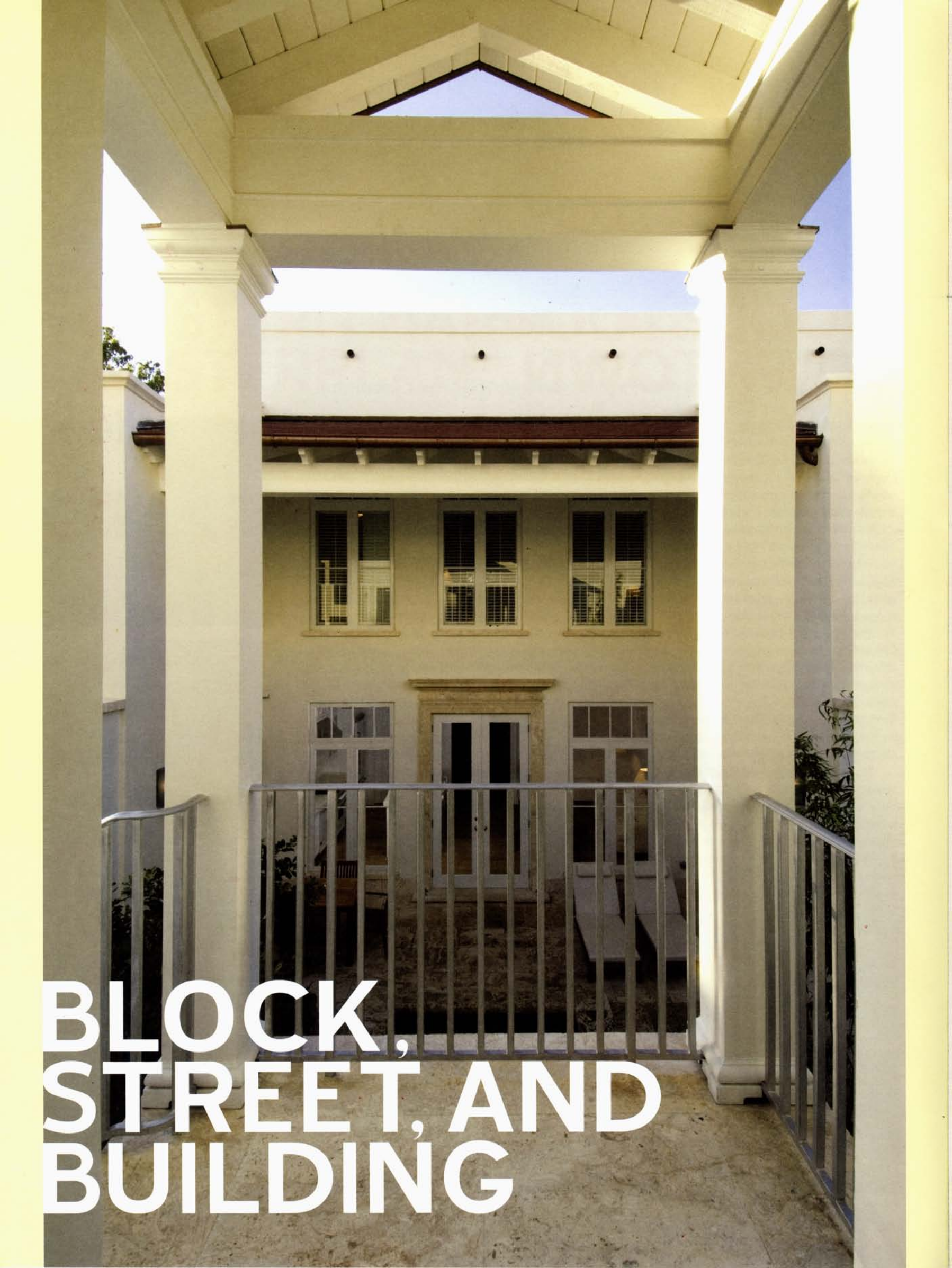


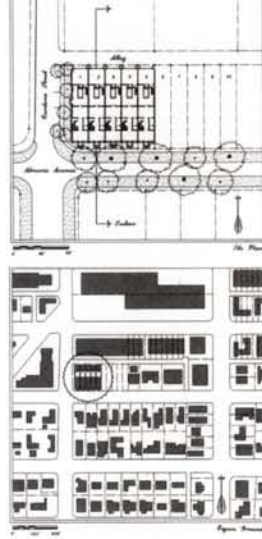


CNU CHARTER AWARDS

2008 CONGRESS FOR THE NEW URBANISM



**BLOCK,
STREET, AND
BUILDING**



SITE:

A 0.7 acre infill parcel—rezoned into 10 fee-simple lots—in a historic garden city.

PROGRAM:

The return of a classic urban housing type to a Coral Gables neighborhood of apartment buildings and detached single-family houses.

ALMERIA ROW

CORAL GABLES, FLORIDA



Ten townhouses squeezed onto less than an acre in Coral Gables? Seventy years ago, it might not have been so surprising. But today, it is quite remarkable. Put that feat together with the considerable craft and grasp of history displayed in the project’s design and execution and therein lie the reasons Almeria Row is among this year’s Charter Award winners.

Before Almeria Row, Coral Gables’ zoning code did not allow fee-simple townhouses on narrow lots. The owner, architect, and city officials collaborated to change the zoning code to restore to local use a classic urban housing type. (Indeed, George E. Merrick’s original master plan for Coral Gables envisioned entire neighborhoods of townhouses). The residences at Almeria Row are neither condominium units nor detached housing units but rather attached single-family townhomes.

Architects from the Coral Gables firm of de la Guardia Victoria Architects & Urbanists drew design inspiration from both northern and southern Europe, the architecture of Mott Schmidt and the Moorish district of Seville, Spain, to create a set of buildings that resemble the “classic” townhouse common in London and New York but function a bit differently from them.

The two-story townhouses on 23-foot by 120-foot lots range in size from 2,840 square feet and 3,037 square feet of living space. Inside each is a surprising revelation: a luminous coral stone courtyard with small pool, something unusual in northern townhouse types but more common in Mediterranean examples. Each connects the main house to the garage and a pair of above-garage guest bedrooms reached by their own stone staircase.

With its elegant stone exterior details and careful attention paid to height-to-width proportion and proximity of front stoop to the sidewalk, the project eases multi-family densities into a transitional area between Coral Gables’ mixed-use city center and its streets of single-family homes.

While jurors would have greeted enthusiastically an effort to accommodate residents with a broader range of incomes—this is strictly an upscale project, after all—most were nevertheless impressed. “I think these buildings are just stunning, absolutely stunning,” said juror Karen Parolek.

“What I liked especially,” said juror Peter Park, “is how the zoning code actually changed. It set a new precedent and makes it easier for good development to happen in the future.”

While the Florida garden city’s architectural history is a proud one, distinguished work of this caliber has unfortunately been the exception in recent years, as the city has given height and apparently bulk allowances to towers designed in vaguely Spanish Revival styles that pay clumsy homage to local character.

Amid much “ugly” and “destructive” construction, juror Stefanos Polyzoides said, “This is an amazing project ... It is outright miraculous.”



- Architects:**
De la Guardia Victoria Architects & Urbanists, Inc.
- Structural Engineer:**
Manuel I. Ortega, P.E.
- Mechanical, Electrical, Plumbing Engineer:**
Popov Engineers, Inc.
- Civil Engineer:**
Vicente Cossio, P.E.
- Pool Engineer:**
Natalia Ojeda, P.E.
- Creative Director:**
Maria Cristina Longo
- Client:**
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