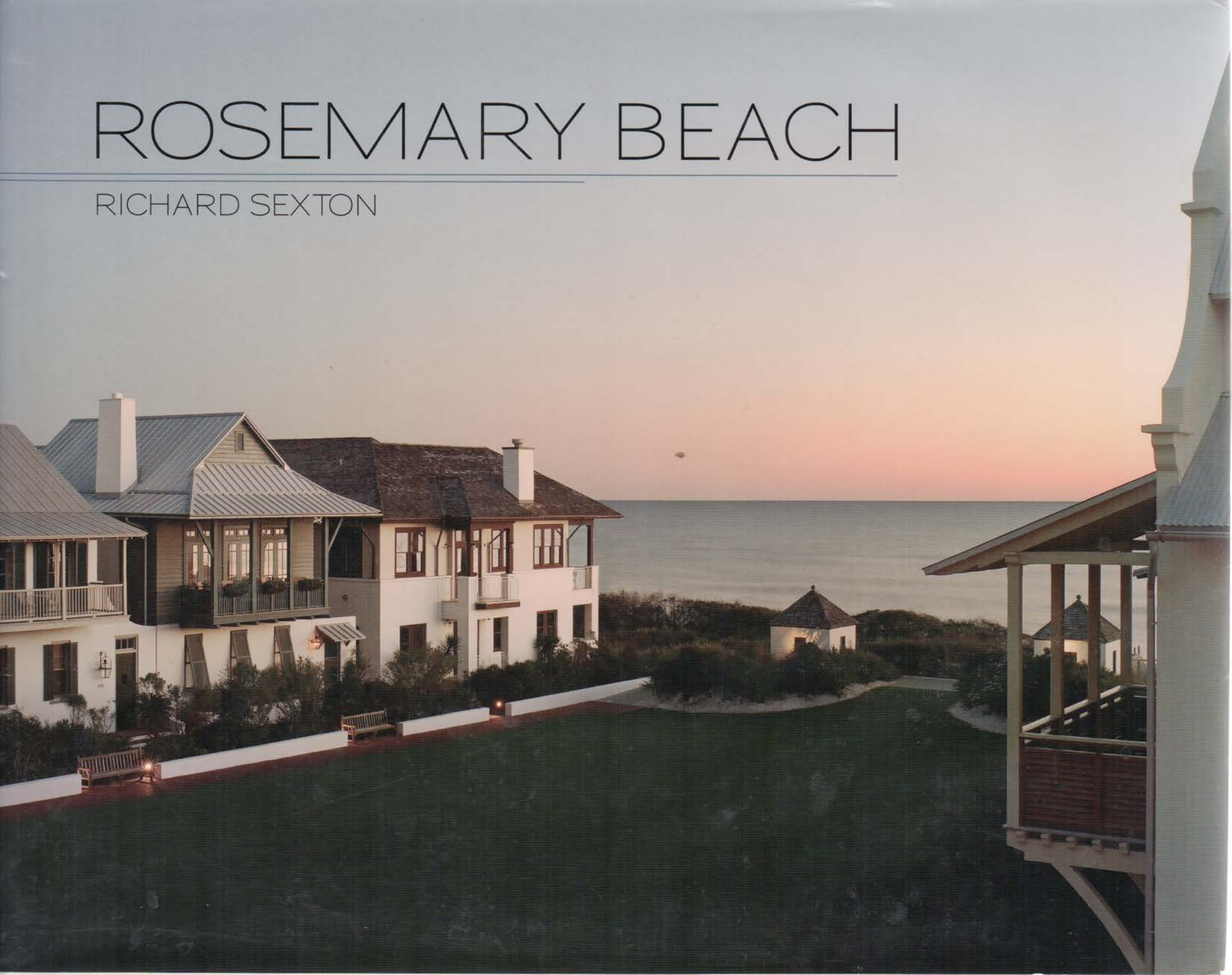
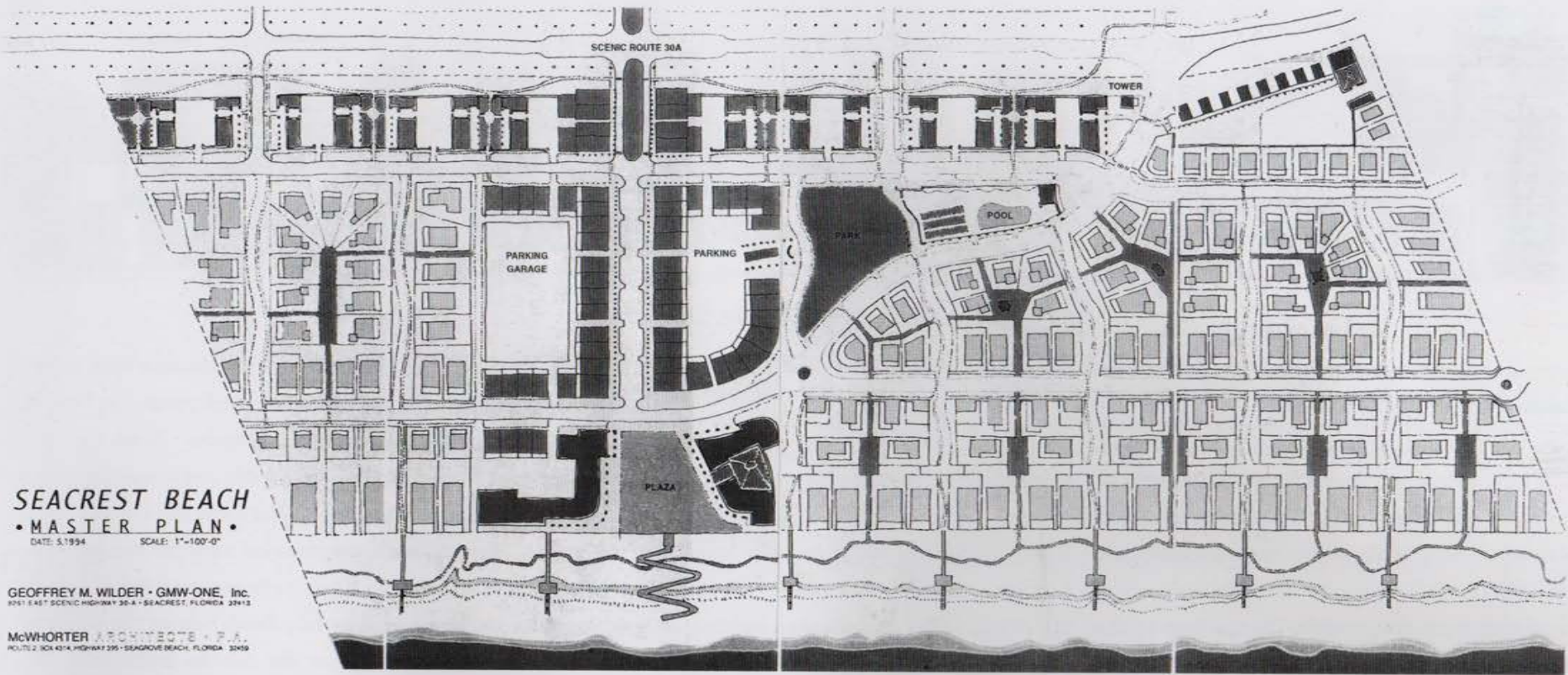


# ROSEMARY BEACH

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RICHARD SEXTON





**SEACREST BEACH**  
 • MASTER PLAN •  
 DATE: 5.1994 SCALE: 1"=100'-0"

GEOFFREY M. WILDER • GMW-ONE, Inc.  
 1051 E. 45<sup>TH</sup> SCENIC HIGHWAY 30-A • SEACREST, FLORIDA 32413

McWHORTER ARCHITECTS • P.A.  
 ROUTE 2 BOX 4314 HIGHWAY 395 • SEAGROVE BEACH, FLORIDA 32459

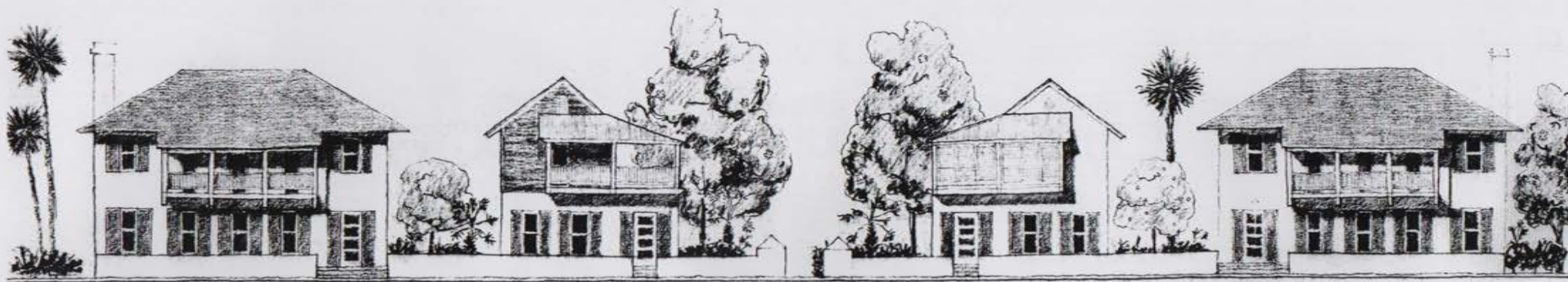
The plan for "Seacrest Beach" by McWhorter Architects was created in 1994 for the south parcel of Rosemary Beach. This plan was never built, but it served as the starting point for the future DPZ plan for Rosemary Beach. (Courtesy Carey McWhorter ©2006)

these issues. Elizabeth Plater-Zyberk became dean of the School of Architecture at the University of Miami. Fifteen years after Seaside thrust Duany and Plater-Zyberk to a position of international prominence, an unlikely opportunity surfaced that must have seemed eerily familiar. They received a commission to design a new resort community just down the beach road from Seaside. Andres Duany described the experience in these terms: "It is extremely rare

to receive what is basically the same commission twice. Rosemary Beach isn't a clone of Seaside. But it is a critique of Seaside."

The Rosemary Beach story doesn't begin with DPZ's planning commission, however. In fact, it turns out that this commission was something of a fluke. The land where Rosemary Beach is now located was, in the early 1990s, slated to have a different fate—a fate that ended suddenly and unexpectedly and that set the stage for the development of the Rosemary Beach chronicled in these pages.

In the early 1990s, Seaside was booming. A decade after its founding, home values had skyrocketed, national media attention was unrelenting, and the great majority of home sites had been



*Rose Lane North Elevation.*

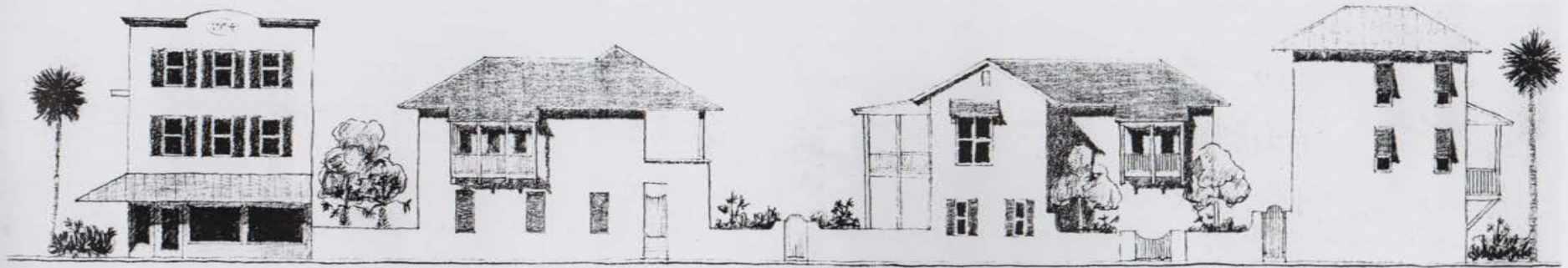
Street elevations for the McWhorter "Seacrest Beach" plan were based on the colonial architecture of St. Augustine. This aspect of the McWhorter plan would carry forward and be incorporated into the DPZ plan for Rosemary Beach. (Courtesy Carey McWhorter ©2006)

sold. There was a sense in the air that Seaside was so successful that a great deal of pent-up demand was being left unfulfilled. A new development similar to Seaside might be quite successful. This prospect was not lost on an entrepreneurial Seaside resident, Geoffrey Wilder. Mr. Wilder secured an option on forty-nine acres at the east end of Highway 30-A. This parcel represented the entirety of what is now Rosemary's gulf side. It constituted a subdivision of a larger parcel that had been owned for many years by George Barber, well known in the region for his dairy business. A purchase agreement for the entire Barber parcel, from Inlet Beach to present-day Alys Beach, had been recently acquired by Mr. Doodle Harris, a self-styled Florida real-estate tycoon. Harris then optioned out the forty-nine-acre gulf-front tract to Wilder.

In early 1994, Geoffrey Wilder commissioned Carey McWhorter, a local architect who practiced in nearby Seagrove Beach with his wife at that time, Lourdes Reynafarje, to plan the development. McWhorter had designed several houses in Seaside, most of them in

collaboration with Deborah Berke, a former Seaside town architect. Berke and McWhorter had an architectural practice in New York until McWhorter relocated to Seagrove Beach in 1992. McWhorter's plan featured some notable commonalities with the DPZ plan that would supplant it. The name given to the development was Seacrest Beach, the historical name for this beach area. McWhorter's Seacrest Beach (not to be confused with the contemporary development near Rosemary Beach bearing the same name) featured houses patterned after the colonial architecture of St. Augustine, Florida. It also incorporated a beachfront plaza at the site of Rosemary's Western Green. The development featured footpaths and pocket parks, not unlike the boardwalks of Rosemary Beach. Housing density for Seacrest Beach, however, was quite a bit lower than Rosemary Beach would ultimately have. McWhorter's plan was fully permitted and poised for immediate development when in July 1994 Geoffrey Wilder died unexpectedly of a heart attack. Wilder's estate ultimately proved to be uninterested in pursuing a resort development, and Seacrest Beach found itself in limbo.

A prime parcel of gulf-front real estate was suddenly in play, and a major player got wind of it—Leucadia National Corporation.



*Rose Lane South Elevation*

Leucadia is a publicly traded Wall Street investment firm with diverse interests that include insurance, wineries, mining, and real estate. Leucadia even owns a power and light company in Barbados. Paul Borden, then vice-president of Leucadia, flew down to look at the property and recommended that Leucadia should purchase it. Further, he felt they should hire DPZ to create a town plan for it. Seaside was the best-performing development in the area, and Leucadia could do no better than to simply emulate its success. These recommendations were implemented in short order.

But what was emulating the success of Seaside all about, really? What form would this take? It was never anyone's idea to clone Seaside; rather, the idea was to plan a new development that would incorporate the same planning principles that had made Seaside so successful. To understand these principles and how they would define Rosemary Beach, it's first necessary to understand and appreciate what New Urbanism is all about.

From this writer's perspective, at least, the planning movement that has come to be known as New Urbanism had its genesis in 1961 with the publication of *The Death and Life of Great American Cities*, by Jane Jacobs. *Death and Life* is an homage to what's right

about city life and urbanism. Jacobs extolled the virtues of urban density, pedestrian scale and accessibility, socioeconomic and cultural diversity, mixed-use buildings, and perhaps most importantly, the convenience of and need for urban life. But Jacobs didn't stop there. She analyzed the architectural framework of the traditional city to reveal how it's linked to civilization, allowing for the kinds of human relationships vital to society. Bear in mind that in 1961, the suburban dream was at its peak. Nothing was more popular in early-1960s America than escaping the vagaries of the city for the idyllic bliss of suburbia. Jacobs countered this ideal by focusing on the positive aspects of city life, a lifestyle then viewed as expendable by a cadre of arbiters who had long taken it for granted. The mainstream architects and planners of this era were equally out of sync with Jacobs, as they were busily editing the city to make it more efficient for automobile traffic, with little regard for the negative effect their plans had on inner-city neighborhoods.

*Death and Life* was no more capable of immediately halting a pervasive lifestyle trend than a call for peace can end war. For all practical purposes, this was the first published negative critique of the postwar suburban dream, and its immediate impact was not unlike

Teresa Baum, marketing director 2001-4  
Karen Moore, marketing director, 2004-5  
Tami Pickren, administrative assistant  
Julie Selleck, comptroller

**Rosemary Beach Cottage Rental Agency**

Ken Gifford, rental manager

**Rosemary Beach Realty Company**

*Sales agents*

Lauren Comstock

Larry Davis

Jeff Ellis

Gary Gibson

Mary Alice Johnson

Christina Lopez

Nick Etherington

**Planners of Record**

Duany Plater-Zyberk

Jeff Speck, project manager

**April 1995 Charrette**

*DPZ Team:*

Andres Duany

Douglas Duany

Jeff Speck

Charles Barrett

Elizabeth Plater-Zyberk

Mike Watkins

Xavier Iglesias

Galina Tahchieva

Colin Greene

Manuel Fernandez-Noval

*Development team:*

Paul Borden, Leucadia

Patricia Wood, Leucadia

Chris Waller, Leucadia

Larry Davis, Davis Properties of NWFL, Inc.

*Consultants:*

Sue Murphy, Rudnick & Wolfe

Chris Weddle, Aurora Civil Engineering, Inc.

Todd Zimmerman, ZVA

*Local Architects:*

Carey McWhorter

Lourdes Reynafarje

Richard Gibbs

**January 1997 Charrette**

*DPZ Team:*

Andres Duany

Douglas Duany

Elizabeth Plater-Zyberk (first days)

Jeff Speck

Xavier Iglesias

Galina Tahchieva

Jorge Planas