

Finca El Portal

Antigua Guatemala, Guatemala

PROJECT DETAILS

Project Area: 350 acres
Client: Multi-Inversiones, S.A.
Year Designed: 2006

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The hotel and mountains beyond form a terminated vista along a signature public street.



The canal provides a unique address for residences that front the waterway.



Courtyard houses face a generous green space.



The Project

Finca El Portal is located three quarters of a mile away from the center of Antigua Guatemala. For over 200 years, the 350 acre site has been the home of one of the largest coffee plantations in the Antigua region. Future development will transform the property into a unique resort village, with an 18 hole professional golf course surrounded by mountains and views of several volcanoes. Two hotel sites, one of which will be a Golf Resort and Clubhouse, will anchor the village. The historic main buildings of the coffee plantation will be preserved and adapted for new uses, while a portion of the farm will remain dedicated to the harvesting and production of coffee beans. The Plan was created by Dover, Kohl & Partners, in collaboration with Castillo Arquitectos and Sottile and Sottile.

Process and Status

The team worked closely with the Client to create the Plan during a week-long design charrette in August 2006. Market and financing feasibility studies are currently being conducted.

Key Concepts

The village of Finca El Portal is comprised of streets, squares and plazas that are inspired by the traditional urbanism and architecture of Antigua Guatemala and its surrounding villages. Respect for the history and physical topography of the site, along with many other guiding principles, influenced the details of the Plan that make it a distinct and memorable place.

Key concepts include: recognizing culture and climate; preserving the greenbelt; preserving and framing views of the mountains; leaving pre-Columbian sites for archaeological research/preservation; and designing a regular street grid/plaza, as in La Ley de las Indias Españolas towns. Creating an architectural character to include classic Antiguan styles and rural vernacular elements was also important. Courtyard houses are located at the center of the village while detached villas are placed along the village's edge. Traditionally designed hotels and a clubhouse, hospital, and church serve as landmark civic buildings. The workforce housing quarter of the coffee plantation is improved and expanded. Multiple street connections to the surrounding road network are included to reduce traffic congestion. In response to environmental concerns, limited development is found on the steepest slopes uphill from the highway, while lakes and the river are incorporated as prominent design features.

The Courtyard House Type

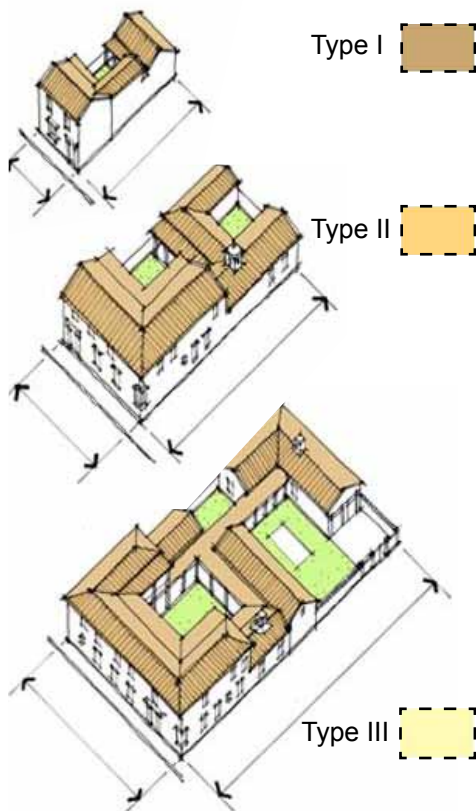
To make the most efficient use of urban blocks using the vernacular architecture of Antigua, the planning team conducted a series of studies to explore the versatility of the typical courtyard house type. Designers illustrated the configuration of negative and positive space on lots of different sizes and also the way these lots are assembled to form urban blocks. The courtyard type allows for growth and densification to occur upon lots without altering the streetscape. Modest houses may only have one courtyard, while larger houses can have several courtyards ranging in size from intimate light wells to sunny and landscaped gardens. This type allows for a high degree of privacy and complete control over private outdoor space. Courtyards can be utilitarian in character or can be completely whimsical, depending on the wishes of the owner.

The courtyard house arrived in Guatemala by way of Spain, and may be among the earliest types of houses developed when the first towns were settled.

Though the building type is derived from Spain, there is a deliberate character that is native Guatemalan as well. The stout proportions of the architectural elements and the incorporation of hand-crafted wood, wrought iron rails, gates, and lanterns, and intensely painted walls are all representative of local architectural traditions.



The use of courtyard houses allows for a diversity of building sizes to occur within a single block.



Courtyard houses of varying size



Courtyard types are arranged in different configurations to form blocks.