Abstract

This master's project provides the background research for an affordable housing architectural pattern book for Durham, North Carolina. An introduction describes the current housing situation in Durham and why an affordable housing pattern book will improve the quality of the built environment. Chapter 1 is a literature review that describes how the best pattern books have played a role in creating beautiful, valuable built environments in the United States. Before the widespread availability of pattern books, most buildings were constructed by people with little or no architectural knowledge. They constructed dwellings using the tools at hand and rudimentary skills. Pattern books brought architectural design within reach of middle-class Americans, allowing them to build high-quality houses modeled on prevailing architectural trends. The rise of pattern books roughly coincided with the Industrial Revolution. Technological innovations such as balloon-frame construction and mass-produced items like the wire nail made buildings cheaper and stronger. The rising wealth of the middle class...
enabled growing numbers of Americans to afford their own house. Large numbers of pattern book houses were built in the century they were most popular, roughly 1830-1930. The analysis of pattern book literature is followed in Chapter 2 by case studies of several recent pattern books that have been influential in shaping the built environment. These case studies describe the characteristics that the best new pattern books share. The results from publication of two pattern books are also included. Chapter 3 is a history of Durham that focuses on how the city's creation, industrial growth, and postwar decline shaped the built environment. Founded in 1850 as a railroad stop, Durham quickly became a thriving industrial city because of the popularity of its brightleaf tobacco. The town grew exponentially between 1870 and 1900, and its prosperity continued until the end of World War II. Durham's decline occurred because of the population's shift from the city to the suburbs, a lack of investment in the businesses in the city, and a number of urban renewal projects that destroyed many of the historic buildings in the core. In the past few years, however, a resurgence of investment downtown and the rehabilitation of several aging neighborhoods near the core have encouraged hope that Durham will soon be a thriving city again. Chapter 4 defines the scope of the pattern book and the purpose it will serve for Durham's residents. It details the four architectural housing styles that are most prevalent in Durham's historic neighborhoods: vernacular mill houses, Victorians, Colonial Revivals, and Arts and Crafts. Each section gives a brief history of the origin of the style, examples of neighborhoods in Durham with houses built in that style, and photographs highlighting some of the most common details. The paper concludes with some recommendations for Durham. The city should examine the successes and setbacks other municipalities have had with their own pattern books. Durham should strive to imitate the success that those places have had. The city currently has a number of strong, stable historic neighborhoods as well as opportunities for more growth and stability in other neighborhoods. Creating a pattern book of Durham's houses can help revitalize the city and preserve the heritage of those historic communities.