

CHAPTER FOUR

The literature review, case studies, and typologies lead to the conclusion that Landscape Architects can play an important role in designing low-cost manufactured housing developments that will fulfill the needs of the residents and gain the acceptance of the surrounding community.

The following discussion describes how the criteria developed in the first three chapters is tested by designing a working class manufactured housing development.

4.1 Methodology

To test the criteria, a site was chosen in the Town of Blacksburg, Virginia. The site is an older manufactured housing development, Clayton Estates. In order to design a new development on the site that fits the community's context, it was necessary to determine what the community's standards are. Three studies were conducted to determine this:

- The Community Preference Study
- The Community Attitudes Study
- The Visual Survey

The Community Preference Study was a focus group of local home owners who participated in an aesthetic preference study. (Chapter 5.1) The purpose of the

study was to find out what can be done to make the appearance of manufactured housing neighborhoods more appealing to middle-class home owners in Blacksburg. In three activities, the participants expressed their preferences for the ways in which the homes addressed the streets, the ways they were landscaped, the presence of porches or decks and the size of the setbacks. These preferences were taken into consideration when designing the new developments.

The Community Attitudes Study was a series of interviews concerning expressions of displeasure over the presence of manufactured housing neighborhoods. Planning officials and manufactured housing development owners or managers in southwestern Virginia were interviewed for this study. Questions related to the complaints that were supposedly received by the participants about manufactured housing developments. These complaints were to be addressed in the design of the new development.

The Visual Survey was undertaken to note the characteristics of the neighborhoods surrounding the chosen site. By noting the common use of materials, the ways in which the houses were sited, the degree of landscaping, the location of driveways and the use of pathways, a set of criteria was developed to help fit the manufactured home neighborhood into the context of the surrounding community.

Three designs were created to show three different responses to the developed criteria. The first plan is designed as if there were no pre-existing development on the site. The emphasis of this design is to create a good neighborhood for a medium density development. Affordability is the last criteria applied to this "Ideal" design.

The second design emphasizes affordability. This plan begins with a set of numbers that promise low lot rents for the residents and a good profit for the owner. The emphasis then shifts to creating a good neighborhood, using what was discovered about creating good neighborhoods in the "Ideal" design.

The third design is a retrofit of the existing development, using as much of the existing infrastructure as possible to reduce construction costs. This design explores how to inject the elements of good neighborhood-building into an existing neighborhood. This design also emphasizes affordability and is able to produce a decent profit for the owner.

A set of goals were developed from the literature review, case studies and typologies in Chapters Two and Three. These goals were used to guide the three designs.

- To integrate local housing and neighborhood characteristics into the design. In order to assess the characteristics of the local

community, a visual survey was taken of nearby neighborhoods. Elements noted include:

- housing type – single family detached, multi-family, duplex, apartment
- façade materials – wood, stone, brick
- setbacks
- parking – in relation to the house and the street
- street lighting
- fencing – materials and heights
- signage
- pedestrian walkways – material and locations
- front entries – how they address the street, is there a porch, deck or stoop
- height of front entry from the ground
- landscaping.

- Create a distinct and positive neighborhood identity. This is accomplished with the use of signage, unified elements of street furniture and landscaping.
- To keep lot rents affordable. It is necessary to place the homes on small lots, raising the density beyond that of traditional suburban home sites in order to keep lot rents affordable. A successful design is able to reduce the perception of higher density with attention to lot

layout, the siting of the houses and landscaping.

- Create a varied streetscape. One problem with the older, utilitarian mobile home developments, has been their monotonous streetscapes, with row upon row of long, narrow houses facing gable end to the street surrounded by sterile, unclaimed yards. Creating a varied streetscape is possible by varying the size of homes, the ways in which the homes face the street, their distances from the street and the addition of vegetation along the streets.
- Create play spaces for children. Children have different needs in their play spaces as they age.
 - Pre-school-aged Children. Private and semi-private spaces around the homes will satisfy most outdoor space needs for pre-school-aged children. It is necessary to make sure that the spaces are easily viewed from within the home (Marcus, 1986).
 - School-aged Children. Children need to explore their nearby environment as they get older. It is necessary to provide them a variety of safe areas in which to play, explore, interact with others and create their own special places. This can be

addressed through the creation of a variety of common open spaces; some for organized games, some with playground equipment and others in a more naturalized vegetative state. Adults must also be accommodated in these spaces by the addition of pathways and benches (Marcus, 1986).

- Designing the street system so that it slows down traffic traveling through the neighborhood. This can be accomplished by using the narrowest streets allowed by code throughout the neighborhood. Traffic can further be slowed by the addition of street trees and traffic calming devices such as chokers which narrow the street to a single lane in chosen places.
- Creating community facilities that are readily accessible to all the homes. This includes the community center, management office and mailboxes. Placing the community center and management office away from the access road and into the neighborhood will accomplish three things:
 - Make them more geographically accessible to all the residents.
 - By removing them from the entrance to the development, it

will help to dispel the institutional image of the neighborhood.

- Give the neighborhood a symbolic center.
- Create private, semi-private and semi-public outdoor spaces for each house. This is accomplished in part by the way in which the homes are sited on their lots. This allows a clear demarcation of where one lot begins and the other ends. It also prevents one resident's front door from facing directly onto the neighbor's back door, a major loss of privacy. Both privacy and territorial demarcation can be accomplished with the addition of fencing, hedges or planting beds. Clear boundaries to each territory should encourage the homeowner to lay claim to their yard and maintain and enhance it with landscaping.
- Create aesthetic views for the home owners. This is accomplished by:
 - Siting the houses so that existing vistas can be enjoyed by as many residents as possible.
 - Creating green spaces throughout the development.
 - The addition of street trees and vegetation to soften the

manmade elements throughout the neighborhood.

- Create adequate parking for each home which does not detract from the aesthetics of the neighborhood. This consists of two spaces per home. The parking spaces should be paved, creating a sense of permanence and to discourage parking in undesignated places. The paving material should be uniform throughout the neighborhood. Parking on the street is discouraged because of its effect of visual clutter to the streetscape.