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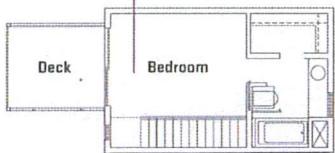
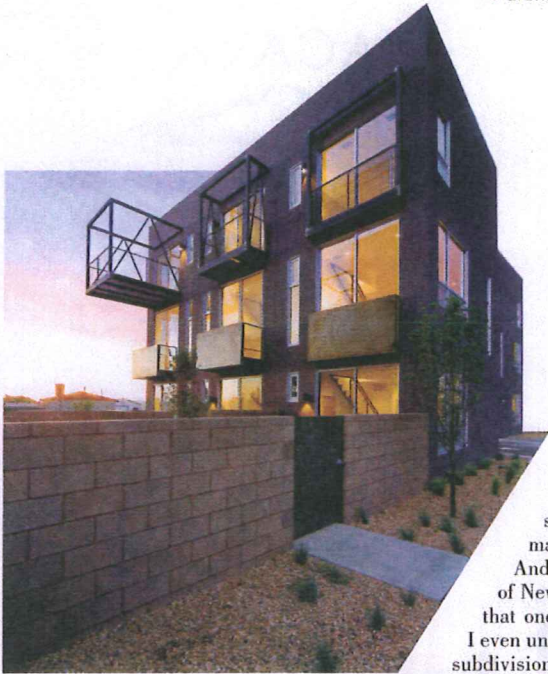


DESIGN DIVERSITY IN THE GLOBAL ECONOMY

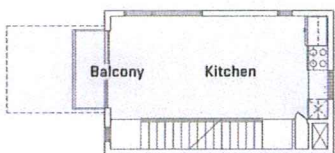
ESSAYS BY BRUCE STERLING, JOHN HOCKENBERRY,
JOEL KOTKIN, AND JAMES HOWARD KUNSTLER



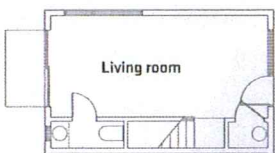
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THIRD FLOOR



SECOND FLOOR



GROUND FLOOR

I was amazed that such a project could be built in that stubbornly traditional town.

Urban Interlopers

Lofts! Transit! Density! What's not to like? Ask the fine citizens of adobe-encrusted Santa Fe.

I'm the first to admit that I don't get Santa Fe. Yes, I appreciate that tourists flock there for the city's quaint pueblo style, that the adobe (or imitation adobe) architecture makes a picturesque setting for boutiques and restaurants.

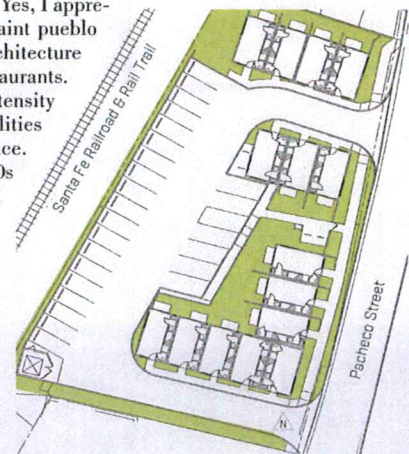
And I understand why artists are attracted to the intensity of New Mexico's desert light and landscapes, the qualities that once inspired Georgia O'Keefe and D. H. Lawrence.

I even understand that most buildings here, even the 1950s subdivisions, are pueblo revival simply because it's Santa Fe and that's how things are done.

On my most recent visit, I noticed that the most vital and interesting part of town was not the charming adobe-encrusted heart, or even Canyon Road, where the established galleries congregate, but the emerging Railyard District. Site Santa Fe, a contemporary-art center housed in an industrial building, forms the nucleus of a messy, still amorphous territory where the galleries are mostly housed in corrugated-metal warehouses. Two big civic projects, the 12-acre Sante Fe Railyard and an extension of Rail Runner, a commuter line to Albuquerque, both scheduled for completion this year, will be the centerpiece of a more contemporary Santa Fe. Here, amid the Butler buildings transformed into cafés and yoga studios, is the right spot for a new architectural moment, a place to escape from the vernacular. Certainly that's what architects Christopher Calott and Tom Gifford and developer Jay Rembe, partners in the firm Infill Solutions, believed.

I stumbled on Infill Solutions in Albuquerque, an hour south of Santa Fe, where I was spending a night before heading off on a weeklong retreat in the high desert. In need of a late lunch, I followed the hotel desk clerk's directions to the Flying Star, a bright multilevel café. Gazing out the big windows, I noticed the development across the street, a new architecturally assertive apartment complex. The project was impressive, so spying the developers' office in the basement of the Flying Star, I barged in and introduced myself to Calott. We chatted about how Albuquerque is becoming the "Vancouver of the United States" (meaning that film-production companies are building studios here because production costs are lower than in Los Angeles), and how the city is poised to become a boomtown for the emerging solar industry. Albuquerque, he told me, is thrilled to have his company fill downtown's plentiful vacant lots with housing.

Calott also showed me pictures of the Pacheco Street Lofts, a newly completed development in Santa Fe similar to the one across the street. I was amazed that such a **continued on page 72**



SITE PLAN

This dense cluster of 15 loft-style homes, located next to a transit line, is very atypical for Sante Fe.

Top left: One of the three-story live/work spaces that make up the Pacheco Street Loft development in Sante Fe, New Mexico.

Above left: The third-floor bedroom windows frame views of historic downtown and the mountains beyond. **Left:** A typical floor plan for the lofts.

continued from page 70 project could be built in that stubbornly traditional town. "We argue: we're the traditionalists," Calott said, meaning that the density and structure of their developments are inspired by Indian pueblos and Spanish-style compounds.

After my week in the desert, I arranged a meeting with Calott and Santa Fe-based Gifford at the Counter Culture Cafe, a simple concrete-floored industrial-style building typical of Santa Fe's Railyard District, and they told me about how they began developing the Pacheco Street Lofts.

"We had to mind our Ps and Qs," Calott said. "We couldn't do anything that would trip the review process." By staying within the zoning, they avoided engaging the city's regulatory mechanisms.

Gifford noted that Santa Fe permitting is done on a point system, with higher scores awarded for attributes that make buildings more pueblo-esque: "If more than thirty percent of your building is

In Santa Fe, single-story adobe (known locally as fauxdobe) is the development model of choice. Everything else represents unwanted density.

glass, you get one point. A more traditional structure, where ten percent of the building is glass, you get five points. More points for less windows. More points for one of the traditional shades of brown." The architects lost points for painting some of the walls cream-of-tomato red but managed to survive the process with their design largely intact.

"But we did become the poster children for the anti-infill, antichange group in town," Calott noted.

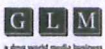
Anti-infill? This is the part I really don't get. In the pro-urban, antisprawl world with which I'm familiar—the world on this side of the looking glass—infill is almost always good. By making cities more dense, you preserve the surrounding open space and give people less reason to drive.

But in Santa Fe, this is not the case: single-story adobe (or what's known locally as fauxdobe) is the development model of choice. Everything else represents unwanted density.

Calott and Gifford told me about their neighbor, Beverley Spears, one of Santa Fe's leading traditional architects and the designer of the city's new 74,000-square-foot pueblo-ish civic center. Her office is in a one-story adobe house adjacent to their site. "To make a long saga short, she said, 'If you build more than two stories, I'm going to fight you,'" Calott said. "We said, 'Why?' and she said, 'I don't think Santa Fe needs this kind of density.' And we said, 'Quite the opposite, our mission was to do a building that reintroduced density.'"

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Calott continued, "She quite craftily came upon a small loophole in the state energy code—solar access to an existing solar panel—and a skylight qualifies as a solar panel, and she had a skylight on her building. So she sued us for her solar access to her skylight. She thought that would kibosh the whole deal."

Instead, the architects designed a fix. They did some solar modeling and shaved one story off a section of the project to allow the legally mandated amount of sunlight to reach Spears's skylight. They refer to that anomaly as "Beverly's Notch." She complains that her office grows dark by 1:30 p.m.

Most of the 15 Pacheco Street apartments have a studio/work space on the ground floor, a kitchen/living area on the second, and a bedroom on the third. The units are configured to maximize views of the mountains. From the top-floor balconies, you also look out onto the neighboring freight yards, a

landscape of corrugated metal and steel. Just up the block is the future Rail Runner stop. The project's contextual and urbanistic logic is clear. In any other city, the Pacheco Street Lofts would be regarded as a model development. "I don't think we can get a project like the Pacheco Street Lofts built in Santa Fe ever again unless a lot of things change," Calott said.

"We thought it would be a catalyst to smart growth," Gifford grumbled. "Now it's like the banner for what not to do."

I assumed they were exaggerating. (Architects do that sometimes.) But as it turns out, not long after the project's completion, city councilor Karen Heldmeyer proposed a "neighborhood conservation district" ordinance that would let area homeowners override existing zoning "to define for themselves what they think is important about their neighborhood." Under the ordinance, three-story buildings,

although they may be permitted by zoning, could be banned if 67 percent of an area's homeowners agree. So could two-story buildings—or anything that is regarded as unacceptably weird.

As of late January only four of the 15 Pacheco Street Lofts had sold. The Infill Solutions partners remain optimistic and, in her own way, so does Heldmeyer. "The only satisfaction I get out of all of this," she says, "is that many of these inappropriately developed places are not doing well on the market because people in Santa Fe appreciate and treasure the vernacular architecture." Maybe so, but Heldmeyer's plan, which hasn't been voted on by the full city council, strikes me as a formula for maintaining Santa Fe as a museum of increasingly fake vernacular, one that is profoundly disconnected from the culture that inspired it, the dense urbanism invented by the Pueblo Indians a thousand years ago. ○

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