Precinct Links: Binding Precincts into Units

The physical links binding precincts into coherent, identifiable units take many different forms. They are most commonly streets and pedestrian ways, but they can be greenways, bicycle paths, skyway links and underground passages. Underground pedestrian networks may seem to be a surprising way of linking elements together at the precinct level, but many cities have them.

Designing the Infrastructure to be Plugged Into

Designing the basic infrastructure – streets, a reticulated water supply system, sewers, electricity and communication systems – is very much the basis for urban development. It can lead development. La Défense in Paris could be included here as an example of a precinct with a multi-layered infrastructure layout into which new commercial buildings have been plugged. The same principle applies to most World's Fairs although in their case everything is done in a great hurry. The infrastructure is built and the individual exhibitors then plug their buildings into it. The example included here is Expo '92 in Seville.

Similarly, on a much vaster scale, suburban housing developments throughout the world consist of the infrastructure (roads, sewers, water and electric supply) being built by a property developer, public or private, and the plots sold off to individual owners to develop as they wish although many such developments are total urban designs (as is Raleigh Park described in Chapter 7) but others are all-of-a-piece urban designs in which the designs of individual houses are heavily controlled by design guidelines (e.g. as in Seaside, Florida, described in Chapter 8). In many developments the freedom of design allotted to individual owners is considerable.

Building, or purchasing, a house is the major investment decision of countless families and their design decisions are very much tempered by their perception of what can be sold easily if necessary. The house designs thus tend to be conservative and similar to what is being built elsewhere in the neighbourhood. In areas inhabited by the *nouveau riche* where individual display is an important aspect of status, there tends to be much greater idiosyncrasy in design. Unity, if achieved at all, is obtained through diversity. Standard suburban developments cater to the needs of the middle- and upper-income groups in a society (see Figure 10.18). Sites-and-services cater to low-income populations in third world countries.

In the sites-and-services approach to the creation of housing for the very poor, a new precinct is provided with roads and streetlights, sewers, and a reticulated water system. Each site is provided with connections to the sewerage system and a water tap. In some cases, where the clients have greater resources, the site may be supplied with a latrine and a multipurpose community room. The householders then build their houses themselves plugging them into the infrastructure