New Urbanistic Architecture

A Community for the Elderly and Assisted Living

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In the late 1980s, a new approach to the creation and revitalization of communities began to emerge in the United States. Based on the development patterns used prior to World War II, New Urbanism seeks to reintegrate many components of modern life - housing, workplace, shopping and recreation - into **compact, pedestrian-friendly, mixed-use neighborhoods**. The New Urbanism is an alternative to suburban sprawl, a form of low-density development that consists of large, single-use "pods" - office parks, housing subdivisions, apartment complexes, shopping centers - all of which must be accessed by the private automobile.

Initially dubbed "neo-traditional planning," the New Urbanism is best known for projects built in new growth areas such as **Seaside** (Walton County, Florida, 1981; Duany and Plater-Zyberk Town Planners), **Kentlands** (Gaithersburg, Maryland, 1988; Duany and Plater-Zyberk Town Planners) and **Laguna West** (Sacramento County, California, 1990; Calthorpe Associates). The principles which define New Urbanism can also be applied successfully to infill and redevelopment sites within existing urbanized areas. In fact, the leading proponents of New Urbanism believe that infill development should be given priority over new development in order to revitalize city centers and limit sprawl. An early manifesto by several leading New Urbanists states: "...we can, first, infill existing communities and, second, plan new communities that will more successfully serve the needs of those who live and work within them" (Ahwahnee Principles, 1991, Local Government Commission). Unfortunately, many of the current social, political and economic realities in the U.S. favor development at the metropolitan edge.

All development should be in the form of **compact, walkable neighborhoods**. Such places should have clearly defined centers and edges. The center should include a public space - such as a square, green or an important street intersection - and public buildings - such as a library, church or community center, a transit stop and retail businesses.

**Neighborhoods and districts should be compact and detailed to encourage pedestrian activity.** Streets should be laid out as an interconnected network forming coherent blocks where building entrances front the street rather than parking lots.

A **diverse mix of activities** (residences, shops, schools, workplaces and parks, etc.) should occur in proximity. Also, a **wide spectrum of housing options** should enable
people of a broad range of incomes, ages, and family types to live within a single neighborhood/district. Large developments featuring a single use or serving a single market segment should be avoided.

Civic buildings, such as government offices, churches and libraries, should be sited in prominent locations. Open spaces, such as parks, playgrounds, squares, and greenbelts should be provided in convenient locations throughout a neighborhood.

Developers, planners, local government officials and citizens have all shown great interest in New Urbanist design approaches, particularly in regions that are experiencing conflicts related to growth. Many see the New Urbanism as a win-win approach that enables a community’s growth to be channeled into a physical form that is more compatible with the scale of existing neighborhoods, that discourages auto use, that is less costly to service and that is less consumptive of land and natural resources. Despite such benefits, the New Urbanism has yet to be broadly embraced as a development model. One reason for this is that its physical design standards and implementation practices are not fully compatible with the regulatory framework in most regions of the U.S. and Canada. For example, many fire departments require streets that are wider than those proposed by New Urbanists. Zoning laws often discourage secondary living units within established residential areas or require large setbacks for homes and businesses.

Another reason for the slow adoption of New Urbanism is that the real estate industry is highly segmented by land use category (such as single-family housing, multifamily housing, retail, office and warehouse). Each category has its own practices, markets, trade associations, and financing sources. The highly integrated development strategy advocated by the New Urbanists requires a more holistic approach to community-building than the real-estate industry is currently structured to deliver. However, in the face of these challenges, New Urbanist communities are consistently achieving much higher prices than those in more conventional adjacent developments. Despite such barriers, public opposition to conventional suburban development is creating greater demand for alternative forms of growth, such as New Urbanism.
The "American Dream" is taught to the current generation through textbooks and grandparents. This dream of leaving the inner polluted city, owning land, and living in a newly developed suburban community meant a healthier, better lifestyle. The idea of ever-green lawns edged by curved, tree-lined lanes became a symbol of the American middle class. Images of this dreamland have a much different appearance than the suburbs many grow up in today. The trees are smaller and more sparse giving less character to the neighborhood. Two-lane driveways divide the evergreen lawn as concrete and asphalt have become more prevalent than the lawn itself. These driveways support access to the front of each home where an overwhelming two car or more garage consumes the home and pressures most of the homes activities to the rear of the house. The city, which no longer remains the overcrowded, polluted center, is miles away, and without a car, access to schools, stores, church, work and the many other necessities of living are out of reach. This American Dream has evolved into great homes for our vehicles but into a sterile holding pin for our children and elderly. This realization that suburbia is heading in a disastrous direction has lead many Architects and Planners to rethink the organization of our communities.

New Urbanism is just one solution to the revitalization of the American community. It is a planning approach used at a large scale that often requires zoning and code variances. N.A. Salings, a professor at the University of Texas believes that "if architecture and urban elements cannot couple at the smallest scales, then they can never support the larger scale." If Salings is correct, then ideas of community can be explored and improved upon at the scale of our individual buildings, spaces, and their immediate context.

This Thesis developed from the idea of analyzing the smaller scale and developing a sense of community that is often lacking in most residential corridors today. Can a sense of community be apparent within Architecture? To begin such a study, a test facility was derived. New Urbanism attacks the American need to drive everywhere. The movement supports pedestrian activity and those that benefit the most are those who are not capable of depending on the vehicle. Many elderly are inconvenienced by either not being able to drive or are uncomfortable driving. Many elderly become dependant on friends and family to get them places and are isolated from the car
dependant society. The test facility for a New Urbanistic approach to Architecture needed to benefit the elderly.

To study "community formation" at such various scales, a single nursing home environment would not satisfy this thesis exploration. A complex had to be created that would support many styles of elderly living. The complex had to support pedestrian activity and social motivation. It needed to support everyday needs of its inhabitants including places of recreation, food, convenience shops, and on-site medical treatment. The thesis idea grew into a development consisting of elderly housing, an assisted living complex, a major nursing facility, a small village, administration facilities, and numerous outdoor spaces that weaved the entire complex into a community. The site would have to support such a major complex yet not isolate it from its surrounding context.

The thesis intent was to examine and explore if community could be prevalent in Architecture and persuade such activities that develop a sense of community to exist. The project had to develop on many scales, through the master plan, the building design, the placement of each outdoor space, and the layout of each resident room and space. The project sought to create an atmosphere that the elderly residents would become comfortable in to live and interact with each other. Through positive interaction, a better sense of community could be developed. The complex provided various indoor and outdoor spaces to encourage ranges of activities that would take place in such a facility. As the designer, one had to find activities that might not be established in current nursing facilities but would provide benefits to such a community. The idea of space was explored and the architecture became an entity that formed and identified components of the community.
Sony Center  Berlin, Germany  - Murphy / Jahn

The Sony Center is a seven building complex residing on a 1.3 million sq. ft. urban site. It contains two apartment structures, an Imax theater, the German Film Institute, and the Sony headquarters. The architects tried to create Commercial Architecture as a public celebration by using an engineering focus. The Architectural language is a sleek, rationalized technology consisting of polished surfaces and crisp edges. The Sony Center makes a place within the city that can be described as a giant forum that is neither indoor nor outdoor. Such Architecture rarely exists in the States; corporations and developers hardly give consideration to the potential of public space.

[ Zoning ]

The zoning of the Sony Center is hardly anything complexed. The form and shape of the complex provides most buildings with street exposure. The commercial spaces are scattered around the outer ring. All buildings have a certain exposure to the street with a minor exception to the protected I-Max Theater. Each building is provided with a view to the outer city and a more private view to the inner urban courtyard.

[ Approach ]

The Sony Center offers access in many directions, which provides a different approach from every entrance. The Forum roof, however, becomes the main technological piece that provides an energy for triangulation. Seen from every vantage point, it seems to give the Sony Center a uniqueness that sets it apart from the surrounding architecture yet ties the separate buildings within the complex together. The Sony Center buildings frame the corridors from the entrances and the forum provides the roof.
Residential, Commercial, and Entertainment centers require large amounts and different types of access. Pedestrian corridors are large to satisfy not only the traffic, but to allow the users to feel more comfortable in the urban scale. The Sony Center allows a place solely for pedestrian activity without the interruption of the vehicle; Pedestrians can also use the circulation paths as a thoroughfare, allowing all to experience the space.

The Sony Center is a celebration of technological advances. It has an extremely futuristic lighting system. No brick or masonry is used but rather steel, glass and fabric. The roof has been designed to temper the environment of this outdoor space. The glass panels gently heat the space and protect if from wind and cold weather. The fabric panels only transmit 17% of the incident daylight and shade the forum in warm days.

I believe the Sony Center has a particular spirit about it that is created by its components acting together. One alone would not create such a sole but one missing would certainly destroy it. The program of such a complex allows it to have a personality during the day, but during the night, a new one arises. The blurring of outdoor space drives this building, however, from the beginning of winter till spring the Forum probably lays dominant.
An early town plan for the Town of Wellington was a result of a one-week design charrette. Like many Florida developments, a large percentage of the Town of Wellington's land area is required to be water for drainage purposes. The Town of Wellington provides water views and public access to the lakefront from many points. Careful planning preserves the values of prime waterfront home sites and increases the appeal of properties in other parts of the development.

[ Zoning ]

The Town of Wellington is composed of nine distinct neighborhoods that converge across a central lake to form a dense commercial core. A continuous lakefront boulevard connects the densest part of each neighborhood while another set links their central squares. There are larger amounts of commercial and residential spaces along with a wide range of housing options. The town of Wellington offers rental units above stores and in the backyards of principal residences. The multi-unit affordable housing is placed only in small groups and always among residences of a higher economic range. The massing and architecture must reflect adjacent dwellings.
The Town of Wellington offers three main forms of circulation, vehicular, pedestrian, and that by means of the waterways (recreational). New Urbanist Developments encourage pedestrian circulation therefore vehicular is minimized. Cars are not hid in garages in the front yard but rather tucked in the alleyway. Streets are framed narrow corridors not to increase congestion but to make drivers more aware and pedestrians more comfortable.

The Town of Wellington can be described as a series of framed open spaces. Each of these creates an inviting, peaceful scene that reinforces the idea of community. The approaches are not just to the open spaces, but the surrounding Architecture provides similar vantages.

Since the retention of rainwater is such a major issue for Wellington, the designers decided to use that to portray the kind of town it needed to become. Using the combination of water and architecture, Duany and Platerzyberk have created a picturesque setting for the community. The stucco buildings are brought about by local style and the waterways contribute to the openness and public setting.
Sony Center  Berlin, Germany - Murphy / Jahn

Dacra Development group asked Duany and Plater Zyberk for a design of Allison Island’s 8.5-acre site on Miami Beach. Dacra wanted an intimate, designed informed, art filled, private guarded island. Duany and Plater Zyberk wanted a community focus so AQUA’s design of streets and blocks encourage walking and includes a series if small plazas. While the Urban plan is based on historic models, Aqua’s architecture is inspired by modernism. Ten contemporary Architecture firms were invited to design the mid-rise buildings and island homes. Dunay and Plater Zyberk do not consider this a New Urbanist community.

[ Zoning ]

It is important to note that Aqua’s 120 apartment units and 46 townhomes are built away from the water’s edge. Focus on a waterfront walkway aids in the community idea. Many buildings in Miami hog the shore and block the view, Aqua needed to be different. The three 11-story apartment buildings screen views from such buildings. The rest of the site is organized around 4 main blocks all reflecting the outline of the island’s edge.

[ Approach ]

Duany and Plater Zyberk kept the scale of the buildings down to appeal to the pedestrian. The roads are wide most likely to prevent tunnel vision which is easy to do with 3 story townhouses and tall palm trees. The development fully supports vehicular traffic which is only one reason it is not considered a New Urbanist Development. The approach is meant to be reached by the car.
[Circulation]

Aqua is an isolated, private community which opens its doors to its neighbors inside the complex, but not outside its castle gates. Circulation is vehicular based; it incorporates pedestrian activity but doesn’t minimize the vehicular threat. The organization of the streets and avenues are grid-like to reflect traditional town planning. Townhouses are pulled closer to the street to encourage interaction between pedestrian and residents.

[Materiality]

Aqua is unique for Duany and Plater Zyberk because it incorporates non-traditional architecture that works with many New Urbanist aspects. The townhouses are each designed by one of ten contemporary architecture firms based in Miami or New York. Being located on Miami Beach means local architecture is bright, colorful, and constructed of stucco. Local materials make it easier to incorporate more artistic forms and contrasting pieces.

[Spirituality]

Aqua definitely has its own character. It reflects a diverse group that can come together and create a healthy community. Being designed by such differentiating design firms and their various philosophies allows this diversity in form to occur. The ocean creates a desire to be outside. The encompassing boardwalk invites people to congregate outside. When people congregate, they interact, and a community begins to form.
The site of this thesis project is located on the south side of Fort Wayne in Indiana. Fort Wayne's south side was chosen because it already accommodates a good portion of the city's elderly. The land allocated for the Assisted Living and Elderly Complex is approximately 25 acres. The land resides close to the city's edge, which has plans for renovation and further development. The site is currently surrounded by existing apartment living, new subdivisions, farmland, and the deteriorating Southtown Mall. The unoccupied mall has been labeled an "urban blight" by city planners and has plans of future demolition and a new commercial development will possibly revitalize the area. Despite being on the city's edge, the site is only ten minutes from downtown and fifteen minutes from the airport. The site's surroundings already satisfy many daily lifestyles with commercial areas and apartment living structures adjacent. The site can be neither described as isolated nor overcrowded by its surroundings.
Realizing this thesis project served on many levels and scales of design, it was decided best to perform a site analysis on the surrounding area instead of just focusing within the boundaries of the site. The existing South Town property is partitioned, and the most appropriate out lot was chosen. This lot currently resides as farmland yet is surrounded by recent residential development. Analysis of the area familiarized one with major circulation trends, neighborhood edges, and desirable views while noting physical attributes of the area like natural vegetation and contours of the land.
The conceptual phase began with the creation of five dissimilar organizational schemes. The first concept focused on primary and secondary linkages. Concept two involved a central hierarchy formed by the surrounding activity. Concept three evolved into more than one central activity revolving around one another creating a more organic form. Concept four explored repetition and rhythm. And the last concept considered an internal environment with cluster pods to group activities and inhabitants. Though certain schemes are more apparent in the final design, all had an impact on the overall design process.
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A Community for the Elderly and Assisted Living
Jeremy Hatfield
Early critiques presented a concern with scale between the assisted living complex and the elderly apartment flats. A model was constructed and analyzed with a heliodon and sun patterns were photographed. The studies suggested altering the tower pavilion elements. These studies also strengthened ideas for the placement of the courtyard and fishing pond.
[ Components ]
The entire complex consists of five major components:
1) Assisted Living Complex
2) Nursing Care Complex
3) Elderly Apartment Flats
4) Administration Wing
5) Village Shopping

[ Nodal Anchors ]
The facility is anchored by nodal towers that serve as a repetitive elements that break each complex into living clusters. End pavilions serve as circulation towers. Other pavilions serve as community spaces and have various configurations.

[ Circulation ]
Circulation occurred along the wings of each complex. End pavilions served as major vertical circulation towers. The observation tower and courtyard served as circulation between the two main complexes.
[Outdoor Space]

Many of the outdoor spaces were designed before the interior spaces were considered. The buildings form edges and boundaries of outdoor spaces as well as interior spaces. Outdoor space was considered a major catalyst to community interaction for the elderly residents.

[Community Spaces]

Interior community space became important due to the climate of northern Indiana. Each pavilion served as a community space on each floor (except on sub-grade level). Each facility also opened up into a warm atrium that housed activity on each floor and opened to the central courtyard. The observation tower also anchored the pedestrian bridge that crossed this center of activity.

[Housing Spaces]

In most nursing facilities, the housing of the residents consumes most of the facility which becomes an efficient, sterile layout. In this design, housing spaces embrace the exterior courtyard and form edges to the outdoor space.
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Looking back at the thesis process, I realize what I had initially visioned as the result turned out to be a completely different entity in the end. A simple idea of community is easily comprehensible, however it is difficult to define and explore the creation of. New Urbanism is a philosophy and can be applied to smaller human scales, similar to many other philosophies. A sense of community may not be able to occur at all scales, but it can be present in our Architecture. This thesis has begun a life exploration in examining design in coordination with interaction between its inhabitants. The design of buildings must consider not only the inhabitants, but also their relationships and interactions between one another.

As every project attempted in my college career, I did not reach a level of completion, as I believe no student really does. I feel I explored the necessary things but only wish time would have permitted more to be examined. This thesis project covered a mass amount of square footage, however it attempted to look more closely at the Nursing Complex in the end. If given more time, I would have taken things to another scale, studying mechanical and structural details to aid in the formation of this idea of community. I believe that even the smallest details in a person's environment may aid or destroy a positive interaction with others. It has been generally said, that there is nothing more interesting to people than other people. If this is so, society should embrace interactions between all sorts of people. Our living environments should reflect our beliefs and lead society to a more attractive place than the current suburban neighborhood.
Accomplishments are never the result of one person's activities, yet rather the interaction one person has had with many individuals that have influenced his path.

Thanks must be mentioned to my thesis professor, Jack Wyman, who has allowed me to travel in the direction I saw most fitting but least support along the way.

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My Graduate Assistant, Josh Vermillion, must also receive credit as he always reminded the class the importance of progress and served as a constant reminder why I wasn’t going to Graduate School.

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