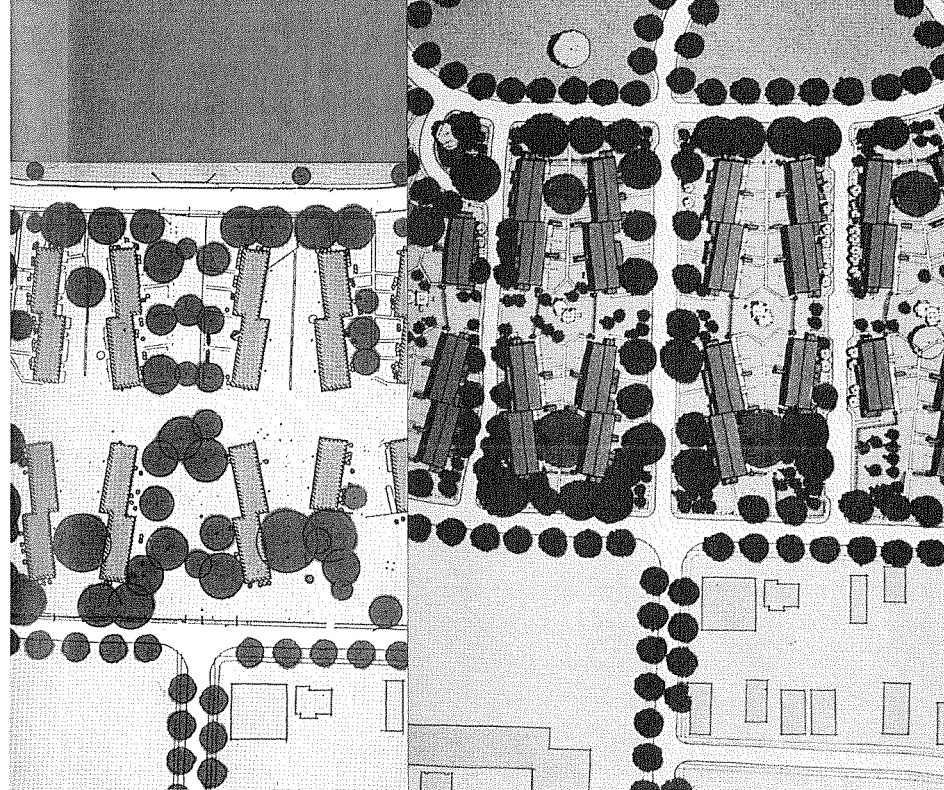
Perhaps the most vivid way to understand the importance of the cross section of an address is to see examples of where it does not exist, where there is no statement of either individuality or community and no street.

We were asked by the Norfolk Redevelopment and Housing Authority (NRHA) to suggest ways in which its renovation budget could be used to make the most difference in people's lives in a public housing project called Diggs Town. These funds were coordinated by the NRHA, along with a number of other programs, including early childhood education, community policing, drug prevention and employment training.

There are 428 units of housing in Diggs Town, almost all of which are two-story, town-house-type units. The buildings, 40 years old,



Diggs Town, before and after renovations



Top: Before and after plans of Diggs Town. Above: Detail of modifications to the space around the rows of housing. New streets were added; sidewalks connect house entrances to the streets; some yards are fenced.

were long, barracks-like rectangles whose fronts faced courts and whose ends turned a blind side to the street. Because the units did not face a street, they had no real address. There was an ambiguous “no-man’s land” surrounding them, no definition of either a public realm or the private domain of individual residents. Gangs took over and residents were afraid to come out of their house.

Garbage was collected in large, communal garbage bins. These not only dominated the streetscape, creating a very messy image for this address, but also presented dangers for residents. As one person put it, “When you have garbage in your own trash can it’s your trash, but when it goes to the ‘big bin,’ it becomes the world’s trash, and therefore not maintained at all.” Drug dealers used them as impromptu sales counters to make sure they did not have incriminating evidence on their persons when the police came by.

We worked with residents and with the city to find out how to reclaim this no-man’s land from the gangs and criminals and how to establish a safe, stable community. The residents told us, “We want to have porches, not because we need another place to sit, but so we can come out of our houses, see one another, be together and come together to deal with our problems.” That is a powerful statement of citizenship.

The most dramatic change was that, wherever possible, streets were inserted through the no-man’s land. The project once had superblocks with interior courts that could not be seen from the street; now it is a series of smaller neighborhood blocks, more like the neighborhoods around it.

The dimensions of these new streets were critical because of the close spacing between buildings. Wherever there was sixty feet of space, it was possible to insert a street. Much-needed parking was included, but the section could not accommodate a planting strip between the curb and front lawn. In areas where streets could not be placed, courts were defined with fences and twelve-foot-wide walks were built with curbs separating them from front lawns, thus providing a strong definition between public and private.

The major investment on the exterior of the buildings was the construction of good, full-sized porches. They have correct classical columns with balusters that provide an elegant frame within which people can sit in dignity, no matter how humble their furniture may be. Since our house is a mirror of ourselves, we should make sure we are designing mirrors that contribute to personal pride, self-image and dignity. The porches are symbols for the individual families they serve.

Small-scale, white picket fences define the edge of each citizen’s property, particularly at the corners where gangs and others have trampled the lawn. Taller fences create secure back yards, which are shared among the group of houses on each side but closed to outsiders — a private place for those who live around it. Individual trash bins were provided for each family, just like in a normal neighborhood.

These very simple elements create the cross section of address in Diggs Town. Where once there were units on an anonymous wasteland, there are now “houses” with front yards, front porches and back yards with patios. The residents now have one of the most basic elements of citizenship: an address.

The impact has been remarkable. The statistics indicate a sharp drop in police calls and crime. Residents tell us that before the changes, they heard four and five gun shots a night; now

they hear a gun shot once every four or five months. Norfolk's police chief has said that visible evidence of people taking care of their neighborhood discourages criminals from doing business there. So these simple elements of fences, porches and streets have had a major role in securing the neighborhood.

Most important is the creation of an address in which residents take pride. The community police officer has said that the most significant change is one of spirit. Once residents began to take pride in the community and gain self-respect, they also gained hope.²

It would be foolish, however, to credit this change on the physical environment alone. There are also a number of social programs that have been coordinated with the physical changes. The physical form provides a framework that enables residents to re-establish a neighborhood.

Creating New Addresses for Public Housing

Generally, public housing projects do not have the richness and clarity of urban structure found in a neighborhood like Ghent. Although Diggs Town now has a series of neighborhood streets and courts as addresses, it is still a bounded project and not part of a mixed use, mixed-income com-

munity in the same way that the various neighborhood streets of Ghent are. The challenge, then, is to find strategies that can enable public housing projects to become part of larger, stable, mixed-income neighborhoods. In Norfolk, the city established a citizen task force, led by two city council members, that suggested several ideas.

The first step is to expand the boundaries of the planning effort to identify both strengths and weaknesses in the larger community. Positive elements, such as churches, schools, community centers and civic buildings can be used as a means to create new addresses. By establishing partnerships with the institutions and with both private and nonprofit community-based developers, a comprehensive revitalization can be accomplished in which the public housing is only one of many components:

Focus on the institutions as anchors and create a framework of public space that makes them the visible focal points of the community. Always bound these open spaces with streets and make sure the churches and schools have a dignified setting.

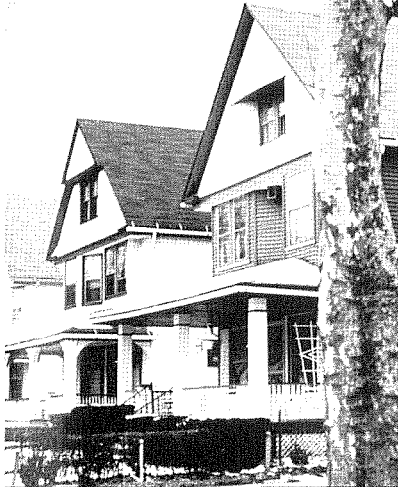
Build new housing along these new addresses that have been created with houses or apart-



Above: The cross section of the address includes yards and porches. Spaces with a transitional public-private nature. Below left: Diggs Town is now filled with signs of residents taking care of their yards and their community.



Right. Streets have become a place for play; the porches are places from which parents can keep a watchful eye. Below: Typical houses in the Fairfax neighborhood.



Above: Rendering of neighborhood with vacant lots filled with new houses or turned into streets that make-through-block connections.

ments that have the character and image of a good local neighborhood.

Add infill development on vacant and deteriorated properties with buildings that are consistent with the image of the community.

Remodel the remaining public housing structures to have the essential elements of a good address with streets, porches, front yard amenities and well defined back yards.

Bicentennial Place: A New Address to Revive an Old Neighborhood

Bicentennial Place is a new, block-long street in Fairfax, an aging Victorian neighborhood on the Near East Side of Cleveland, Ohio. It connects two existing blocks that have a mixture of recently constructed infill houses and rehabilitated and restored nineteenth-century houses. Along this street, new houses have been fitted carefully onto a sequence of empty lots.

The houses on Bicentennial Place (the name celebrates Cleveland's two-hundredth anniversary) demonstrate the many housing programs the city offers to encourage the revitalization of troubled neighborhoods. They serve as model homes for a

sales program that will offer houses scattered throughout Fairfax at a wide range of prices.

The new street has exactly the same cross section as the historic streets. The twenty-four-foot-wide cartway permits parking on both sides and slow moving, two-way traffic. This is narrower than current city standards but was approved because of the low volume of traffic and the fact that it is based on the existing streets in the neighborhood. There is a three-foot-wide tree lawn between the sidewalk and the curb.³ The houses are set back ten feet from the sidewalk to permit a small front lawn and an ample front porch. The front facades of the new houses line up to create the edge of the public space.

The cross section does not include alleys (most of Cleveland's traditional neighborhoods do not have alleys), so access to garages must be from the street. The key, therefore, is not to interrupt the continuity of house facades with garage doors, a problem whose difficulty was compounded by the narrow forty-foot-wide lots. Therefore, the front-loaded garages are set back twenty feet behind the front facade, with a maximum ten-foot-wide driveway interrupting the front yard.

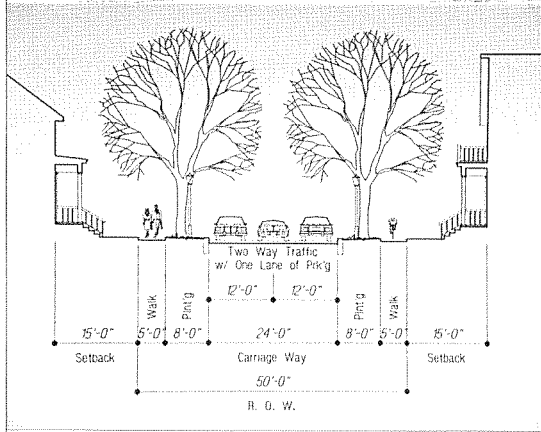
While developing the master plan for Bicentennial Village and the detailed house designs, we engaged in a broad-based public process with extensive participation by the many block clubs in the neighborhood. We learned that there were many vacant lots on which terrible things took place and, therefore, that the area was perceived to be unsafe.

But when people talked about safe streets, they talked of windows and porches overseeing the activity of the street. As one woman said, "I love my porch because I am a nosy neighbor. When I sit on my porch I know what is going on in the street. And I know that when I am not sitting on my porch, there are things that are going on in the street that would not be going on if I were sitting on my porch." To which a man in the meeting replied, "The best security system is a nosy neighbor."⁴ Therefore, when we developed a pattern book to make sure the essential elements of good street were incorporated in the design of houses, the primary criteria were to serve the interests of nosy neighbors.⁵

The new street has another important community purpose. In this part of Fairfax, the blocks are extraordinarily long – 2,100 feet, instead of the more conventional 500 to 700 feet. However, we know from Jane Jacobs and other observers of neighborhood form that short blocks are better for building communication among neighbors than long blocks. Bicentennial Place connects the people of several streets and creates a shared focus for them.⁶

The three-dimensional character of the cross section is typical of Victorian neighborhoods. New houses without the essential qualities of the adjacent historic ones would not succeed in creating the address. The pattern book we developed calls for houses that will both harmonize with and enhance the existing houses. It calls for steeply pitched gable roofs facing the street and full-size porches with some decorative elements.

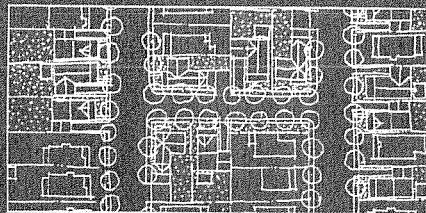
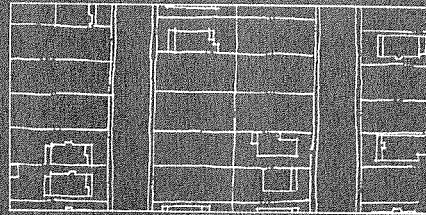
Because there will be a wide range of house designs (with a range of prices so that various income groups can afford them), it is essential to create a unified character and imageable address in which the differences are easily absorbed.



Rendering and sectional drawing of the cross section of address in Fairfax.

Houses by Habitat for Humanity have been modified from the standard model to have these essential elements. They will stand side by side with market-rate houses and restored Victorians as respectable members of the community.

Also part of the master plan are a series of village greens and street corners that combine residential uses with retail and institutional uses. These are anchored by landmarks such as churches and located at key intersections. Emmanuel Place will be developed by Emmanuel Church and includes church-sponsored housing over



Plan of typical area in Fairfax (above left), and conceptual plan for how it might be transformed by using vacant lots for infill housing and connecting streets (left).



address has a different range of home types, but within the town you will find apartments renting for \$650 a month across the street from large, \$900,000 houses, which in turn are adjacent to small cottages, which are on the very same street as modest townhouses.

Our role, after the master plan was done, was to develop design guidelines that would ensure both quality and harmony among these various housing types. Many of the houses and town-

Celebration's pattern book seeks to create neighborly streets and public spaces.

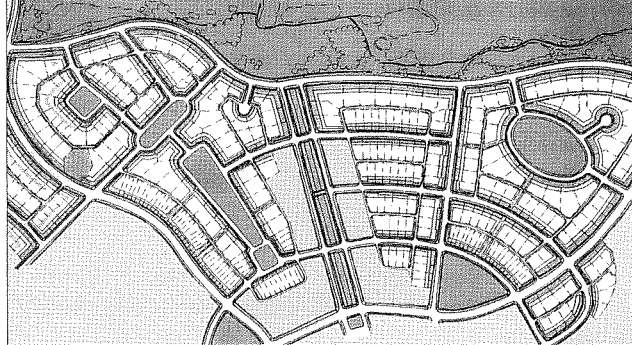
ground floor space that is a mixture of retail and church educational programs. The image in the drawing indicates a new address based on the architectural character of the church.

Celebration: Traditional Addresses for a New Town

The images of the neighborhood street are an integral part of the success of Celebration, the new town being developed in Orlando, Florida, by The Walt Disney Company. Celebration is a landmark project because it challenges some of the most negative and destructive aspects of the way communities have been built in the past 50 years.

By providing a wide mix of types and price of housing in one small area, the town has demonstrated that mixed-income communities can be revived as part of American culture. The reason people are accepting this in Celebration is because of the quality of the address and the sense of community it represents.

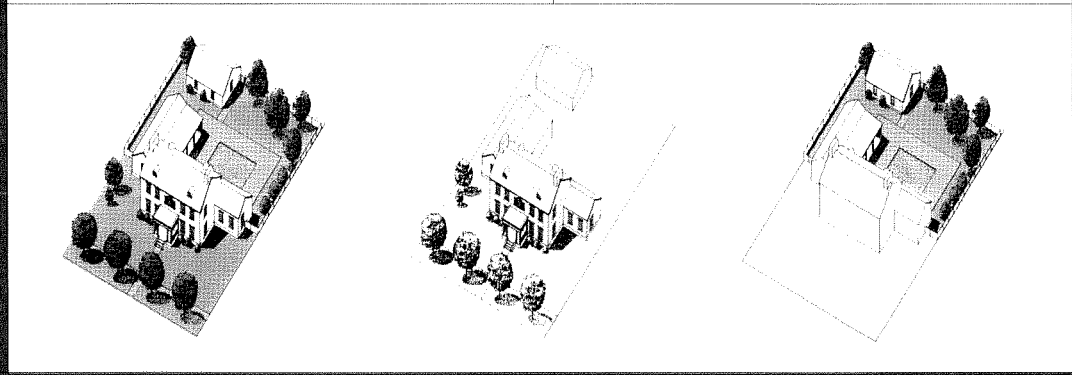
The first phase is a village with 800 apartments, townhouses and houses. The master plan, by Robert A.M. Stern and Cooper Robertson Partners, creates a series of beautiful addresses, each with its own character and identity. Each



houses are being built by merchant builders with their own standard plans and elevations. The Celebration pattern book, like the traditional ones on which it is modeled, establishes patterns for building good houses and a good neighborhood. It is meant to be seen as part of marketing the development rather than a regulatory tool that inhibits the builder.

The focus of Celebration's pattern book is the creation of neighborly streets and public spaces. There are community patterns and architectural patterns. The community patterns establish setbacks and placement of key architectural elements, such as the central volume of the house, which contains the front door, porches (if appropriate) and landscape elements.

Right: architectural plan. Community pattern: establish setbacks and placement of key architectural elements, such as the central volume of the house, which contains the front door, porches (if appropriate) and landscape elements.



Although the cross sections vary for each type of community space, they are coordinated to establish a harmony of scale and style among the different addresses. The more expensive homes might be larger, but the scale of the parts of the house would be similar to those on the smallest houses. It is the harmony among the elements that create the community space — the address — that makes it possible to have a great diversity of price and type of house.

The architectural patterns include six architectural styles that are based on architecture indigenous to the Southeastern U.S. and provide the essential elements necessary to create a good neighborhood address. For example, windows are carefully designed to be dominant on facades so they can serve as symbols of human presence and as “eyes on the street.” The detail of cornices is specified so the height of houses and the profile of the roof define the boundaries of the space. Porches not only provide comfortable places to sit and but also represent the individual families that support the street.

A Revival of American Urbanism

Celebration’s marketing success indicates that the creation of a sense of community is regaining importance in American life. Home buyers are paying more for a smaller house because, they say, they want to be part of a community, not simply owners of a house in an anonymous subdivision. This sense of community is most visible in the character of the neighborhood streets, squares and parks of the town.

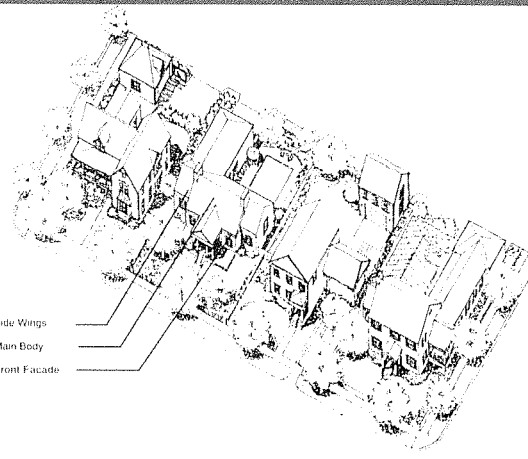
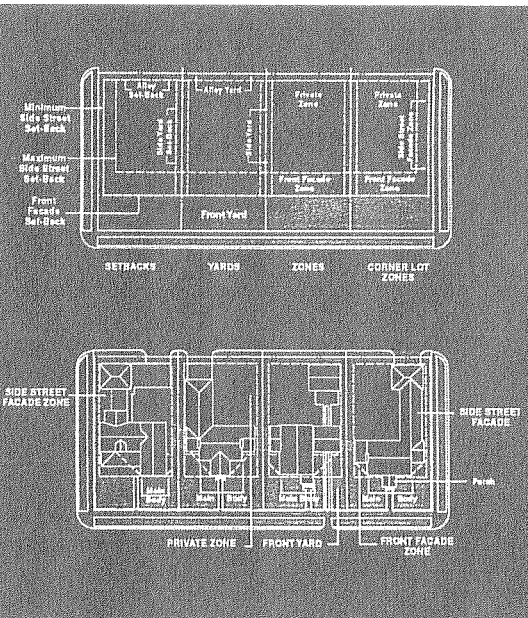
In Fairfax, restoring the now tarnished image of its neighborhood streets has been the means of bringing together the residents and leadership of the city in an effort to re-establish Fairfax as a mixed income and vital community.

In Diggs Town, the transformation of barren spaces into a series of neighborhood streets and courts has enabled residents to come together to deal with the community’s problems.

These three efforts are in very different regions of the U.S. and involve people from a wide range of economic and social conditions. Yet, the image of a comfortable, safe and socia-

ble neighborhood street, park or square is central to their success.

In each effort, the focus of the design effort was to create an address that appeals to a wide range of people — to encourage them to take a risk and move back to an urban neighborhood like Fairfax, or to become part of a new town like Celebration, or to think differently about a public housing project like Diggs Town. Gustave Caillebotte’s painting helps us under-



stand the complexity of such spaces and therefore how to create the cross section of wonderful addresses.

Notes

1. Fencing each yard individually would have required inserting either an alley, for which there was no room, or a pedestrian way. The problem of gangs was so severe that it was decided not to have such a public way but, rather, to enclose yards with gates operated by the residents of the units around each block (sixteen to thirty-two units). Storage buildings and four-foot high fences define the zones closest to each house as private areas.
2. A study of a local educational and job training program compared the participation of Diggs Town residents with that of residents of another project. More Diggs Town residents participated regularly and were employed at the end. Incomes appear to be up, meaning that people are getting jobs and new residents are not all at the bottom of the scale. Family reunions are being held in Diggs Town for the first time, because people are proud of where they live.
3. We prefer a six-foot minimum width for tree lawns, and depending on the character of the street, it might be desirable to have a width of up to twelve feet.
4. The nosiness being celebrated here is about what goes on in the street, not what goes on behind the front facades of the houses. It is a human and natural security system.
5. We often express design guidelines in the form of pattern books, which reach back to the way traditional American neighborhoods were built until World War II.
6. The Bicentennial program is an infill project that relies on the city land bank. New streets are located where land is available to tie together two or more streets.