A FOOD MARKET IN ALEXANDRIA VIRGINIA

SUSAN ELIZABETH REED

Thesis submitted to the Faculty of
Virginia Polytechnic Institute & State University
in partial fulfillment for the requirements for the degree of
MASTER OF ARCHITECTURE

APPROVED:

Gregory Hunt, Chairman

Jaan Holt

James Ritter

Prepared at the Washington-Alexandria Center,
for Blacksburg Virginia
August, 1986
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Acknowledgement</td>
<td>iv</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Program</td>
<td>v</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Setting</td>
<td>vi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Form</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Urban Form</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Building Form</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overall Structure</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Market Hall</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Street Space</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parking Structure</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tenant Space</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Afterthought</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Selected Sources</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vita</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The prosperity of the human species is based upon the existence of communal behavior. Some individuals provide food, while others are freed from the search for food to do other things: to chip flint arrowheads, to make pottery, to write symphonies. In large cities, individuals may be vaguely conscious of their larger social community, but often they recognize few of the faces of the other individuals who belong to the same large community. In an urban setting, the social behavior of individuals is defined by the built environment. The built environment has a responsibility to encourage the formation of communities of individuals, as well as to recognize and strengthen the wider community of mankind, in order that the species may flourish and prosper.

A Food Market for Alexandria is a proposition for a place in Old Town Alexandria Virginia, where the growth of responsible communities may occur in an architectural setting which is a responsive member of the collection of buildings that house the human city.
to ancestors for dark soil, 
wavering with hay on a summer afternoon

to neighbors and relatives 
for baked beans and brown bread
hot cocoa and doughnuts in the cool of autumn

to friends 
for sausage pizza with mushrooms
for file gumbo on rice
for cappuccino ice cream cones
for plates of Sunday pancakes
for a cheese steak with onions
for barbecue with beer
for picnics on mountain tops

to teachers for strawberries and champagne

to parents
for grilled lamb, slabs of red tomato, and apple pie
for the luminescent arches of a fragrant cornfield
The food market is a place to sell and to buy food, a place to shorten distances between growing and eating, and to shorten the distances between strangers. The site will be chosen and developed in concordance with the composition of the city. In the market there will be regular permanent food shops such as a bakery, a meat shop, a spice store, or a fish shop. The open air space will accommodate the seasonal sale of produce by local growers, and other similar temporary and informal community events. An indoor market hall space will serve the produce sellers in inclement weather, and may be used for other events. In keeping with the combination of residential and commercial uses typical to this area of Alexandria, and other usefulness of a built-in market, there will be apartments above the shops. A parking structure will serve the residents, merchants, and customers. There will be gardens for the residents, and for the market.
Saturday at the Italian Market; humid midsummer in South Philadelphia. You stand in brown light beneath canopies stretched from the buildings over the sidewalks and the overflowing produce stands in the gutter. Heaps of bread leaves in a bakery window, a woman hawking hams, live crabs escaping from baskets. You pause from walking shoulder to shoulder with a polyglot cross-section of the city population, and ask a vendor with good prices for zucchini to go with your fresh pasta and provolone purchased from the shops. The vendor chooses and weighs your squashes, and teases you about smelling of talcum powder. You buy a straw hat and a lemon ice for the heat, and wait for a crosstown bus with a box full of food.

Arlington Courthouse parking lot on a fall morning. The air smells of leaves, apples, and basil. You wander between the sunlit stands and pickups, tasting various ciders before making your choice, and talk with the gray-haired farmer about harvest conditions. You juggle a handful of change and a bag of ripe tomatoes, and take the Metro home with a pumpkin under your arm.

Buying groceries at the Old Town Safeway, breathing refrigerator air under the cool fluorescent lights. Edging your cart into the canned peas so an elderly couple can push their own past in the narrow aisle. Murmuring polite apologies after bumping someone foraging for hard pink tomatoes. In line, you surreptitiously read the scandal magazine covers, and eye the candy bars. The check-out clerk refuses to let you buy meat what smells bad, and discusses the weather with an old customer. You pull your two-wheeled cart home down the quiet sidewalks, past brick walls spilling flowers.

Market Square in Alexandria at noon, a stage set on King Street. You pass a gaggle of tourists posing by the tulip bed, and choose a seat on the fountain. A toddler practices Arlington Courthouse parking lot on a fall morning. The air smells of leaves, apples, and basil. You wander between the sunlit stands and pickups, tasting various ciders before making your choice, and talk with the gray-haired farmer about harvest conditions. You juggle a handful of change and a bag of ripe tomatoes, and take the Metro home with a pumpkin under your arm.

The market at Commerce Street in Old Town on a sunny afternoon, the leaves making patches of dappled shade. A woman pushing a stroller stops and buys peaches from a farmer, exchanging stories about their babies. A tourist family on its way back from the waterfront stops to wander through the market, leaving with fruit and a bag of pastry. You walk down the street from your office, stop at a farmstand that sets up for late afternoon business, and discuss weather while buying thick peppers and a bouquet of daisies. A friend calls your name and waves as he startled pigeons into flight. You go past tubs of geraniums, and buy beef from a clerk who talks Redskins. You run into your good-looking next-door neighbor at the mail boxes, and climb the stairs together. Your roommate comes across the bridge from parking, with the season’s first garden tomato. The three of you talk in the kitchen while fixing dinner, and watch the people in the street below. Later, in the quiet of early evening you go to pull some weeds from your garden high above the street, and stay to sit and listen to birds and playing children. The air smells of flowers and tomato leaves and newly-watered ground. The setting sun turns the roofs of Old Town to gold and rose.
In the anonymity and mass of a city, the social ties forming a community are a delicate network needing an hospitable climate and a place in which to grow. Two strangers meeting in the street will not speak unless there is a third thing for them to speak about, an unusual event or object: flooded streets, a pet, a child, an accident. The presence of food also loosens the social walls between strangers. Food has pleasant social associations, whether it is an ice cream cone on the street, or food cooked at home. Even as undistinguished a place as an impersonal grocery store for buying everyday food may serve for the nurturing of a community because it is a common, cooperative experience with pleasurable associations. A city without any community networks is an unpleasant and unhealthy place. The success of human evolution, and therefore of cities, is based on the existence of community: the cooperation of individuals for mutual benefit.

The food in grocery stores appears as if by magic, coming thousands of miles by truck and train and ship and plane from all over the world. But good farmland in the Washington D.C. area, as in other American cities, is so little valued that it is being destroyed by highways, shopping malls, and sprawling speculative housing complexes. At present, the system of huge agribusinesses, mechanized production and long distance provisioning feeds the United States more than adequately. But in the event of disasters or the changes which will make this system less viable or totally unworkable, such as when the world oil supply runs dry, or is withheld by wars and embargoes as it has been in the past, there should be functioning alternative distribution systems and food sources close to the cities.

Local small farmers may currently be unable to compete in the wholesale produce market system that serves the supermarkets. However, if there are small markets available at which to sell seasonal produce directly to the city consumers, farmers may be able to keep the smaller plots of land available near cities in profitable production. At the same time, the city dwellers will have access to varieties and qualities of produce not always available in supermarkets because of the requirements of mass production, through direct exchange of goods and words with the farmers.

A new urban food market would add to the diversity of provisioning options. Such a food market is not a replacement for the existing system of agribusiness, long distance shipping, wholesale food markets, and supermarkets. Rather, it is a co-existing alternative. Diversity is the key to societal survival, as it is to the physical survival of the species. When one thing fails or falters, there must be alternatives for its replacement. Food is an absolute essential without which cities would collapse into chaos.

An urban food market would also provide a place for social interaction, for the formation and strengthening of community and the betterment of the city. Food is a commonly enjoyed necessity for all the city dwellers, for all the potential members of a community. The feeding of human groups is the cornerstone to human evolution and civilization, and therefore architectural concern should be given to the place in which the cooperative endeavor of the feeding of the species is most evident.
The urban core of Alexandria, functionally as well as historically, is the Old Town area. (See maps on following page.) Old Town is confined on the east by the Potomac River, on the south by Hunting Creek and the Capitol Beltway, and on the west and north by parklands, industrial areas, and railroad yards. The streets follow a typical grid system. Old Town is largely composed of three story townhouses, with taller commercial structures. There are clusters of mid-rise commercial and residential buildings towards the edges of Old Town. Brick is the predominant building material.

The most heavily travelled streets in Old Town are Washington Street, which runs north-south and is part of the George Washington Memorial Parkway, and U.S. Route 1, running north-south on Patrick and Henry Streets. King Street, running east-west, is the main commercial street, and is the urban axis running from the Metro Station and the Masonic Monument tower to the Potomac waterfront. Most of the commercial activity—specialty shops, restaurants, and offices, occurs on or near King and Washington Streets. King is the most public street, where the greatest number and variety of pedestrians are found. There are also offices, chiefly of national associations, near the Metro Station and the north waterfront, but without a well-developed retail and pedestrian environment.

The primary economic bases of Old Town are the offices and the tourist/leisure trade. The tourists come for the historic sights and the urban playground of the area by the waterfront. Groups of tourists of all nationalities come by car, limousine, tour bus, bicycle, and Metro. They come to the area by the waterfront, along with the residents of Old Town, to look, to stroll, to shop, to eat and drink, or perhaps to find love. The local indigent streetpeople sit and watch, and sometimes ask for money, or maybe just for attention. There is a daily influx and exodus of office workers by car and Metro. On the streets are also the construction workers, police, restaurant workers, shop clerks and others serving the needs of the city. Unlike many cities, Old Town allows no street vending.

There is more equality on the pedestrian street than elsewhere in the city. Position in society and wealth are indicated only by behavior and clothing, which are changeable. Without occupations, buildings or cars, everyone is reduced to being simply a human on two feet, each one taking the same amount of space. Everyone is on foot, able to physically touch one another, and sharing the very immediate needs and purposes of going from place to place in safety. And yet there are rarely specific shared interests or concerns allowing strangers to speak together.

The older, more dense and intricately developed areas of Old Town lie between Washington Street and the Potomac. Urban renewal, redevelopment, renovation, development, and gentrification, beginning in the 1960's, started in the easternmost blocks of King Street, and have gradually spread to the south, north and west. Additional new construction, mostly of mid-rise office buildings, is taking place on the north part of the waterfront, on the west end of Duke Street, and near the Braddock Road and King Street Metro Stations which opened in 1984. Shopping centers, large grocery stores, hospitals, high schools, and other space intensive necessities are located at some distance to the south and west of Old Town, accessible by bus and car.

The most expensive housing is in the Historic District, towards the waterfront. Low income housing is in the northwest quarter of Old Town. Unfortunately, the well-to-do residents in Old Town are predominately white, and the poor are virtually all black, a long standing division compounded by geographic distinction. The northwest quarter of Old Town generally has lower incomes, more rundown homes, and blacker faces. There are no slums in Old Town, but the combined contrast of class, money, and color create a social abyss, which though not absolute, is hard to remove.

The original market district of Old Town Alexandria was on King Street, three blocks from the waterfront. After changes in transportation and marketing technology in the past century, and corresponding changes in civic priorities, the market hall was swallowed by City Hall, and the shops turned into exotic clothing stores, or were torn down to make Market Square, where a small produce market is held at dawn on Saturday mornings.

Market Square, a widening of King Street, now functions as a place for the public life of the city to occur. Market Square provides a stage for formal and informal performances, city festivals and ceremonies. It is a gathering place for tourists, students, shoppers, and workers enjoying the sunshine, flowers, and company at lunch time. One of the evidences of the existence of a functioning community is the establishment of stricter standards of behavior: while prostitutes solicited openly at the 1100 block of King, wading in the fountain and skate-boarding were banned in Market Square at the 300 block of King Street.
The appropriate place for a public food market is on the main thoroughfare of Alexandria, which is King Street. The east end of King, already a dense and lively place, has neither the space nor the need for major additions. The west end of the street is rapidly being developed from two directions, particularly with large new office buildings, which add people to the street, but with no reasons to slow their pace and interact with one another as there are on the east end of the street. The intersecting diagonal of Commerce Street at the 1200 block of King provides a natural wide place for a public plaza, a second widening of the pedestrian street like that of Market Square. Such a public space, with the attraction of a market and shops, will provide the nucleus for the growth of community among the pedestrians, as well as among the people of the adjacent residential areas.

There are other reasons for placing the market at the junction of Commerce and King Streets. This site on the 1200 block of King is easily accessible to vehicular traffic from the city and from the highways for deliveries and farm produce. The areas immediately around the Metro Station are removed from residential areas, and have a vehicular rather than a comfortable pedestrian scale. Too many people are needed to fill very large open urban spaces like these to make them pleasantly busy, and therefore attractive places. Unlike the east end of the Old Town axis, which is firmly embedded in the Early American/Victorian Historic District, the west end is not as constrained in its architectural expression. The unusual event of a diagonal street stopping at the corner of a street grid makes the site an uncommon place, where the stiffness of prescribed formal behavior, that of buildings and people, may be relaxed and reshaped.

This market would not be a replacement for Market Square, any more than it would be for the supermarkets. It would be an alternative to the supermarket system, and an addition to the urban system of Old Town. Unlike Market Square, which is a large area devoid of all permanent commercial endeavors and empty of temporary businesses for most of the week, the Commerce Street Market would be a number of smaller spaces with permanent and casual retail establishments. Although the market would contain no restaurants or cafes, its presence would draw these businesses and others to adjacent buildings, especially those facing the open area across King and Fayette Streets, forming a new retail node on King Street.
The market building is constructed of brick bearing walls and flat plate concrete floors. The parallel brick bearing walls between the shops, 20 feet on center, are perpendicular to Commerce which is the central street of the site, and consequently are at a 33-degree angle to King Street. Like these market walls, the party walls of row houses and shops in Old Town form series of parallel lines. In the market hall and greenhouse, the parallel structural walls become lines of structural columns, and the floor slabs are split to allow the flow of stairways and sunlight.

The open spaces of the market are extensions of the King Street sidewalks. The open area towards Fayette Street is for events of varying size. Because of its triangular shape, a small event can fill a corner to a comfortably busy density, as can a large event by taking more of the area of the triangle. The same thing can be done with the area on Commerce Street, when the street is blocked off, so that there is a potential for large events of festivals to occur, but in spaces in which small events will not be insignificant.

The section of the market on Commerce Street, with shop fronts on both sides, repeats the agreeable and effective Old Town street cross section: 3 story facade, sidewalk with trees, street, sidewalk with trees, 3 story facade. The bridge across Commerce links the two sections of the building with a circulation spine, and confines the area of the open air market, so that it is a visibly limited and defined space, belonging only to this corner of King Street. The bridge also serves to screen the delivery area from the market proper, and to discourage through traffic on Commerce Street. Commerce, now a little used one-way street, would remain open only for limited vehicular use, without parking.
The south side of the 1200 block of King Street was selected as the market site for its character and location, rather than for vacancy. Buildings, none of great significance, were removed by fictive license until enough room was created to accommodate the program. The row of houses facing Prince Street was left untouched, forming as it does an integral part of a pleasant residential street. The restored brick building on the corner of King and Payne Streets was retained to connect the marketplace to the existing scale, facade line, and milieu of King Street.

The mass of the building steps up from the low place of the corner of King, Commerce, and Fayette Streets, to the three story height of surrounding buildings. Although some new buildings in the area are several stories tall, the program does not require a larger building, and the two-to-four story scale existing in most of Old Town is quite successful and suited to a building complex which serves both residential and commercial needs.

The plans of the market complex follow. Explanation of specific areas may be found later in the text.
The market hall is a shelter during winter and inclement weather, and an expansion, place for the various aspects of the outdoor market. Some of the sellers at the market may prefer to set up stands inside, or food shops from other parts of the city may occasionally wish to have stands in the market. Like any large interior public space, of which there are few in Old Town, it may provide a space for other community uses: cooperative purchase distribution, ethnic festivals, political events, recycling collections, charity bazaars, health screenings, musical performances, theater, dances, emergency housing, or relief collections, some of which may spill out into the outdoor market.

The first floor of the market hall is below grade, to connect with the lower levels of the parking structure. The upper two floor slabs of the market are cut away, to light the lower levels from the windows, clerestories, and central glass roof. The height of the hall roof was chosen to give the building the mass necessary to fit its urban context, to give the hall some consonance with traditional market halls, to provide a lofty interior public space, and to allow hot air to rise and vent out the operable clerestories during the summertime.

The market hall roof is made with the same gable shapes as are used on the shops, although in slightly different configurations. In the shops, the gable roofs come down to a party wall on each side; the lowest point supports the weight of the roof. In the market hall, the weight of the roof is borne on rows of columns, which follow the parallel structural lines of the building as a whole. The roof is made of inverted gables, or Y shapes, like trees, which like the regular gables bear loads at the lowest point of the V. Inverting the gable allows the gable units to be shifted vertically, forming clerestory windows to catch the westerly winds of summer, and emphasizing the wider central bay of the market.
The columns in the market hall are steel I-beams. The roof supports are prefabricated tudor arches. The floors are concrete flat plates with quarry tile paving. Wood railings with steel uprights form the back of wood benches. Where solid walls are needed, the structural line of the market become brick, punched with operable windows in arched openings for light and air, and thickened with piers for strength and stability.

On the lower two levels of the market, three of the shops have counters to serve customers in the market hall, and to take deliveries. Vertical circulation within the hall is by the grand stair, the smaller stairs at three of the corners, or by the ramp for baby carriages, wheelchairs, and carts. Stands and booths would be located on the lower two levels.

At its south end the market hall becomes a greenhouse, open to the public but divided from the market by a clear glass curtain wall for climatic reasons. Food and seedlings grown there would be sold in the market—primarily fast-growing, delicate plants like herbs and lettuce, or seedlings for home gardeners. The greenhouse would serve an educational function for urban gardeners. The market might also provide space for the cooperative extension service or other organizations to give education and assistance on the growing, preparation, and preservation of food. The greenhouse roof steps down from the height of the hall roof, in respect for the adjacent homes, and is all of glass, as are the greenhouse walls, so that light comes into the south end of the market hall dappled and green from the growing plants.

The upper floor of the market is for use when the lower levels become crowded. Also, the management offices for the market, housing, and shops are located there, on the third floor of the market hall, which is the second floor above grade. Because the forms of money are diversifying, the casual merchants of the open market, for their own convenience, would only accept two forms of payment—cash or market tokens obtained from an office in the market hall. This office would handle the risk and paperwork of checks, credit cards, traveler’s checks, foreign currency, electronic fund transfer cards, and any other forms of exchange which may evolve.

The sunken courtyard to the southwest of the market hall lets light into the lower levels of the hall and parking structure, and provides space for an eating place, a garden, or a composting area.
The outside spaces of the market are paved with red brick and speckled with tree shade. The brick paving visually joins the market with the rest of the sidewalks, the pedestrian streets of Old Town. Brick gives the pavement an intricate surface texture and warm color. Like that in most of Old Town, the brick will be set in sand rather than concrete, to allow rain to seep downward to water trees and replenish groundwater levels, and to avoid street flooding. Because brick paving is cellular in nature, it ages gracefully by accommodating repairs and tree roots without diminishing in dignity.

Within the market, Commerce is also brick paved, to slow and discourage vehicles, to unify the market, and to make the street usable for large market events. There is no sharp raised curb. Rather, there is a sloped street edge, paved with a darker brick also used for water-tables and for marking the lines of the structure of the building in the surface of the plaza. The edge of the street is marked instead by the edges of raised tree planters. These raised planters provide benches and tables for the street market and for lunching office workers; they also protect the trees and roots from damage.

The trees give life and grace to the street. They form a dappled shade which is a transition in the summer between the hot, bright outside and the cool, dim shops, or in the winter between the warm, dry shops and wet, dark streets. Here as elsewhere in Old Town, they will form a self-renewing canopy over the sidewalks and streets, in scale with the buildings whose hard geometries they soften. The trees freshen and clean the air, and change color and shape and size with the passing seasons and years, keeping the urban dweller part of the natural rhythms of change shared with the rest of the natural and human world.
The structures in the open air market are for physical and psychological shelter from the sun and sudden rainstorms. One has a solid gable roof resembling the shop roofs. The others are frameworks to hold tents and the signs and scales and garlands of the farmers. The uprights are lamp posts. Sellers would back their cars and small trucks into the angled parking spaces on Fayette Street, and would sell directly from the vehicles, or unload their goods to stands beneath the canopies. The produce would be piled on tables and benches, giving fragrance and color to the space. The market management would provide canopies, administration, refuse collection, and advertising, in return for a participation fee.

The main entrance to the market hall from the open air market is on axis with the entrance from the parking structure, perpendicular to the structural walls. The entrance is marked with a gable roof and a public clock. The circle marked in the brick pavement in front of the market hall entrance is for erecting a circular tent for special events, for street theater performances, or for building a splashing fountain.

The bus stop shelter on King Street has the same roof and brick benches as the market shed. Like the market shed, it provides a one story gable form to complete the stepped rise of the building mass from ground level to three stories. The bus shelter provides a visible physical connection to the mass transportation systems of the metropolitan area.
Although pure pedestrianism is to be encouraged, the reality of the American automobile culture and the paucity of parking spaces in Old Town makes on-site parking a necessity for any substantial addition to the city. The parking structure for the market is on the Payne Street side of the circulation spine, where cars may enter without clogging the market space with traffic. A separate structure and form was given to the parking area because cars have a different scale and physical agility than do human beings. Given the need for a substantial number of parking places in a limited area, combined with a high groundwater level and the need for an unobtrusive mass, a low circular concrete structure was selected as the optimal form.

The design of the parking structure incorporates a two-way circulation ramp around a central light well. Parking spaces are outside the ramp, between concrete structural piers. There is a pedestrian walkway between low concrete bumper walls and the outer wall, which above ground is a brick parapet wall, letting in light, air, and distance. Below grade the outer wall is a brick-faced with openings to tree-filled lightwells. Parking at and below ground level is for market customers. Upper level parking is set aside for residents and merchants. At the connection of the parking structure and the circulation spine are the stairs, elevator, mechanical shafts, and entrances to the market hall and apartments. The top level of the parking structure is used for garden plots for market gardeners and residents.
The facades towards Commerce Street manipulate the intersecting geometries of King and Commerce Streets to form three-dimensional shop fronts. These shop fronts reflect the way in which pedestrians walk down a row of shops: a sign and display window angle out into the pathway to catch the eye, and in front of each shop the sidewalk widens to slow foot traffic and allow space for window shopping and door opening. Each shop has its own defined segment of sidewalk with a street light and a tree planter, where each shop may express its personality with flowers and displays.

The small balconies of the apartments continue the three-dimensionality of the shop fronts, before flattening into the gable fronts with the mullion abstractions of tree forms.

The King Street shop fronts are flatter than those on Commerce, because the geometry, stylistic conventions, and spatial thrift of the commercial unity of this street dominate the three-dimensional play of forms. The balconies on this side of the building, overlooking the crowded vehicular street, are to distance the apartments from the noisy road, and to align the gable fronts with Commerce Street.

The gable roofs themselves were used for practical as well as aesthetic purposes. Sloped roofs are more suited to the shedding of rain than flat roofs, as was recognized by two centuries of the builders of Old Town. Given that construction technology can now produce a reasonably leakproof flat roof, flat roofs can be used where they are needed for some specific purpose, such as for mechanical equipment, or where the awkward intersection of roofs and walls would be more prone to leak than a flat roof, but otherwise sloped roofs are the better choice.

The zigzag form of repeated gables is not a traditional Old Town form. However, rows of houses or shops with party walls, a series of parallel lines, are common. The Victorian era added many oddly shaped towers and ornaments to the lively intersecting of gable and flounder (half gable) roofs of prior builders, followed in the 20th century by flat roofed commercial buildings and gable-roofed homes. A slightly different combination of roof forms is hardly liable to disturb the rich architectural disunity of Old Town.
There are eight shops of varying sizes, with dumbwaiters and stairs to the basement level storage rooms. Some have facades to both King and Commerce Street. Three have one facade to Commerce Street, with counters serving two levels inside the market hall. The shop spaces are left bare, with exposed brick walls, for the individual needs and aesthetics of the shop tenants.

The shops are under individual ownership and management, but share some services provided by the management of the market complex, such as group advertising, security, and maintenance. On the basement level are restrooms, a common lounge for the merchants, and access to the storage rooms for shipments. All deliveries for the shops, market, and apartments are made to the shared receiving office located by the loading area and elevator.

Above the shops are eleven apartments: three 3-bedroom, 2-level units, three 2-bedroom units, and five efficiency apartments. The apartments are divided by exposed brick walls; interior partitions and ceilings are of gypsum drywall. The gable end walls are wood and glass, with operable windows. Mechanical systems run above the structural slab and below the flooring. On the third floor the apartment ceilings are vaulted, and there are lofts for storage, sleeping, or children's play.

The front doors to the two-level units are in the open air on the third floor, in a row of south-facing house fronts entered through small patios. The living rooms of these units face southeast, and the kitchens face Commerce Street. On the bedroom levels below, there are storage spaces, bedrooms, baths, and lightwell courtyards shared by two bedrooms.

The apartment dwellers share common spaces—parking, gardens, the pedestrian bridge, the refuse room, laundry, mail room, common room, some of the terraces, and the hallways. In the common spaces the residents who share the building have semi-public spaces, like a neighborhood street, in which the develop friendships and a community for mutual support and benefit.
Any complex situation in architecture takes a great deal of thought. The design of this market took a specific urban site as the primary determinant of the design. The secondary determinants were the various elements of the program. All parts of the design were compromised in some way to make a cohesive whole.

After the design had been formalized and documented, several alternative ways to organize the project suggested themselves. These design alternatives are not given to refute the validity of the market project as it was developed. Rather, they are fundamentally different options generated by thoroughly developing and understanding the design project:

Design the project from the inside outwards, rather than the opposite:

- Begin with the optimal conditions for the beautiful display and sale of foodstuffs.
- Or, begin with the most practical facility for receiving and selling the consumers perishable goods, tailored to the needs of transportation and refrigeration.

Use the buildings existing on the side, with renovations and additions, to fulfill as much of the program as feasible.

Give the same importance to urban design considerations, but limit the program to fewer functions, and optimize the design for those functions:

- A pure market hall, without parking, housing, or a greenhouse.
- Only housing and parking, emphasizing food use.
- An urban square.
- Shops without a market or housing.
- A commercial urban greenhouse.
- An environmental machine, without housing, emphasizing solar power, the recycling of wastes, and self-sufficiency in an urban setting.


Dept. of Planning and Community Development, Zoning Use Digest, City of Alexandria, Virginia, 1984.


United States Department of Agriculture, Food from Farm to Table, 1982 Yearbook of Agriculture, USDA, Washington, D.C., 1982.


Personal Visits:
Blacksburg VA, Farmers Market at Gable's Plaza, 1983.
The vita has been removed from the scanned document