Everyville:
Community beyond Place, Civic Sense beyond Architecture

Imagine every town. Remember where you grew up, a place shaped by your first walk, your first love, your first amazement at color and form and other people; your first humiliation when you couldn't find your way or weren't part of the group. Recall the sights, the sounds, the dirt on the street, the wind rustling through the trees, the day the garbage was picked up and the day before that, the trip downtown or to the airport, the place where what you knew slowly shaded over into an uncharted territory that itself receded the older you became.

Maybe you still live in this city, or visit it because your family is there. Maybe you never lived there but grew up in the countryside or in a high-rise. Deep in our culture, however, is the notion that a small-scale community, whether by itself or as the neighborhood in a larger city, is at the core of what connects us not just to a place, but to a sense of community. These days, such places arise and disappear much more quickly than at any time in human history. If we cannot live there long enough to make them our own, and if they cannot develop over time, what makes them real places that create social and physical foundations for our experience of the world?

Certainly architecture is not the answer, at least not in the traditional sense of the word. It is unlikely that monuments or recognizable structures such as churches or banks were ever anything either placeholders or late appearances in the forming of community. It is the texture, the changing, decaying and growing collective of built form that allows a community cohere long enough to evoke memories. These days we wonder whether we can create such communities virtually, or at a global scale. But what if we ask the question the other way around and wonder whether the techniques developed in the world beyond bricks and stone, wood, steel, plastics and concrete, can help us shape a more ephemeral, quicker to rise and faster to disappear, community. Can we build the character of place instantly and let it fade away without fear?

Now consider the following situation:

Everyville is a new exurban community that has emerged around the intersection of Avenue Z and X Street, just to the Southwest of the intersection of Highway 1 and the Beltway around Megalopolis, about 20 kilometers from the city's core. Making good use of the flat, featureless terrain that used to support dairy farming, developers have carved the plains here into several subdivisions that by now house over 20,000

inhabitants. Analysts expect that the whole 25-square kilometer area that used to be the historic Big A and Small B farms can eventually support as many as 50,000 inhabitants and perhaps even more.

Along the edges of town, retail establishments have grown up, mainly along the roads that lead from the interchanges off both the Beltway and Highway 1. They include one shopping mall, which contains 25,000 square feet of retail space, a strip mall with about 15,000 square feet of space, and many smaller strip malls and fast-food outlets. A new Unified School, housing 2,000 high school students, is under construction at Avenue Y and W Street, while two small grade schools exist on Avenues P and S. They are each designed to accommodate about 500 students. There is an office park, Executive Park I, that has 7,500 square meters of fully leased space, right where Avenue H links up with the Beltway exit. Another office development, as of yet unnamed, but projected to have 12,500 square meters of leasable space, is planned at the exit of Highway 1 onto Avenue B.

The land on which Everyville is built consists of flat, clay-based soil. The prevailing winds are from the West-Northwest. The temperature is moderate, with occasional frost and snow in the winter and hot and humid periods in July and August. There is a notable range of mountains, the Tall Ones, about 40 kilometers to the North. Megalopolis is located at a bend in the Medium River. The main industry in the area is based on telecommunication: there are several very large call centers in the region, and the headquarters for Universal Telecom is on the Western outskirts of Megalopolis. The total metropolitan area is approximately 2.5 million.

Everyville was just incorporated as a separate town, with a City Council of five members. The member who receives the most votes is the mayor for a four-year term. The city is looking into establishing its own fire and police departments. It is currently operating from the County Building, a multi-purpose set of offices on Avenue R. Now the City Council has to decide how to give Everyville coherence and identity. In a heated meeting in December of 2007, several factions proposed different strategies. Some felt that there was no government necessary, but that a strong police should operate from a monumental building that would have a jail attached. Others felt that Everyville should develop around a unified school building that would eventually also have a (junior) college or trade school, and that this campus should include civic functions. Yet a third group wanted a more traditional city hall that would serve as the new community's core.

But most of the participants felt that nothing of the sort was necessary, for civic buildings were a waste of money and time. "We need a Starbuck's, that's a real civic amenity," was the final comment of the meeting.

In the end, the City Council voted to hire an architect to decide the question of how to give Everyville a focal point, a place or method of identity, and a home for shared services. They felt that architects would have the expertise to determine whether any new buildings would be necessary to do this, or whether what was really needed was a method of creating common and shared space with a clear and distinct Everyville identity. The use of commercial spaces in this effort was to be included. The Mayor in particular believes that what services there may be should be integrated into the school, the office park or the shopping area, so that they would be part of Everyville's everyday life, and that what is really needed is a program that moves beyond buildings to create a character for this community. Above all else, she thinks that this character should take the form not just of identity programs and focal points, but also of guidelines that will help Everyville grow as a cohesive, environmentally sane and participatory community.

To accomplish this task, Everyville has therefore set out a Request for Proposals in which architects are asked to suggest how they might create an image, a coherence, a character and a civic sense for this small town, appropriate to its location and to its history, its site and its future. The proposal can be idiosyncratic. It may even be utopian. It should certainly be an evocation of a real place of community where there is right now none and that may be again just a series of fragments in sprawl a decade from, it should be an Everyville of the imagination and of memory, of hope and of fear.

The proposal must take the form of a series of drawings that will allow citizens to see what Everyville will look like in ten years, and how that community will make sense through the medium of architecture:

- one jpg file (dimension: 945x450 pixel, max 200 kb) that will include several drawings, among which at least one 3D general view of the project (admitted techniques: photomontage, virtual-digital model, photos of the maquette, drawing, perspective)
- a text, English language, describing and explaining the concept of the project: maximum length 1000 characters (including spaces).
- one jpg file (dimension: 945x450 pixel, max 200 kb) that will

include several drawings, among which at least one 3D detail view of the project (admitted techniques: photomontage, virtual-digital model, photos of the maquette, drawing, perspective)
- a text, English language, describing and explaining the project's main details: maximum length 1000 characters (including spaces).

The deadline for the submission is July 15, 2008.

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