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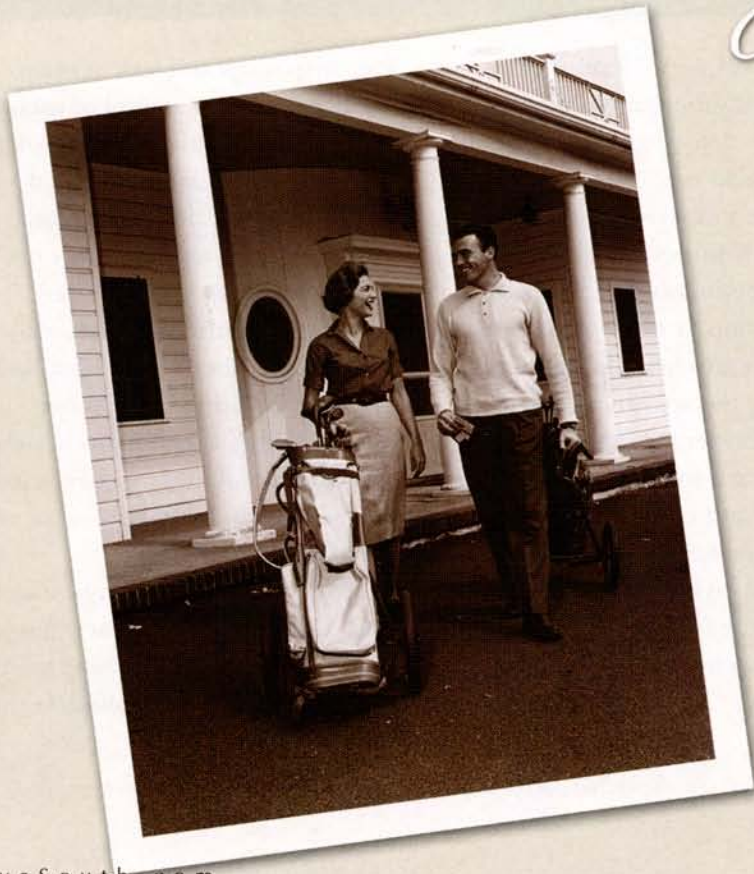
FREE MAGAZINE

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CREATING COMMUNITIES

*Traditional
Neighborhood
Design*

BY JEANNE BARNES



*R*emember when life seemed simpler? When everything you needed was close and convenient? You can recapture that feeling by visiting neighborhoods in places like Annapolis, Charleston, Savannah and Wilmington, NC.



BAXTER, FORT MILL, SC



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Until recently, zoning regulations have restricted mixed-use development in these towns. The good news is that Traditional Neighborhood Developments (TNDs) are bringing back pedestrian friendly, mixed-use neighborhood. TNDs allow mixed use so that people can live, shop and work in the same area. This reduces travel time and increases leisure time. People are choosing to live in TNDs because they create a sense of community, use land more efficiently, reduce traffic and provide a better quality of life.

Traditional Neighborhood Development focuses on creating liv-

able neighborhoods. Rather than conventional suburban development that is lower density and single use, TNDs mix land use. They create environments that respond to the needs of individuals and families. For example, people can live above or near their shop or office and not have to drive to work. As an alternative, renting the apartment above the business provides income that makes it possible for a small business to own its building and creates affordable housing. Residential, commercial, recreational, civic and educational uses can all be found in a TND.

TNDs also fight rapidly growing urban sprawl. The acres of parking

lots, strip malls and lack of open, natural spaces are typical of sprawl. Sprawl often drains life out of older downtown areas and residential neighborhoods. It replaces the unique identity and character of many towns with homogenized development and causes people to drive longer distances to work and for errands. Sprawl also breaks down people's connections because of a lack of gathering spaces that are essential in building a sense of community.

The roots of sprawl can be traced back to the late 1800s. Americans left rural areas for the big city and suburbia began to rise. Populations in the

cities grew rapidly, resulting in areas that were more crowded. Development pushed outward as a growing middle class sought an escape from the pressures of the city. Advances in transportation, including railroads and the streetcar made it easier to commute into the city for work.

The automobile and World War II gave the biggest boost to the suburbs. Because of the automobile and the ease of this new form of transportation, new communities sprang up just beyond the reaches of the city. World War II also created a boom, for the suburbs. A housing shortage, the new interstate highway system, and government-sponsored

financial incentives for GIs created a demand for housing outside of the cities. Suburbia quickly became a retreat from the demands of city life. The suburbs brought more than simple conveniences such as transportation and shopping malls. They also brought traffic, cookie cutter design, pollution, and sprawl.

The National Association of Home Builders estimates that over the next ten years, Americans will require 18 million additional housing units. Much of this growth will be in the South. To support this growth, it is necessary to look at planning in a different way to maximize space and natural resources.

Planners and developers are beginning to respond to these needs.

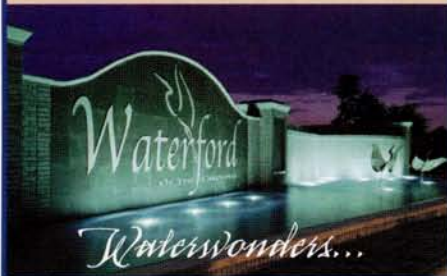
It is no surprise that the South has led the way for TNDs. There are more than sixty projects in Florida alone. Seaside, on Florida's Gulf Coast, was the first TND in America. It was developed more than twenty years ago and is a successful model. TNDs are reminiscent of many American neighborhoods of the early twentieth century. TNDs can be found in urban and suburban areas, resort communities, historic districts, and in coastal areas.

As sprawl continues, the need to manage growth is clear. TNDs attempt to make communities more

TNDs attempt to make communities more livable, attractive, and economically viable.

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livable, attractive, and economically viable. They reduce dependence on automobiles, which eases traffic and frees up money that people can spend on housing or recreation. Aging seniors are able to stay in their homes when they can no longer drive rather than be dependent on relatives or move into assisted living facilities.

Additionally, the wide array of housing types and prices of TNDs can attract a variety of people of different ages, races, and incomes, creating a diverse and authentic community.

Bert Exum, President, Waterford of the Carolinas, a TND community in Leland (near Wilmington), North Carolina, said that Waterford is a direct response to the needs and wants of potential buyers. In the planning of

other communities, Exum found that "People were looking for privacy, walking trails, sidewalks, a retail village, and water near their property."

After assessing the needs of buyers, Waterford was developed as a TND that mixes residential areas with a commercial village. The village will include a medical campus, grocery store, retail shops, pharmacy, bank, and dry cleaner. Waterford also has a professional and business park so that residents can live and work in the same community. A residential village center has a media room, fitness center, tennis courts, and pool

for residents.

Traditional Neighborhood Developments have several key principles that make them attractive communities for many buyers. These developments typically have mixed housing types which can include apartments, townhouses, and single family homes, as well as mixed uses which allow people to live, work, shop and play within their own community.

Baxter Village, a TND in Fort Mill, South Carolina, outside of Charlotte, is a very diverse and affordable community. Buyers can find townhomes or single-family homes to meet their needs. Kerri Robusto, Marketing Director of Clear Springs Development Company, said, "To further diversify the neighborhoods in Baxter Village,



the master plan mixes lot types throughout a block. It is not unusual for a 60' wide lot to be next to a 40' or 50' lot. The Master Plan also mixes builders

together, thus mixing price points on the same street."

Streets are organized to supplement the neighborhood rather than hinder the community. Streets are typically narrow to reduce speed and create safer environments. TNDs also reduce dependency on the automobile and emphasize using other forms of transportation, including biking, walking, public transportation, and even golf carts. Natural resources should be preserved as much as possible. Green spaces,



VILLAGE AT MAYFAIRE, WILMINGTON, NC

trees, lakes and ponds should all be part of a TND.

Habersham, a community in Beaufort, South Carolina, takes advantage of the natural resources of its property. Michael Asnip, Habersham Vice President, said, "Habersham is built on an organic grid. Because of the triangular shape of the property, roads are offset and the community feels very natural and as though it has been there a long time." There is a clear commitment to nature in Habersham. There are over 2500 live oak trees and of the 183 acres of land, 74 acres are dedicated to parks. Two miles of waterfront also attracts people to Habersham. By preserving as much open space as possible, nature becomes an important part of the community.

TNDs are excellent places for

those who cannot or do not want to drive. People who live in the suburbs drive about 3,300 more miles each year than city households. In addition, chauffeuring children, shopping and errands account for 46 percent of the average American's daily car trips. Imagine being able to walk your children to school and run all your errands in a retail center that is a short walk from your home.

Careful planning makes TNDs pedestrian friendly. A walk from the edge of the neighborhood to the center should take roughly five minutes. Neighborhood centers provide an opportunity for people to congregate and socialize. These centers can be a park, a retail center, or a clubhouse.

The Village at Mayfaire in Wilmington, North Carolina, creates a town within a town. Located just a mile and a half from Wrightsville

Beach, Mayfaire is a community with its own identity. Luxury condominium residences are just a half-mile from a town center that has its own shopping and retail center with restaurant and entertainment zones. Bryan Williams, Director of Sales, said, "The town center captures the sense of the outdoors, allowing you to be outside, not in a mall, taking advantage of the environment around you." Residents of The Village appreciate the double amenity of private homes with the retail town center just a short walk away.

Shopping isn't the only thing that is important to homebuyers. Daniel Island, Charleston, South Carolina, has an impressive mix of recreational amenities. It is home to the Family Circle Tennis Center, which hosts the annual Family Circle Cup, a women's professional tennis tour-



I'ON, MT. PLEASANT, SC

namment. The 17-court facility is open to the public. The Charleston Battery, a professional soccer team, also makes its home at Blackbaud Stadium at Daniel Island. Twenty-three miles of rivers and creeks, access to swimming pools, hundreds of acres of parks and a country club that features golf courses designed by Tom Fazio and Rees Jones attract many to Daniel Island. Communications Manager Julie Dombrowski said its recreational amenities "create a community feeling and a level of interaction among neighbors that is hard to find."

TNDs are also characterized by their architectural style. While diverse, their common element is a sense of place, with a streetscape built around public gathering areas. Each community sets their own standards, often reflecting the regional style of the area. Baxter Village in Fort Mill, South

Carolina, has an architectural style that is indigenous to Upcountry South Carolina. Kerri Robusto points out that in Baxter Village, "The Architectural Review Board must approve every home. All architectural details must be true to style." In maintaining these styles, the sense of community is reinforced visually, without the cookie-cutter styles typical of conventional suburbia.

One of the most important parts of TNDs is the sense of community. I'On Village in Mt. Pleasant, South Carolina, has many ways residents can get involved. I'Onissimo! is a community music ensemble that includes musicians from across the Lowcountry. I'On is also the home to First Fridays, a monthly cocktail party. Drew Grossklaus, Marketing Director, I'On Village, said, "residents enjoy a quality of life you can't find every where." The East Cooper Community Trust works at I'On to ensure that events such as concerts and movies in the park involve the entire Mt. Pleasant community, not just I'On residents. This extends the sense of community into the greater area surrounding I'On Village. There are so many events at I'On that residents started a website: www.ioncommunity.com, to keep people informed.

As smart growth policies are adopted across the country, TNDs will become an important solution and an attractive option for homebuyers. By fulfilling the basic needs of the community, Traditional Neighborhood Developments provide an excellent alternative to conventional suburbia. Because TNDs are so diverse and feature different amenities, buyers are sure to find a community that fits all their needs and wants. **LSS**

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