

The Staircase and the Garden

Courtyard

There are several components used as organizing elements within each of the proposed clusters. As well, there are additional components used as environmental buffer between the individual clusters across the overall site.

The staircase is perhaps the most important architectural element belonging to the clusters. These not only provide a means of access to the interior of the cluster, taking the inhabitant to their front door, they also form a linking and communicative structure. Beyond the realm of the cluster these staircases reach out to the rest of the hillside community and to the proposed paths connecting this community to other neighborhoods. Of greatest importance, however, is that these staircases, as demonstrated in their final form, create space—rooms. These rooms are useful as gathering, transitional, sacred, and contemplative space.

The intention, however, is not that these spaces be charged with such meanings, it is merely suggested that the ability to use the space for such purpose is possible.

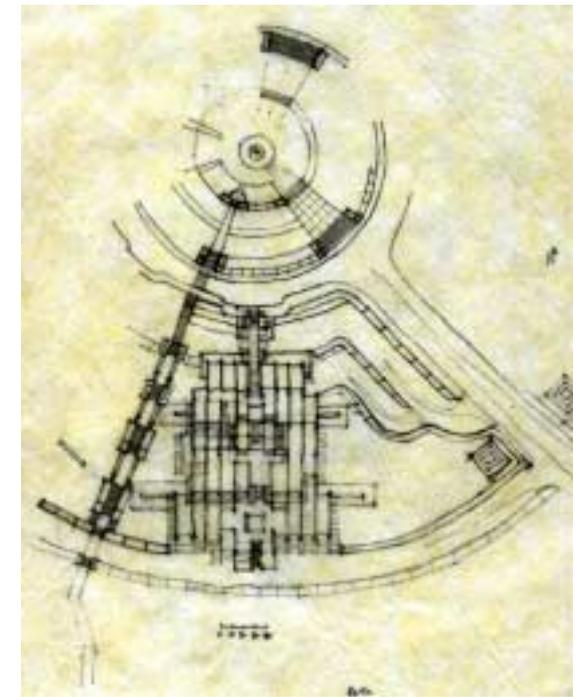
The staircase does not form a straight line from point A to point B. This would be entirely impractical, as the site is too steep for a straight run stair. With all of the appropriate landings the staircase would be much too long to accommodate the overall organization and tightly spaced structures of the dwellings. The staircase is truly conceived as a “courtyard” thus resulting in a formalized space that is of a freer form. The staircase courtyard continuously maintains a regard for the overall rhythms and unit system that dominate the entire building.

The staircase is constructed of poured in place concrete. The assemblage also forms a barrier, planters and cistern (see diagram at right showing these elements.) Water is circulated from the top of the staircase to the bottom where, in the dry season it is recircu-

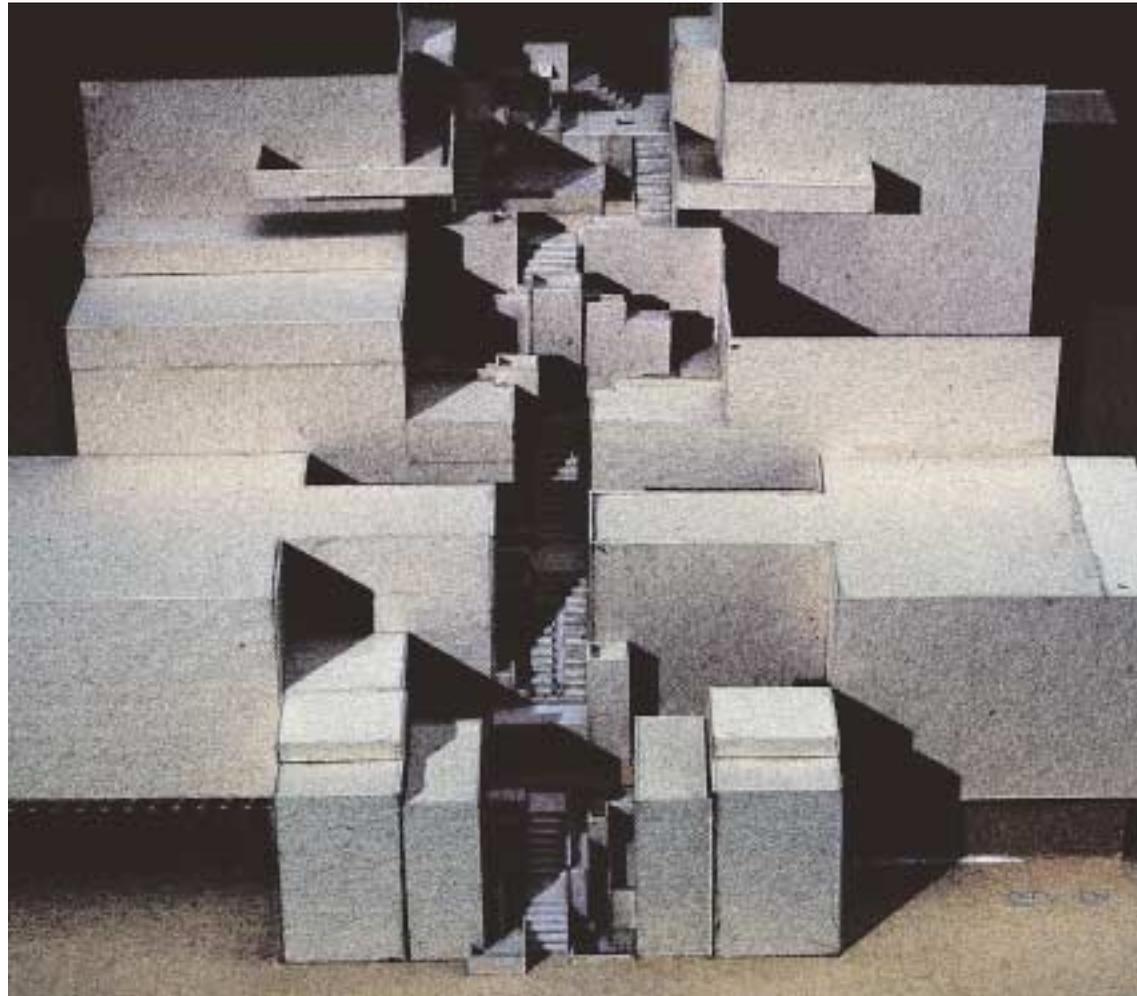
lated to the upper area. In the wet season, one half of the adjacent dwelling roofs drain into this waterway. The water is then allowed to overflow into the storm drain system at the lower elevations of the site.

These built components are used to organize and impart a sense of Nature and beauty within the staircase courtyard. One natural element is water, the other is vegetation in the form of landscape plantings. Both of these elements are also used to further identify the individual units from one another. As the breakfast patio of the units uses planter elements for the dweller to maintain and use as a personal identifier, the overall cluster will use the common planters to develop an overall landscape identification for their housing group.

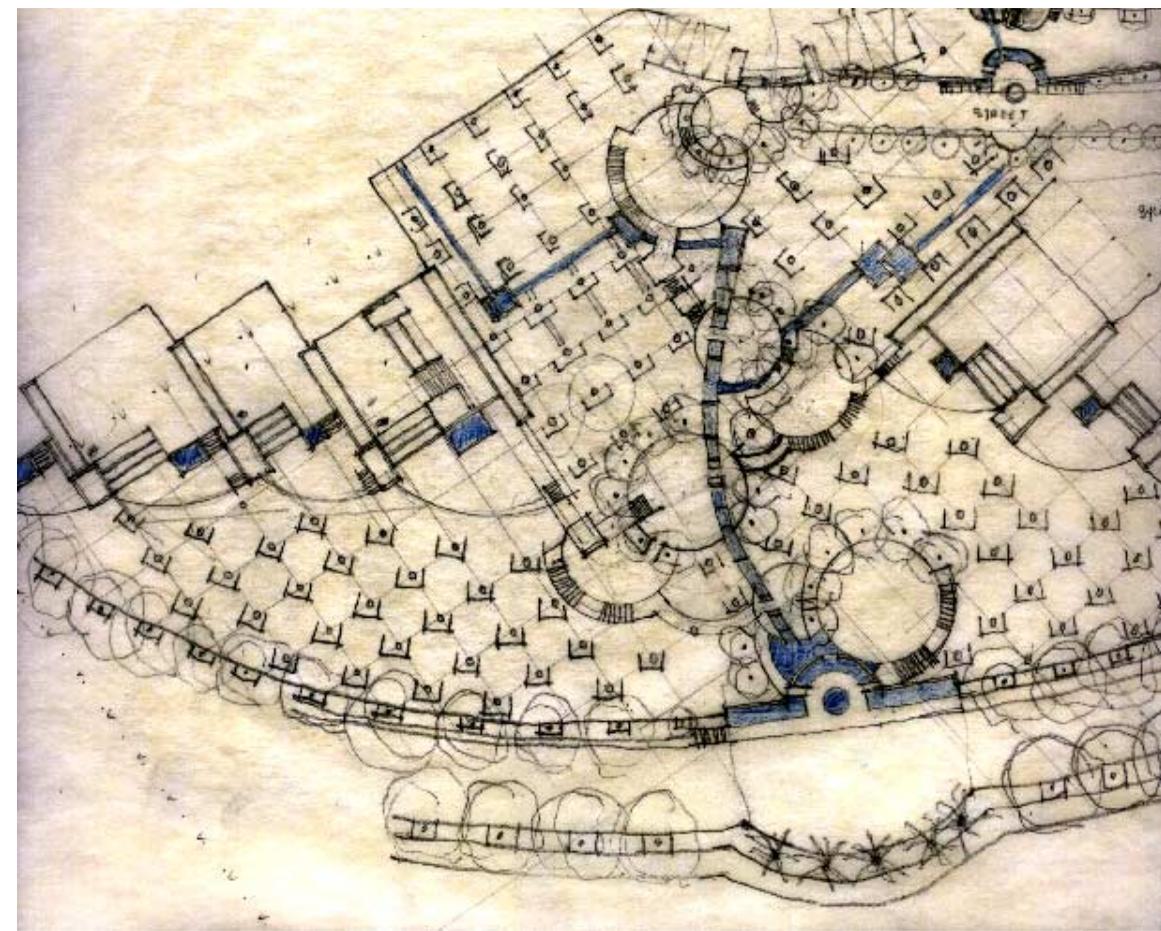
The second natural element within the staircase courtyard is water. Water is used for several purposes while not being held in a stagnate state. The most significant use of running water is to create white noise that



Plan sketch showing early ideas of circle, staircase courtyard and gardens.



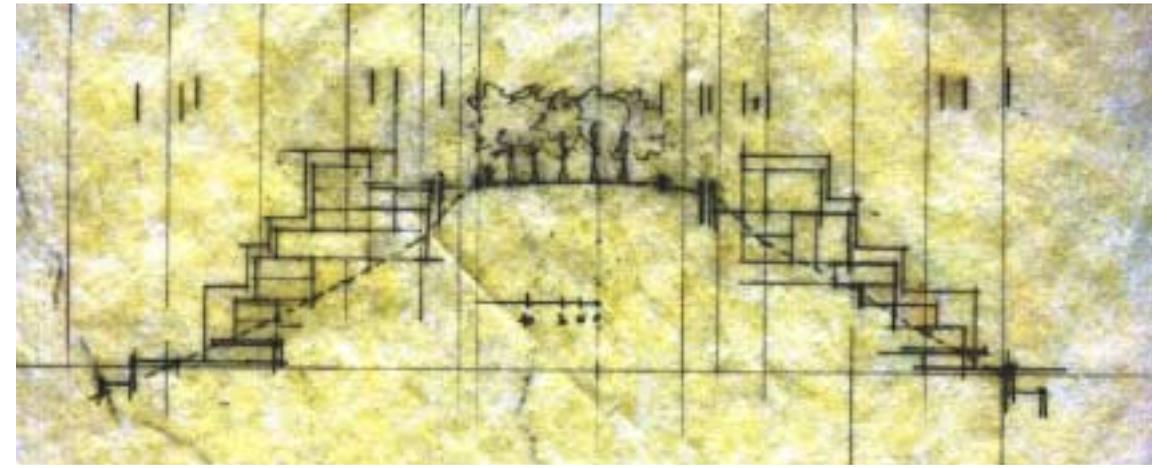
Study model of staircase courtyard.



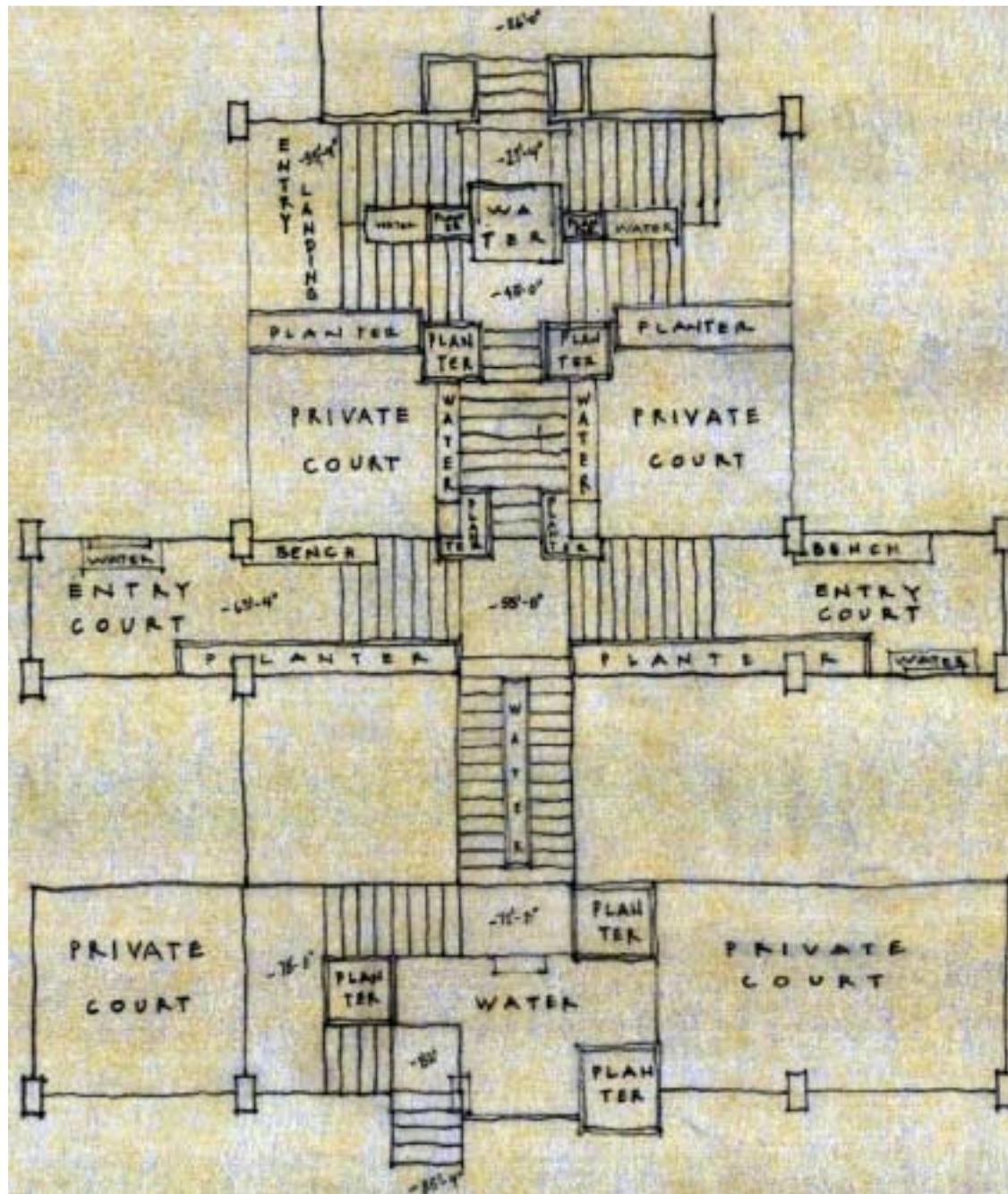
Early site section taken through southwest prominence demonstrating slope steepness.

will buffer sound transmission between the rooms of the units that face the staircase courtyard. Since the units are either directly adjacent to one another, or are within as little as 8' of a neighbor the use of white noise will provide the means for a greater degree of privacy between units. A second use for the water is for evaporative cooling between the units in the staircase courtyard, and within the units.

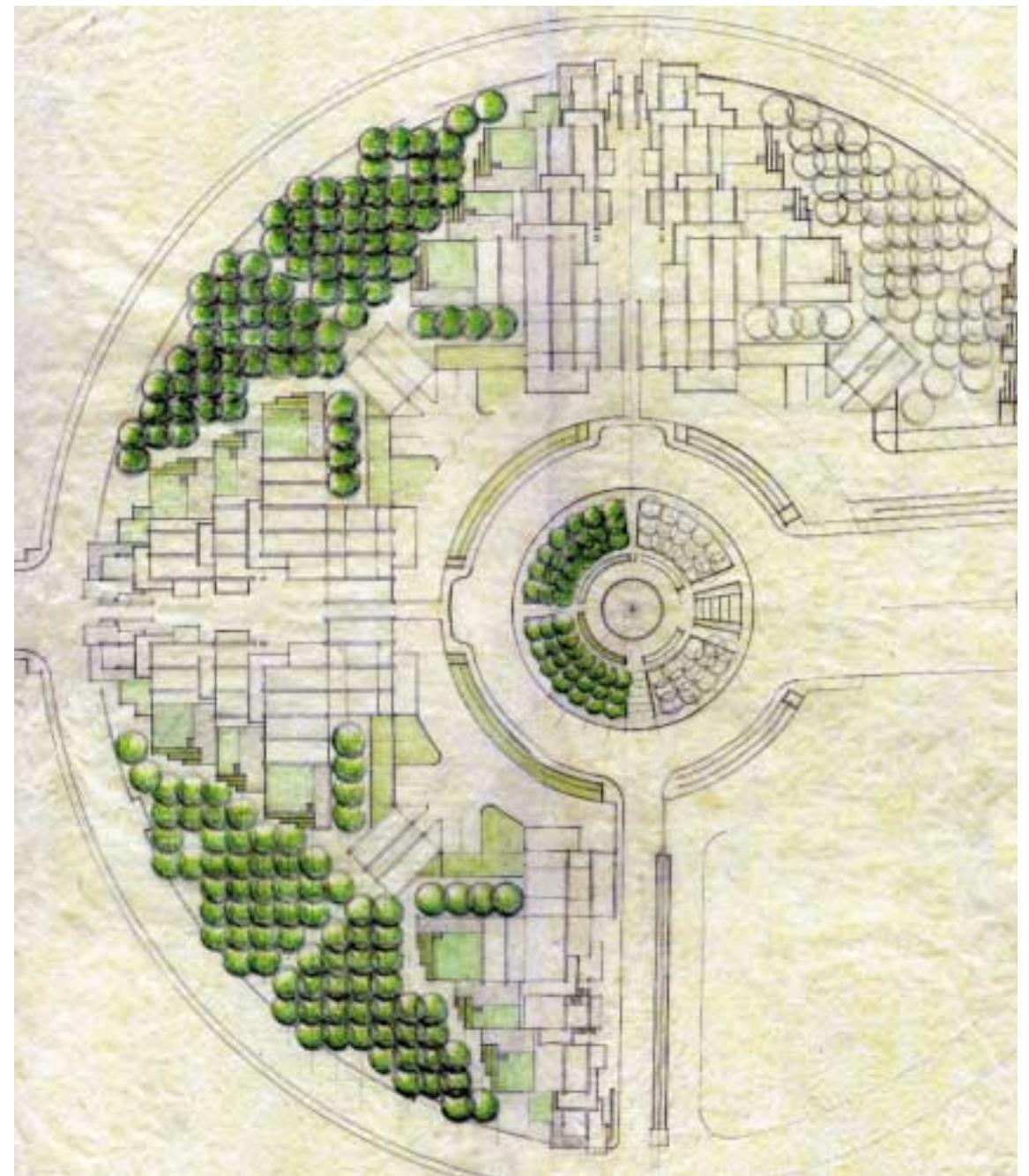
Whereas the cluster staircase forms the 'main street' of the interior world of the clusters, the adjacent hillsides form 'backyards' of the houses. This is a common area to all of the clusters in the development, as well as an area common to the inhabitants of the adjacent neighborhoods. These gardens are accessible from the staircases and paths developed and shown in the site plan (page 40) of the overall site composition.



A preliminary site section used to gain an understanding of the terrain.



A partial staircase planning diagram which was used to place water, planting and gathering areas in the courtyard..



Conceptual planning layout of the cluster as they relate to the ending nodes of the development.

Garden

As with many other elements of this Thesis, these “in-between” spaces have been generated using many of the guiding principles in the design of the buildings themselves. Here, landscape is used as structure as well as an element of transition between the perceived grid that is extended from the building structure of the dwellings onto the land. A collection of trees are the predominate features used in these spaces. This will accomplish several things. In a large sense,

these plantings, in combination with many smaller shrubs will help to stabilize the top soil of the hillside, and thus prevent avoidable land movement.

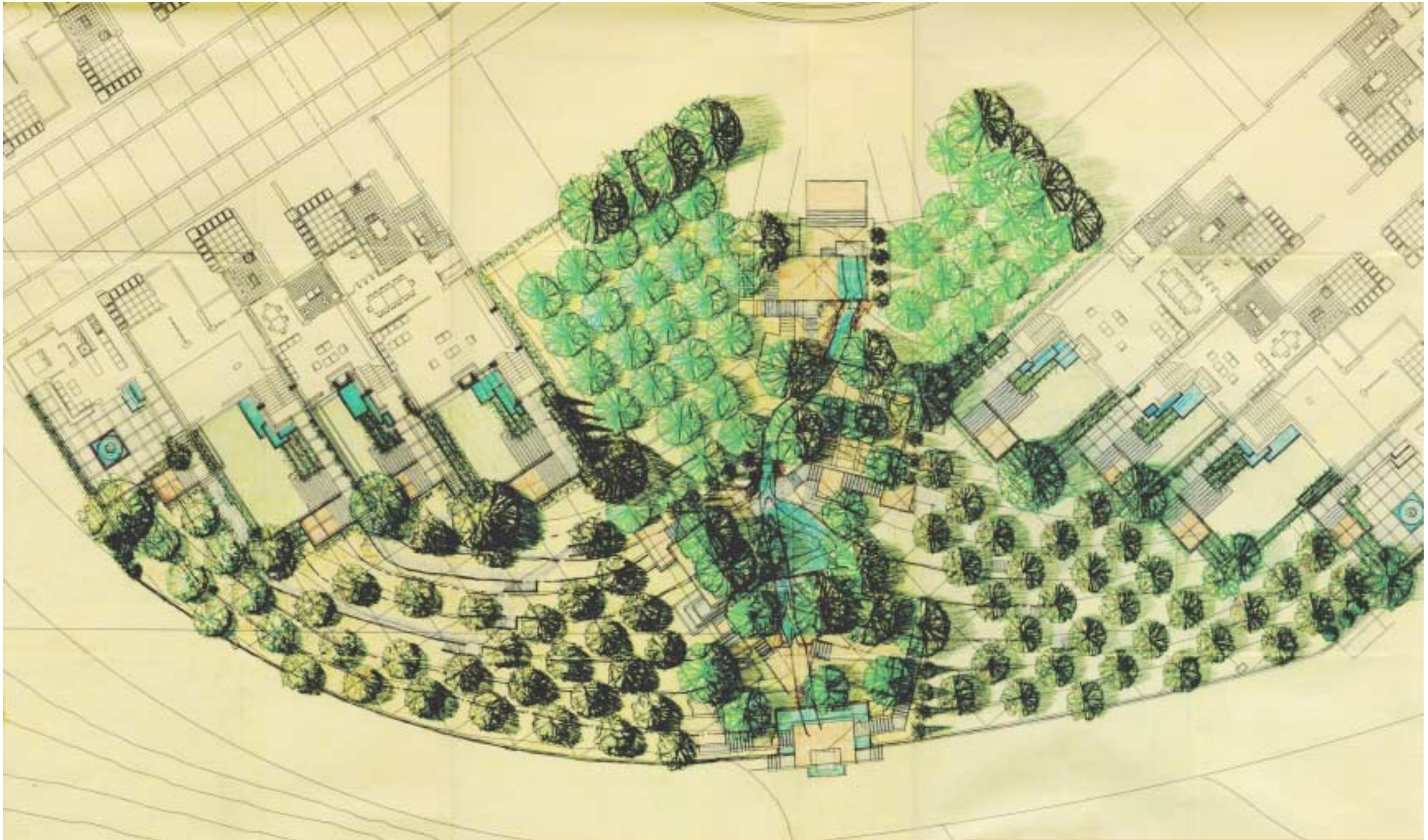
Within the scale of the city, this development could be perceived as a large and somewhat oppressive element on the site. By incorporating significant and varied plantings on the surrounding hillside the impact of the structures will be downplayed and softened. By maintaining the overall height of the

cluster below the crest of the hill and by planting large trees on the top of the hill, the development will be set in a forest of green. With this image in mind it is easily seen that the cluster is practically engulfed by nature.

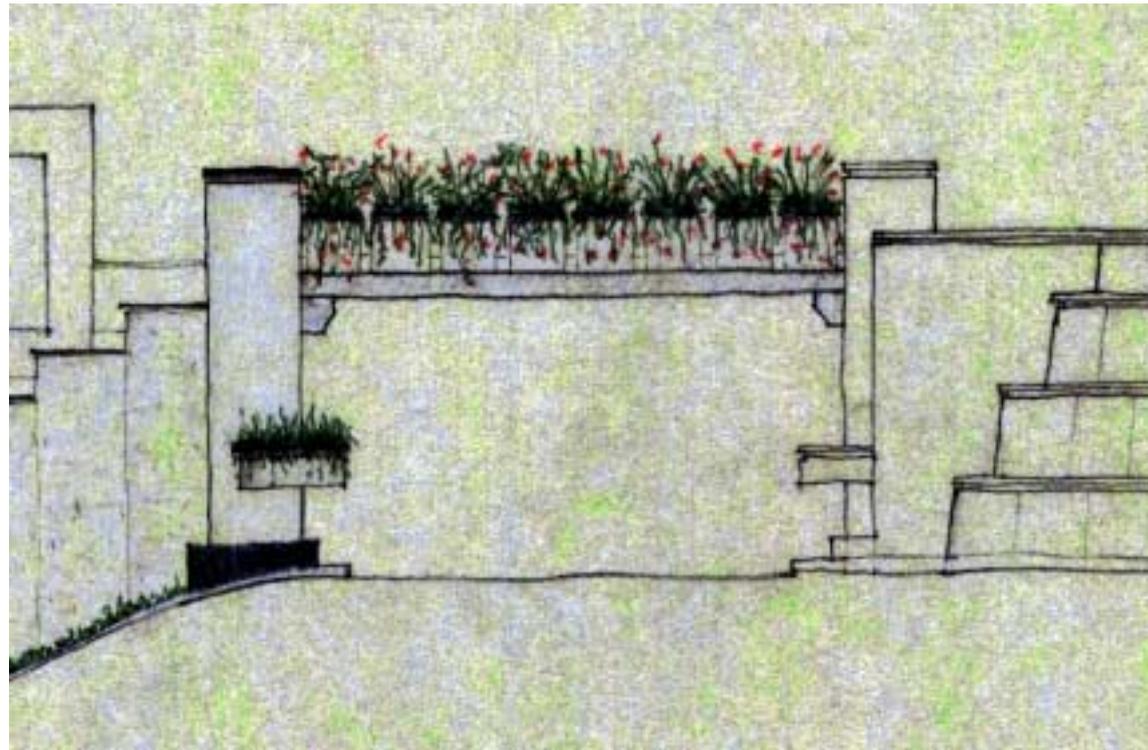
Citrus Groves

Southern California from the early part of the 20th Century until shortly after World War II was the largest producer of citrus in the

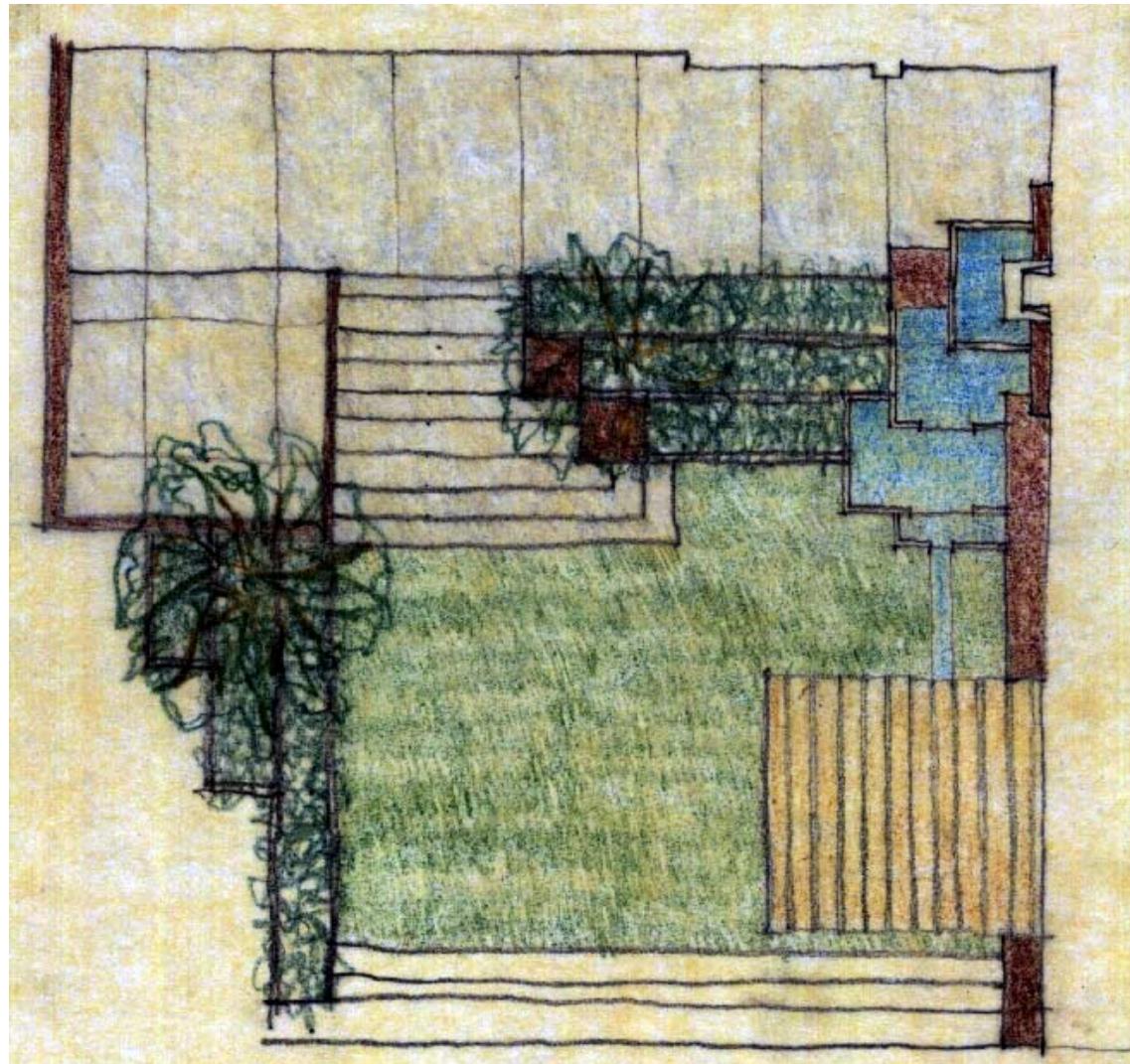
United States. The foothills of the surrounding mountains provided the ideal climate and soil conditions for these large groves. It is said that during the flowering season of these fruit trees that the smell of citrus was found throughout the Basin. The propaganda of this era demonstrates just how significant the growing of citrus products was to the region. For better or for worse, this industry is all but forgotten today. Left is only another vision of the Arcadian past. Since this Thesis reaches



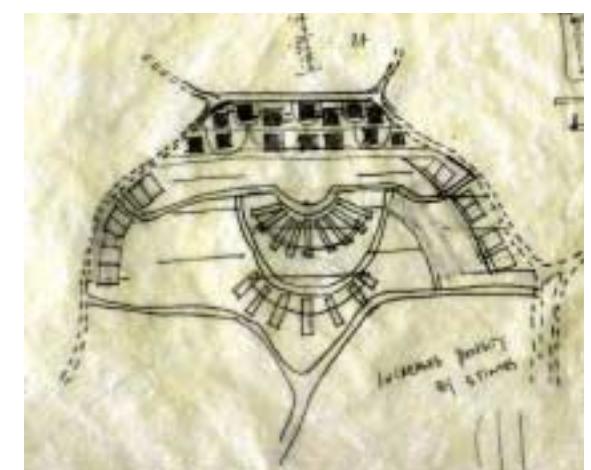
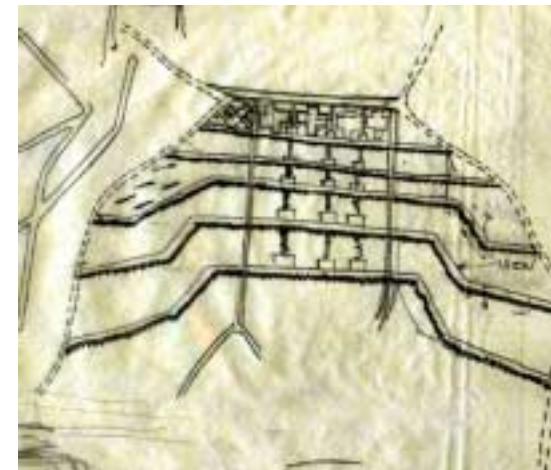
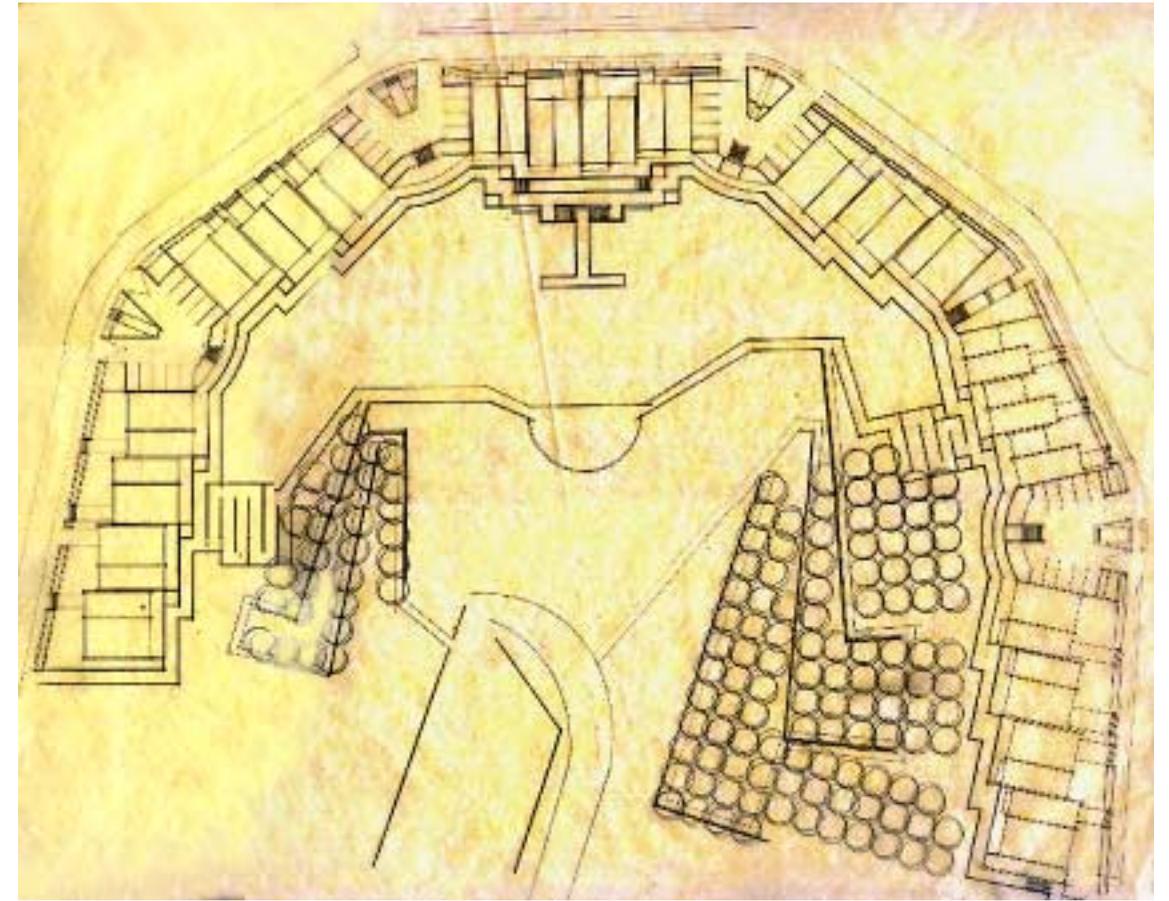
This rendering shows the ground floor plan of each unit and its relationship to the private garden. Additionally it demonstrates one option for the use of the in-between space. In this option the area is bisected by a water course. This in turn is flanked by citrus groves which are bordered by stands of eucalyptus and cypress trees.



Elevation sketch of the bridge connector between the staircase and upper road.



Detail sketch of a private garden, showing upper and lower areas.



A series of early sketch studies showing alternative site layouts and how those may relate to the concept of an integral garden. The top diagram shows a more fully developed idea that strongly includes a citrus grove as a part of the development.

in a great many ways to that past for suggestion, the use of citrus seems an appropriate choice of planting element for the in-between spaces. At maturity, these orchards could provide a substantial income for the develop-

ment, This income could in turn be used to offset the cost of maintaining such a vast amount of open space. Additionally, the pleasure derived from the simple fragrance of these fruit trees is immeasurable.