

# Historic Design and Timeless Ways

Roger Johnson

I love this place! It feels so comfortable!

Ever hear something like this? Chances are you have and you were probably in an older building. Human affinity for some places and dislike for others is complex, but some basic reasons have been discovered. These elements can be applied to all matters of human habitat. What makes a house a structure that invites people to stay and feel good?

The North Slope Historic District is comprised of many older homes that have many of the elements that make them "user friendly" The first element that is obvious is a welcoming entry, an obvious entrance that leads people to the home's front door. A welcoming entrance also usually has a porch that is elevated so that people can sit and observe the neighborhood: a connection to the community. It is elevated to provide a small sense of distance and privacy, thus a personal space. It is your space, but is part of the neighborhood.

Once inside, the same is true: small spaces which are part of the whole, large rooms that have smaller "cozy" areas, breakfast tables tucked into a nook, an angling nook in the parlor, window seats, bay windows, groups of comfortable seating, ceilings of different height. All these places are smaller more personal nooks in a larger space. They invite you to stay, be a part of something more personal and still be a part of the big picture.

Another element that makes a space comfortable is "sameness" . Older homes have architectural features that repeat throughout the home but are slightly different place to place, visual and physical comfort and peace without boredom, comfort in the known. Make a quick visual survey in your own home and around the neighborhood for details or spaces that repeat or create places of comfort and peace.

Roger Johnson, North Slope Historic District Representative to the Historic Preservation Commission, 1999

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