

The Archetype and the Ideal

by Carter B. Green

Thesis submitted to the Faculty of
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State University in partial fulfillment
for the requirements for the degree
of:

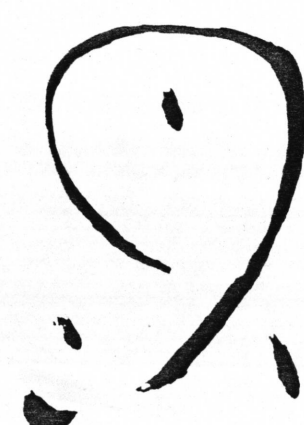
Masters of Architecture

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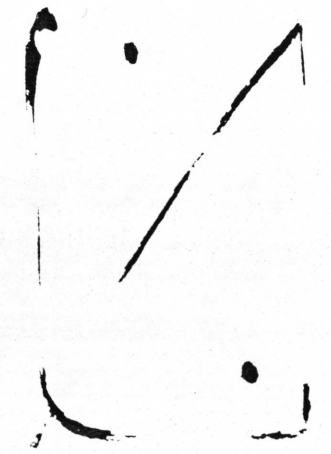
Jaan Holt, Chairman

William Brown

Olivio Ferrari



To my teachers and my professors for their support and guidance, but mostly to _____, who through her encouragement was a partner in this effort.



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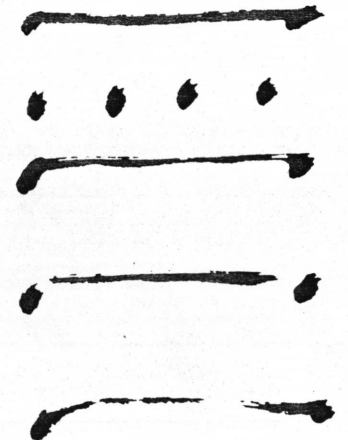


*Places remembered and places anticipated
dovetail into the temporal span of the
present. -- Aldo van Eyck.*

The Archetype and the Ideal

The location for the project is in the downtown area of Staunton, Virginia, a small town in the Shenandoah Valley. The site is a parking lot with a wall of nineteenth century warehouse buildings on one side that suggest the completion of a public square.

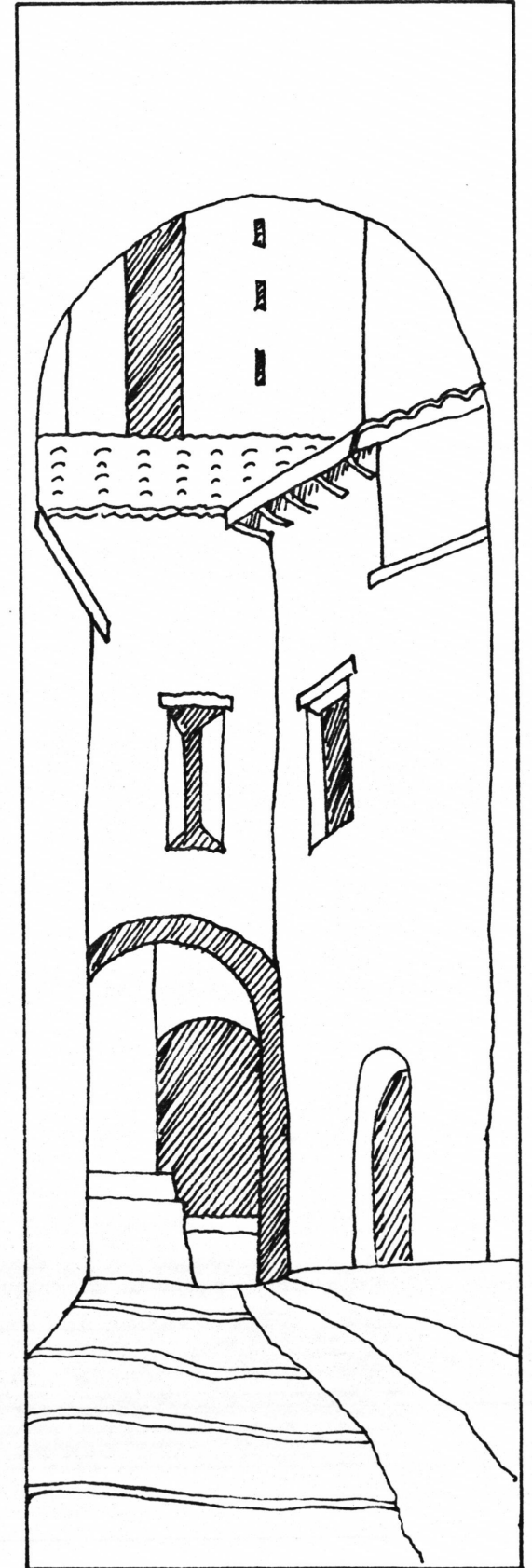
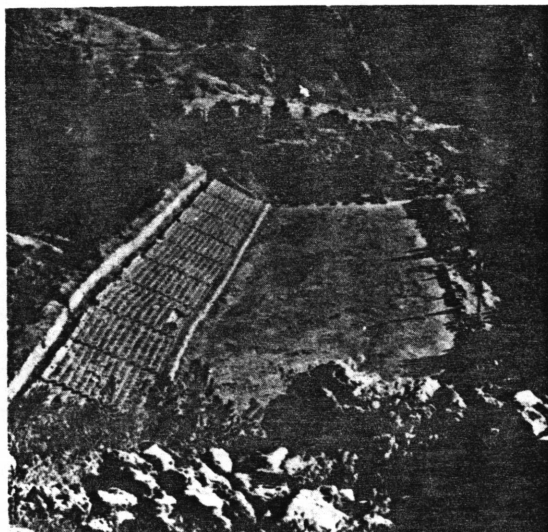
The means by which I tried to find a resolution to this architectural suggestion involve a historical search for connection as well as a vision for the future. The circumstantial demands of place and occasion allow the project to materialize between the archetype and the ideal



An archetype is a timeless theme on which new interpretations are made. The archetype in this project is regarded as a historical building pattern or typology that responds to lasting human interactions and needs rather than as a visual reference to historical buildings. The aim of connecting the project to the collective past is to make it easily inhabitable and satisfying on many levels.

Archetypes are not images with content-- rather forms without content representing the possibility of a certain type of perception. -- Carl Jung

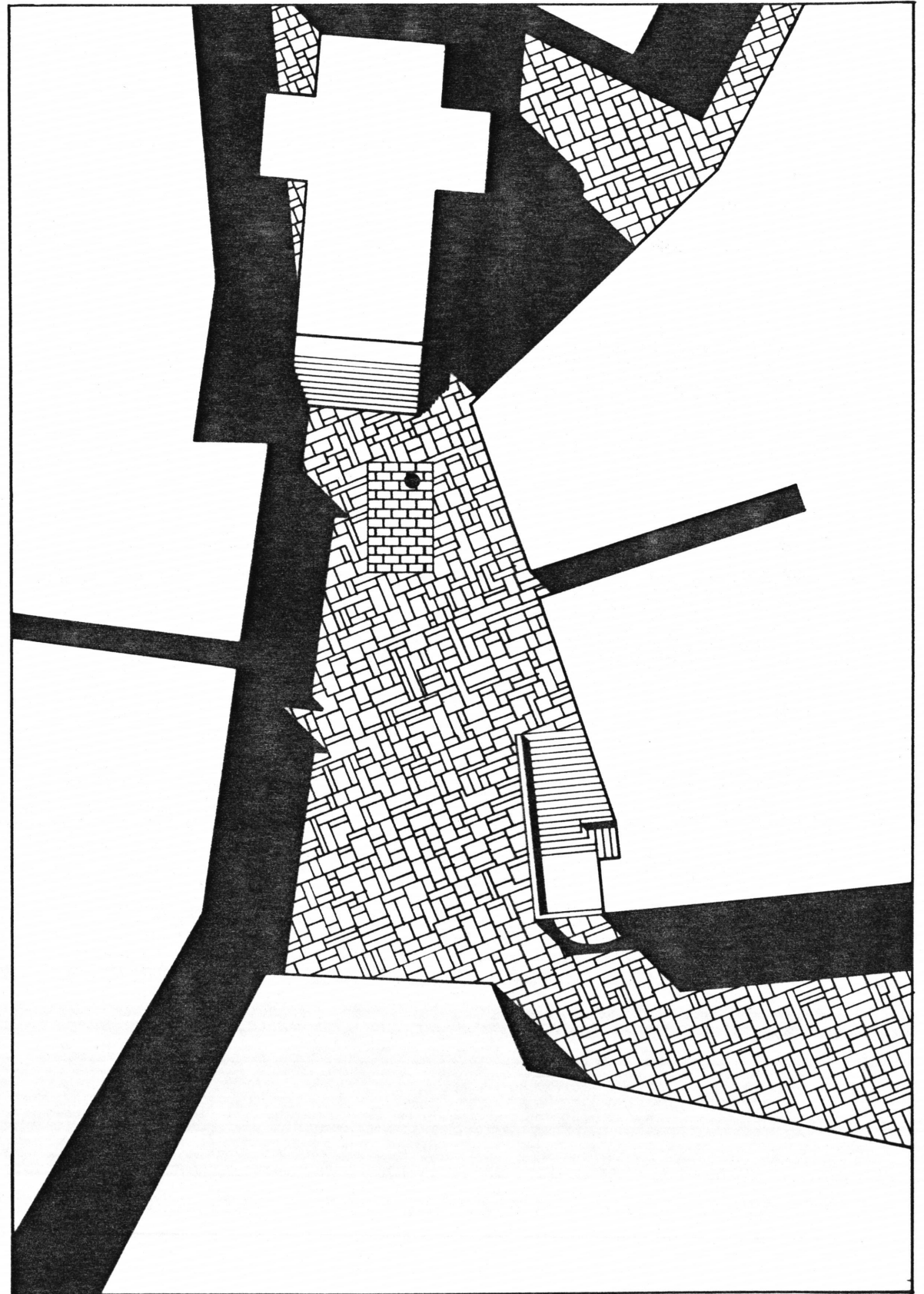
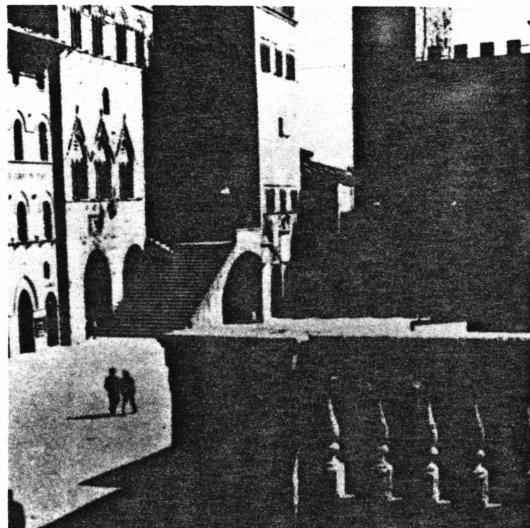
The moment of typology establishes a necessary connection with the past and with society and is in some way a natural given. -- Christian Norberg-Schulz



The piazza in the town of Todi, Italy, is a place of stairs. The stairs are places to pause and be a part of the life of the city. They are transitions on the edges of the piazza, thresholds between the city and the institutions of church and state.

The archetype that I began with was simple: a large stair on a public square that is a place to meet and a threshold between the realms of an institution and the public.

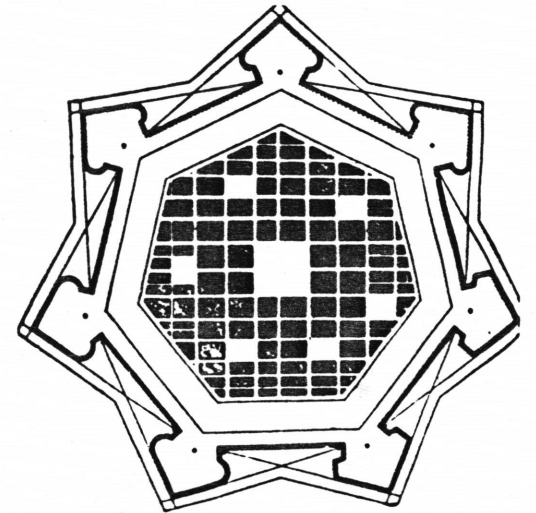
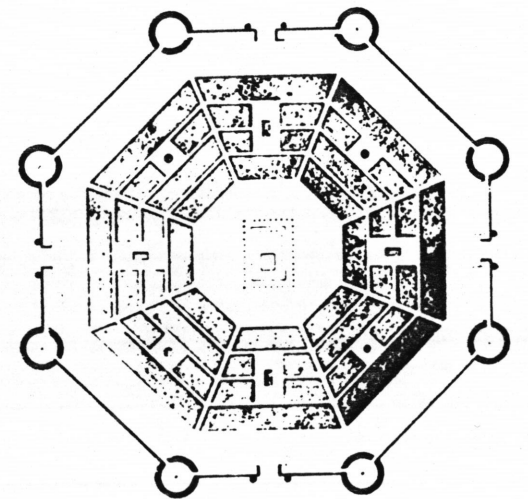
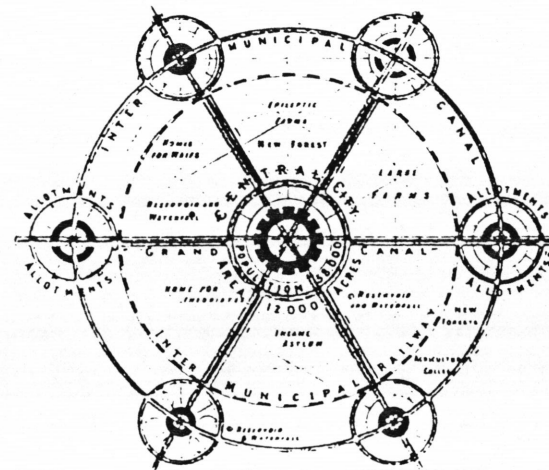
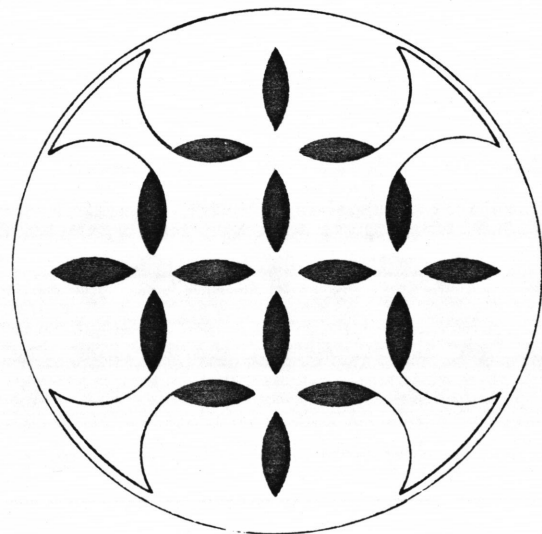
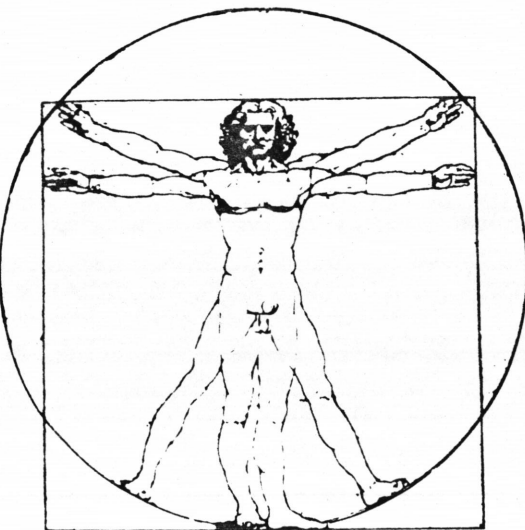
Primal images ... are but so many invitations to start imagining again. They give us back areas of being, houses in which the human being's certainty of being is concentrated, and we have the impression that by living ... in images that are as stabilizing as these are, we could start a new life, a life that would be our own that would belong to us in our very depths. -- Gaston Bachelard



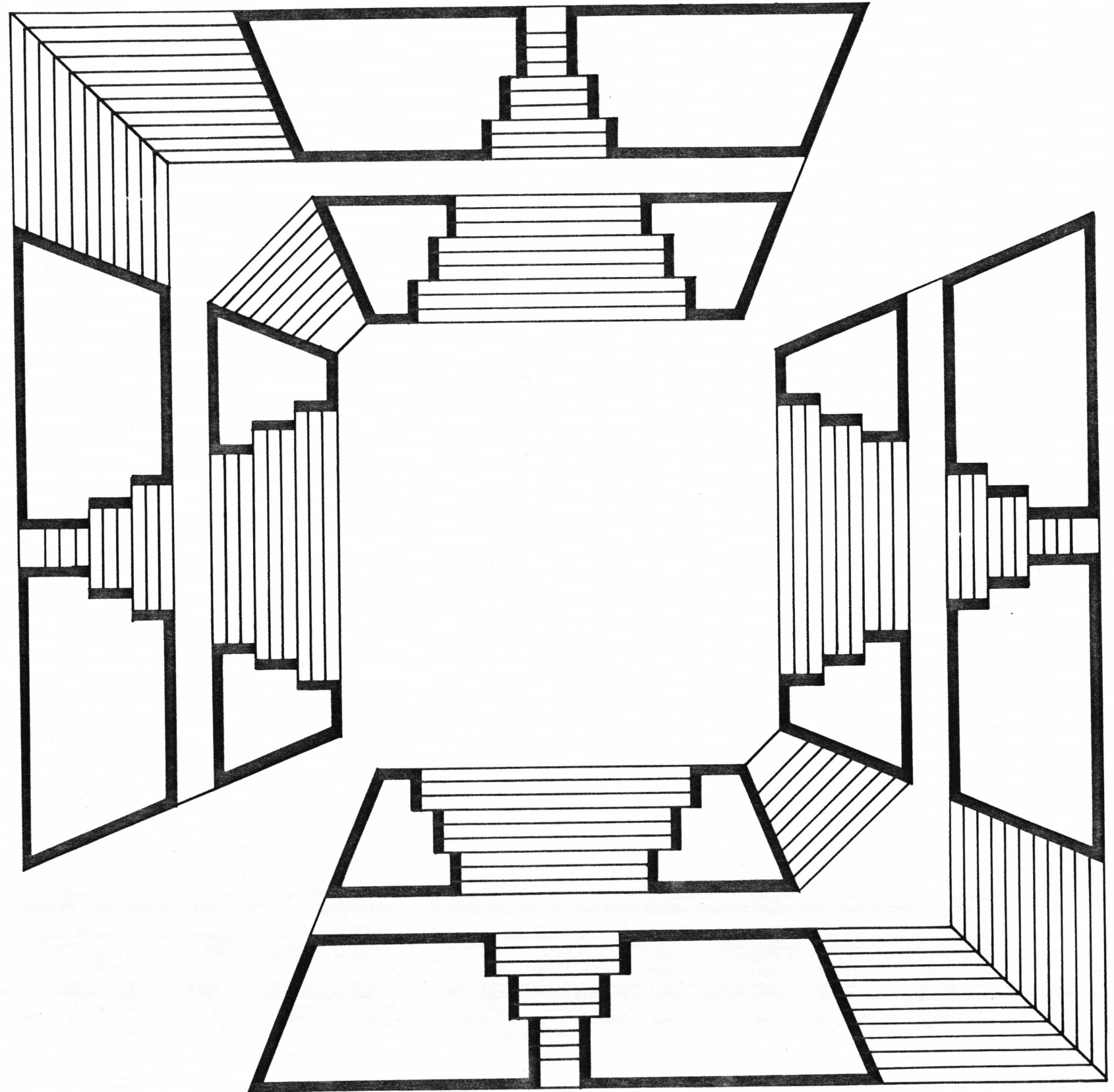
The ideal serves as an impetus to bring into reality a new expression of the archetype. Just as the archetype has no ultimate expression, the ideal is by its nature abstract and unrealizable. What it brings to the project is the clarity of a moment of perfection along with the energy inherent in the notion of progress.

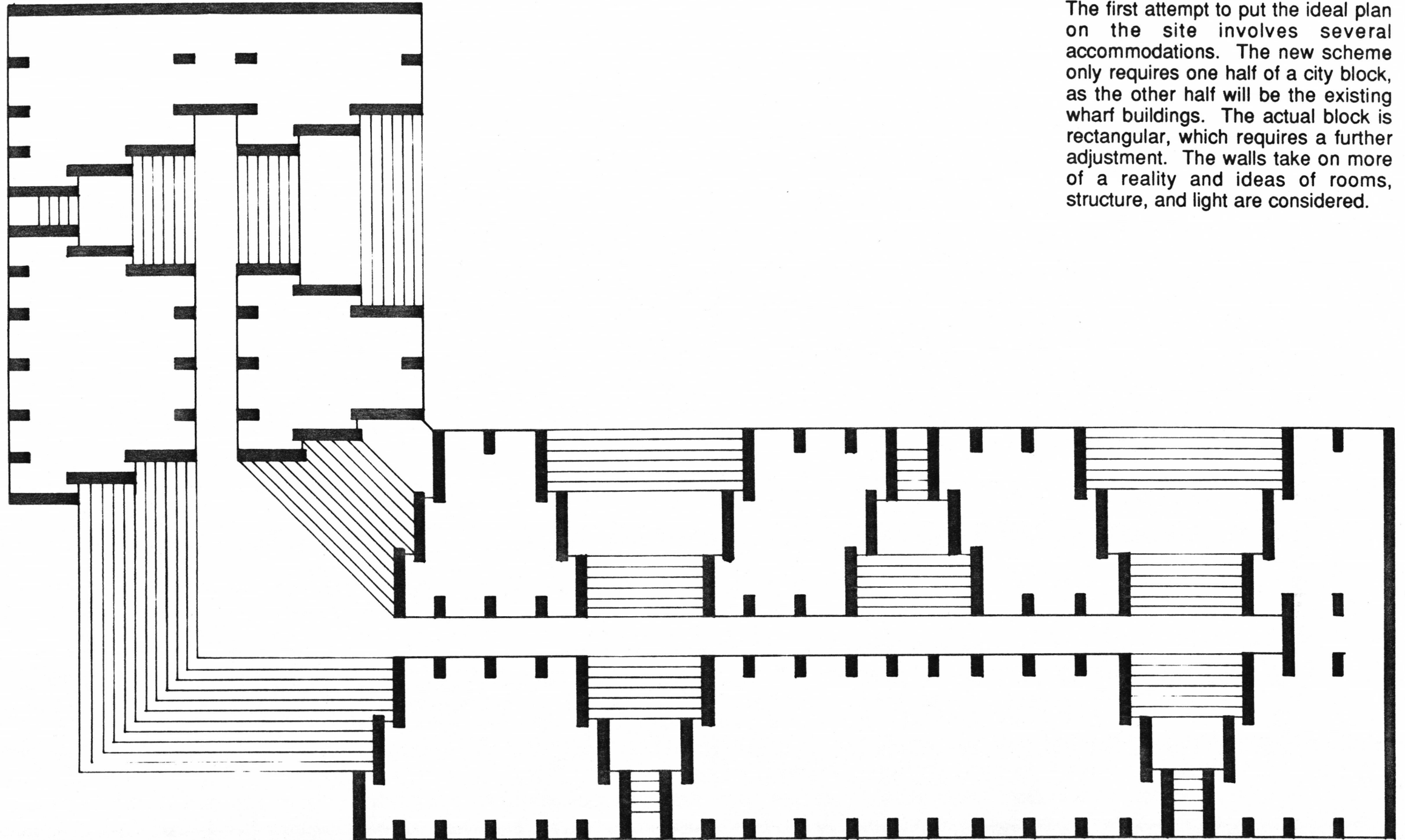
When the ideal is brought into the world of concrete phenomena, the orders of site, institution, and construction are overlaid on this perfect scheme. The result still contains the seed of the ideal, but evolves into a more concrete expression with a particular identity.

By now safe inner discipline had come to me, the interior discipline of a great ideal. -- Frank Lloyd Wright



In the ideal plan, the building occupies a city block. The courtyard at the center of the block is surrounded by four tapering staircases. The stairs are in a solid void relationship with the building such that the boundary of the courtyard extends into the building. Two of the exterior corners of the block are turned with stairs. The exterior stairs connect to the interior courtyard through a mid-level path.





The first attempt to put the ideal plan on the site involves several accommodations. The new scheme only requires one half of a city block, as the other half will be the existing wharf buildings. The actual block is rectangular, which requires a further adjustment. The walls take on more of a reality and ideas of rooms, structure, and light are considered.

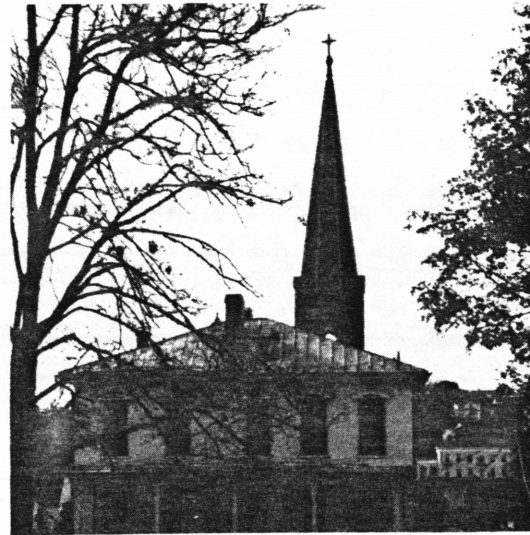
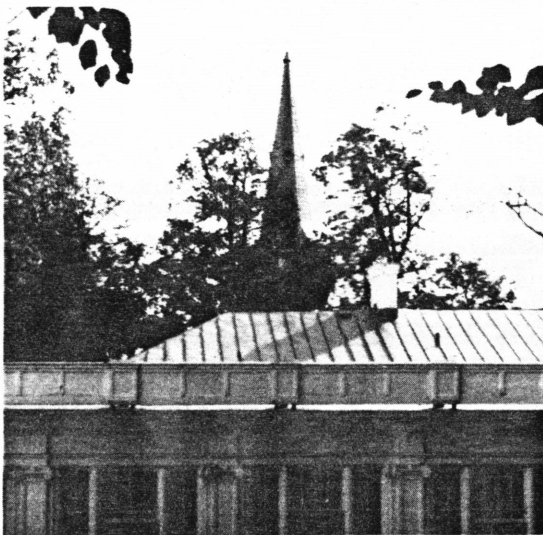


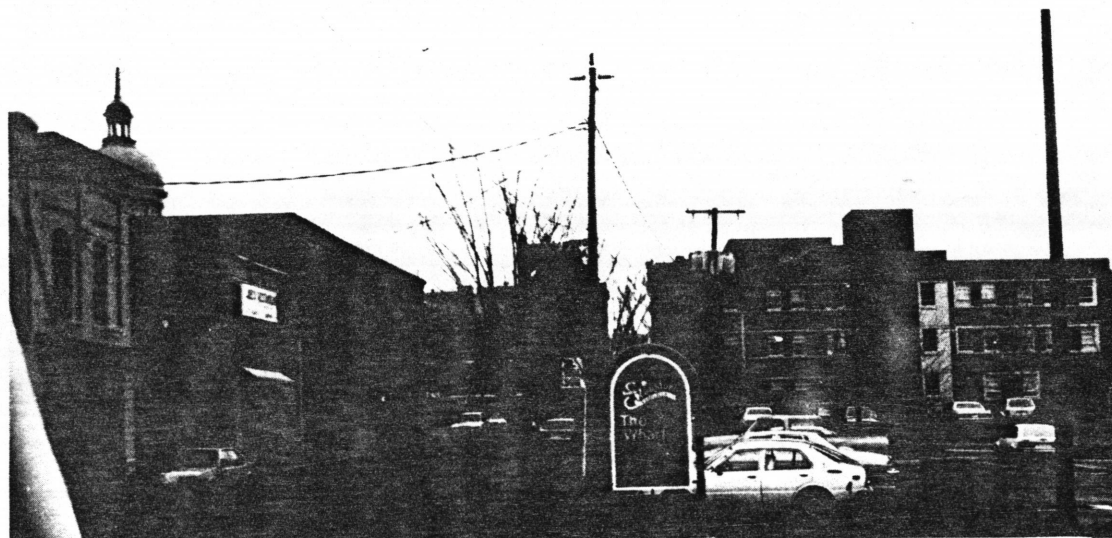
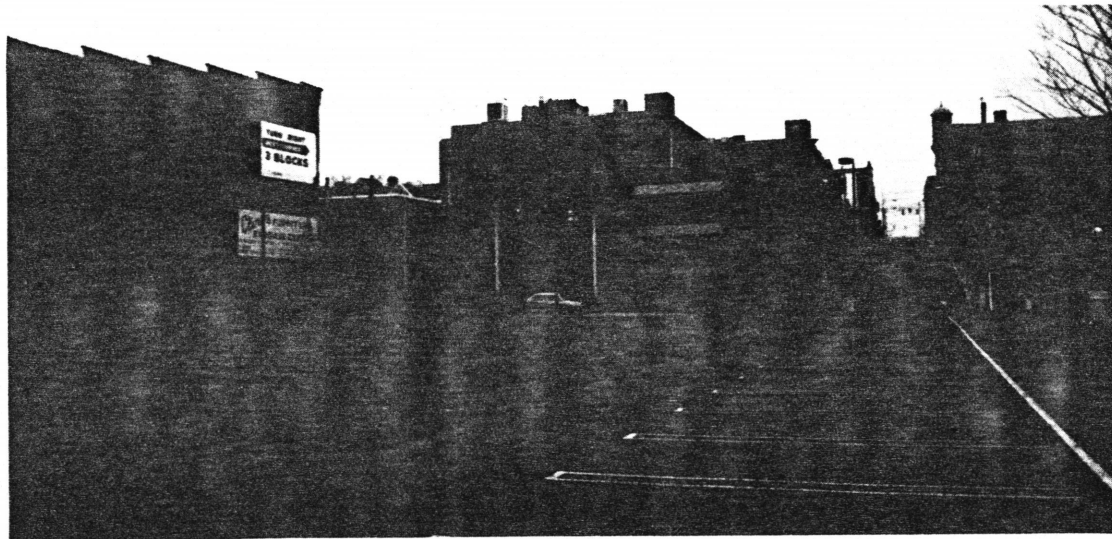
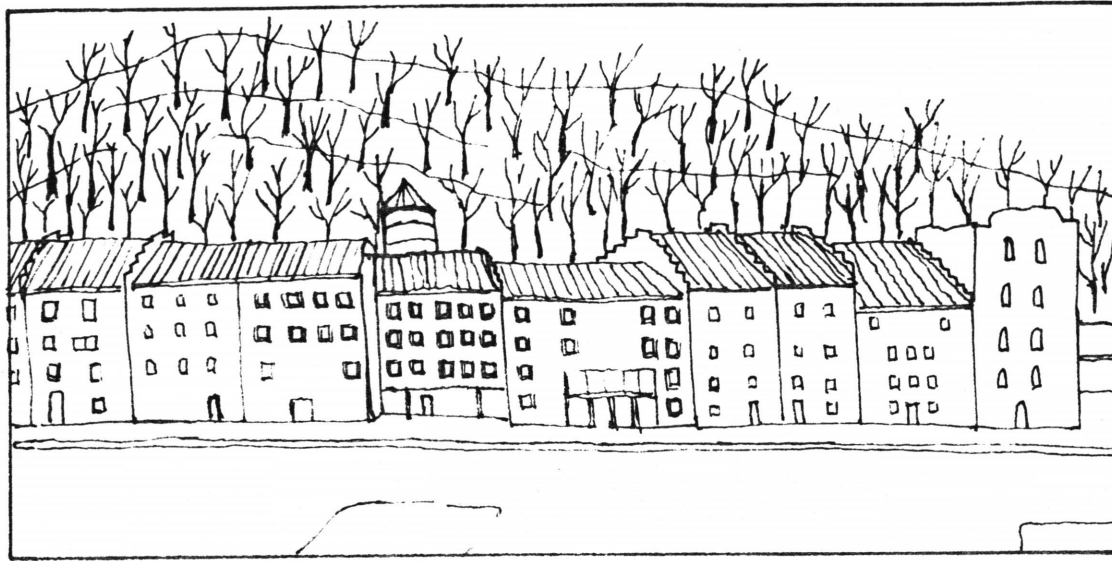
Organizing the project around the stairs relates it to the organization of the city. Staunton is typologically a hill town. The experience of the town is one of climbing and falling; seeing buildings from varying perspectives and in varying relationships (e.g. being at eye-level with steeples).

The stairs are in this way a man-made hill. The building, by surrounding the stairs, alternately restricts and reveals views of the city and the building itself.

By attempting to integrate the building's order within the city's existing settlement order, and not just with its image, the building embodies more deeply the sense of place.

The existential purpose of building is to make a site become a place, to uncover the meanings potentially present in the given environment. -- Christian Norberg-Schulz



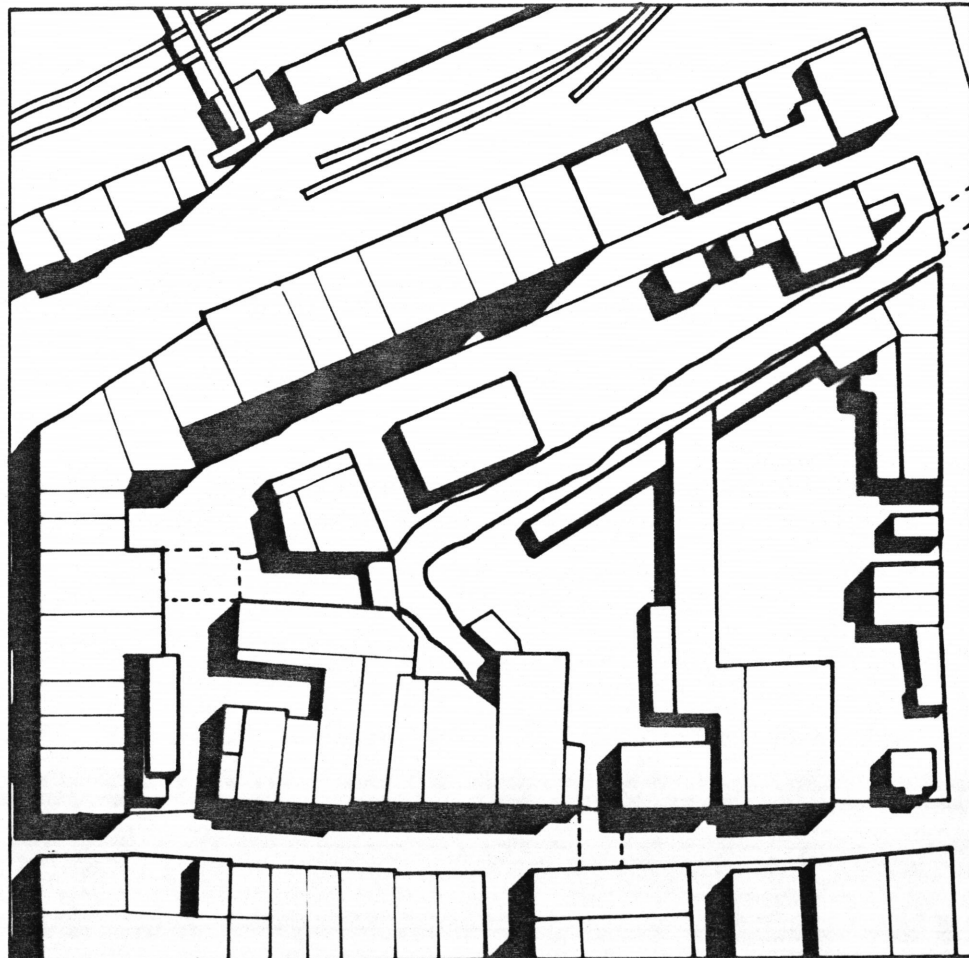


Rather than try to compete with new commercial developments outside the center of town, as is often the case in small town downtown developments, my proposal is to build an industrial design school on the front end of the parking lot. The presence of a new major institution is intended to alter the nature of the downtown.

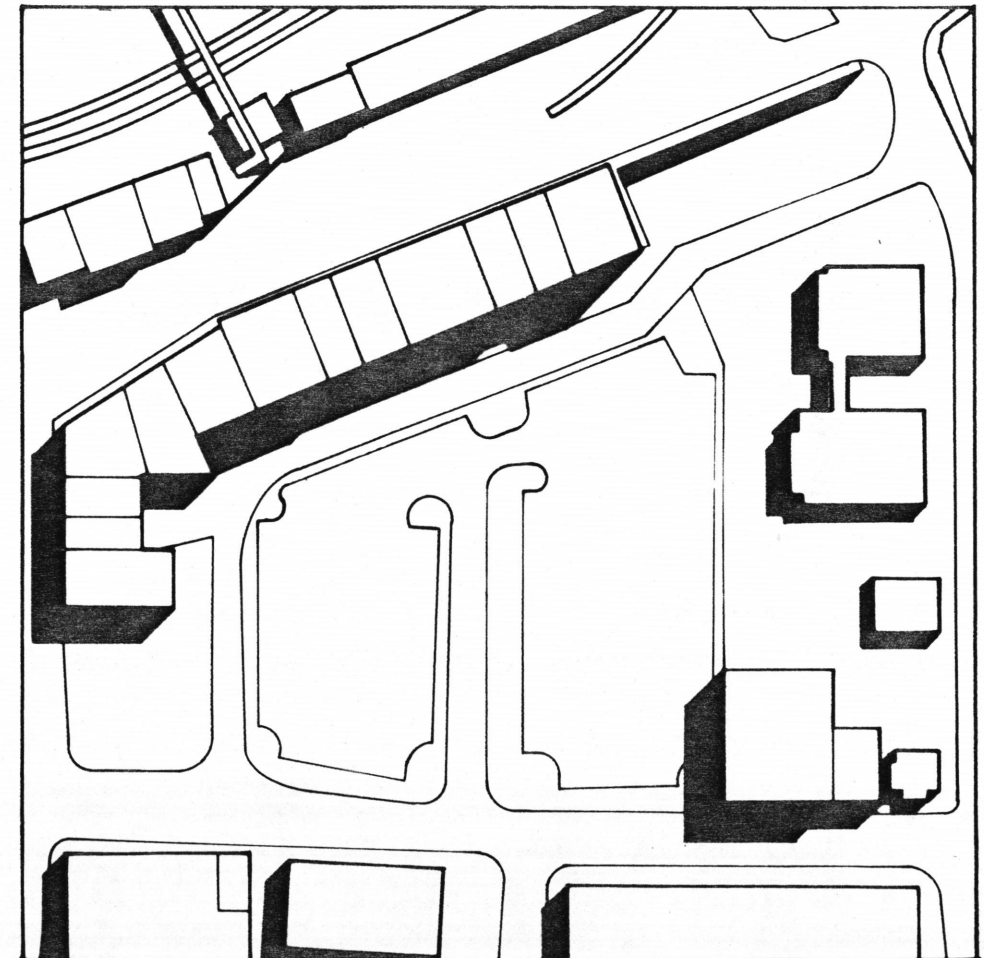
The school would further the already institutional nature of the town, which is presently home to a prison, a handicap vocational rehabilitation center, a mental institution, a school for the deaf and blind, and a private college and a boarding school for women.

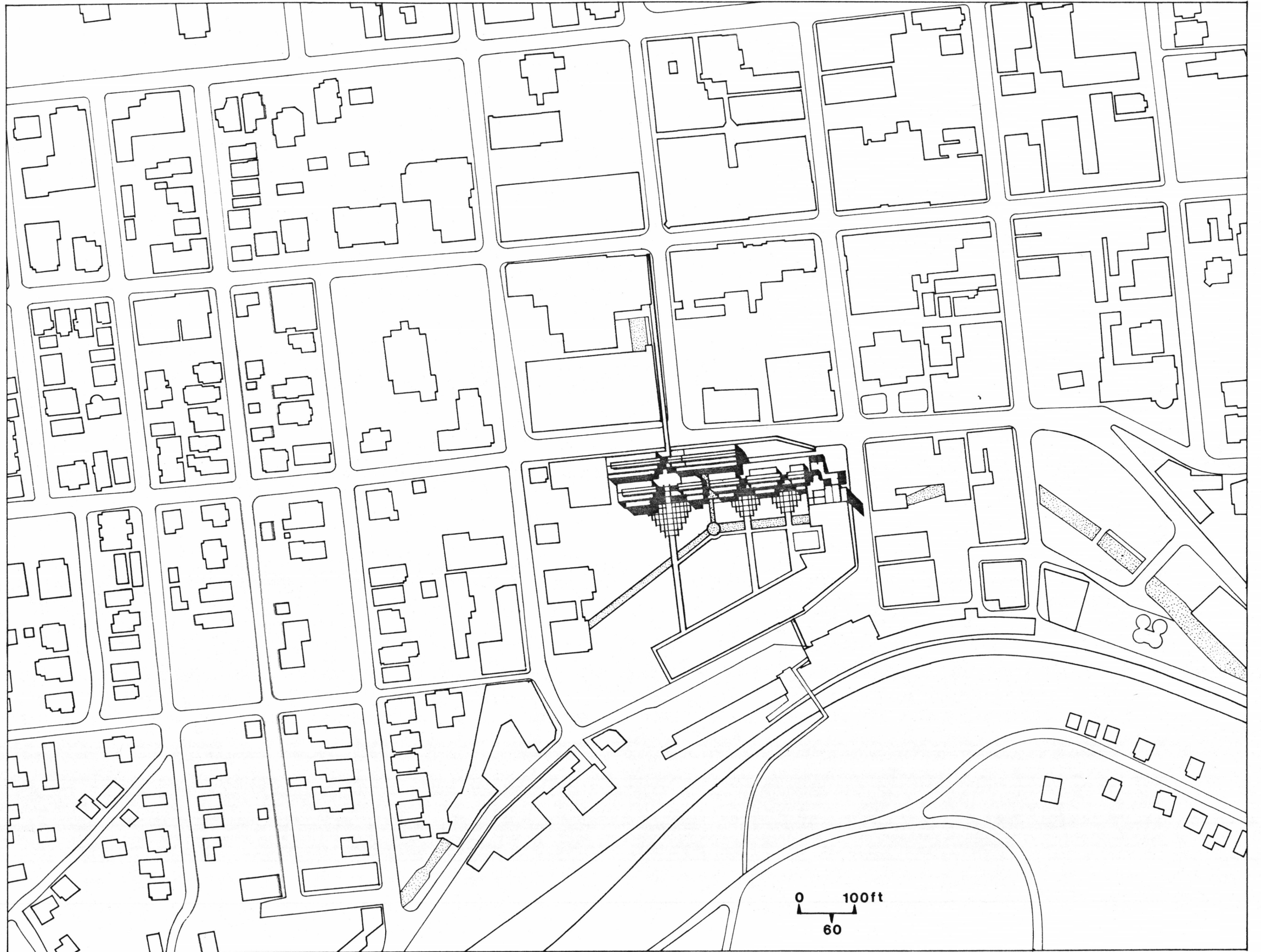
The central location of the school in the downtown area would hopefully encourage integration of the city and its resident institutions. Participation of other institutions in the programs of the school could be encouraged.

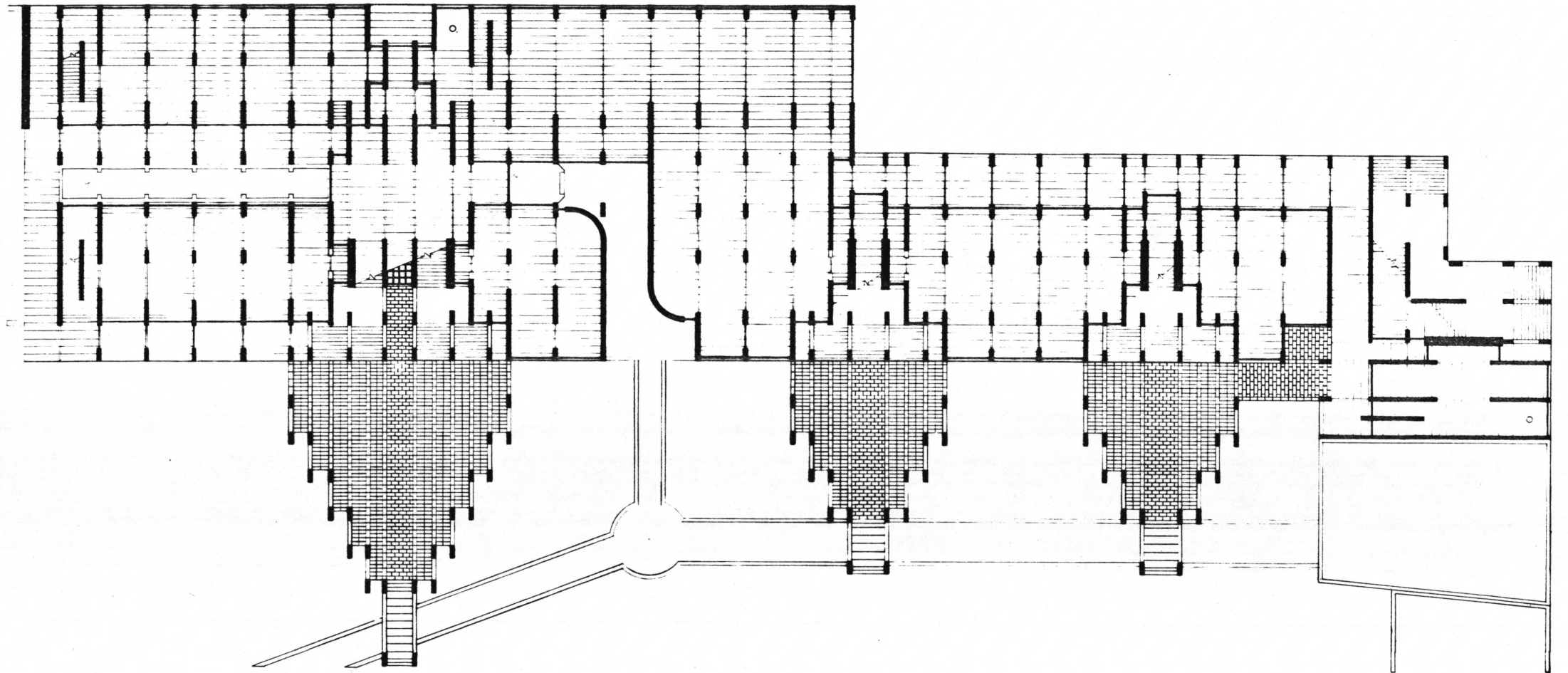
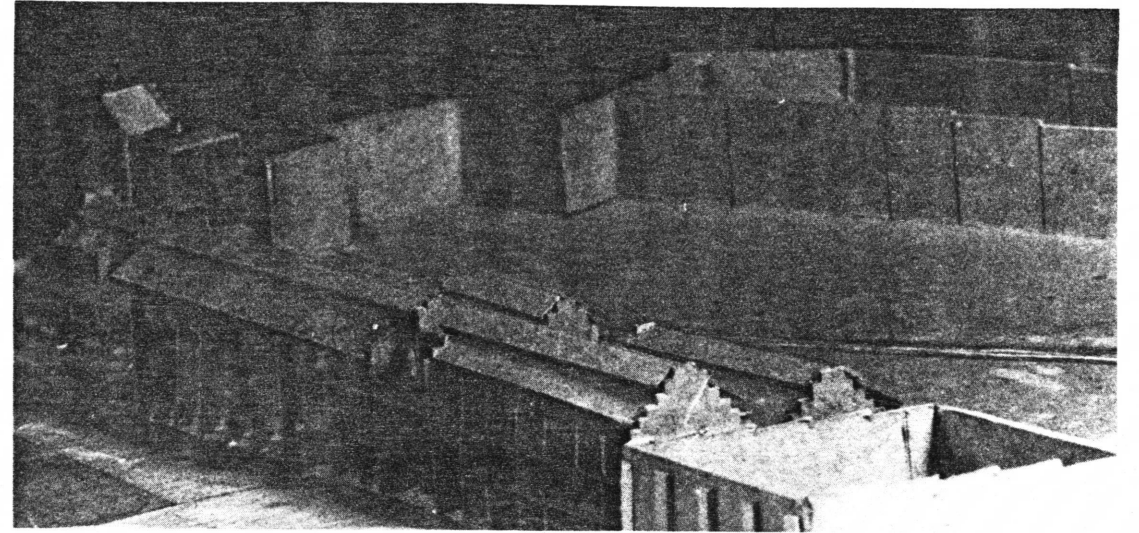
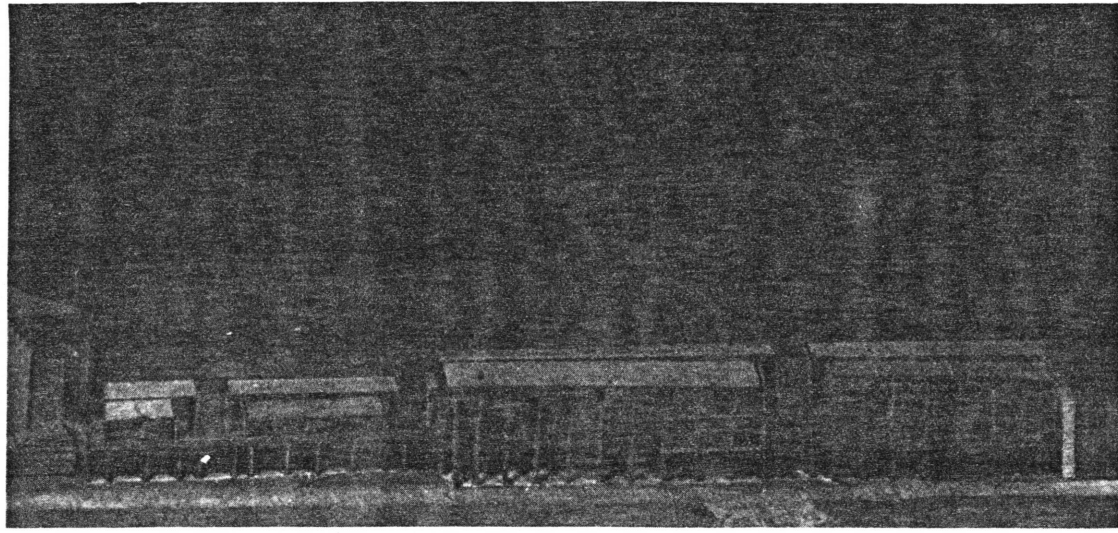
Staunton began as a railroad town. The site abuts the so-called wharf area that originally supported the rail industry. In 1920, the area contained industrial, commercial, and warehouse establishments in close and casual proximity, as was typical of the time.

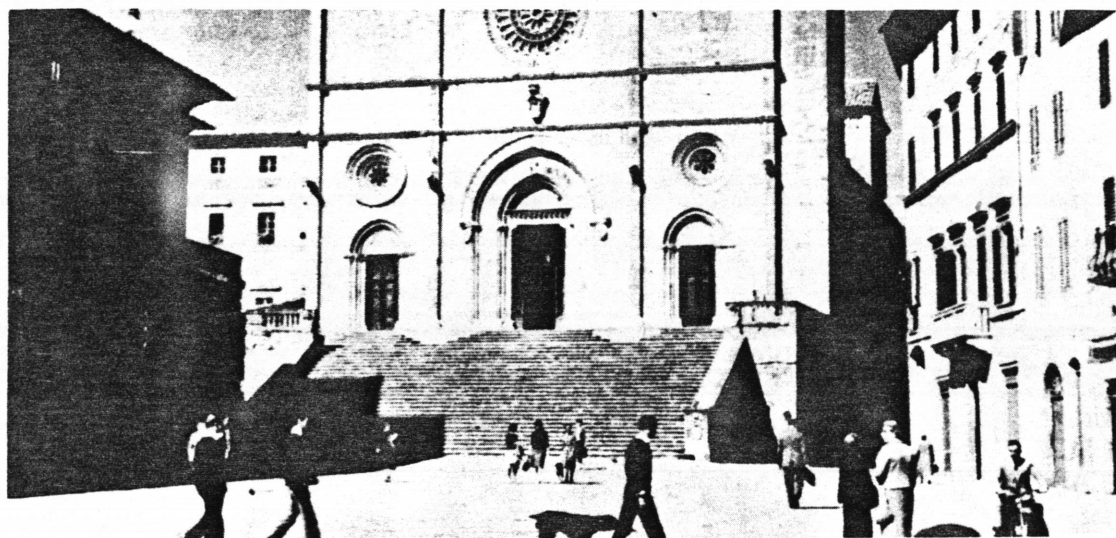
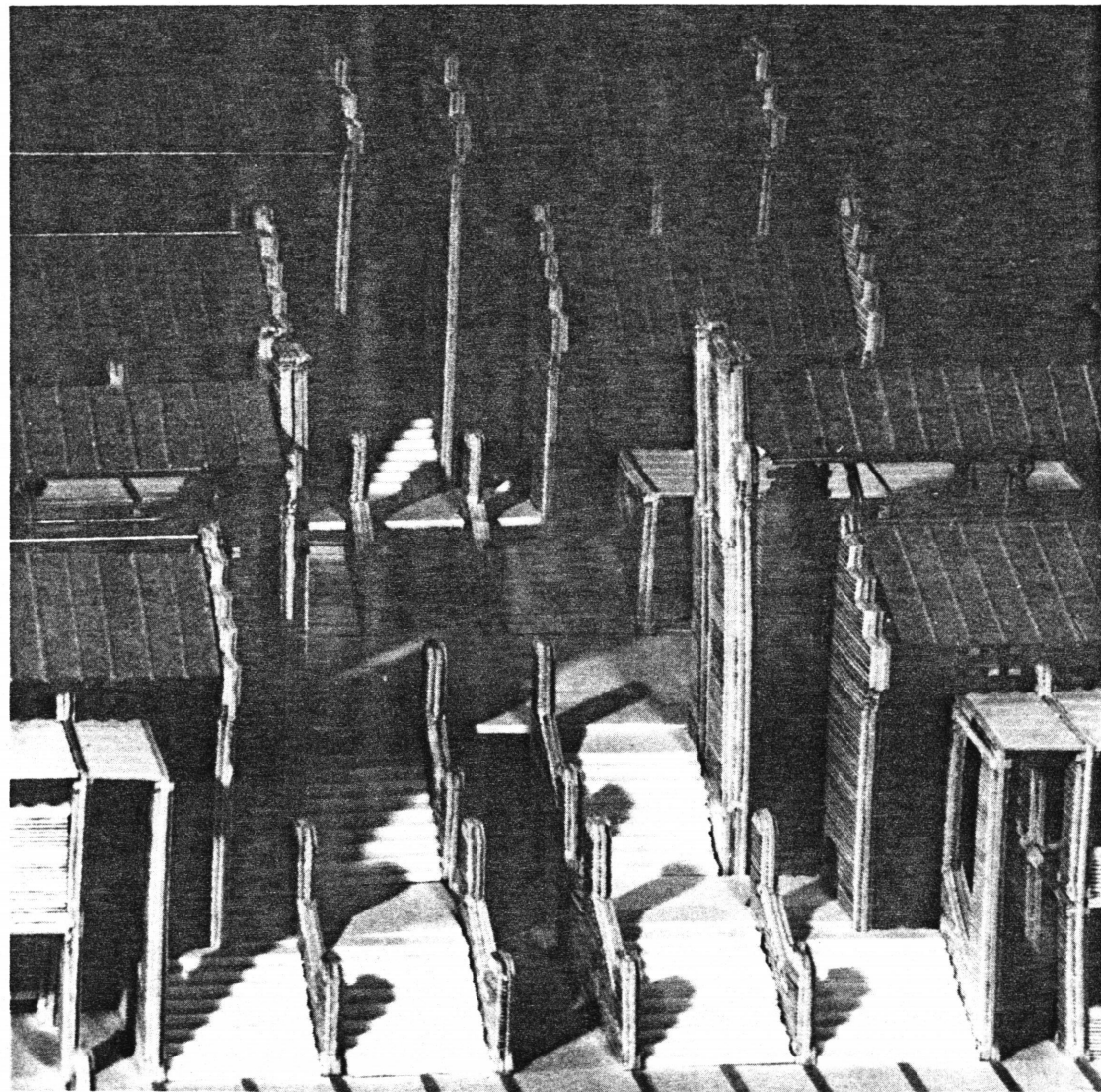


In the site's current condition, many of the older buildings have been cleared. In an effort to stem the flow of businesses to the outlying areas, a parking lot has been paved to provide parking for the Main Street commercial district. The row of warehouse buildings directly across from the railroad station remain. They are now used mainly for offices, retail shops, and restaurants.



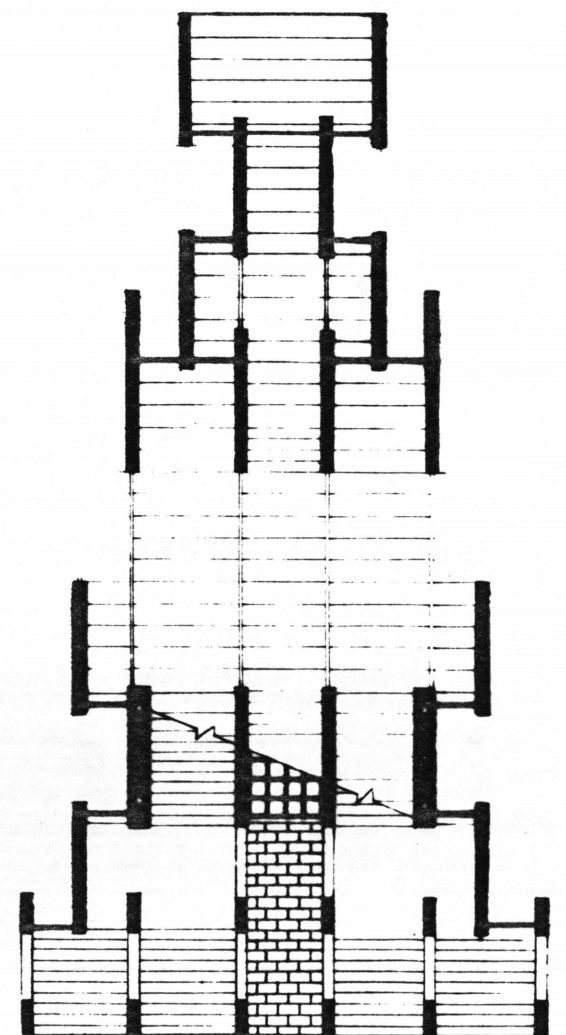


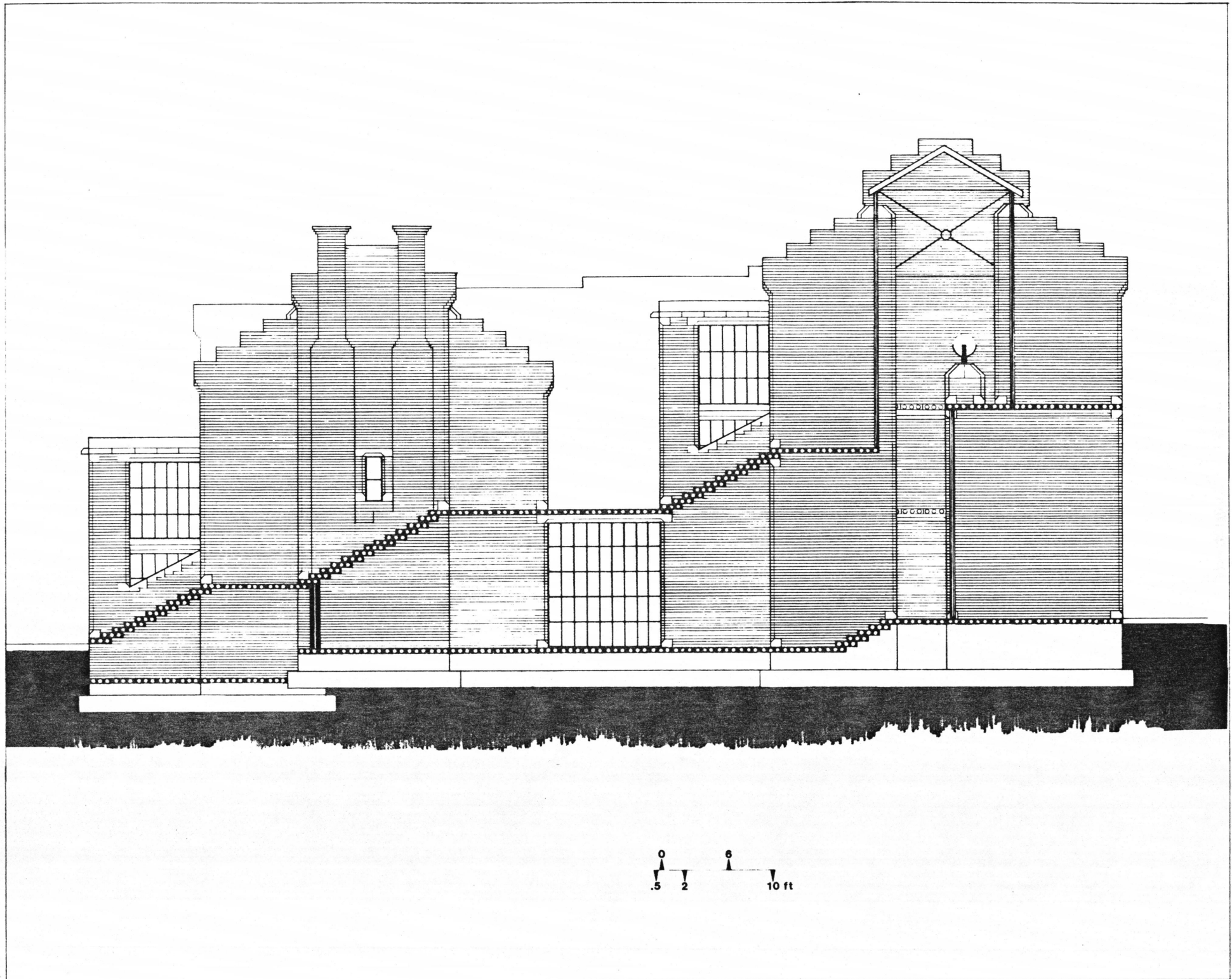


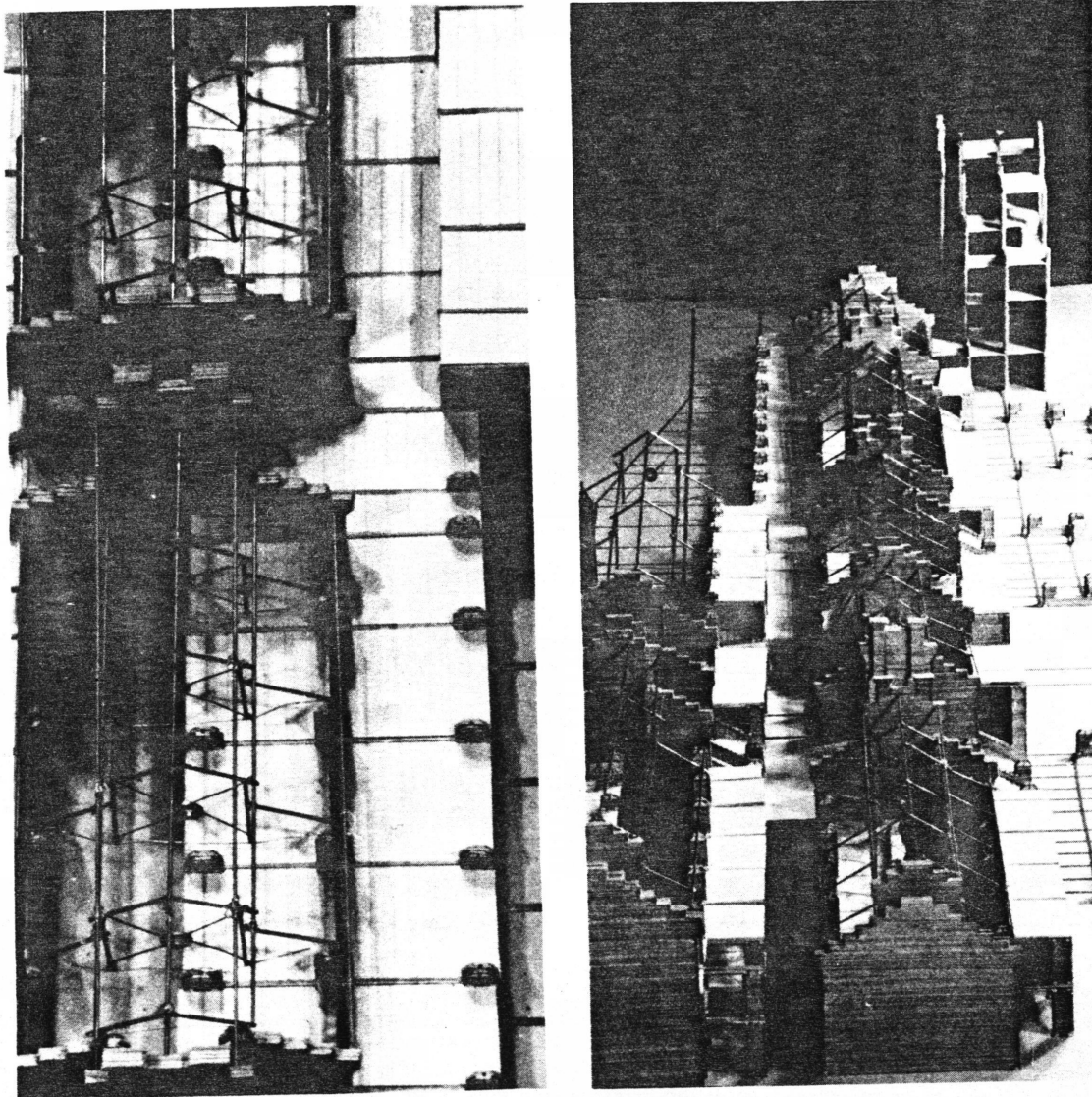


The main stairs play several roles. They are a link not only within the school but between the wharf area and Main Street one block away. As the stairs carry through pedestrian traffic, niches are provided that allow one to step out of the flow of traffic.

By surrounding a village green or outdoor community room with stairs, not only is there a place to gather but also an incentive to stay. The stairs can hold crowds for performances in the courtyard. Public ceremonies for the school and city are similarly given a venue.



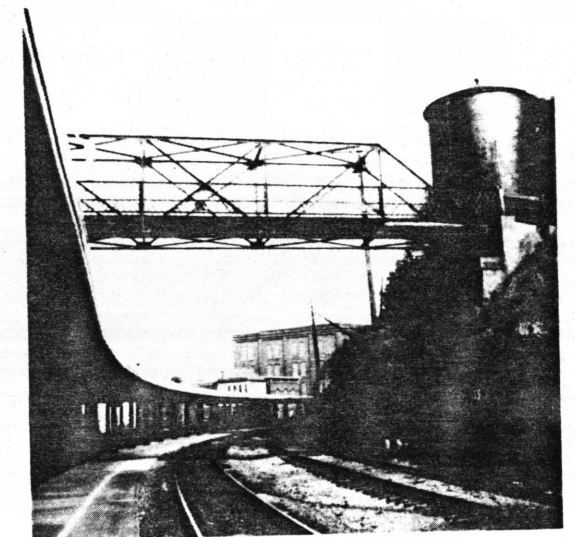
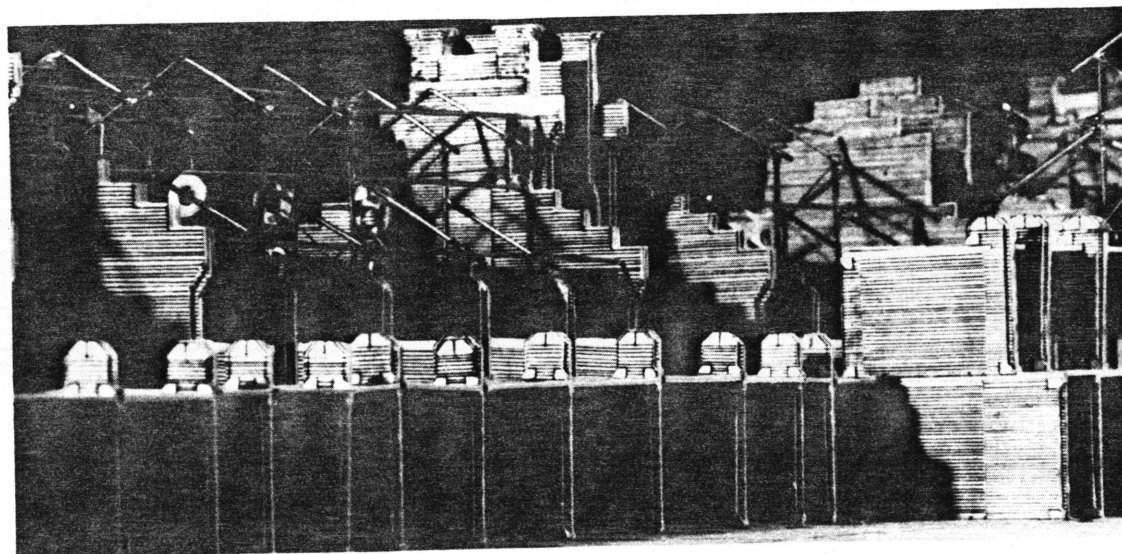


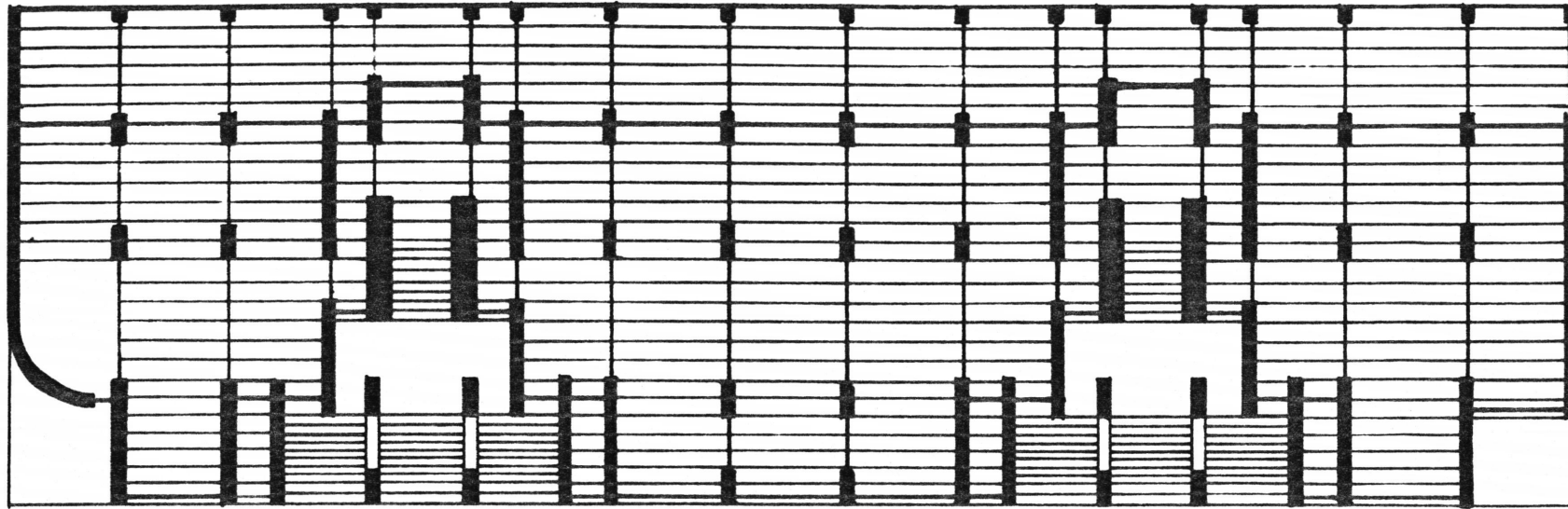


The path not only connects the various buildings of the school but also organizes them horizontally as the stairs organize them vertically. It is a public space that clearly belongs to the school. The chance meetings that assist in informal exchanges within the school would be facilitated here.

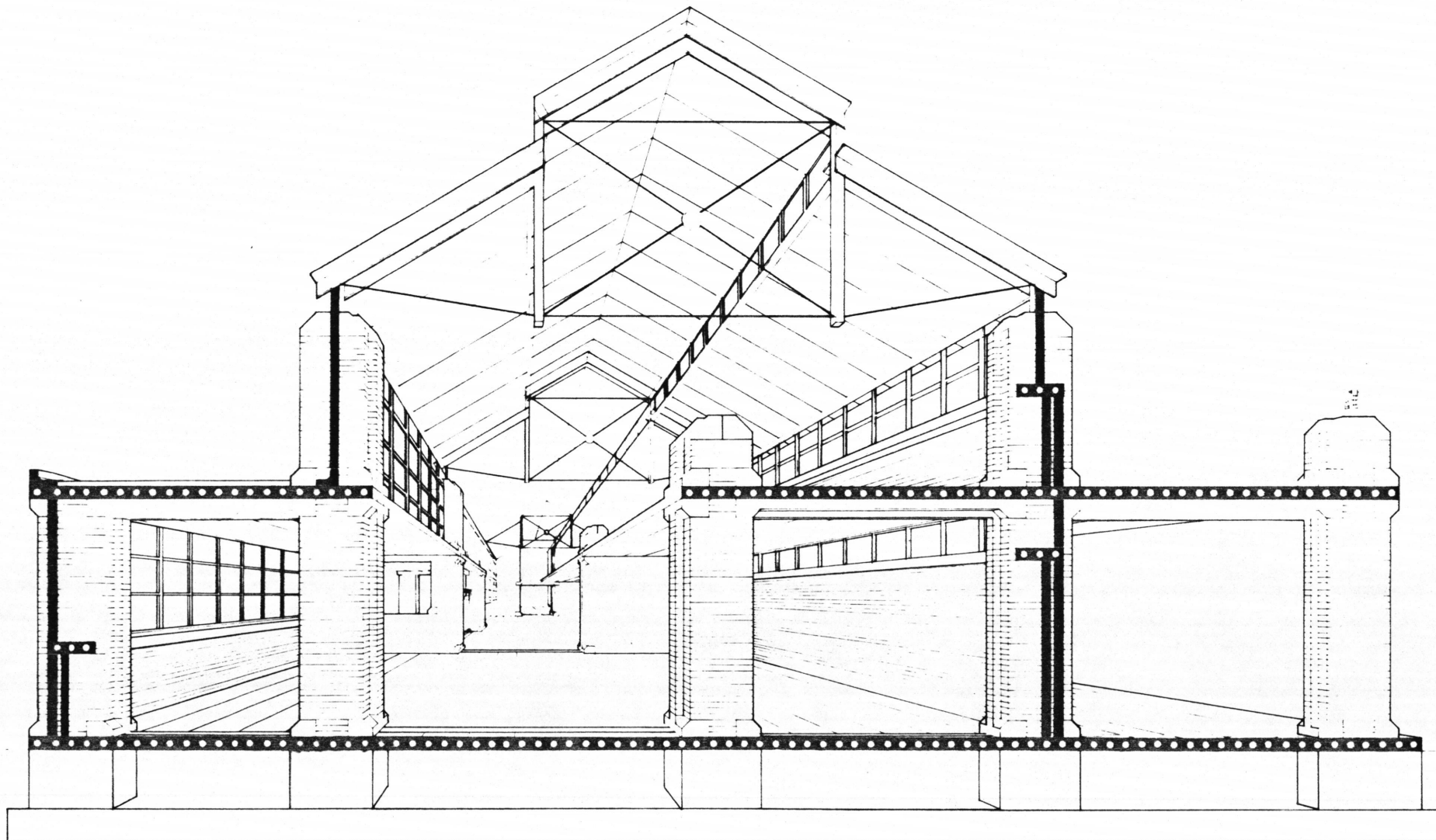
For the city, the path is a new pedestrian street that connects the new wharf square to the other significant downtown public space -- Main Street -- by way of a pedestrian bridge at the top of the main stairs.

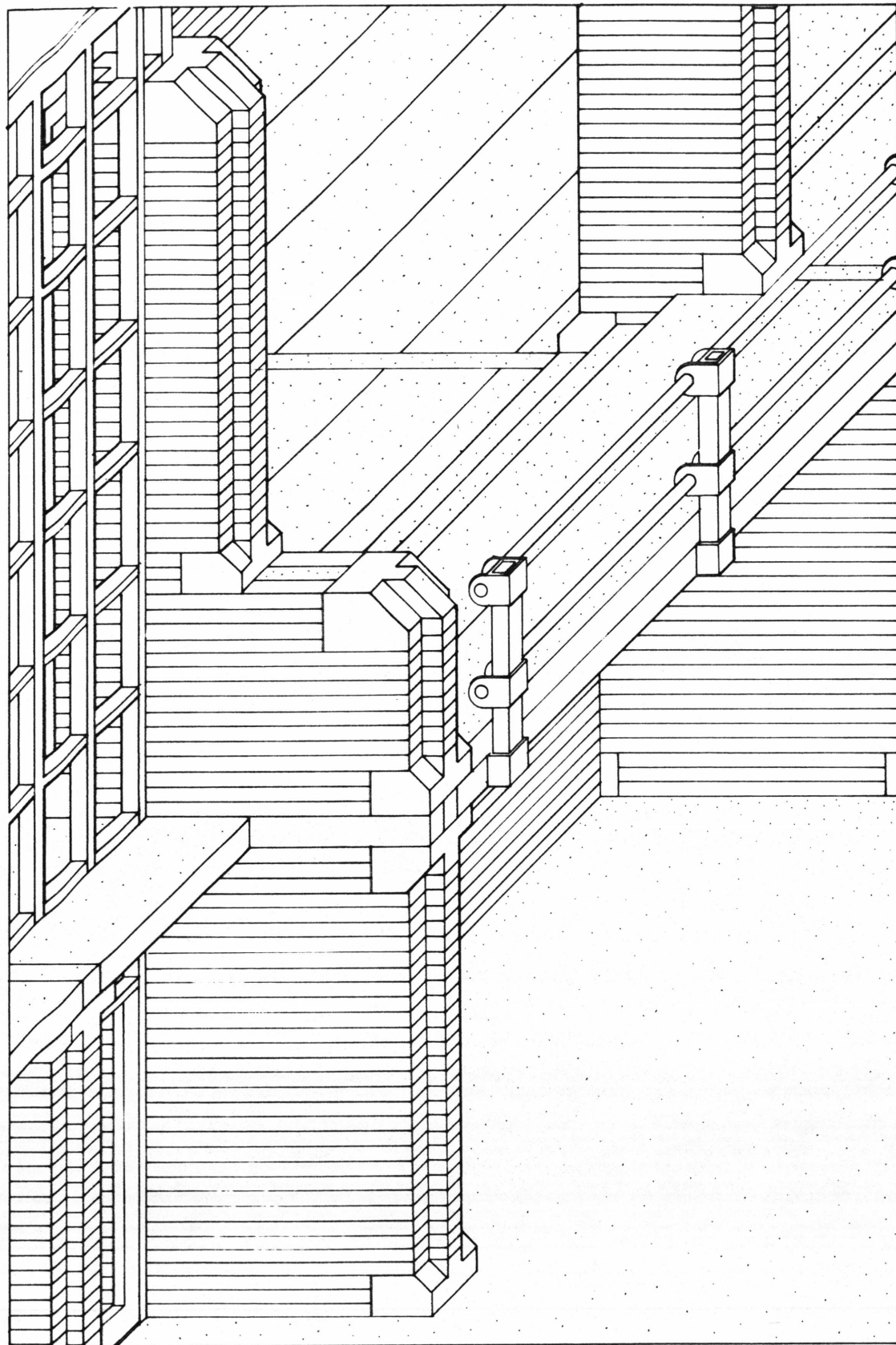
The top of the main stairs is the same elevation as Main Street. An elevated sidewalk, which already gives access to the top level of the existing public parking garage, would now join the pedestrian bridge. By being a raised outdoor area, the path puts the pedestrian in contact with the hill town order of the site as well as providing the pedestrian better access to the city.





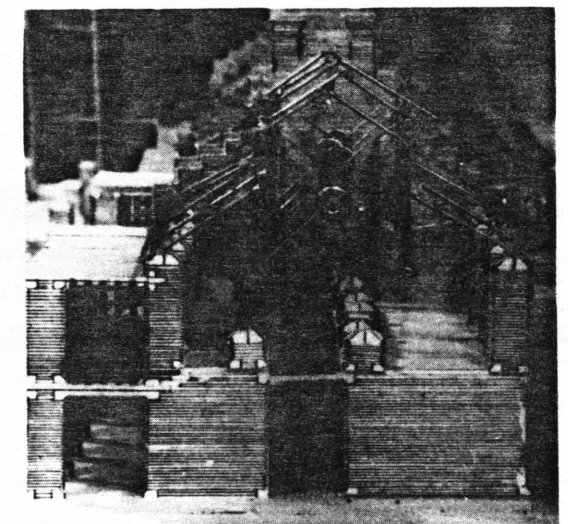
The machine shops are single rooms with a double-story height space that responds to the need to handle long construction materials. A mezzanine and single-story servant spaces for storage and support surround this central work area.

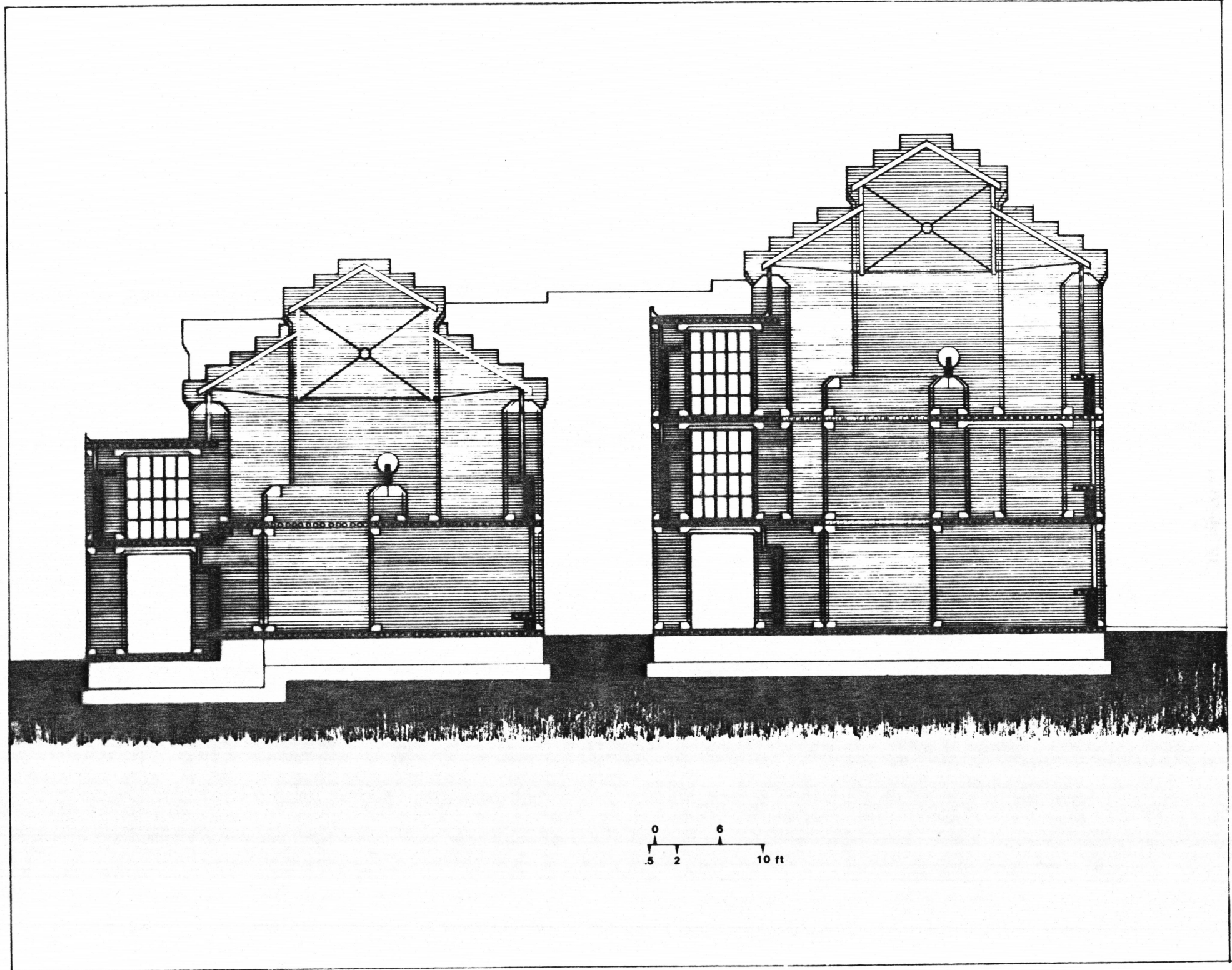


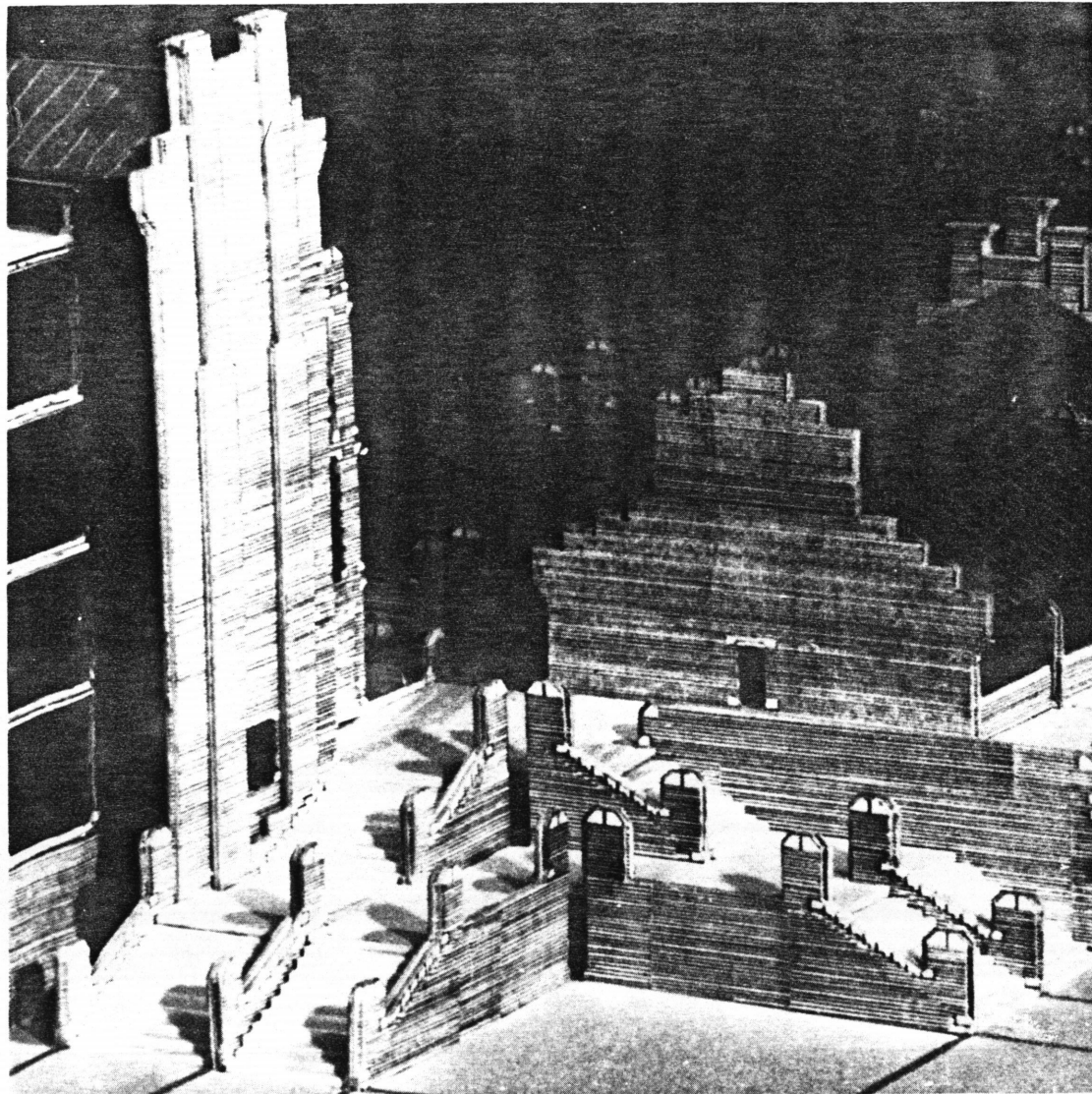


The library has a main double-story reading room that is flanked by stacks. The second-story mezzanine runs all the way around the main room but on the courtyard side becomes a partly depressed private study area by means of three stairs continuously accessing a catwalk.

A narrow, private stairway on one end provides interior access to the mezzanine and contrasts the large exterior public stair on the other end.



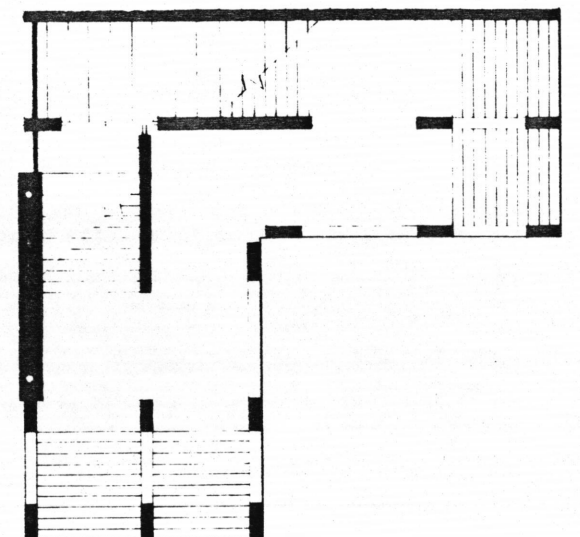


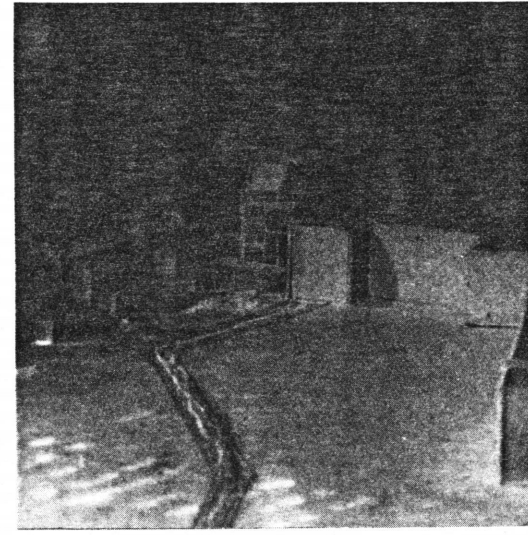
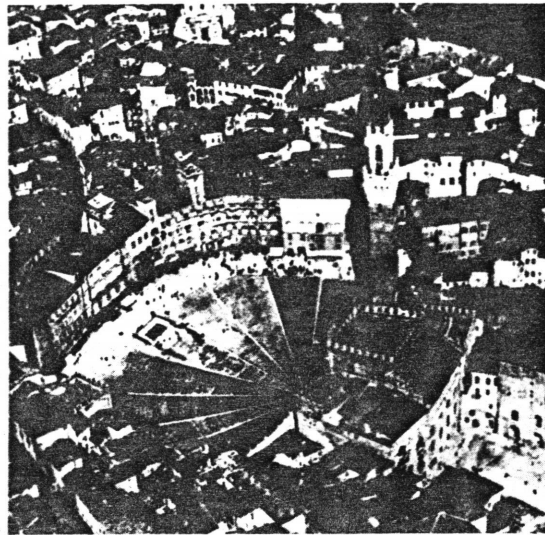


The corner stairs serve two roles in the project. When streets intersect in an urban context, there is a need to address the turning of the corner and provide a transition from one street to the other. The corner stairs, then, are the knuckle of the scheme.

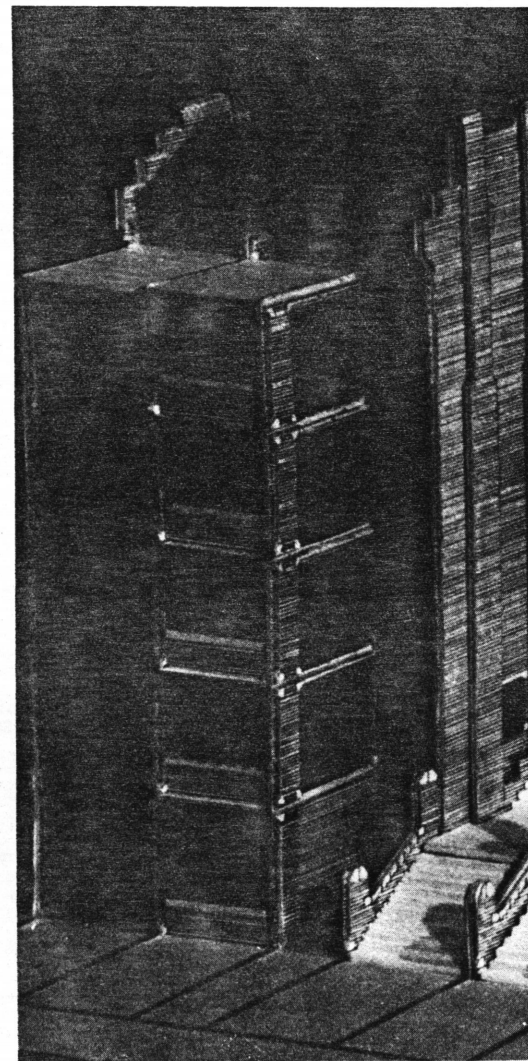
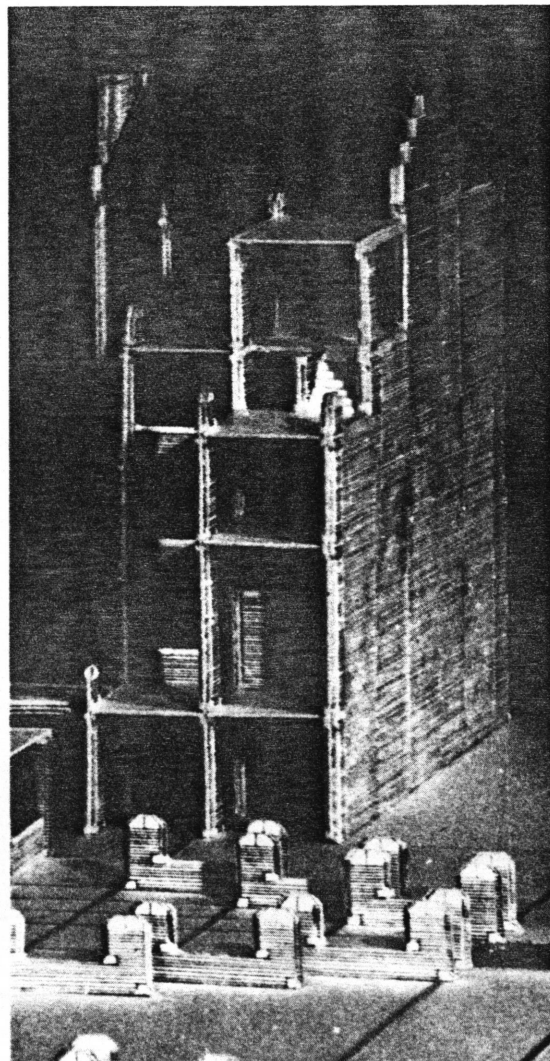
They also respond to the courthouse that is located diagonally across the intersection. One can wait and watch there, partially removed from the activities of the courthouse, yet still in contact with them.

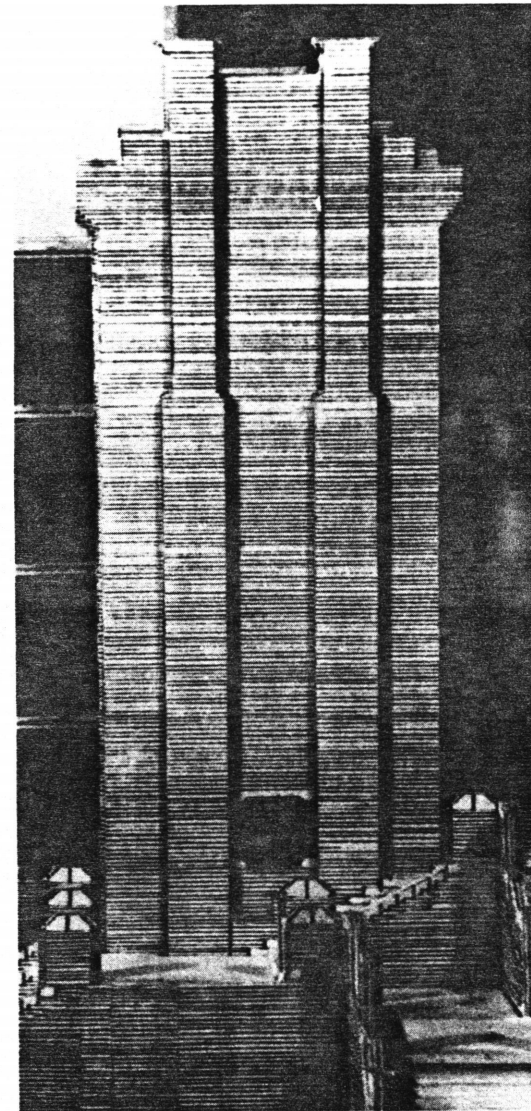
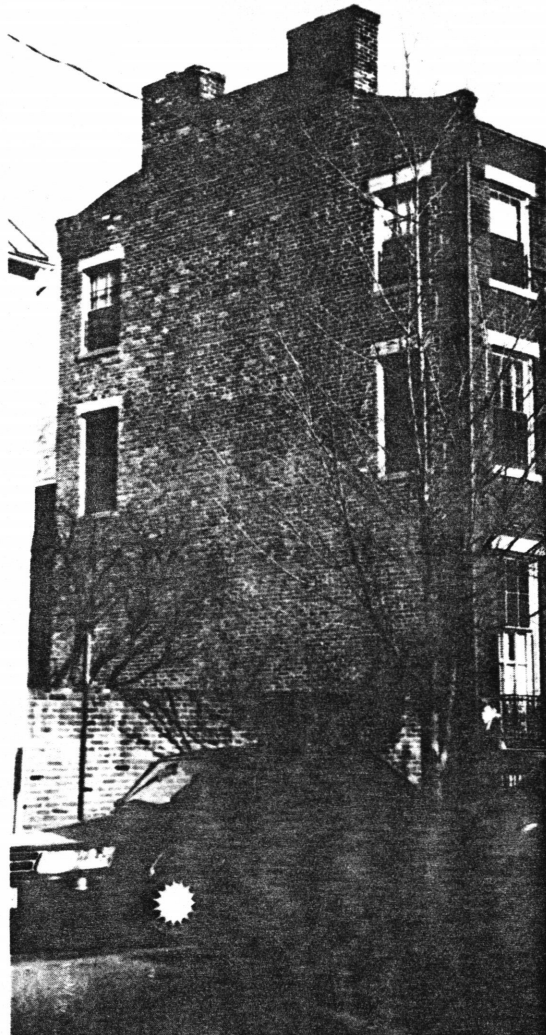
From the other direction, the stairs are a threshold between the city and the school; they invite the city into the realm of the school. The presence of the institutions next to each other is mutually supportive and conducive to civic integration.





The archetypal tower watches over an area. As residence for the administration of the school, the five-story tower building reinterprets this role for the circumstances of the school. It also serves as the focal point for the interior square as well as an identifying landmark for the school.

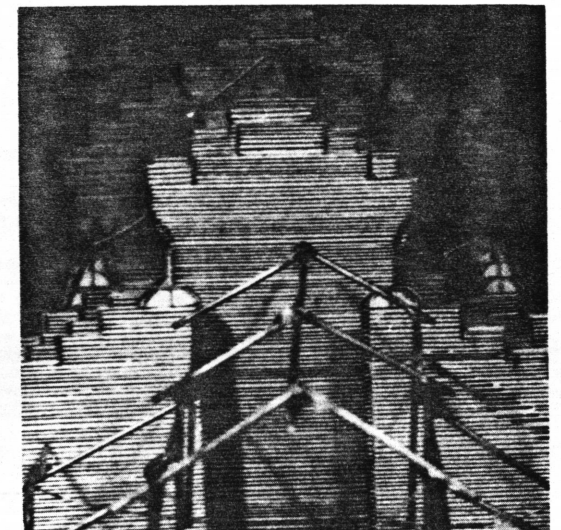
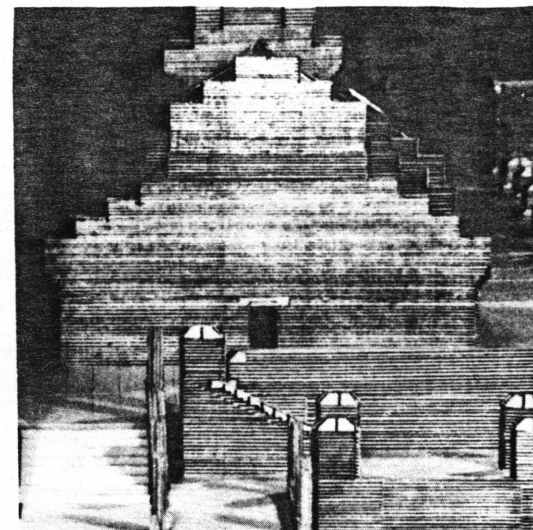
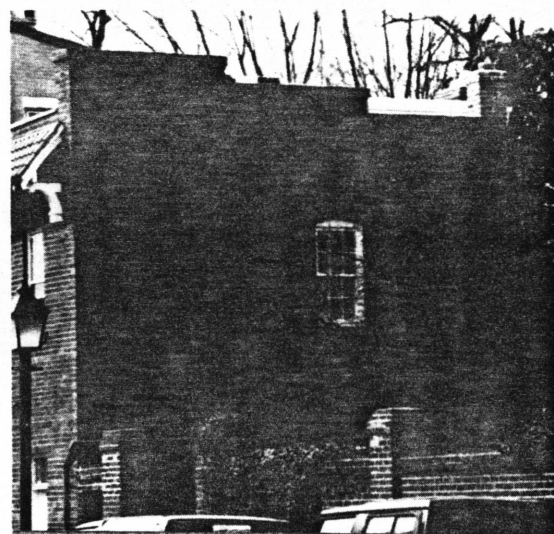


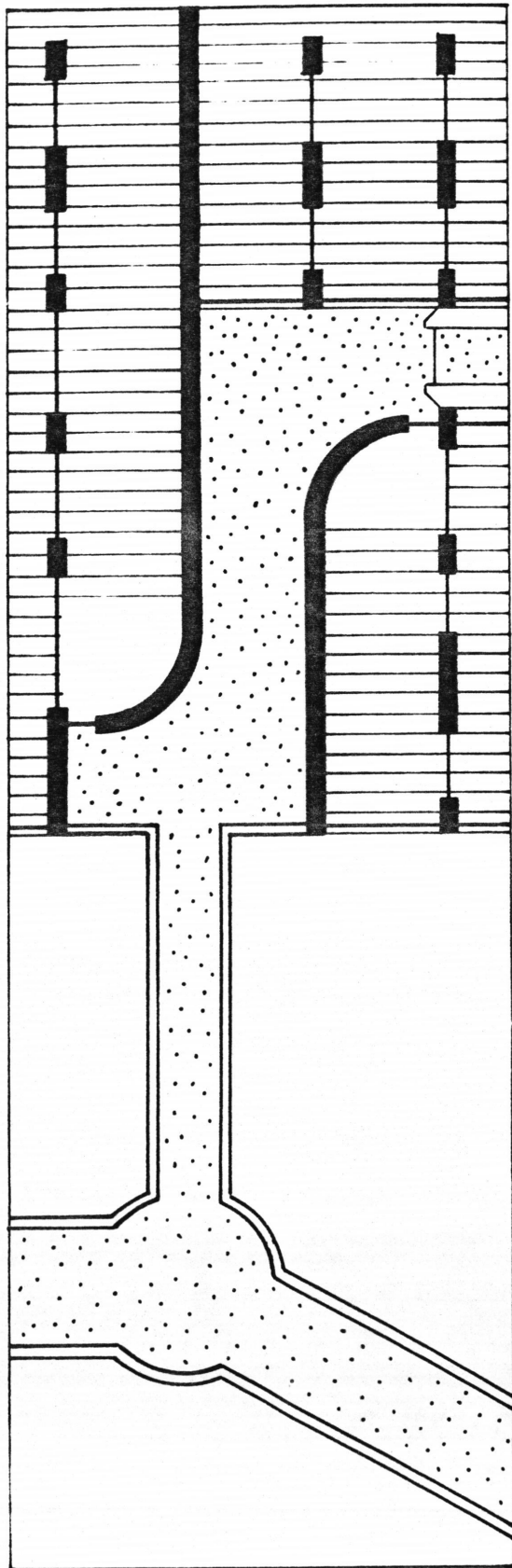


The end walls provide a solution to the ends of the structural bays. Locally, masonry parapet walls are used as an end to the roof structure as well as a service wall to carry exhaust above the roof line (i.e., they include chimneys).

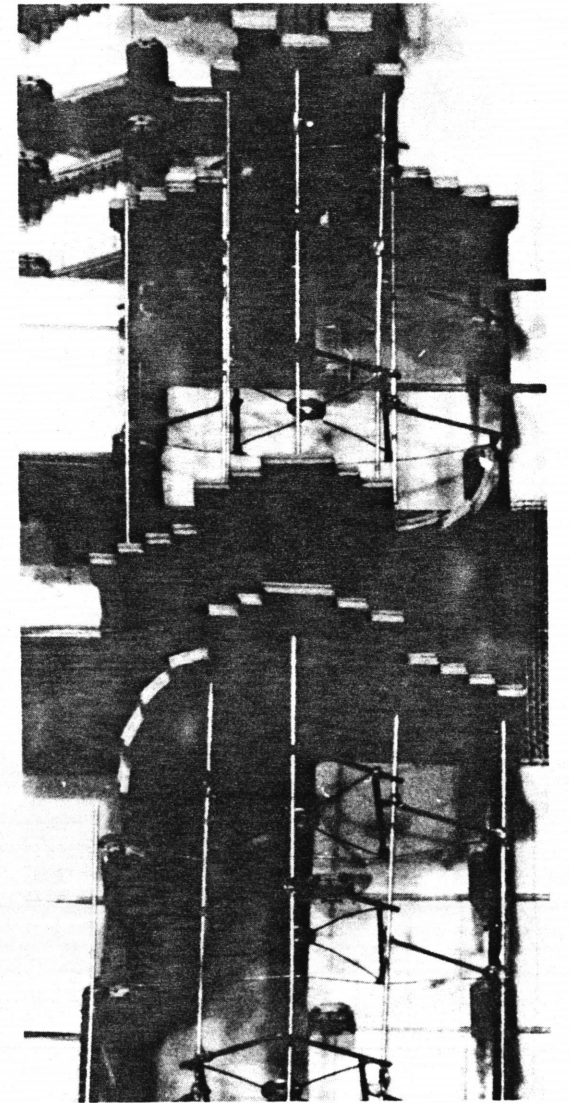
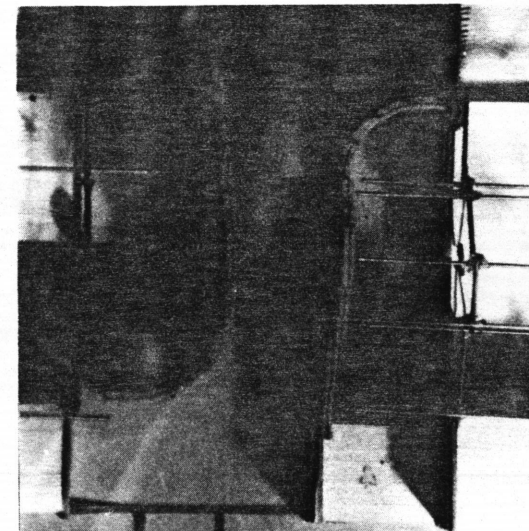
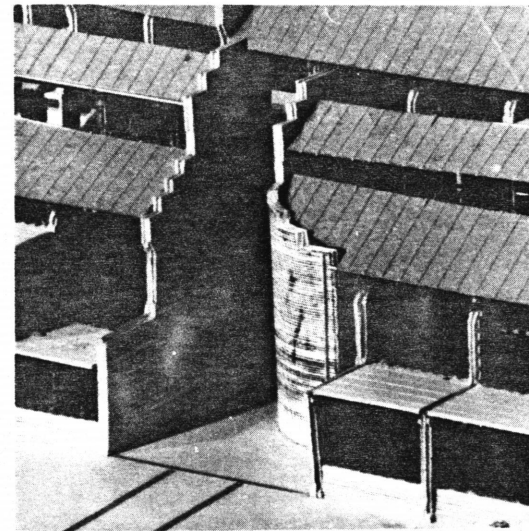
Reinforced masonry allows this typical wall to be transformed. It can be separated from the rest of the building by glazing. It can be broken into parts to allow for a labyrinthine entrance that fits the order of the rest of the building.

The end walls service the mechanical spaces that are located below the stairs with air intake and exhaust. The bathrooms are also vented through these walls, eliminating the need to puncture the roof.



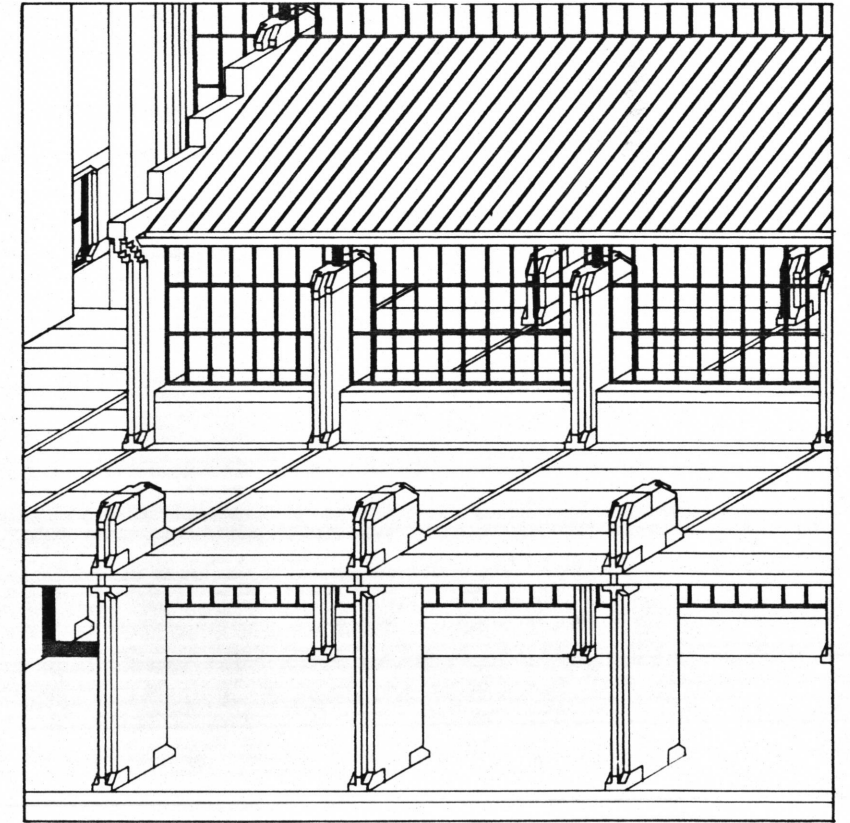
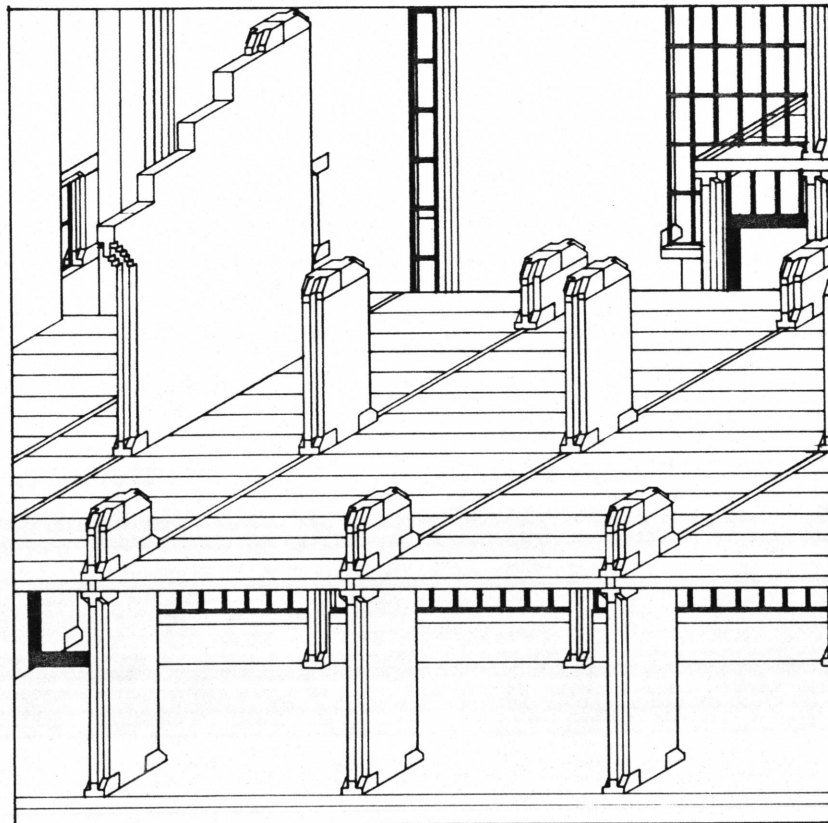
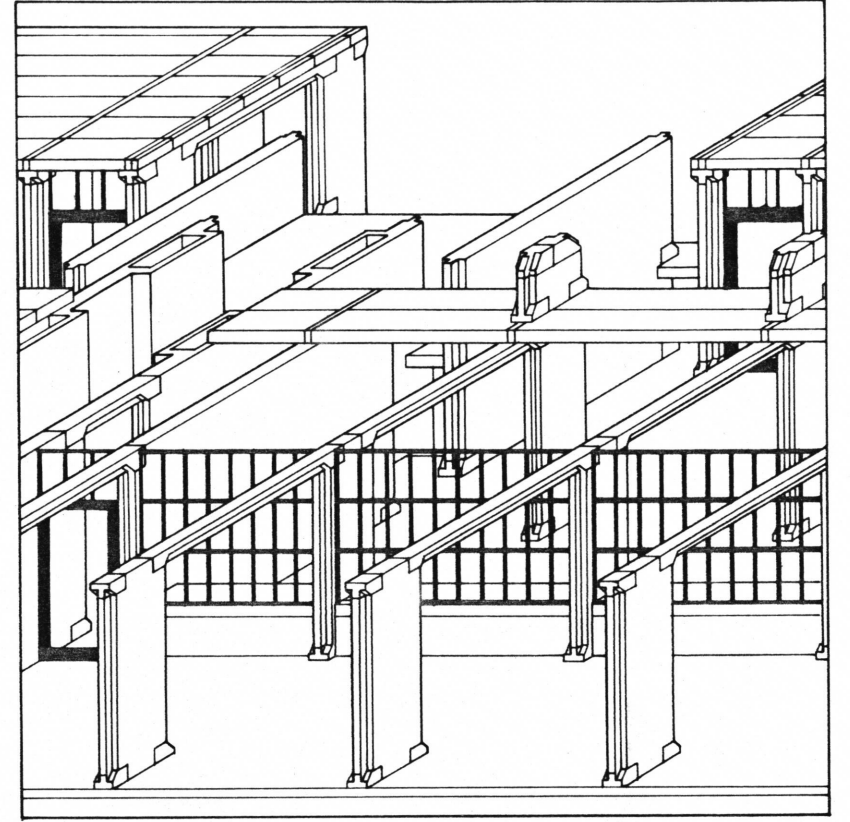
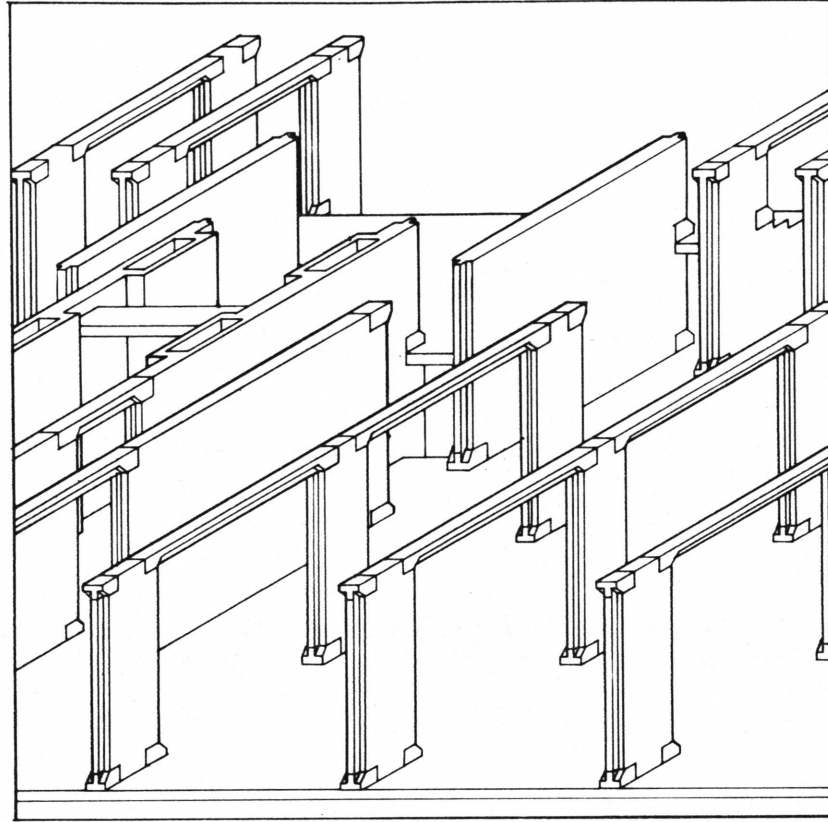


The stream, which is presently covered at the site, is reopened and channeled through the square. The double curved walls make a gesture to the water as it enters the square. A pool holds the water between the walls before letting it enter the square. This break from the established order of the building makes this threshold a significant event.

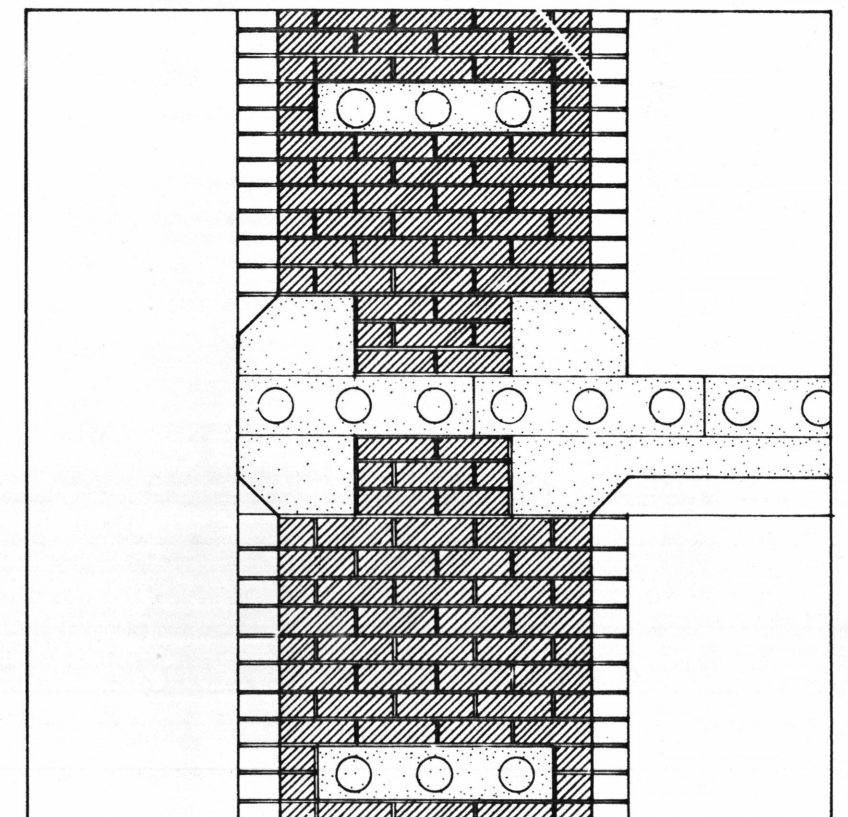
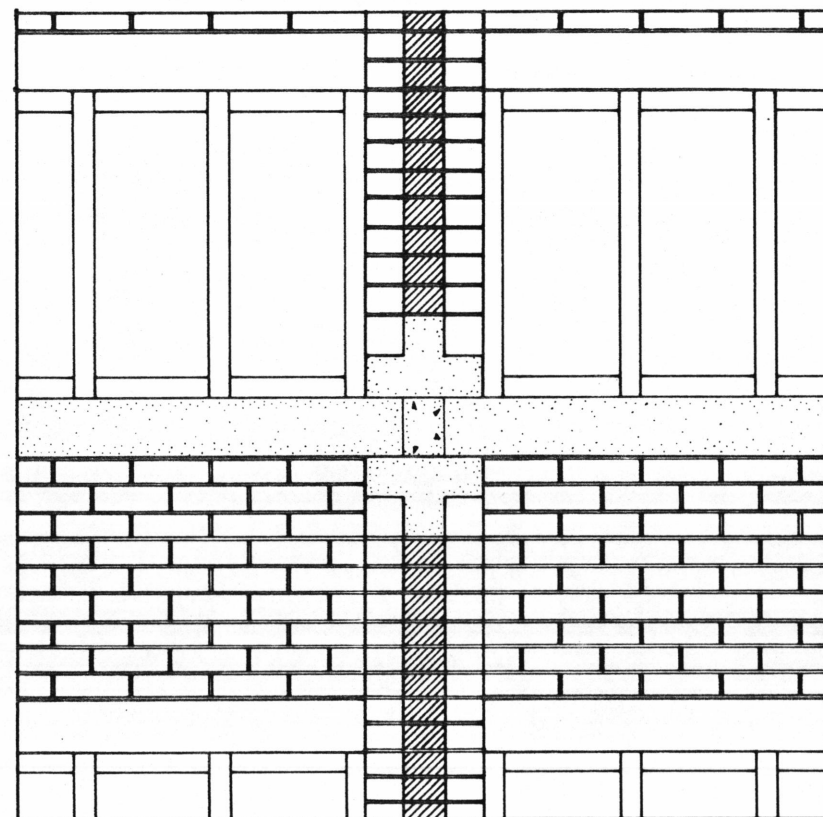
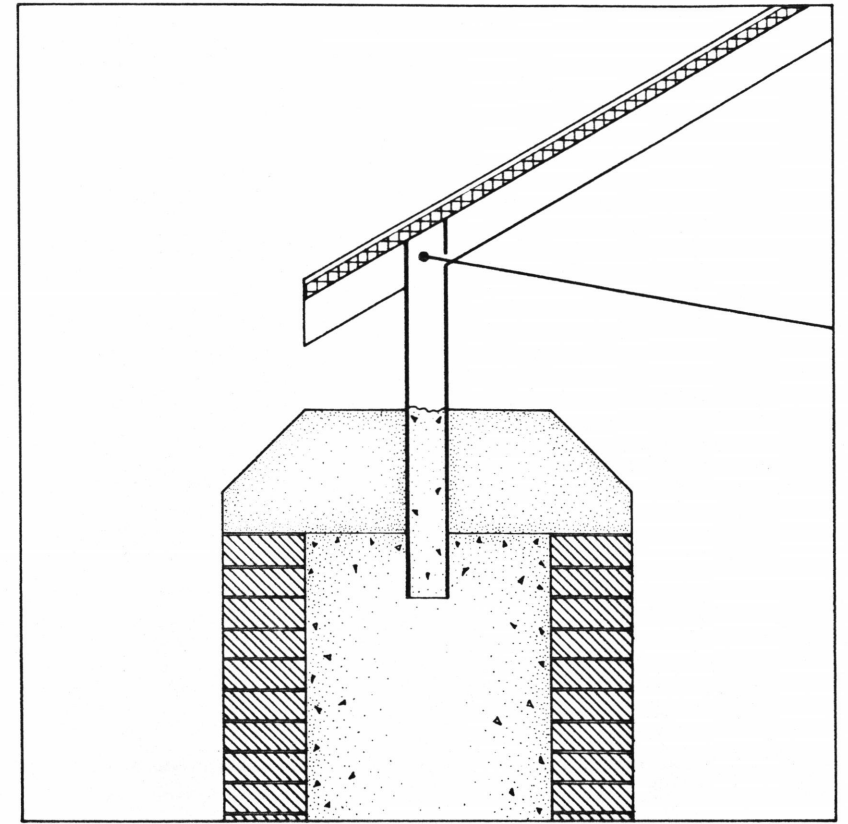
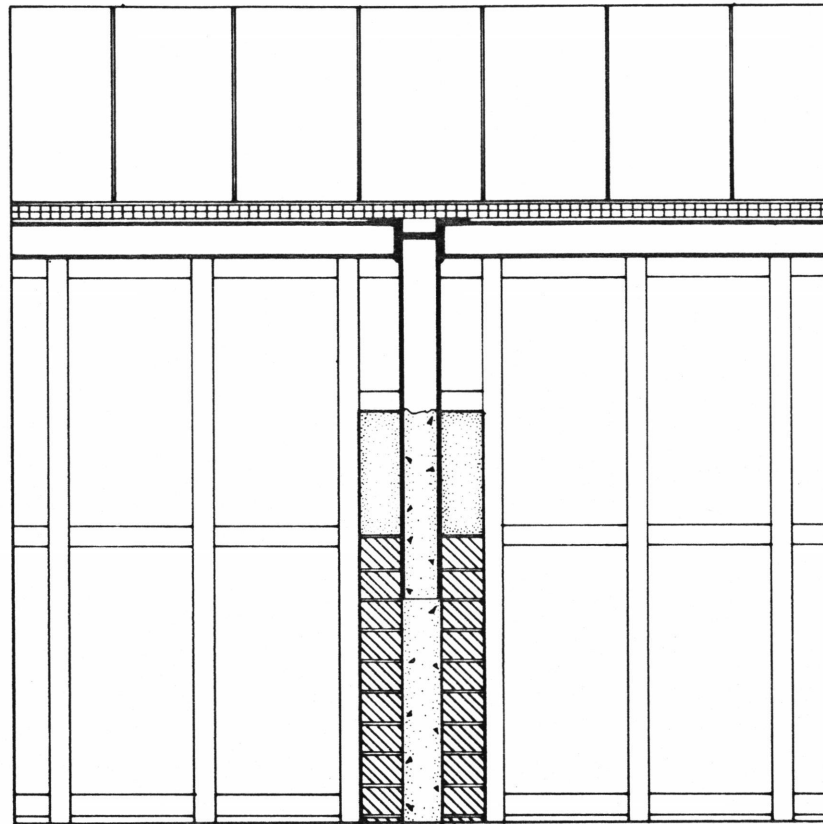


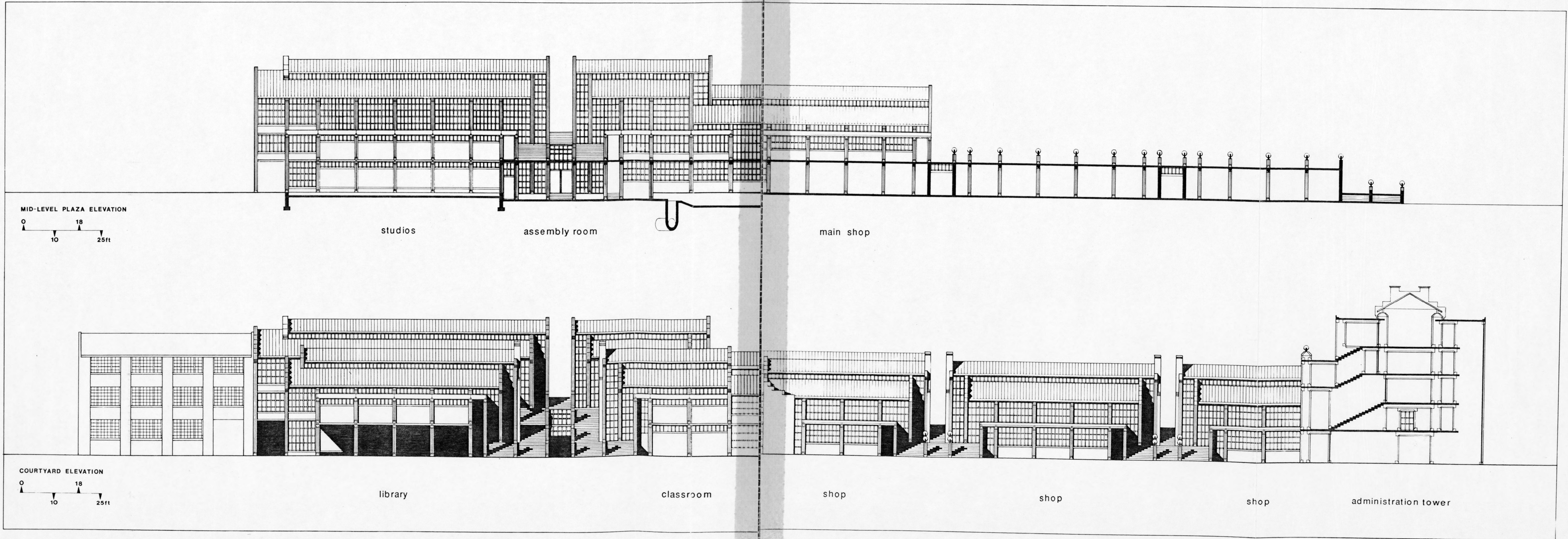
The order of the piers begins as parallel bearing walls that work in concert with precast concrete planks. Overlapping these parallel walls allows the stairs to be integrated into the building and makes beginning and end points for the rooms.

By working with a system of construction from the beginning, I hoped not only to give the project an economy but to discover the potential and possibilities of such a system.



The language of construction arises from a desire to have the details express the larger order of the project. The serrated edge of the wall is a reflection of the relationship of the piers to each other. The precast concrete end pieces then resolve the edge of the wall in relationship to the load it receives -- spreading to meet a distributed load, narrowing to meet a point load.





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