CHAPTER 2

URBAN DESIGN RATIONALE

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The urban design framework focuses on the functional, form and environmental aspects of the built environment, with the objective of achieving a composite form. In this, both buildings and open spaces are parts of a larger "picture". Their form and functional relationships are more important than their individual characteristics.
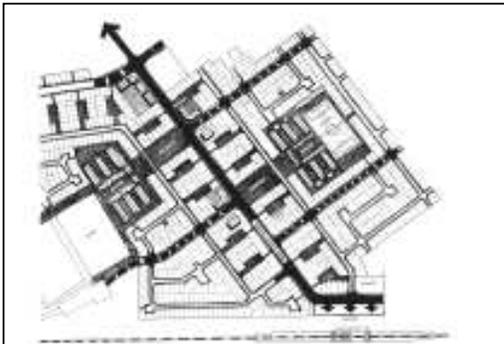
Functional Aspects

Functional aspects pertain the practical purpose and the structuring of the built environment components.
The ways in which buildings and open spaces "work" can either enable or inhibit the performance, liveability and richness of the urban environment.
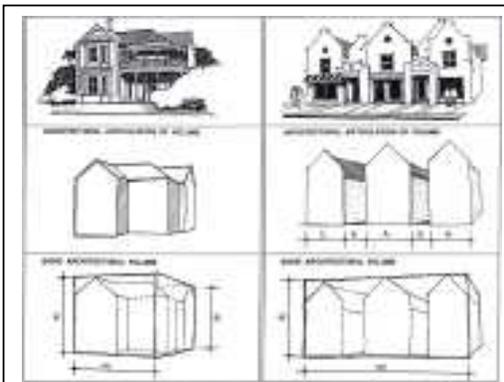
Form Aspects

These involve the perceptual qualities (visual) of buildings and open spaces. Buildings and other physical objects in the urban environment contain messages that people perceive, interpret and respond to. The creation of responsive environments and a "sense of place" is the foundation of good urban design.

COMPOSITE FORM (SEASIDE VILLAGE, NEW URBANISM.

FUNCTIONAL ASPECTS. LAYOUT

**FORMAL ASPECTS: COMPOSITION OF THE**

Environmental Aspects

Temperature, sun penetration, wind and other elements of nature, have a strong influence in people's sense of comfort and well-being.
Buildings and open spaces must enhance positive environmental aspects and mitigate those that have a negative impact (such as noise)

AREAS OF INTEREST

It is useful to distinguish between two separate aspects of the built environment; one aspect being the "public environment" and the other being "private development".

Public environment comprises the space between buildings to which the public has access, either physically, visually or both. It forms the "void" component of the urban environment. The public realm in Century City is privately owned which enables a fair degree of management and control. Residents and visitors move through the public environment before they get to their destination at individual buildings.

Private development consists of buildings and groups of buildings that create the "solid" component of the built environment. Normally private development is structured in two zones: the interface zone (the edges of the parcels facing the public realm) and the internal zone (where development does not have direct contact with the public environment).
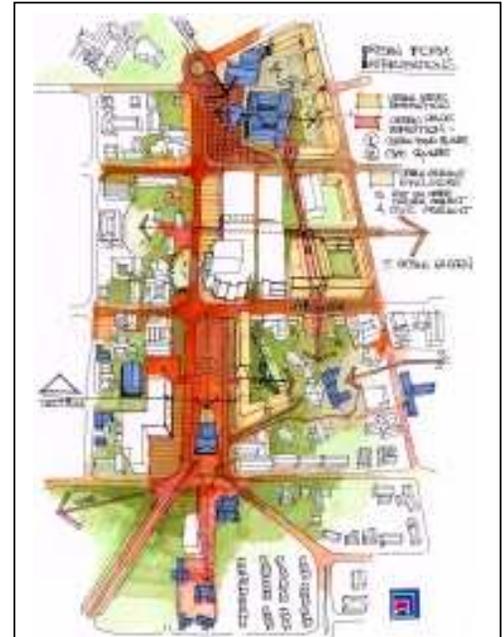
PUBLIC ENVIRONMENT (SPACES BETWEEN BUILDINGS) AND PRIVATE DEVELOPMENT (BUILDINGS)
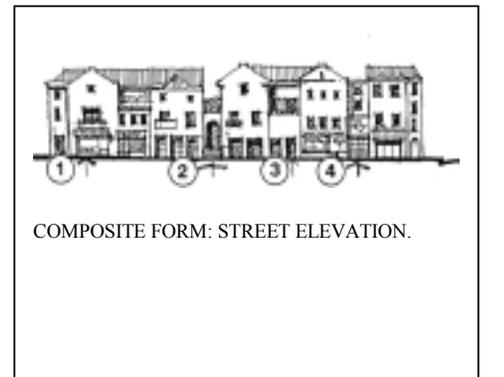
COMPOSITE FORM: STREET ELEVATION.

STRUCTURING ELEMENTS

In Century City there are distinctive elements that give structure to the site. Some are public environment components and others are private.

The Grid

The street and block system (grid) is adopted as the primary structuring device for the urban fabric.

Place Making Elements

Buildings and open spaces overlay the grid to add variety and richness to this basic structure.

Linkage System

Streets perform a greater role than just functional corridors for moving vehicles. They are also urban spaces for people, and primary components of the public realm.

Pedestrian Oriented Environment

Places within Century City should be pedestrian oriented to encourage people to walk instead of drive. Urban spaces need to accommodate elements such as sidewalks, canopies, entrances and landscaping to make walking attractive.
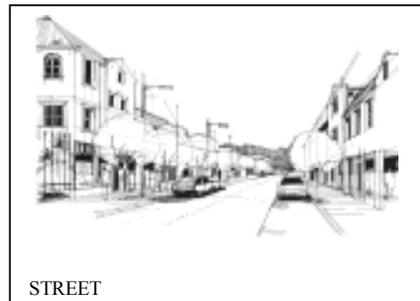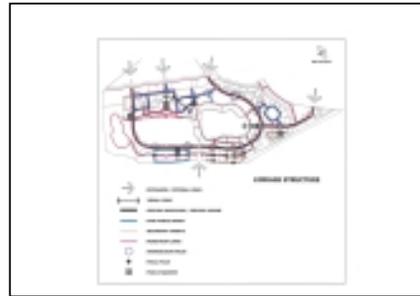
STREET

PUBLIC ENVIRONMENT COMPONENTS

The main components of the public environment are the street, square and park. These can have a variety of roles, forms, and characteristics.

The Street

The street is a linear urban space, or corridor, related to both movement and activity. The buildings that face the street (interface area) create its enclosure.
Streets are organized hierarchically according to factors such as scale, character and the degree of connectivity they provide.
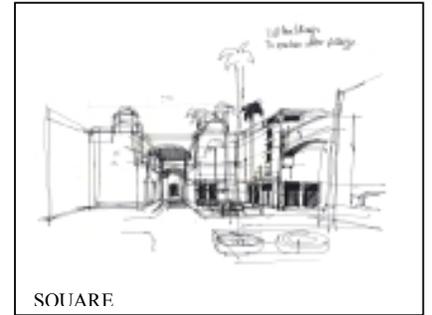
The Square

The square is a multi-dimensional urban space, or urban "room". Squares can adopt a variety of sizes and scales and are primarily gathering places for people. Squares have walls and a floor since the buildings that surround the squares create their enclosure. Squares are also organised hierarchically, from major urban squares to small urban courtyards.

The Park

The park is a "green" open space, which fulfils amongst other things, the role of an "urban lung", providing passive recreation and psychological well being for people in urban areas. The park also has an important role to sustain flora and fauna. The wetland and Ratanga island are two major parks in Century City.
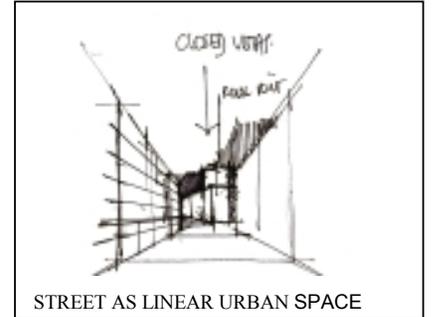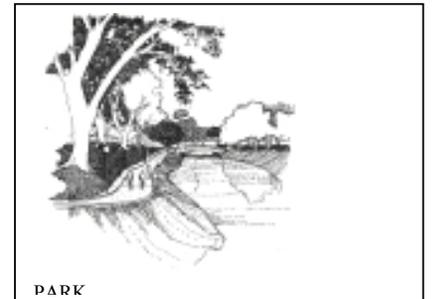

STREET AS LINEAR URBAN SPACE

SQUARE

GHANDI SQUARE

PARK

PUBLIC ENVIRONMENT (cont)

Parking and Public Transport

Multi-level public parking facilities should be located at strategic sites within Century City and connect with the shuttle system to take people to their destination. This "park and ride" solution will enable more efficient land usage, and reduce the pressure on the transportation system, It will enhance the public realm, with greater presence of people.

The shuttle bus will also connect with the various public transport terminal points around Century City. An attractive pedestrian system should encourage people to walk, and walking distances to local amenities should be minimised.

PRIVATE DEVELOPMENT

Century City's developable land has been organised into precincts. These can been further subdivided into blocks, which offer both large and small land parcels for private development.

Land packaging

The sizes of land parcels may vary. Some developments will occupy a single site while others might occupy a few blocks. However, the maximum size of blocks and the permeability of linkages through these blocks should be preserved. A large parcel should be treated as an aggregate of smaller blocks with streets (privately owned public spaces) as through linkages.

PERIMETER BLOCK FORM

SEMI-PUBLIC OPEN SPACES AT THE CORE

**DEVELOPMENT ON THE PERIMETER**
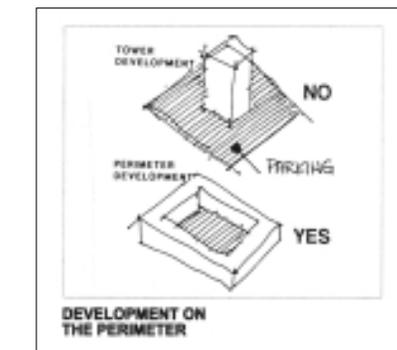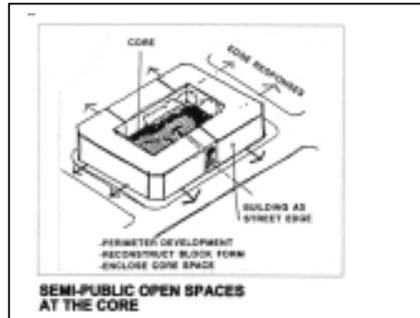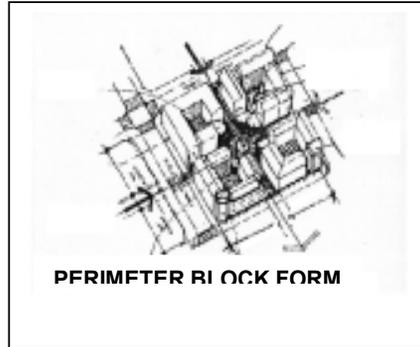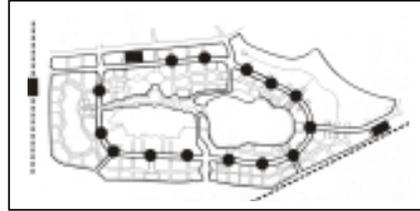
Block form:

Development at Century City should adopt a "perimeter block" built form. Each block is made up of two distinctive areas, the **interface** area, which is visible from and interacts with the public realm, and the **internal area** or core created within the block.

Perimeter block building form

Placing buildings at the perimeter of blocks, close to or on the building line, helps to define and give life to the public environment. Buildings are in contact with the street space, and facilitate, but do not force, visual and physical integration between both. The perimeter block form is also beneficial for private development. It creates internal open spaces of a more intimate, sheltered and private character, it results in a more efficient footprint and achieves more bulk in comparison with tower buildings,

Interface zones: These are the places where private development and the public environment come into contact. This interaction can be functional (shops, lobbies, entrances) or visual (windows). Street facades as well as the ground and first floors of buildings, are the primary components of the private - public interface.

Internal zone: The internal zone of blocks can adopt a variety of forms, depending on the type, and intensity of development and the needs of individual developers.
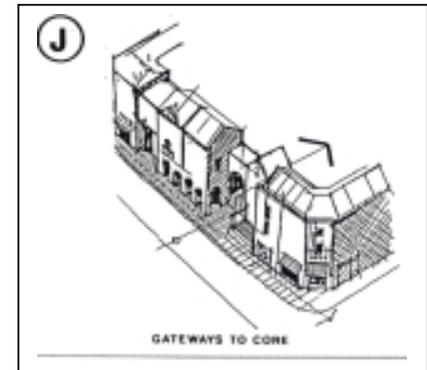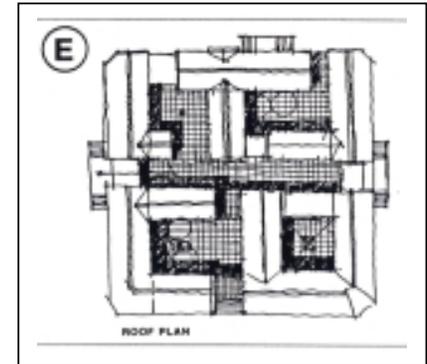
ARCHITECTURAL LANGUAGE AND IMAGE: THE CREATION OF A "COMPOSITE FORM"

In an integrated development such as Century City, the objective is to create a sense of place and identity. Buildings should create a "composite form or overall building landscape" where some buildings stand out due to their meaning or importance, while others blend into the background. These "object buildings" become landmarks within a fairly harmonious environment.

A composite form is achieved by the use of functional and formal linking elements between buildings. That is the objective of the design guidelines contained in this report.

The photographs opposite illustrate examples of a composite form. The top picture is of Lafayette square in Washington D.C, a higher density urban environment that has emerged over many years. The lower picture is of a lower density planned environment (Seaside Village in USA). While very different, both pictures illustrate how the functional and form relationships between buildings are given more importance than individual designs. The result is an integrated environment with an attractive composite form.

Building Form Example

Some of the principles used to achieve a composite form are analysed overleaf with reference to the photograph of Seaside Village.

It is emphasized that the architecture of Seaside Village is not necessarily suitable for Century City (which is a higher density urban place), but the principles for achieving a composite urban form are similar.

The analysis overleaf makes the point that architects at Century City can use different design elements, but need to respect the context of their buildings to create a composite form.

COMPOSITE FORM ANALYSIS

ROOF FORM

The top sketch in the series opposite illustrates only the roof forms of the buildings shown in the Seaside Village photograph. Note that they are all designed with straight panels and combined with double pitch, hipped and other forms, as well as rotated. As an exception, only one building, indicated with an arrow, is different. This is a special building.
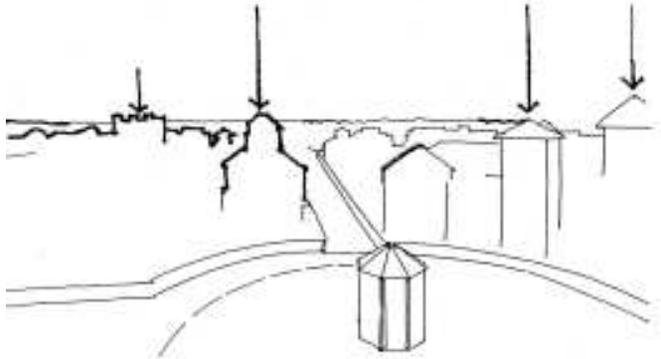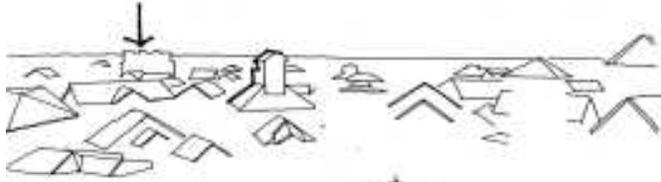
SKYLINE

The second sketch illustrates only the skyline (the line where buildings meet the sky). Note that there is an average building height and only a few taller structures accentuate specific buildings.
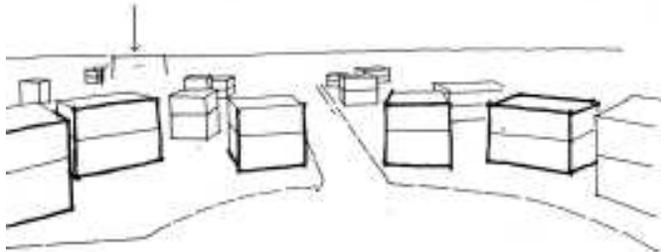
BASIC BUILDING VOLUME

The third sketch illustrates only the basic building volumes. Note that all buildings are based on a rectangular box form and have similar dimensions.
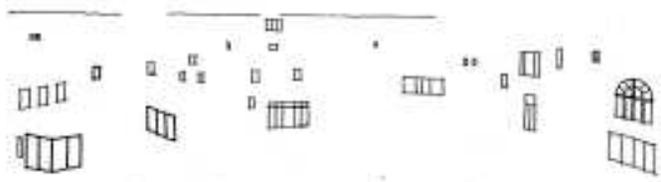
OPENINGS

In the last sketch, only windows have been traced from the picture. Note that all windows have been vertically proportioned.

INDIVIDUAL BUILDING FORM

The sketch below illustrates the architectural features of one of the buildings. Note the basic architectural volume is a simple rectangular box, but lantern, porch, bay window and openings of the walls, are all ways of articulating this basic form. All buildings in the picture have been designed to combine these same elements in a variety of ways. In addition, these simple buildings have been placed in different positions and directions, adding variety to the composite form. Although the same design elements have been adopted in all the houses variety and richness has still been achieved.