

# SEASIDE, FLORIDA PLANNING PRECEDENT

## History

Seaside is a master-planned resort community located on the Florida panhandle in the stretch of the Gulf coast known as the “Redneck Riviera.” The town was founded in 1979 by Robert Davis on land he had inherited from his grandfather. Davis’s dream was to build a community that would be a counterpoint to the typical American suburb: automobile-dependent, unattractive, and socially isolating. Seaside was to be a “livable” resort and a haven for people who yearned for a greater sense of community.

Davis hired the architects Andrés Duany and Elizabeth Plater-Zyberk (later DPZ), who, along with Léon Krier, developed the formal organization for the approximately 80-acre site over the course of several years. The principal planning goals for the town were that it be walkable and have an abundance of outdoor communal spaces to encourage social interaction.

To that end, the plan of the town is organized radially: diagonal streets extend from a large public green, surrounded by commercial buildings, which together form the heart of the town. The streets, which are narrow to discourage speeding, lead to residential areas away from the center; many of these terminate in architectural follies – such as gazebos, obelisks, and pavilions – or even civic buildings. A variety of street types and open spaces – linear parks, pedestrian ways, and alleys – further subdivide the blocks.

The variety of pedestrian routes means that none of the approximate 300 homes in Seaside is more than a five-minute walk from the center.

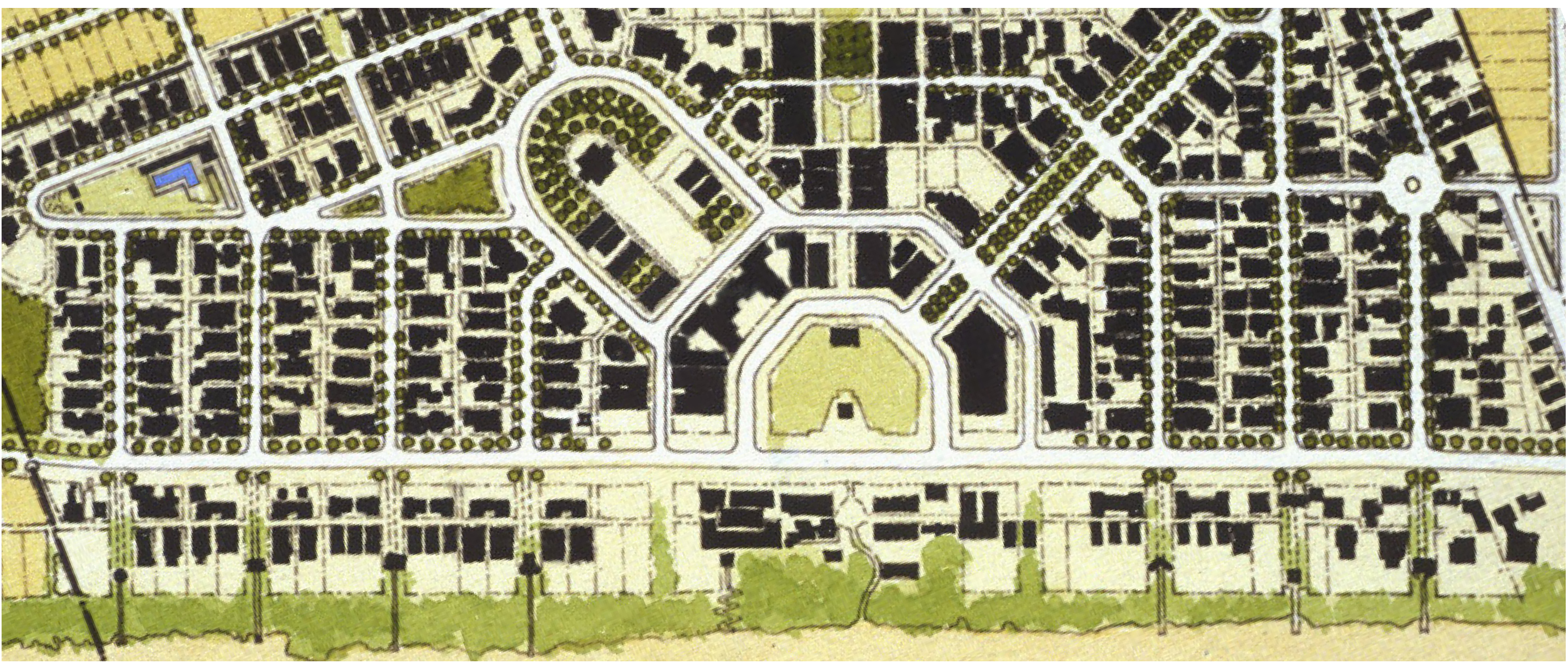
## Usable Design Features

The formal, almost neoclassical plan of the town distinguishes Seaside from the haphazard planning of other beachfront towns in the region – indeed, in most suburban communities in the country. But what also distinguishes Seaside is its architecture – and this derives from the groundbreaking form-based Urban Code created by Duany, Plater-Zyberk, and Krier.

Development in most American towns and cities is based on zoning classifications based on use: an area for housing, another for commerce, and so on. Seaside’s Urban Code regulates development through physical form, rather than use. Each lot in the town belongs to one of eight categories, classified by the “role” the lot plays in the overall urban plan: prominent corner lots, interior lots, gateway lots, lots without views of the sea, and so on. For example, the code may function to protect views in one area or, in another, to promote a sense of grandeur or prominence. The specific regulations for each type of lot concern the location and scale of yards and porches, outbuildings, parking requirements, and building height.

The result is a more predictable scale of building and a more cohesive urban landscape. Moreover, since the code doesn’t regulate use (except to a certain extent), the uses on any particular parcel can change over time. In addition to building form regulated by the Urban Code, Seaside has a more restrictive set of architectural guidelines that regulate materials, colors, and other decorative elements.

Seaside revolutionized the way planners and architects design and building communities. Its planning precepts – walkability, traditional architecture, social spaces – have become the cornerstones of the New Urbanism, the planning paradigm that is an antidote to the car-oriented, sprawl-inducing results that stem from zoning based on use.



Plan: DPZ



Photo: Moon Creek Studios



Photo: Seaside

All houses have front porches, balconies, and rooftop terraces to encourage sociability.



Photo: Seaside

Streets are narrow to discourage speeding and encourage walking.



Photo: still from “The Truman Show”

Houses in Seaside do not have front lawns.



Photo: Darling Down South

A wooden obelisk marks the gateway to the beach at the end of the path.



Photo: Kurt Uischka/Moon Creek Studios

A variety of gathering spaces are located throughout the town.



Photo: Steve Tiesdell Legacy Collection

Architectural follies throughout the town create informal landmarks to aid in wayfinding.



Photo: Sotheby’s International Realty

There are nine beach pavilions at the end of each street to act as gateways to the beach and protect the dune system.

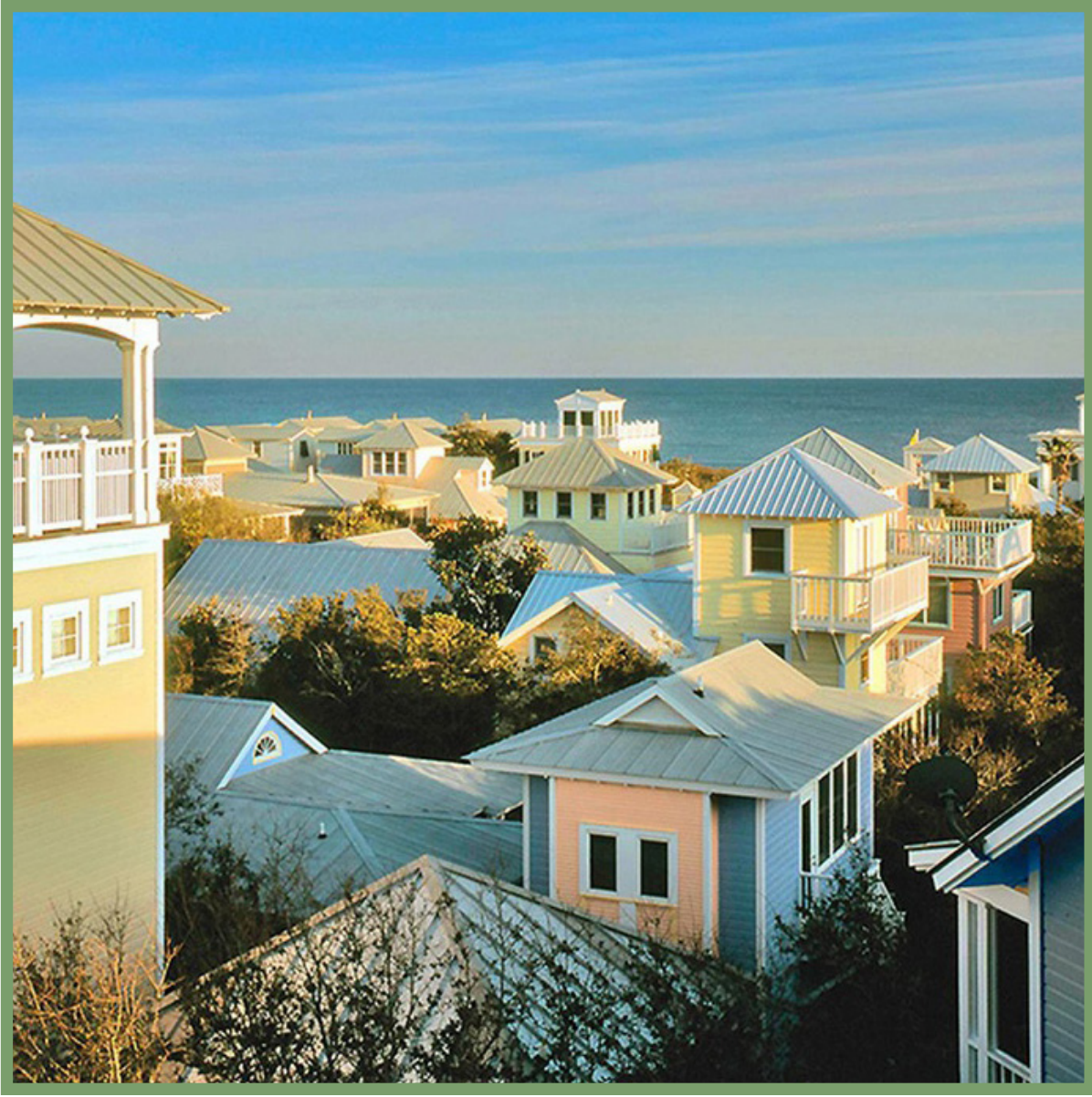


Photo: Lifestyle Asset Group

Pastel house colors are prescribed in the architectural code of Seaside to promote harmony.

## Urban Code



Illustrations: DPZ

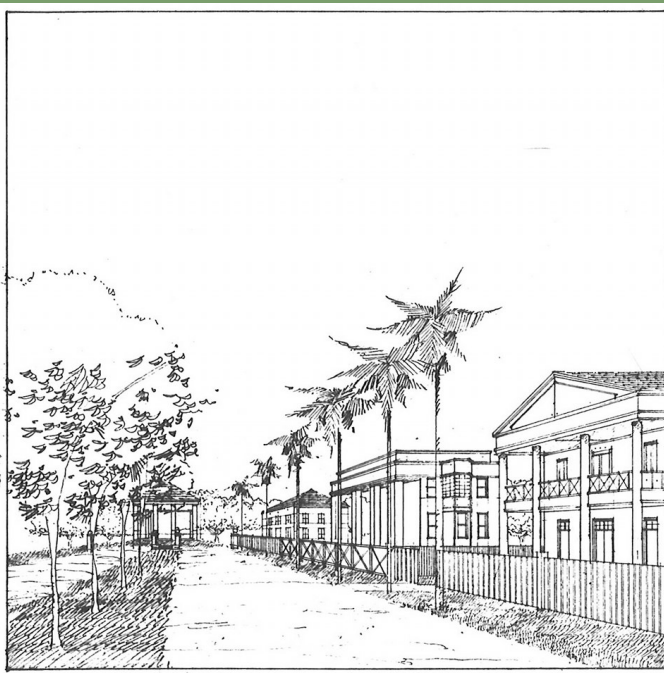
**Type I:** buildings along the central square typically of residential units above retail spaces, with a maximum height of five stories



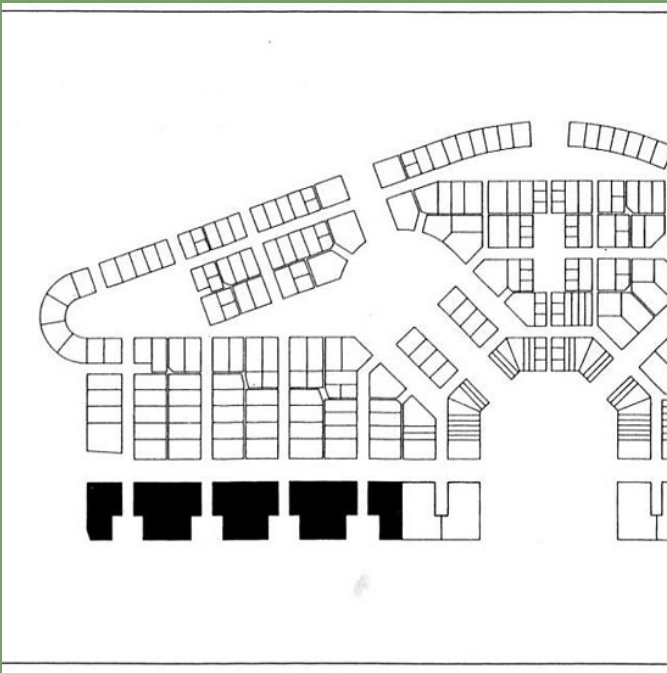
**Type II:** small pedestrian square in front of the town hall, zoned for office and residential use



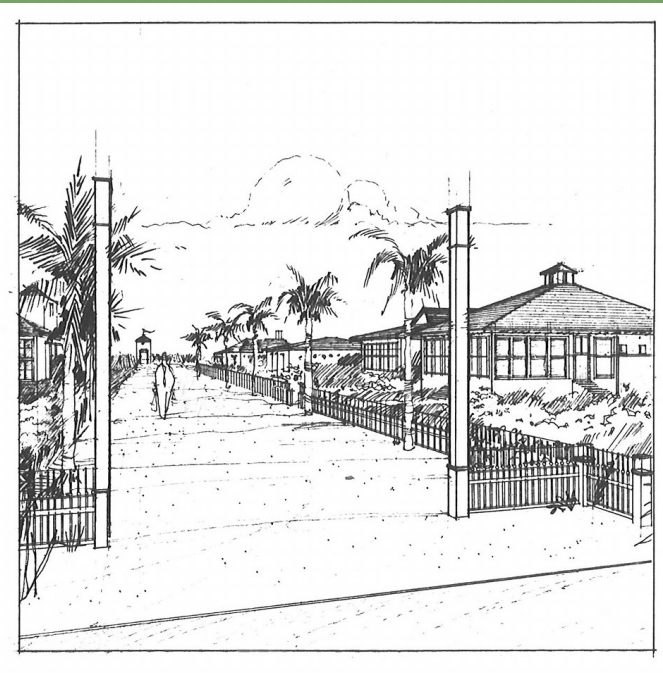
**Type III:** large lots facing service street for warehouses, storage, or workshops, small lots connect to central square for small shops



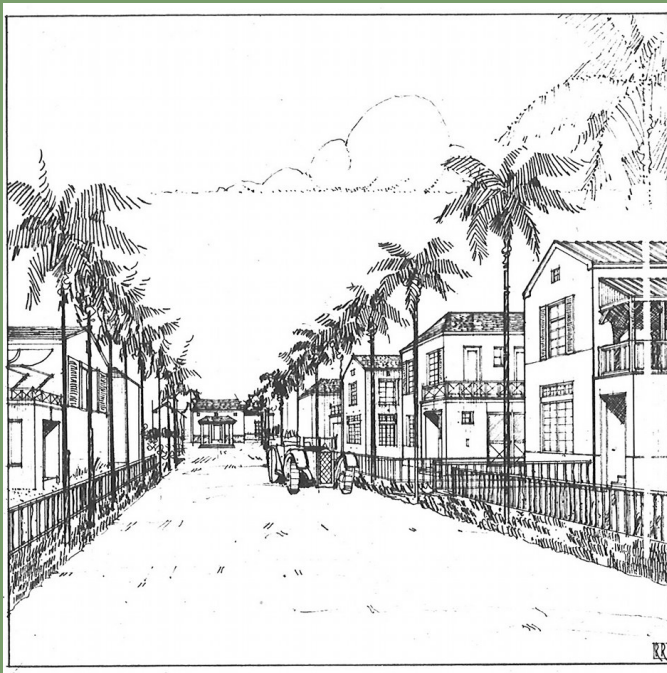
**Type IV:** large, free-standing buildings with setbacks on all sides and a continuous porch at the street front, with big out-buildings behind



**Type V:** special category for large lots which can contain several buildings, designs must be approved by the municipal authority



**Type VI:** sub-urban section of town of free-standing houses with small out-buildings in the rear, substantial front yards, and picket fences



**Type VII:** smaller lots along with east-west streets with no view of the sea, houses tend to have side yards and minimal front setback



**Type VIII:** at locations that require some degree of acknowledgment as gateways of special places, provides meaningful variety