3D LEVEL ANALYSIS IN THE ELDER SCROLLS V: SKYRIM

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WHITERUN OVERVIEW

- The first major city of Skyrim that the player comes across
- Known for cultural diversity and strategic positioning in the region
- Acts as a central hub for trading and quests in the early game
- Stables right outside of the city walls with a carriage for fast traveling between cities
- The keep is visible from everywhere outside, as it towers above

Stables and the Outer Wall of Whiterun

ENVIRONMENTAL DESIGN

- **Geography** – Whiterun is situated on a hilltop with grand views of the surrounding expansive tundra plains and mountain ranges

- **Architecture** – Nordic style wooden buildings with stone walls and fortifications

- Traditional and/or even ancient influences are clearly present in the artistic design of the buildings, yet more modern influences are seen with the stone battlements and fortifications that lead up to the Keep

Whiterun from Afar

The Vitruvian Triad

Dragonsreach Keep

VENUSTAS

- **Aesthetics & Beauty** – Panoramic views from Dragonsreach Keep offer grand vistas of the city & beyond
- Enough variety in architecture to provide interesting and unique buildings to see, but enough consistency in styles to provide a cultural foundation and trademark look for the city

FIRMITAS

- Durability & Firmness
  - Strong stone walls, guard towers, a drawbridge, and a large main gate provide the city with great defensive capability
  - The entirety of the city is surrounded by fortified stone walls, battlements, and natural rock formations
  - The geography of the land slopes upwards continuously throughout the city, culminating with the main keep

UTILITAS

- ## Urban Utility & Functionality

  - Districts are organized, and street pathways provide clear navigation for players

  - Central marketplace and shops area provide the player with NPC's and items to interact with

  - Creates a sense of hustle and bustle, as NPC travelers from afar will visit this marketplace during different times in the game

Marketplace with kiosks & storefronts

PATHWAYS &NAVIGATION

- Clear paths and landmarks lead players from city gates to key locations (i.e. Market, Dragonsreach, etc.)

- The front, main gate opens to the main road of the city, which leads through the market and up to the keep

- Other stores dot the sides of this pathway, providing the player options for exploration and denoting their purposes with signs

Front Gate Entrance View: Dragonsreach Keep Top Left, Marketplace Straight Ahead

SOCIAL/CULTURAL LIFE

- Whiterun has a convenient location in the province as a central city, and has therefore always been the commercial center of Skyrim

- This popularity provides multiple venues for multicultural interaction

  - Marketplace – NPCs from every region and beyond come through Whiterun

  - Dragonsreach's Great Hall serves as a political seat for the ruler of the region and a cultural landmark where the native Nords have gathered for ages

SUBJECTIVE DESIGN THEORY

- Whiterun's cultural diversity and integration of architecture fusions creates deeper immersion for the city and the game world as a whole

- Architectures found in Whiterun display a blend of Nordic/Viking style building features while the city itself may seem to be more of a cultivated, modernized medieval town

- This can be seen by comparing Whiterun with the smaller town of Riverwood, which seems to be a more primitive Nordic/Viking style of architecture

  - Riverwood is a small lumbering town that the player may see before Whiterun
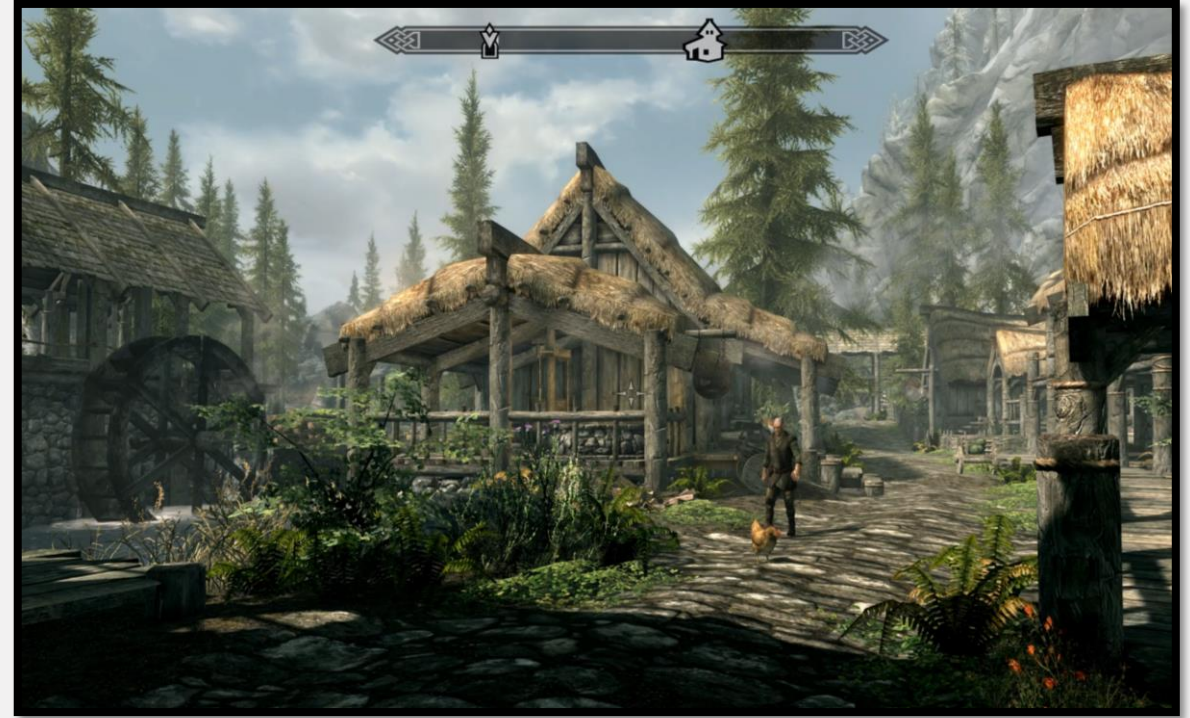
Riverwood

ARCHITECTURAL FUSION

- As it is a fantasy world, I believe it was the developer's intention to use cultural fusions in the architecture of Whiterun to enhance immersion for the player

- The layout of the city mimics that of a medieval European castle town in some ways, using geographic formations for military advantage as well as massive stone walls for defense and structural integrity

- In contrast, structures in the city are mostly made of wood, with some stone and metalwork mixed in → this is completely different to the nearby Riverwood village, of the same culture, which only has thatch roofed wooden buildings

- Clearly some mixtures of culture has occurred over the years in Whiterun, resulting in an architectural fusion that you can find elsewhere in the game

- Some may say this blend is unrealistic, but that's exactly why I think it's intentional, as it adds more depth and diversity to the city (rather than just being a larger version of Riverwood)

- This makes Whiterun the most significant melting pot of cultures in Skyrim

- Whiterun effectively combines strategic layout with architectural diversity, enriching player immersion and narrative depth.

- The city's functional design and cultural venues contribute to a dynamic gameplay experience.

Dragonsreach Entrance

Riverwood Lumber Yard

Riverwood from Afar