

Garages That Say, 'Welcome Home, Cars'

When the car became the dominant means of transport in this country, every new house of any size had to have a garage.

Many if not most of these garages were given a prominent front-row spot - they faced the street. The phrase "attached garage" was a price booster. To be able to walk straight to it from the kitchen without braving the elements was a sign of arriviste luxury.

Often necessitated by lot size, a garage door dominates. Even when it's not protruding, but set flush in the structure's front, it manages to draw the eye, to make you look at - because they are closed most of the time - blank walls. The house becomes a backdrop.

"Welcome home, cars," seems to be the greeting. Here's the problem: Our cars are bigger and our garages are bigger. Most of our garages face the street so you can't miss them. Bulky, boring garages make houses look bad and cheap. In certain neighborhoods, the homes look so much alike that the only way to find your house is to use the garage-door opener and see which one goes up.

There is a need to make the front elevation of the home inviting, and not a moment too soon, for communities that could fairly be described as a vast wasteland of ugly garages. Architects and builders alike, responding to demand from home buyers and home renovators, are designing garages that complement house styles.

Adding distinctive architectural styling to the garage, simply, can add curbside drama.