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## **The Antigua Neighborhood**

By Jim Castronovo, Antigua Board of Directors

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### **Antigua's Situation in Abacoa's Downtown**

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Every town has its Main Street. The name honors the central commercial and cultural district of the community. Jupiter's Main Street measures less than a mile and it runs through Abacoa's town center. Its small span is densely lined by the Scripps Research Institute, Florida Atlantic University, the Abacoa Village Green (the focal point of Jupiter's entertainment district), and the Roger Dean Baseball Stadium.

Traveling north on Main Street beyond Roger Dean Stadium you pass through the undeveloped Phase IV property which one day will be a downtown office district. Beyond that you see that Main Street intersects with Cades Bay Avenue. Its character changes and becomes a boulevard whose wide median functions as a park. The park has a beautiful fountain at one end and a club house at the other. The arrangement puts a jog in Main Street that obliges you to stop to turn right on to Cades Bay Avenue and then left in order to continue. The Main Street lanes straddle the east and west sides of the park and their narrowness suggests that you drive slowly.

Here you notice the streetscape is different from the rest of downtown. You see elegant three-story townhouses with beautiful pillars and balconies. A parade of Royal Palms in the park mirrors the pillars. You also notice that the townhouses ring the park perimeter and create a delightful enclave that you didn't expect. It may cross your mind that you found Florida's answer to Boston's Beacon Hill or New York's Gramercy Park. You see shingles advertising small businesses, law firms, and medical offices operating on the ground floor of the buildings which makes clear that you are still visiting part of Abacoa's downtown. The neighborhood's personality is commercial but it is also distinctively residential. Welcome. You have just arrived in Antigua: Abacoa's live/work neighborhood at the end of Jupiter's Main Street.

### **Antigua's Live/Work Character**

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Antigua is a neighborhood of 80 commercially zoned three-story live/work townhouses, and 200 two and three-story residential townhouses. The Town of Jupiter zoned the ground floors of the live/work dwellings for commercial uses. Typically a small business is located there and the owner lives on the two floors above the firm. This concept

harkens back to more traditional times when merchants lived above their shops. The owner is encouraged to display a business shingle on a column by the front door. Many Antigua live/work units are occupied by businesses providing professional services. Some examples: Two appointment-only art galleries, a golf course design firm, five medical and physical therapy related businesses, two HOA service providers, several law firms, several hair stylists, a florist and a professional photographer all occupy the ground floor of live/work units on Main Street and Cades Bay Avenue.

The owner of one space comments “The live/work concept is a fantastic opportunity to have retail show space and the clout of a Main Street address without the financial liability of leasing. The concept really works for me, the price worked great for me and you can’t beat the address particularly if you believe that within 10 years commercial space in Jupiter is expected to be at a premium because of the Scripps spin-off businesses. It works out as a great investment and it immediately deals with very practical business and lifestyle needs.”

While live/work townhouses have commercial zoning, other homes in Antigua are built with the same 3-story format without the zoning. Those homes provide some of the same benefits for at-home workers. Some of those houses are occupied by independent consultants in a broad range of fields. “I love the three-story townhouse layout” says one neighbor who works as an IT consultant, “It allows me to conduct my business on the ground floor away from my living space. At the close of business I shut my office door and walk to Xpress Fitness or head over to the pool. When I come back home, I go upstairs to prepare dinner without a thought about the office or work downstairs.”

This set up provides a real physical and mental separation of the professional work space from the living space that the usual home-office cannot provide. Another at-home consultant in the Design field adds, “One thing I like about Antigua is that you run into a lot of business owners. It’s the only place I know where I can live along side other independent business people who have common concerns and goals.

To ensure that business owners have a place to conduct private meetings, the Antigua Club House has a professional conference room available to any resident for a nominal fee. The club house also has wireless internet access, serves coffee in the morning and provides daily copies of the Wall Street Journal. The club house is staffed full-time by the HOA’s licensed property manager from Bristol Management.

## **The layout of the Antigua neighborhood**

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### ***The boulevard: Neighborhood focal point and the placement of the Antigua Green***

Antigua has some admirable examples of the urban planning elements typical of all of Abacoa. For example, the Main Street boulevard serves several purposes. First, the most practical purpose: It slows down traffic. From Roger Dean Stadium until Antigua there is nearly a quarter mile stretch with no stop signs or traffic calming elements. Drivers

gaining speed in that distance are forced to slow down as they approach Antigua. In fact, they need to stop and decide whether to turn right, left or negotiate around the boulevard. This ability to slow traffic helps introduce a certain level of civility; drivers get a sense that they are *borrowing* Main Street from the neighborhood and not the other way around. Furthermore, the short 10 feet of lane on either side of the park make pedestrian crossing safer in Antigua.

The boulevard is also the heart of common activity for the neighborhood. It is the location of the heated swimming pool, the club house and cabanas and our main park. It is the location of the mail room where even the most solitary neighbor will run into acquaintances. The boulevard is the neighborhood center we call the Antigua Green.

### ***Terminated vistas, outdoor living rooms and a sense of place***

Main Street ends some 400 feet north of the Antigua Green at the intersection with Frederick Small. From there the street continues with the new name of Greenway Drive in honor of the Abacoa Greenway on the east side of the road further north. At this intersection with Frederick Small Road, if you look south towards the club house entrance on the Antigua Green, you will see that the club house is situated such that it blocks Main Street and your line of sight. This is a wonderful example of a design element that planners call a *terminated vista*, the idea being a prominent building becomes a focal point and walking destination for all neighbors. The building site looks odd when you consider that it is taking the place of a road, but the idea of placing a prominent civic structure in the middle of a main street is not new with Abacoa. The next time you visit Palm Beach Island, notice that the town hall and town fire department are placed together in the middle of South County Road. Or if you happen to be visiting Manhattan, notice that Grand Central Station is placed in the middle of Fifth Avenue thus separating Fifth Avenue from Fifth Avenue South.

But a terminated vista is not the only design element you can see at the intersection of Main Street with Frederick Small Road. The tall three-story live/work units lining Main Street leading up to the club house help create a sense of place. This assembly of tall, linear buildings to define a space is what planners call an *outdoor living room*. In the book Suburban Nation Andres Duany and other authors from DPZ, the design firm that master-planned Abacoa, state that “the most effective technique for designing successful urban spaces is to think of them as outdoor living rooms. To feel like a room, a street must have relatively continuous walls, whose design calls attention to the space as a whole rather than to individual buildings.” No where in Abacoa is that outdoor living room more discernible than on Main Street facing the Antigua club house.

### ***Antigua townhouses on mews***

Other wonderful examples of outdoor living rooms are the Antigua Green itself and the small parks on which many of the residential townhouses sit. Those small parks surrounded by townhouse buildings come from a tradition more common in the Washington DC area. The parks are called *mews* (this is the singular as well as the plural form of the word) and they are successful at creating a common space in the form of an outdoor living room. You can see for yourself from the gazebo on Savannah Bay Mews.

Sit in the gazebo, look towards Corbison Point Place and notice the charming public space created by the placement of the three-story buildings to either side of you and across the street.

One benefit of placing townhouses around a mews is safety - particularly for children. Think about it: homes placed on a mews have no street in front of them. In that sense a mews is even safer than a cul-de-sac. From the children's point of view, the mews is a fun play area in their own front yard. One park in particular, St Luke's Mews off of Corbison Point Place, is a successful congregation point for many children from all over Antigua. And since the mews is lined by 24 townhouses, it is very likely that the children are under some degree of adult scrutiny.

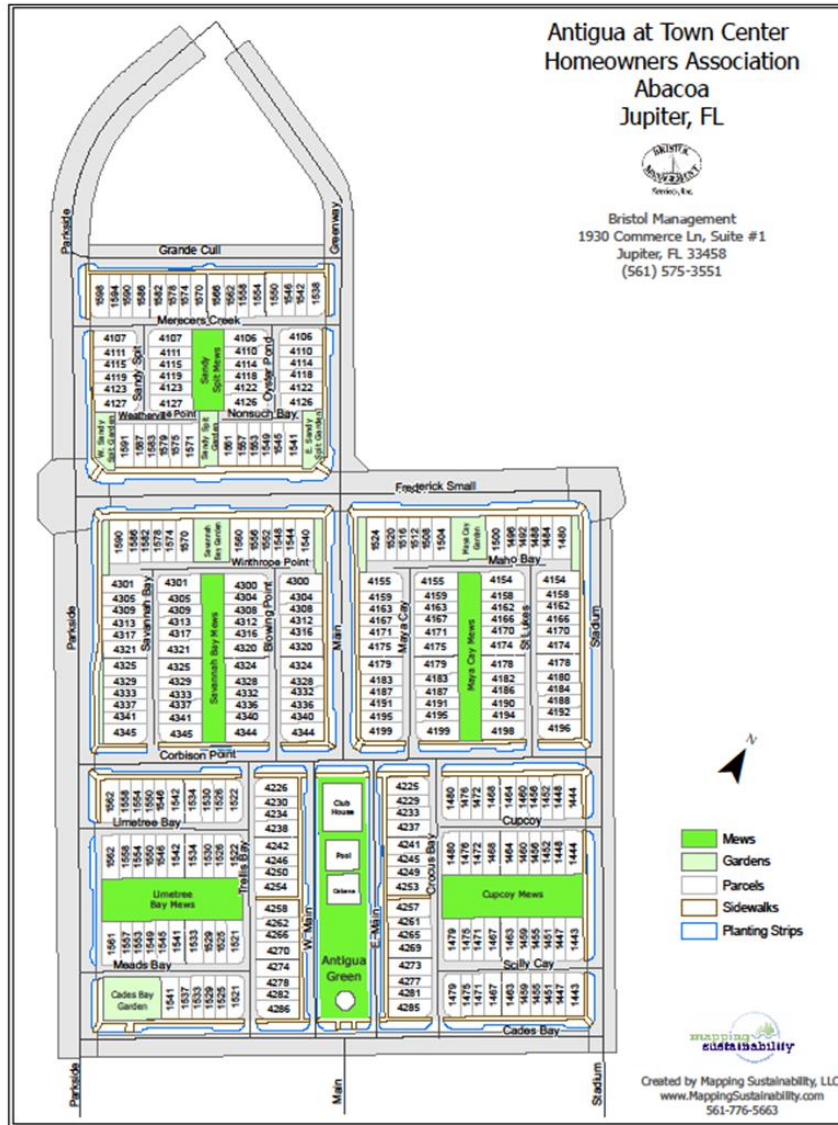
### **Antigua back-loaded garages**

Other design elements that go hand in hand with the mews are the back lane and the back-loaded townhouse garages. Without garages in the back, a mews in the front is impossible. Back-loaded garages are also crucial for removing visual pollution from the front of the house. With no garage in front of the townhouse, skilled architects are able to give the buildings elegant façades. Back-loaded garages also provide a safety feature since any one back alley in Antigua often serves a dozen homes. The result is that the public streets of Antigua have fewer and more predictable vehicular access points than standard housing developments where every garage is a vehicular access point to the street.

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## Antigua's situation around Abacoa's sports facilities

The Antigua neighborhood is bordered by Cades Bay Avenue to the south and Parkside Drive to the west. On the east side Antigua borders Stadium Drive and Greenway Drive. On the north side you find Grande Cull Way.



On Antigua's periphery you find first-rate sports facilities. The Abacoa Golf Club is located to the west of the neighborhood on Parkside Drive. Its club house, a five minute walk, offers lunch and then happy hour daily in a dining room overlooking the course. The Abacoa Golf Club provides a wonderful club house atmosphere available to everyone.

Town-sponsored clay tennis courts, a skateboard park and a playground are located on the north side of the neighborhood. Practice baseball fields are on the east side of Stadium Drive. In fact Stadium Drive residents actually view the Florida Marlins and the Saint Louis Cardinals spring training baseball games from their homes!

### **Is Antigua a neighborhood that suits everyone?**

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Many of the townhouses are quite large, with over 2300 square feet of space and 20 windows, but Antigua is not suited for everyone. People have left Antigua because they prefer a single-family house with a private yard. Also HOA living may not suit everyone's needs. But people who would like a Main Street address for their small business find benefit from living and establishing their business in Antigua. Consultants and other at-home business people find the three-story townhouse structure and neighborhood convenient. Families with small children find the mews beautiful and safe. Others appreciate the stateliness of the townhouses, or the ability to walk to Town Center Drive to visit the Saturday morning green market and participate in other town center activities.

Here's a small story: Last night a neighbor and a good friend told me that when he, his wife and baby moved into their Antigua townhouse, his mother-in-law had commented, "Wouldn't you rather be living out in Jupiter Farms where you can get more space for the same price?" My friend responded to her by saying, "No, because I'm not just buying the townhouse. I'm buying the town." That was Jasey Campbell, president of the Antigua Homeowner's Association. I couldn't have said it better.