



Principles for
Designing and Planning
Homeownership Zones

U.S. Department
of Housing & Urban
Development
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Secretary

Office of Community
Planning and Development
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FOREWORD

Rebuilding neighborhoods with hundreds of new homes presents an exciting opportunity to create better and more livable communities. In recent years, architects, planners, landscape designers, and developers have experimented with principles of a "New Urbanism," combining features of traditional community planning with new ways of organizing daily life in a rapidly changing world.

The fundamental idea is to view the neighborhood as a coherent unit, where adults and children can walk to nearby shopping, services, schools, parks, recreation centers, and in some cases, to their own jobs and businesses; where civic centers can serve as focal points for community activity; where streets and blocks are connected with pedestrian walkways and bicycle paths; where public transit is readily available to connect with other neighborhoods and communities throughout the metropolitan region; where automobiles are convenient to use but do not dominate the most visible aspects of the urban landscape with traffic congestion and massive parking lots; and where houses are built closer together, with front and back porches and yards, grouped around tree-shaded squares, small parks, and narrow streets with planting strips.

Such pedestrian-friendly environments help facilitate positive community spirit and emphasize neighborhood safety and security. The goal of the New Urbanism is to promote diverse and livable communities with a greater variety of housing types, land uses, and building densities – in other words, to develop and maintain a "melting pot" of neighborhood homes serving a wide range of household and family sizes, ages, cultures, and incomes.

This book of principles summarizes the essential lessons of the New Urbanism. It can serve as a useful document for communities striving to create new homeownership opportunities through Homeownership Zones and to rebuild neighborhoods through other efforts.



Henry G. Cisneros, Secretary

U.S. Department of Housing
and Urban Development



U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development
Washington, D.C. 20410-7000

OFFICE OF ASSISTANT SECRETARY
FOR COMMUNITY PLANNING

Our new Homeownership Zone initiative provides a tremendous opportunity to make a visible difference in distressed areas across the nation. A key part of President Clinton's and Secretary Cisneros' national homeownership strategy, Homeownership Zones can provide the catalyst for vibrant neighborhoods to sprout from abandoned and distressed areas. To use homeownership to spur widespread economic development. To give families the chance to own their homes and take pride in their community. To restore energy and hope.

The Homeownership Zone strategy builds on the successes of America's Empowerment Zones and Enterprise Communities by recognizing that the best strategies are forged from the ground up, are coordinated and comprehensive, and must make sense for the community, not just for Washington.

We also know that with renewed public/private partnerships, we can prove that we can make a difference in distressed neighborhoods. Homeownership Zones provide a unique opportunity to do just that: to visibly change the way abandoned neighborhoods look and feel; to revitalize neighborhoods and restore commitment to communities; to build new homes and create new homeowners; and to design places where families can work hard, raise kids, and move forward.

This is an exciting initiative that builds on what works. This book of principles on planning and design provides innovative ideas from some of the best minds in the field. We offer it to you as one more tool for your consideration in making the most of your housing and community revitalization efforts.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Andrew Cuomo".

Andrew Cuomo, Assistant Secretary

Introduction

1

Rebuilding neighborhoods is one of our greatest urban challenges. Strong communities anchored by homeownership support individuals and families while encouraging personal responsibility. Developments that feature homeownership should be designed to reinforce and strengthen complete neighborhoods. They should not be seen as stand-alone projects. Broad community involvement and designs that integrate the project within its neighborhood context are critical to the success of homeownership development.

In many inner city areas the underpinnings of neighborhood and community have been lost. Local institutions, unique history, cultural diversity, and common meeting places that once knit neighborhoods together have been undermined by deterioration and abandonment. The physical basis of community – walkable streets – has been degraded by crime in some areas and by auto congestion in others. Usable public

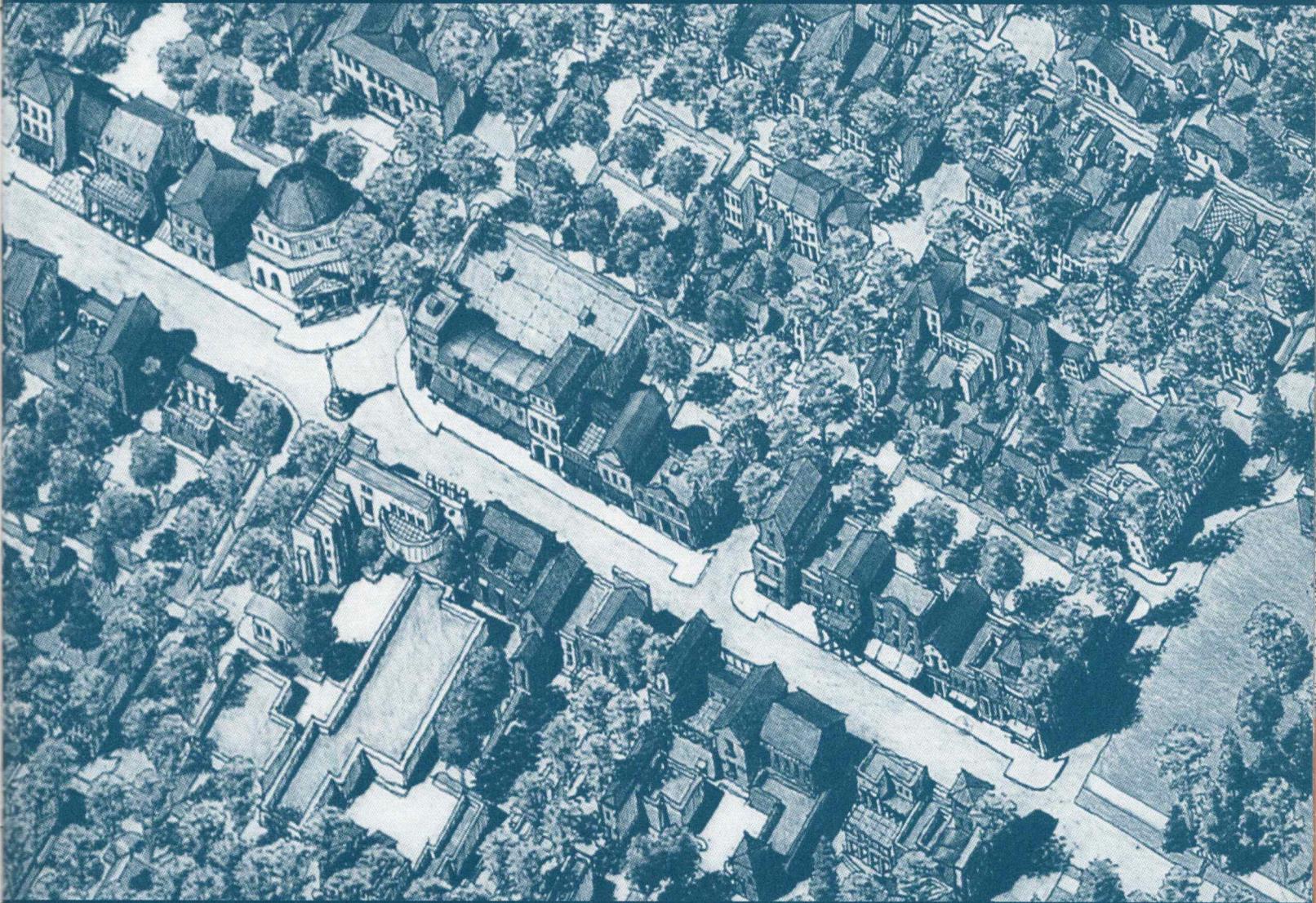
spaces and civic facilities have been neglected, resulting in loss of community spirit. Homeownership Zones can help reestablish the foundations of healthy neighborhoods and cities.

The fundamental building blocks of a region and city should be its neighborhoods and its homes. Neighborhoods are the physical and social expression of community and its sustaining infrastructure. Preserving usable public spaces, respecting local history, and establishing thriving neighborhood centers are essential to fostering healthy communities. Mixed-use economic development, homeownership, and community services should enhance local identity. The following principles and illustrations are offered to help shape the design and configuration of Homeownership Zones in order to produce stronger neighborhoods and more complete communities.

1

The neighborhood, not individual projects, is the essential increment of development and redevelopment in urban communities.

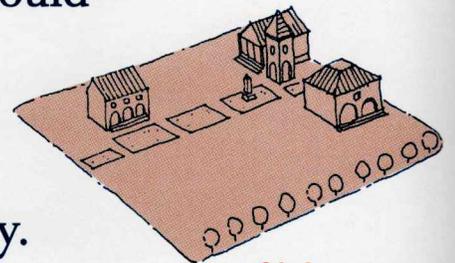
Neighborhoods should be compact, pedestrian-friendly, and mixed-use, forming identifiable areas that encourage citizens to take responsibility for their maintenance and evolution.



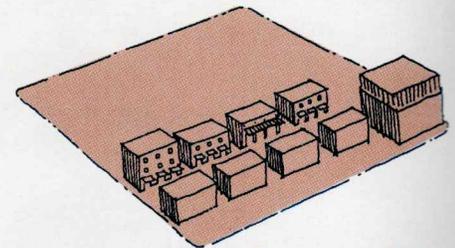
A fine-grained mix of uses—retail, office, and housing—combines to create a diverse main street in this new growth area.

2

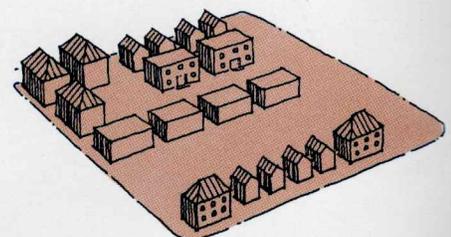
Many activities of daily living should occur within walking distance, allowing independence to those who do not drive, especially the elderly and the young. Interconnected networks of streets should be designed to encourage walking, reduce the number and length of automobile trips, and conserve energy.



Civic

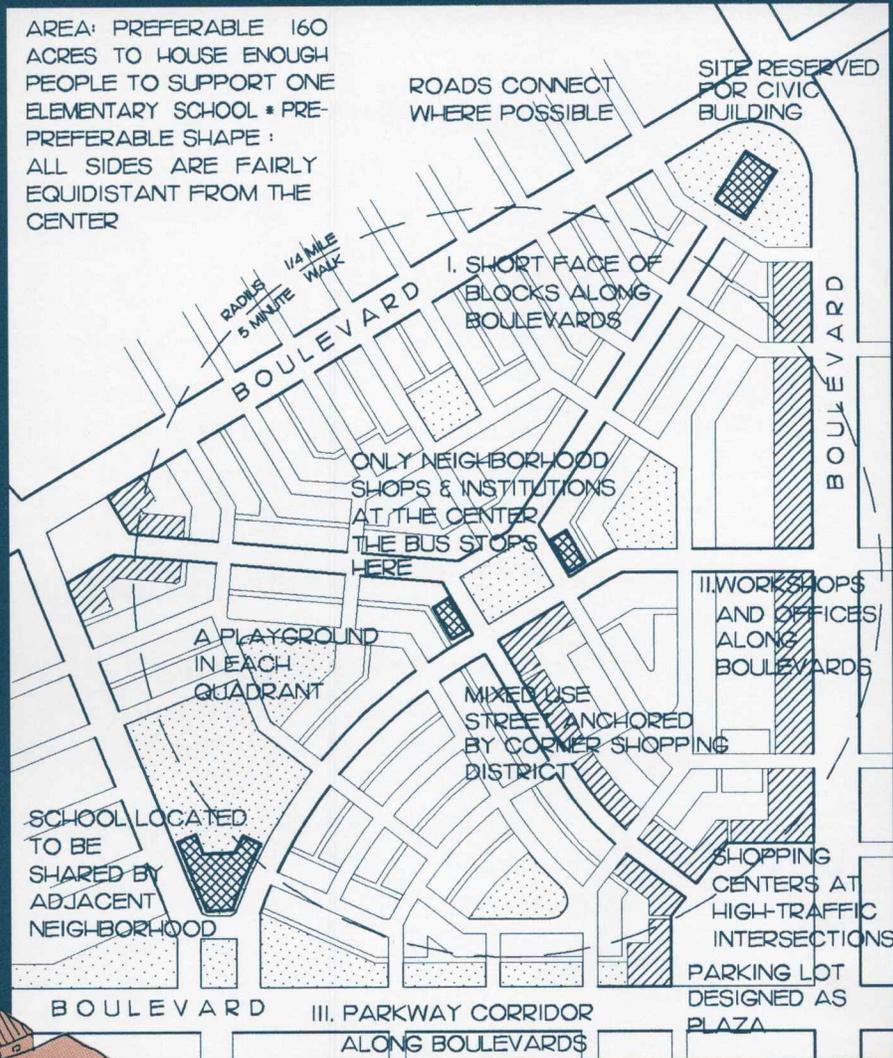


Commercial

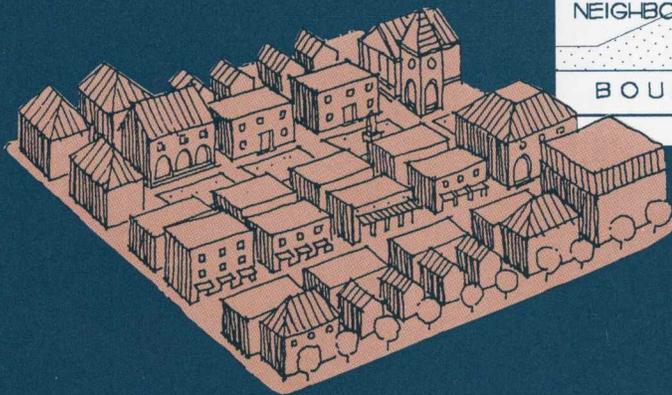


Residential

AREA: PREFERABLE 160 ACRES TO HOUSE ENOUGH PEOPLE TO SUPPORT ONE ELEMENTARY SCHOOL * PREFERRED SHAPE: ALL SIDES ARE FAIRLY EQUIDISTANT FROM THE CENTER



↓ Neighborhoods should be scaled to the pedestrian and shaped by an interconnected network of streets.



Neighborhood

↑ Healthy neighborhoods should have a diversity of uses, both public and private.

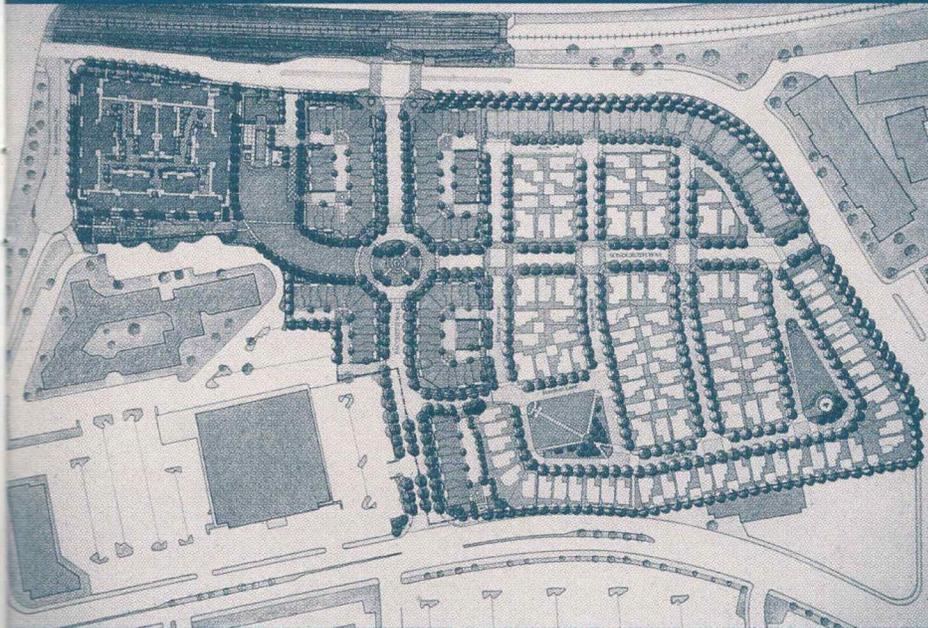
3

Within neighborhoods, a broad range of housing types and price levels can bring people of diverse ages, races, and incomes into daily interaction, strengthening the personal and civic bonds essential to an authentic community.

Urban revitalization and homeownership opportunities can emerge in a variety of locations. The site

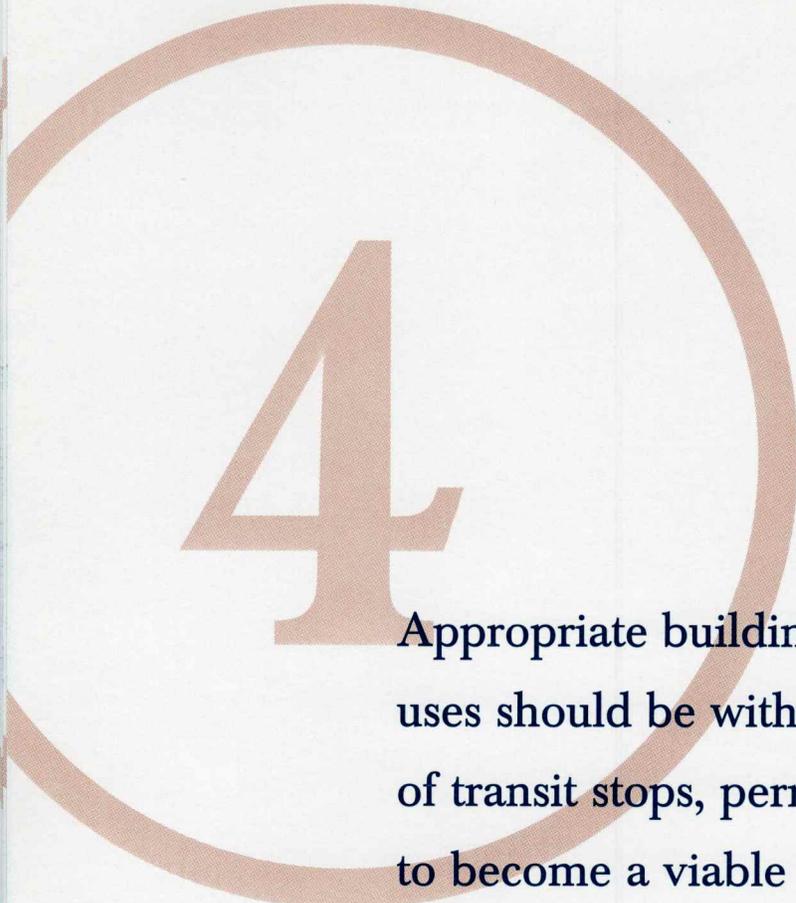
of a defunct shopping mall, The Crossings neighborhood in Mountain View, California is made up of a mix of housing types and price levels, from

small-lot single-family homes to townhouses and apartments. Streets lead to neighborhood parks and a commuter train station.



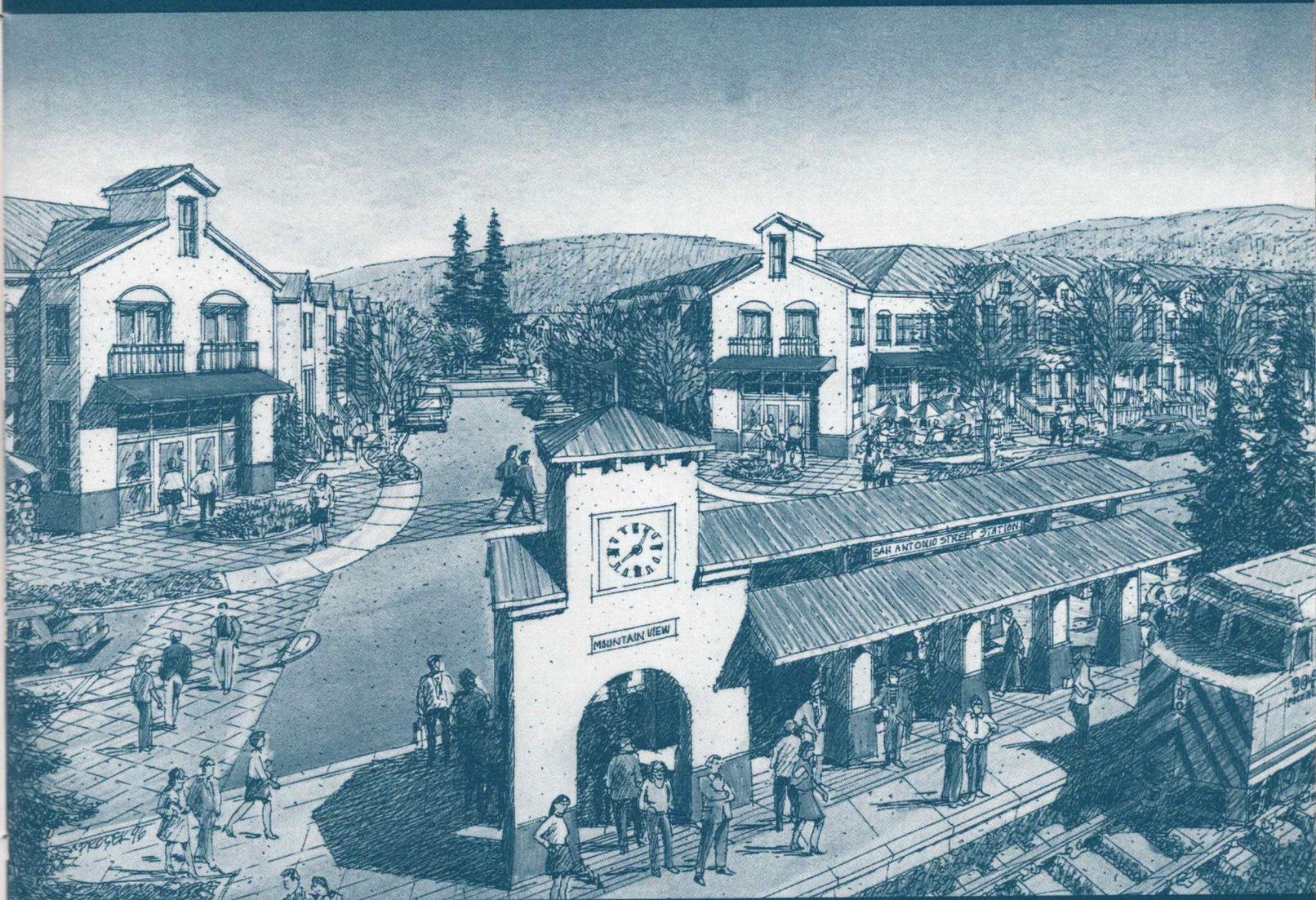
The Back of the Hill Rowhouses include a mix of moderate-income (66% of units) and middle-income (33% of units) homes,

increasing the economic diversity of this multi-ethnic neighborhood in Boston.



4

Appropriate building densities and land uses should be within walking distance of transit stops, permitting public transit to become a viable alternative to the automobile.

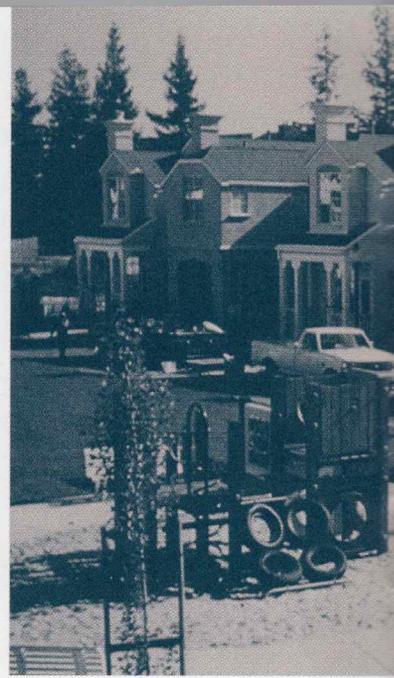


Transit should provide an affordable and convenient connection between home and work. Homeownership Zone residents will have

greater access to jobs if homes are located within walking distance of transit.

5

Concentrations of civic, institutional, recreational, and commercial activity should be embedded in neighborhoods, not isolated in remote, single-use complexes. A range of parks, from tot-lots and village greens to ballfields and community gardens, should be distributed within neighborhoods.





Calthorpe Associates

← Small parks placed within neighborhoods should be lined with homes to create a sense of security and a place for gatherings, as shown here in The Crossings neighborhood.

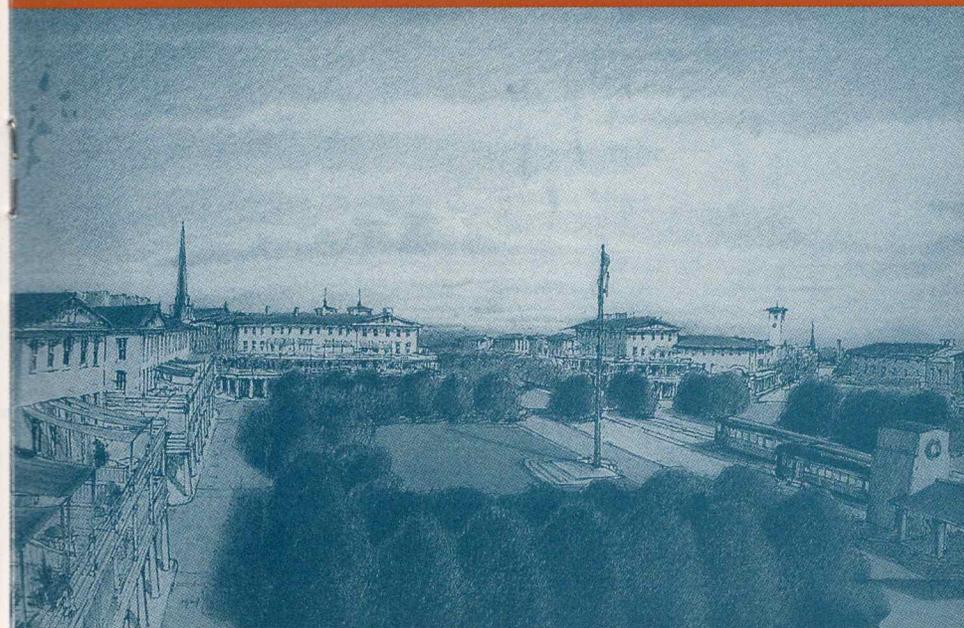


Each of Playa Vista's residential neighborhoods has a distinct identity based on its mix of public spaces and civic, cultural, and retail buildings. This intermingling of public and private uses brings vitality to a new Los Angeles community.

Moule & Polyzoides



← Libraries, post offices, schools, day-care centers, parks, recreation facilities, meeting halls, health clinics, public plazas, retail stores, and transit stations are the types of services that should be accessible to neighbors and form the core of a community.



6

A primary task of all urban architecture and landscape design is the physical definition of streets and public spaces as places of shared use.



The Uptown District in San Diego lines streets with porch-front townhouses, making walking both a pleasurable activity and a social event.

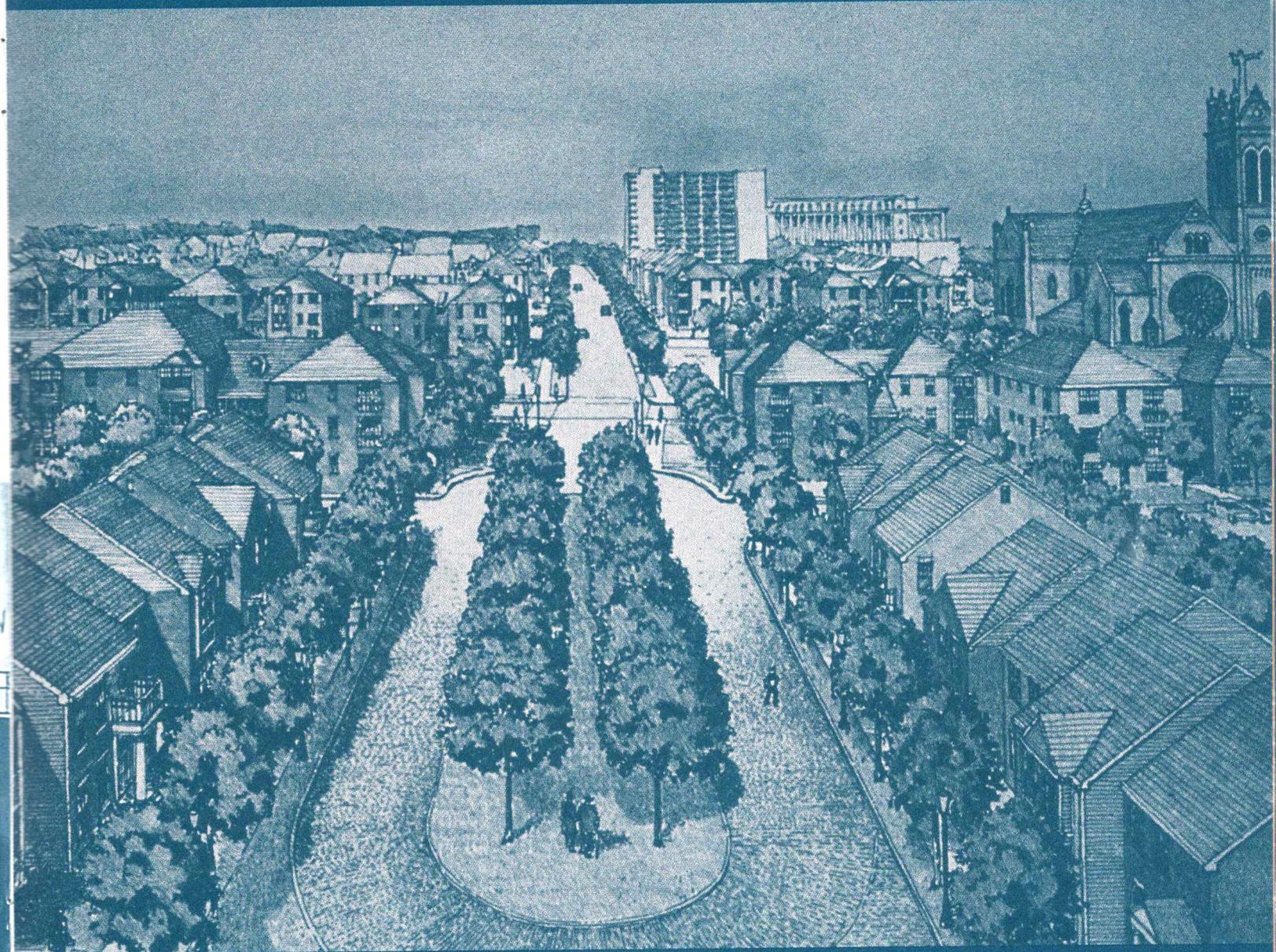




Crawford Square's residential design relies on the traditional single-family home patterns of front yard and back yard; even the apartments have

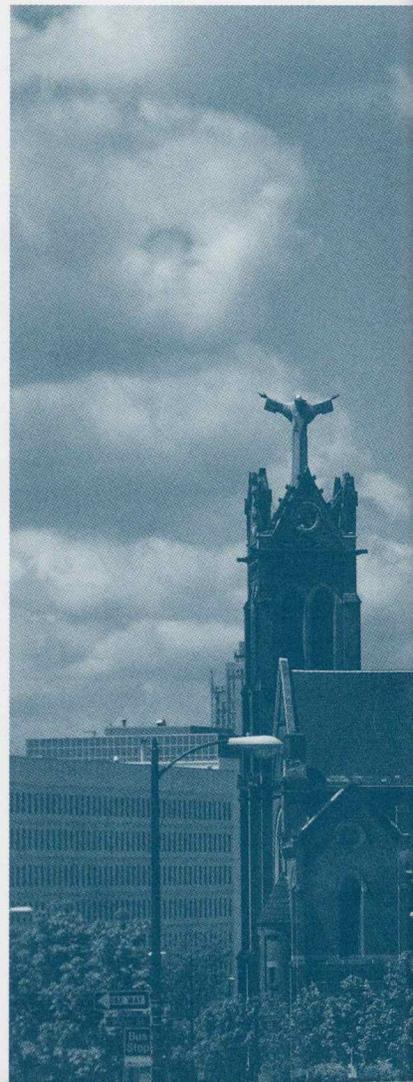
house-like forms, with porches and bay windows that overlook the street. This Pittsburgh development's success in attracting a mix of

people, including middle class professionals, has fundamentally changed the image of the central city.



7

Individual architectural projects should be seamlessly linked to their surroundings, regardless of any differences in architectural style.



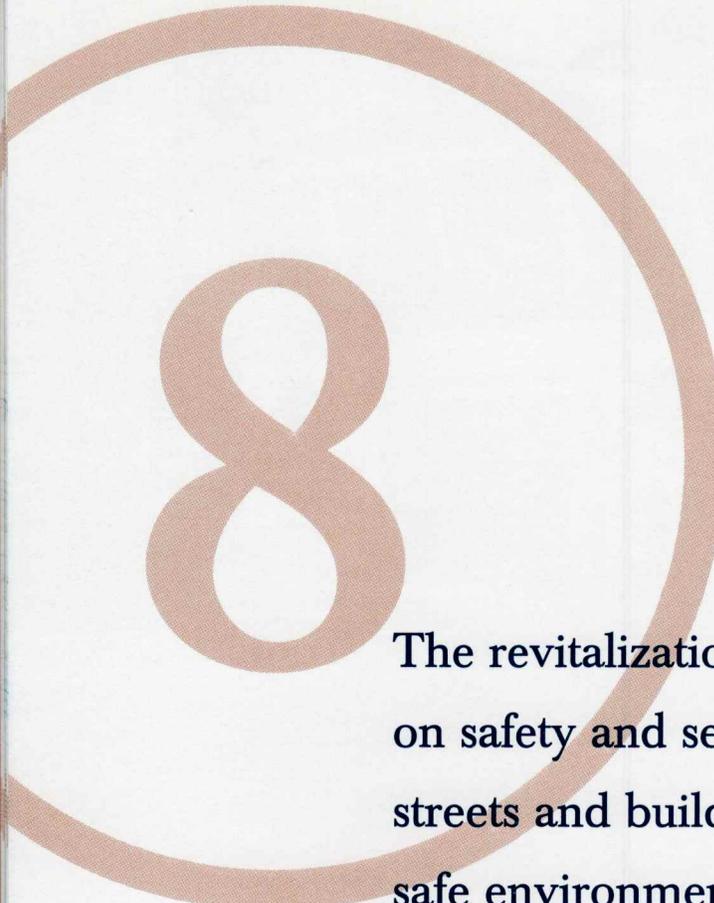


Del Carlo Court, a mixed-income, mixed-density housing development in San Francisco, integrates itself into the fine-grained urban fabric of the city. Its design echoes the scale and massing of the surrounding Victorian-era buildings.



Crawford Square is located at the edge of downtown Pittsburgh and is part of the historic Lower Hill District. The Lower Hill was deteriorating and neglected for 30 years. The 18-acre Crawford Square development has served to reconnect this district with the downtown and attract a wide range of new residents.





8

The revitalization of urban places depends on safety and security. The design of streets and buildings should reinforce safe environments, but not at the expense of accessibility and openness.

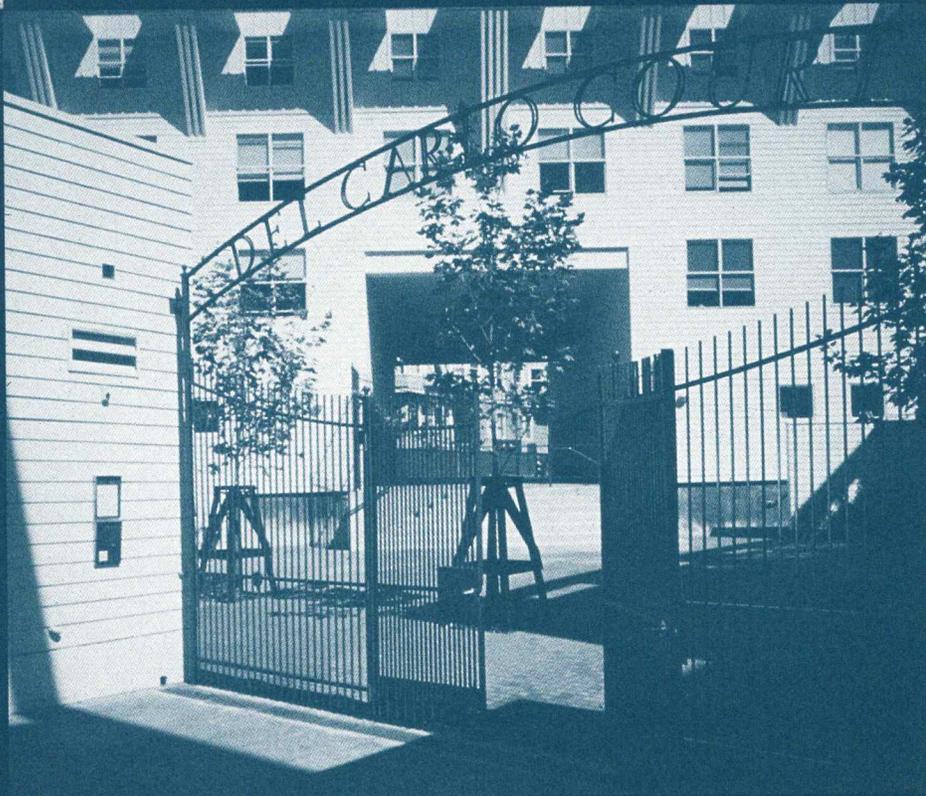


UDA Architects



Diggs Town was once a troubled public housing project. Residents heard gunshots at night and local police received 30 crime calls a day. Today, Diggs Town, located in Norfolk, Virginia, has been transformed into a healthy community.

Each house has its own territory which looks out directly into the community space. The front porch is both the symbol and the place in which this relationship between individual and community is most vivid.



Safety and security also can be accomplished through beautiful, yet strong, building design. The gate at Del Carlo Court demonstrates a sense of community pride and a statement of security.



9

In the contemporary metropolis, development must adequately accommodate automobiles. It should do so in ways that respect the pedestrian and the form of public space.



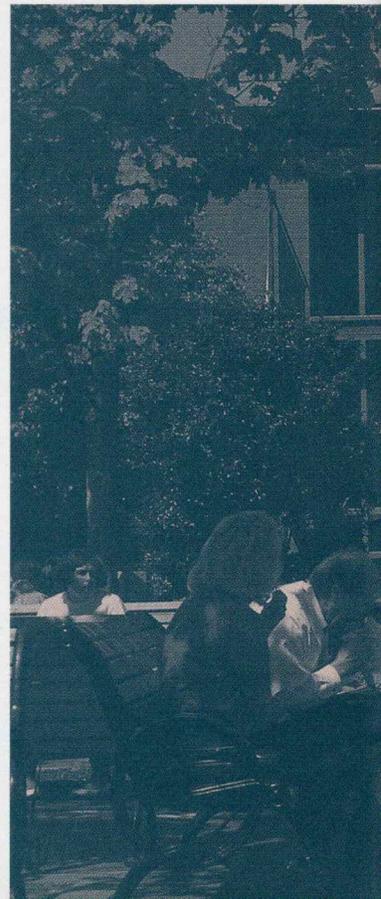
Fulton Grove, a mixed-income homeownership development in San Francisco, is designed around a network of streets and alleys that allow automobile access through the site. Living units look out onto

these passageways that accommodate cars, but also are comfortable and safe for walking.



10

Streets and squares should be safe, comfortable, and interesting to pedestrians. Properly configured, they should encourage walking and enable neighbors to know each other and protect their communities.





This 165-unit development of one-, two-, and three-bedroom homeownership townhouses built by the Bricklayers and Laborers Non-Profit Housing corporation in Boston, creates a neighborhood of

attractive affordable homes that enhances the sense of community by preserving street edges, providing homes with bay windows for views, and placing an urban park at its center.



The building of this small plaza, along with new homeownership homes, was the spark that began a trend toward urban revitalization of downtown Chattanooga, Tennessee. Comfortable spaces for sitting and

relaxing, along with a multi-purpose public building designed for meetings, events, and concerts, draw residents and employees to enjoy the outdoors and get to know one another.

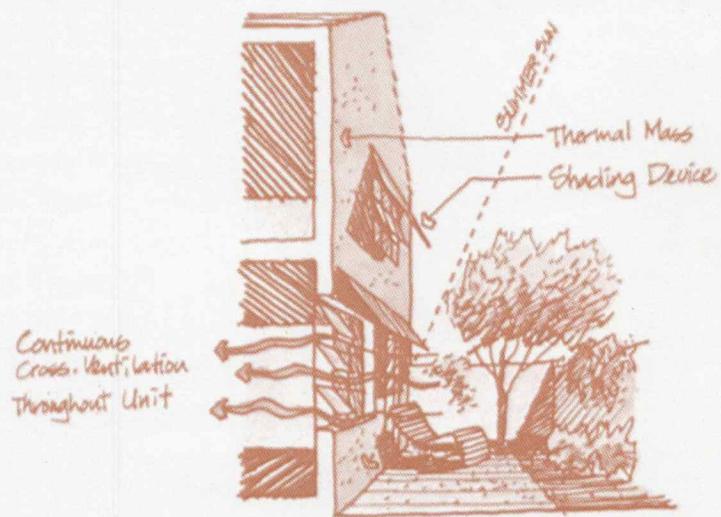
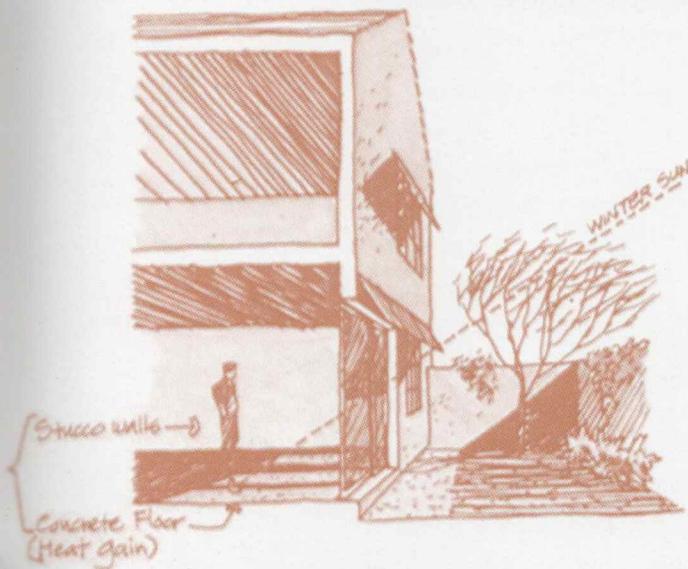


11

Architecture and landscape design should grow from local climate, topography, history, and building practice. All buildings should provide their inhabitants with a clear sense of location, weather, and time. Natural methods of heating and cooling can be more resource-efficient than mechanical systems.



Somerset Parkside, a mixed-income project of 107 units on two acres in downtown Sacramento, employs passive solar heating and cooling for all units.



All dwellings have passive solar heat gain in winter. Stucco walls and concrete floors provide thermal mass, acoustic

barriers, and resilient surfaces. All dwellings have cross ventilation, thermal mass for *night vent*,

and shading for summertime.

12

Preservation and renewal of historic buildings, districts, and landscapes affirm the continuity and evolution of urban society.



Vermont Village Plaza is located in South Central Los Angeles, an area damaged in 1992 after three decades of disinvestment. First Interstate Bank has sponsored an effort to revitalize Vermont Avenue through this mixed-use development involving both new

construction and historic renovation. The proposed anchor tenant in the refurbished art deco-style tower is the University of Southern California's Business Expansion Network, which will train community-based entrepreneurs. Affordable homeownership and

ground floor retail stores will complement USC's business services center, and form the beginnings of a new era of reinvestment for this community.





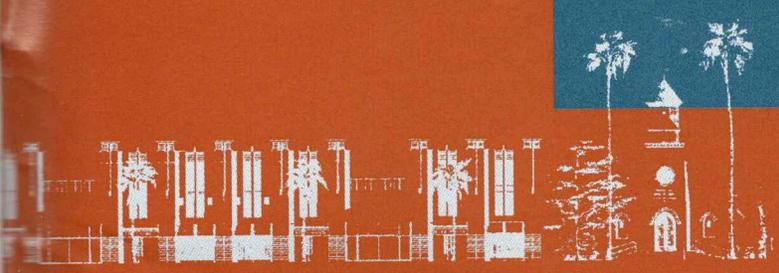
The Randolph Neighborhood was a decaying urban area covering 76 acres in Richmond, Virginia, and was cleared beginning in the late 1960s. Instead of rebuilding, however, the neighborhood became a patchwork of abandoned homes and vacant lots. Twenty years later, an ambitious urban design plan has revitalized this area, with 300 new and refurbished homes. New facades for existing buildings recreate the character of the neighborhood's early 20th century roots, giving the streetscape a native charm.



Before



After





New homes in the Randolph neighborhood, Richmond, Virginia.

July 1996
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