

# THE PROCESS

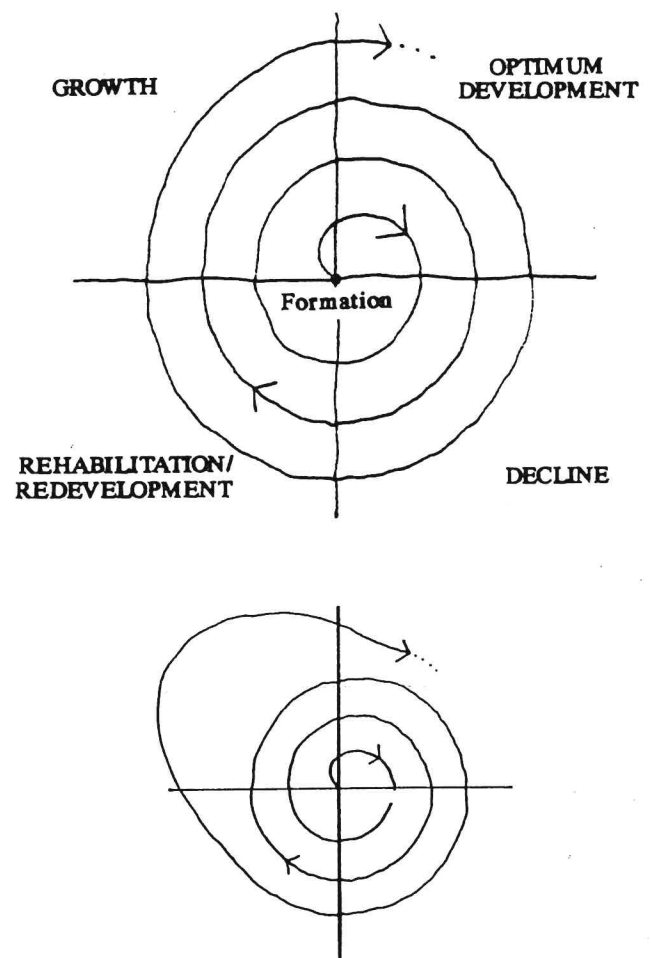
## CHAPTER ONE

The planning and design of hamlets, villages, and neighborhoods, or small communities as I will refer to them throughout the book, can focus either on new development or on the redevelopment of existing commercial, residential, and industrial areas.

All places are in a continuous process of growth and evolution, like the Built-Form Spiral. Starting with its early formulation, a place grows to optimize the available resources, technology, perceptions, and financial capabilities. The spiral continues through deterioration and then redevelopment followed again by growth and optimization. The spiral is endless in this evolution. The important thing to remember is that as it evolves, we get multiple opportunities to intervene. Every decision we make effects the balance and the path of evolution. As the next cycle comes around, the path can be corrected.

The planning to create small communities must occur at both the macro scale of master planning and the micro scale of site planning and urban design. New hamlets, villages, or neighborhoods can achieve an even higher positive value than older ones when we combine the best of the past with a humanistic vision of the future. We must envision the potential and honestly attempt to solve the problems of the present. Planning communities on new, previously undeveloped land will be an easier task than redevelopment will be. Redevelopment and/or retrofitting of Euclidean zones of older industrial-retail areas is becoming more popular, challenging though it may be. Many of these places reach the limits of their economic and functional usefulness as predicted by the spiral diagram.

### The Built-Form Evolutionary Spiral



## A SEVEN STEP PLANNING AND DESIGN PROCESS

After years of planning and designing small and large projects, a process has emerged which reflects this evolutionary diagram. When this process is followed, opportunities to create small communities exist. The process consists of seven conceptual steps:

- I. Understanding the biography of the past
- II. Analyzing and understanding the problems
- III. Creating a common vision, Design by Democracy
- IV. Analyzing and applying the potentials
- V. Creating three- and four-dimensional plans
- VI. Developing illustrated codes that reflect the common vision and the potentials
- VII. Improving interaction between the community and the developers through submission and review of plans

**These seven steps have been used to define the various sections in this book .**

### STEP I THE BIOGRAPHY OF THE PAST

The biography of the past looks at a town's political, physical, and economic development over the life span of current generations. We must understand the historical development or growth of our municipality, document these changes over time, and analyze the impact of the total build-out pattern based on current zoning. We must understand the past policies at the national level as well as our personal conditioning. Chapters 3 and 4 review the history and evolution of suburban planning and design since the 1920s.

### STEP II ANALYSIS OF PROBLEMS

The analysis of the physical problems at a local municipal level becomes apparent through the vision planning process. Specific focus sessions with the elected officials, police, public works staff, legal council, neighborhood groups, or at town-wide meetings provide lists of the physical planning and related economic and social problems facing the area. In this stage there is an assessment of the most severe problems and what the participants recommend as solutions. This is particularly critical when the current master plan or zoning ordinance allows the physical characteristics which create the problems.

### STEP III DETERMINING THE COMMON VISION

The common vision provides specific images of those places and examples of land use patterns that are positive and acceptable to the community, as well as those that are negative and unacceptable. I use both the VPS™ and Hands-On Model Workshops to help generate the vision. These visual images should be used in the creation of the master plan's goals and objectives, in the land use, circulation, open space, and

community facilities plans. They are particularly important to demonstrate the three-dimensional reality of the two-dimensional plan. The two-dimensional plan elements of the master plan can be given their three-dimensional image by using photographs and models to represent various land uses, points of interest, and attractive landscape characteristics. Images with positive ratings can be used to demonstrate the standards for streetscapes, housing densities, transit stops, parks, etc. The clearer and more understandable the vision of the master plan, the greater the probability that your municipality will get the quality of growth and/or redevelopment it desires. The negative images tell you specifically what to avoid. Chapter 5 describes the Vision Planning Process and the Hands-On Modeling technique.

## **STEP IV THE POTENTIALS**

Using the positive images is the next step in the process. The potential of what the area wants to be in the future is generated through those images and model design workshops in the common vision step of the process. The range of characteristics which can be assessed in this process is dependent on those images used in the VPS™ and the results of the Hands-On Model Workshops. We typically include many images in the VPS™ which are further along on the evolution spiral or which have stood the test of time. If they come up positive, the potential for implementation exists. Sometimes the results of the Hands-On Model Workshops can be recycled directly into codes through figure ground plan and design standards. Chapter 6 looks at potentials for positive development and redevelopment.

## **STEP V CREATING PLANS**

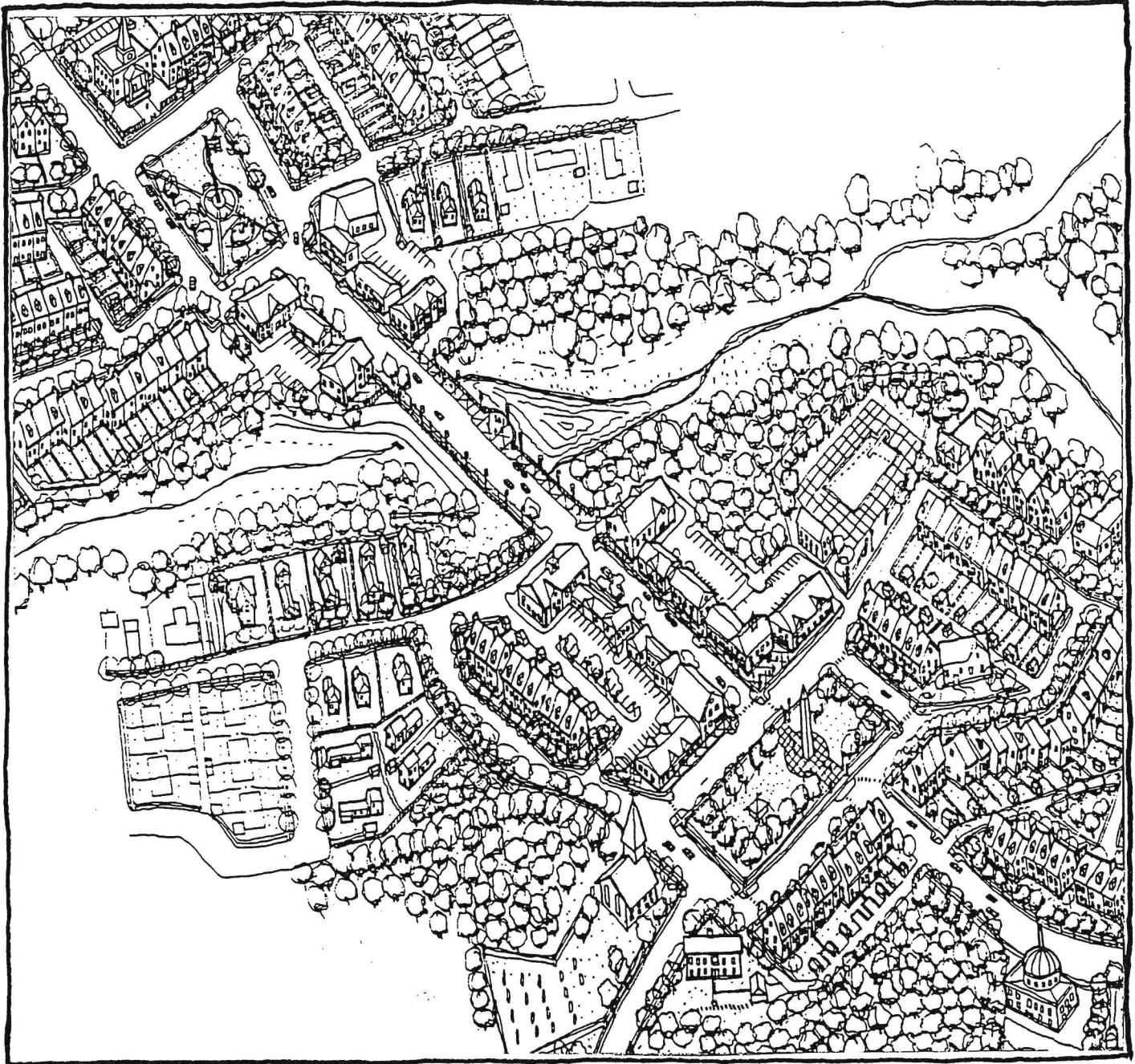
Many of the potential images for future development duplicate pre-1938 streetscapes and land use patterns found in traditional places. To translate these potentials into master plans and zoning/development ordinances requires that they be more design specific and more three-dimensional. This does not mean that highly rated images, street form details, or building materials should be copied. Instead it means a sensitive understanding of the design principles inherent in the analysis of the positive images should form the basis of the master plan and design-development zoning ordinance. To the extent possible, the master plan should include the specific location and layout of all future roads, a conceptual-figure ground plan for all zones, and specific plans for the higher-density houses, mixed-use, and non-residential zones. Conceptual axonometric or positive photographic images can be used as guidelines. The normal two-dimensional plans must become more three-dimensional; the clearer the master plan, the easier the translation into the zoning and development ordinances. Chapter 7 contains the Ten Principles to design a small community.

## **STEP VI ILLUSTRATED CODES**

It is critical that development ordinances be written and illustrated. Chapter 8 is an example of an illustrated ordinance which can be used in total or in parts for the creation of hamlet, villages, or neighborhoods.

## **STEP VII SUBMISSION AND REVIEW PROCESS**

Chapter 9 describes the application process, with an emphasis on informal submissions and the submission requirements which hopefully fast-track the approval process.



Axonometric sketch of the core for a new village community of Prince Georges County, MD.