

Res Privata– The Privata Realm

Written by CNU-Carolinas Chapter
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Res Privata or the Private Realm is the main fabric of our communities and daily lives. It, along with *Res Publica* - the Public Realm - form the Complete City or *Civitas*. (The Public Realm and the Complete City have been described in previous articles.)

These two Realms, public and private, describe the physical built form and fabric or the “hardware” of a city. One without the other is not complete and each realm will contribute to the true nature of a community or place.

What makes up the Private Realm? The Private Realm is the interior spaces where commonplace events and routines of daily life take place. These things include our homes, our garages, our yards, and the basic places we get our daily needs filled, our stores and typical places of employment. All of these things form the backdrop of our lives and provide the basic urban fabric that we inhabit.

A great Private Realm is the largest single defining attribute of a region's built character, more so than the architecture of monuments. It is easy to tell if you are in Charleston's peninsula, the French Quarter in New Orleans or Old Town Alexandria. The common buildings there all share the same vocabulary of vernacular architecture. They also form a pallet of background fabric that reinforces the notion of a place while allowing the place's *Res Publica* or monuments/landmarks to clearly stand out.

The vernacular architecture of the *Res Privata* has certain characteristics that allow it to be a great sense-of-place builder. It must have a modest beauty, an economical sense, an honest use of local materials and adaptation to local conditions, and clarity of form & typology.

Beauty, in modest domestic architecture, comes from simple mass, proportion and rhythm. Proportions found in nature, such as the "golden section," typically drive these three principals. These

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A photograph of a two-story yellow house with a white picket fence in the foreground. The house has a prominent front porch with white columns and a balcony on the second floor. The property is surrounded by lush green trees and shrubs.

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