

5 CONCEPTS IN URBAN LIVING

2011 HOUSE REVIEW THEMES

- JUNE Outdoor living
- JULY Single-family detached housing
- AUGUST Duplex/triplex
- SEPTEMBER Green homes
- OCTOBER Cottage homes
- NOVEMBER Live/work houses

The House Review design team presents five cutting-edge plans for urban, townhouse living.

By **Larry W. Garnett, FAIBD, House Review Lead Designer**

We continue to hear about the increasing popularity of urban living. It seems that many young professionals and empty-nesters appreciate the convenience of living in a place where they can walk to most destinations, have access to public transportation, and enjoy a variety of cultural attractions. Although each city and town offers a variety of both incentives and challenges when building in urban settings, the opportunities certainly seem to be increasing.

Creating appropriate designs for urban housing can also be a challenge. In fact, it's difficult to arrive at a concise definition for an "urban home." After all, available sites in most cities range from narrow single-family lots to properties where attached units make more sense.

However, the common elements that seem most critical are building homes that maintain a sense of identity in the existing neighborhood while also offering a sense of privacy and security. This month, our design team offers several examples of urban homes, each addressing these important elements. While the recurring theme seems to be the use of courtyards, the house structures range from simple traditional forms to more elaborate luxury homes. Each designer has provided thoughtful and often flexible solutions that can be adapted to fit the context of virtually any urban site.

For more information on these plans and to view additional designs, including previous House Review reports, visit www.HousingZone.com/HouseReview.



16TH STREET

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PLAN SIZE
 First floor: 775 sf
 Second floor: 805 sf
 Width: 22 feet (frame)
 Depth: 40 feet



DESIGNER'S ESSAY

High-density sites often require designs with a great deal of flexibility. This design allows either a single home to be constructed on a narrow lot or a group of homes built side by side as duplexes or townhomes.

The idea of sharing spaces within a home is nothing new. We've been combining kitchens and family rooms quite successfully for years now. Here, the front entry utilizes this same concept by sharing the space devoted to the dining room and the staircase. Each area seems larger, and the dining area can easily expand into the entry when needed.

Although the kitchen and family area share valuable space, the kitchen is defined by the use of simple Sheetrock "columns." The "resource center" is an extension of the kitchen, using a column to define a functional workspace, complete with a computer, desk, and file drawers.

Outdoor spaces become absolutely essential in smaller homes. Here, the covered porch and courtyard become extensions of the indoor living space, providing a place for entertaining and even a small kitchen garden.

Finally, it's the attention to detail that transforms any house into a unique home. Inside, note the thickened walls, columns, and openings between the dining, family, and kitchen areas. It's quite amazing how much more substantial the home seems when walking through a 10-inch-thick opening in the wall. The exterior utilizes a simple combination of natural stone and stucco. However, notice the stone detail at the window and porch openings and the use of color on the window frames — both are very subtle but extremely important to the overall appeal of the exterior design.



CLAIRMONT

ARCHITECT

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PLAN SIZE

First floor: 1,067 sf
 Second floor: 1,021 sf
 Lower level: 475 sf
 Width: 25 feet, 7 inches
 Depth: 62 feet, 9 inches

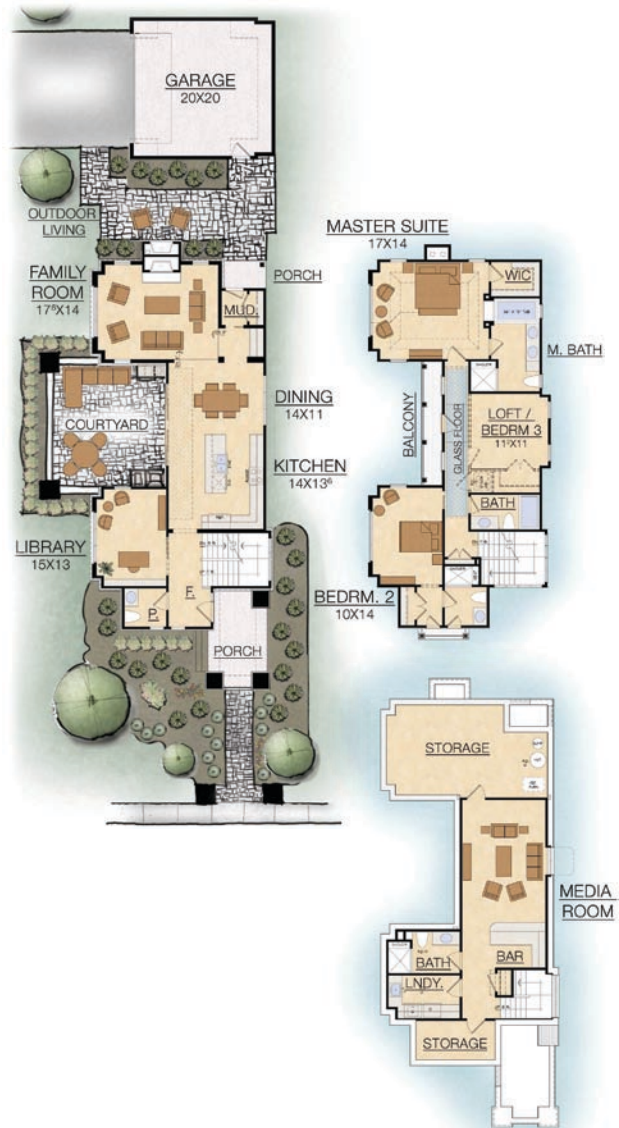


ARCHITECT'S ESSAY

The Clairmont plan is a contemporary home designed with a focus on Generation Y buyers. The floor plan is designed for busy lifestyles, with an emphasis on outdoor living and at-home entertaining. The spaces within the home are open and flexible, designed with technology, convenience, and entertainment in mind. Upstairs, the plan features two bedrooms and an optional loft bedroom for buyers who enjoy urban, loft-style living.

The elevation has Craftsman-style architectural features, with a contemporary twist that appeals to Gen-Y buyers.

A major selling point of the home is the side courtyard, which adds to the overall living space without increasing the square footage. The courtyard is also visible from all rooms inside the home, making it a great entertainment area with indoor/outdoor interaction.



STATE STREET

ARCHITECT

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PLAN SIZE

Ground floor: 1,041 sf
Second floor: 980 sf
Third floor: 335 sf
Garage floor: 158 sf
Garage: 454 sf
Porch/Patio: 86 sf
Terrace: 391
Width: 22 feet
Depth: 50 feet



ARCHITECT'S ESSAY

Simply stated, designing single-family, attached dwellings in an urban setting is still designing single-family homes, but the design typically clusters and attaches several homes together, creating one or multiple buildings with shared green space, amenities, and drives.

State Street is one such development. It was created by designing and grouping three and four townhome units together and pushing them outward to the property line to create an urban pedestrian streetscape. Breaking the development into multiple buildings allows for pedestrian "cut-throughs" to the inner core, which is comprised of more buildings and amenities.

The individual townhomes are designed to accommodate everything a typical single-family home offers. State Street is comprised of four-story buildings that house a garage, utility room, elevator, and storage on the ground floor; main living spaces, such as foyer, dining room, kitchen, powder room, and family room, on the second floor; two bedrooms, a master bedroom, and two bathrooms on the third floor; and an office and roof terrace overlooking the city on the top floor.

The exterior of the buildings are designed to make a gesture toward the older neighborhood in which they are being built and are full masonry with careful attention to detailing and window size and placement. Overall, this design approach yields a handsome, high-density pedestrian urban setting of homes that cater to families, professionals, and empty nesters alike. The development includes four unit types, which appeal to a greater audience.



TH3058-1920

ARCHITECT

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PLAN SIZE

First floor: 1,270 sf
Second floor: 650 sf
Width: 30 feet
Depth: 58 feet



ARCHITECT'S ESSAY

Townhouses are unique product types and should be strategically positioned and designed as unique units. Often-times, we see units designed solely as price-point units, which leaves a lot of value on the table. Value building is done via proper design, efficient construction techniques, and proper context for the product. Townhouse units should cover a range of market segments, from entry level to the luxury market.

The TH3058 is a great mid-market flexible plan. It works as a single-family unit, a courtyard unit, a duplex, or a traditional multi-unit rowhouse with little change to the core. It offers easy adaptability to multiple façade treatments and accepts regional styles and materials readily.

The plan includes a well-appointed master-down configuration, which allows the unit to be an aging-in-place dwelling (rear ramp is easily added), but it still lives front to back, which is key for attached units. In addition, the plan is efficient in use of space and basic construction techniques.



PENNMORE

ARCHITECT

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PLAN SIZE

First floor: 1,507 sf
 Second floor: 1,378 sf
 Lower level: 826 sf
 Width: 26 feet
 Depth: 64 feet, 5 inches

ARCHITECT'S ESSAY

The Pennmore plan is designed for a buyer seeking urban, loft-style living. The elevation features a traditional design with a contemporary twist and plenty of outdoor living and entertainment space. The extended front porch welcomes guests into the home and is conducive to entertaining. The exterior courtyard in the rear of the home features a fireplace and private entertaining area.

Inside the home, the open, integrated kitchen/nook/living area on the first floor enables the homeowners to entertain guests while still having a cozy space to enjoy alone. The focus of the second floor is an overstated master suite, with walk-in closets and an innovative master bath. The homeowners can conveniently access the office/reading area adjacent to the master suite. With conservation of square footage in mind, the garage was designed to fit underneath the first floor, adjacent to the lower level space.



CALL FOR SUBMISSIONS

If you have a design concept for an upcoming House Review topic, please submit your idea to Larry Garnett, House Review Lead Designer, at larrygarnett@larrygarnettdesigns.com. Preliminary sketches need to be received six weeks prior to issue date.