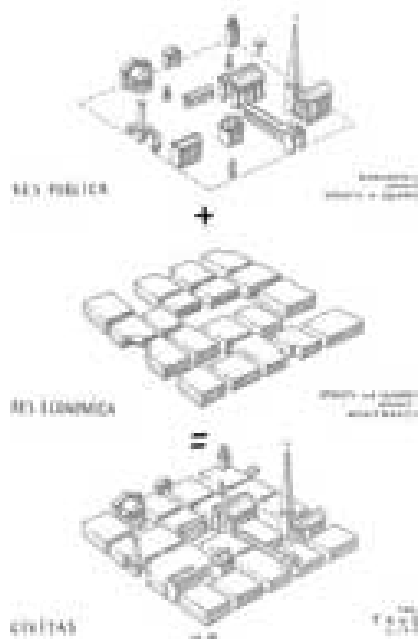


Civitas: The Complete City

Written by

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Great places, cities and towns are composed of many different pieces. These pieces can be divided into two main parts; the Res Publica (the Public Realm) and the Res Privata (the Private Realm). One without the other is a failed place, but with both, a place may become great. Those parts, combined harmoniously create Civitas or the Complete City.

The Res Publica is the realm which we all share together. It is much of what we draw our collective identity from. This public realm is composed of our streets, parks, squares and civic buildings. These items are the backbone of our community, our collective institutions. The streets need to be beautiful and enjoyable to be in, not just singular transport tubes. The parks, squares and other open spaces should provide a great variety of places for people to enjoy and socialize in.

The civic buildings need to be the monuments that showcase the best of our city; they should be prominent and beautiful with a mass, scale and proportion proper for a landmark. Examples of these include churches (with which Beaufort is so blessed), higher learning campuses (USCB Downtown buildings), schools (Port Royal Elementary), Libraries (Downtown building), Hospitals, and Government Buildings (New City Hall). Institutions bear the burden to provide these well-executed buildings and spaces as a matter of duty.

Investment into the Res Publica is the duty of the City, the business and the individual. Cities can and should provide value building, economic growth and preservation of land values with Public Realm investment. Business and individuals can and should also contribute. Their contribution can be simple things such as beautiful fences and gates, porches or porticos. Investment here is the greatest wealth generation tool in human history, more than any industry.

Res Privata is the realm of the individual private buildings. If the Res Publica is the bones, the Res Privata is the meat or muscle. These are simple buildings which we use on a daily basis and which form the bulk of our built environment. The typical house, commercial , industrial and agricultural buildings all fall within this category. These buildings should be economical to build and durable; they should reflect their region and collectively add to a City's true nature and sense of place. Pattern, proportion and rhythm are the hallmarks of the Res Privata. Beaufort is blessed with fantastic fabric buildings; much of the historic core is of this type.

A city or place with both a well-executed Res Publica and Res Privata can become a Civitas, a Complete City. This means that these two realms are skillfully woven together and work in tandem. A great City cannot have a "zone" of one or the other. Each level of the City or place, down to the block level should have a clear sense of both these realms. Civitas should be our collective unyielding goal.

This article was written for Lowcountry Weekly by the Congress for the New Urbanism – Carolinas Chapter. To learn more, visit www.cnu.org

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