Designation

The town can't regain its former glory, but it can regain its dignity and adhere to the new way of life.

Retaining Distinction; Restructuring a Small Town

As a designer, I chose to redirect the town so that its organization becomes intelligible again. The axis of the old railroad line still has an impact because of the highway connecting the adjacent towns that were created by the railroad. The new town plan retains this axis, but rejects the encroaching 90 degree grid of the sectored country side. Instead a 45 degree grid is introduced along the axis within a triangle and inside a circle. The circle is delineated by a combination of trees, parks and water to create a boundary for the town. This boundary helps prevent horizontal sprawl and defines what is considered 'town' and 'country'. The axis of the old railroad line is countered with the major axis of the town. Along this axis landmarks are introduced; frame, facade, square, and tower. The frame allows a certain perspective for the passer-by to visually frame the major axis. The bypass is elevated to allow a better perspective of this view. The facade encroaches on the main axis and creates a threshold for the town. The square is an important space for assembly of the town. The driver must drive up onto the square to continue on the path. This slows the driver and reminds them of the importance of the square as a pedestrian space. East-West traffic is rerouted to align with the new axis of the main street. The tower anchors the major axis of the town and introduces the town to visitors arriving from the East. Visitors arriving from the West are introduced to the frame, but are led underground before they can enter the town.

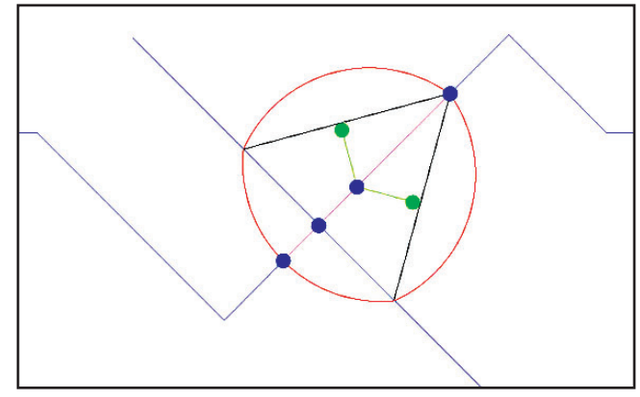
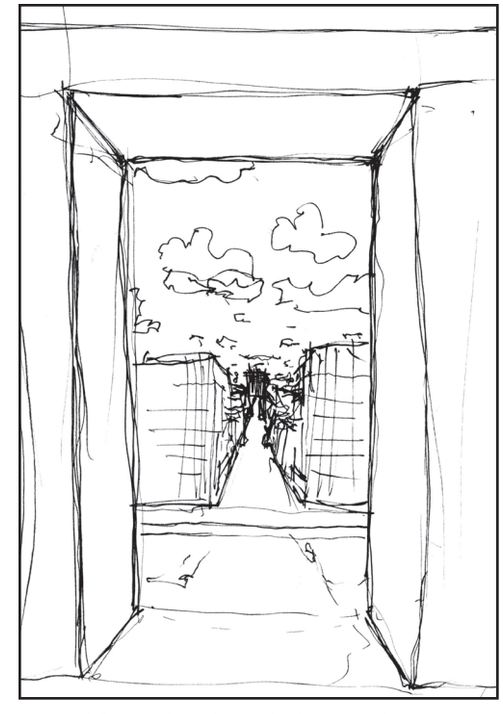
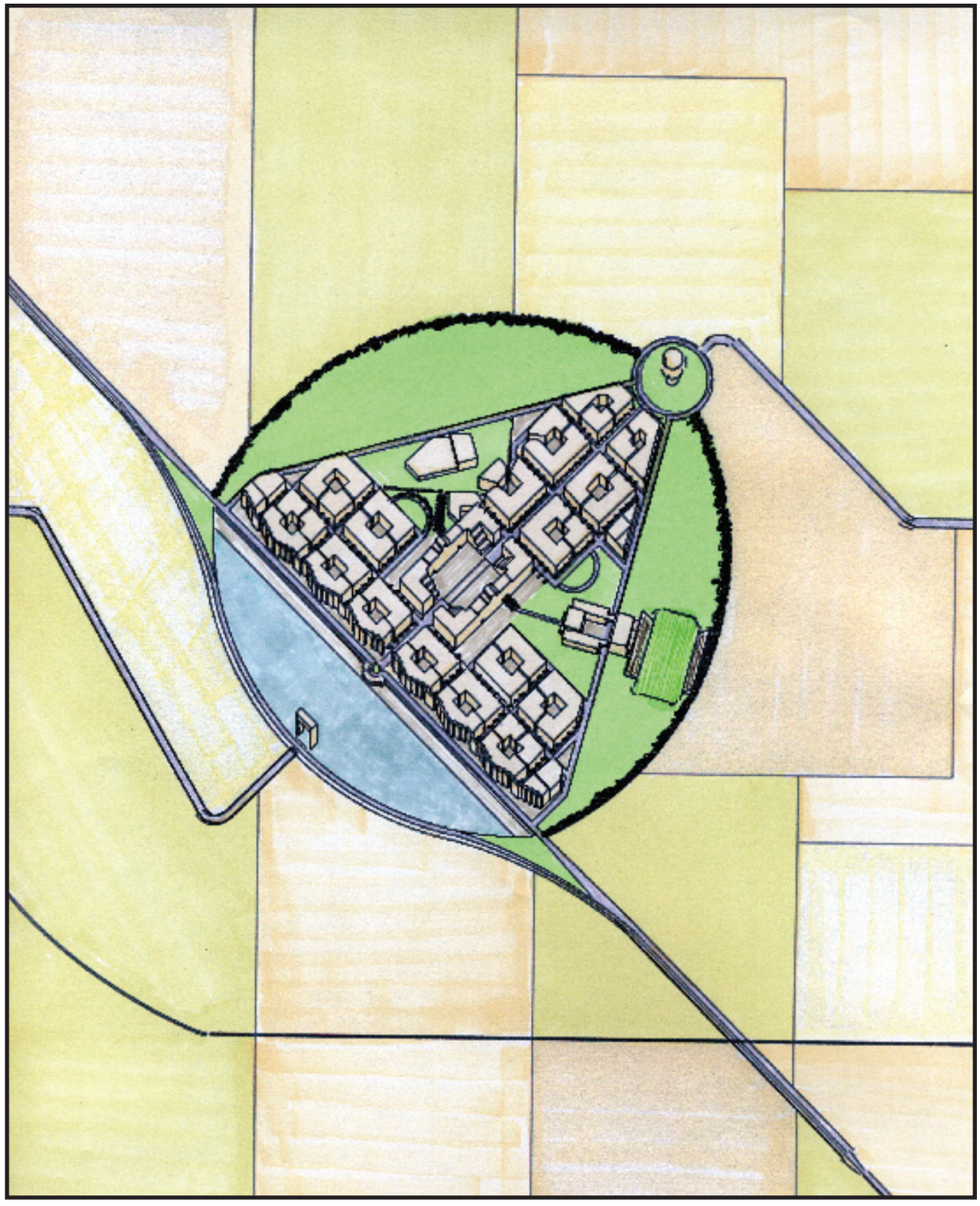


Diagram showing major axis, landmarks, and boundary.



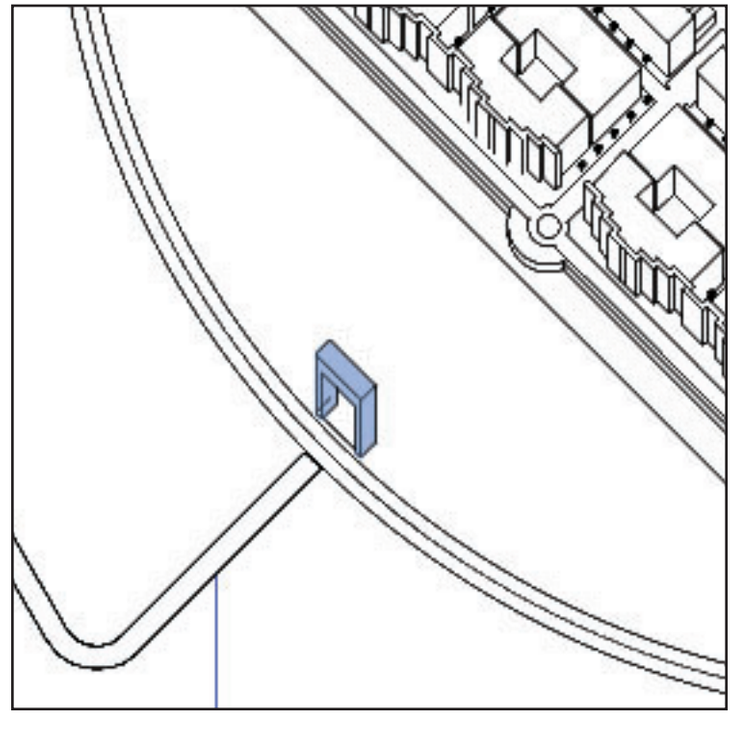
View of major axis through frame.



Highway 16 (running East-West) is redirected so that it can follow the main axis and become Main Street.

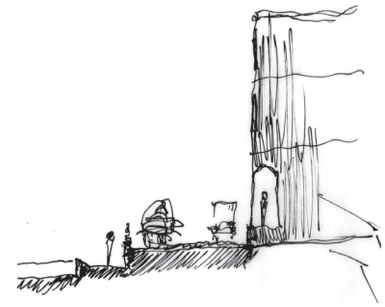
Important Lines

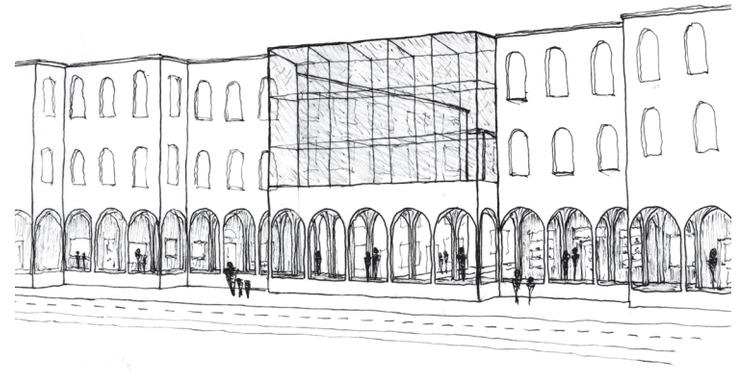
The baroque period shown through the lime avenue of Versailles, influences my design through a hierarchy of landmarks for the town. The main street begins with the frame and follows passed the façade and square and ends at the water tower. By including this baroque characteristic the town gains structure and gives the citizens a reminder of the town's importance.



Motion Picture

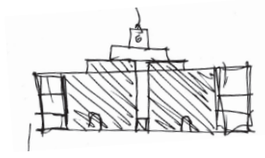
The large structure that creates a frame at the bypass is intended to frame a perspective of the town for the drivers on the bypass. It is one of the anchoring elements that make up the baroque line of structure.



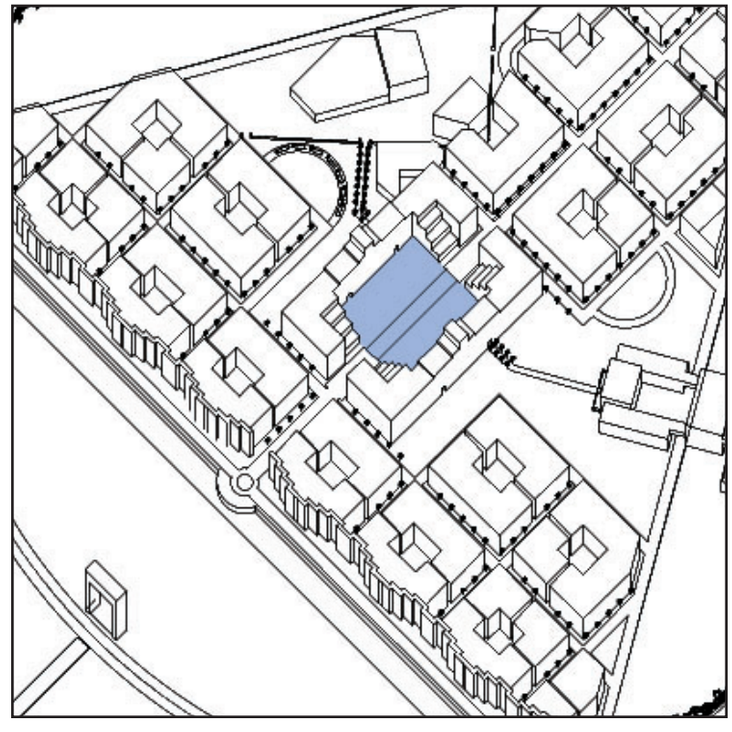


Wall to the World

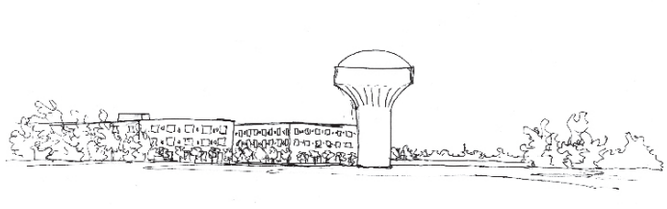
The main façade of the town acts as a screen to the bypass traffic. It prevents any knowledge of town activity until it is revealed. The façade along with the pond is the formal entry to the general public even though it isn't entered at that perspective. By extending the façade between blocks, the main street's importance is raised. The first floor is an arcade. It creates a covered space for window shopping and acts as another protective element for the town.



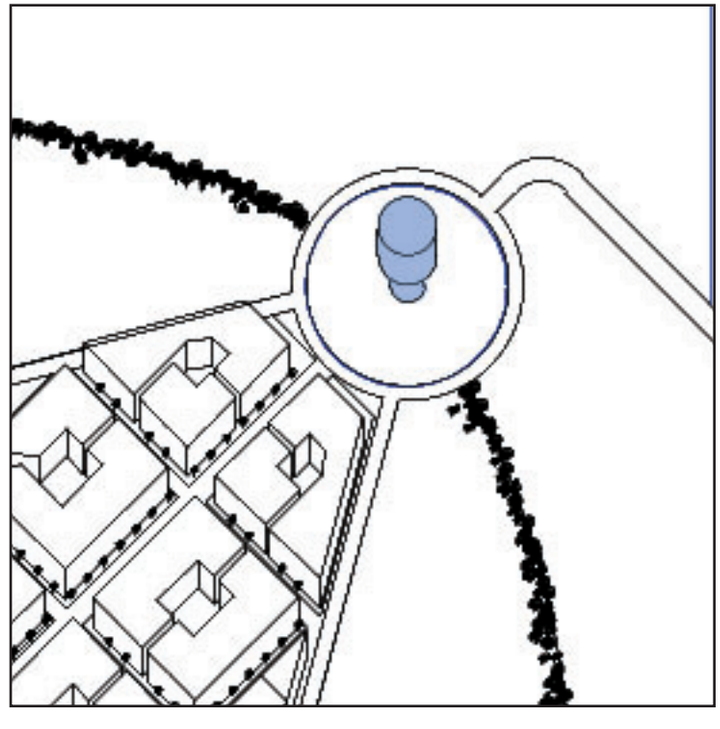
Pedestrian Owned



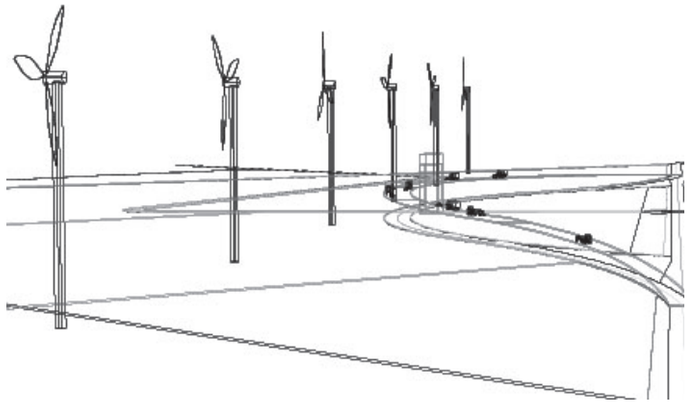
The town square is a public space meant to utilize many functions during different seasons; festivals and craft shows occur yearly, the farmer's market occurs during the summer and fall months, and restaurant dining flows into the square daily as weather permits. The plaza is a pedestrian owned space. Even though main street goes through the square, the roadway is raised to the height of the plaza. This makes the driver react by slowing down for the users. The square is accessed by main street and by the fours tunnels that allow a direct route to and from the schools.



Sign of Entry

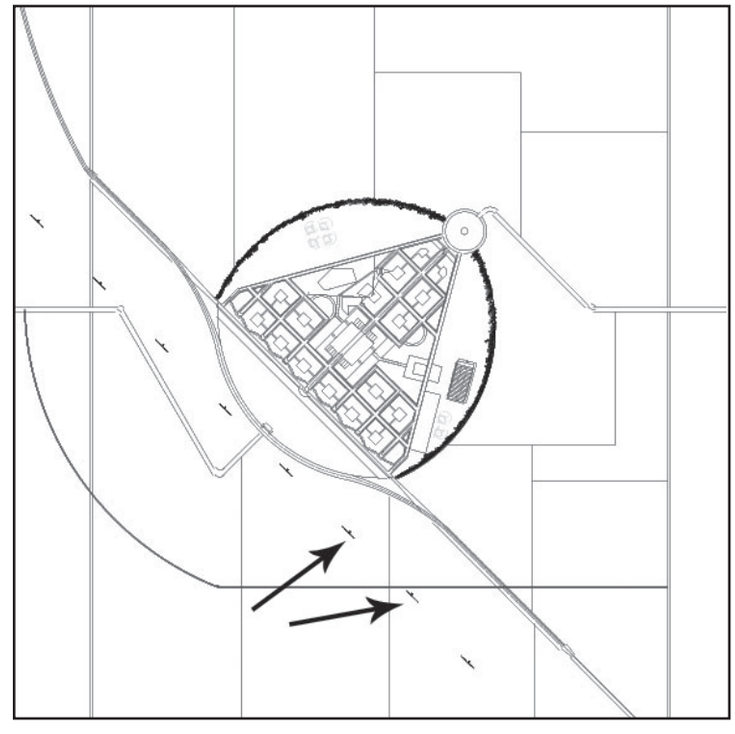


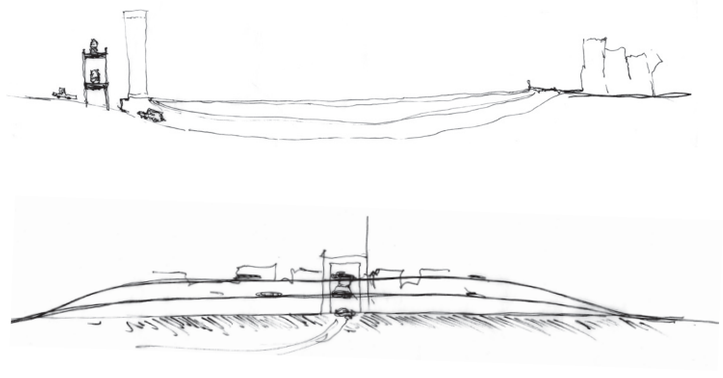
The water tower is the first element seen by the local traffic arriving from the East. Unlike the North-South traffic, this traffic is more likely trying to gain access to the town since only rural farmers live East and West of the town. They must drive along the large round-about around the water tower. The round-about acts a one threshold for the town. Traffic arriving from the West must use the threshold of the tunnel under the pond in order to enter the town.



Rhythmic Energy

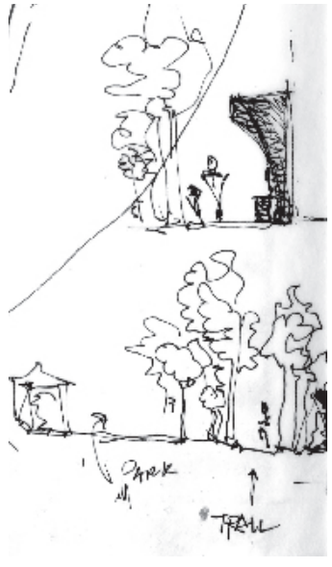
Wind turbines are placed along the bypass. They are visible miles from the town and act as a sign of modern thinking. The setting sun will cast shadows over the highway and creates a rhythm for the traffic.

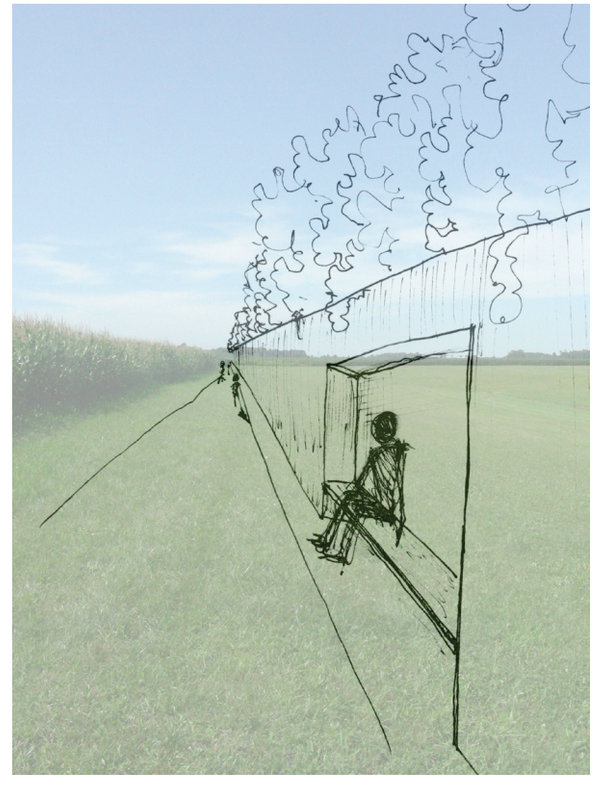


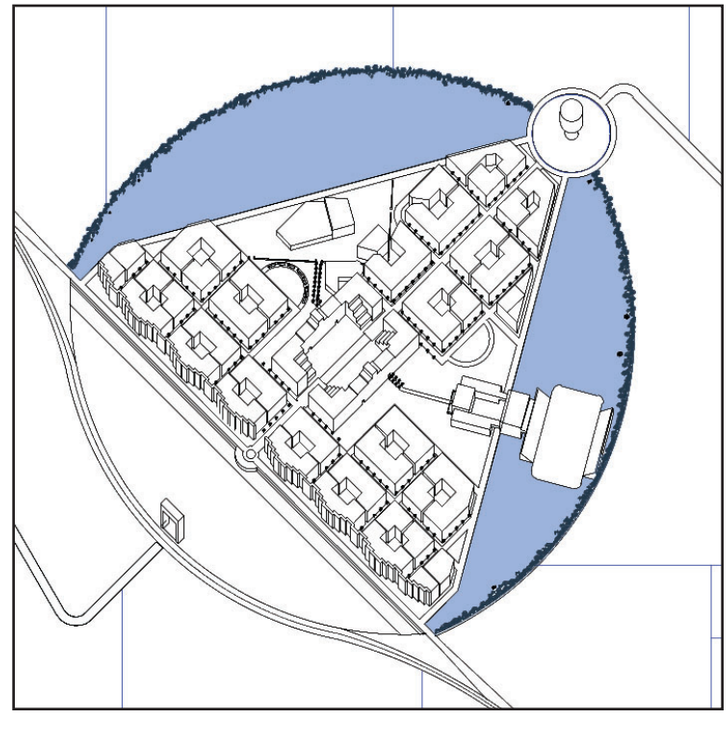


Heighten Awareness

The bypass was created so traffic not intended for the town wouldn't conflict with the town's daily life. The bypass is raised as it curves around the town in order for the drivers to get a glimpse of what they are passing by.

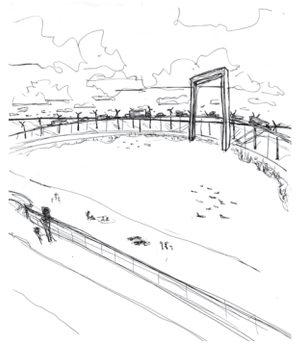






Barrier to the Country

The surrounding parks act as a barrier to the countryside by gradually sloping upwards. Trees line the circumference which holds the structure inside and prevents any connection to the country. This is an additional boundary to prevent horizontal sprawl from occurring. The parks contain recreational fields, the memorial cemetery, picnic areas, and the running path. The running path runs parallel to the tree line and borders with the neighboring fields to make a reclusive running path.

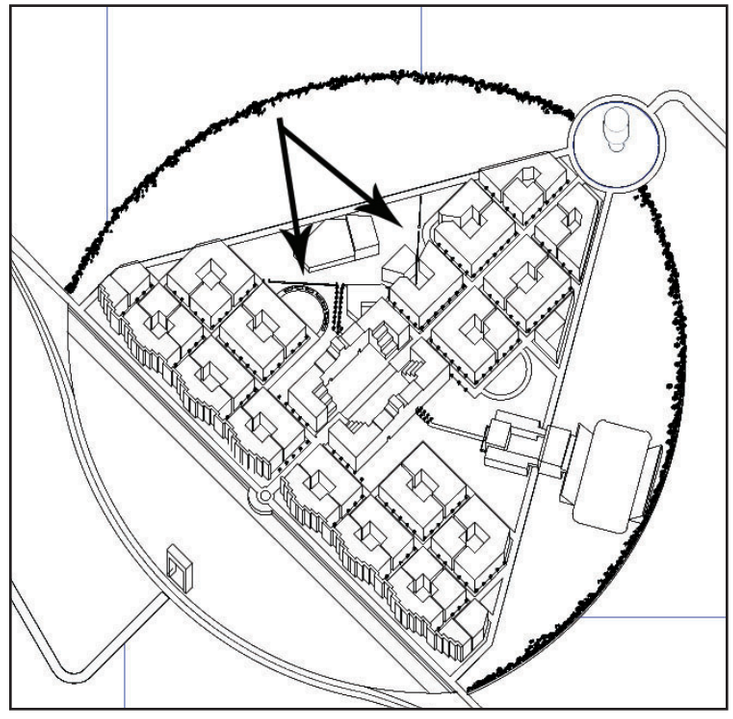


Reflection and Communication

The pond acts as boundary and as a recreational area of the town. It separates the drivers on the bypass from the drivers entering the town. The pond includes a small beach and a connection for the running path. It accepts migrating birds for local bird watchers. It becomes an ice-skating rink during the winter months.

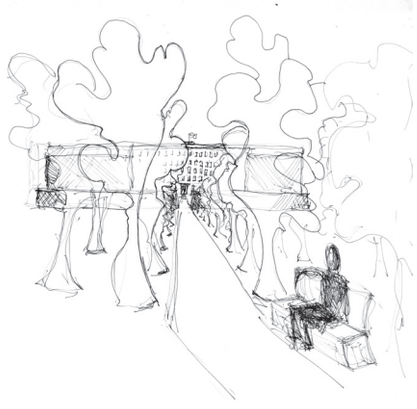
Seasonal Foliage

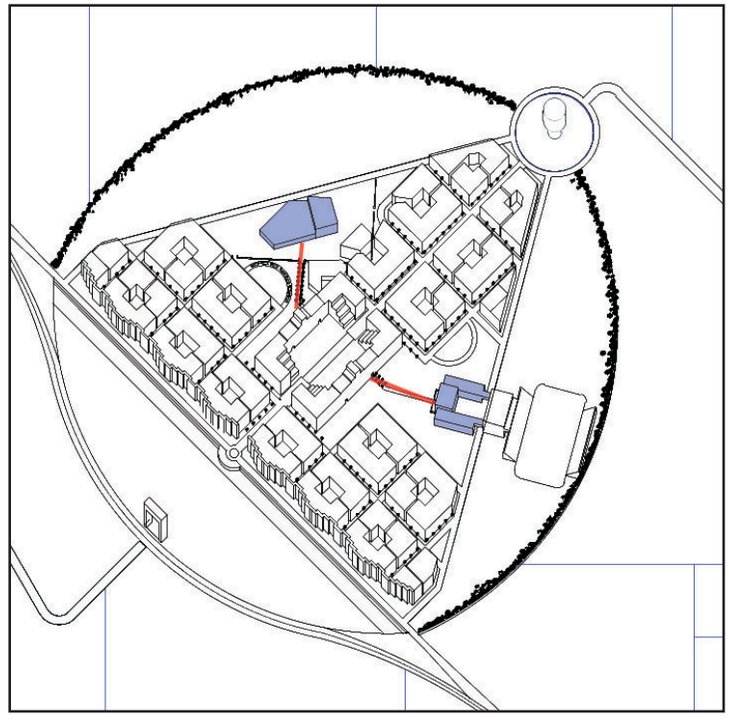
Different species of trees are utilized in different ways for different seasons. The red is the placement of Fall trees such as red maple. These secondary roads will highlight colors of Fall. The black around the parks are Winter trees such as evergreens. Other species are also in the park, but the evergreens will maintain the town boundary during the winter. The blue indicates Spring trees such as redbuds. These are placed on residential streets. The green along the main axis is the Summer trees of American Elm. The elm provide a canopy for the street and reinforces the axis.



Historical Reminder

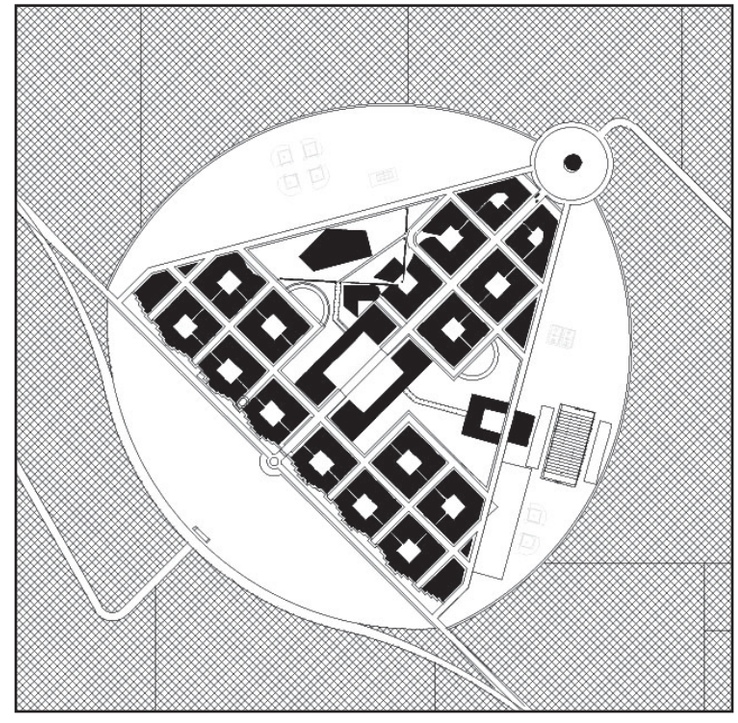
The stone wall existing from the original town is restored and retained in the new plan. Its history is one of the few elements from the old town that is worthy enough to be saved. It acts as a reminder that there once was a different layout for the town and reflects the cardinal points of the 'country grid'.





Intersecting Activities

The schools are placed on a tertiary axes that connect to the town square. Each school has an order of its own. The elementary school reacts with the angled stone wall to produce an irregular building form, while the high school has a symmetrical form but shifted along the axis. Trees line both paths from the school to the town square.



Common Privacy

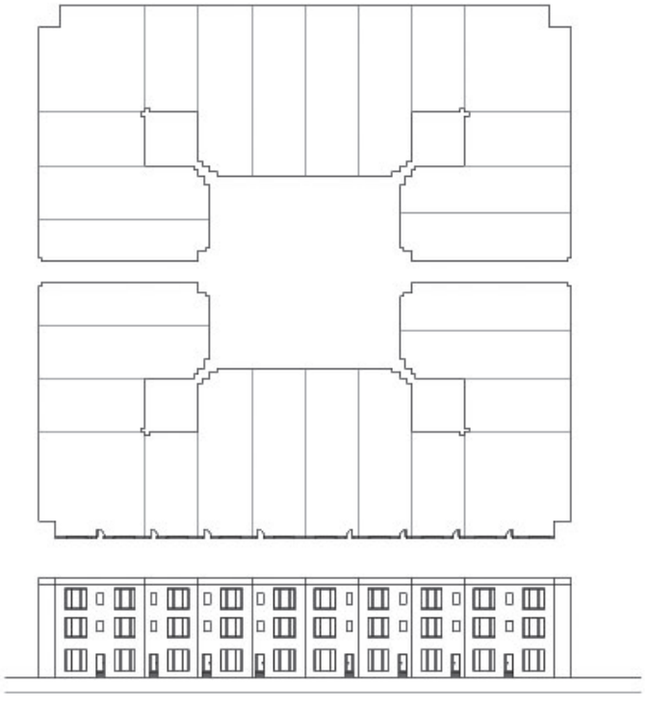
Intimate spaces such as the residential courtyards and alleys between buildings are public spaces. The shared use of the spaces allow residents to take ownership of their town. The only private spaces are inside one's home. This type of known right fosters a stronger community outside the home.

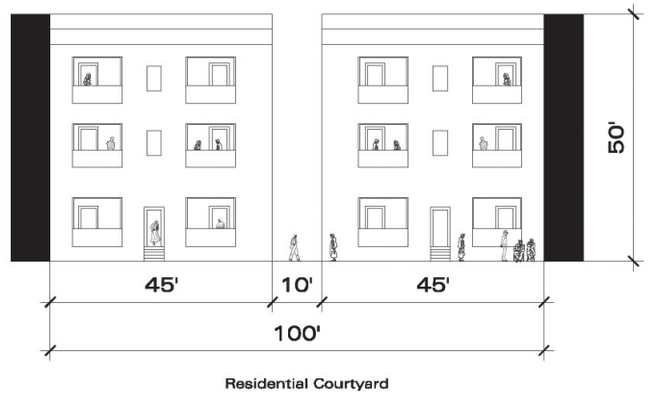
A Place to be Remembered

A memorial cemetery is placed in the north park and throughout the town. It is not a burial cemetery. It is intended for pieces of artwork or functional pieces to act as a tombstone or memorial. These pieces of artwork represent the individual so strangers may understand their soul similar to old tree stump tombstones. These tombstones are carved into the figure of a tree stump. Additional symbolic references are added such as number of branches to represent how many children they had in their lifetime. An example of a function memorial might be a bench or a fountain within the town. There is an existing burial cemetery located outside the town and can be reached via the water tower route.

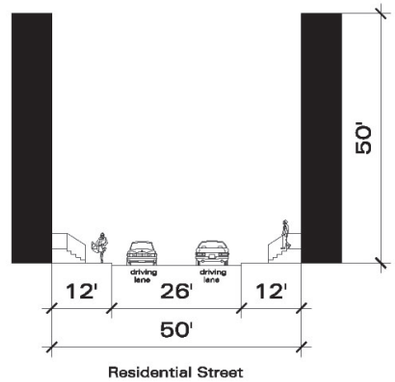
Placed Appropriately

All streets except for the plaza roadway have on-street parking. All building blocks have underground parking as well. Waffle concrete block that allows grass to grow in its openings is used for parking in the park.



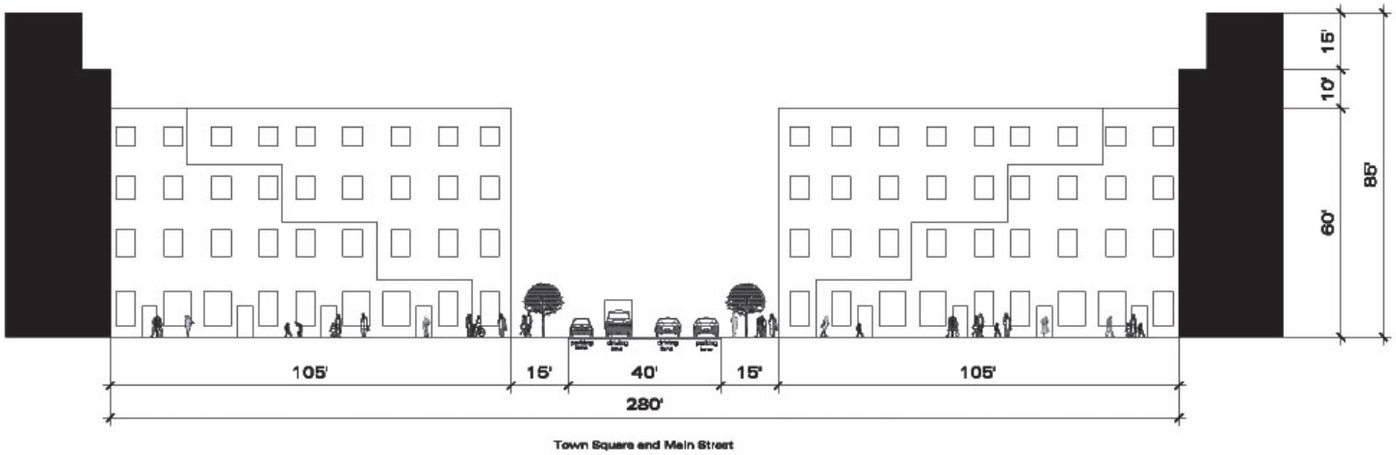


Residential Courtyard



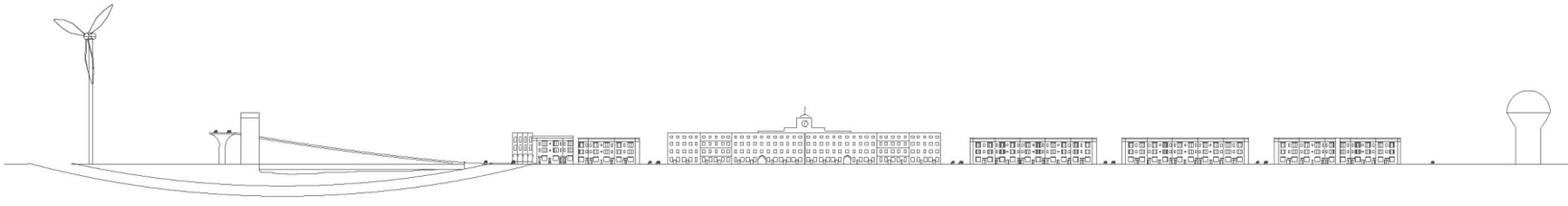
Residential Street

A typical town block is 250' x 250'. A block facing Main St. has commercial on the lower and residential above.



Town Square and Main Street

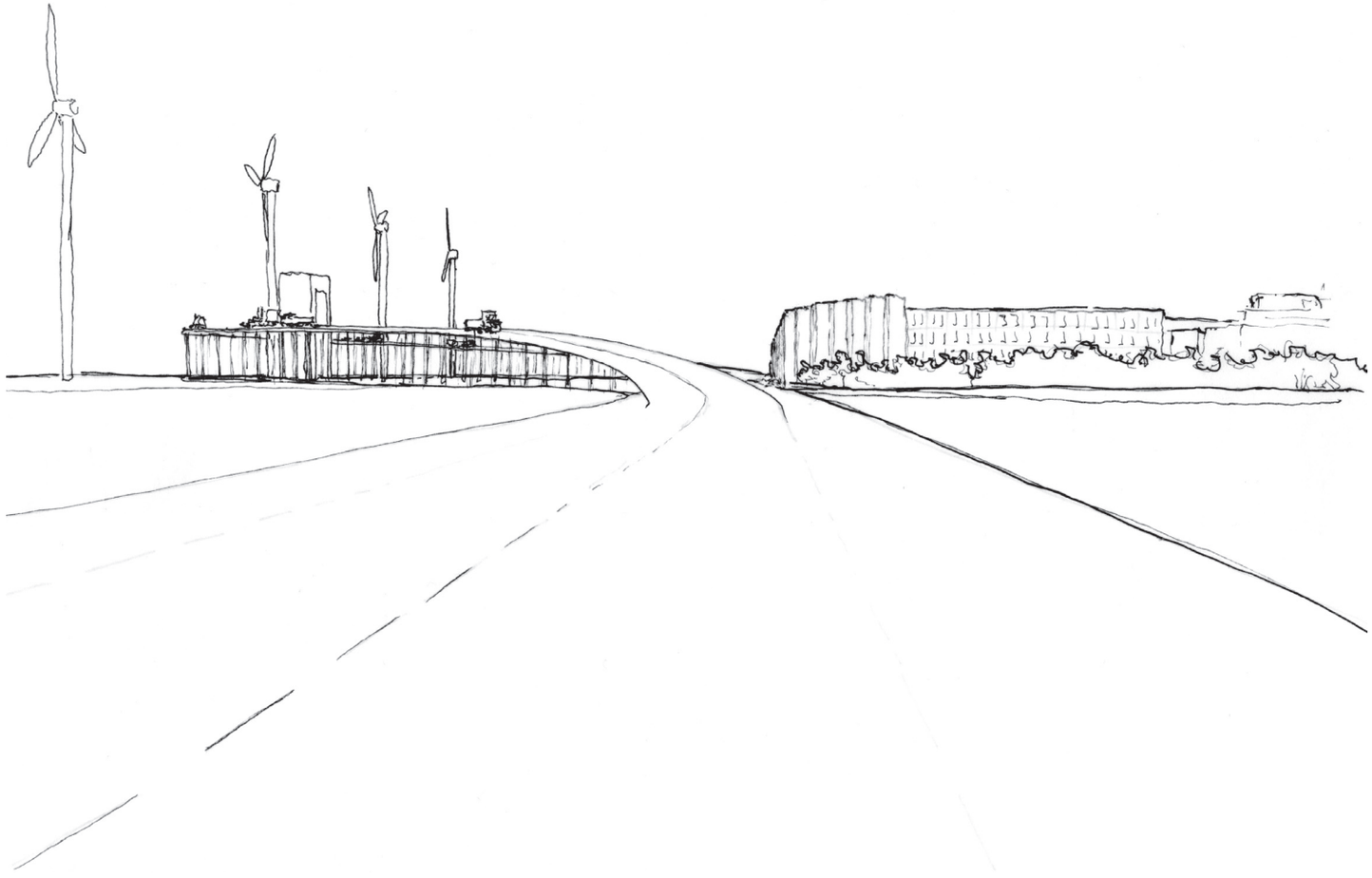
Facade of town

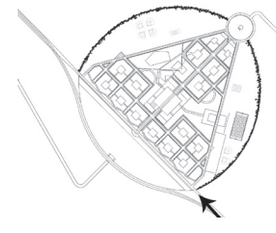


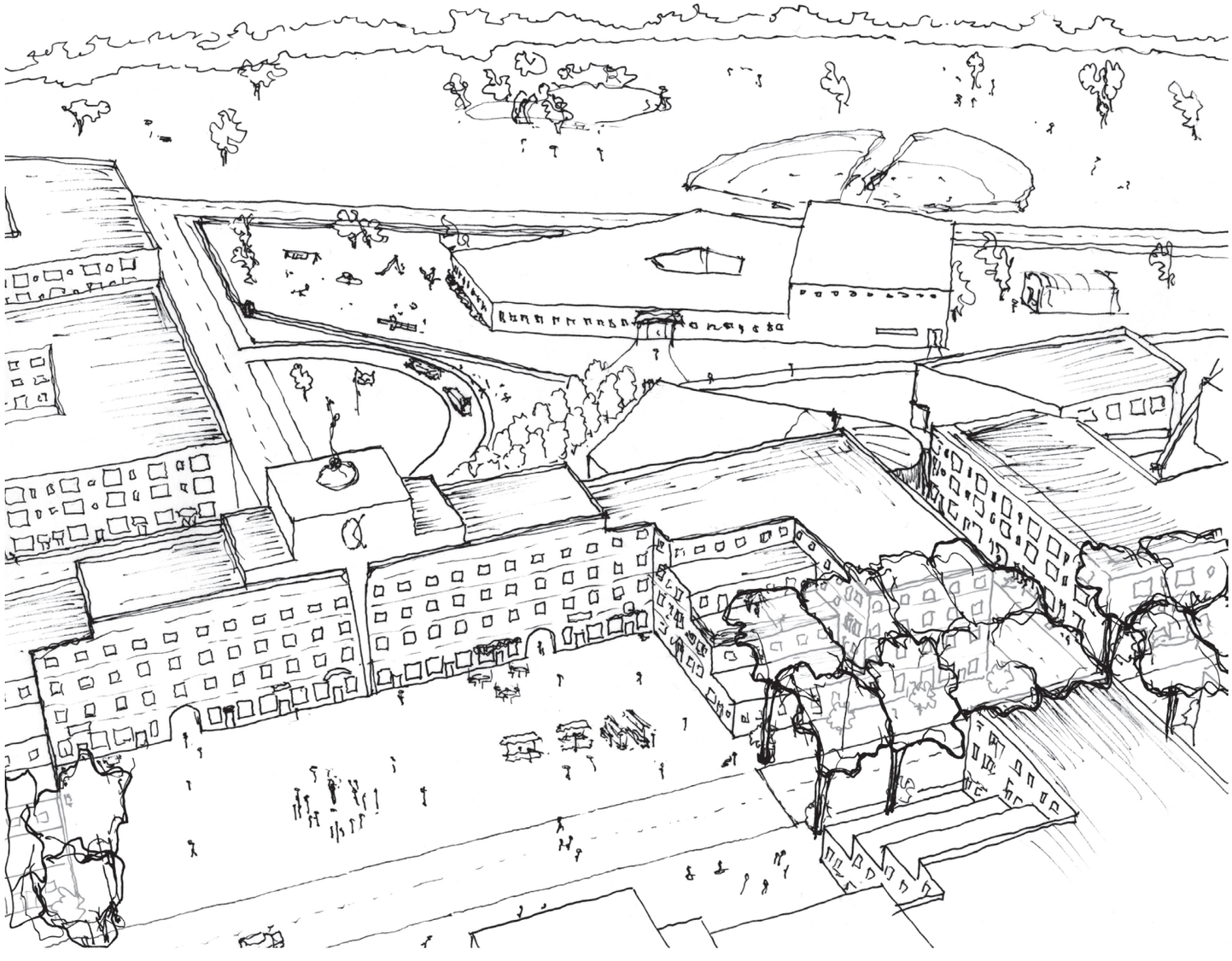
Section cut through main axis

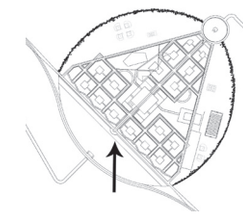
Section cut transverse to main axis

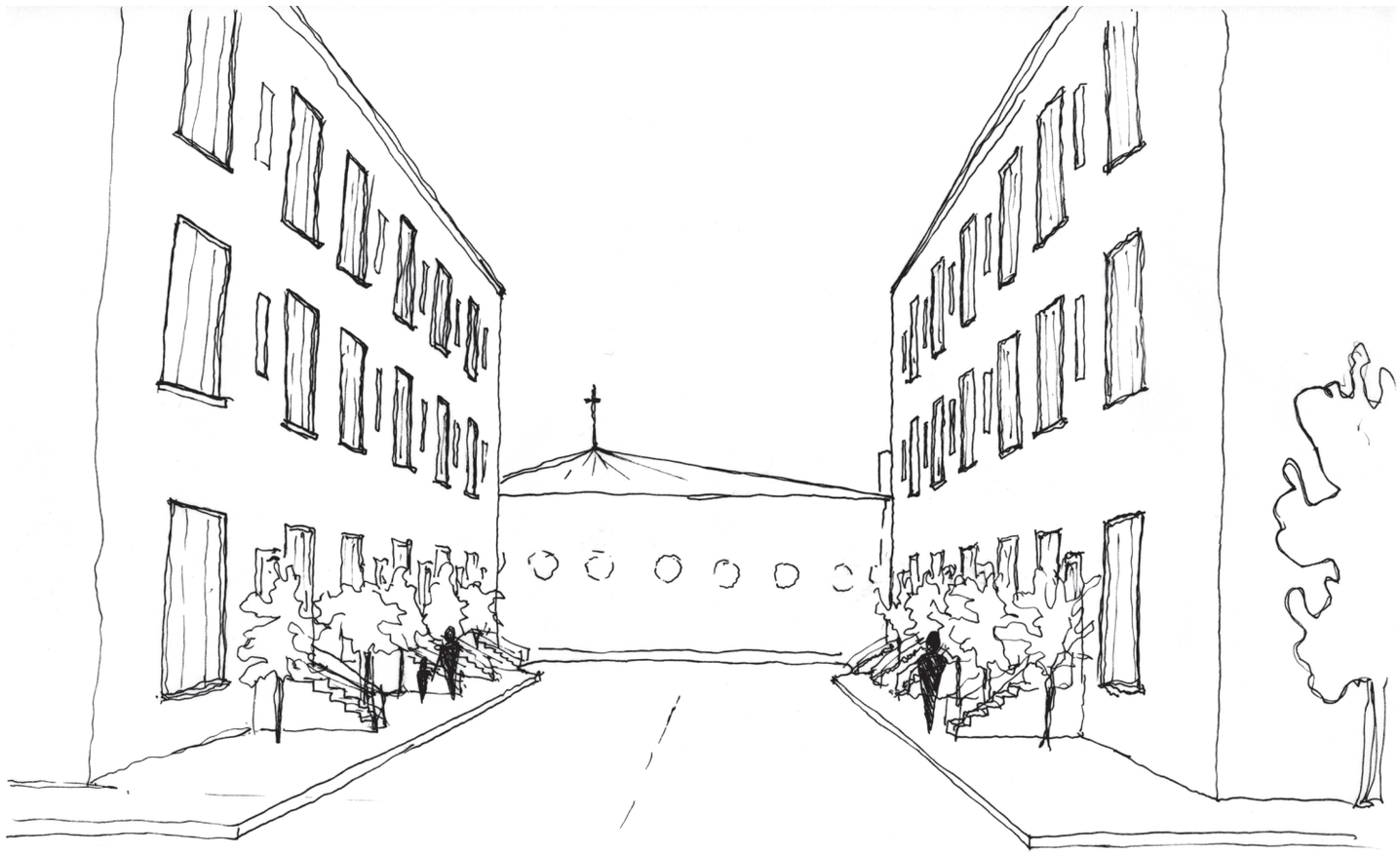
Illustrations

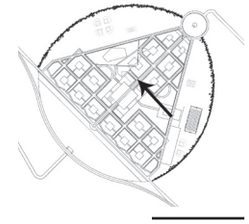












Conclusion

This thesis can never be truly tested unless a town with my proposed structure and details is built. But if it were to be built I believe that residents over time would realize an increased satisfaction in their interaction with the town. Their sense of community would become stronger. Residents wouldn't have to drive 20 minutes to dine at a restaurant or make an excuse to get away. This town is meant to be large enough to contain the diverse spatial needs of the community while still being a small town. Because of the vertical growth the new density allow new businesses to become established and thrive. Over time residents will find an overall improvement in their quality of life; a quality most never knew could be improved.

Notions

The following are thoughts that came about while creating my thesis.

America is a pessimistic country. Americans are pessimistic. As much as we would like to think of ourselves as optimistic in the sense of being dreamers we in fact are pessimistic. Building codes are put in place for our safety. So there is a huge fear that we will always get hurt. But in reality our fear is hurting us more. Fear is preventing Americans to live and enjoy life. We have strict codes to prevent accidents and prevent getting sued. The key word is accident. On the basis of the word, accident means something out of your control. So why do we put so much effort on trying to prevent something we have no control over?

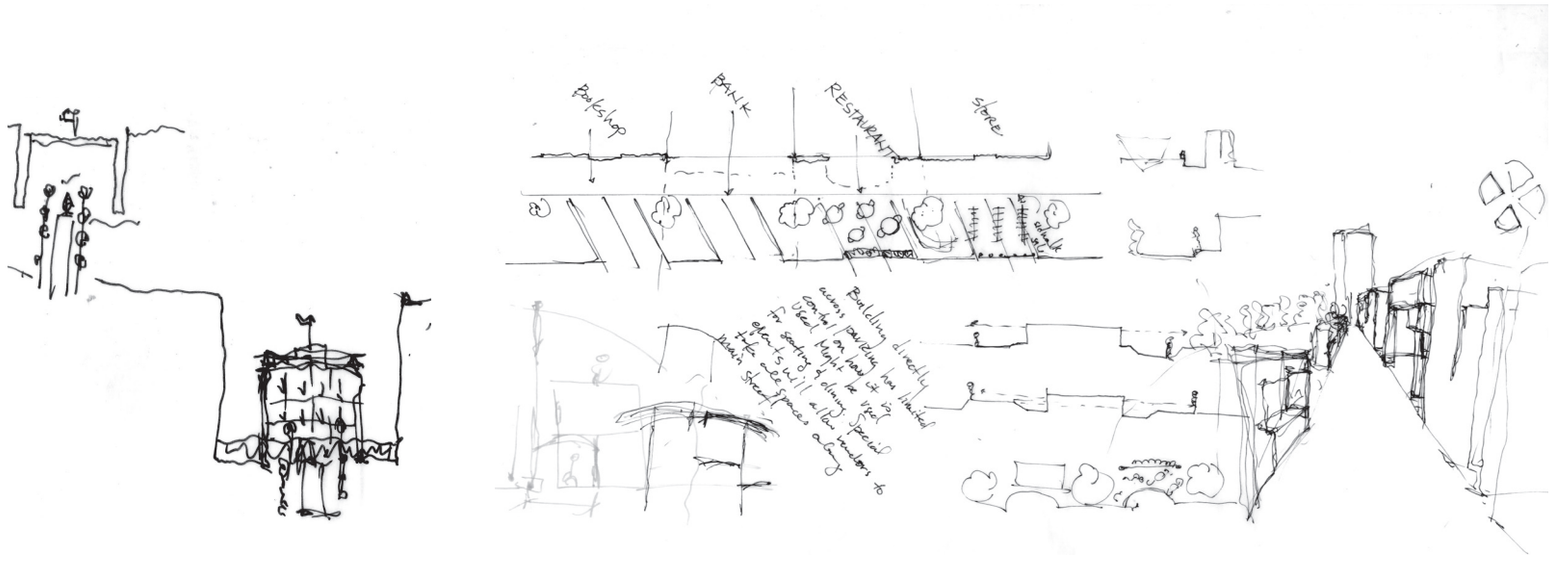
Do suburbs have neighborhoods? Those living in one would say yes, but then what are some of their distinguishing characteristics? The answer most likely sounds a lot like the 'neighborhood' next door and the one an hour away. Neighborhoods in cities do have distinguishing characteristics, such as different restaurants, parks, and specialty stores. Those in suburbs would say that they can travel to any of those things, but the key is that those in a city neighborhood don't have to. They are basically in their backyard. The amenities in a neighborhood defines a home just as much as the home defines a neighborhood. What does that say about the suburban neighborhood? Nothing, because they don't have any definition.

Slowly cities are getting rid of important elements. For example, removing city benches because the unwanted homeless use them denies the public the enjoyment of the seating when the homeless aren't using them. Our environments are being decided by law makers and businessmen. But the decisions aren't keeping our best interest in mind. By instilling fear we forget about our right to live and choose to be safe; not realizing that our quality of life is slowly diminishing. Everyone should start being optimistic about the safety of our environment. If you don't speak up it will be decided and not for you.

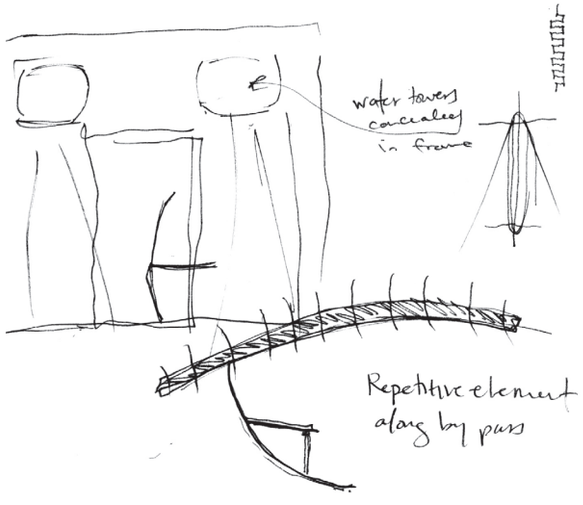
Keep meandering paths to the gardens or roads following a winding river. Man has had the capability to design and create ordered paths. Only nature can create organic beauty. Do what nature can't do; straight, ordered, grid thoroughfares. Man mustn't copy nature, unless nature prohibits an ordered path, but then the path will regain the order; it must.

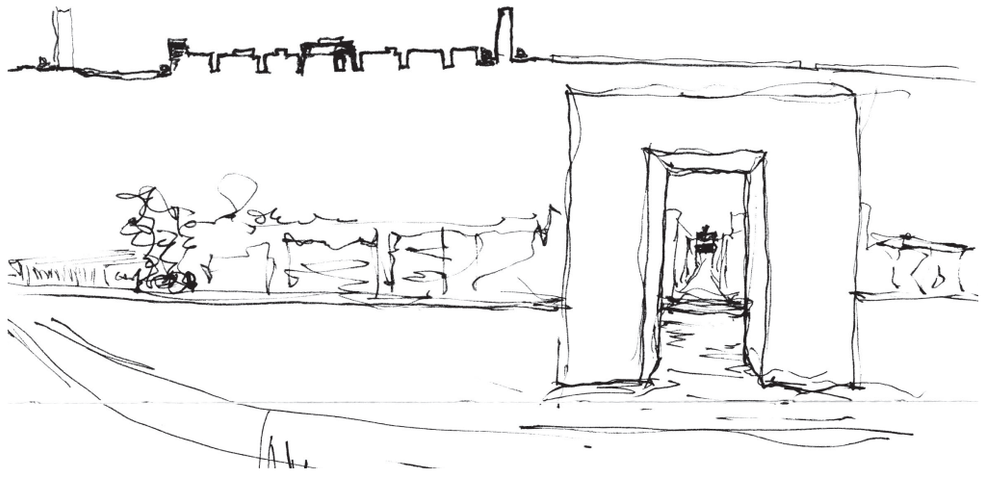
Society are architects' children We observe other parents (architects) and think we can do better. When we try we give them everything. But you can't do everything for children when they reach a certain age. We hope that through example and guidance that our children (society) will take our lead and live up to our expectations. Parents (architects) will always disagree with their children (society) on how to live, but we will never give up on them. As a future parent (architect), I am ready for that challenge.

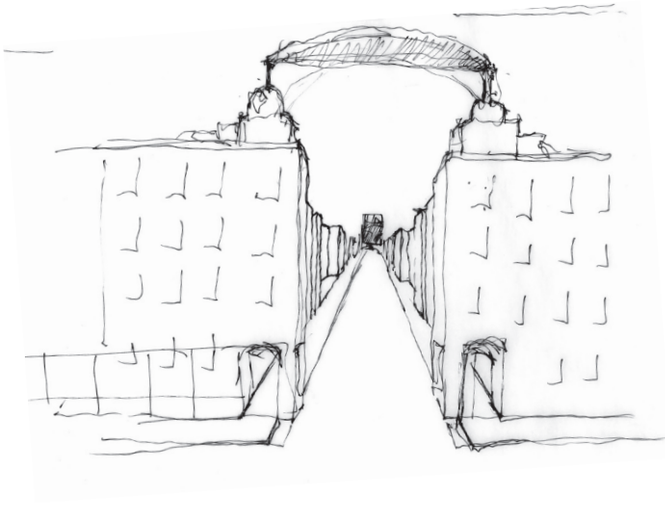
Appendix

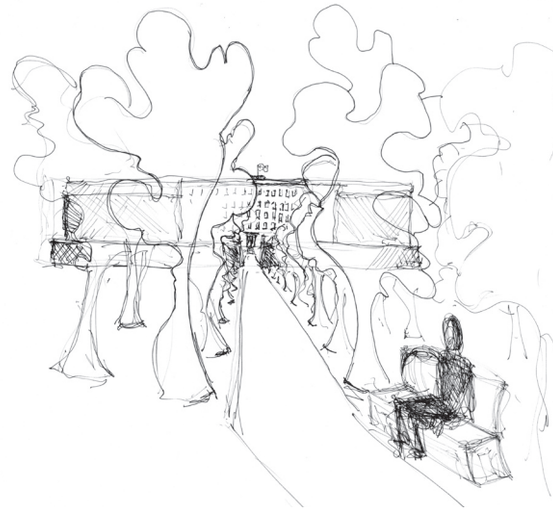


Various studies

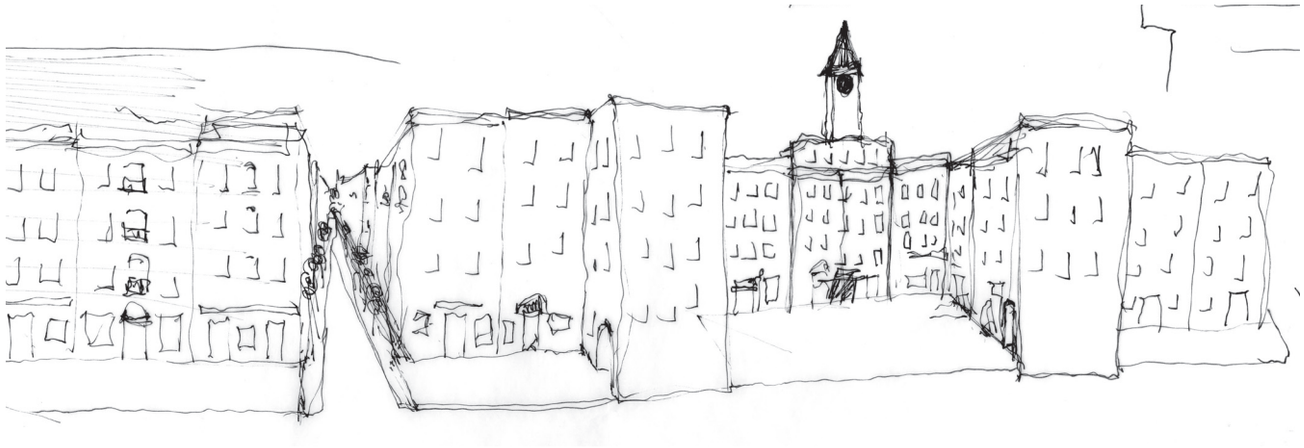


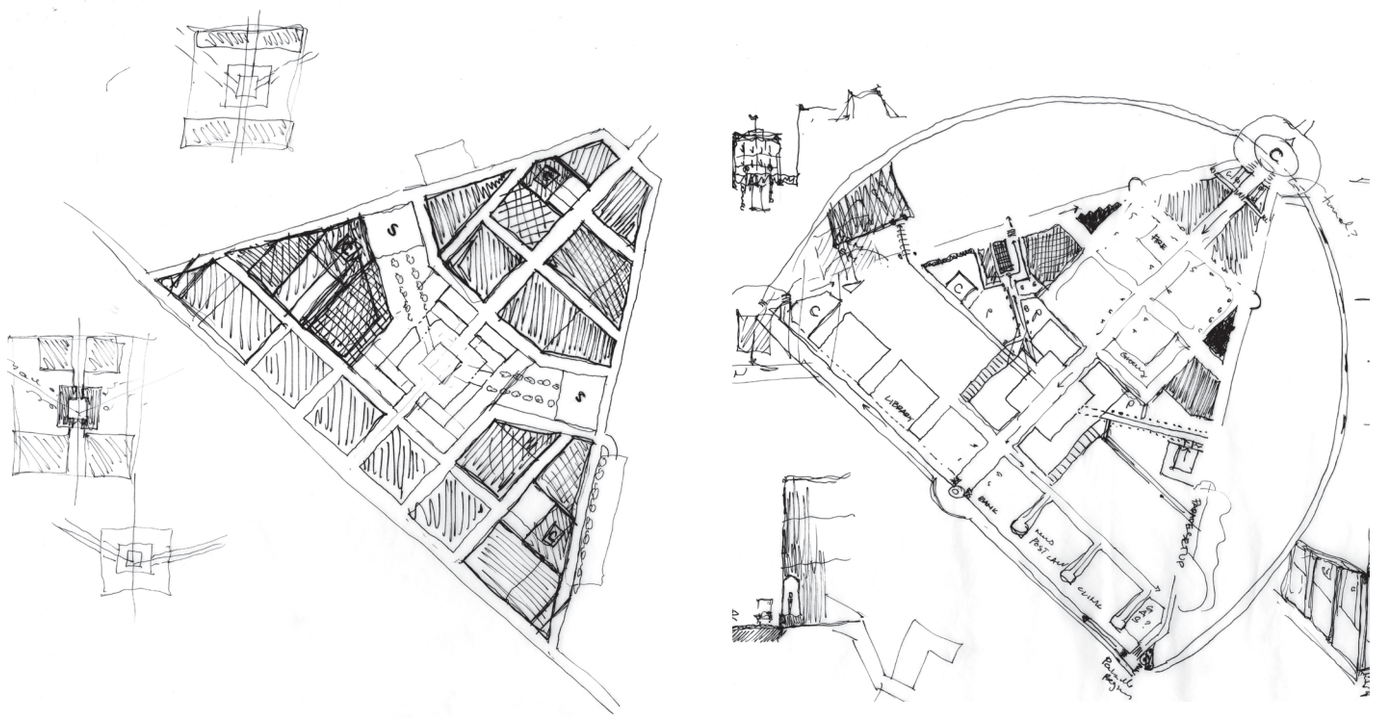






Perspective studies





Town layout and organization studies

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All photographs were taken by Rachel Malchow

All plats and maps of Royal Center, IN have been altered, but the original documents were received from the Cass County Surveyors Office in Logansport, Indiana.

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