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Author
Gindroz, Raymond L, AIA

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Cross Sections enable us to see relationships among the various parts of our buildings and environments. The Committee on Design is using this theme throughout 1998 to explore the role individual buildings and architectures can play in creating public space.

In this first conference we saw three distinctly different ways in which many architects and builders can work together (or against each other) across both time and space to create a large scale-environment. We learned from the contrasts among the design approaches for Celebration, the Florida Southern campus, and Tampa’s traditional neighborhoods and commercial districts.

In Celebration, many architects, all working within the concept of creating a new home town, designed buildings that create a sequence of streets and public open spaces that have the character and quality of a traditional American town. Required to choose among one of several possible traditional architectural styles, they designed buildings that relate to each other and to the character and design of streetscapes and landscapes. Through collaboration, the design-invention of many architects has created a unified environment.

By contrast, Frank Lloyd Wright created a single, unified vision (land style) for the campus of Florida Southern College. He called this campus the “Child of the Sun” and produced a rich sequence of spaces within an orange grove, linked by canopies. The singular vision has been less successful in directing the work of other architects than Wright would have hoped.

In the Hyde Park and Ybor City districts of Tampa, committee members saw traditional residential neighborhoods and commercial districts in their natural state, unified by the urban and architectural conventions of their period. These include verandas for the way houses and porches create a neighborhood street space, the way mixed-use commercial buildings create a room-like street space, and the architectural elements of buildings.

The Committee on Design was pleased to be joined by the Regional and Urban Design and Housing Committees. The program provided joint sessions to share common information and individual meetings to discuss topics of more specialized interest.

Raymond L. Gindroz, AIA, is managing principal of Urban Design Associates in Pittsburgh.