

Figure 4.6 Hill-and-bowl development, San Francisco

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the main roads. On a flat site other criteria of a practical nature, such as climatic conditions, building materials and construction technology, become important for design. Unlike contours, however, they do not have the same influence on the form of the built environment. To some extent the designer has to invent his or her own discipline for the

development of a flat site. The tool used for such development is often the rectangular grid or linear axial composition. The skyline form of the settlement follows and parallels the natural horizontal horizon. In the traditional settlement on a flat site the skyline may be broken by the contrasting vertical accent of a church spire. Generally, however, the main decorative effect of the profile is experienced from within the settlement where highly modelled rooflines and subtle changes in floor levels break the monotony of the flat landscape. There are few examples of pre-industrial settlements where man has imposed his will upon the flat site with expansive structures of extra-human or mega scale. The 'cities of the dead' in Pharaonic Egypt are an exception to this rule; the pyramid group at Gizeh being the model for this type of development. The massive pyramid tombs rising high above the endless plain proclaims a new and gigantic man-made landscape.

The older, central part of Paris was developed on a relatively flat site along the banks of the Seine. This part of the city skyline is dominated by the Eiffel Tower. The Eiffel Tower is the prominent mental image of the city; it is an image of Paris held even by those who have never visited the city. The Eiffel Tower stands for Paris. It is difficult to imagine the skyline of Paris without its tower. The knowledge that this great tower was originally intended only as a temporary novelty landmark to advertise the 1891 World Fair makes no difference to this image of Paris. The city is overflowing with great works of architecture, urban streets and boulevards that delight, but without the Eiffel Tower, this wonder of the modern world, Paris as an entity, would lack distinction. At a much more mundane level, Blackpool without its tower and ballroom would lose much of its significance for holiday visitors. At great expense towers, such as that by Eiffel and the much smaller replica in Blackpool, are lovingly maintained and restored; their destruction and removal is inconceivable. They are such powerful symbols of their respective cities, such important

decorative features of the skyline, that it is not difficult to imagine exact replacements being built, if by some unfortunate mishap, their respective towers were to fall.

In the USA there are several examples of grid planned cities developed on flat sites. In Philadelphia and Washington DC, where there have been strict height controls, the skyline is much less dramatic than New York or Chicago. The height restrictions in Philadelphia were recently relaxed. New York with a multitude of tall buildings has a singularly dramatic skyline. The Chicago skyline, which accentuates the 'loop' in contrast to the lower development of the rest of the city, is rich and dramatic with its cluster of skyscrapers (Figure 4.8).

The most dramatic view of the skyline is often reserved for the main entrance to the city. This is particularly true if the entrance is from the sea. The contrast of a horizontal seascape reflecting the colour of the sky with the waterfront buildings rising from their mirror image makes this a special scene in any coastal settlement. A notable example of a city portal is the main gateway to Venice from the Grand Canal. Entry to the city from the sea is at right angles to the canal, between the Doges Palace and the Library, through the Piazzetta San Marco towards the Basilica with its highly ornate roofline. From the sea approach the skyline is dominated by the campanile. It is so important to the city and the citizens' self-image of their community that it was completely rebuilt earlier this century when it collapsed. The medieval skyline of Venice is clearly illustrated on the engraving shown in Figure 4.9. The many church towers and spires reflect and anticipate but never dominate the much greater and more important Campanile of St Mark's. Liverpool is another fine example of a coastal entrance. It is dominated by a dramatic skyline. The three fine buildings that form the immediate waterfront are themselves dominated by the Liver Building with its rugged profile and gigantic liver birds, the symbol of Liverpool (Figure 4.10). Beyond, and proudly on the



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Figure 4.8 Chicago skyline**Figure 4.9** Medieval skyline, Venice