

shopping, business or leisure zone. In the same way even the largest housing scheme cannot become a city or public monument.... its functional monotony and uniformity simply do not provide the typological materials for significant monumental and urban gestures.⁷

Background and foreground buildings

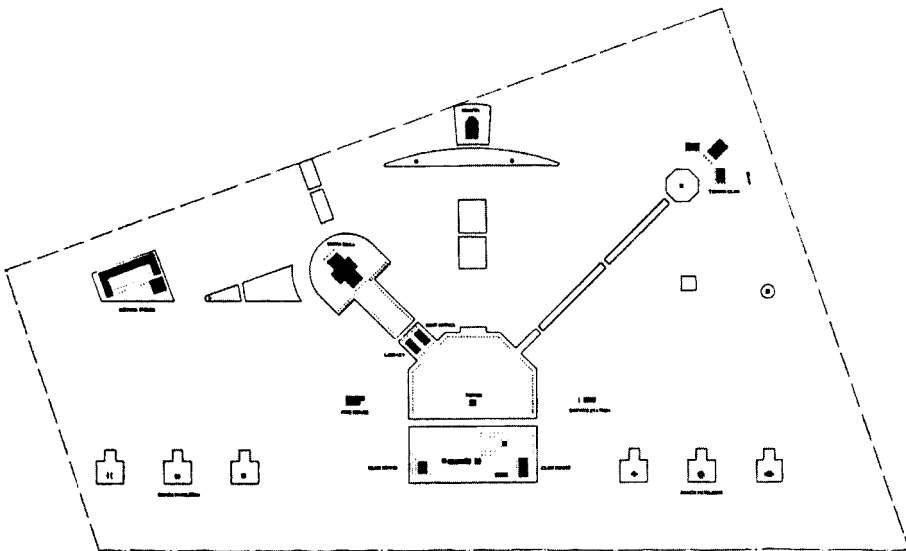
Making the distinction between background and foreground buildings is another way of linking architecture and function. Here function is defined as urban coherence and legibility rather than the accommodation of a building's program. Putting private and commercial functions in foreground, monumental buildings is inappropriate. Putting important public functions in background, vernacular buildings is equally wrong. The local post office often looks like it could be a warehouse, and conversely the drug store looks like it might be the post office.

Monumental buildings need not be large in size. They need only be civic in presence. Sometimes

stature is enhanced by miniaturization, color, or refinement rather than grand size. A figural, low-rise city hall can tame surrounding high-rise buildings into backdrop roles. (High-rise buildings tend to be perceived as background buildings at street level and as foreground buildings when seen against the sky from a distance.) The inner temples at Japan's Ise Shrine are but one famous example of the power of smallness and refinement. Teahouses are another example from that country which so values propriety. In Philadelphia, Independence Hall makes dwarfs of much larger surrounding buildings, as do gemlike colonial buildings such as the Old State House in downtown Boston and Neo-Gothic churches in the canyons of New York's Wall Street district. Neighborhood libraries and firehouses are small, but they also can command a strong public presence.

Expression by type

The appropriate expression of each and every building's importance is a critical part of restoring meaning and clarity to both architecture and the city. The hierarchy of civic importance and the distinction of



With a clear distinction between residential and public buildings, Seaside, Florida, is zoned more typologically than functionally. This Neo-Traditional resort community trades uniformity of function within a zone for a variety of architectural types within a neighborhood. A common architectural language is also prescribed in its codes, which reinforce a hierarchy of building and street types. For instance, only public buildings can be white; all houses must be colored, have picket fences, etc. Public buildings are far less constrained by the code. They are treated as figural monuments, with foreground buildings set off against the background residential buildings. (Duany and Plater-Zyberk)