

Seaside

Florida



Location: Walton County, Florida
Type: Resort Village
Year Design: 1978
Status: Largely Complete
Size: 80 Acres
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Located in the Florida Panhandle, Seaside is an 80-acre resort community on the shores of the Gulf of Mexico. The program for Seaside was originally conceived to approximate the scale and character of historic Southern towns. The Seaside plan proposes traditional American settlement patterns as an alternative to contemporary methods of real estate development. To this end, the retail center was designed as a downtown commercial district; the conference facility doubles as a town hall; and a portion of the recreation budget was dedicated to the creation of small civic amenities, including a chapel, a primary school, a fire station, and a post office, all to be shared by adjacent communities.



A study of towns throughout the American South indicated that a community of genuine variety and authentic character could not be generated by a single architect. Building was therefore given over to a multitude of designers. The public buildings have been designed by architects selected for their known sympathy with the regional vernacular, and the private buildings have been commissioned by the individual buyers. A master plan and zoning code regulate the buildings to ensure the creation of an urban environment similar to that of a small Southern town of the period before 1940. Prior to any construction, these standards were tested several times in university design studios and proved to be workable.



Today, more than 20 years after its inception, Seaside is widely acclaimed, financially successful, and almost completely built-out. It has become a symbol of the New Urbanism, exemplifying the movement's underlying principles, which can be applied to all urban conditions: the built environment must be diverse in use and population; it must be scaled for the pedestrian yet capable of accommodating the automobile and mass transit; and it must have a well defined public realm supported by an architecture that reflects the ecology and culture of the region.