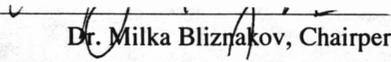


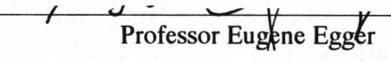
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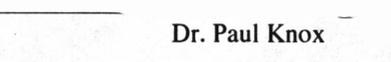
by Tania Ruth Lukowsky

A Design Thesis Submitted to the Faculty of Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University
in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of Master of Architecture

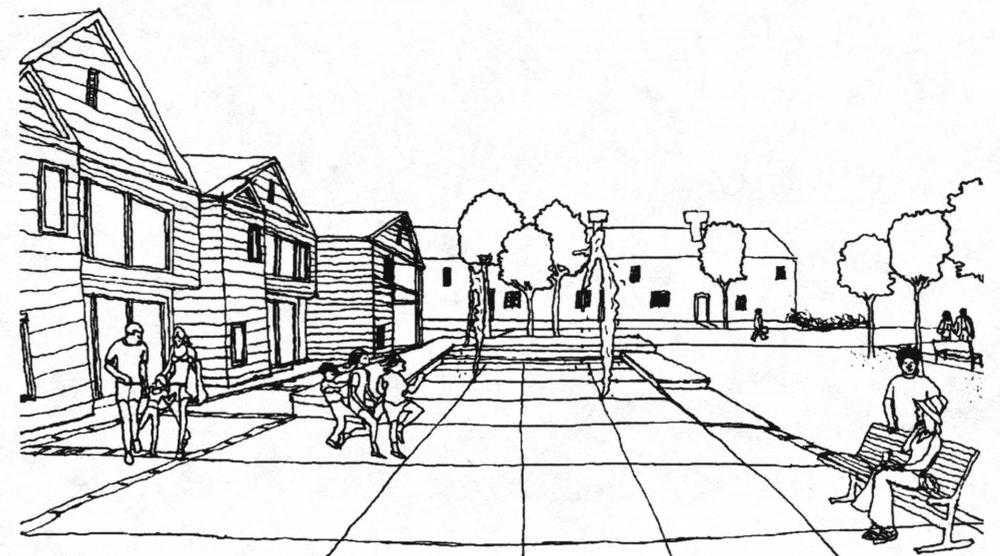
Approved:


Dr. Milka Bliznakov, Chairperson


Professor Eugene Egger


Dr. Paul Knox

Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University
Blacksburg, Virginia, December, 1993



A c k n o w l e d g e m e n t s

Thanks to my committee members Milka Bliznakov, Eugene Egger, and Paul Knox for their advice and encouragement throughout the project.

Also, many thanks to my parents and sisters for their love and support.

Special thanks to

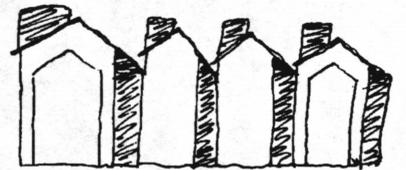
for their help and friendship in and out of the studio, and to for his patience and love.

In loving memory of

"It would be something if everything we made encouraged people to become more closely acquainted with their surroundings, with each other and with themselves... so that the world, in so far as it is amenable to our influence, becomes less alien, less hard and abstract, a warmer, friendlier, more welcoming and appropriate place; in short a world that is relevant to its inhabitants."

Herman Hertzberger

The purpose of this thesis is to create a mixed income housing community in Old Town Alexandria. While people who share similar life-styles tend to cluster together, this project encourages people of difference to find a common ground. The community will be the size of a residential Old Town block to encourage a fulfilling amount of human interaction. The interior of the block will be subdivided into a variety of places: places that provide the opportunity for people to sit in quiet contemplation, another place for children to play, other places that encourage people to interact with one another, and places where one can passively observe the surrounding activity with the option to participate or not. The houses have a variety of living spaces in response to the diverse social groups that will inhabit the blocks. These houses follow the language of Old Town in terms of materials, details, rhythm, and the way in which they meet the street, and so connect this community with the larger order of the town. This project maintains the privacy of the individual houses, encourages human interaction in the public areas, and at the same time recognizes the responsibility of designing these houses using the same structure and patterns that are inherent in Old Town.



T a b l e o f C o n t e n t s

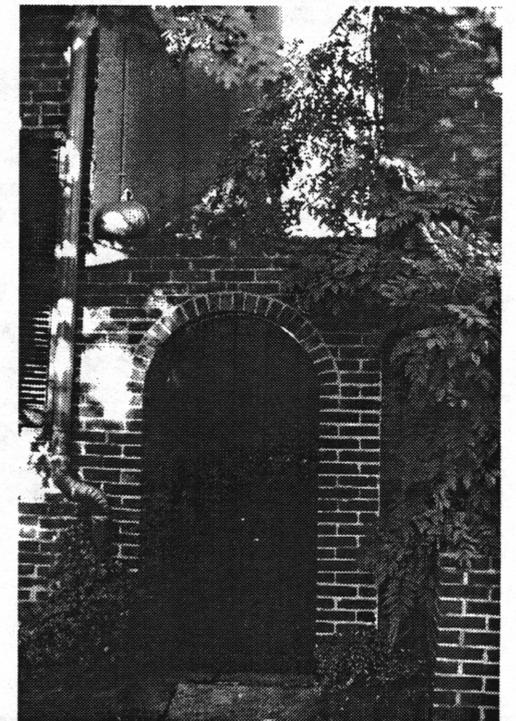
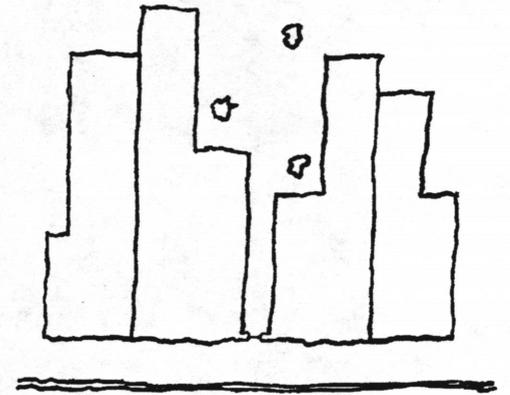
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As a point of beginning, the unique characteristics and ordering principals of Old Town Alexandria were explored so that an appropriate architectural response could be determined. It is this variety of elements and the consistency of the underlying structure of these elements that present a strong image of what Old Town is as a place, and give the inhabitants a way to orient themselves within their surroundings. In order to respect the strong identity of this place an understanding of these distinct patterns of language, structure, rhythm, and character must be understood.

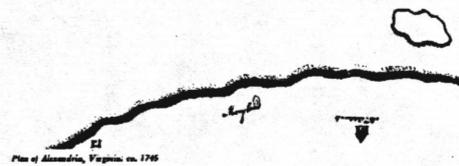
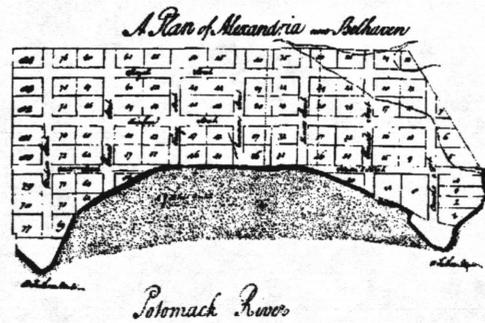
“Alexandria is a considerable place of trade, is well situated on the river which is three-fourths of a mile wide. It is now thriving rapidly; the situation of the Town, a capital one, a fine eminence, plain level, and bounded by a pretty range of hills an excellent, safe, and commodious harbour, a fine back country to it, will soon make it a very important post; much business is done here; there are about 3,200 inhabitants; the houses principally of brick; the streets are not paved and being of clay after rain they are so slippery it is almost impossible to walk in them. I went to the top of Colonel Howe’s house, a very lofty one, the prospect a magnificent one. The Town laid out at right angels, the harbour, river to great distance, with its winding creeks, and island, the extensive plain contiguous to the city, all formed a fine scene.”

William Loughton Smith, 1791



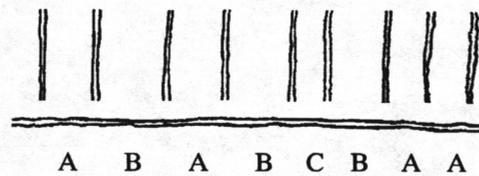
HISTORY

Old Town Alexandria was founded in 1749, and was a major port of trade due to its proximity to the Potomac River. The land was divided into a grid system of eighty-four blocks. Each of these blocks were two acres, and the blocks were further divided into four one-half acre parcels. As Alexandria prospered and expanded, additional blocks were added and they were further subdivided into smaller lots. This is one of the governing principals that structures Old Town.



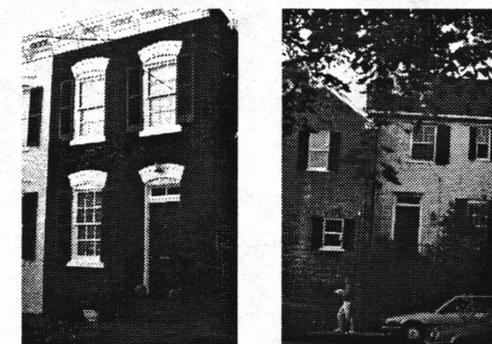
RHYTHM

The row houses are adjacent to each other and sit close to the street edge, creating a continuous line broken only by the other streets and by an occasional alley. The houses are usually two or three stories tall and are quite narrow - typically seventeen feet wide - due to the small lot sizes, but the depth of the houses varies significantly. Variety between the houses is achieved through different colors of brick and painted wood, through the detailing of the lintels and cornices, and through changes in the roof heights, pitches, and forms. This differentiation between the individual units, punctuated by an occasional alley, creates a distinct rhythm to the street.



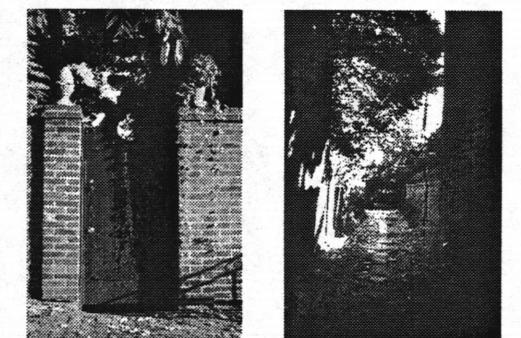
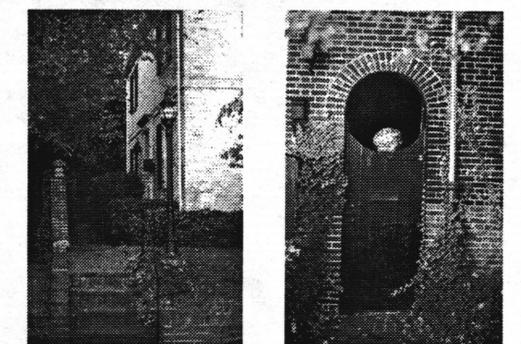
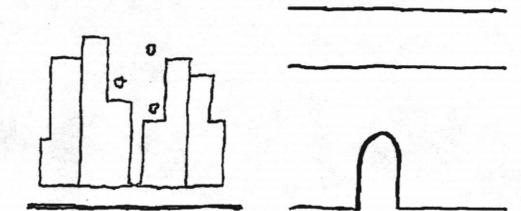
MATERIALS/ELEMENTS

The use of materials reveals the historic layering of the city, with the older houses being constructed of clapboard siding, and the later ones of brick masonry. The consistent language of Old Town is further reinforced by particular elements which re-occur throughout the town. The windows and doors are proportioned vertically, and are of similar size. This gives an overall appearance of stability and order to the facades. The brick sidewalks lined with trees, brick stoops, and recessed entrances act as the transition from the street into each house. Each block is punctuated by alleys which lead to gardens behind the houses. The detailing of the facades with ornamental lintels, cornices, and window frames further emphasizes the distinct patterns of this town.



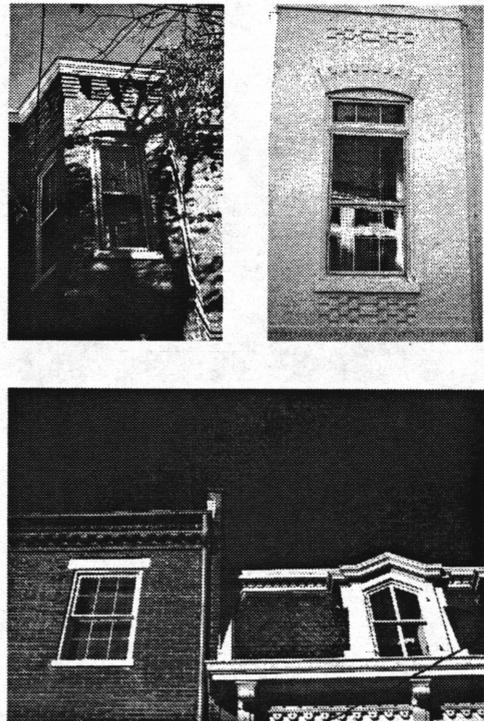
ALLEYS

Alleys and gaps between the houses link the street to the courtyards and gardens behind the houses. By connecting to the sidewalks and streets, alleys become part of the larger network of paths throughout the town. They also act as an oasis away from the busy sidewalks and even busier streets since they are narrower than other paths and are walled on either side by buildings. Alleys are considered semi-public zones since they are "owned" by the whole block. These gaps are especially important to the Old Town's sense of place since they expand the spacial experience for the pedestrian by allowing views and glimpses into the interior of the block.



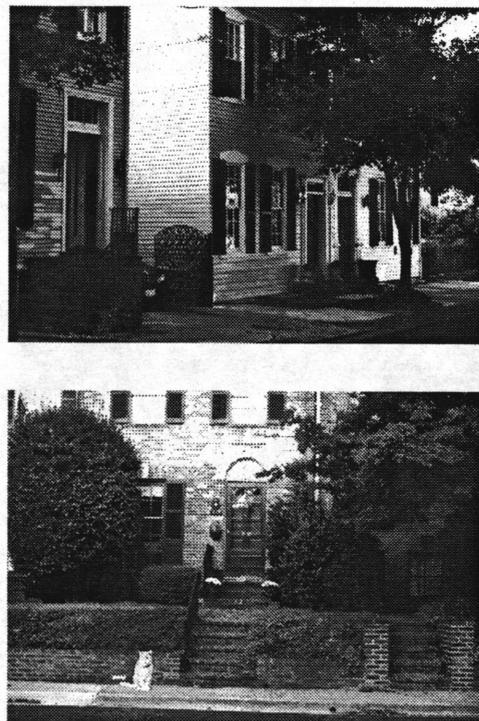
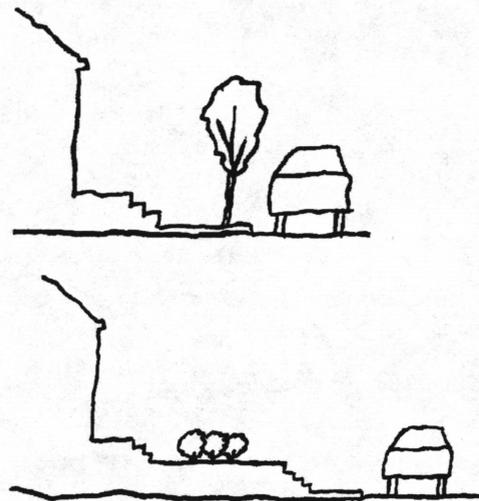
DETAILS

Cornices, lintels, window frames, and points where the buildings meet the sky are designed with particular, and sometimes elaborate attention. This concern for detail adds variety to the overall structure of Old Town, thus contributing to its uniqueness.



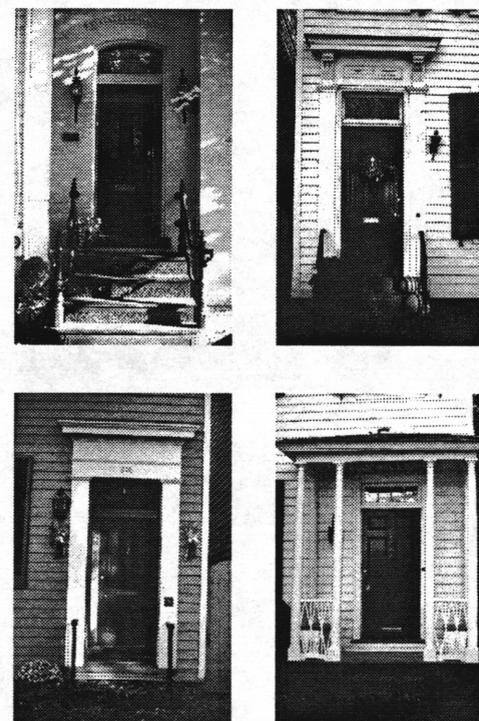
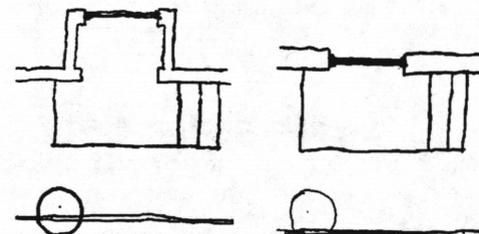
EDGES

Edges where the house meets the street are also a major consideration. Most of the houses sit directly on the brick sidewalk, while others meet the street through a progression of paths, steps, gates, and landscaping.



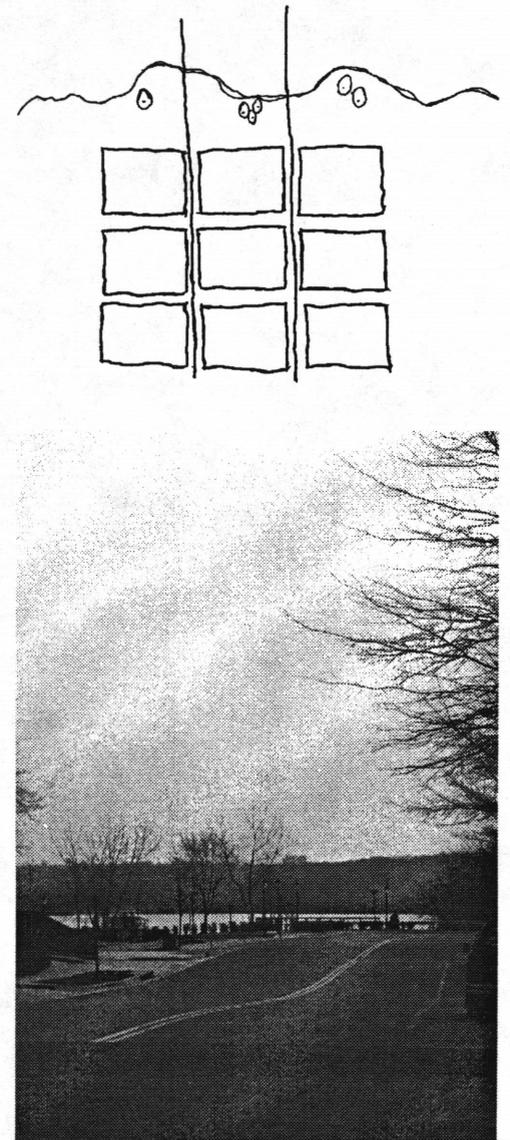
ENTRANCES

The hierarchy from the public realm of the street to the privacy of the house occurs along the street edge. The transition between these realms is articulated by the brick sidewalk, a raised water table, and several steps to a front stoop. Some houses even include further transitional zones by recessing the front door and extending the stoop, or by having two doors that one must enter before experiencing the interior of the house. Thus, the act of entering one of these houses becomes a significant way to experience Old Town.



RIVER

Since Old Town is built along the Potomac, the presence of the river is continually felt. Often one can view the river from many blocks away through the straight streets running perpendicular to it. The river connects people to other places, and situates Old Town within the larger order of the world.



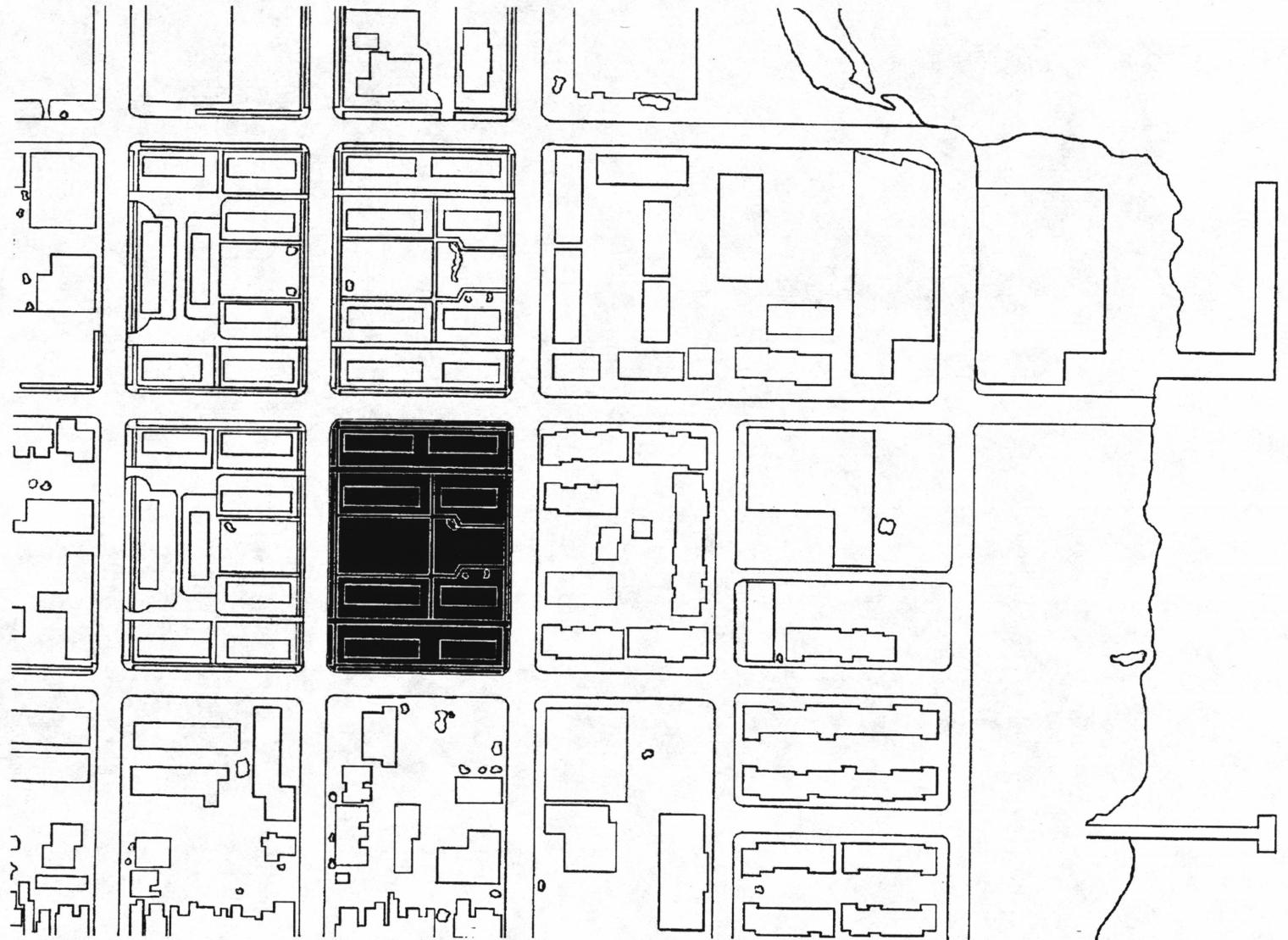
"The fundamental principal is that in places where people live all space should seem to belong to someone or something; space either should seem to be inhabited, as if it belonged to or could be claimed by particular groups of people, or should be understandable as part of a coherent larger order, such as the natural landscape or the traditional fabric of the town or a system of altogether new urban spaces."

Charles Moore

The site chosen for this project is one of the four blocks known as the Hopkins-Tancil Courts, which is an existing low-income housing complex. The block lies between Oronoco Street to the North, Princess Street to the South, North Fairfax Street to the East, and North Royal Street to the West, and is only two blocks from the Potomac River.

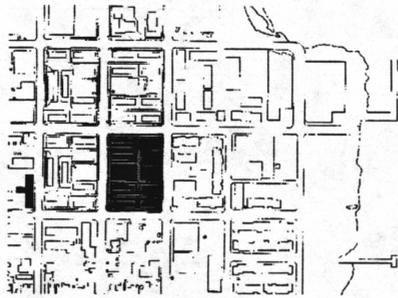
Currently the site has been under investigation by the town of Alexandria because it is trying to change its policies on low-income housing. In the past, low-income developments were allocated several blocks on which to build, and these developments were scattered about the whole city of Alexandria. All of these developments have experienced continual dilapidation, vandalism, abandonment, and a high crime rate despite attempts to "fix them up." It is also evident that several generations of families have lived in these same buildings. The town of Alexandria wants to help break this cycle, but this means a re-organization of how these developments function. Instead of siphoning the poor off into their own enclaves, the town of Alexandria would like to create a greater number of mixed-income housing communities than the existing low-income housing developments. While this is not a new concept, the key to making this successful is keeping the communities small, as evidenced by the recently built mixed income apartment complex on Quaker Hill in Alexandria. This would not lessen the amount of housing available for low-income use because it is envisioned that there will be at least twice as many of these mixed income communities throughout Alexandria than there are low-income developments today.

The Hopkins-Tancil Court development is next in line for changes. Due to its proximity to the water, and surrounded by expensive town houses, these four blocks are considered to be prime real estate. Developers have had their eyes on these blocks for years, and lately their cries to tear the housing down and gentrify the whole area have been louder than ever. Creating a mixed income housing community out of one of the blocks would establish a prototype that could be used in the other three blocks, as well as in other housing developments in Old Town. More importantly, a design that encourages people to interact will increase the livability of the complex, and will contribute to the betterment of Old Town as a whole.



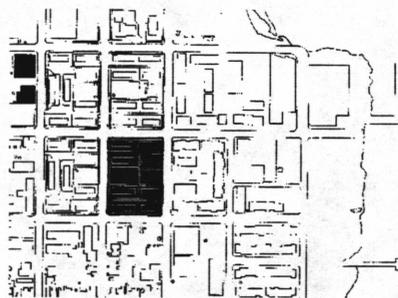
HOUSES IN THE NEIGHBORHOOD

Some of the town houses that surround the Hopkins-Tancil Courts follow the Old Town structure and language in terms of materials, detailing, and the way in which the edges of the houses meet the street. Variety is achieved through the use of different colored brick or painted clapboard siding. Height differences and the extending and retracting of facades give a particular rhythm to the street that refers to the rhythms created by the houses of Old Town. The size, shape, and ordering of the windows, as well as the detailing of cornices and lintels are also reminiscent of the historic row houses. The most direct copying of the historic house structure can be seen in the transition between the street and the house. The houses sit close to the street edge, separated only by a narrow brick sidewalk. The transition into the house is further articulated by steps leading to a stoop, and often a recessed entrance door completes the entrance process. While these are not historic houses, they follow the language of Old Town and so contribute to the making of a meaningful community by connecting their inhabitants to the rest of the town.



OTHER BUILDING IN THE VICINITY

When the Hopkins-Tancil development was built in 1947, it was on the most northern edge of Old Town. With the growth of Alexandria, many warehouses, businesses, and apartment buildings were built along a new and ever expanding edge. These buildings are also part of the neighborhood encompassing Hopkins-Tancil Courts. While many of them are brick, and so copy the primary building material of Old Town, their flat roofs and the inarticulate way in which they meet the street edge show that they do not follow the language and order that is unique to Old Town, and so do not participate in making a neighborhood with a strong sense of character.



THE STREETS SURROUNDING THE SITE

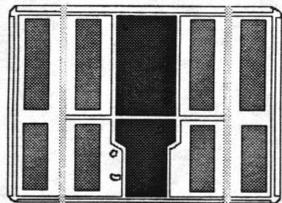
The streets directly next to the site do not follow the principals that are inherent in the rest of Old Town, and so do not contribute to the making of a meaningful community. The block of Hopkins-Tancil that was chosen for the mixed-income community has modern town houses to the East, a store to the South, and other Hopkins-Tancil housing to the West and North. The town houses to the East are large, brick, and generally fit into the pattern of Old Town, but they have no particular qualities of their own. The buildings to the South include a dilapidated store and an empty lot. The houses across the street to the West and South of the block are part of the Hopkins-Tancil Courts and do not offer much in the way of encouraging community living. It is obvious by looking at the existing neighborhood that a new design must offer a stronger sense of character that is reminiscent of Old Town for the inhabitants to feel connected to Old Town and to be in a more livable environment.



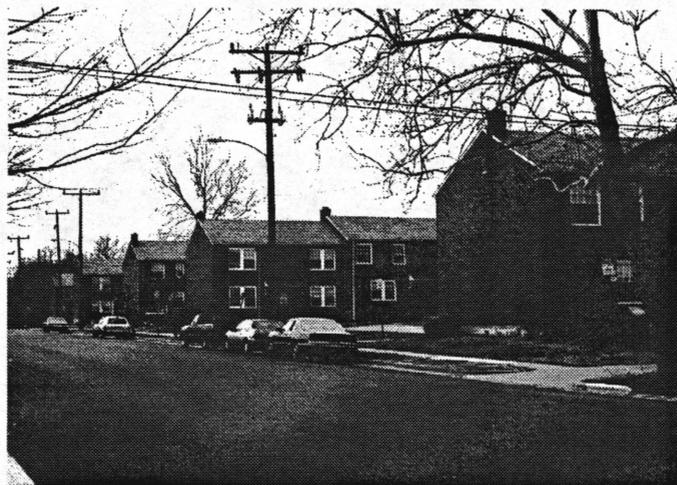
THE SITE AS UNRELATED TO ITS CONTEXT

As it presently stands, the Hopkins-Tancil Courts have little relation to the neighborhood or to the town that surrounds it, and the buildings have no distinguishing qualities that enhance the character of the town or the lives of the people living there. The buildings do not address the issues of street or hierarchy between public and private realms (as is a consideration of the historic houses in Old Town), or the idea of a shared community within the interior of the block. Also, the buildings do not possess any distinguishing or varied characteristics by which one could easily orient themselves within these four blocks. Thus this complex does not present a strong idea of place, and so does not encourage a positive communion between people. This lack of character is typical of public housing projects throughout the country, and part of making a new design for this block will be to establish a new image for project housing.

Except for the use of brick, the existing development does not relate to the structure of Old Town. Old Town is a street-centered town, and the existing Hopkins-Tancil buildings do not address this issue at all. The perpendicular orientation of many of the buildings to the street denies the importance the street has had in the making and structuring of Old Town.



- ALLEYS
- BUILDINGS
- COURTYARDS



LACK OF MEANINGFUL PUBLIC SPACE

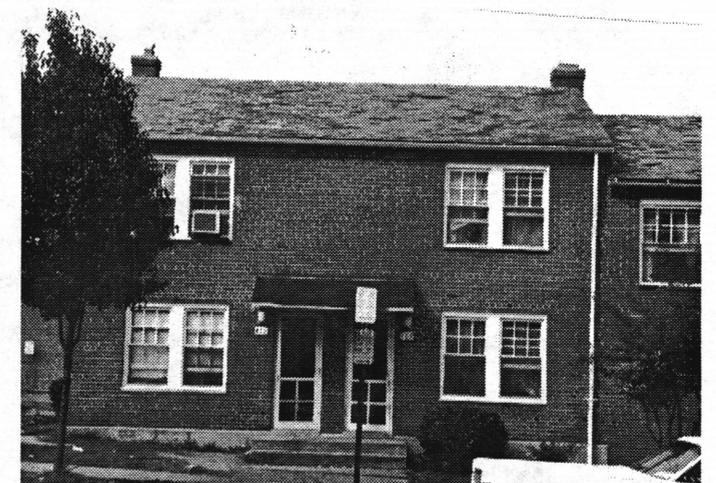
The most detrimental aspect of the Hopkins-Tancil Courts is the lack of good public spaces. Large wastelands of unkempt grass, asphalt, and an occasional playground span the breadth of the space between the buildings in all four blocks, causing the distance between the buildings to seem even greater than in actuality. This kind of alienating space in no way accommodates human interaction.

Public alleys run between the backs of the buildings and are more frequently used than the large central spaces because they are narrower, more intimate spaces. However, these same alleys occur twice in each block, and their long, straight, unvaried format makes it difficult to orient oneself within these four blocks. Consequently, the manner in which these blocks were arranged does nothing to encourage a positive living environment.



LACK OF DETAIL AND VARIETY

The difficulty to orient oneself within these four blocks is further induced by the lack of variation and detail since all of the Hopkins-Tancil buildings look alike and the blocks are arranged in a similar manner. All of the buildings are the same color and type of brick, and the roof-line height changes are minimal due to only slight variances in grade. This is also evidenced by the fact that there is no hierarchy between public and private spaces since the front and back entrances are almost indistinguishable from each other. The lack of decoration on the facades also does nothing to enhance the character of this development.



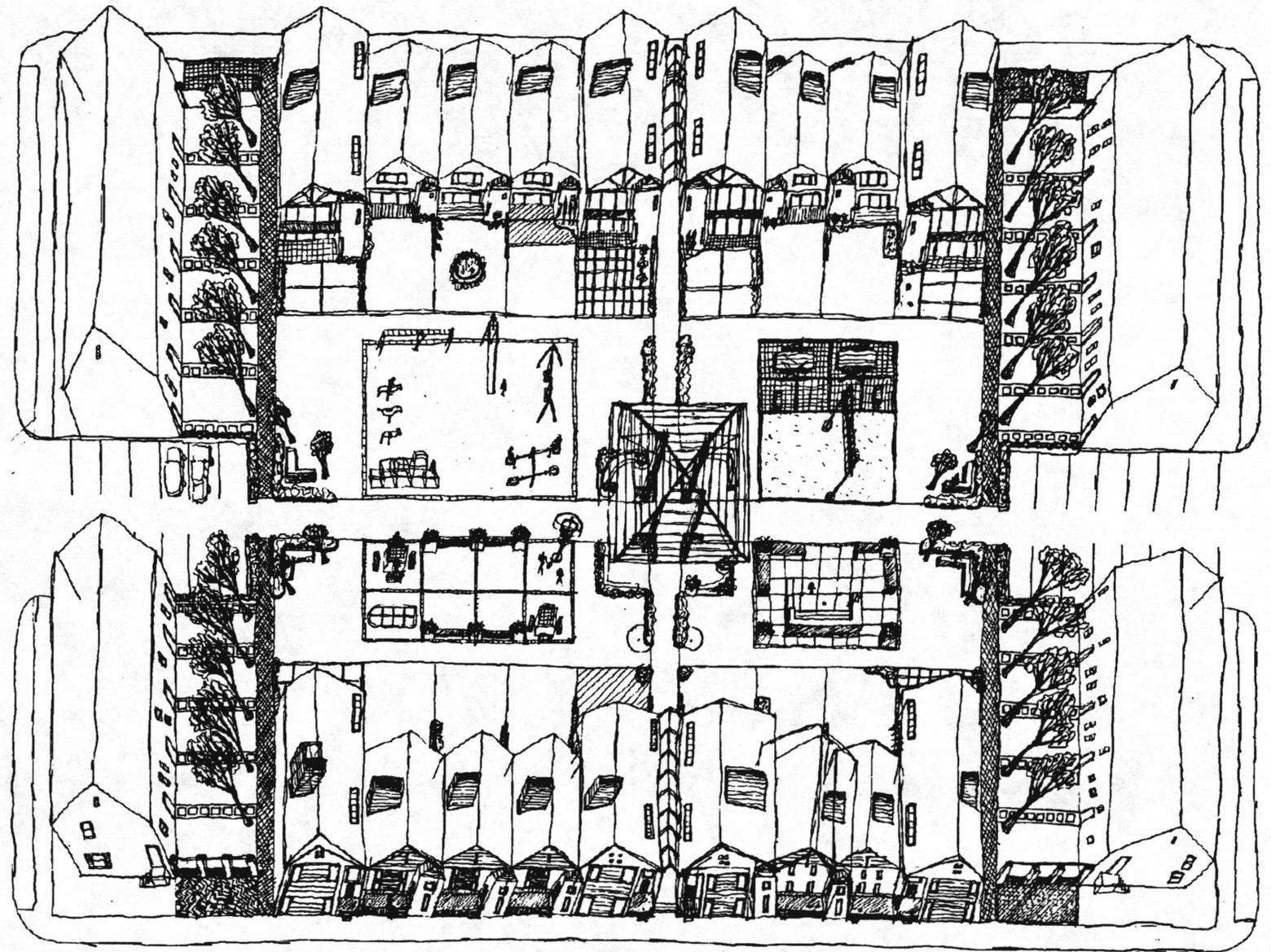
The Block: Experiencing the Public Space

"Our own dream, as architects, is of a built environment so richly configured that it can easily be claimed by the imagination, with recognizable places that can serve as bench marks and identification points."

Charles Moore

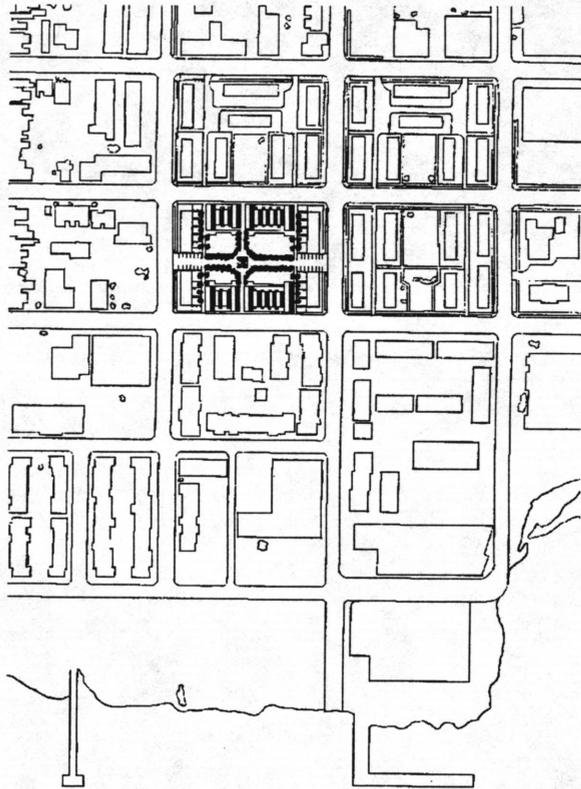
The placement of the houses around the perimeter of the block expresses the shared nature of the block, and the buildings surrounding the inner space form an architectural unit defined as a courtyard. The block is then divided into four unequal parts by one path that leads from the street through an alley between the houses and through the middle of the block, and by a wider path which also crosses the middle of the block and leads from one parking lot to the other. These paths begin to influence the structuring of the other spaces within the block. By breaking the interior of the block into four quadrants, a smaller scale is achieved in which to encourage human interaction, and these quadrants are further divided into places that support even more intimate communication.

While architecture cannot force people to communicate or act positively, it can encourage human activity. A meaningful, livable environment should offer a broad range of opportunities and possibilities for living, especially in a mixed income housing community where people of diverse nature will share their outdoor space. All of the spaces created in the block are small enough that one can read another's facial expressions, and this encourages a greater degree of communication. Areas of interaction or intimacy are articulated by the size of the space, the density of landscaping, and the availability of seating. It is up to each individual to determine at what level he or she wishes to participate in the community, since the main activity areas are visually accessible from all of the units and quadrants.

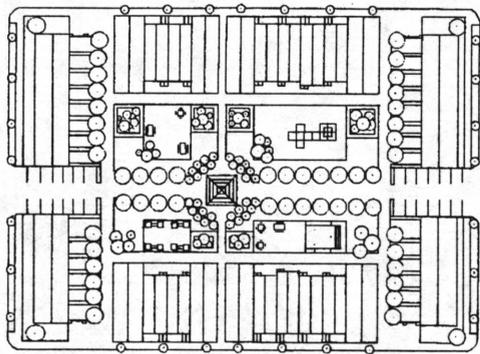


THE BLOCK

The idea of the perimeter block is realized through various scales. The structuring of these buildings, paths, and landscaping gives a particular order to this block.



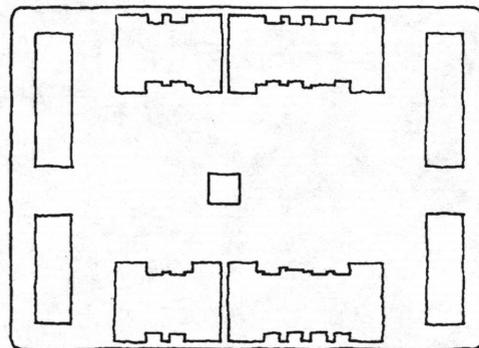
The Perimeter Block



BUILDING STRUCTURES

The buildings create a physical and visual boundary between the block interior and the town. The gaps and alleys between the buildings help to enhance this condition since they allow glimpses from one world to another, thus exaggerating their differences.

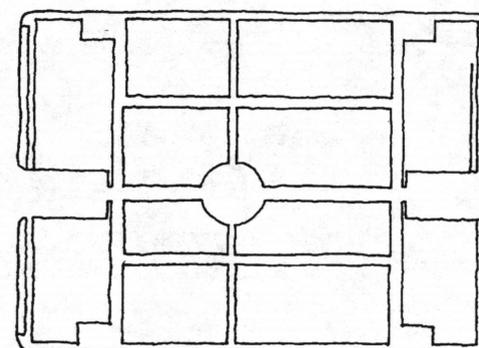
Buildings around the Perimeter of the Block



PATHS

Paths in the form of sidewalks surround the block, and another path forms a perimeter around the four inner quadrants. The two intersecting paths which divide the block into quadrants separates the block into four smaller scale "blocks," each with its own function and character. The concrete and brick pavement creates a sense of commonality between the quadrants, and helps to make larger areas more approachable.

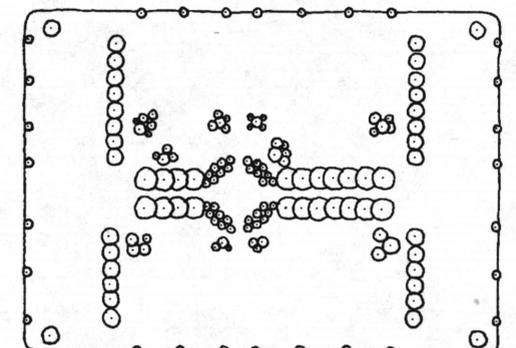
Paths Break Block into Smaller Areas



LANDSCAPING

The placement of trees and bushes lends additional emphasis to these paths. Trees planted on the sidewalk add another layer to the boundary established by the buildings. In the block interior, trees and bushes accentuate the intersecting paths and help to define the spaces as intimate or communal.

Landscape Defines Paths and Spaces



Walking along North Fairfax street, the historic vibrancy of this town is made evident by the rough brick and painted clapboard facades which are close to your left shoulder. Their raised stoops and recessed entrances, some of which are enlivened by brightly colored flowers in heavy ceramic pots, add a pleasing sense of variety to your stroll. Occasionally, your curiosity is peaked by a break in the facade wall which allows your gaze to penetrate into the secret depths of the block. While your view may be somewhat obstructed by a wooden gate barring your entry into this private world, the coveted glimpse of greenery, statuary, or benches is enough to set your imagination whirling as to what the rest of that garden may be like.

With your feet clacking rhythmically on the rough brick sidewalk, you notice that on the next block the historic buildings give way to a newer set of houses, and in the distance high rise office and apartment buildings claim the view. Your destination lies to the left where there exists a new housing community.

When first approaching this new complex, you realize the density that was achieved in the historic areas has been continued. The first building, which lies perpendicular to your present path and is a building from the pre-existing public housing complex, is stepped back from the concrete sidewalk. A large tree surrounded by thick grass marks the corner of this block, and smaller trees continue the line of the sidewalk. The new brick and clapboard row houses are built up to the edge of the sidewalk, and remind you of the historic neighborhoods that surround most of this area. The raised stoops and porches that allow one a brief pause before entering sustain this reminder.

In these new row houses the rhythm of the facades is articulated by the extending and recessing of the units. Every detail, including a thin line which follows the contour of the facade and separates the building from the ground, the variances in window size, and the differences in roof height and pitch, helps to add to the street density and provides a constant source of interest as you walk along the street. This rhythm is broken only by a path leading into the block between one of the pre-existing buildings and the new row houses, and an alley farther up the street.

You continue along the sidewalk until you come to the alley. Here you are reminded of the glimpse you caught of the private Old Town garden. While there is no gate, the narrowness of the alley and the change of pavement from plain concrete to brick and concrete pavers makes you hesitate. Nevertheless, your curiosity is too strong and you decide to enter.

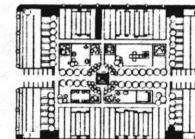
Alleys are often dark, dirty, trash-laden places, but this alley celebrates the entry into the block interior. It links two different areas - the public street and the more secluded block interior, and so becomes its own special place. The rhythm that was experienced while walking on the sidewalk is maintained in this alley, but on a different scale. The paving units are scaled to the approximate size of your stride, causing you to walk at a more measured pace. The recessing of an entrance door and the projecting of window ledges opens and closes the linear space of the alley, and further enhances the distinct rhythm of this path. Also, the fact that an entrance opens into the alley suggests that the life of this alley is created by more than just pedestrian traffic.

The slight grade change carries you up from hustle and noise of the street. Just as you emerge from the narrow confines of the alley, the path becomes level and the walls of the houses give way to an open area bounded by the backs of the houses, large planters on either side of the path, and a kiosk directly in front of you.

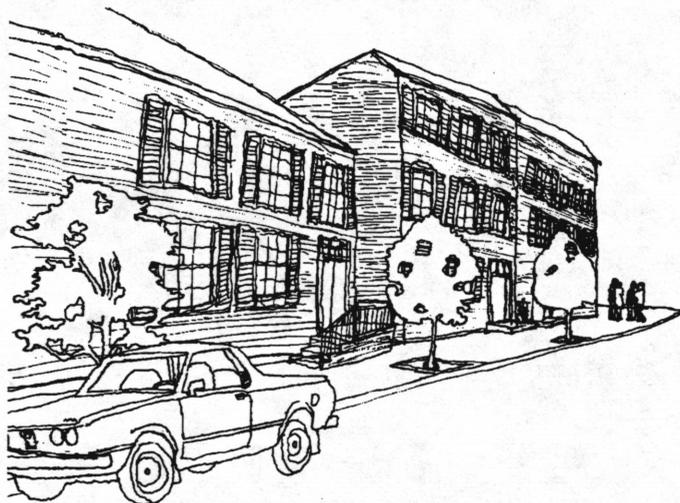
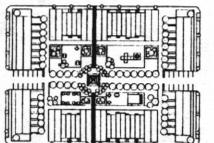
Typical Old Town Street



Proposed Housing Community Street



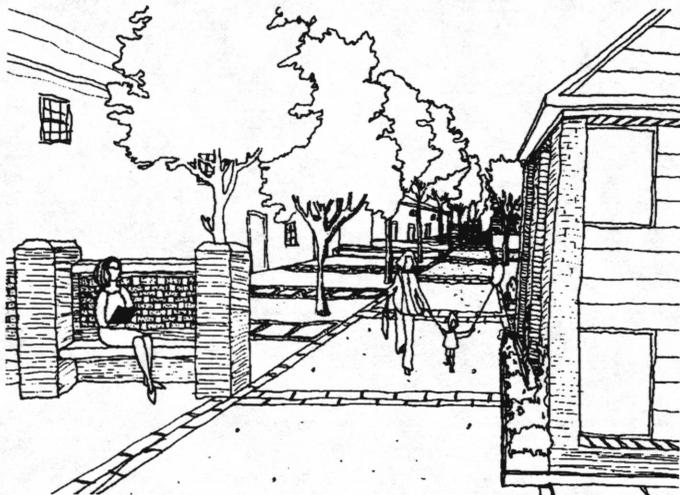
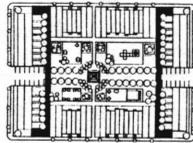
View into Alley



Instead of continuing toward the kiosk, you turn back down the alley and walk to the path between the new houses and the pre-existing ones in order to experience the entry into the block in another way. A six-foot brick wall helps to close the gap between the old and new row houses, and here the sidewalk is enlarged by an area of square concrete pavers each surrounded by a double line of brick, similar to the pavers in the alley. Three benches are built into the wall, and above them the bricks are staggered with small openings between them so that they provide a semi-transparent screen to the activities happening in the yards behind it.

Between the wall and the new row houses a straight, slightly inclining path leads you into the block. The concrete and brick pavement is continued along this inward path. While this path is much more open than the alley, its linearity is expressed by the newly planted row of trees which shade your left side. The grass yards of the public housing structure are open to the block interior, and are separated from each other by new walkways of square concrete pavers embedded in gravel which lead to their back doors.

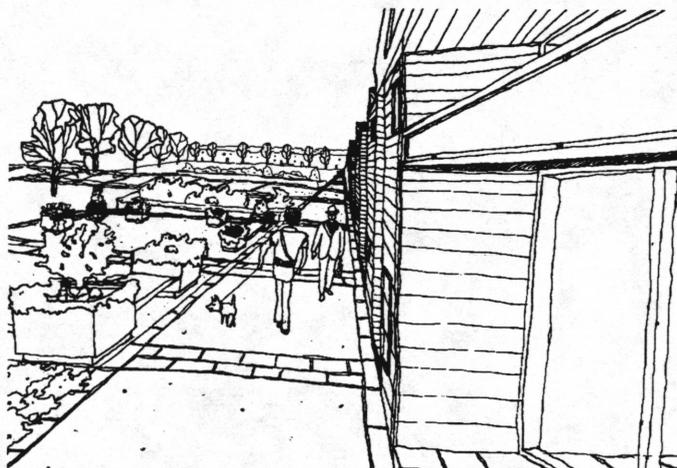
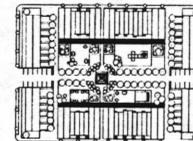
Side Path Looking into Block



Once you pass the side of the house, you can either continue walking straight, or you can walk along another path that runs along the backs of the houses. You choose this route, and notice that this path is slightly narrower, although the concrete and brick pavers are used here as on the other paths. You are quite close to the houses, and can occasionally see into them due to their large sliding-glass doors, but some of the interiors are concealed by curtains. A brief step up into a covered patio is all that is needed to keep you out of that private territory.

On the other side of the path each quadrant has its own special function and focal point - a playground, a fountain, and two types of seating areas, each with varied amounts of trees and bushes. The focus of this particular quadrant is an open seating plaza. Here you can choose to sit on benches in the sun, on the wide, low ledges of giant planters, or on a solitary bench under a small grove of trees.

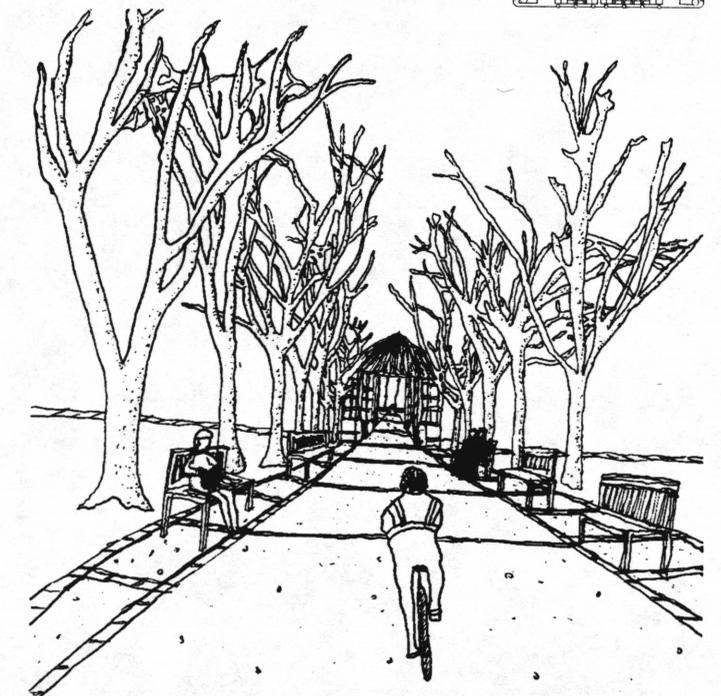
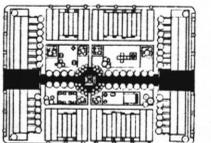
Path Along the Back Sides of the Houses



After sitting awhile in the plaza, you walk back to the path that runs along the side of the houses. Turning right at the grove of trees, you walk until a tree-lined path lies to your right, and a parking lot sits submerged between the two pre-existing buildings on your left. You are drawn towards the wide, shady path whose tawny-colored gravel crunches lightly under your feet. While this path is mainly for pedestrian use, it can easily accommodate maintenance and emergency vehicles. On either side you are enticed to rest along with others on wooden benches which line the path under the large trees. The benches sit on the familiar concrete and brick pavement which characterize this block.

Up ahead you spot the large kiosk which you viewed from the alley. You notice several people milling around this area, sitting on benches built into the kiosk's columns, and talking pleasantly to each other. This is the central meeting place for all the inhabitants and serves as the focal point for the block.

Tree-Lined Path with View of Kiosk



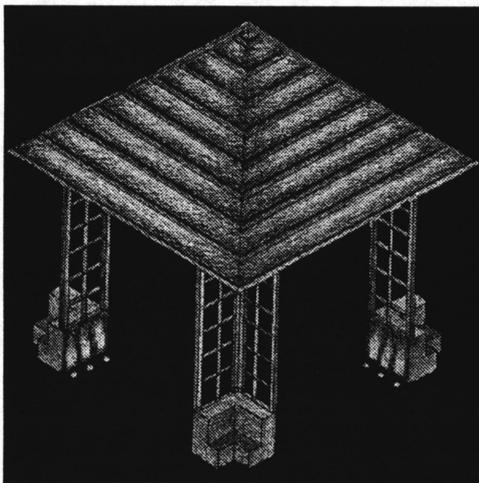
THE KIOSK

The kiosk is the architectural center for the block and the social hub for the community. While it is not in the geometric center, it marks the place where the tree-lined path and the alleyway intersect and is the focal point for the quadrants. This point is further articulated by a double row of trees which surround the kiosk.

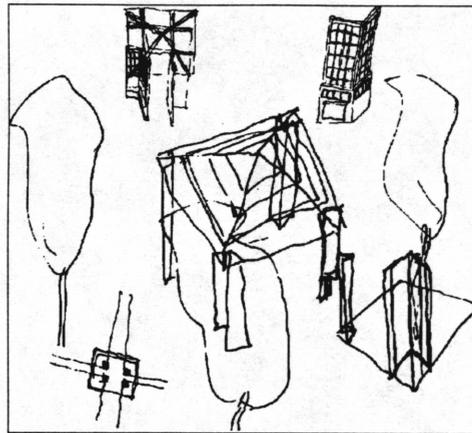
The kiosk is twenty feet square, and has a sixteen foot clearance for emergency, maintenance, and postal vehicles. The base of each of the four L-shaped columns is concrete. Benches are carved out of one side, and the inward side contains mail boxes, newspaper stands, and message boards within its thickness. Wooden posts with a wood screen between them rise out of this base to hold up the roof.

The roof is also wood beams with a canvas stretched over them. During the day this canvas is a cheerful yellow, and matches the canvases on the back balconies of the units. Lights shine up from the ground at the base of the columns at night, and the canvas becomes transparent, revealing the wooden roof beams underneath. Whether day or night, the kiosk is a constant nucleus to this community.

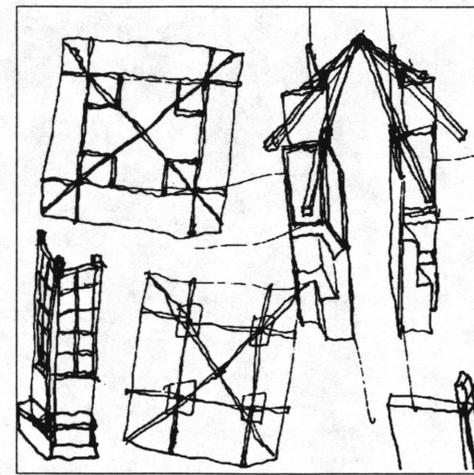
Kiosk at Night



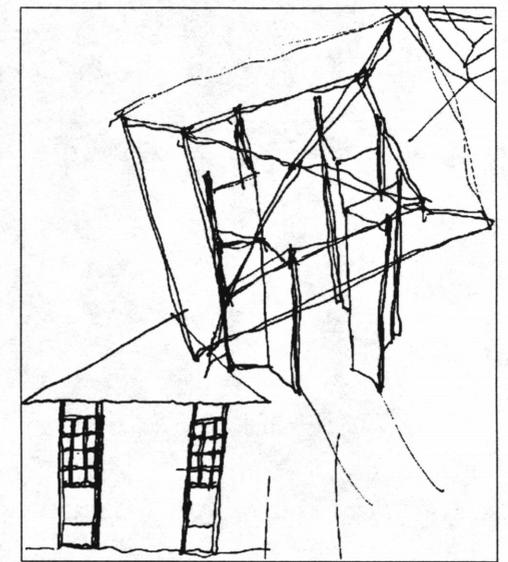
KIOSK SURROUNDED BY TREES



ROOF DIAGRAMS OF KIOSK



KIOSK ELEVATION



Section Showing Relationship of Kiosk to Other Elements in the Block



T h e H o u s e s : T h e R e a l m o f t h e I n d i v i d u a l

"Houses must be special places within places, separately the center of the world for their inhabitants, yet carefully related to the larger place in which they belong."

Charles Moore

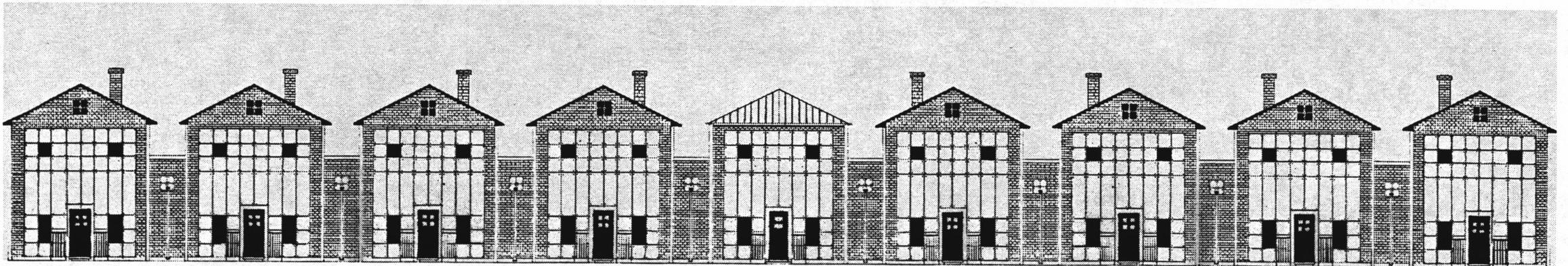
The proposed houses accommodate the diverse lifestyles of the people living in this community, and follow the same language and patterns that are inherent in Old Town in terms of materials, details, rhythm, and the way in which the houses meet the street.

Like the historic houses, these houses are constructed out of brick and wood clapboard, and are separated by load bearing walls. Details, such as the thin, raised, concrete edge which separates the sidewalk from the facade wall, and the cornice which separates the roof from the sky are also reminiscent of the Old Town houses.

These houses meet the street through a series of transitions as do the Old Town houses. They are built close to the street edge along a narrow sidewalk. Several steps and a porch, and a slightly recessed entrance door further articulate this transition into the house.

While the Old Town houses create a distinct rhythm to the street due to their varying heights, widths, details, and gaps, the proposed houses for this community also have a rhythm that is all their own. This rhythm is created by the recessing and extending of the facades, the three variations of the unit, and by the alleys and gaps which allow access into the block interior.

This reference to the language and structure of Old Town helps to order this community within the larger town that surrounds it. The three variations of the unit also accommodate the different social groups that inhabit this community by providing a variety of living spaces. The houses act as the private realm in which these people can retreat from the community when desired.



OLD TOWN HOUSING UNITS

A typical Old Town house interior consists of an entrance hall with two rooms opening off of it and a stair to one side. A kitchen lies at the end of the hallway. The stairs lead to the bedrooms and studies on the second and third floors.

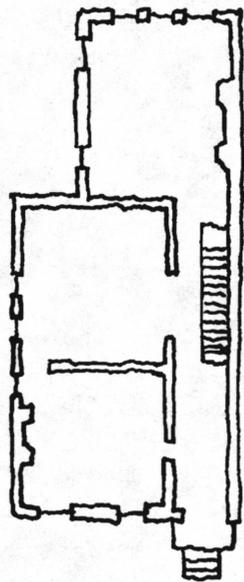
DIAGRAMATIC STRUCTURE

This structure was abstracted and used for the row houses of this community. There are three variations of houses within this community in accordance with the needs of people of mixed incomes and life-styles. Differences include the sizes of the individual units, slight variations in stair, fireplace, and entrances elements, and the occasional addition of an efficiency. However, the layout of the houses are all based on the same structure, which developed from the historic town houses.

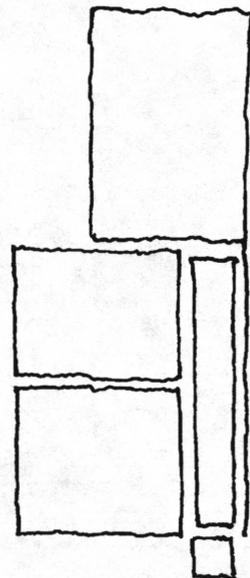
PROPOSED HOUSING UNITS

Like the Old Town houses, these interiors have an entrance hall and a stair facing the front door. The plan has been reduced to two rooms on the first floor, separated only by a thick wall which holds a double-sided fireplace. This plan is more open to light and views of the block interior than the historic houses. This dividing element is continued on the second floor as a system of closets and shelves, and separates two bedrooms, and is a common element in all the units. The hall and stair, along with the bathroom and kitchen behind them, form a long narrow element that is also repeated in all the units. This element becomes a functional spine for each of the units, and its relation with the rest of the house determines the rhythm of the front and back elevations.

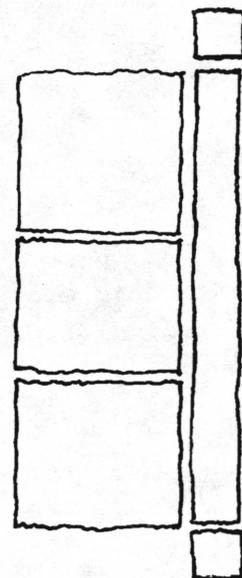
*Typical Old Town House
Ground Floor*



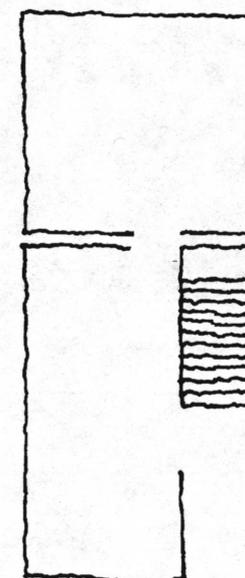
*Abstraction
Three Rooms and
an Entrance Hall*



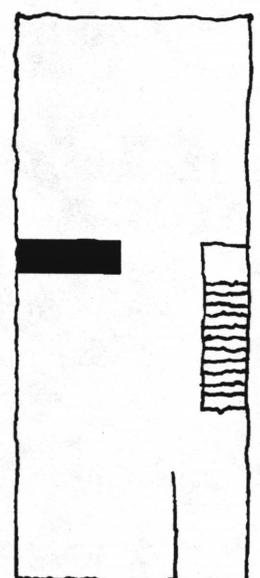
*Rooms Become
Independent Entities*



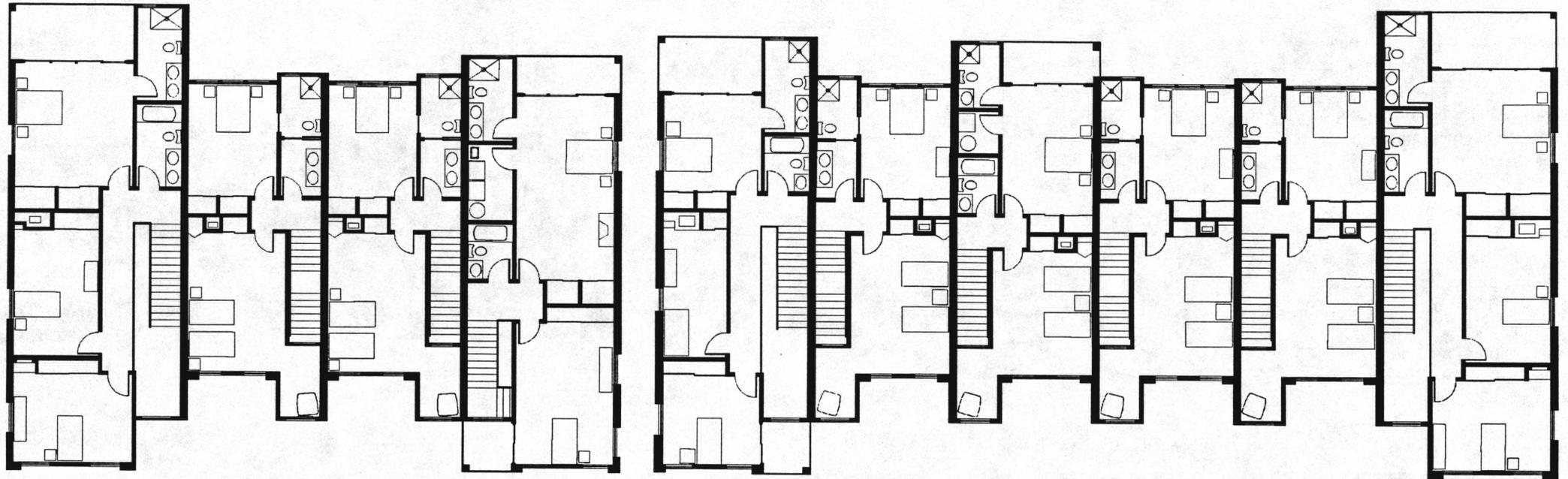
*Areas Are Reduced to
Two Rooms and
an Entrance Hall*



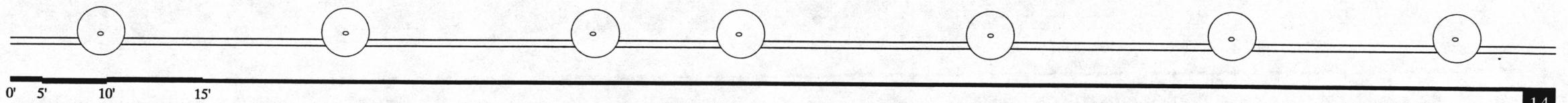
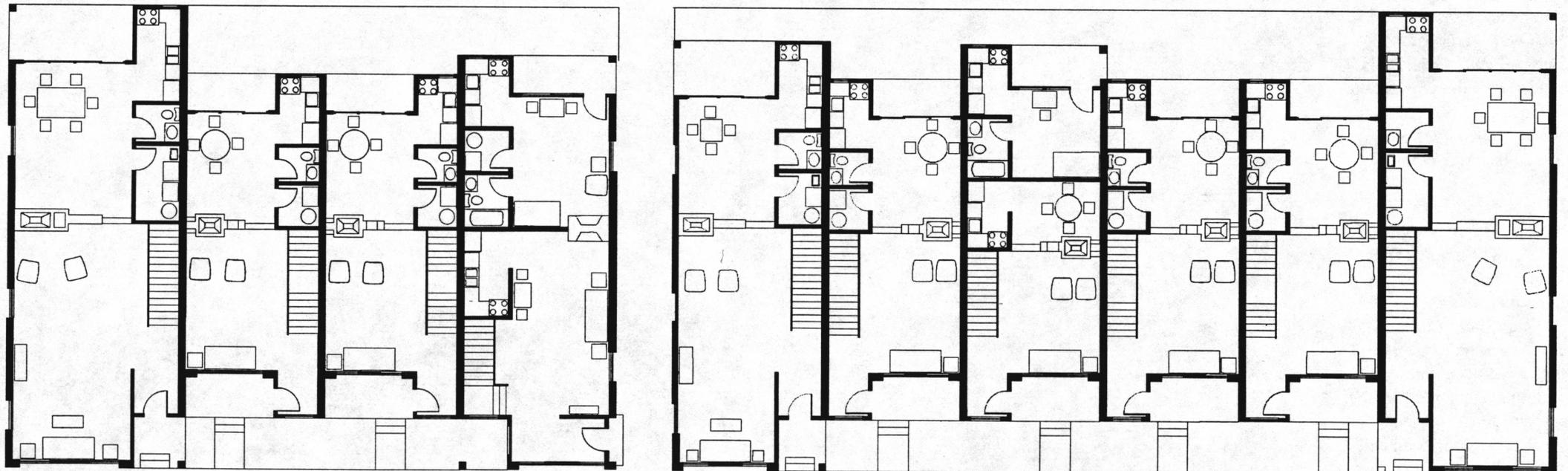
*Basic Layout of
Proposed Units*



SECOND FLOOR



FIRST FLOOR



The proposed houses refer to the language and structure of Old Town through materials, detailing, rhythm, and the way in which the houses meet the street, and unites this community to the rest of Old Town.

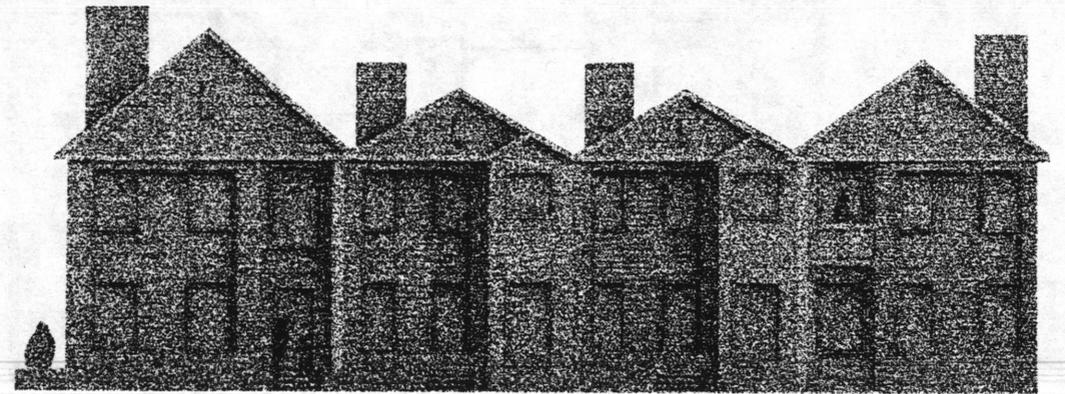
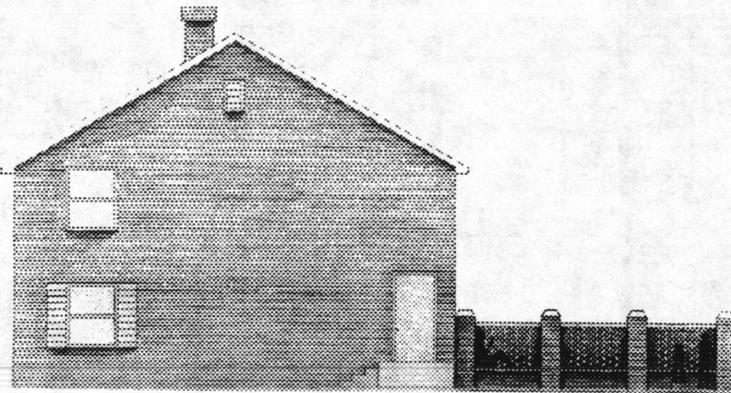
The houses are built of brick and clapboard siding. The brick acts primarily as the structural material. The clapboard supports the windows and sits within the brick frame. A concrete edge separates the house from the sidewalk.

Three variations of the unit are repeated in a particular rhythm along the street. This variety is indicative of the diverse social groups living in this community. The difference in roof heights accentuate the variety between the units and enhance this rhythm. The recessing and extending of the facades also enhances this rhythm and variation among the units by creating patterns of light and shadow along the street edge. Gaps between the pre-existing housing and the new units, and an alley between the units also adds to this rhythm. Like the alleys of Old Town, these gaps reveal glimpses of the block interior, thus enlarging the spacial experience of the street, as well as providing access to the courtyards behind the houses.

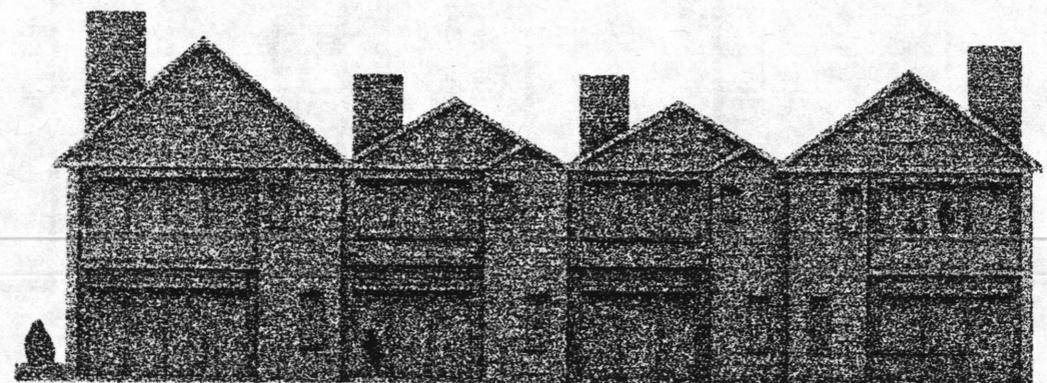
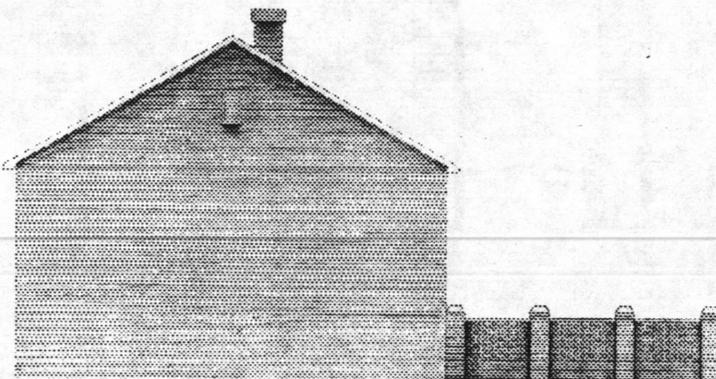
Transition into the house is articulated by steps leading to a stoop and a slightly recessed entrance door, which mimics the transition from street to house in the rest of Old Town.

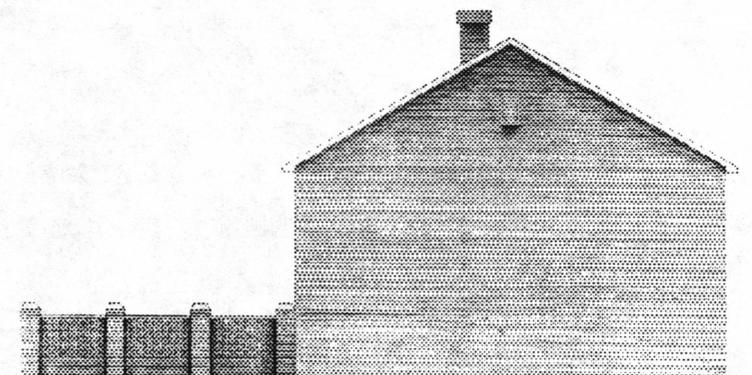
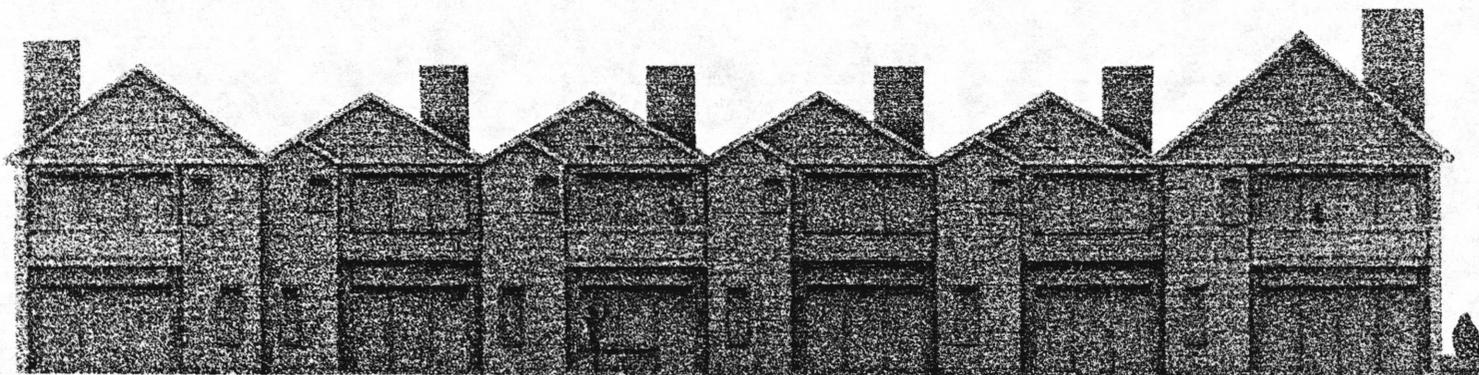
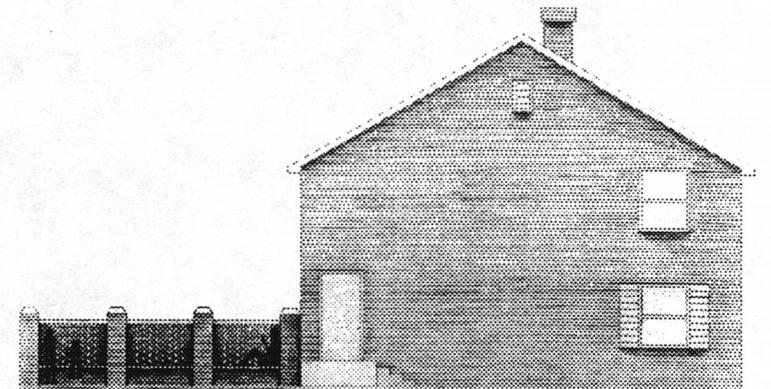
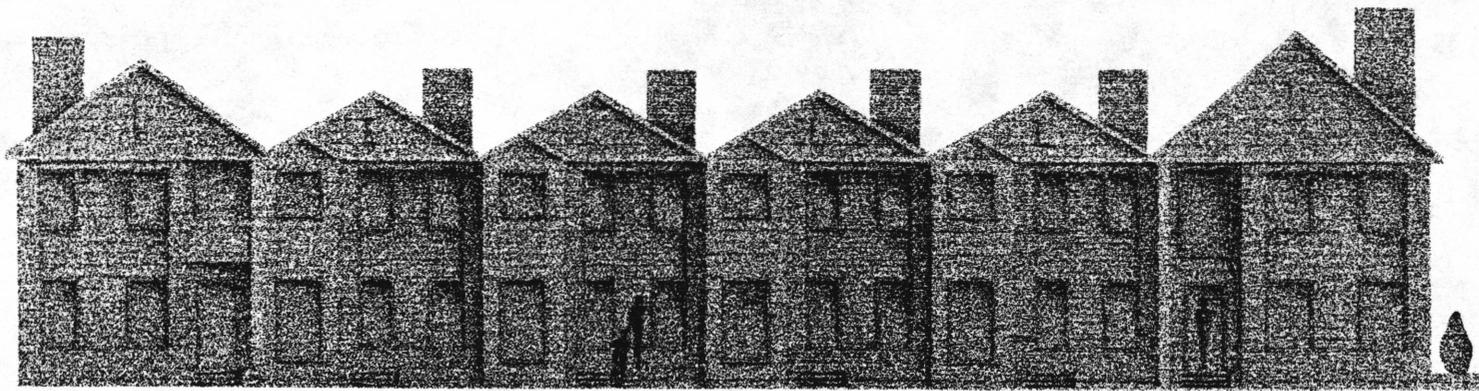
The back facades continue the materials and rhythm established on the street side. The units are open to the block interior due to their sliding glass doors and large windows. This openness allows the block interior to become its own little world. This is a distinct community that shares common elements with the surrounding town, and so presents the inhabitants with a place they can call their own, while connecting them with the larger order in which they live.

FRONT ELEVATION



BACK ELEVATION



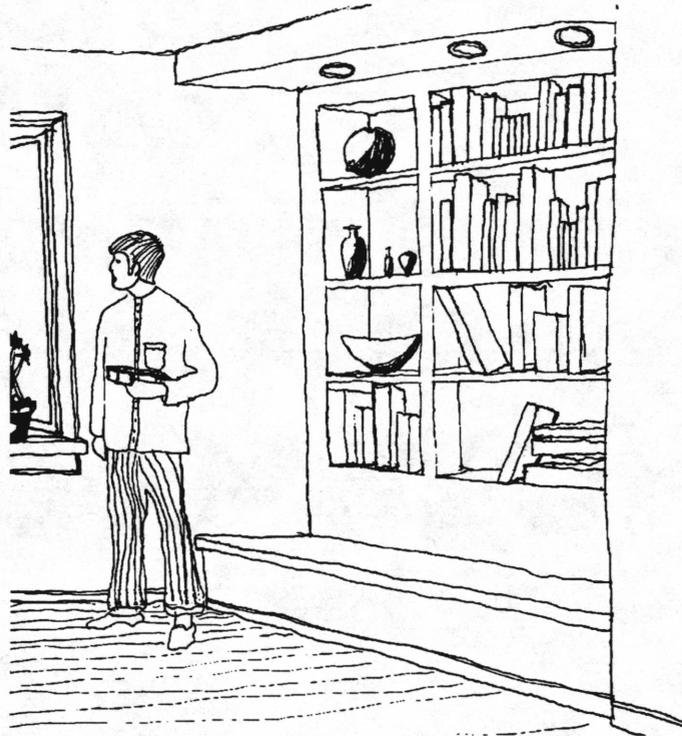


PRIVATE SPACES

Privacy is a necessary component in a community, and the individual units act as the private realm. People need to be able to reduce and control outside stimuli at a level that is individually preferred, which helps to minimize the stress and conflict that is also part of community life. The private realm of the house thus becomes an important accompaniment to the intimate and communal spaces established in the interior of the block. Different levels of privacy are made available in each of the units, from the scale of a room, to that of a recessed reading nook only large enough for one person to enjoy.

The three varieties of units offer different kinds of private places. The large double-sided fireplace in each of the units provides a place for family gatherings, although the specific nature of each fireplace, its material and size, changes from house to house. One of the bedrooms in the largest units provides a reading nook, so that within the room there is a smaller "room" for one's private thoughts and dreams. The smallest units have a larger nook that is tucked off to the side in one of the bedrooms, in the event that this room is shared and escape from a rambunctious sibling is needed. This bedroom also has a built-in curtain that can be pulled across to make two smaller rooms for additional privacy. The third unit offers a balcony which faces the street and is only large enough for two people to stand comfortably.

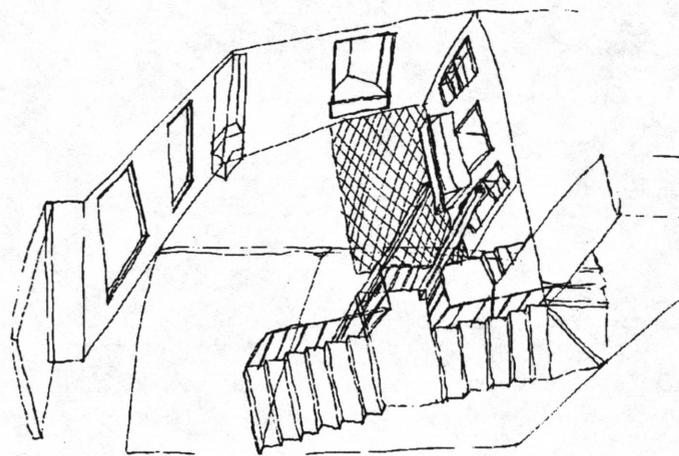
*Reading Nook
A One Person Retreat*



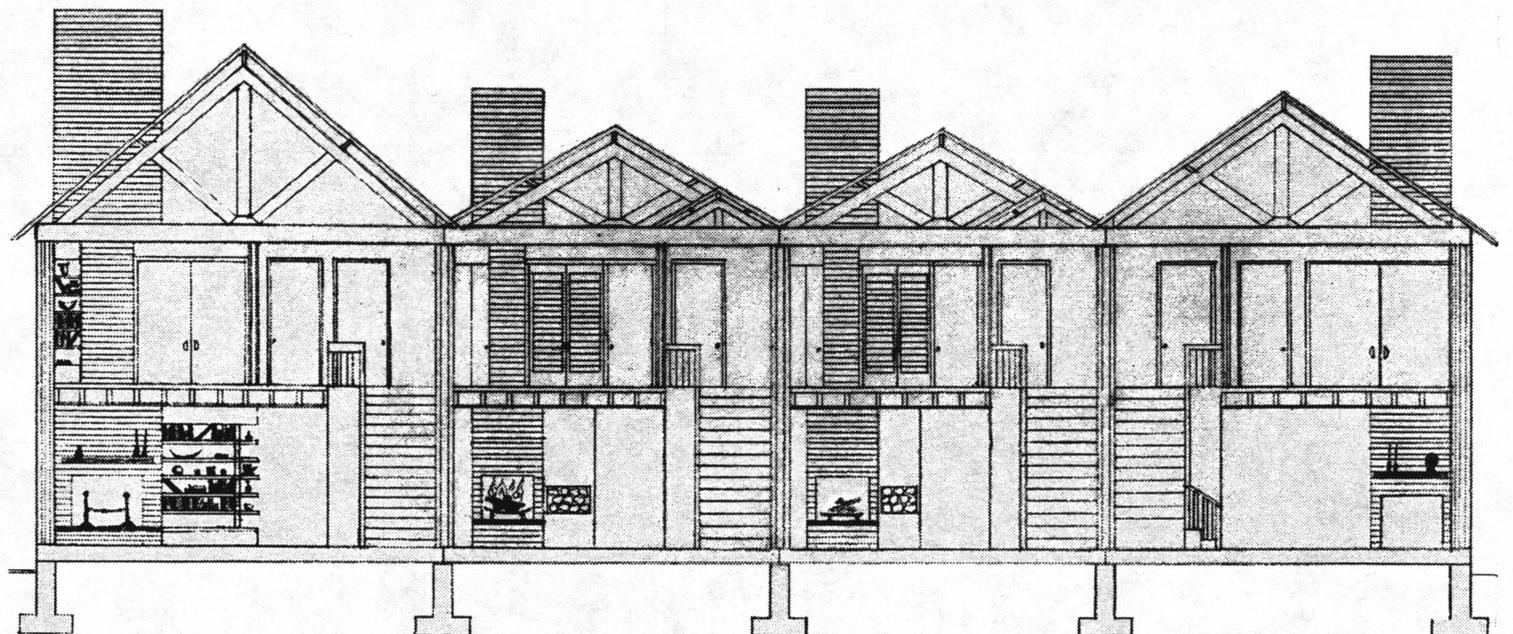
*Balcony
A Place to Privately View the Outside World*



*Living Area
A Place for Family Gatherings*



*Section
Three Variations between the Units*

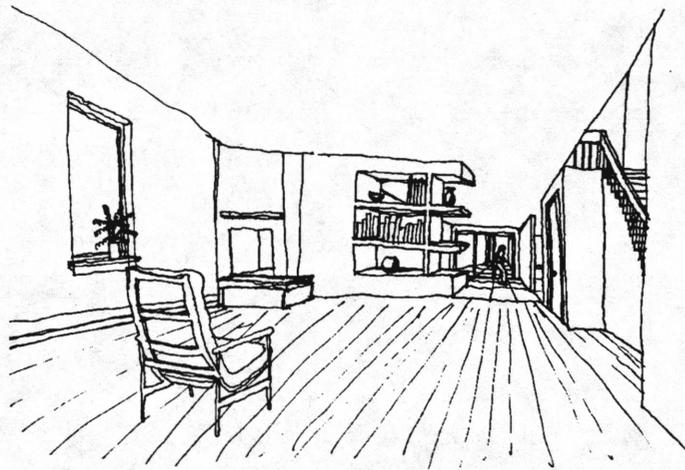


VIEW THROUGH LIVING ROOM TO OUTSIDE PATIO

In order to make the units a part of the community, a dialogue between inside and outside spaces must be established. This dialogue is primarily exhibited by views through certain parts of the house into the street or the block beyond.

When standing in the living area, views of the block interior can be seen through the double-sided fireplace, and through the pathway into the dining area and out the sliding glass doors that make up almost the entire back wall of the house. This view into the block is further exaggerated by the floor of the dining area which extends onto the outside patio, thus transporting one's vision past the confines of the house.

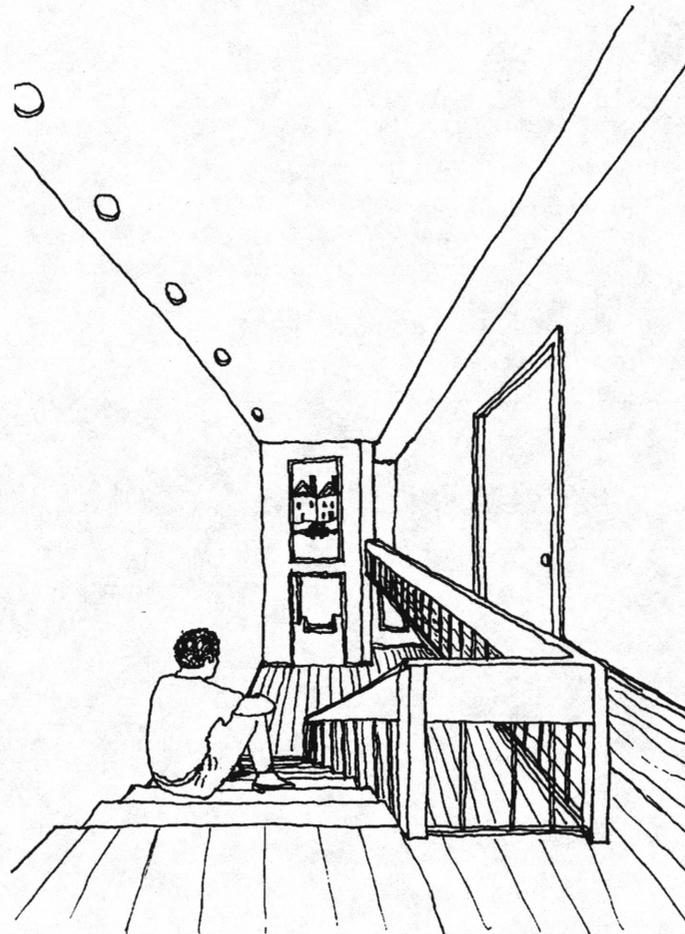
Living Room with Patio Beyond



VIEW OF STREET FROM TOP OF STAIRS

A window placed above the entrance door delivers a view of the street when looking down from the top of the stairs. By framing this glimpse of the outside world the private space of the house connects people with the larger order in which they live.

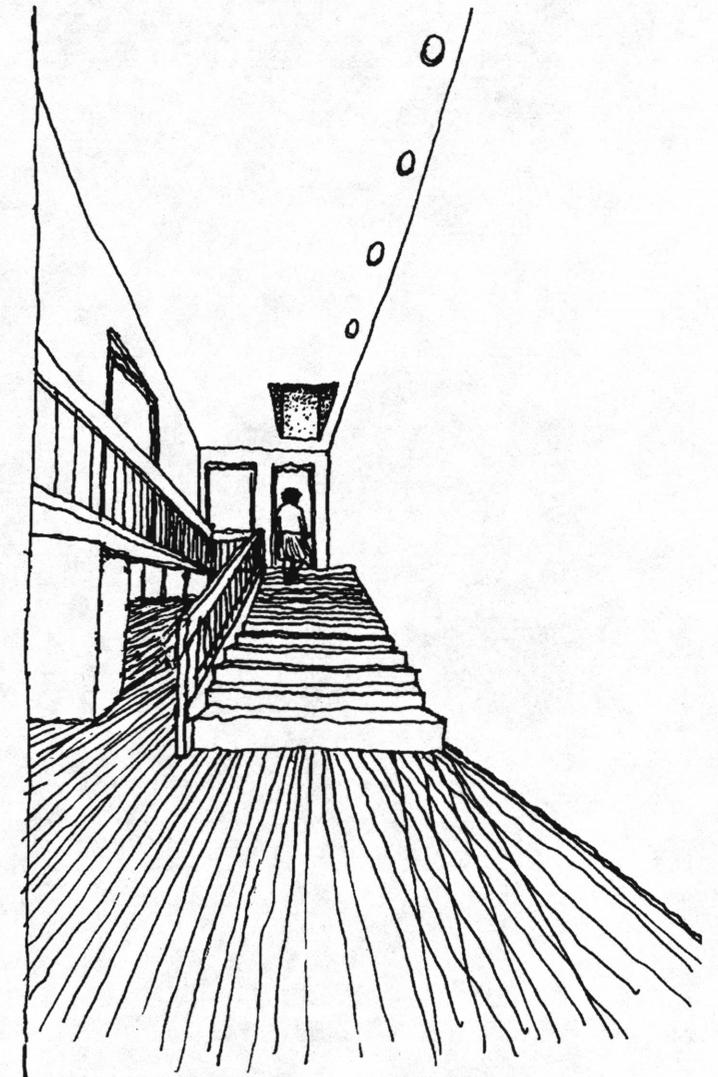
Top of Stair with View of Street through Window and View of Porch through Open Door



VIEW LOOKING UP THE STAIRS FROM ENTRANCE

Connections between the public world of the street and the private realm of the house are also articulated by the transition between the street and the house. The outside steps and the porch bridge the gap between the public and private spheres. Once inside the entrance process is enhanced by a flight of steps which draw one's view upwards to the cathedral ceiling and the skylight at the top of the stairs. The two larger units have an open hallway which overlooks this entrance space from the second floor, but the most moderate units only possess the small skylight.

View into House from Entrance

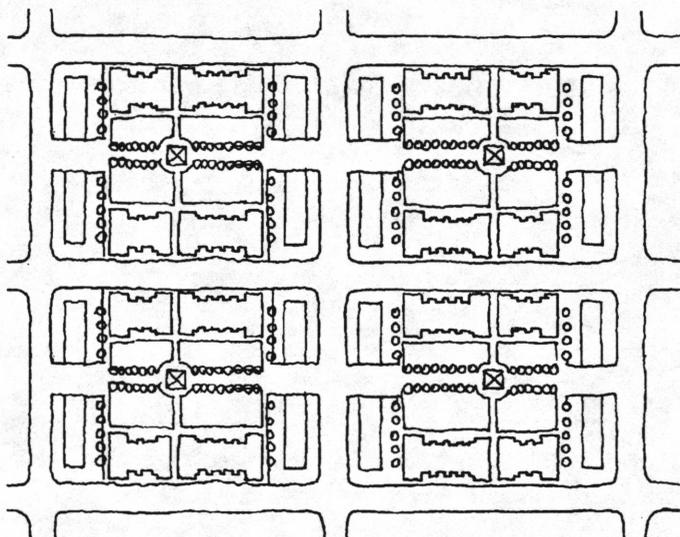
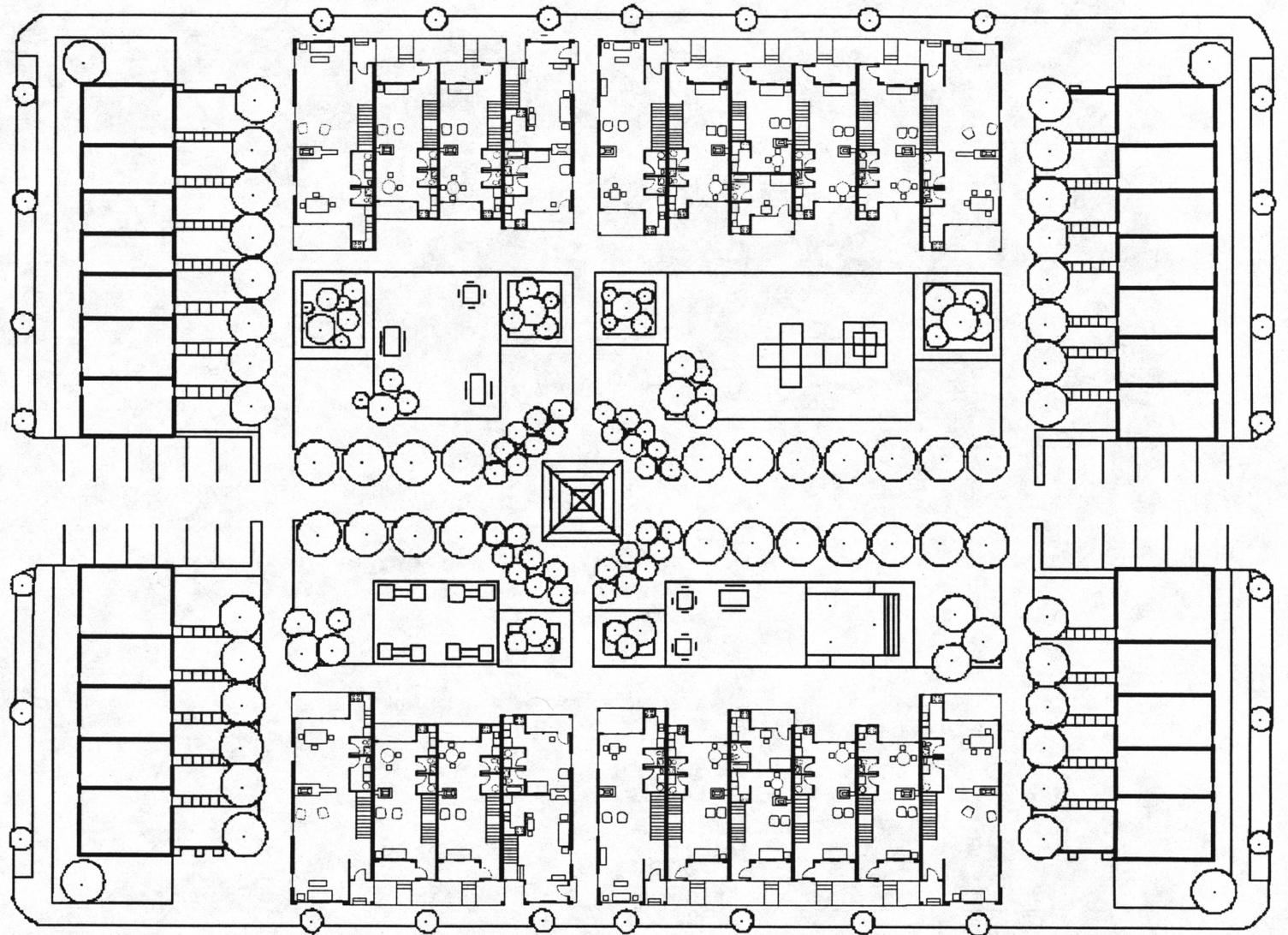


Extending the Community into the Other Blocks

CONTINUING IDEAS OF THE BLOCK

The idea of making one block into a mixed income community is a prototype for an alternate way to make project housing. The principals established in this thesis could be used in the other blocks of Hopkins-Tancil courts, or in other housing projects throughout the city. Each block would have its own special character and structure, but these new communities would each strive to encourage positive human interaction through the making of meaningful urban places.

If this community was extended to the other blocks which are also part of the existing Hopkins-Tancil Courts, the rhythm established in the first block could be maintained. The parking lots on either side of the block, in addition to providing much needed parking, allow views into the next block. The alleys between units also establish minor axis which visually connect the other blocks. A continuation of this project into the other blocks would emphasize these axis, and the idea of community would be established on a larger scale, thus becoming part of the larger order of Old Town.



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