

Detached, Dense, and Urbane Infill

In their drive to develop densely on the fringes of urban cores, planners and builders usually ignore detached single-family houses. Instead, suburban developers are delighted to be able to develop at a density of 15 to 18 units per acre. An innovative solution in Berkeley, California, how-

A vine-covered arched trellis leads down a semiprivate pedestrian arcade to each house. There, another wrought-iron gate within a fence leads to a 12- by 35-foot private terrace. The nearly 500-square-foot terrace serves several functions. It is an entry court leading to a formal entrance in its center. Flanking the en-

houses are identical, increasing the efficiency of construction. Fearing uncertain demand for a new product developed at the brink of a recession in the housing market, Kennedy developed the second floor as dual master bedrooms. Buyers can finish the triple-skylighted attics as home offices and studios.



ever, demonstrates that it is possible to develop urbane, single-family detached residences profitably at a density of 25 units per acre.

Located only a half-block from the renowned Chez Panisse restaurant in the so-called "gourmet ghetto" of the northern part of Berkeley's downtown core is Henry Court, developed by Berkeley-based developer Panoramic Interests. Using a 10,000-square-foot lot, Oakland-based architect Kirk Peterson designed six freestanding, single-family houses. The site plan creates a hierarchy of outdoor realms that range from public to semiprivate to private spaces. From the street, a green parking lawn leads to two shaded parking pergolas. Between them, a remotely controlled wrought-iron gate in an articulated wall leads to a semiprivate entry court.

Vine-covered pergolas create separate parking areas and shade the cars. Between parking pergolas a remotely controlled wrought-iron gate leads to a semiprivate entry court.

trance are two sets of double French doors leading out to the court from each house's dining and living rooms. At the far end of the terrace lies a tree-shaded concrete area alongside the house in a five-foot setback zone that shields trash containers and other equipment.

The houses include approximately 1,300 square feet on two main levels, plus a 470-square-foot third-floor attic lit by three large skylights that can be opened. A central entry with a small central staircase eliminates most hallways. The simple floor plans for the six



Perhaps the most innovative feature of these single-family houses was the developer's decision to aggregate all parking at the entrance to the development rather than provide separate parking areas attached or adjacent to each house. Each owner has exclusive use of two parking spaces. If parking needs had been addressed differently, the site could have supported only half of its current density.

Despite new urbanists' disdain of parking facing the street, a series of devices helped to lessen the visual impact of the 12-car parking area. It was divided into four separate spaces, and turf-stone was used to create a parking lawn for six spaces in tandem with the six



A nearly 500-foot-square terrace functions as an entry court, private terrace, and outdoor storage area. Stone benches and wall fountains encourage residents to linger as they retrieve mail from the common wall-mounted mailboxes.



others. Behind the parking lawn, two vine-covered pergolas separate the parking spaces into six areas and provide shade for the cars. Berkeley's board of adjustment was even persuaded that the green parking lawn should count toward the project's 40 percent landscaping requirement. A neighbor in a single-family house on the northern edge of the project had objected to the board's decision, but a photograph was produced showing that the neighbor in fact had paved her entire lawn and was renting eight or nine parking spaces to university students.

Developing in Berkeley proved to be a challenge that delayed the beginning of the project almost two years. After its favorable decision on parking lawn landscaping, the city changed its regulations to preclude its use in the future. Moreover, land costs were high—almost \$55,000 per unit. And a lack of affordable housing for

construction workers means that developers often must pay as much as \$50 per hour for carpenters.

Surrounding Henry Court is an eclectic mix of facilities. To the east is the back of a Bank of America building; to the south lies the parking lot for the bank; to the west is a two-story apartment building; and to the north is the aforementioned single-family house. While not atypical for urban fringe areas, selling a single-family house for nearly \$300 per square foot in this environment (i.e., one lacking high-priced residences nearby) was risky, especially when on the verge of a housing recession. However, the project sold out in three months. There have been no resales, but Kennedy expects that the houses might resell for approximately \$450 per square foot.

The preferred equity investors who took a risk in providing development loans for a new concept were repaid with a 15 percent return on equity. As planners and developers seek to increase density in the urban fringe areas of downtown cores, the Henry Court model shows that detached single-family dwellings can be profitable. And as suburban developers seek to provide housing that more closely resembles traditional products, this form may increase urbane alternatives and suggest that buyers will not necessarily insist on having attached garages. ■

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