

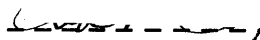
A Thematic Design Projection for a New Neighborhood in Philadelphia: Continuity and Change

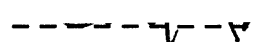
By Ian Michael Cope
B.E.D.Arch. North Carolina State University, 1981

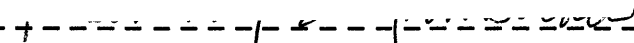
Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements of the Degree of Master of Architecture at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology
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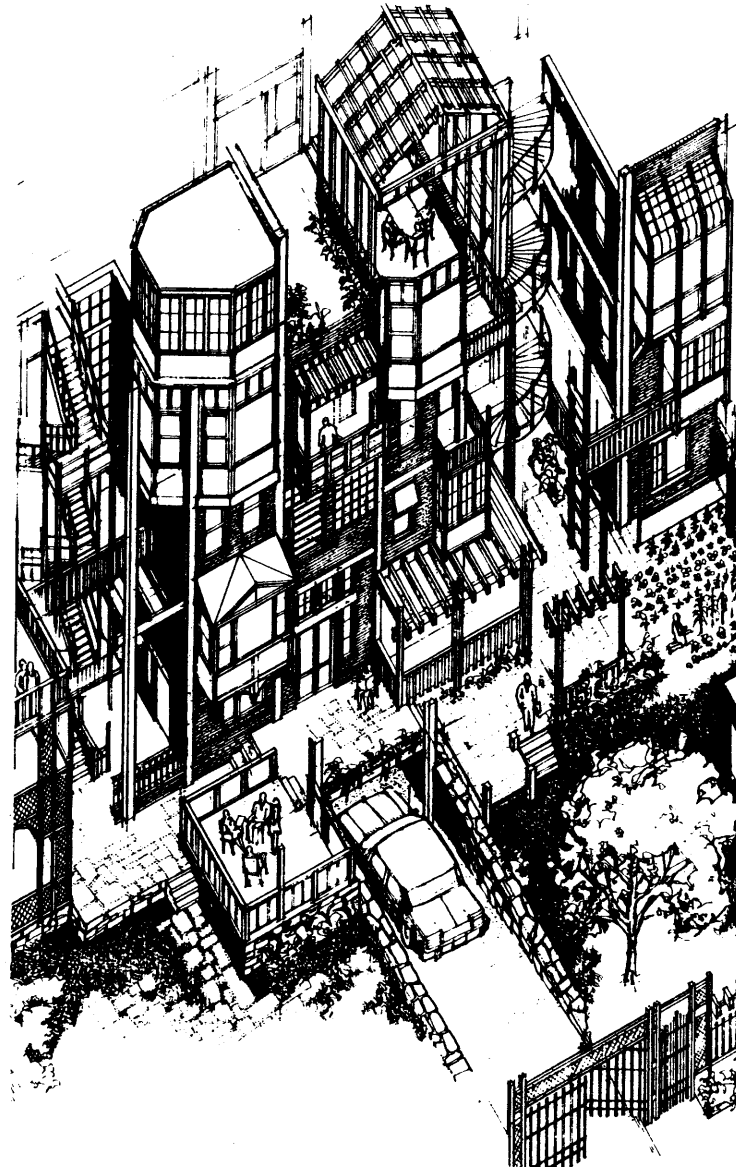
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Signature of the Author 
Ian Michael Cope
Department of Architecture, July 20, 1984

Certified by 
Stanford Anderson, Professor of History and Architecture
Thesis Supervisor

Accepted by 
Rosemary Grimshaw
Chairperson, Departmental Committee for Graduate Studies



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ABSTRACT

A THEMATIC DESIGN PROJECTION FOR A NEW NEIGHBORHOOD IN PHILADELPHIA: CONTINUITY AND CHANGE

By Ian Michael Cope

Submitted to the Department of Architecture on July 20, 1984
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the
Degree of Master of Architecture.

This thesis represents an effort to integrate a number of related notions about building within a city. The format of the exercise is a design projection for a new neighborhood within an existing urban context. Intended not as a comprehensive solution, but rather as a primer, the design poses an alternative way to address this particular problem.

The premise of this study is the contention that new themes derived from a balance between continuity and change, with respect to the context, may yield a framework that is receptive to the variations necessary to accommodate a range of people and activities, in a rich environment that is easily understood. While this exploration is limited to the physical nature of a new neighborhood, it is based on an interest in both the aesthetic qualities and functional considerations, which are viewed here as inseparable.

This document is divided into four distinct parts. The introduction provides a concise outline of the ideas and attitudes that helped to shape the design. These are drawn from a variety of sources. Following this, the general context is examined, at various scales, in qualitative terms. These are presented as patterns or models. The third section discusses the specific site and a previous proposal for the development of the area. The final section is comprised of the design itself, and an accompanying description.

Thesis Supervisor: Stanford Anderson
Title: Professor of History and Architecture

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Special thanks are due to Professor Stanford Anderson for his sensitive criticism, generous commitment of time and patience with an often needlessly obstinate pupil. Many of the best decisions made during the course of the semester were the direct result of his influence. I am particularly grateful for being given the latitude to pursue ideas, perhaps contrary to his own sensibilities.

My readers, Dean Jean DeMonchoux and Prof. Shun Kanda were particularly helpful in establishing a framework for the thesis.

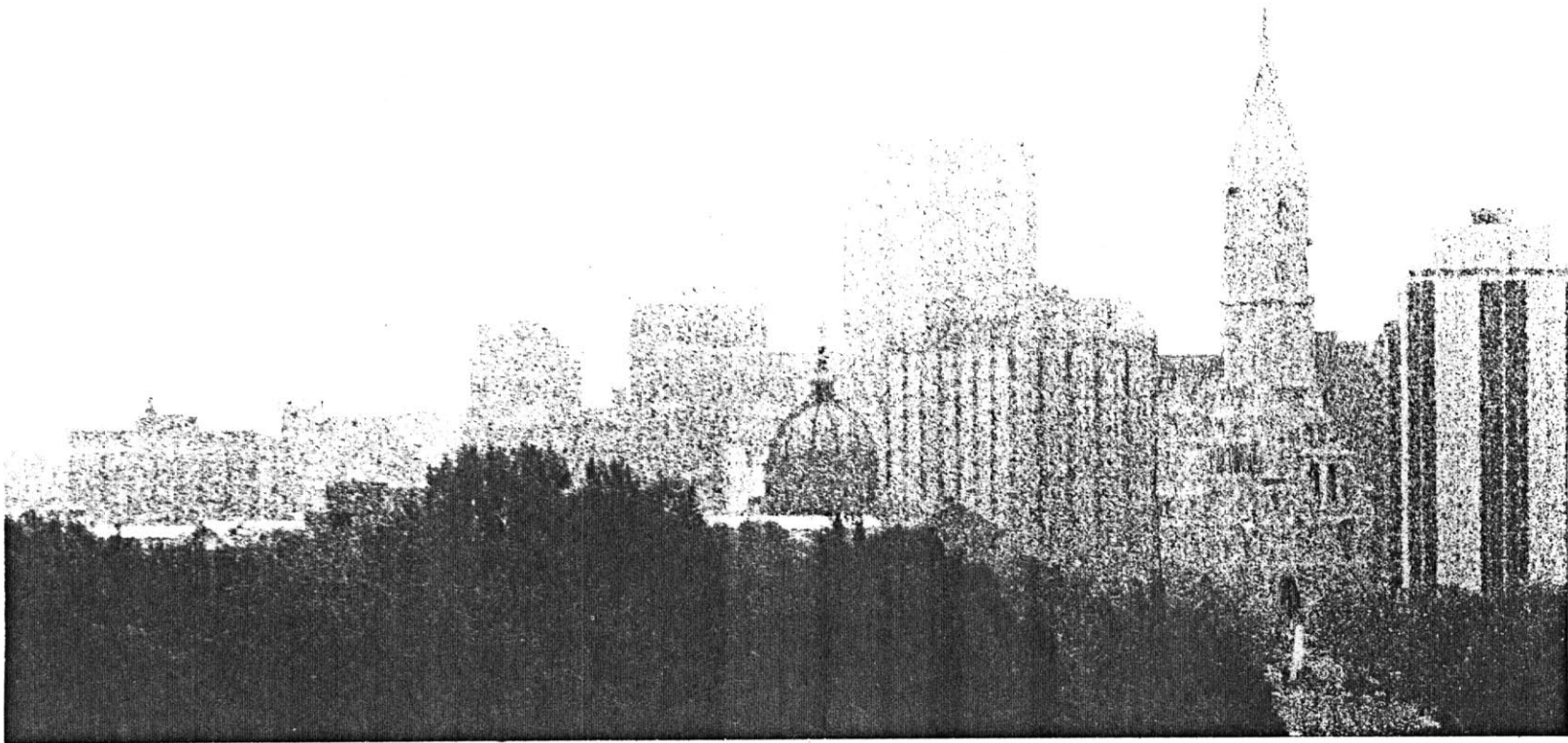
I wish to thank my parents (all four of them!) for their seemingly limitless support and encouragement. They have continued to share their love and express their confidence in me at times when it must have been terribly difficult to do so.

I am indebted to Ken Diener for a close and loyal friendship that has endured the experience of two rigorous schools and six, often difficult, years. On matters both academic and personal, his advice (whether solicited or not!) has proved to be most reliable. He has made the journey much easier!

My good friends and roommates, Dominic, John, Leah, Mark and Nancy have provided a a great environment for my too frequent retreats from school. Nancy has been particularly helpful in "getting over the hump" as typist and sometime editor.

Mei Chen,

萬分感謝你在那困難的時候所提供的強有力的鼓勵、深沉的愛和表現出的耐心。你那甜密的聲音與誘人的微笑時時在促我前行。我是多麼想念你啊！現在我們該走向生活了。



An environment that cannot be changed invites its own destruction. We prefer a world that can be modified progressively, against a background of valued remains, a world in which one can leave a mark alongside the marks of history.

Kevin Lynch
1918-1984

INTRODUCTION

The initial motivation for pursuing a design thesis at the urban scale was an interest in exploring, in general terms, what is meant by the "character" of a place and more importantly how one could go about developing such a thing. Obviously there is a certain naivety about the very premise as one does not design the character of a place; one designs the place from which the character, good or bad, is the result. This is particularly true in the case of a building. But if we are referring to a larger area, comprised not of one building but many, with a range of functions all to be designed and built by individuals with perhaps divergent interests and tastes, how does this place achieve any coherence or continuity? Need it read as a collective concerted effort? Or should new development in the city reflect all of those different influences in a seemingly random fashion?

A number of attitudes helped to shape the design exercise that follows. These attitudes are an agglomeration of the thoughts of this student and of those more eminently qualified. A number of quotations and illustrations have been excerpted (or perhaps, usurped!) from various works. These notions about building in the city, run from the very general to the quite specific. By no means, however, is this thesis a treatise on architectural theory. Nevertheless, some of these more generic attitudes warrant, at least, brief mention.

"Continuity" and "change" may be seen as disparate or contradictory. Nevertheless, these form much of the dialogue of urban design. Virtually every design embodies characteristics of both. The degree to which a project reflects change or continuity, with respect to this context, in terms of its image and/or function, can obviously vary a great deal. Regardless of

the balance that is finally achieved, it is implied that the design is a thoughtful response to both the context and the needs derived from its own program.

Continuity, defined as "uninterrupted succession or persistence without essential change," may suggest something of a static nature. With respect to physical form it may possess characteristics of familiarity, or the capacity to "blend-in." In the negative sense it may be associated with mimicry or monotonous replication -- what is often held out as a continuity is in fact a jump back in time under a nostalgic veil. A prime example of this is "Main Street U.S.A." at Disneyland or the more perverse examples of recent designs based quite literally on antiquity, or a popular image thereof. Here, there is an expressed desire to make continuous that which has actually been separated or lost by time and distance.

The inverse of this is "change." It has positive connotations of progress, newness and perhaps novelty. Accompanying these traits, however, may be sentiments of apprehension and

unfamiliarity. The notion of extreme change may conjure images of the "futurist" cities where little reference to familiar forms and super-technical solutions allude to wholly new activities and social orders. For better or worse, the aesthetic of change, in reality, often has an overly complex rationale with only tenuous links to significant changes in the way we live.

A general characteristic of the modern movement, which eagerly sought change, is an overt disregard of the built physical context, unless of course it is modern. This was not an omission, but rather a calculated and intentional effort. It was felt, in that temporal context, that any reference to, or perpetuation of the status quo would undermine the message and admit to a satisfaction with what was then perceived to be, intolerable and obsolete conditions.

Perhaps in an effort to "make a statement" (an expression still commonly used by many architects), new buildings within the city became object and isolated, rather than part of a larger whole. Designed from the inside out, the



volumes and vocabulary were purported to be the natural result of functional considerations internal to the building. The new structures occupied urban space instead of forming it as] generations of buildings had done. Accompanying this attitude, a new, unrelenting vocabulary, to be finely honed by machine, reflected "the spirit of a new age."

While the more theoretical propositions (most of which were never built) did advocate major changes in the social order of society, the bulk of the projects to this day have simply carried forth the questionable spatial values and pieces of the modern aesthetic without advancing many substantive positive changes. Today, many of the tenets of Modern Architecture and certainly many of its manifested forms are being criticized for their alleged insensitivity to human needs. Terms like "brutal," "inhumane," "banal," and "totalitarian" abound in the litany that attacks the Movement for lacking many of the very same qualities that formed its *raison d'etre*. This has led to the recent backlash of historicist design that

often seeks continuity with times and places where things may be romantically perceived to have been "better."

While continuity and change were addressed here in the most brief and polemic terms, the inadequacy of trying to design by greatly emphasizing one over the other should be apparent. Although not a novel idea, this suggests that perhaps characteristics of both should be thoughtfully tempered. This seems especially true where the design occurs in an existing physical context that be shown to have a viable character of its own.

We are all familiar with the often common criticism that new housing projects, office buildings and the like, "have no character." That is a very simple way of saying that they lack the distinction that would separate them from the abyss of mediocrity. When pressed for a favorable reference, people will often refer to what is familiar to them, "ideal" places nearby. They seem perfectly willing and able to suggest things more domestic and locally appropriate, than the obscure precedents or novel

images so often used in the great Masterplan. What is sought in this thesis is a partial but recognizable continuity with that which is very real, familiar and alive; the context -- where change occurs, as Lynch put it, "against a background of valued remains."

If one accepts the notion that architecture and urban planning possess, only a very limited capacity to determine changes in activities or effect changes of behavior, in any predictable manner, then it seems no more arbitrary to adopt certain "good" and familiar characteristics from a given context, than to simply accept an aesthetic that merely implies ongoing change. It seems quite reasonable to direct change towards more immediately realistic and readily obtainable solutions to the inadequacies within our current paradigm of urban life. There seems to be an ample number of moderate problems to warrant specific well-conceived solutions rather than proposals for quantum or radical change.

This leads to what William Ellis, when discussing the work of Colin Rowe, describes as "a discourse between ideal types and imperfect

contexts" where change is understood to be "the incremental subversion of the status quo." To further define the dialectic view that Rowe's contextualism tries to mitigate, Ellis notes that "the concept of perfect and perfectable type was inherited from modernism. The renewed concern for continuing contexts was a reaction against it." In the most general terms, it is the same argument between ideal type and imperfect context that has guided this thesis. However, in this exercise there is no attempt to integrate the spatial values associated with the Modern movement, with those espoused by the traditional city. Instead, "ideals", which could be viewed as modern, are in the form of more modest solutions, such as an equitable distribution of open space, the establishment of minimum standards for dwelling units and the provision of ample parking.

There is obviously some overlap and ambiguity between ideal type and imperfect context, for there may be certain elements of the context itself, which are popularly viewed as ideal or near-perfect. Furthermore, the

"ideal type" or universal solution, at the building or block level, may be neither an obtainable nor, in the interest of variety, a desirable aim. The proposal presented in this thesis tries to establish something of an idealized type at the building level in the form of parcels which can be manipulated to form spatial qualities that are reminiscent of the context. This idealized type is illustrated only as a guide for incremental growth. The scenographic qualities of the facades, for example, are also, to some extent, reminiscent of the context. However, the design was developed both inductively and deductively. While many of the design decisions were deduced from patterns found within the larger context, the actual plan is the result of the inductive agglomeration of individual buildings with qualities unique to the place.

In pursuit of "character" however, there is every indication that simple continuity with the context, especially in the plan of a new neighborhood, is not enough. Character is born of distinction. The aspects of continuity cannot

override the qualities that establish "place value." Numerous studies by Kevin Lynch and others point to people's awareness of particular characteristics that identify specific regions. Those neighborhoods or larger districts that have the strongest "imageability" have a degree of continuity within themselves but more importantly have easily-perceived qualities that differ from the surrounding area. Often the areas commonly cited in Lynch's studies, such as Beacon Hill and the Back Bay, have a recognizable "thematic unit" or repeated type within which subtle variations occur.

Closely related to continuity and change is the notion of "theme and variation." This Norberg-Schulz states, "allows for the expression of individual identity within a system of manifest common meanings. Thus it conserves the 'spirit' of the place without making it become a lifeless straightjacket." Usually the product of the incremental growth of groups of smaller buildings, this general characteristic is evident in urban form throughout history.

Peter Smith, in his work Urban Aesthetics, uses the term "rhythm and rhyme" to describe the same effect, where within a more or less repetitive framework there is a pattern where there may be "no point-to-point correspondence but nevertheless substantial affinity." He goes on to describe a picturesque scene in Normandy where "at first it seems to be a case of amicable anarchy, but then gradually an awareness of pattern supercedes complexity. ... Where just the right balance has been struck between autonomy and subordination to the whole." Smith continues to build a strong argument regarding the perception of theme and variation, that demystifies the qualities of what we often refer to as "charm" or "character."

The experiential qualities of theme and variation, however, are not limited to small buildings or areas. Nor is it a question of style. Even where the grain is substantially larger than the single house, a system of patterns can emerge where subtle variants mediate likeness with difference.

As previously mentioned, this design exercise represents an effort to establish a fairly committed, but certainly amendable framework that might serve as a guide, or model, for the subsequent, incremental growth of smaller pieces of a larger area. It is intended to be descriptive rather than prescriptive. Unlike a performance statement however, it renders a clear, if arguable, image of what might occur in the framework, assuming that various discrete interests would be involved in its development. In contrast to the often, overly-ambiguous nature of the Masterplan, this type of exercise tries to simultaneously address issues at the large and small scale.

The visionary "Masterplan", if not a product of the Modern movement, has definitely flourished during its reign. As they almost invariably work in an deductive and subtractive manner, they are usually accompanied by a high level of uncertainty, until successively smaller stages have been "responsibly" resolved. The attendant ambiguity does, on the surface, serve a purpose, as it encourages the viewer, be it

the developer, architect or potential occupant to mentally "fill-in" the missing details with personally favorable images. It represents one more way of "proceeding", without actually making a commitment to a clearly defined objective. Unfortunately, this has not always proven to be prudent in the long term, as investors begin to question exactly what they're investing in, potential occupants wonder where they fit-in and irate residents from surrounding communities criticize or oppose the final product as being grossly different from what they had been shown previously.

Rarely do these plans include provisions for the actual design and development by different designers and business interests. Nor does the character the often vague sketches reflect the variation that could logically be anticipated with the involvement of these different interests. Quite often the plan clearly bears no relationship to the surrounding physical context but rather treats that area within the boundaries of the site, as an isolated artifact. While the more aggressive masterplans

especially those espousing some form a mega-structure, reflect an "anti-street" attitude, others simply lack the hierarchial relationships and figural contrast found in the traditional city and town.

In the traditional city, the spatial qualities, and for that matter the character, was typically formed by the incremental accretion of smaller elements. Usually a hierarchial ordering system is also present, where there is a balance and tempered contrast between what could be termed the typical, or thematic structures, and those possessing monumental qualities. Buildings that served the larger public interests, such churches, civic structures and markets (not corporate headquarters), were situated in, or at, particularly prominent locations within the typical grain.

True enough, much of what we consider to be robust in character is due to simple, often natural, elements such trees or a landscape juxtaposed with the built form. Alternatively, a sense of character may owe a great deal to a conscious concern for articulation and detail. Admittedly, the labyrinthine street, picturesque fishing village, majestic hilltown and Renaissance piazza may not seem like appropriate references for building in the flat grid-iron city. Nevertheless, the commonalities between these places and most urban form right up until our present predicament (including most grid cities) transcends temporal, geographic and stylistic distinctions.

These places are hierarchially organized. Often the development occurred in a contiguous fashion, incrementally building the streets and paths into defined spaces, rather than simply roadways. There is usually a clear distinction between "front" and "back". This permits a range of levels of privacy. To the extent that these attributes are not part of the Modern polemic, this thesis attempts to emulate the traditional

city with particular reverence for these spatial patterns of the existing context.

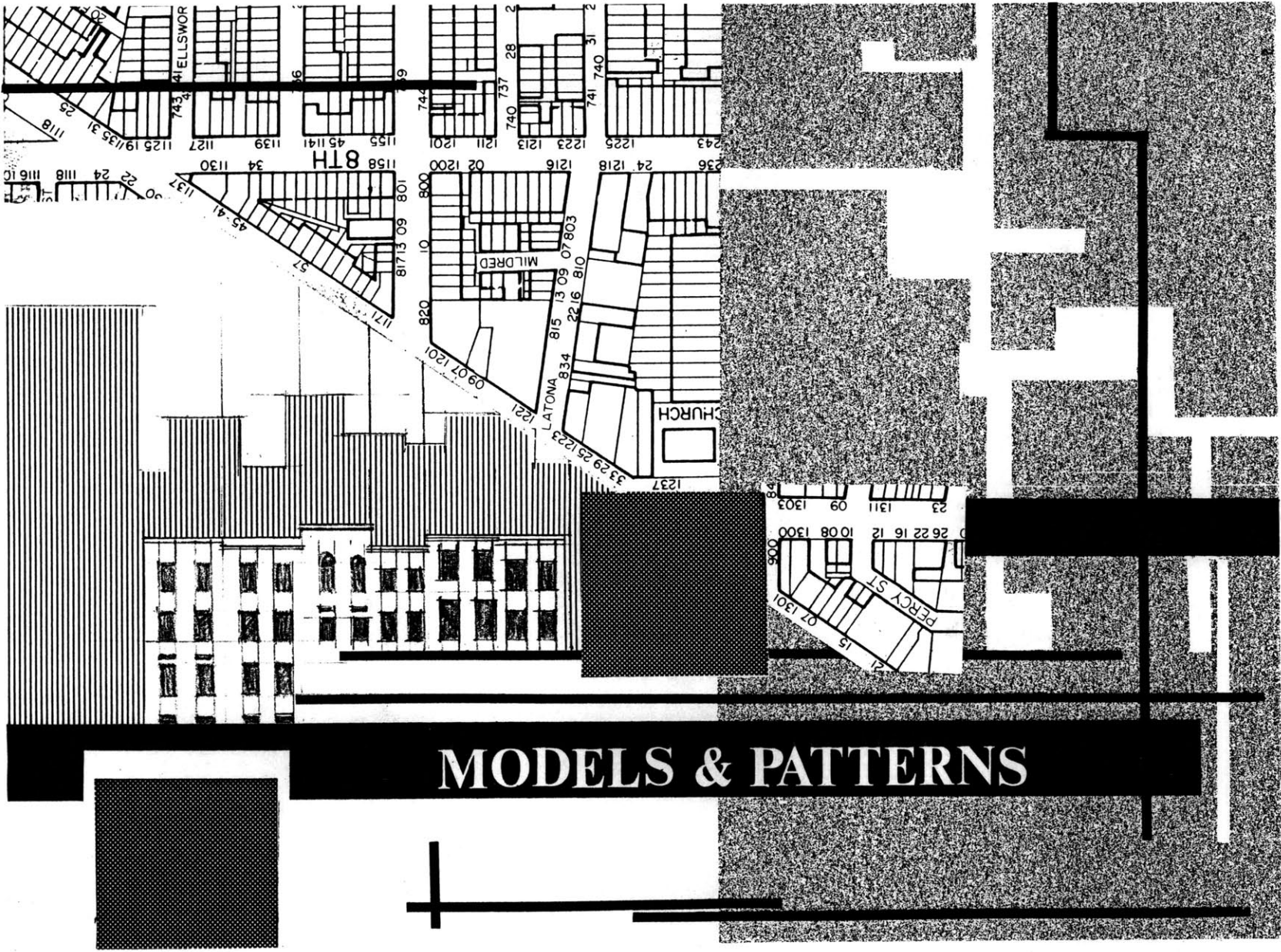
Similar to John Habraken's concern regarding a proposal for a new building in Amsterdam, the design of this new neighborhood seeks a posture compatible with the repeated meter, or rhythm of the surrounding fabric. Along with an acceptance of the existing grid as a reasonably rational and familiar structure, and what could be called a "pro-street" attitude, the design hopefully reflects a concern for choice of movement, varying levels of privacy throughout the site, and clearly perceived spatial definition. Additionally, there is an effort to establish, simultaneously, recognizable continuity with the existing built forms while cultivating a type unique to the site.

Our image of the traditional city is a composite of thousands of, more or less, good and bad buildings and spaces. The fact that so many discrete decisions have been made in such a small area, adds to the richness and vitality of this image. This can only occur where the

grain is small, allowing diverse activities and encouraging variations in the vocabulary. If the grain grows too large, as is often the case with large planning efforts, decision-making tends to become standardized with forms representing the interests of few.

While this thesis does recognize the need for some guidelines in the form of a framework, it is loosely structured enough to embrace a range of variations, while maintaining some level of continuity with respect to the patterns that have, by and large, served the city so well.

In the following section, the context of this design exercise, Philadelphia, is examined qualitatively at various scales. As with any brief analysis of this kind, it is necessary to make committed value judgements about what is "good" and "bad" in the city. The patterns and models gathered from the context then form the primary reference for the design.



MODELS & PATTERNS

GENERAL CHARACTER

Clearly the pace of life in Philadelphia is neither as frenetic nor as exciting as that of New York. It is decidedly less cosmopolitan and somewhat less culturally diverse. Nor does the city possess the stately classical grandeur of a great capital such as Washington, conceived in one masterful scheme to embody the significance of a singular purpose. Rather, Philadelphia, built on a colonial foundation, is a working-class city trying to establish itself as a viable "service" center to compensate for the exodus of much of its once-powerful industrial base.

For a short time during the nation's infancy, Philadelphia was the second largest English-speaking city in the world. Its character then must have reflected the sober conditions of a burgeoning port town populated by expatriates with fairly simple aspirations. Nevertheless, it embodied the sense of freedom,

tolerance and prosperity that sowed the seeds of the new Republic. It was, for a time, the most tangible symbol of the New World. However, the relocation of the capital to Washington, and the subsequent growth of New York, appear to have irreparably retarded the momentum of the city in terms of both its physical development and its self-image. The Philadelphia of today still seems to struggle with its sense of identity in the shadow of its more prominent neighbors. Despite its large population (approximately two million) and an enormous metropolitan region surrounding it, the physical character and lifestyle of the city is often compared to those of much smaller cities such as Baltimore and Boston.

Although it is difficult to assess and describe a city's own sense of its worth, it is apparent that a certain degree of indifference or pessimism characterizes the population regarding the significance of Philadelphia. Little effort, as of late, has been made to host significant events that would bring the city national and perhaps international acclaim, as well as considerable revenue. (The city did, however, host the enormously successful Centennial Exposition of 1876 and a number of national political conventions.) On the other hand, there are numerous institutions and traditional activities that are indicative of a high measure of civic pride at the neighborhood level. Among these are the many community associations, the Italian market, Chinatown and the annual Mummers Parade, to name but a few. In many cases these are supported by the strong individual ethnic groups that help to identify distinct neighborhoods.

Surrounding the downtown is a collage of neighborhoods, a number of which could be described as "ghettos." They evolved in the

19th century during the great influx of Italian, Irish, Jewish, and Polish immigrants. The continued migration of Blacks from the South, the later arrival of Puerto Ricans, and recently the flow of Chinese and Koreans, has maintained the city's pool of diverse ethnic/racial groups. Although a few of these neighborhoods undergo continuous transformation -- with periodic boundary shifts -- there are many more stable, often segregated, communities that have experienced little change. Most of these neighborhoods are characterized by a seemingly infinite repetition of speculative housing, usually in the form of attached single-family houses. Often, the only significant physical variations that occur in these areas are the occasional super-market and the parish churches and parochial schools that are scattered throughout the city.

As one draws closer to the central business district, the neighborhoods are segregated less by ethnic or racial distinction than by economic status. Here, there is a greater incidence of variation in the housing stock and an established hierarchical spatial order. It is the inhabitants of these areas that seem to reap the primary rewards of urban dwelling: close proximity to the downtown activity and accessibility to the city's public amenities. It is primarily from these areas that the positive physical patterns illustrated in this thesis are drawn.

Many visitors may note the somewhat subdued character of the city. With some notable exceptions, understatement seems to be a pervasive physical theme. This is probably a reflection of a more generalized preference for things "plain" as fostered by the Friends, or Quaker families, that have continued to control much of the land, as well as a number of the city's most influential institutions. Although this undercurrent, as manifested in the physical qualities of the city, may in part be responsible for the popular and often comical stigma attached to

Philadelphia, it has also helped to preserve the sedate, if slightly provincial, image that has discouraged the uncontrolled sprawl of the city.

In fact, Center City is relatively small, with the densest development occurring in an area just over one-half square mile in size. Unlike many cities, such as Boston, where a number of concentrations of development or focal points occur (i.e. Downtown Crossing, Prudential Center/Boylston Street, etc.), there is one clearly-defined center in Philadelphia. This is the hub of the government, financial and major retail institutions of the city. Philadelphia is different from many other cities, such as New York or Chicago, where many of the residents could be expected to venture only occasionally to Manhattan or the Loop, the symbolic centers of those cities. "Center City," by contrast, remains the focus of virtually all commercial and entertainment activity, and is used regularly by most Philadelphians.

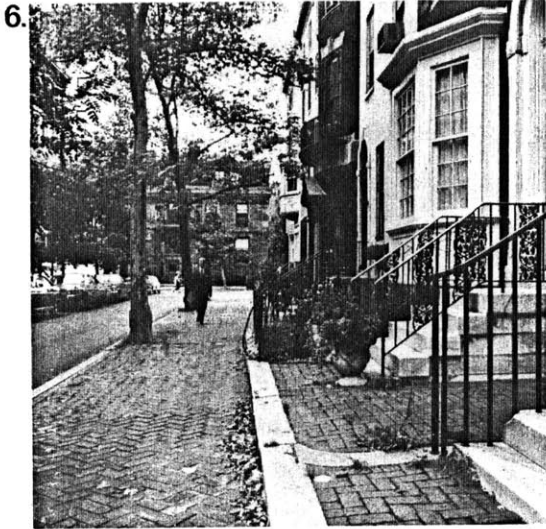
The founding aristocracy of Philadelphia also set into motion a sustained commitment to the public welfare concerning the quality of the urban environment. This noblesse oblige is evident in a number of significant gestures aimed at creating beautiful and easily accessible public spaces and institutions. Of course it is not coincidental that these occur along the routes to and from the posh suburban townships to the northwest. The allocation of land and the assured maintenance of the extensive Fairmount Park (largest city park in the U.S.) is a prime example, as are the Parkway, the Free Library, Museum of Art, and nearby Zoological Gardens. Additionally, a number of rather curious "gentlemen's agreements" remain in force, such as the stipulation that no building shall exceed the height of William Penn's statue atop City Hall. It seems quite extraordinary that such an agreement could survive without formal legislation.

Vestiges of the city's colonial history survive in Society Hill where a nostalgic, if not faithfully realistic, image of the past is

carefully preserved. In a large precinct maintained by the National Park Service, those buildings with the most illustrious history are displayed not in their temporal context (many of the adjacent structures were demolished), but rather as isolated artifacts flanked by meticulously maintained lawns, criss-crossed by quaint cobblestone and brick paths. Throughout the predominantly residential section of Society Hill, the many "infill" houses attempt, with considerable success, to "blend in" with the older restored houses. This is achieved through a continuity of scale, materials, and vocabulary. Near the Delaware, at Head House Square and the Olde City section, dense enclaves of small commercial establishments abound with tourists and local residents alike.

The images of Society Hill and the area around Rittenhouse Square, although relatively small, are particularly germane to an understanding of the character of Philadelphia. They act as something of a role model for the many Philadelphia neighborhoods that are currently undergoing rehabilitation. To most developers,

homeowners and tenants alike, these communities represent the epitome of civilized urban living, similar to the relationship of Georgetown to Washington or Beacon Hill and the Back Bay to Boston.



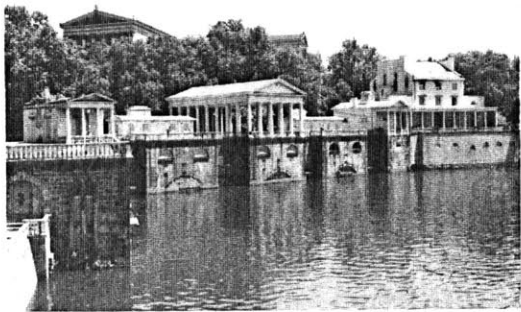
The relationship between the downtown and the two rivers that, in part, define its form is extremely important. From two directions these rivers serve as the threshold to downtown. At one time both the settlement patterns and daily activities revolved, almost exclusively, around the maritime interests of the city. Today, however, the perceived connection with the water is not as dominant, for example, as that of Boston or San Francisco. As the terrain is virtually flat, there is little sense of descending to river's edge, and views are limited a few select locations.

Approaching Center City from the east over the Delaware River and from the northwest along the Schuylkill, one realizes the distinctly different experiential qualities expressed by each. Admittedly a portion of the southern Schuylkill, from the Airport to the downtown, is heavily industrialized much the same as the Delaware. Here, the industrial plants and expressways that parallel the rivers reduce accessibility to the waterfront.

Nevertheless, there is a picturesque quality to the upper Schuylkill as it meanders through lush parkland. Sculpture gardens, bike paths, Revolutionary-era mansions and a row of Shingle-style boathouses articulate the edges of the two "River Drives." Gradually the entire skyline comes into view with the almost surrealistic Fairmount Waterworks (Latrobe) and the museum perched above the river in the foreground. The pronounced silhouette of the downtown and the easily discernible City Hall tower form the background. Many of Thomas Eakins' more popular paintings faithfully captured the halcyon image of sculling on the Schuylkill.

On the other side of the city, the Delaware exudes the drama of a busy international port. Although much of the cargo shipping has moved to deep water facilities to the south, dozens of ships and tugs still ply these waters each day. The image is quite industrial as large trucks jockey along the wide avenue that serves the various warehouses and wharfs. Intermittent glimpses of the massive freighters are seen

between almost rhythmic rows of commercial piers, while the underside of a mighty suspension bridge looms overhead.

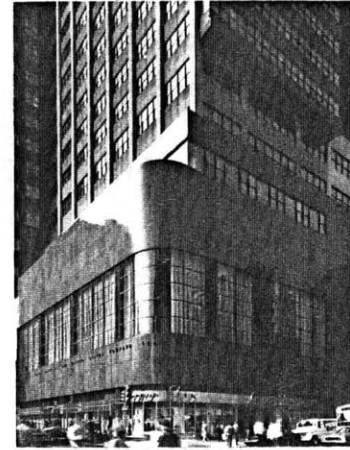


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It is interesting to note the relatively large number of prominent designers who have practiced at one time or another in Philadelphia. Among the luminaries are William Strickland, Benjamin Latrobe, Frank Furness (with whom Louis Sullivan apprenticed), George Howe, Louis I. Kahn, Aldo Giurgola and, most recently, Robert Venturi. Despite their presence, evidence of their work within the downtown is fairly sparse.

Although some may debate the existence of a "Penn School" as a related and cohesive architectural theme, there is a recurrent tendency toward understatement with a concern for a contextual "fit", among the many students of Kahn, Stonorov and McHarg presently practicing in the city. The building vocabulary and materials are decidedly "modern" but the forms are, in general, rather plain and low-key.



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Notwithstanding the monumental qualities of the City Hall and the Museum of Art, the most pervasive physical theme of the downtown is not individual buildings. It is the composite assemblage of contiguous incremental building that adheres to the familiar grid, and the discontinuities that occur in that framework. At the urban scale, the grid forms the theme and the discontinuities provide the variety. The impact, however, of these well-conceived but sparingly-introduced exceptions -- the axes, the squares, and the park -- only extends over a limited area. Unfortunately, as one withdraws from Center City into the surrounding neighborhoods, the significance of these spaces is no longer perceived, nor is the sense of their relationship to one another. This is one of the drawbacks of a centrally-organized framework. Some of these patterns are discussed individually on the following pages.

To date, only one major, realized planning project deviates from the theme of virtually solid blocks of contiguous building mass separated only by the street system. The highly-

publicized Penn Center development is comprised of numerous office towers linked together by a complex network of underground concourses which provide access to the suburban and urban mass transit lines below street level. The placement of the individual towers as relatively isolated masses creates large voids of undifferentiated open space. Long pedestrian "plazas" with little access to direct sunlight are the result. The configuration of these spaces and the lack of light seems to discourage the assembly of people or any leisurely activities. The repetitive, if monotonous, vocabulary of the constituent buildings does give one the impression of a single comprehensive undertaking, but at a scale previously foreign to the city. In deference to the original planner(s), it should be noted that the orientation and configurations of the buildings in the initial plan would have created potentially more habitable open spaces.

The influence of Penn Center on subsequent development in the downtown was considerable. It set the tone for the two-office building per block pattern and helped to establish a policy

that encouraged a setback for a foreground plaza. Of the sixteen or so variously sized paved plazas in Center City, only in three of these do substantial numbers of people congregate regularly. Common among the few successful spaces are access to areas of both light and shade, ample seating in arrangements conducive to small groups, and most important, a sense of partial enclosure on at least two sides.



A more recent project, Market Street East, extends, in places, across the grid network. It does however, closely adhere to the street lines with virtually solid masses filling each block. This is a large mixed-use development that represents a successful effort to revitalize and

supplement a badly-deteriorated commercial district, while also providing convenient access to the transit system. In the Gallery shopping complex, the public space has been internalized in the form of a linear interior street. A number of different pedestrian levels flanked by shops traverse each block, while multi-level bridges span the intermittent cross (north-south) streets, connecting the larger masses. Although limited outdoor open space is provided at the corner entries, the bulk of public space is fully enclosed with large skylights affording year-round use.

Invariably these internalized open spaces compete with the vitality of the original street. Nevertheless, a number of downtown streets have deteriorated to a point where they are only roadways which cannot support a good pedestrian environment anyway. Furthermore, in many locations these interior spaces represent the only commercially viable solution for downtown activity.

Residential development in the form of rehabilitation and new construction occurs at a much smaller scale. In the once "blighted" neighborhoods around the core, steady progress is being made at the grass-roots level. As is common in many cities, individual homeowners are rehabilitating their own properties, while new residential construction and larger "rehab" projects are handled by smaller local contractors and builders on a speculative basis. Typically, these projects range in size from two to ten rowhouse units. Depending on local zoning codes, these may be subdivided into apartments or, as is more often the case, sold as single-family dwellings. Although the vitality of the housing market is subject to the vicissitudes of the economy, it can be assumed that the demand for in-town housing by singles and small families will continue as an alternative to suburban living.

GRID/AXES

Philadelphia is one of very few colonial American cities to have had a working plan prior to its inhabitation. Commissioned by William Penn in 1682, a plan formulated by surveyor, Thomas Holme, has remained substantially intact to this date, and has continued to guide much of the city's subsequent growth.

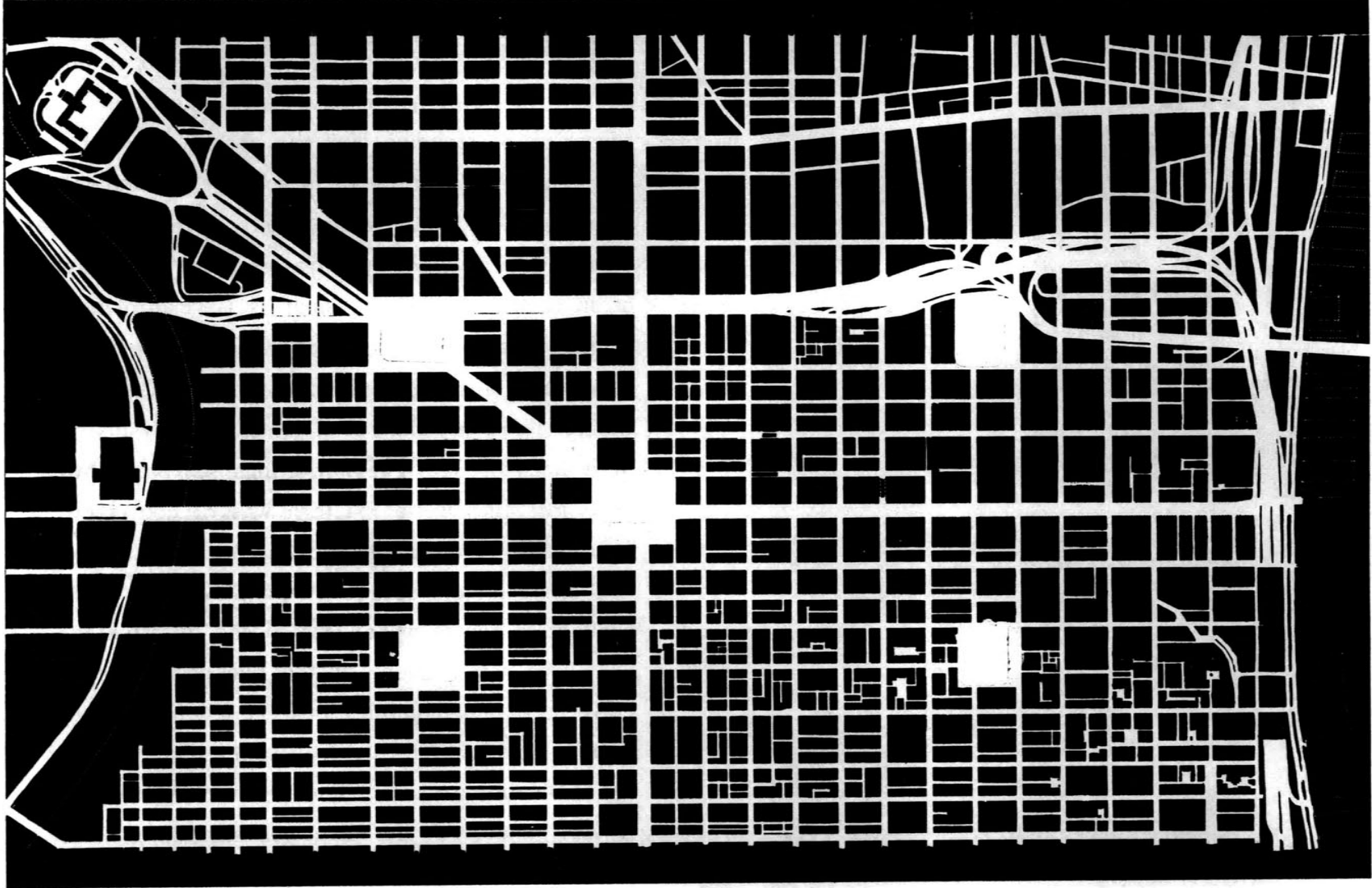
The primary structure of the plan is based on the *cardo decumanus*, or the intersection of two orthogonal axes. These, Broad Street and Market Street, more or less correspond to the compass points. Originally, a grid of roughly equal-sized square blocks (400'x400') was laid out over the resulting quadrants. This large-scale grid later facilitated expansion of new residential areas to the north, south and finally to the west of the original town. The numerous subdivisions of most of the early blocks, resulted from the need to sell-off smaller parcels to repay Revolutionary War debts, and

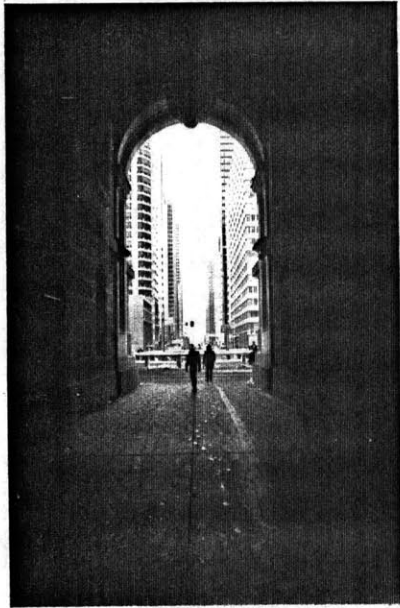
and again later to satisfy the insatiable need for inexpensive workers' housing.

At Penn's insistence the plan included a public square in each quadrant and at the crossing of the two axes at the center of the town. This center point is now emphatically marked by the monumental City Hall on a site which stood vacant until its construction started in 1871. The broad structure, including a 548' clock tower (the world's tallest masonry structure unsupported by steel), is of an eclectic style reminiscent of a French renaissance chateau and is unique in relation to the context.

The symbolic significance of this place is very important to the image of the city. As one enters the downtown along the main axes, the building comes into plain view. The tower, which is the tallest point in the city, serves not only as a familiar reference point, but also as a goal destination. The built edges of both Market and Broad Street seem to frame the view and emphasize the long approach.

The building itself seems to respect the axes. Although vehicular traffic is diverted





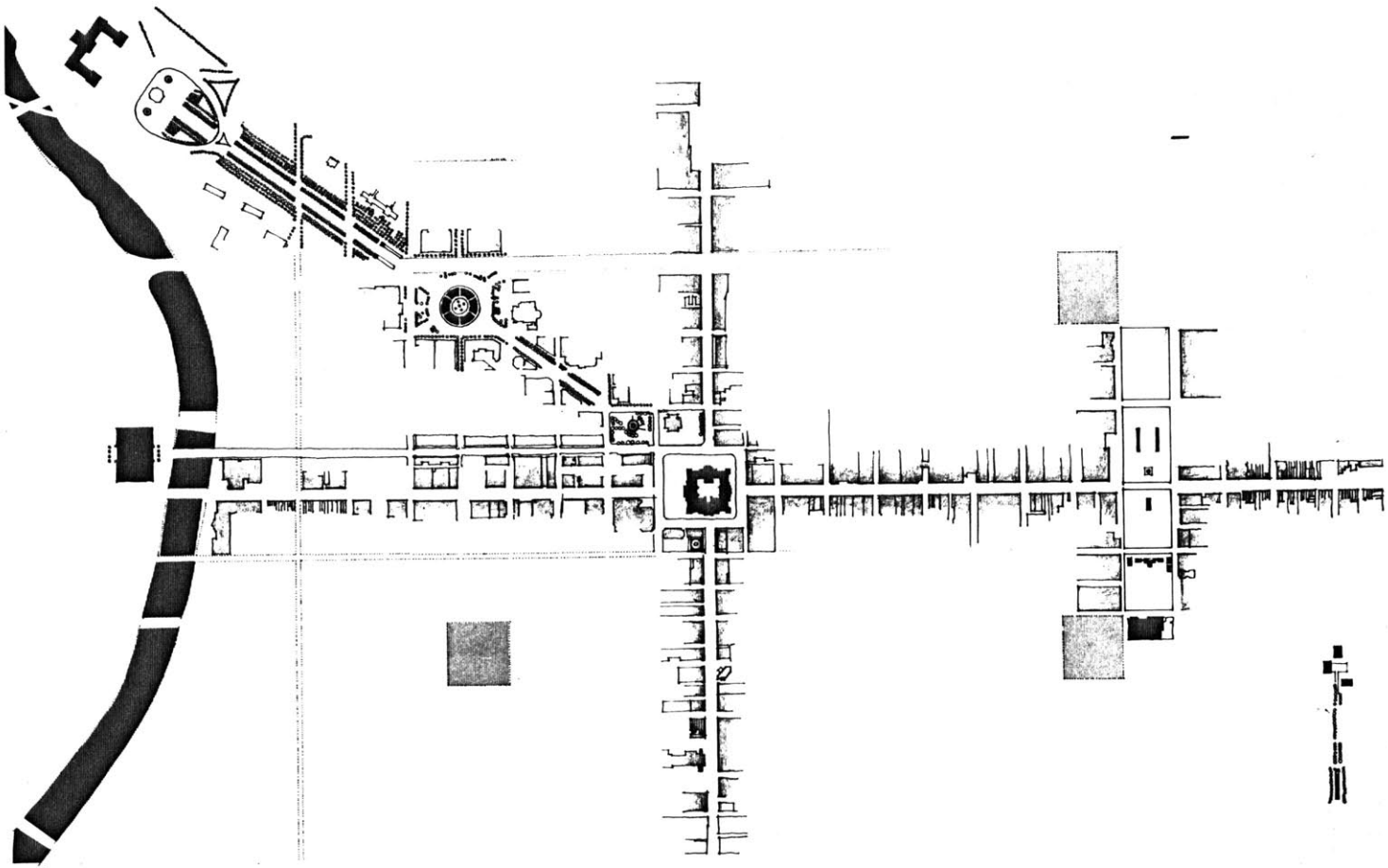
around the square, pedestrians may proceed through high, darkened portals into an open-air courtyard. Here, one really experiences the sensation of standing "in" the absolute center.

Despite Penn's efforts to have settlement occurring along both rivers, early development was almost exclusively concentrated near the Delaware or in remote townships, such as Germantown. Much of the area west of Independence Hall remained unoccupied for well over a hundred years. Although Penn envisioned an almost evenly-distributed field of detached dwellings set back into deep lots, the initial pattern was of contiguous structures filling whole blocks. Because of concern over the spread of fire, even the earliest buildings were constructed of brick.

The arrangement of the two primary axes, the uniform grid and public squares, independent of actual growth patterns, represents what Norberg-Schulz would term a, "cosmic plan." At the time it was conceived, the plan was something of an idealized and arbitrary geometric abstraction.



2.





Construction of another great axis, conceived by the French planner, Jacques Greber, began in 1917. The Benjamin Franklin Parkway cut a wide diagonal swath through the northwestern quadrant of the downtown, linking City Hall with Logan Square and Fairmount Park beyond. It was clearly inspired by the Champs Elysees with deep (200') setbacks required along the western half. The section closer to the core is more densely built. It is interesting to note however, that most of the structures along this portion still follow the orthogonal orientation of the grid. Perched atop a small bluff at the opposite end of the Parkway from City Hall, is the Philadelphia Museum of Art (1916-28). The neo-classical Greek "temple" flanked by two smaller pavillions and a large oval in the foreground, diverts suburban-bound traffic to the two "River Drives "



The importance of these axes, and to some extent, the J.F.K. Boulevard (terminated by the Pennsylvania Railroad Station) and Independence Mall, as reference points is undeniable. Furthermore they give spatial prominence to the civic buildings that are accessible to all. They are meaningful gestures to all the citizenry.

Among the seemingly indiscriminate grid there is, in fact, a hierarchy where various uses are commonly associated with particular streets. The intensity and volume of activity, as well as the scale of the buildings gradually diminishes as one moves away from the center. For instance, the city's largest financial institutions are clustered around City Hall. Moving slightly south are the palazzo-style office towers containing the most prestigious offices and law firms. Traditionally, along Market and Chestnut Streets (east-west) one finds the large department stores and a few franchise stores. The next parallel street is Sansom, which is a congested service street comprised of parking garages, supply houses, hardware stores, etc.(lots of architects too!). This is followed by Walnut Street, where many of the fancier boutiques and apparel shops are located, along with travel agencies and investment houses. Still further south is Locust Street, where a number of formal clubs, a small theater district and the Academy of Music are situated. This street, which forms a line between Rittenhouse Square and Washington

Square, marks the transition to an area characterized primarily by residential uses. The neighborhoods in this zone, which include Society Hill and the Rittenhouse Square area, are relatively plush and expensive. The quality, however, abruptly deteriorates just a few blocks further south where a veritable sea of workers' housing extends for miles.

All of this seems to suggest that there is the presence of a geometric relationship between use and proximity to the center. However, because of a former trend to industrialize much of the area to the north, this ordered transition is not evident on the northern side of the downtown. Nevertheless, an understanding of this pattern may provide some clues about the appropriate uses for the site in this exercise. Relative to City Hall, the location corresponding to the site is the primarily residential area around Rittenhouse Square.

SQUARES

The four major public squares of the original plan, each approximately eight acres, represent a significant discontinuity in an otherwise continuous grid structure. They are distributed at almost equal distances from the ten-acre center square occupied by the city hall.

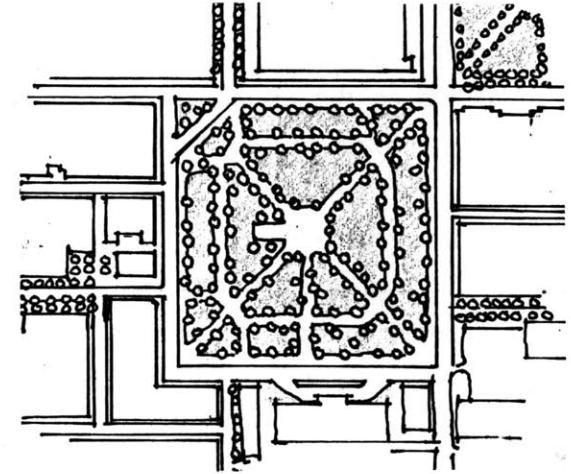
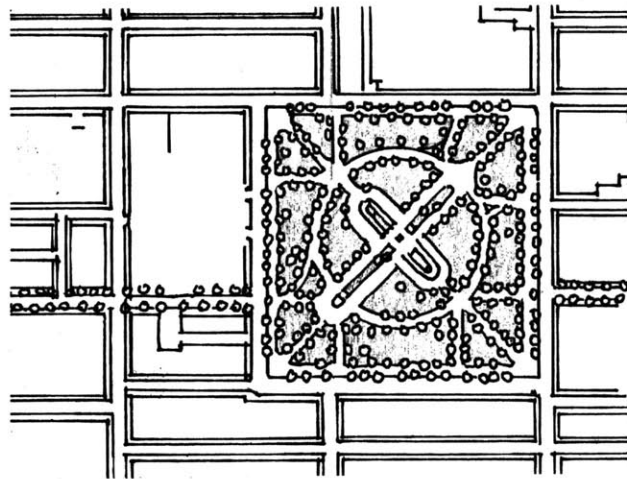
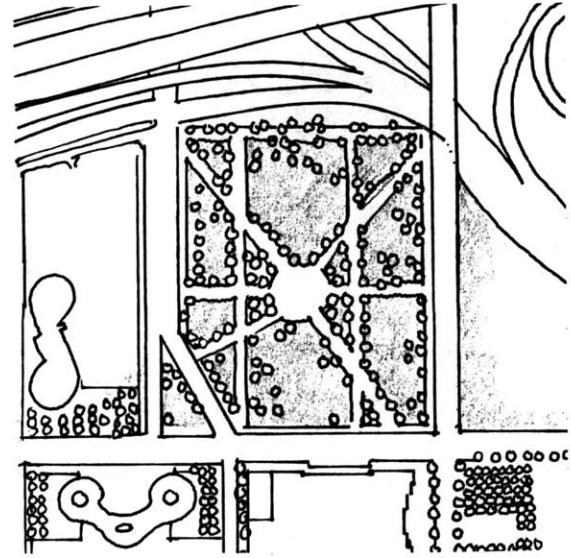
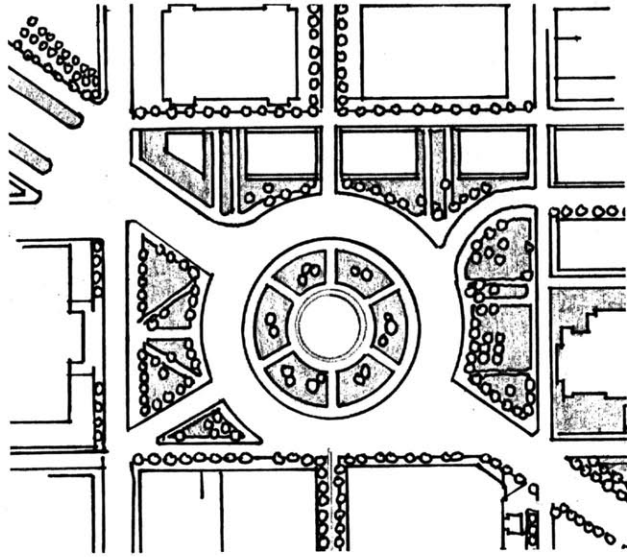
Although the original squares remain today, two subsequent plan interventions, the Parkway and the Vine Street Expressway, have changed the nature of Logan and Franklin Squares, respectively. Located along the Parkway, Logan Square has been transformed into a large rotary modeled after the Place de la Concorde in Paris. The significance of Franklin Square was greatly diminished by the construction of the adjacent expressway. Rittenhouse and Washington Squares, however, remain intact and serve as a transition space and informal gate between the commercial core and the nearby neighborhoods.

Each of Philadelphia's squares interrupts

and displaces at least two grid streets while letting others pass by. Traffic circulates around them in one direction only. The squares serve as points of reference, which both the motorist and pedestrian quickly perceive, as virtually every sequence of movement through the downtown comes into contact with them.

Upon approaching the squares, the vista is gradually broadened above and below a dense canopy of trees or around a fountain. The pedestrian is offered some respite from the grid, as well as from the automobile, which is diverted around the square. Given some choice of movement within the landscape, one can proceed straight or diagonally on the most expedient route or opt for a leisurely stroll along a more circuitous path. This provision of choice seems to compare favorably, the paved plaza, which most people simply traverse quickly.

Most important, the squares act as something of a buffer between the downtown and the surrounding neighborhoods. Although the perimeters may be densely developed, there is a marked and rapid decrease in scale just beyond the squares.



OPEN SPACE

In a number of recent commercial projects, there seems to be an awareness of the requisite qualities of habitable public open space and the simultaneous recognition of the shortcomings of the traditional modern plaza. Common among these "places" which are both interior and exterior, are well-defined volumes, access to light and shade, and obviously a high level of activity. Throughout, the shapes of the buildings are manipulated specifically to form the open space. In all likelihood this trend will continue as the allocation of such space has proved extremely profitable to developers. In a sense, they become a unique trademark popularly associated with each project.

It is interesting to note the success of these environments in attracting people while discouraging anti-social behavior. The principle seems quite simple. While a gate may remain open for public access, the very

existence of such a gate (or, for that matter, the partial containment by a group of buildings) tends to indicate that the space is owned and cared for by someone. Perhaps, at first, the user may feel a bit like a guest; however, he or she is more likely to think twice about any misconduct. Obviously, this tendency also depends on the "attractiveness" of the environment as viewed from outside of the space.

Unlike the truly "public plaza" which ostensibly belongs to everyone but so often seems to belong to no one, these contained spaces seem to imply that "this is private territory graciously shared with the public on a provisional basis." Containment and activity seem to be the crucial determinants of the success of these plazas.



2.

GRAIN

The building block of the Philadelphia neighborhood is the rowhouse, or more precisely, the narrow lots that dictate its shape. The built form has, more or less, served the needs of a great many urban dwellers, from the poorest of immigrants to the wealthiest industrial barons. It appears in a multitude of sizes with a seemingly infinite number of variations in the way it is embellished. Within this framework, the rowhouse has been the subject of both the finest architects and speculators whose motivation is financial

The basic form is so pervasive that Gunther Barth in City People, characterizes Philadelphia as a "City of Homes"; where in 1880 the city counted "a dwelling-house for every six inhabitants." This is quite extraordinary in comparison with the other cities during the influx of astronomical numbers of immigrants. This is attributed to the great many small savings and

loan associations throughout the city.

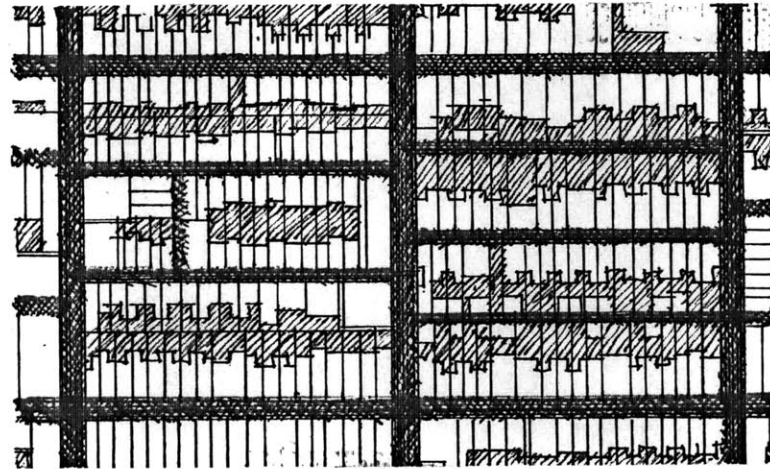
Obviously this proliferation of the rowhouse is due to the utterly logical and efficient partition of larger parcels in a manner conducive to quick speculation, the installation of utilities and the orderly, if slow, flow of traffic. This kind of contiguous development along the grid lines, in itself, seldom produces any charming or picturesque spatial qualities. For these effects, where they exist, the street must rely upon architectural detailing, simple amenities such as front gardens and trees, and the type of frequency of activity along its edges.



6.

There is usually a great deal of continuity with respect to building size (grain), especially width, within a given neighborhood. The "better" neighborhoods seem to possess a range of building sizes. Again, there is some continuity but here it occurs at the block level rather than the entire neighborhood. For instance, nearby, but not necessarily adjoining, a block of spacious rowhouses may be a street of much smaller carriage houses. This contributes to the variety of forms in a neighborhood but, more importantly, provides a choice of size and type within close range of one another. Today, these neighborhoods are immensely popular, as they are receptive to families of varying sizes and certain uses, such as artists' studios, craft shops or small offices, that are compatible, but not ordinarily associated with residential areas.

Occasionally there is a partially concealed secondary level of structures, within the gridded block structure. Historically, these lots were often occupied by the squalid housing common in the 19th century. Many of these lots have since been rebuilt as quality speculative housing.





New housing containing a courtyard within formerly larger lots.

6.

HI-RISE INTEGRATION

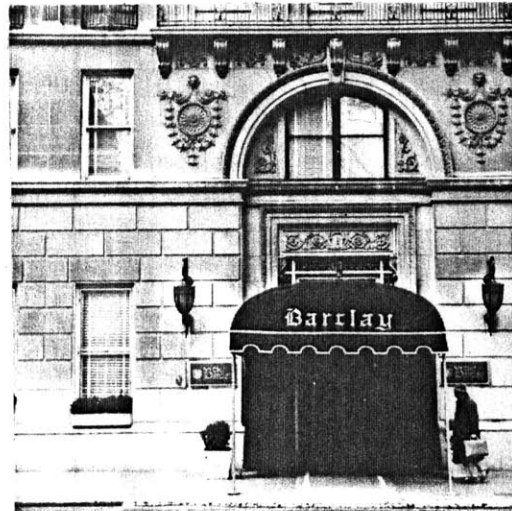
Although referred to as a "City of Houses," increasing land values and market demand in the neighborhoods at the edge of the core made lucrative the development of smaller, high-rise buildings (10 to 22 stories), as both luxury apartments and speculative professional suites. These seem to have a more innocuous presence than their massive counterparts in the core.

Frequently they are located at the corner of a block with their broad dimension along the narrower, less prominent north-south streets. A product of lot orientation, this tends to minimize both the shadow cast by the building and the length of the facade along the main (east-west) street.

In architectural terms, these buildings are usually quite understated and ordinary. They effectively blend into the contiguous grain of rowhouses through a strong base with a low cornice to pick up the height of the surrounding

buildings. Often they are constructed of reinforced concrete and masonry with a stone veneer. The entry is often from the "side" (north-south) street, and marked by a simple canopy or small portico.

If the street is narrow, as these cross (north-south) streets often are, and the building extends to the property line, the pedestrian as well as the long-time neighborhood resident may not perceive the buildings' actual height. Only a few hi-rise buildings exist, out beyond the squares that contain the denser development of the downtown.



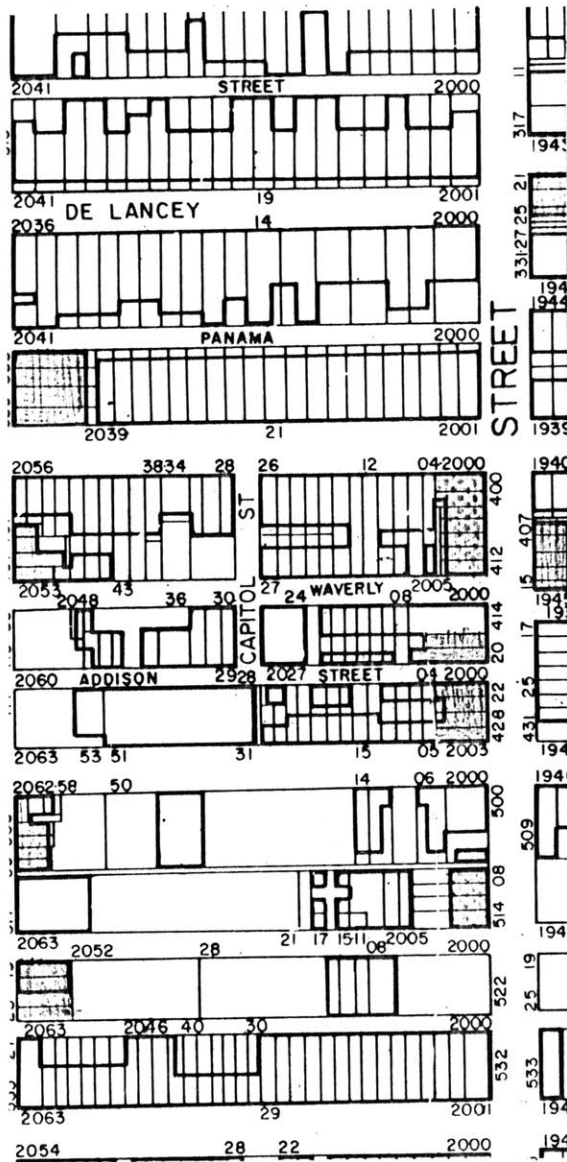


LOT ORIENTATION

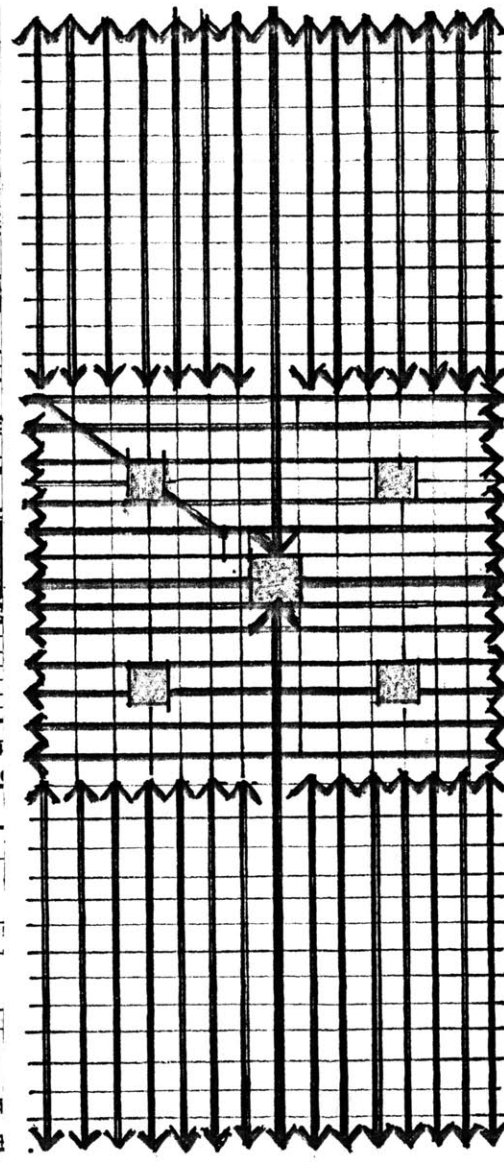
The directional hierarchy of the street structure is reinforced by patterns of lot orientations. The arrangement of lots throughout neighborhoods in and around the downtown core seem to respect those streets with the more important river-to-river (east-west) relationship. Along these "named" streets, property fronts usually continue the full length of each block, exposing their sides to the numbered (north-south) streets. In between the side facades, one may find a short row of houses that do address these streets. However, these properties face onto less generous sidewalks, usually lack front gardens, and often have very limited access to their rear yards, via narrow service alleys.

In the vast speculative neighborhoods, particularly to the north and south of the downtown, the hierarchy becomes more ambiguous. The importance of the relationship between these areas and the downtown supercedes their rela-

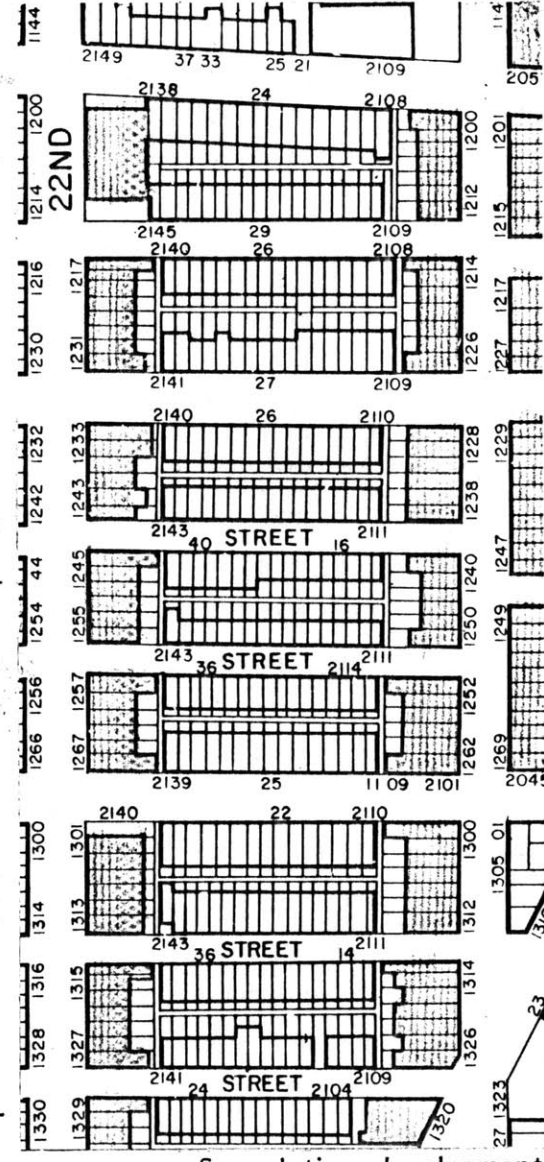
tionship to the rivers, which at that point are considerably farther apart. Yet these north-south streets, which enable the grid to be extended almost infinitely from the downtown, are given no spatial prominence. The result is omni-directional monotony.



Center City
Lot Orientation



Schematic Plan
Emphasized street orientation



Speculative development
South Philadelphia

DISCONTINUOUS STREETS

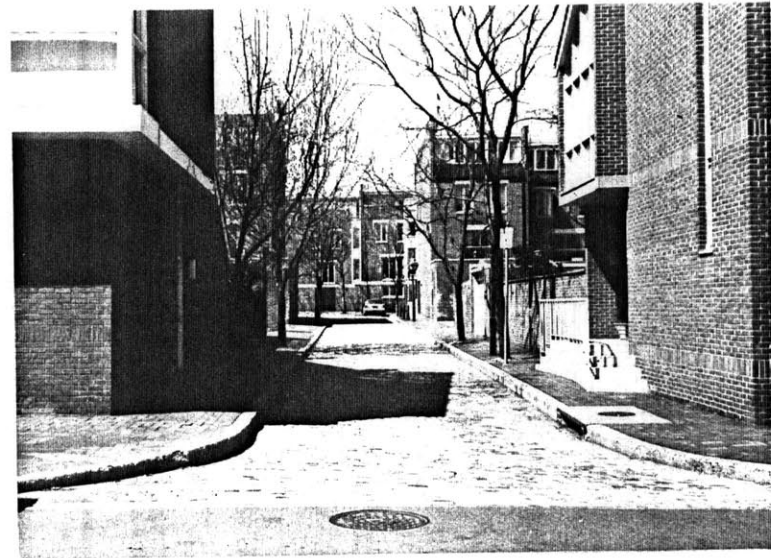
Set within the main grid are numerous "discontinuous" residential streets that may be aligned for one or two blocks. They are predominantly oriented in an east-west direction and are the result of the gradual subdivision into varying lengths of the original grid's narrow and extremely deep lots. This orientation maximizes the north-south exposure of these properties and emulates the direction of the "river-to-river" streets.

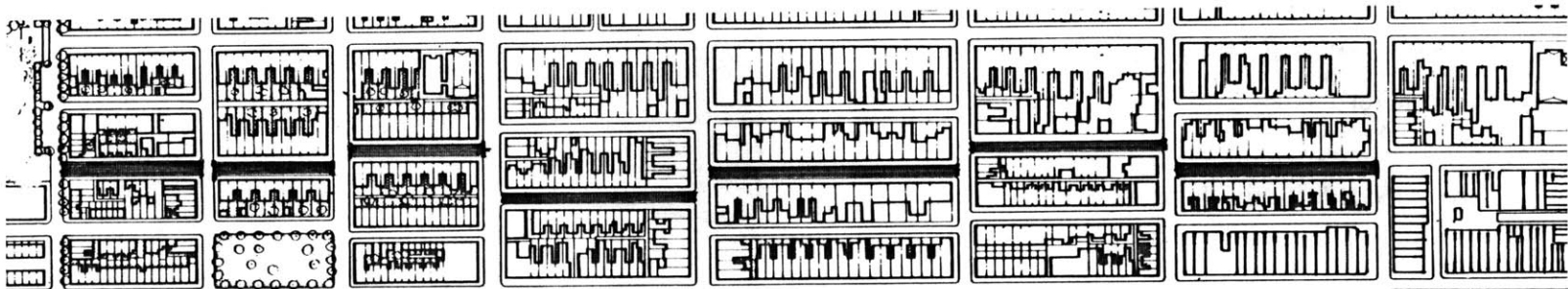
These streets, although they may continue by name for a considerable distance, are staggered and often do not align at the end of the block. Sometimes the view extends a couple of blocks. More often, however, the fronts of houses occupying the adjacent block totally obscure a view beyond or afford only a partial glimpse of the next street.

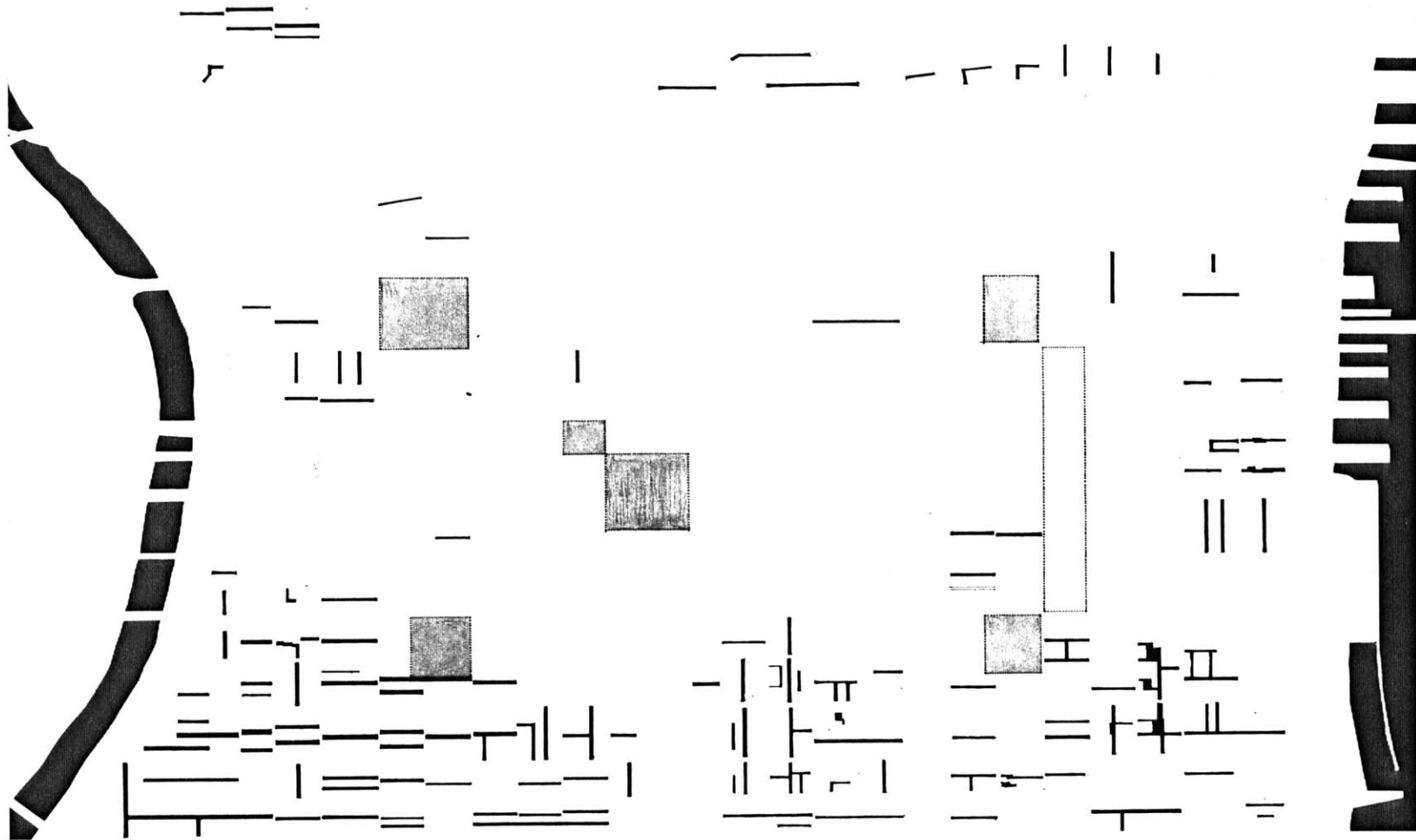
The effect of this "closure" is to give some sense of containment to the individual

block. Since motorists are less likely to use these streets, they retain some of the quieter character associated with "private" residential areas. Each block or two becomes its own entity, set within a larger framework, but not dependent on the streets beyond for its identity or "sense of place."

The adjacent diagram indicates the residential streets in the downtown that are discontinuous. One may note that these are predominately concentrated in two of the city's most prominent areas, Society Hill and Rittenhouse Square.







BACK STREET

As a result of the profitable subdivision of much deeper lots, and the advent of public utilities, the "back street" now plays an integral role in both the function and character of the city. Besides providing vehicular access for deliveries, parking garages and carriage houses, the buildings that form these streets often reflect the individual tastes of the occupants and owners.

Although the rear facades share the very same adjacent relationship to one another as the front facades, there appears to be an intriguing and cavalier attitude about what is acceptable at the "back." Often there is no correlation between the style of the front and that of the back. The eclectic "hodge-podge" groupings of balconies, bays, fences, decks, and greenhouses, and a seemingly infinite variety of windows, appear to defy the partial registration of the front facades. Variations in the depth of

buildings within lots of a common size give spatial qualities to the "in-between" areas.

Total anarchy does not prevail, however. There are definite spatial themes to ensure that each unit will receive some measure of natural light, unobstructed ventilation and a means of egress. The back street plays a significant role because, for many urban apartment dwellers, it constitutes the only view to the outside, and may be the only source of direct sunlight.





PEDESTRIAN PATHS

In addition to the many discontinuous front and back streets, there are a small number of pedestrian path networks which traverse and link residential blocks. They appear to exist in place of small streets or alleys that are no longer needed. The width along these paths does vary and may increase at mid-block to accommodate a small courtyard-like square designated as common space.

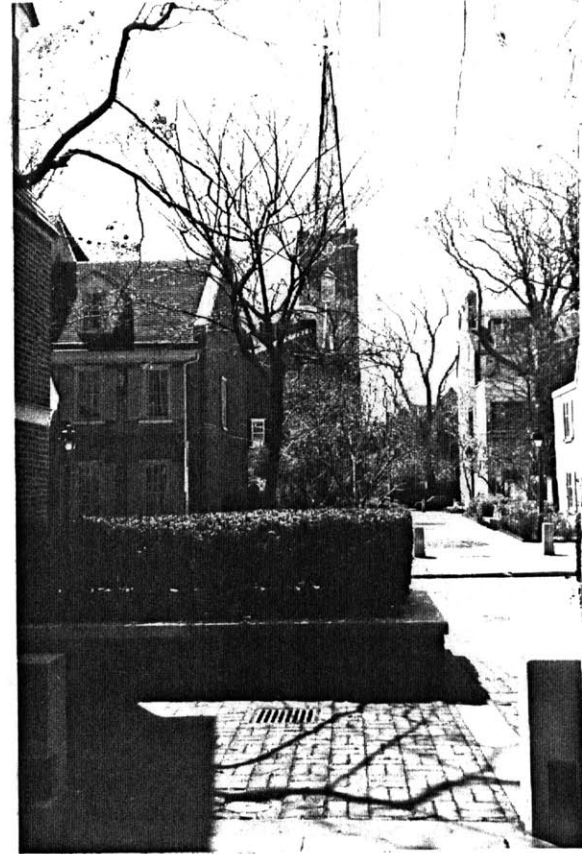
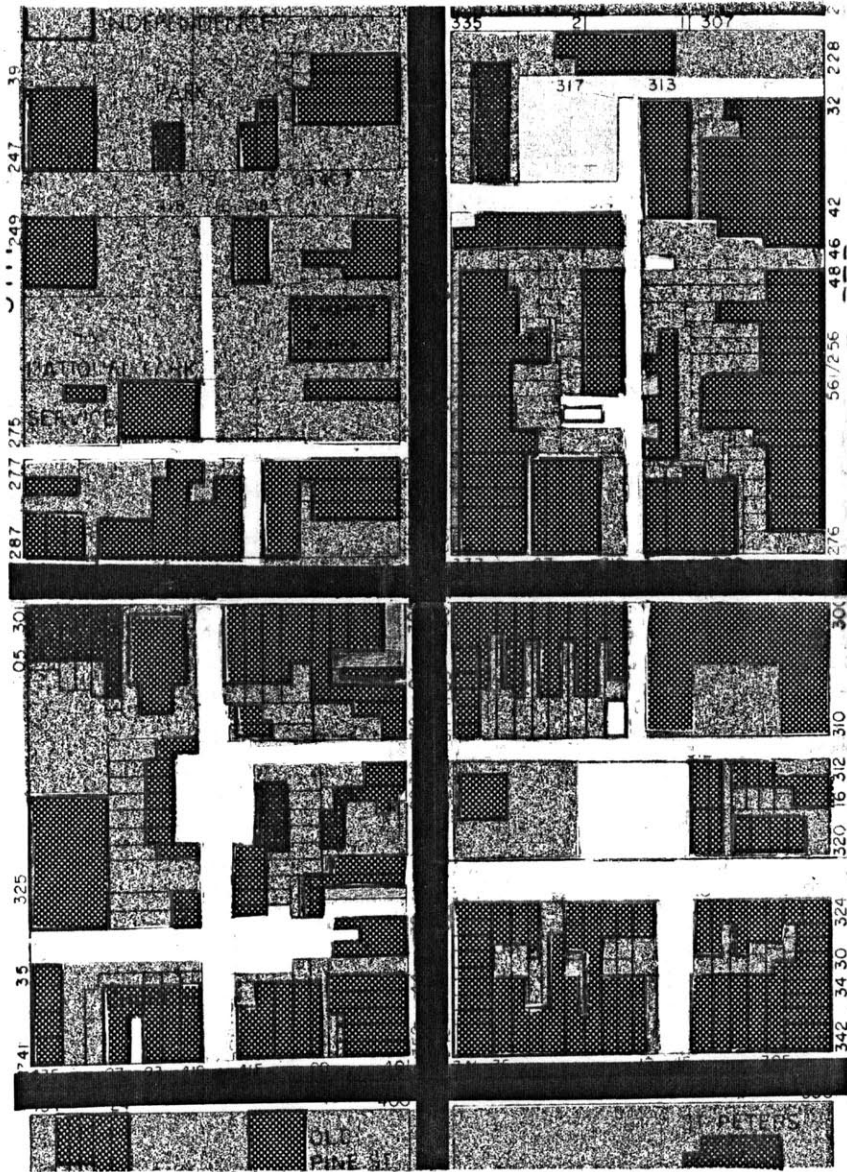
Meandering orthogonally past the sides of houses and their fenced yards, across narrow back streets to the end of the block, these paths may again align with another path that continues through a neighboring block. Although in places they may coincide with small streets, seldom are these paths the sole or primary means of access to individual houses. Rather, they serve as a pleasant alternative to circulation along the more heavily trafficked streets.

Ivy-covered walls, flagstone pavers, and

a variety of trees and flowers, contribute to a picturesque and tranquil character. While the ends of these paths may be partially shaded, the larger interior spaces are bathed in sunlight. Human-scale lampposts provide the necessary security at night.

There are no locks or gates restricting public access, yet there is a very real sense of transition between the public sidewalks around the perimeter of the block and the semi-private spaces within.





THEME AND VARIATION

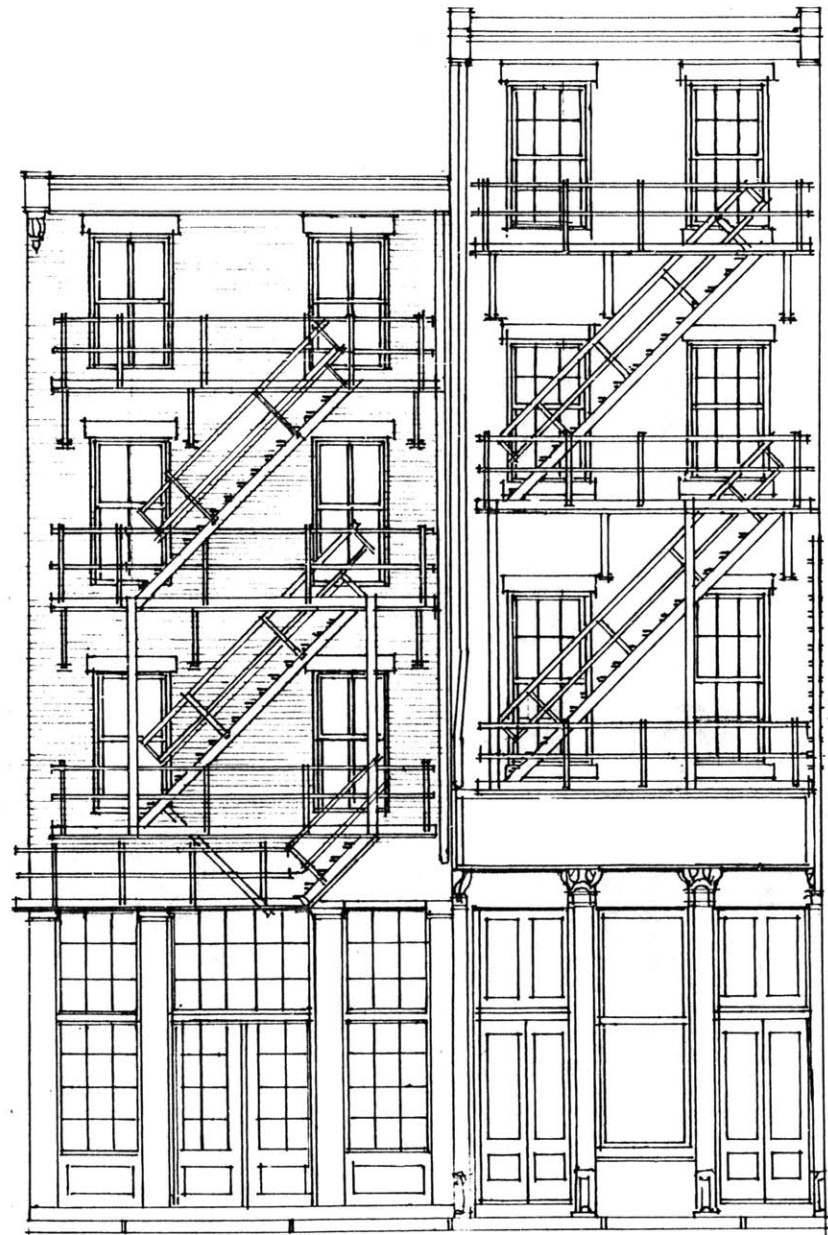
In those areas that are said to possess "character" (in the positive sense), there often exists a subtle and delicate balance between order and complexity, or theme and variation, where "just the right balance seems to have been struck between autonomy and subordination to the whole."

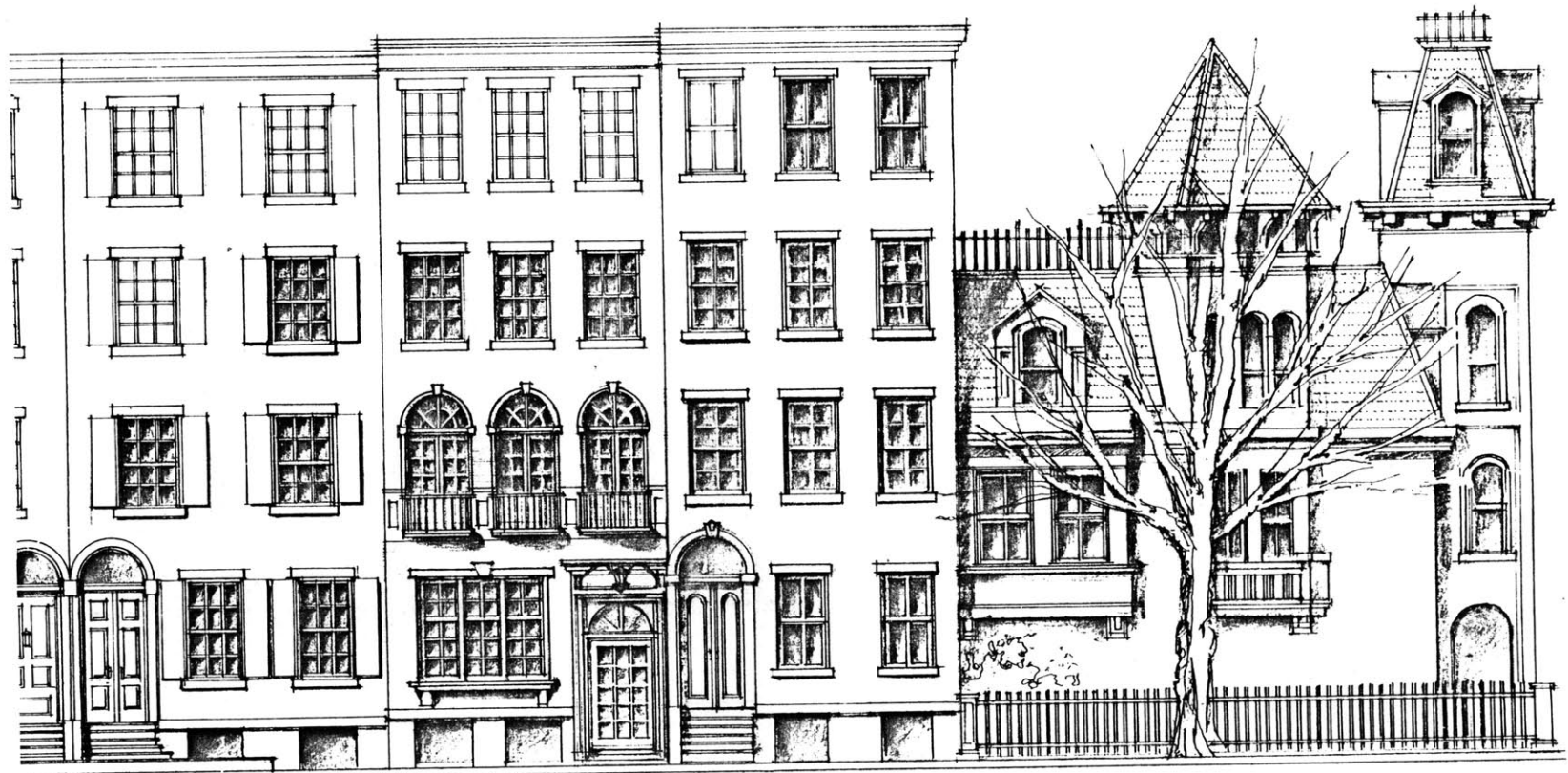
Examples of this can be found in plan, section and particularly in elevation along Philadelphia streets of a myriad of architectural styles. One may note that the examples illustrated on the following pages are all "old." As land parcels and buildings have continued to grow much larger since the mid-19th century, there are fewer and fewer opportunities along any given block in which to establish a rhythm or framework within which the variation, or rhyme, can occur.

It is doubtful whether any significant additional costs are involved in staggering

floor, sill or cornice heights by 6" to a foot. Early speculators and builders of quality houses, shops and even the early "palazzo" style office and apartment buildings appear to have made a conscious effort to do just that. This was often the case even when an adjacent building was of identical size and use.

It is interesting to note that in one predominantly Italian neighborhood, developed en masse by speculators, where little variation occurs for blocks on end, the residents partake in certain almost ritualistic exercises: application of decorative veneers to exterior facades and alteration of the width and orientation of their front steps. Although the floor plans of these houses are often identical--and presumably one orientation of the steps would make more "formal" sense than another--residents have chosen to build variation into a simplistic and unrelenting order.









SETBACKS

On occasion, amidst a block of rowhouses hugging the sidewalk, one may find a curious group of attached or semi-attached houses set back well into the lot. These anomalies are often of a completely different style and method of construction. Some appear to be examples of the church-inspired, neo-Gothic style of the 1830's and 40's. Their wood-frame construction, front porches and often gabled roofs create an interesting juxtaposition to the adjoining masonry townhouses, though they otherwise adhere to the dimensional theme of the street.

Their style, however, is less important than the variation they add to the spatial quality of the block. Although the front yards remain as private property, they are given over to the public's visual domain. This additional depth, combined with domestic landscaping, is an effective means of breaking up the continuous surface of the masonry.



CORNERS

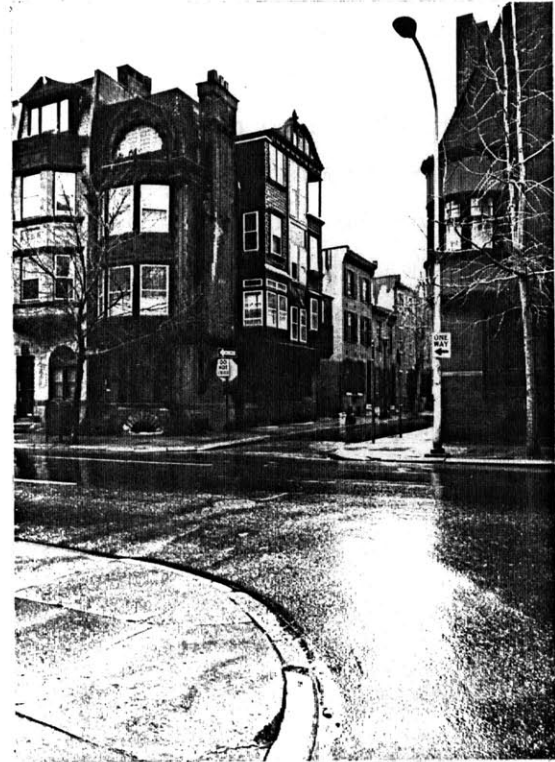
There seem to be as many variations of corner articulation as there are corners. Often corner properties reach out to claim the space above the sidewalk with overhanging bays (especially on the side walls), low cornices, and corbelled turrets. This adds punctuation at the end of the block and may give a sense of closure or containment to the space below. Occasionally one finds an extraordinary corner property that tries to address both streets equally with some form or style peculiar to the block.

One recurrent theme is the stepping back or return of the exposed side elevation to admit light into the middle rooms of the house, similar to the lightwells along the interior of many blocks. This affords some movement and variety along the side streets where the high bearing walls are set back and replaced by lower fenced side yards.

In many communities, particularly the lower

and middle-class speculative areas, hundreds of "corner stores" occupy the ground floor of what resembles an ordinary house. These are often entered at the corner through a diagonal door behind a cast-iron column. Access to the dwellings above is through the side of the building.

As the most prominent position in the geometry of the grid, corners are usually "built-up" in the sense that are seldom eroded away, but rather reinforce the othagonal intersection. When open spaces or setbacks do occur in the solid mass they are most often at the interior of the block.

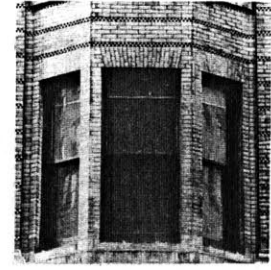


PROJECTIONS

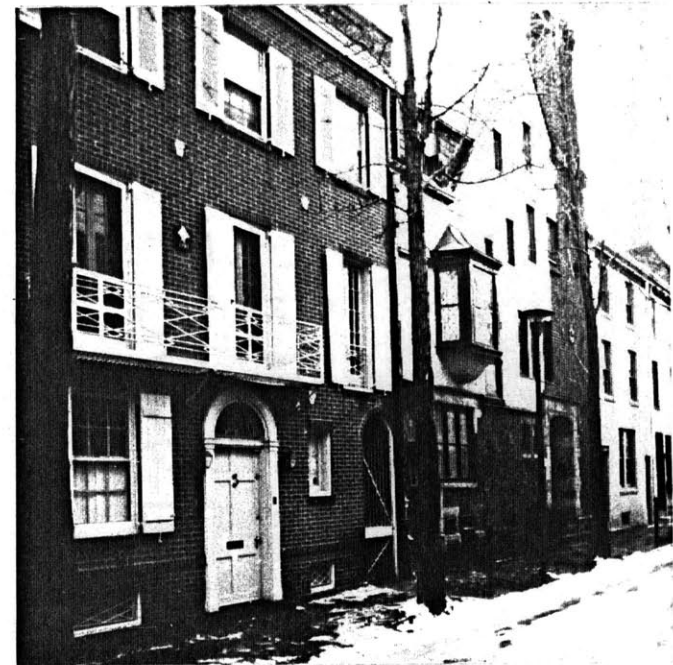
Unlike cities such as Boston, New Orleans or San Francisco, there is not a dominant theme or characteristic type of built projection in Philadelphia. By far, most of the rowhouses in the city have virtually flat and continuous masonry facades. Where these projections (bays, balconies, porticos and oriels) do exist, they are usually placed randomly with respect to the adjoining structures. One often finds suspended oriels on the side elevations above the sidewalk, particularly along the north-south streets. On the few isolated blocks where projections occur in any number, there is often a loosely-structured theme, rich in variants. Seldom are they part of the primary structure of the building, or continuous from the ground to the roof. Rather, they are constructed of light gauge metal or wood, and extend vertically no more than two stories.

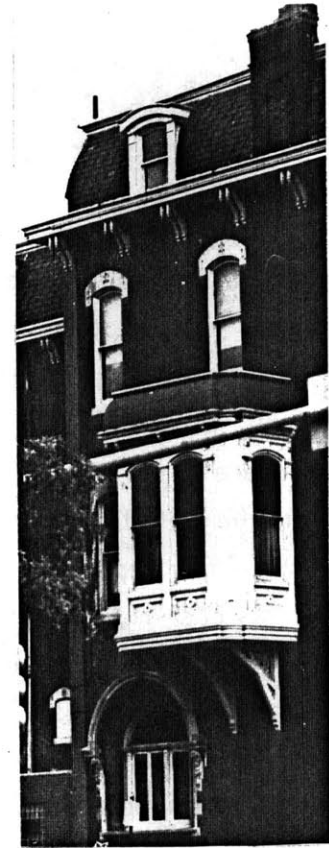


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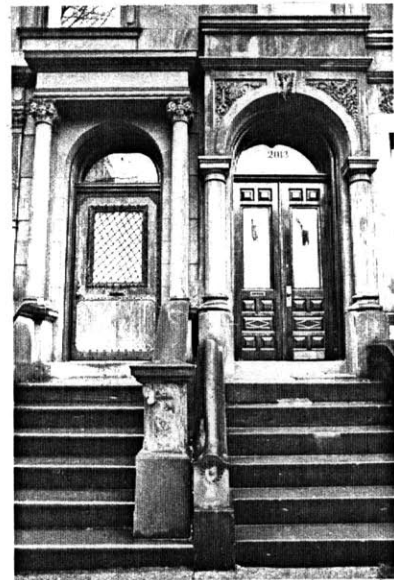
ENTRIES

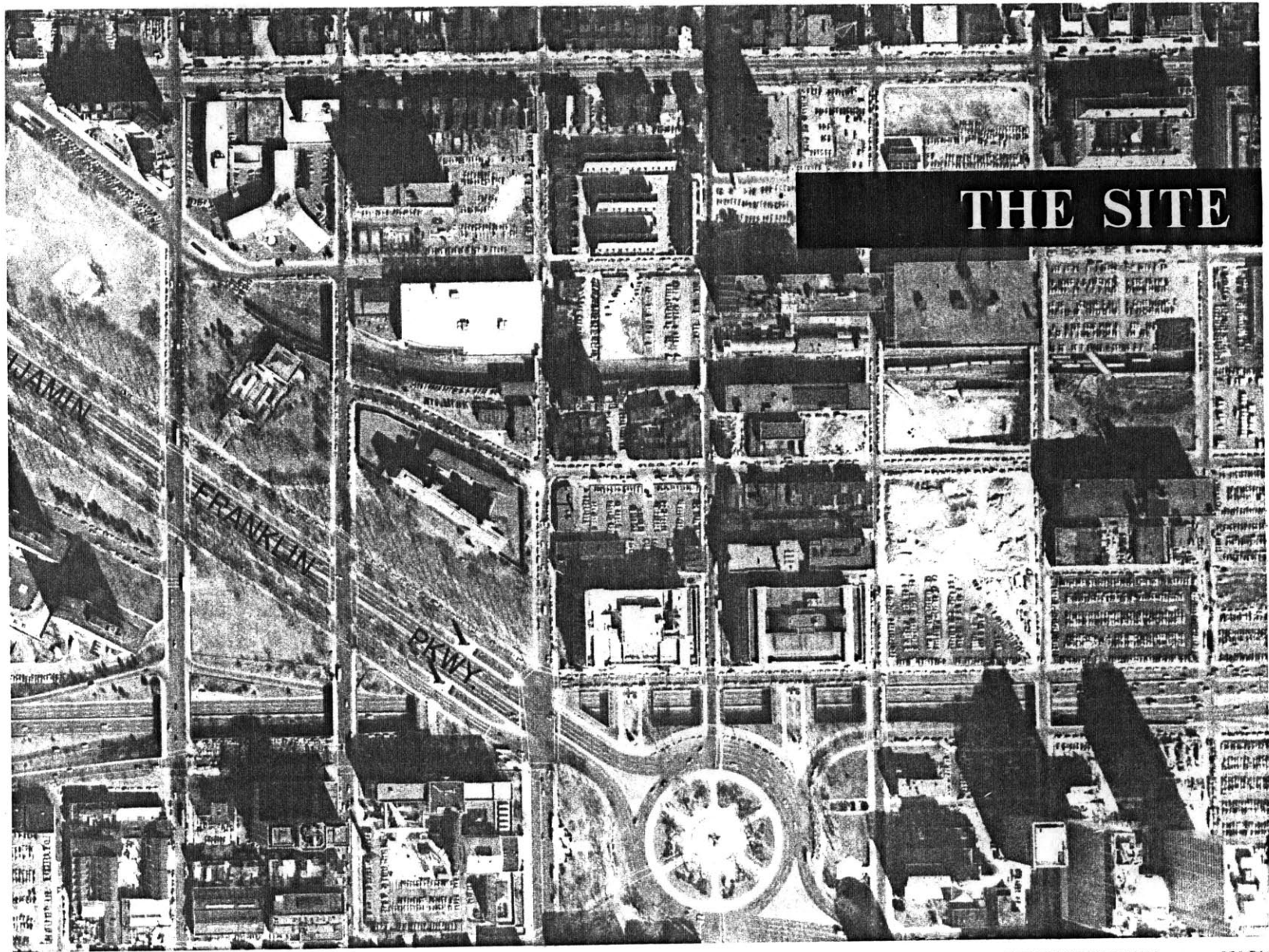
Openings in the continuous masonry surface are often manipulated to distinguish one property from another. While a pair of doorways may be placed side-by-side, near a common party wall, a level change is often introduced to separate the discrete entries. Differences in the detailing of the doorway and window-surrounds represents an opportunity to call out individual houses without any significant structural modification to the framework. Variations in color, molding, stoop height, shape, transom, and side-lites are among the available repertoire. The continuity and mixture of entry types, whether they are porticos, reveals, stepped vestibules or front gardens is an important factor in the recognition of a thematic unit that is characteristic of a given area.





2.





THE SITE



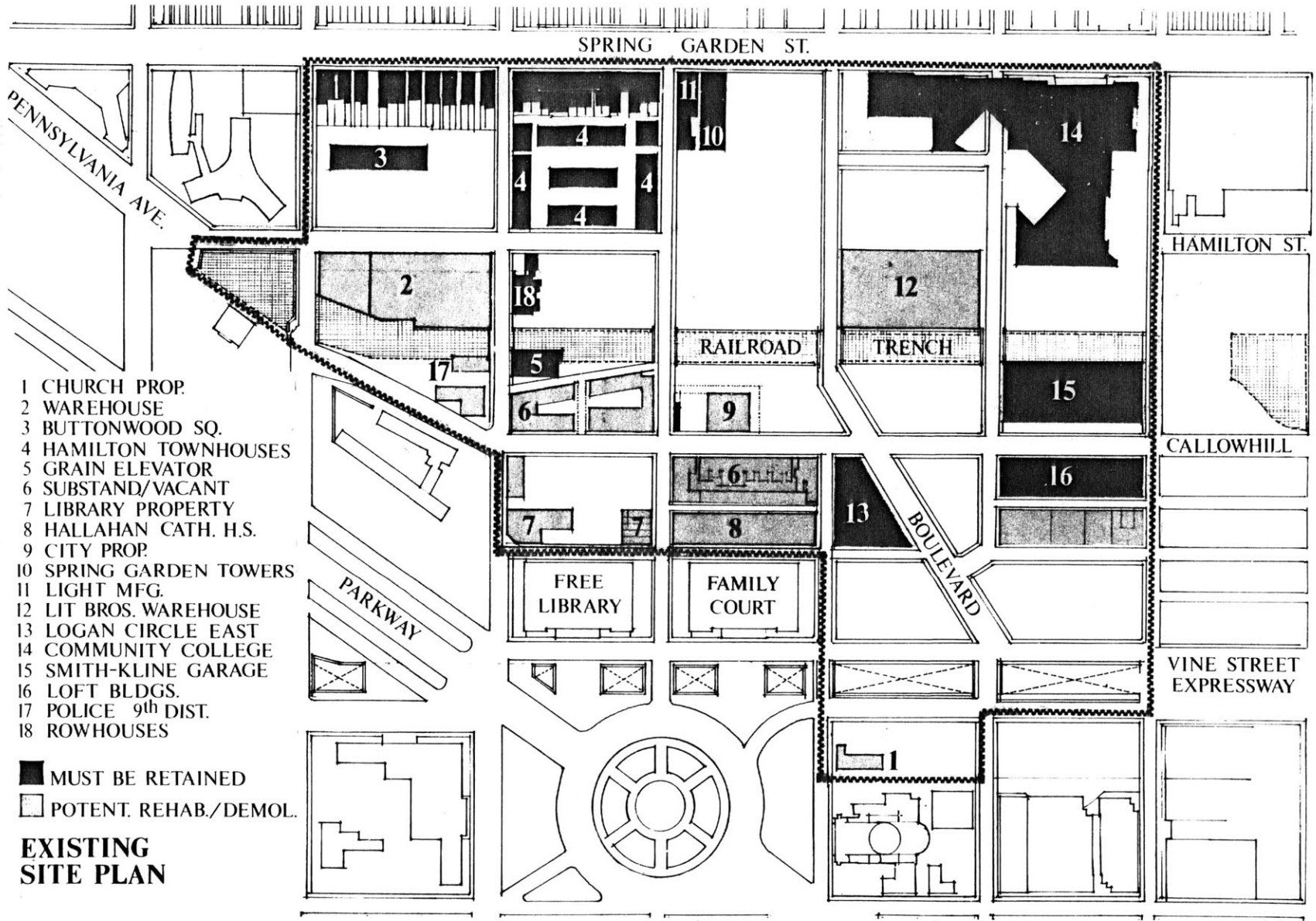
DESCRIPTION

The site for the design exploration, as described in this section, was chosen because it is sufficiently large and remote to make feasible, large-scale intervention where little fabric currently exists. Although the design draws upon the existing context, the site itself is relatively lacking in any character, style or tissue that might dictate a simple "infill" or "matching" solution. The area is amenable to the introduction of new thematic units. Furthermore, the site has been the subject of a previous proposal that may be used for comparison with the ideas put forth here.

Situated along the western half of the northern periphery of downtown Philadelphia lies a large swath of land that is generally derelict and devoid of character. A number of large buildings stand isolated among large vacant blocks. A few partially complete blocks

of small brick rowhouses remain. Many of the buildings that formerly occupied the site were razed as part of a privately-financed urban renewal plan dubbed, "Franklin Town."

In a sense, the area is the backyard of Center City. As much of Philadelphia is hierarchically organized around City Hall, much of the large scale development, especially on the north side of the downtown, addresses the center. The back-sides of the hi-rises, hospitals, and other institutional buildings face out toward Franklin Town. In relation to Center City, the area is the closest and most westerly portion of what was a much larger thrust of industrial development that extended northeast of the city far along the Delaware River.



- 1 CHURCH PROP.
- 2 WAREHOUSE
- 3 BUTTONWOOD SQ.
- 4 HAMILTON TOWNHOUSES
- 5 GRAIN ELEVATOR
- 6 SUBSTAND/VACANT
- 7 LIBRARY PROPERTY
- 8 HALLAHAN CATH. H.S.
- 9 CITY PROP.
- 10 SPRING GARDEN TOWERS
- 11 LIGHT MFG.
- 12 LIT BROS. WAREHOUSE
- 13 LOGAN CIRCLE EAST
- 14 COMMUNITY COLLEGE
- 15 SMITH-KLINE GARAGE
- 16 LOFT BLDGS.
- 17 POLICE 9th DIST.
- 18 ROWHOUSES

MUST BE RETAINED
 POTENT. REHAB./DEMOL.

**EXISTING
SITE PLAN**

At one time, the area was characterized by large factories and warehouses interspersed with small clusters of workers' housing. Giant industrial complexes such as Baldwin Locomotive and later ITE Imperial loomed over the tiny "Father-Son-Holy Ghost" houses (named for the one small room on each of the three floors). Although most of the factories have been demolished, the SmithKline-Beckman pharmaceutical company and the city's daily newspaper, The Philadelphia Inquirer, continue to maintain large facilities. They are located to the east and northeastern edges of the site.

The site, as indicated on the accompanying plan, has an area, including all streets, of approximately 53 acres. It is, for all intents and purposes, flat. There is, however, a very slight grade change descending from the north down towards Center City. This is undoubtedly the source of the area's former name, "Callow-hill." Some nearby residents have mentioned that they enjoy the slight view down towards the city as they make their way to work each day, and would be disappointed with any plan that

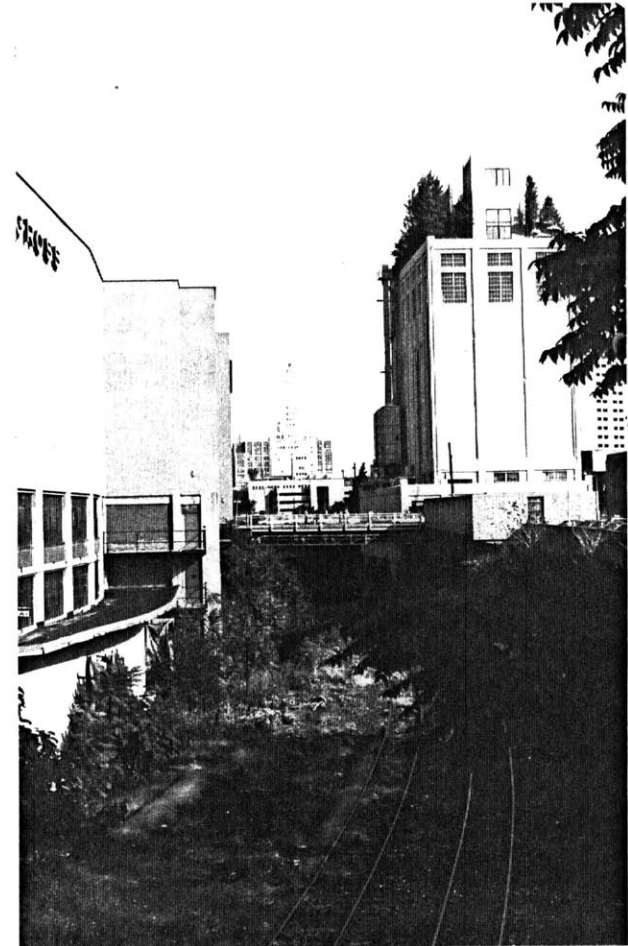
would obstruct such a view.

A number of interesting buildings remain on or near the site. Perhaps the most visible are the twin neo-classical structures, The Free Library and the Family Court. Their broad, columned facade form the northern edge of Logan Square. The design (1917-1927) is attributed to Julian Abele, a young black architect in the office of Horace Trumbauer. The buildings were obviously inspired by the structures along La Place de la Concorde. Relative to these structures, the Franklin Town site is in a position comparable to the Madeleine. Another interesting building is the grain elevator that was once operated by the former Reading Railroad. Constructed of in-situ concrete in 1925, along a railroad trench, it has since been rehabilitated, and now serves as the office of a large interior design firm. The lush rooftop gardens of the apartment belonging to the principal of the firm, are visible throughout the site.



Free Library of Philadelphia. (1917-27)

Grain elevator (1925), railroad trench



2.



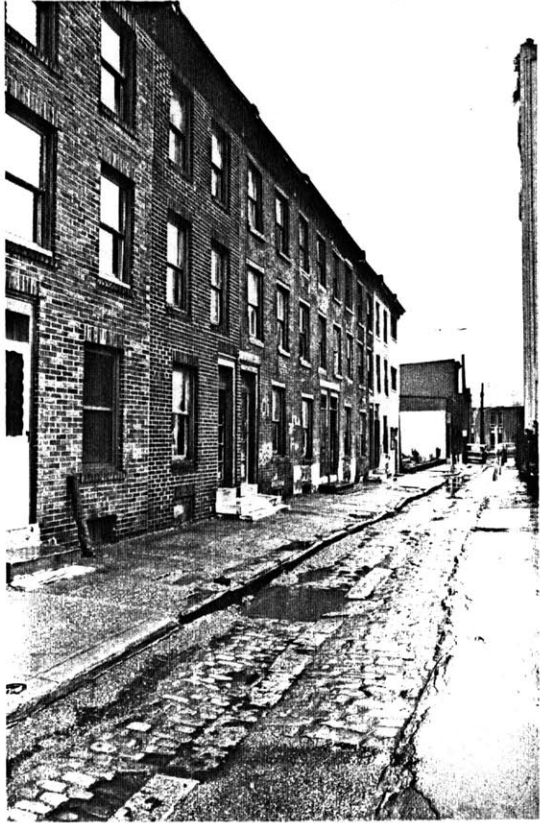
Cathedral S.S. Peter and Paul (1846-64)

Other structures on the site include a squat police precinct, an old Catholic high school for girls and the large, now vacant Hancock-Gross warehouse which had recently been added to and refurbished. Among the remaining buildings are the five completed-to-date projects of the Franklin Town Development Corporation; The SmithKline /Franklin Plaza Hotel complex, One Buttonwood Square, Hamilton Townhouses, Spring Garden Towers and East Logan Square.

The northern edge of the site, Spring Garden Street, forms the boundary between the neighborhood of the same name and Franklin Town. Large semi-detached rowhouses, formerly the homes of wealthy industrialists and merchants, flank much of the wide tree-lined street. These homes, each of approximately the same dimension, are of a myriad of styles, including Greek Revival, Victorian, and Georgian. Just to the north of Spring Garden Street are alternating streets of small houses for domestics and workers, carriage houses and again, wealthy and upper-middle class townhouses. The area was developed between 1830 and 1870.

It is interesting to note that neither Franklin Town nor the adjacent Spring Garden area were named in a 1976 map of Philadelphia neighborhoods, which simply referred to the area as "North Philadelphia" (a negative association if ever there was one). Today the Spring Garden neighborhood is recognized as a viable and cohesive community with a vocal civic association. Property values and the demand for housing in the area have risen sharply, particularly over the past decade. To the residents of Spring Garden, the uses and quality of design accompanying the future development of Franklin Town is of vital concern.

Near the middle of the site is the Olde City Line of the Reading Railroad. The twin tracks are depressed in an open trench that continues below the street level. The tracks join with the trunk lines in Fairmount Park, and once provided freight service to the Reading Terminal in the downtown and the Delaware Avenue piers further east. The only customer remaining on this line is the Philadelphia Inquirer which receives infrequent paper deliveries.



Existing housing.



View looking southeast from 19th Street.

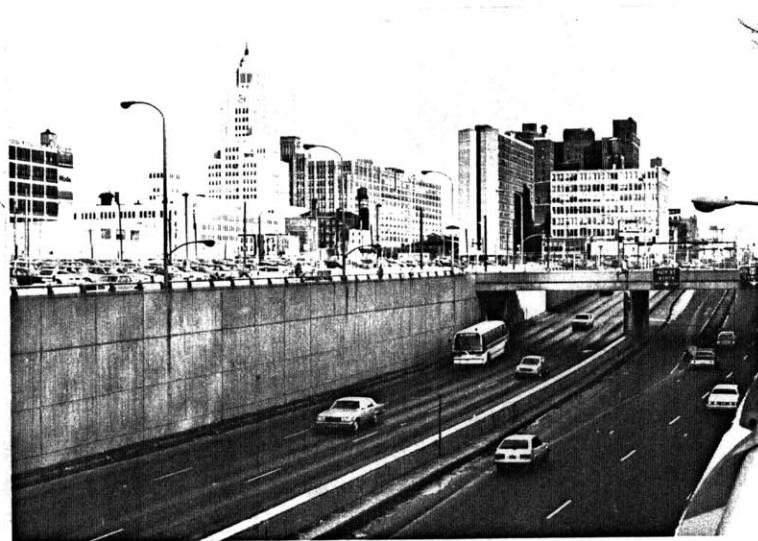


Railroad trench looking east.

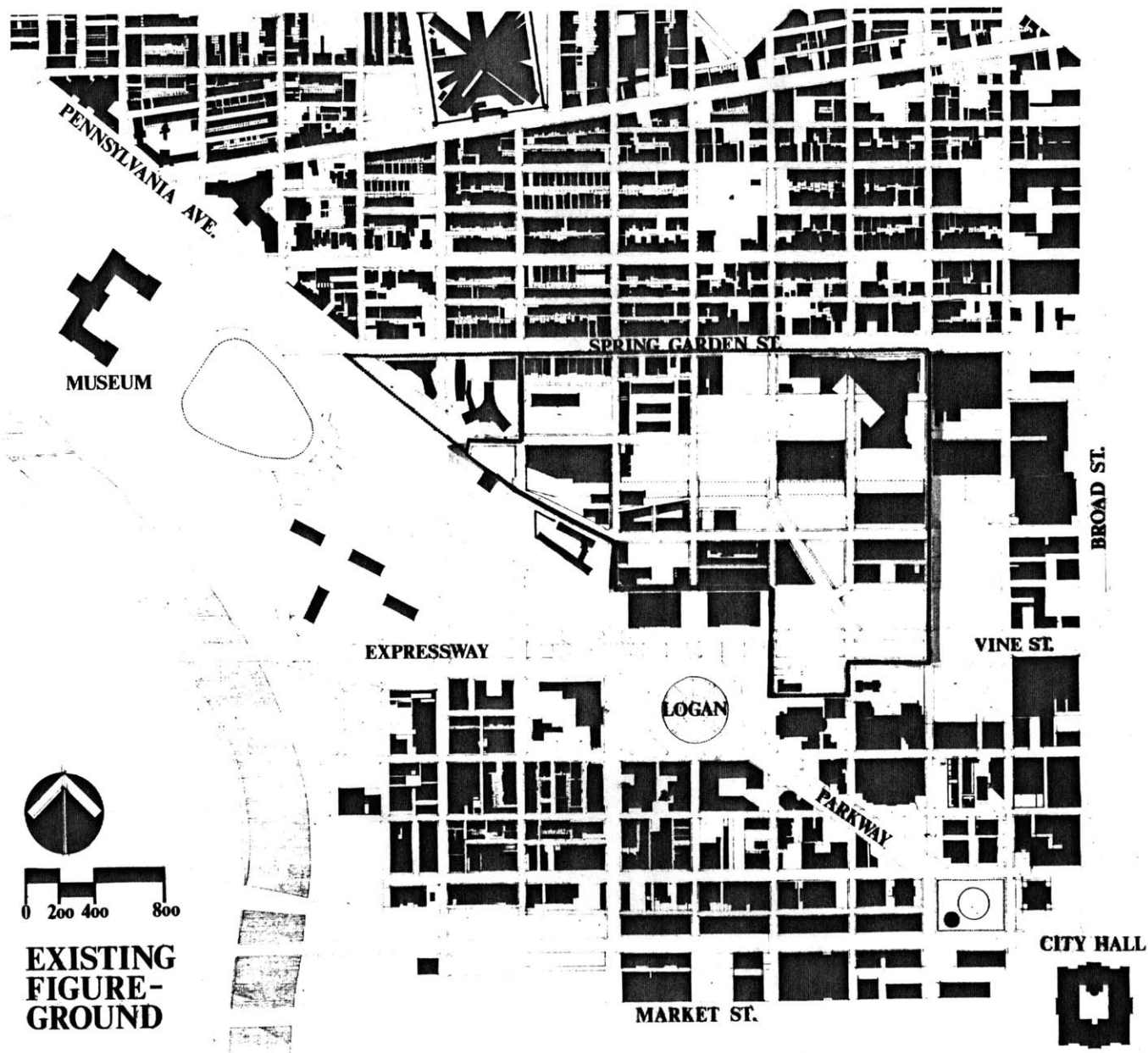
Perhaps the most divisive factor that has impeded recent efforts to revitalize the area is the Vine Street Expressway. The six-lane artery which links the Schuylkill Expressway with the downtown and New Jersey to the east, is also depressed in an open trench along the southern end of the site. It is flanked by surface access roads on either side. This forms an abyss, in places almost 180' wide, that effectively severs the downtown from areas to the north. At the time of its construction during the 1950's as part of a much larger highway network, any connection between the Center City and the "slums" to the north was probably viewed as objectionable anyway. Today, however, with the desire to develop Franklin Town, and the emergence of once-again prosperous neighborhoods still further north, a more gradual transition would be preferable.

The patterns presented in the previous section and the existing Site Plan indicate that there are fewer streets in this area than, for example, Society Hill or the Rittenhouse Square area. This is probably due to the large spaces

required by the industrial uses. These large blocks, many of which are now vacant, seem to encourage the kind of large-grain development that is presently occurring. With the exception of Callowhill Street and a short portion of Hamilton Street, traffic through the site is along one-way streets. Many of the vacant blocks, particularly those nearest Vine Street and the Community College, are used for surface parking.



Vine Street Expressway, looking northeast.



**EXISTING
FIGURE-
GROUND**

PREVIOUS PROPOSAL

In 1970, plans were announced for a massive \$400 million (1970 dollars) development effort by the name of Franklin Town. The project, which had secretly been in the planning process for a considerable time, was sponsored by a consortium of major Philadelphia manufacturing and financial concerns, most of whom owned some land within the proposed development area. They agreed to pool their financial resources and real estate holdings in a seemingly altruistic contribution to the growth of Philadelphia. Franklin Town was touted as a "showcase of private initiative." Nevertheless, the acquisition of additional property was said to be necessary to fully develop the area. In a very questionable agreement with the City, this private corporation was, for all intents and purposes, granted the power to impose eminent domain on existing property owners within a prescribed area. The actual condemnation was

handled by the Redevelopment Authority upon the request of the Franklin Town group.

Approximately 125 homeowners were displaced, along with numerous tenants and property owners not residing in the area. Estimates state that 70% of the residents were over age 65. However, numerous families also resided in the Sumner Street area, presently the site of the SmithKline-Beckman World Headquarters and the Franklin Plaza Hotel. While relocation and settlement with many of those concerned was quick and amicable, litigation over fair market value compensation for many others continues to this day.

Some have accused the consortium of gerrymandering and going through various machinations (such as developing a master plan) simply to obtain valuable property south of Vine Street that they did not originally control. These critics contend that the developer never really had any intention of fully implementing the scheme but rather knew that they would be unable to acquire the most potentially lucrative property on the site through private negotiation.

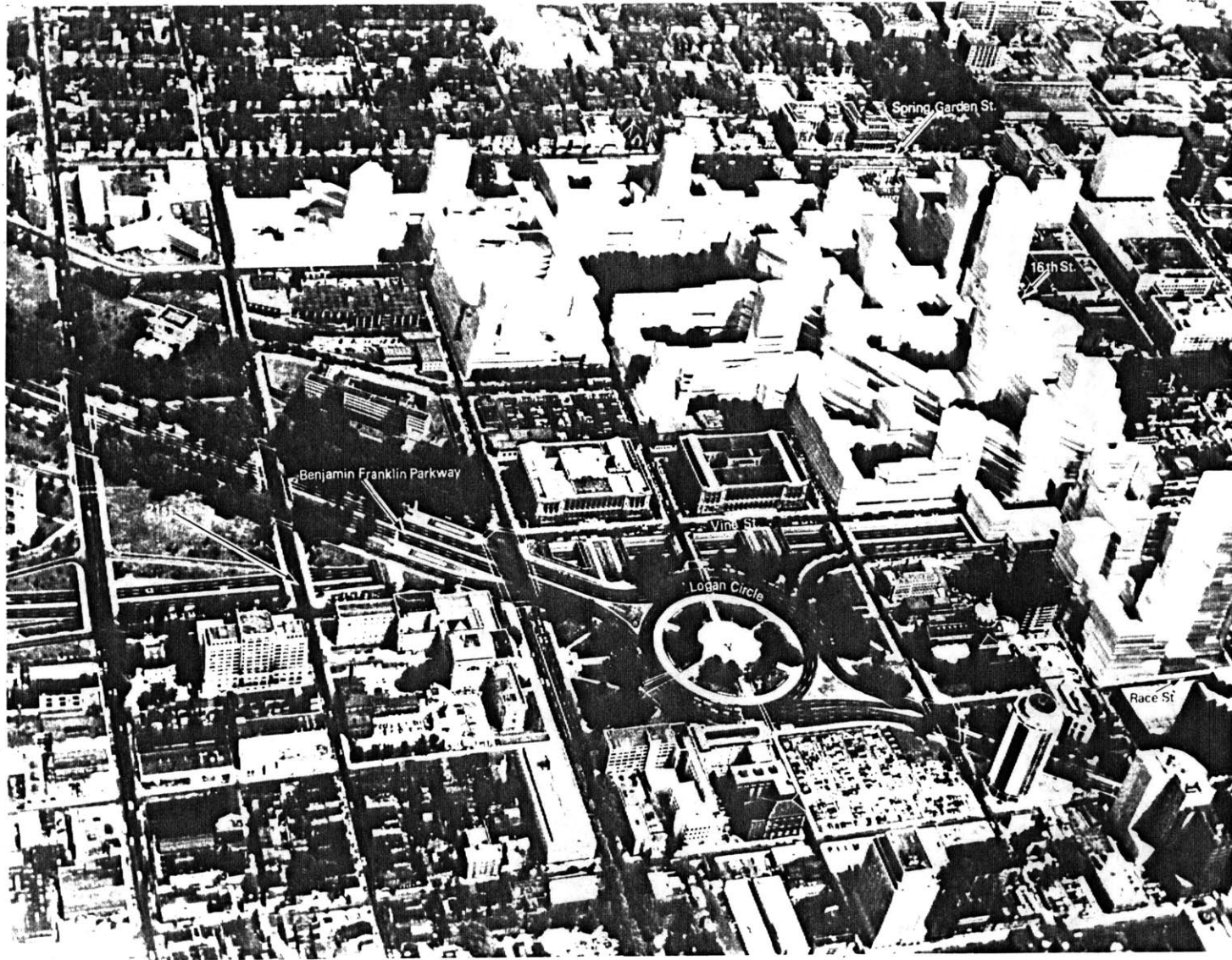
There is some evidence to suggest that this may be partially true. A number of the consortium's participants withdrew their support soon after the individual properties that they originally owned had been developed under favorable zoning variances granted to Franklin Town. Additionally, the only project to have been completed within the past few years, Logan Circle East, was developed by another group after purchasing the site from the Franklin Town Development Corporation.

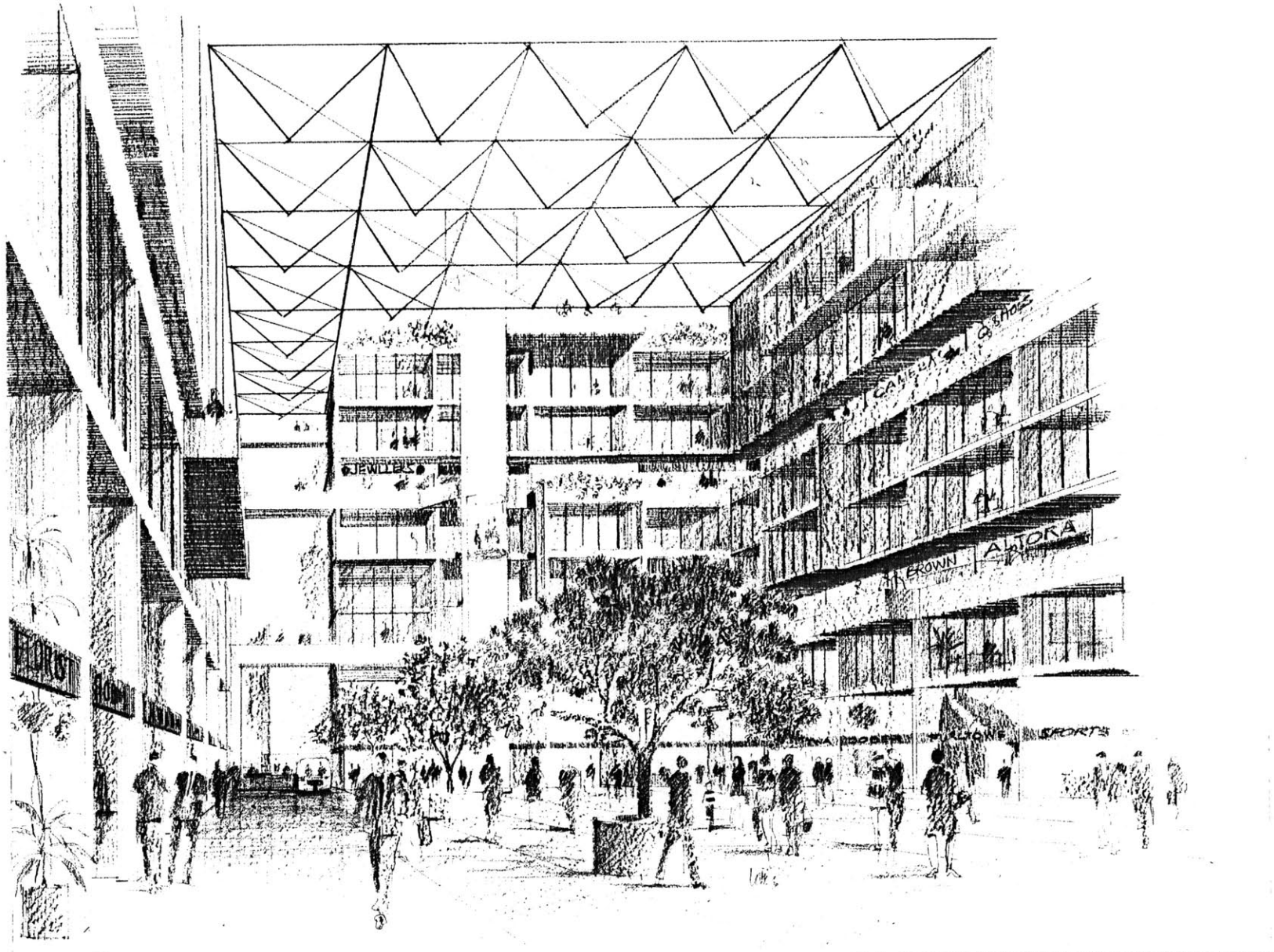
In fairness to the developer, however, significant investment has been made to implement at least some of the original plan, major economic recessions subsequent to the announcement of the project may have curtailed investment. Finally, large portions of the area were in fact "blighted" and the present desolate appearance of the site seems to overshadow the memory of what was an even worse environment.

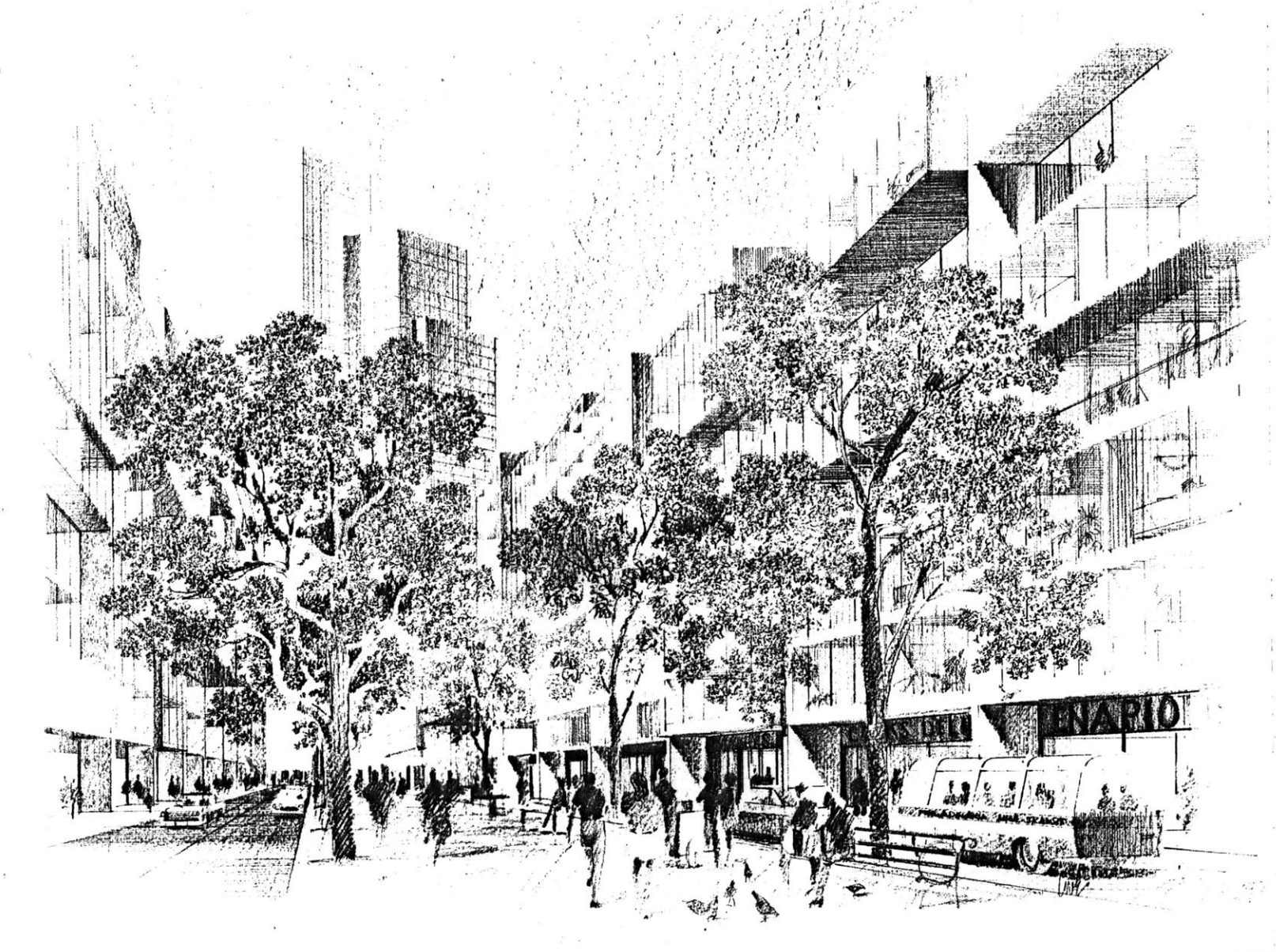
The New York firm of Johnson-Burgee (presently John Burgee Associates with Philip Johnson) was commissioned to develop the original masterplan for the area. Although detailed

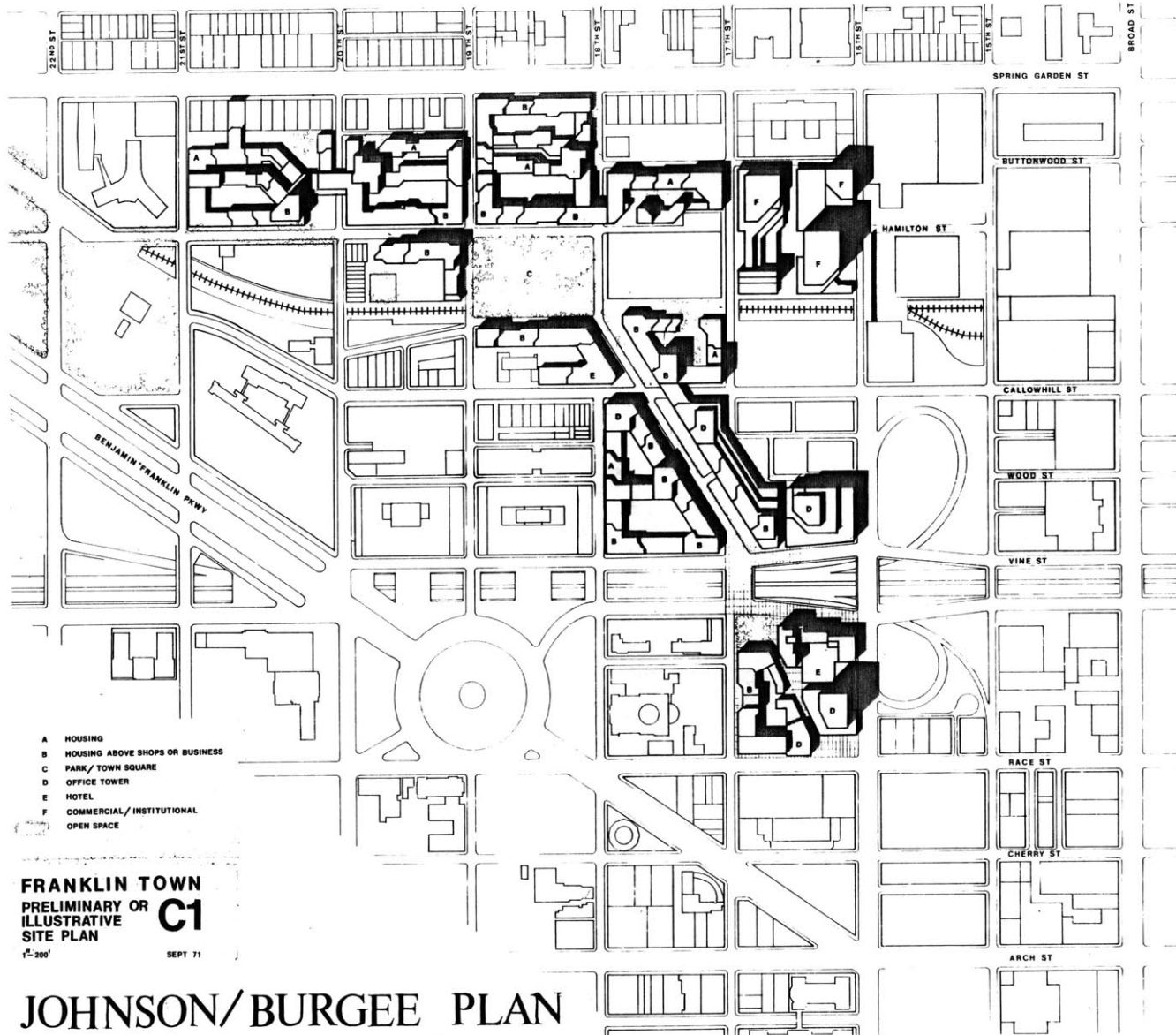
information about the program or its design is no longer available, a number of the drawings and photographs from that proposal are presented here. The program of the initial proposal included, as Philadelphia Magazine described it, "1700 hotel rooms for tourists, a grand boulevard for architects, 4 million square feet of office space for captains of industry, homes, fountains, plazas, theaters, and shops." (It failed to mention who these last few items were for.) In general, the design was praised by both the architectural and planning community and the media.











The image of this "new town in the city" as portrayed in both the model and sketches, is clearly that of a megastructure. The buildings form a continuous mass that extends in places for the length of two blocks. Similar to the existing site, there is a conspicuous lack of the smaller streets that characterize many of Philadelphia's neighborhoods. Rather, a number of the large blocks of the contiguous structure are linked by bridges that span across the few streets within the site.

Judging from the model, the average height of the lower structures within the scheme appears to be approximately 100' above the street elevation with numerous towers rising up to 20-30 stories. Despite the integration of these towers with the lower structures, there is still insufficient contrast between the tall and the short. At ground level, the massing would probably be perceived as a continuous high-rise wall fiercely flanking the street.

The open spaces throughout the scheme are clearly defined, perhaps too much so. Where permitted by the configuration of the site,

totally contained courtyards are formed by the shallow but high massing of the buildings. One doesn't sense from the plan that these spaces would be freely accessible or visible from the street. Also, due to the height of the surrounding structures, little direct sunlight could be expected to penetrate the depths of each courtyard, or the streets, for that matter.

These problems may be inherent in any high density scheme. The density suggested in this proposal is probably not the result of the architects' input, but rather is derived from some misguided market analysis. This is evident from the vast allocation of space for "shops below housing" beyond any reasonable expectation of market demand. Similarly, 4 million square feet of office space amounts to approximately six years of the total annual demand for new space in the city. It would be presumptuous to assume that even half of the city's annual growth would occur in the Franklin Town area while so many valuable sites still exist within the downtown core. Although it is not within the scope of this thesis to conduct marketing studies, this

background information is extremely useful in determining a feasible density for the site.

The renderings of the Johnson scheme depict a high level of continuity. The vocabulary of the buildings, although appropriately vague for a sketch, is decidedly "modern" and appears to be fairly consistent throughout. There is little distinction between office buildings and housing. Although there appears to be no hierarchical organization within the scheme itself, the entire project assumes a very object-like position in relation to the larger context.

While it may be somewhat unfair to criticize a proposal for a project of this scale based upon a few sketches, it is safe to assume that the architect envisioned a very uniform and consistent vocabulary throughout. This occurred despite the forehand knowledge that in all likelihood it would be necessary to involve many different designers and perhaps a number of different developers in order to bring the project to fruition. Apart from the potentially monotonous quality of such a place, the proposal does not seem amenable to the creative

variation that could be anticipated and should be encouraged with the participation of these different individuals.

Apparently the developers have since acknowledged the overly-ambitious scale of the project and have resigned themselves to selling-off or renting large parcels within the site for development by other business interests. In sharp contrast to the Johnson proposal, there is virtually no continuity between the newly completed projects. Banal, modern buildings of disparate density, massing and vocabulary stand next to one another. It is difficult to recognize any coherent pattern by which this development is occurring.

The few projects that have been built for the most part do not contribute to the vitality of the street. Instead, the street becomes a road that simply divides different parcels. For example, one project, the 82-unit Hamilton Townhouses, has 6'-7' high walled backyards along the public street with front doors facing an internal, but not secure, courtyard which is occupied primarily by a parking lot. Never-

theless, the scale and vocabulary of this project approaches a quality more compatible with the nearby neighborhood than do the other projects. The three remaining buildings are high-rise slabs that are not integrated with other smaller structures but stand alone and isolated. Development of the area has been occurring incrementally only by default.

One of the few elements of the Johnson scheme that has actually been implemented is the Franklin Town Boulevard. Because the configuration of the site did not lend itself to "a natural extension of Center City," as the developer now claims it could be, it was thought necessary to create a strong link between the property closest to the downtown, and the more distant area deep within the site.

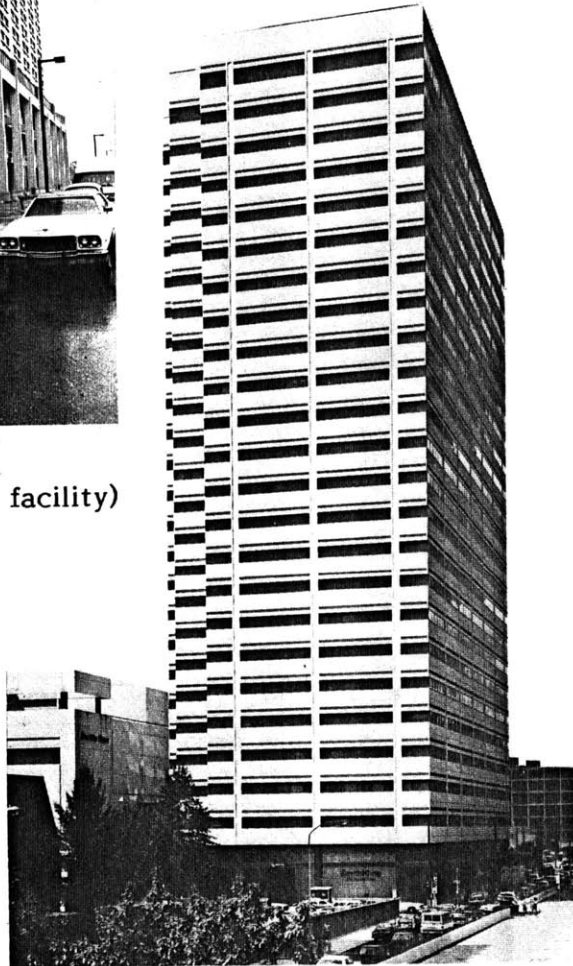
However, as described in the patterns of the city, axes have traditionally been grand gestures, significant at the larger city scale. In other cases where wide thoroughfares deviate from the orthogonal grid, they usually started as horsepaths from outlying suburbs and towns. These have since become boundaries that define



different communities. Surely, the Franklin Town Boulevard was not intended to divide the site into different sections. Yet the extremely hard and visually impenetrable edges as depicted in the Johnson scheme tend to reinforce the perception of great walls on either side that split the area in two. Unfortunately, the one building that has been erected along its length, Logan Square East, a 324-unit life-care facility, seems to perpetuate this effect. It should be noted that none of the buildings within Franklin Town were actually designed by the Johnson office.



Logan Circle East
(324-unit life-care facility)



SmithKline Beckman Headquarters

Furthermore, the ends of axes have historically been reserved for civic buildings. Nevertheless, the SmithKline-Beckman world headquarters and Franklin Plaza Hotel complex were erected at one end of the boulevard. These uses hardly amount to any kind of public or civic gesture. On the other hand, these buildings emphasize the very introverted nature of Franklin Town. It looks into itself rather than out towards the rest of the city, callously ignoring the implicit rules that have guided much of the city's previous growth.

Fortunately, the Johnson plan did propose a generous public square at the northern terminus of the boulevard. No visible steps have been initiated, however, toward developing this space. It sits idle and barren, devoid of trees. The developers argue that without the prior construction of buildings around the perimeter of the square, it would be subject to vandalism. Nevertheless, the square would certainly improve the view from their offices at the other end of the axis.



DESIGN PROJECTION

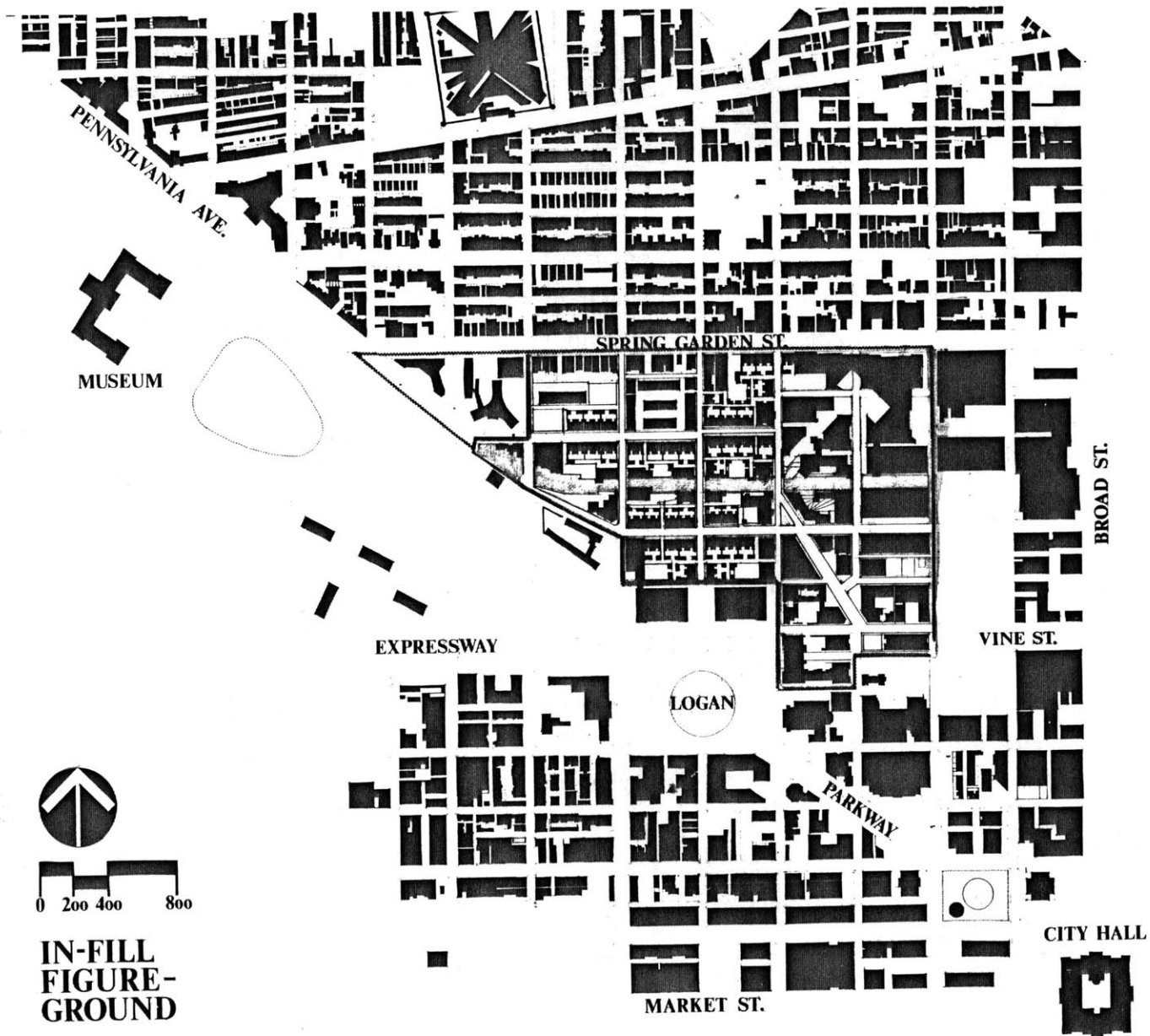
SITE PLAN

Because the site is well contained and buffered by the larger grain of the public square, civic and industrial buildings, it has the potential to be developed as a distinct neighborhood. This is further supported by examining other comparable corresponding locations such as Society Hill and Rittenhouse Square. Unlike the previous proposal's reference to a "New Town within the City" with an accompanying image that seems to imply autonomy from the context, a different attitude is adopted here. The aim is to develop a flexible framework for a neighborhood possessing a full range of activities but still subordinate to the larger city in which it resides. The distinction is not merely semantic.

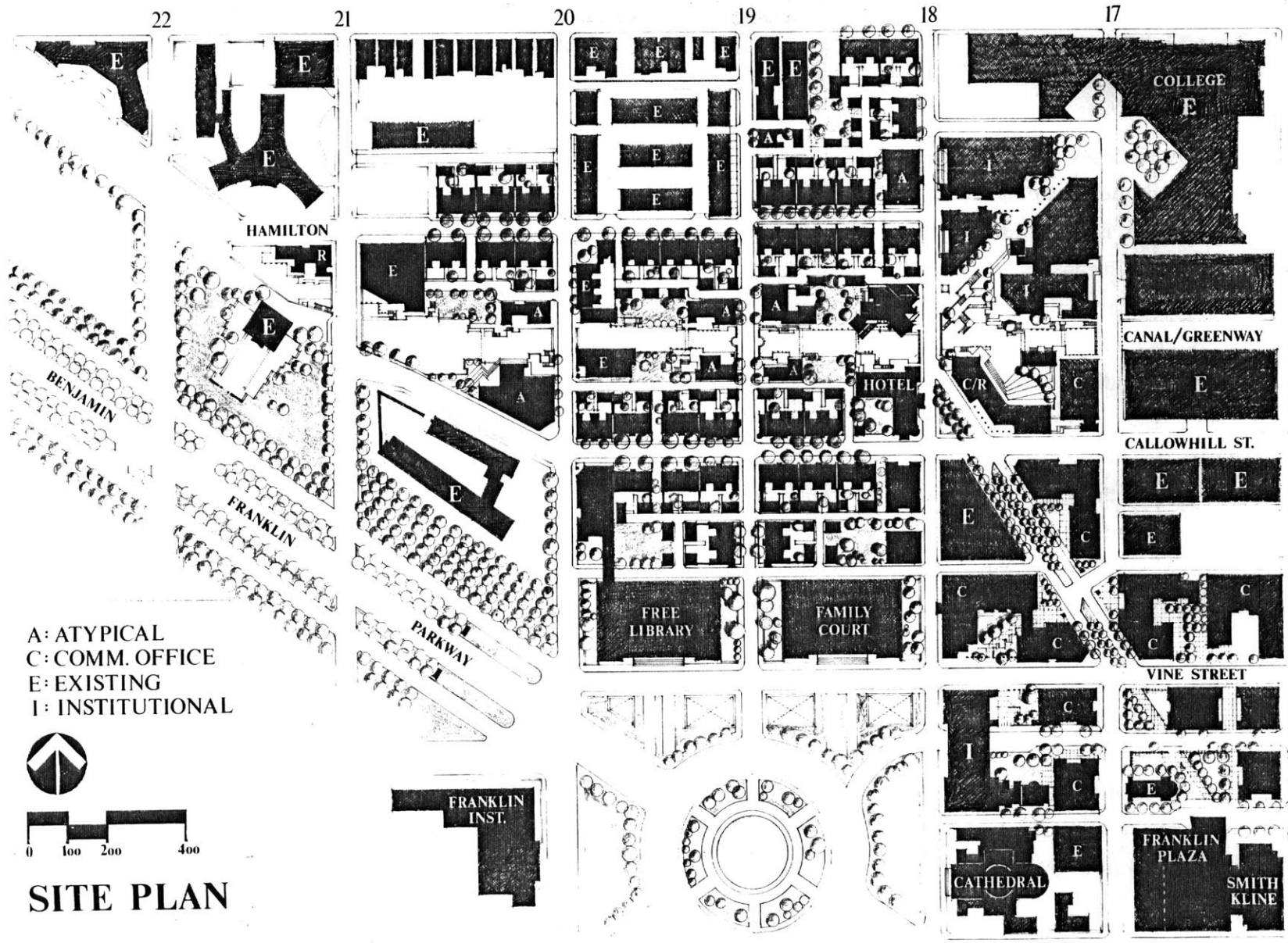
Although there is a considerable amount of exchange between the institutional, commercial and residential activities, the site has been dealt with as three interrelated but distin-

guishable areas. These are the Commercial Office Area to the south, the College Area to the northeast, and the Residential Area in the center. These are discussed individually.

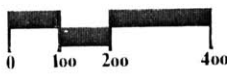
In very general terms, the scheme describes an effort to institute a coherent framework, in which there is some recognizable continuity that is both internal to the project and in relation to the larger context. As the plan suggests, there are similar themes in the structure of each block. However, the variations in the alignment of streets, building sizes and the provision of space for atypical uses and forms could be assumed to create a range of spatial experiences. Likewise, there are similarities between the constituent buildings. But again, the possible variations in facades, density, and unit configurations could increase the complexity of the environment.



**IN-FILL
 FIGURE-
 GROUND**



A: ATYPICAL
 C: COMM. OFFICE
 E: EXISTING
 I: INSTITUTIONAL



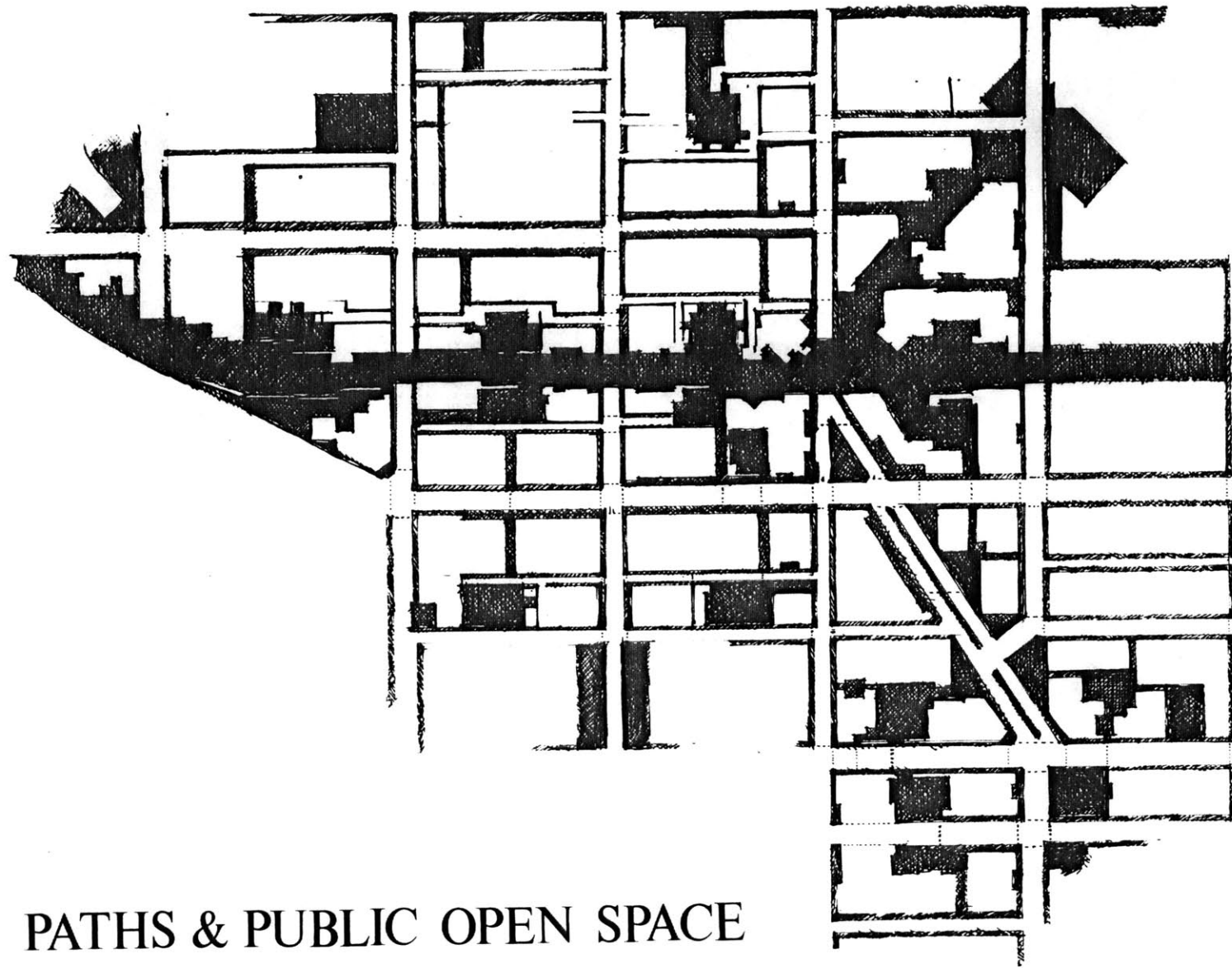
SITE PLAN

PATH NETWORK

A network of pedestrian paths is incorporated into the founding structure of the scheme. Its purpose is twofold. First, it provides an alternative means of traveling through the site and reaching goal destinations. In places these paths may be preferable to the street grid where massing conditions or traffic volume is undesirable. Additionally, they also provide direct access to the larger open spaces often in the interior of the block. Secondly, if the paths were treated as easements, they could, in part, be used to describe the newly-drawn lines of smaller parcels, thereby breaking up a potentially monotonous mass. In a sense, these paths, like streets, would define the buildings and vice versa.

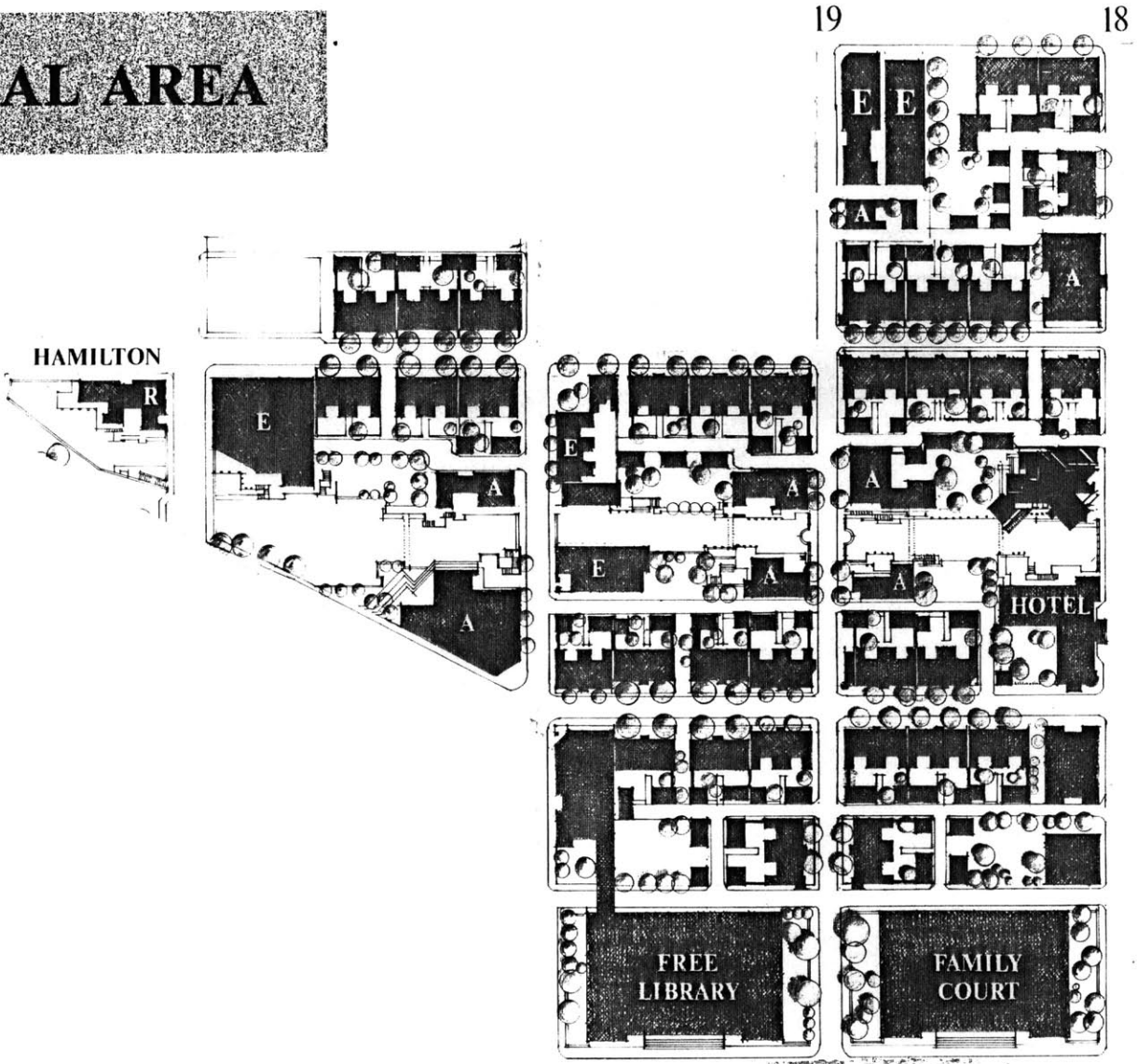
The paths could be treated differently with respect to dimensions and landscaping. Consistent use of a particular paving material, lighting fixture or fence might reinforce the

continuity of the network. As the plan implies, there should be at least a partial alignment of paths from block to block.



PATHS & PUBLIC OPEN SPACE

RESIDENTIAL AREA



LOT INCREMENTS

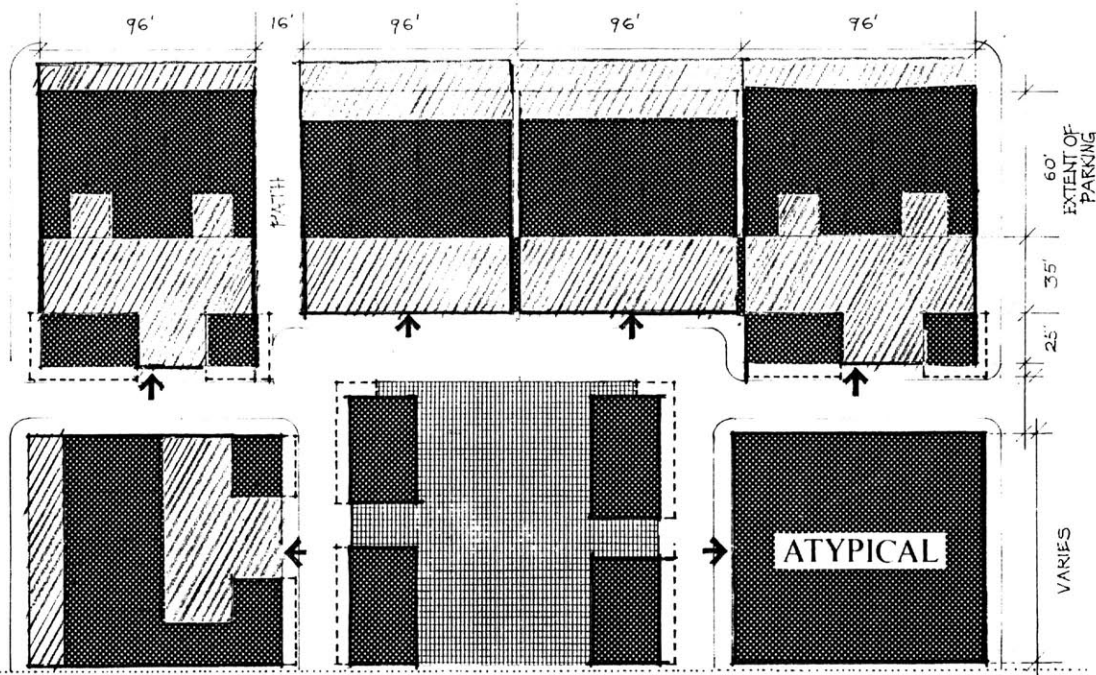
Each block in the residential area has been divided into smaller parcels or lots. The number of these varies depending on the size and configuration of the block and whether or not there are any existing structures. These form the basic increments or building blocks of the neighborhood. They help to establish a framework within which a range of variations can occur in plan, section and elevation.

Following the contextual model, the arrangement of these parcels is designed to maximize the number of lots with frontage along the east-west streets. These streets could expect still less vehicular traffic than the discontinuous streets in the downtown. Only Callowhill Street provides access through Franklin Town in the east-west direction.

The size of a typical lot would be 96' wide along the street and from 100' to 125' in depth. This divides the average block (approximately

400' in length) into four equally wide lots with slack space (16'-20') remaining for a path through the block, and two residual lots that face the busier north-south streets. Each of these lots in turn can be independently developed to varying densities within limits prescribed by parking requirements. In the few instances where houses would front on these streets, they would be setback behind a small garden, much the same as those along the east-west streets.

The dimensions of these parcels were conceived as the result of trying to maximize the number of discrete properties, while simultaneously minimizing the number of circulation cores. The lots can thus be further divided into four house-like substructures which share a modest circulation core and parking garage. The width of each of these "houses" is dictated by structural restraints imposed by the garage below. These dimensions, however, are very typical of the larger rowhouses throughout Philadelphia.



E EXISTING STRUCTURE



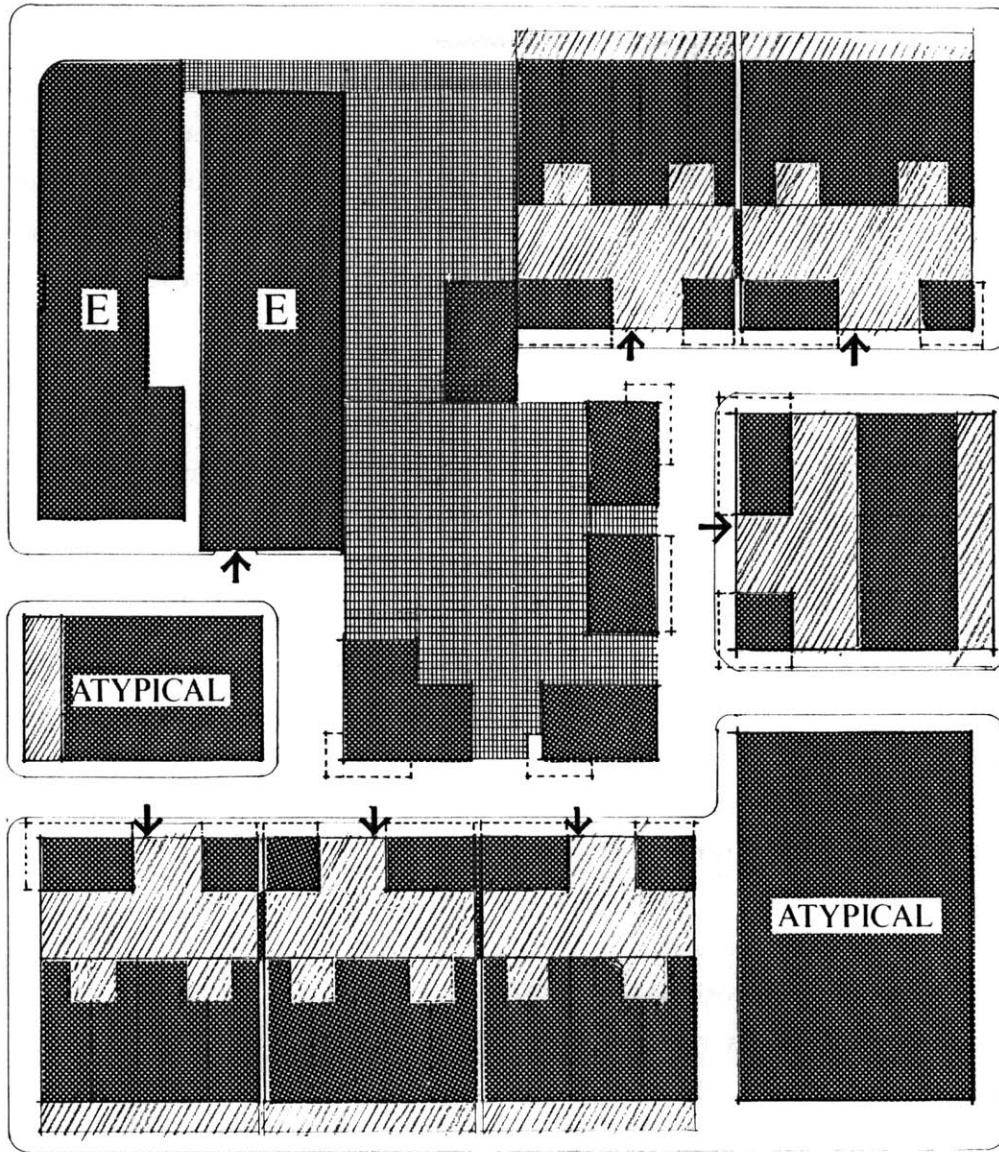
→ PARKING ENTRY

□ LOT/PARCEL BOUNDRIES

▨ DEDICATED SEMI-PRIVATE OPEN SPACE

▩ COMMON SEMI-PUBLIC SQUARE

BASIC BLOCK STRUCTURE



BLOCK VARIATION

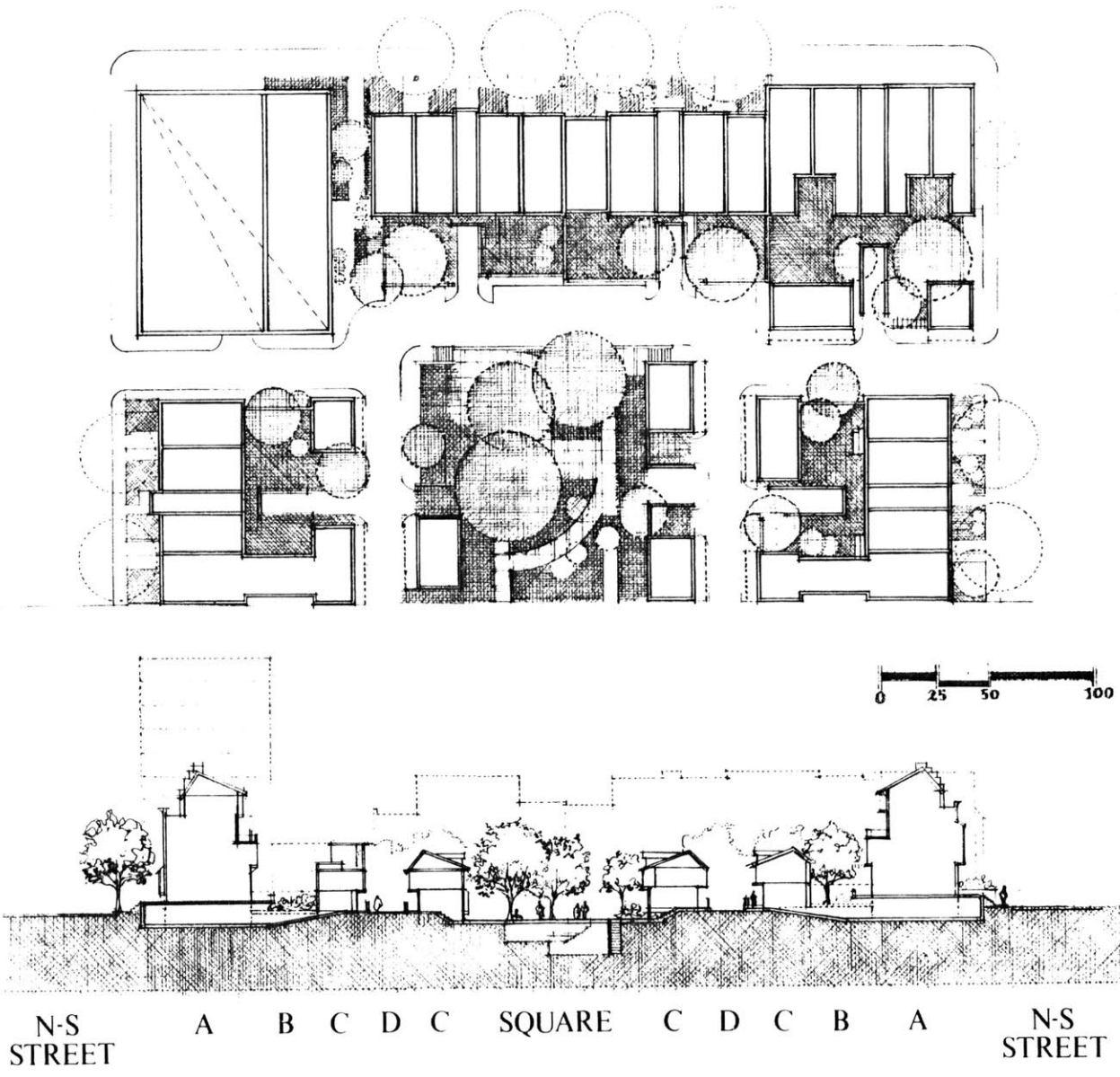
It is suggested that two of the "houses," one on either side of the core, have a nominal width of 22' and the remaining two should be 20' each. While 22' is slightly larger than the space required for a two-car parking bay, it is the minimum dimension necessary to place two small rooms side by side. The 20' bays will permit vertical circulation (8' stairway) next to a 14' room. Although another system was examined involving only one "house" on either side of a core, it was found to be inefficient as it increased the number of cores from four to eight while reducing the potential number of units along the block.

Although it may seem antithetical to the current developers' successful effort to control large areas of land, the rationale for subdividing the whole blocks into parcels is very important. These parcels permit the work to be done by smaller local contractors and "design build" teams, often more adept at the residential scale. As the scope of the work is reduced, so is the required bonding and capital necessary to participate. Obviously, there is

nothing to prevent one contractor or builder from developing more than one parcel.

Furthermore, the increments allow an atypical building such as a school, library, hotel, or mid-rise apartment tower to be incorporated within the structure of the block. This would add to the diversity of activity and form along each block.

Most important, however, would be the capability of each parcel to offer a mix of residential unit sizes within one basic framework. This mix could also vary from lot to lot. As the elevations indicate, this could also be reflected in the facade treatment. Thus, numerous variations would occur within each block.



The incremental building of small parcels would further permit periodic reassessment by city and neighborhood officials as to what number and mix of dwelling is appropriate in subsequent development. Undoubtedly, this would affect land values. However, these decisions could occur prior to release of the next set of parcels. Similarly, the smaller parcels would allow developers to reevaluate market demand and incorporate design innovations or transformations on a more frequent basis.

The user or resident would also benefit by the reduced number of people sharing communal space (backyard, elevator and parking garage) and the ability to better identify his or her place along the block.

With a full compliment of 16 units in the large front structure and a maximum of three rear units on each parcel, the overall density of the area would be just over 50 dwelling units/acre. This figure includes street area and open spaces.

PARKING

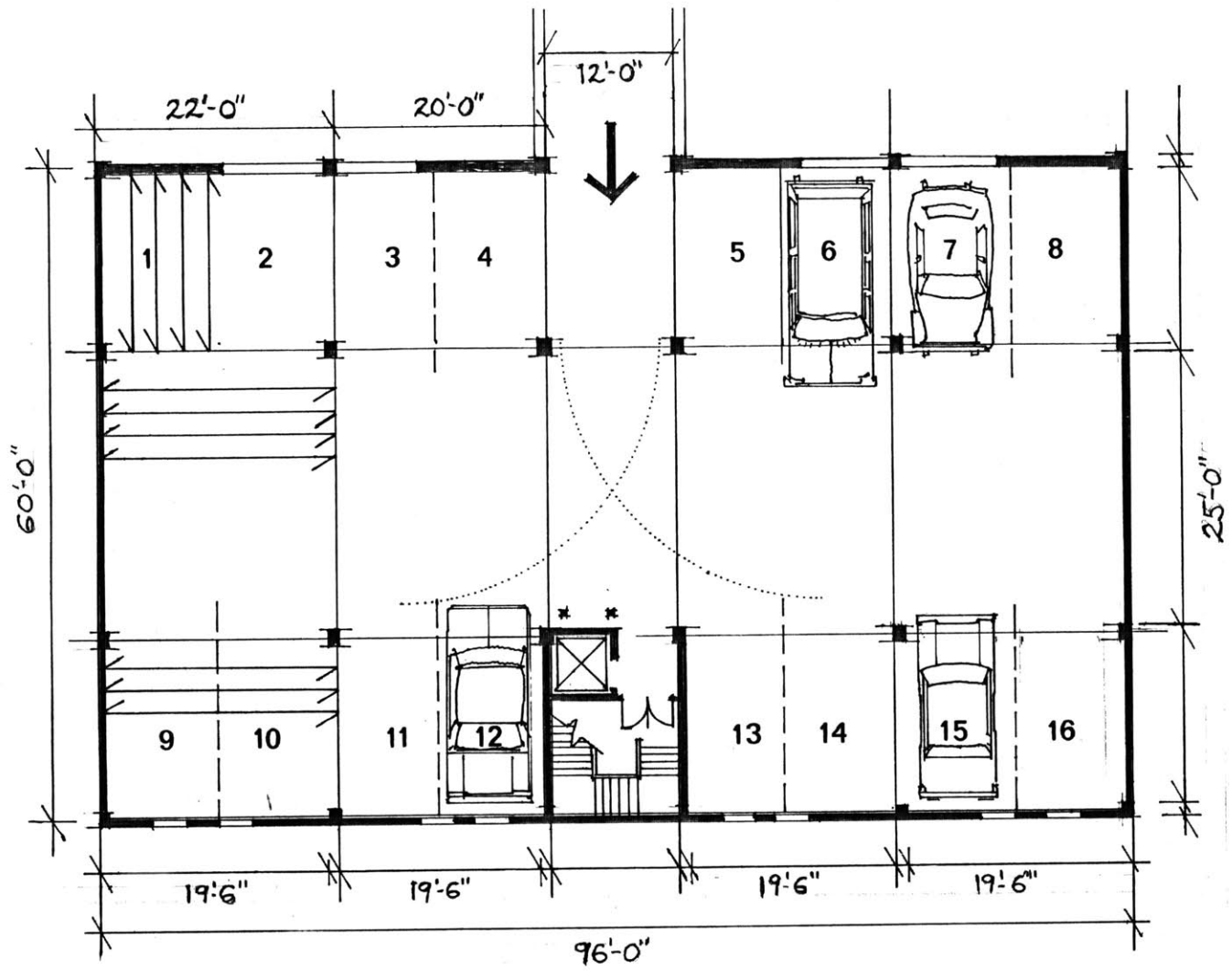
The accommodation of the automobile was a major determinant of the density and form of the residential framework. A recently adopted regulation stipulates that a minimum of one parking space must be provided for every newly constructed dwelling unit. Although the amenity of a parking space may command top dollar in the marketplace, they are terribly costly to construct (up to \$6000/space in the case of a structural deck) and have a propensity to consume an inordinate amount of space. A solution was sought to provide off-street parking in close proximity to the units that would be secure and not occupy precious land that might otherwise be habitable open space.

Within each lot a one-story garage would be placed below the main building. It would be accessible from the rear street via a sloped driveway through the backyard. Each parcel could accommodate up to sixteen cars in this

fashion. Although fewer units may actually occupy the building, the remaining spaces could be sold or rented to nearby residents with more than one car or could be used for storage. A regulation firmly limiting any future subdivision within the building to the number of spaces initially provided would insure that the full complement would be built.

On-street parking could be handled in a number of ways. Spaces could be allocated to residents of a mid-rise building on a lot designated for atypical use. Alternatively, a credit of four spaces could be given to each regular lot to allow a slight increase in the number of dwellings. Furthermore, individual blocks could limit on-street parking to one side of the street or abandon it altogether. This would permit variations in the street scale and allow for potentially deeper front gardens.

A large gate at the entrance to the backyard, followed by a garage door at the bottom of each driveway, with access limited to the one circulation core, would provide each garage with a maximum of unattended security.



PARCEL GARAGE

FRONT STREET

The front streets, which are oriented in an east-west direction, represent a more formal approach to the residential streetscape. Although setbacks might occur in the middle parcels of each block, the general perception of the street would be that of a continuous surface with small projections distributed along its length.

In order to achieve some continuity within each block and throughout the neighborhood, there must be some constant measure or common denominator that is recognizable within the continuous surface. The intention here is to develop a couple of themes that operate in tandem. For instance, an articulation of the rowhouse form within each of the larger parcels previously described, would reflect the meter or grain typical of surrounding neighborhoods. At the same time, grouping four of these houses together around a common circulation core, with

an overall dimension not typically found in the context, would yield a new type unique to the neighborhood. This is what Lynch would refer to as the "thematic unit." It is an important factor in forming the perception of distinct districts or neighborhoods.

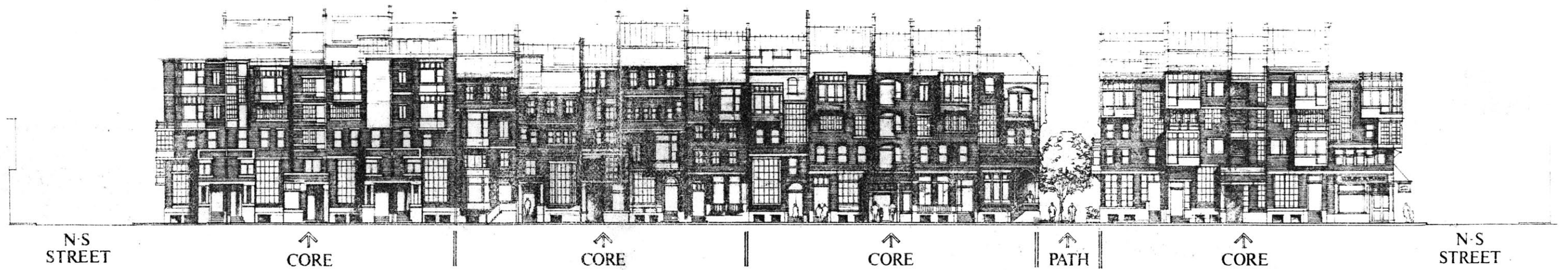
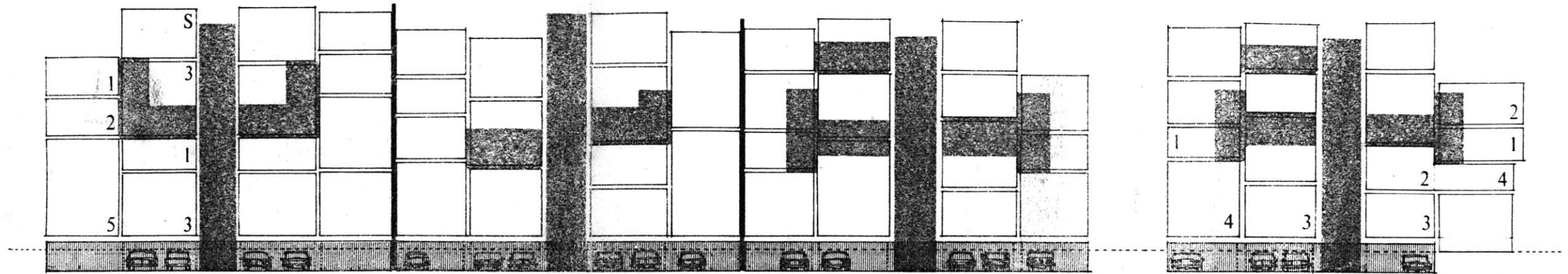
Once the thematic unit, the four house parcel, has been established as a repetitive type, a range of variations could be explored. The facades shown here depict what could be, rather than what must be. Again, a contention of this thesis is that if designed and developed incrementally by a number of individuals, the neighborhood could embody a rich range of variations that go beyond the limitations of one designer. While firm guidelines regarding tolerances for either repetition or variation are not advanced here, this is one of the issues that could be "agreed" upon by looking at committed explorations at this scale, before actually designing and building each property.

Although one of the street elevations indicates that substantial discontinuities could occur within a given parcel, its recognition as a thematic unit diminishes. What is then perceived are autonomous townhouses with varying heights and window distributions. This suggests that a relative balance on massing and vocabulary within each parcel may be necessary to emphasize the theme. At the block level, however, variations between discrete parcels could occur if tempered with certain continuities.

One way to ensure that there is some coherence along each block is to utilize a formal system of elements. In this scheme a fenestration theme was developed where certain window types would be associated with particular interior spaces. For example, double-hung windows, common throughout Philadelphia, would represent bedrooms while large oriels or suspended bay windows would indicate living rooms. Closely-knit casement windows and industrial sash connote lateral and vertical circulation space respectively. A large one and a half, or

two story, flat shallow bay is used for the living space of the lowest unit. Variations in the detailing within this generalized schema would be encouraged, as would differences in color.

The degree of continuity regarding building materials is obviously an important factor in balancing likeness with difference. The continuous surface of the facades would be brick, which is certainly the most pervasive material in the city. Subtle variations in the actual brick color could be used to call out individual parcels. Like the massing and window elements, however, the color should probably remain constant through each lot. The distinction between the smaller "townhouses" that comprise a lot could be articulated by a vertical reveal or an expression of the concrete frame. Furthermore, the firewalls that break the staggered cornices would reinforce the dimensional repetition of these houses. Elements that project from the masonry surface could be metal or wood.





In the accompanying elevations, it was necessary to arrange the individual dwelling units so that a variety of room types faced the front street allowing the full range of building elements to be represented in each facade. In this respect the facades were composed by a simple ordering principle. This is in contrast to the back facades which result from the formal compositional decisions about the front. If, for instance, a row of double-hung windows (representing bedrooms) on the front was thought to be necessary to balance the composition, then depending on the unit type, a living room with its different window type would occur on the rear facade. The random distribution of decks, balconies and bays, perhaps implemented by the users themselves, would enhance this contrast between front and back.

One compromise involves the ability to access some units directly from the street while others must use a collective entry and core. There may be some status attached to a front door along the street. However, the benefit of having numerous points of access in the form of

doorways seemed preferable to subjecting all the residents to collective entries often associated with large apartment towers and mass housing. It is felt that all the residents would benefit from a less institutional neighborhood image.

The frequent entries along the street also serve another function. They permit the ground floor to be used as small offices or shops with circulation distinct from the remainder of the housing. The adaptation of the first floor for low-volume commercial uses such as doctors' offices, professional suites, etc., is common along a number of otherwise residential streets in Philadelphia.

Furthermore, frequent points of entry add to the potential activity and compositional variety at the street edge. The regular rhythm of stoops and doorways, of varying heights and details, would reinforce the perception of the small residential grain. Intermittant porticos at the collective core entries would distinguish each parcel and break-up the continuous surface of the block's overall facade.

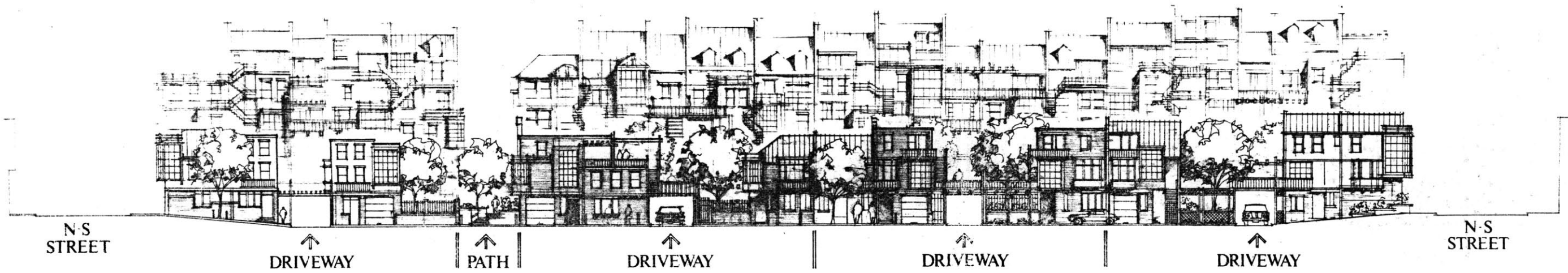
BACK STREETS

The "back street" and the "discontinuous street," identified as important elements of the context, are transformed and adopted in this scheme. Although reminiscent of the traditional backstreet in scale, they are no less significant than the larger streets and in fact would provide the primary access to off-street parking and a number of smaller units that resemble carriage houses. The form of these small lanes is similar to a mews. They are an integral part of each residential block and represent an infusion of experiential variety into the grid structure. The rationale is at once aesthetic and functional.

Each of these streets is given shape by the smaller units that flank its edge and the verdant square at the middle of the block. The massing is not contiguous like the front streets but rather intermittent to provide access to the driveway and back garden of each parcel. The

basic structure can be likened to a series of virtually aligned pavilions. However, the trellises, decks, and gates that link the structures would produce a high level of continuity in the form of an edge, permitting visual penetration at some points and obscuring it at others. These edges alternating from hard to soft would occur in a rhythm established by the maximum building frontage permitted each parcel.

Guidelines could be set up that stipulate the maximum building height, zones for built and un-built spaces, and allowable number of units. For instance, each parcel could be limited to 16 units in the main building and a maximum of three units with primary access from the rear street. Furthermore, a maximum building frontage of 62' along the back street would ensure that an adequate opening (34') remained for a driveway and a view of the garden.



SECTIONS AND UNITS

There is nothing extraordinary about the many arrangements of apartments possible within the traditional rowhouse bearing wall system. Examples of large single-family houses that have been subdivided into a number of apartments abound throughout most cities. The spatial manipulations used to solve the many problems inherent in changing the use of a building are often very innovative. Nevertheless, the resulting units are frequently cramped with little exposure to the outside world. Furthermore, the space required for common circulation may necessitate a reduction in unit size or cause distortions in its configuration. Inadequacies such as these were in part responsible for the development of larger, more efficient apartment buildings.

The following drawings, however, show that a number of unit types, each offering interior spatial variation and linked by a reasonably

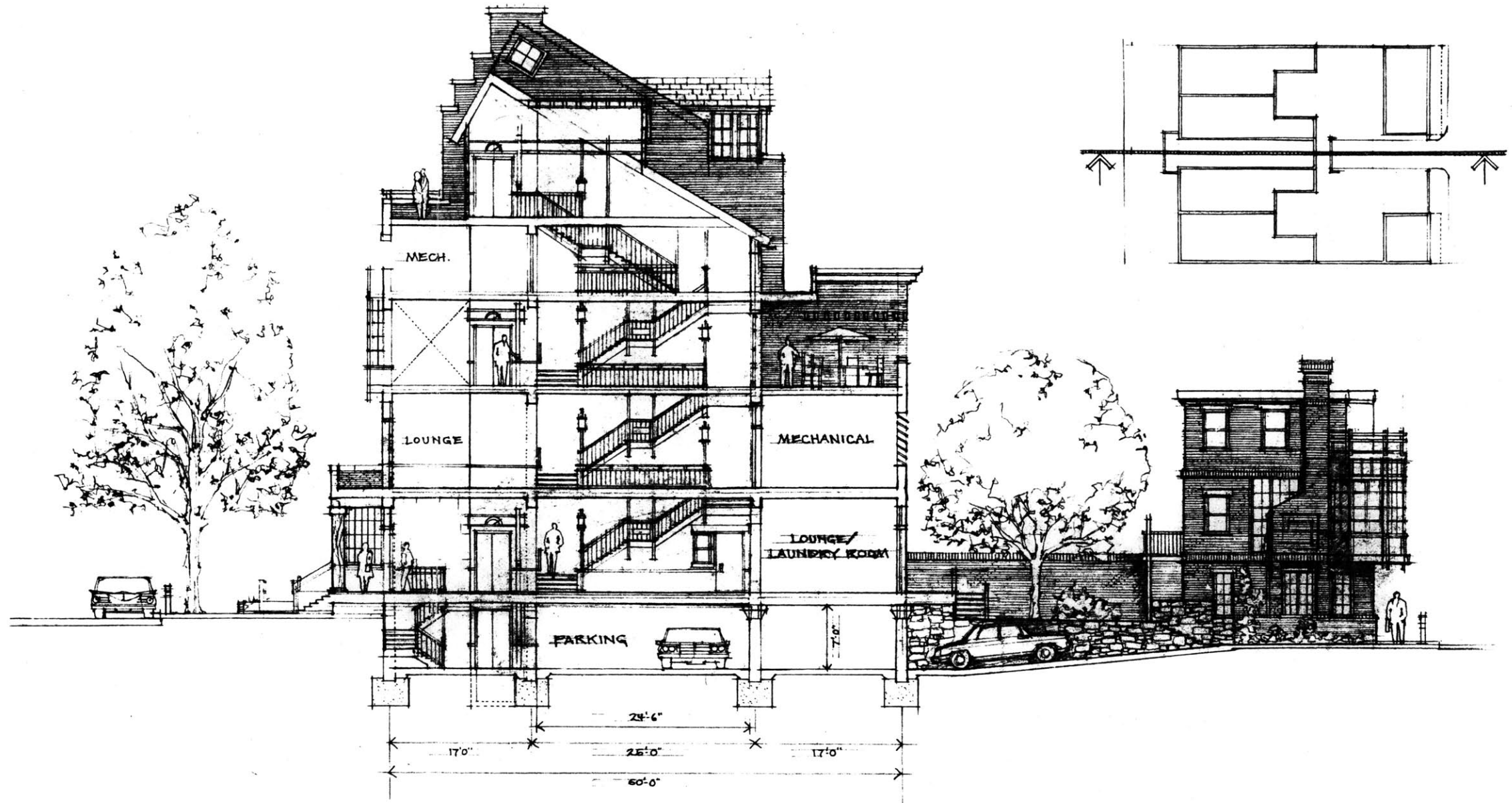
efficient circulation system, can still occur within the basic cellular organization typical of "rowhouse" type structures. As previously mentioned, a few "ideal" characteristics were adopted as criteria which the framework must be able to satisfy. These may be viewed as improvements upon conditions often found in the context. The section drawings and unit plans, although incomplete and not fully-resolved, simply illustrate some possible configurations that might be used as a reference or model in meeting such criteria. Hopefully, more creative and efficient solutions would be developed empirically within the framework.

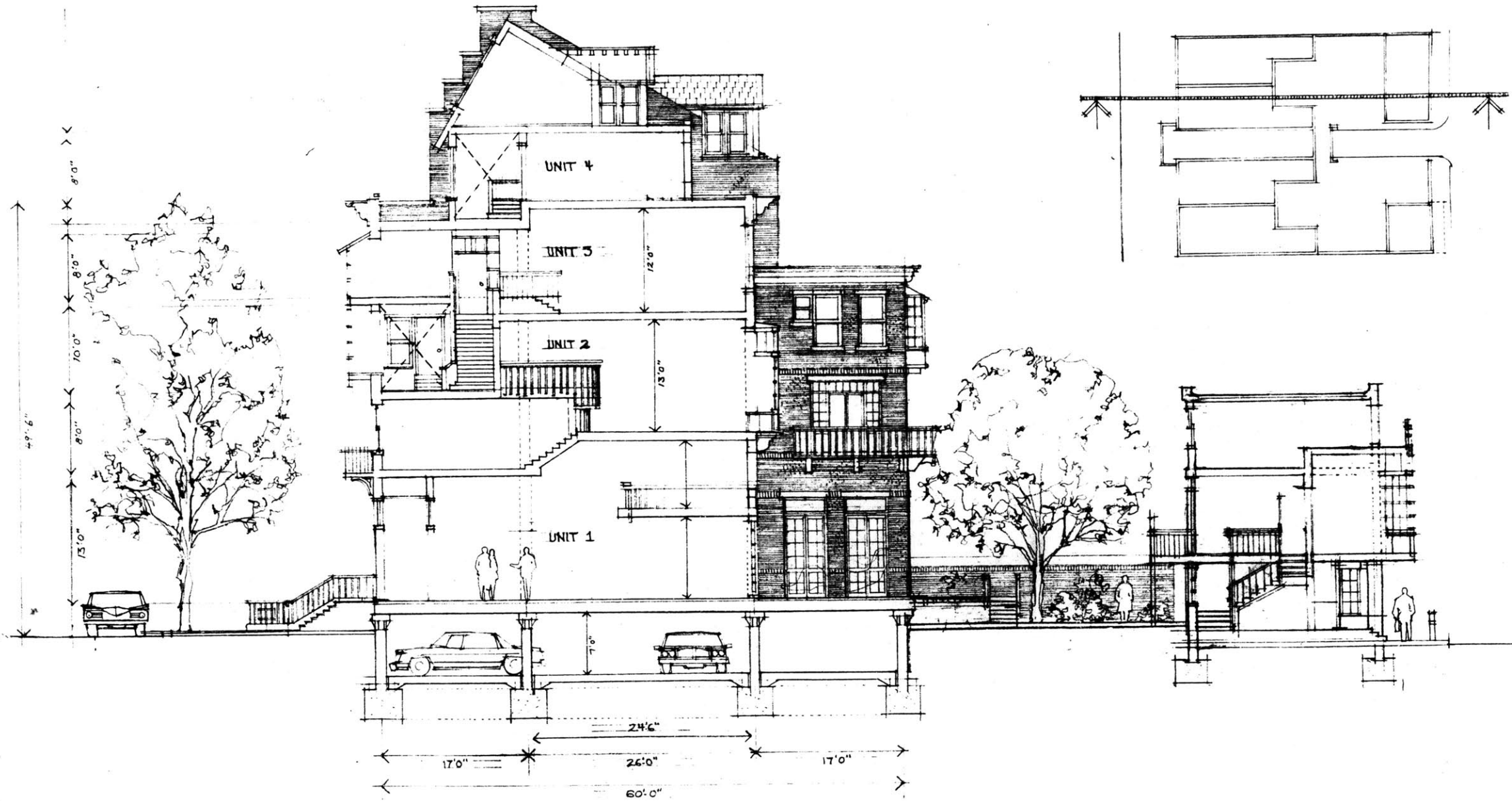
One performance criterion, was that each dwelling unit should be continuous from the front to the rear of the building. In this way all occupants would have access to direct sunlight and a choice of views (front street or rear garden and square). Additionally, "through" units would be conducive to cross-ventilation and provide an alternative means of egress.

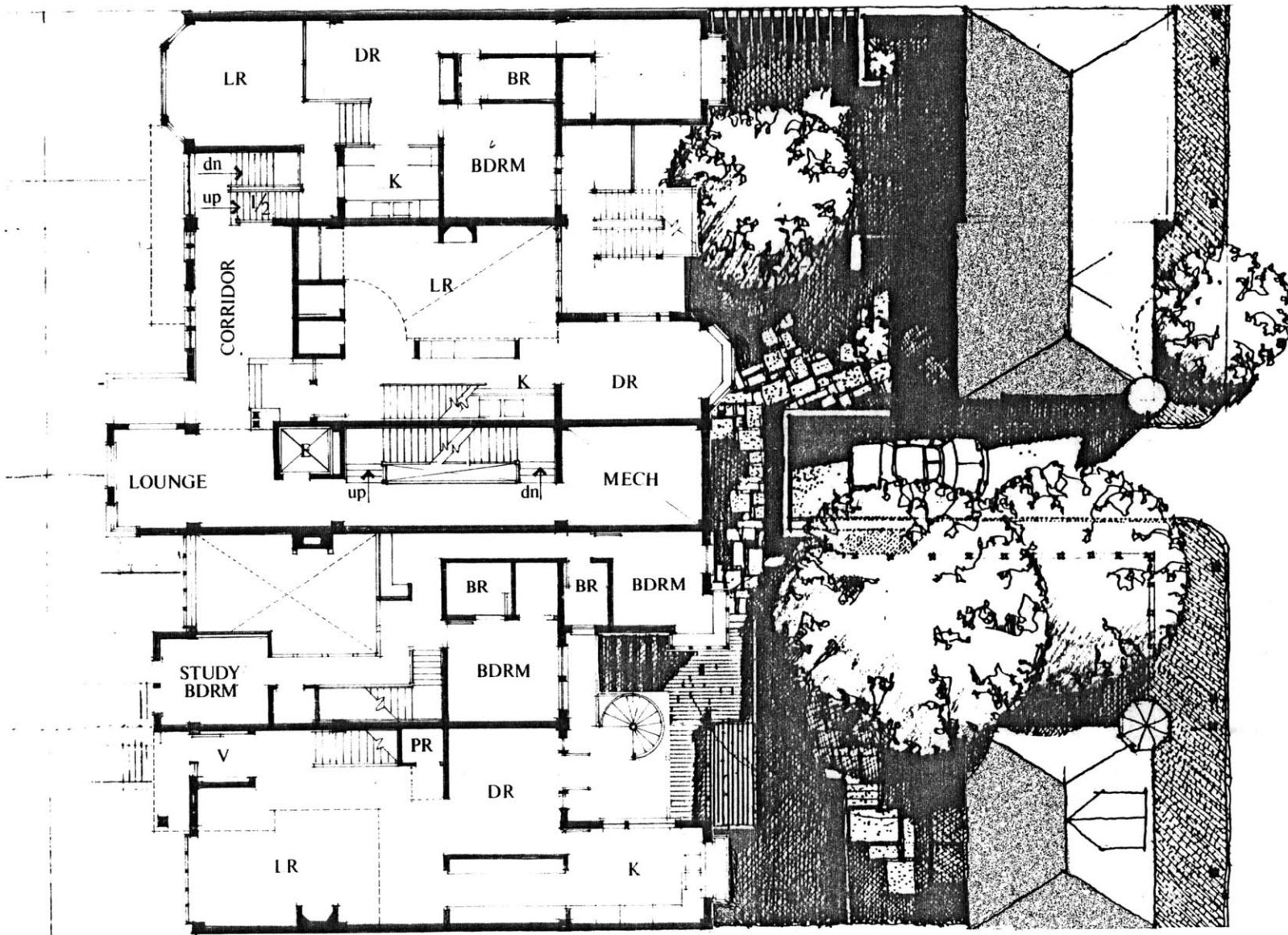
In an effort to reduce circulation area, a single core containing an elevator, stairway, lobby and mechanical rooms in the interstitial spaces was adopted for each parcel. This core would connect with several short single-loaded corridors linking the two outer "houses." Each corridor would access a maximum of three units and would be only 20-22' (the width of one house) in length. Depending on the unit mix, a small stair at the end of the corridor would provide access to two vertically stacked units that are not accessible directly from the street. A few units in the inner houses could vertically wrap around the corridor to permit all the dwellings to be continuous from front to rear. Both the small stairwells and the hallways would have exposure to natural daylight and a view of the street.

Another criterion was to provide spatial differentiation in the interior of each unit. While it is neither possible nor desirable for every unit to have a complete upstairs and downstairs, the simple structural system makes feasible varied room heights and the potential

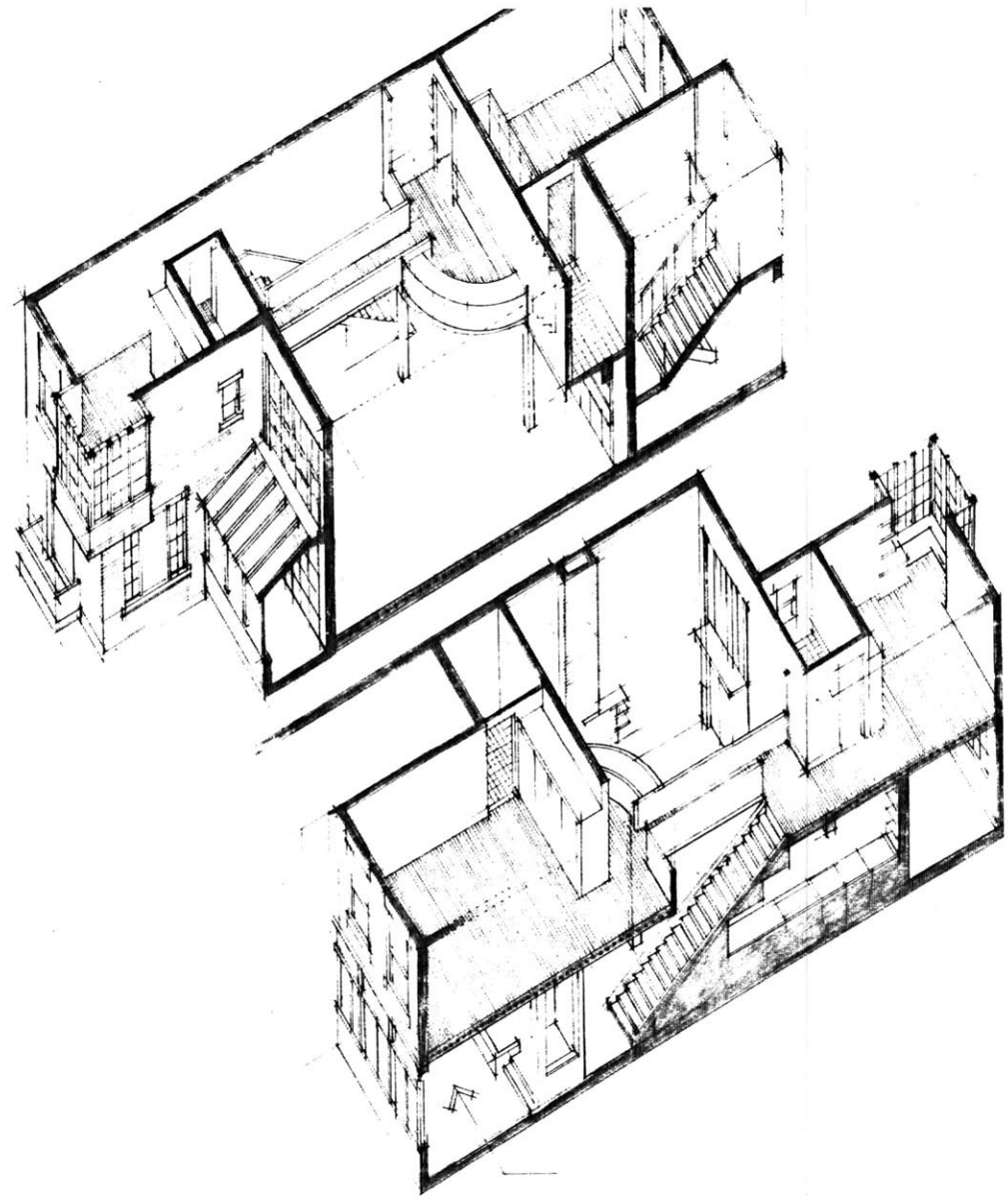
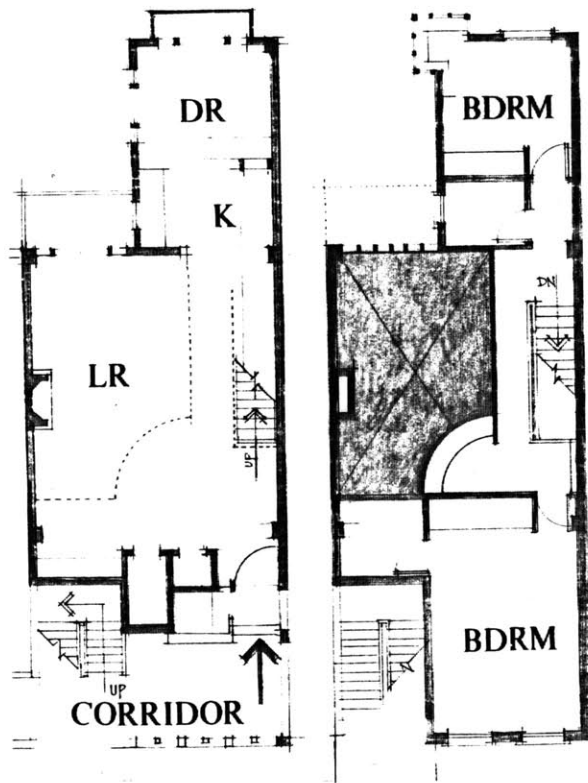
for level changes. As a guideline in this scheme, the typical ceiling height of bedrooms was 8'0" to 8'6" while living rooms varied from 12'0" to 16'0" (the latter in the case of full two-story units). These variations would contribute to the spatial richness of each dwelling and reduce the sense of a cellular organization.







PLANS CUT AT VARIOUS LEVELS



WRAP-AROUND UNIT

The structural system is relatively simple. A reinforced concrete frame, potentially pre-cast, would be erected above a grade-beam foundation and single parking slab. The excavation required for the garage would be no more than that necessary for a traditional basement. Above the parking level, concrete masonry unit or brick walls would fill in the frame in the direction perpendicular to the street. These masonry walls then carry the load of the many floor joists or prestressed planks. Because the masonry is vertically continuous, floor levels may be established at any desired elevation irrespective of adjacent units. The concrete frames would simply reduce the unbraced height of the bearing walls and transfer loads to the columns below. While column spacing parallel to the street is fixed, the depth of the structure and placement of front and back walls is variable within a small range.

Means of egress are provided by the stairway in the core and exterior fire stairs at the rear of the building. A continuous stair that runs the full height of the building would be

shared by the two adjoining "houses," thereby accessing every unit directly. Units occupying the ground floor have direct egress to both the front street and rear yard.

USER INTERVENTION

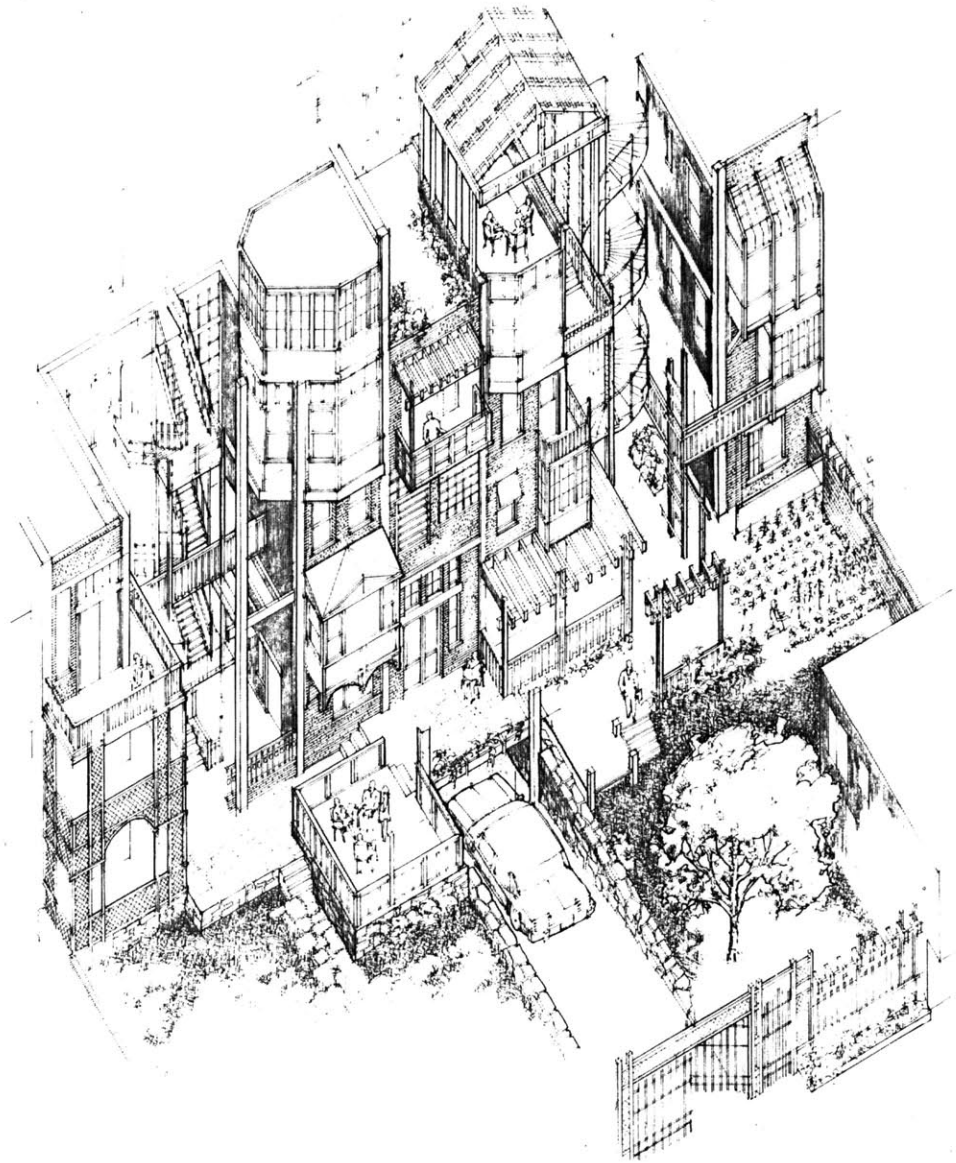
"User participation" in the selection of building systems or elements is probably unfeasible in a dense urban environment, and would be contrary to the interests of contextual continuity. However, it may be possible to establish a flexible framework in which inhabitants could make some decisions about the spatial qualities of their own dwellings that would also complement the overall environment for others. Although not resolved in this study, the issue of user implementation is within the realm of those involved with planning at the tissue scale.

Since the form of housing presented here could be assumed to be speculative, and as the present repertoire of technology in this country does not include economical, durable, and versatile building systems capable of rearrangement, it is doubtful that residents would be able to exercise any meaningful control over the

volumetric qualities of their dwellings. Therefore, their intervention is realistically limited to discrete physical additions or projections from the given form.

A physical framework could be provided so that the inhabitants of each unit could build porches, decks, greenhouse windows, bays, and perhaps small rooms within a prescribed space. Careful guidelines or agreements could be established to ensure that the rights of other residents to views, sunlight, ventilation and means of egress are not infringed.

Like the context, these interventions would occur at the back of the larger residential structures. This does not imply any less significance to that which is implemented by the user. Rather, it establishes a contrast, in the interest of variety, between the formally arranged fronts and the more "organic" backs that are characteristic of many Philadelphia neighborhoods.

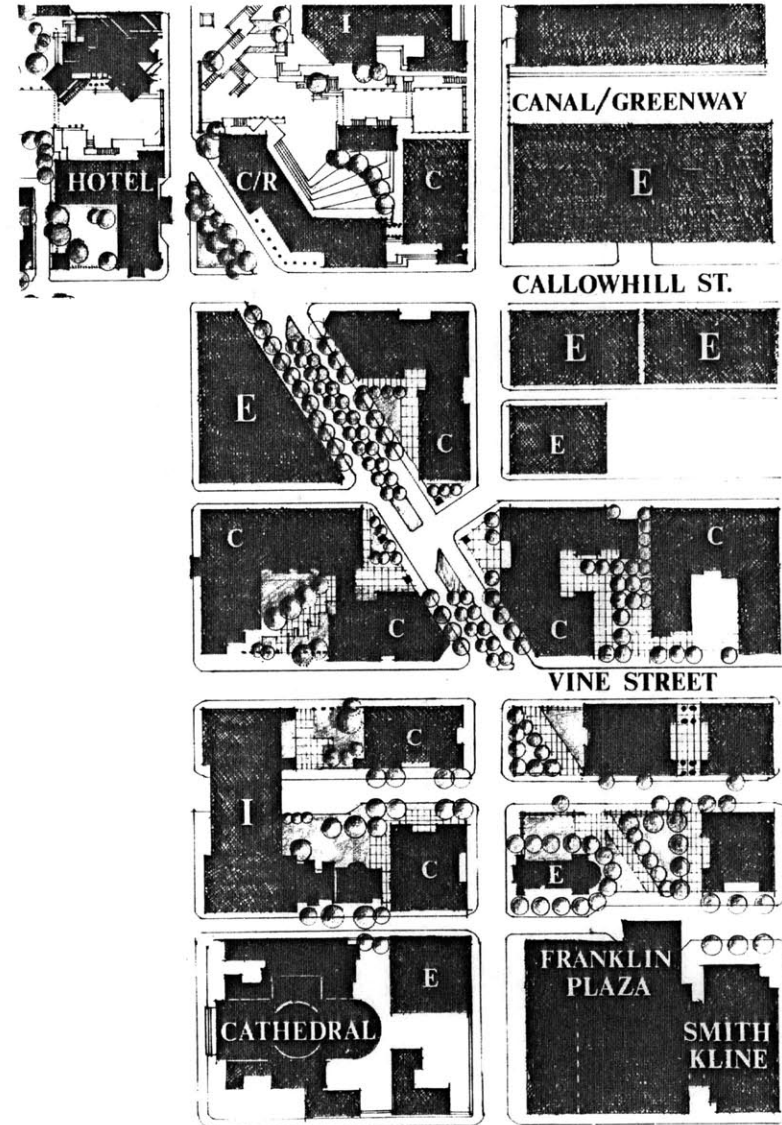


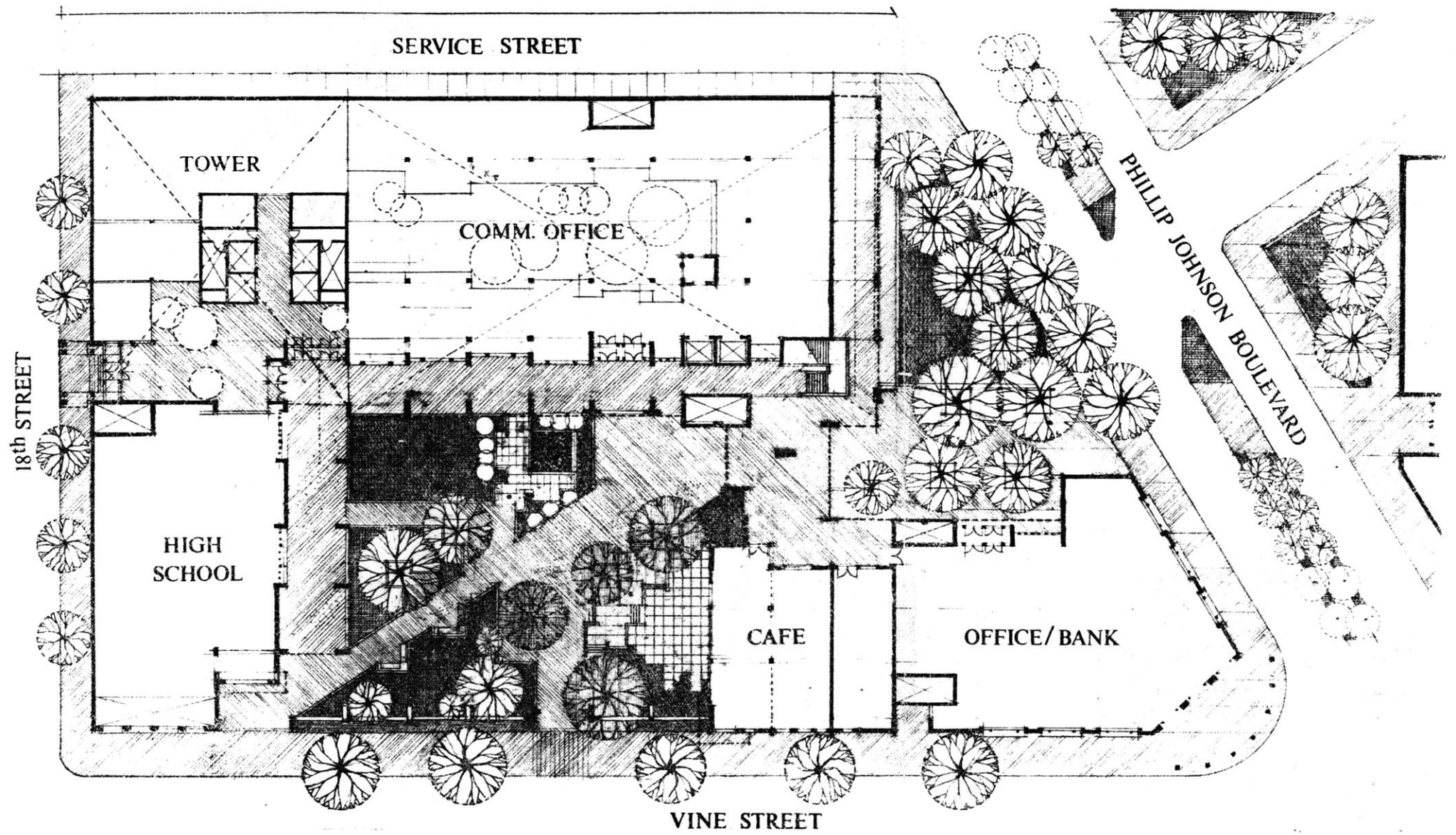
COMMERCIAL AREA

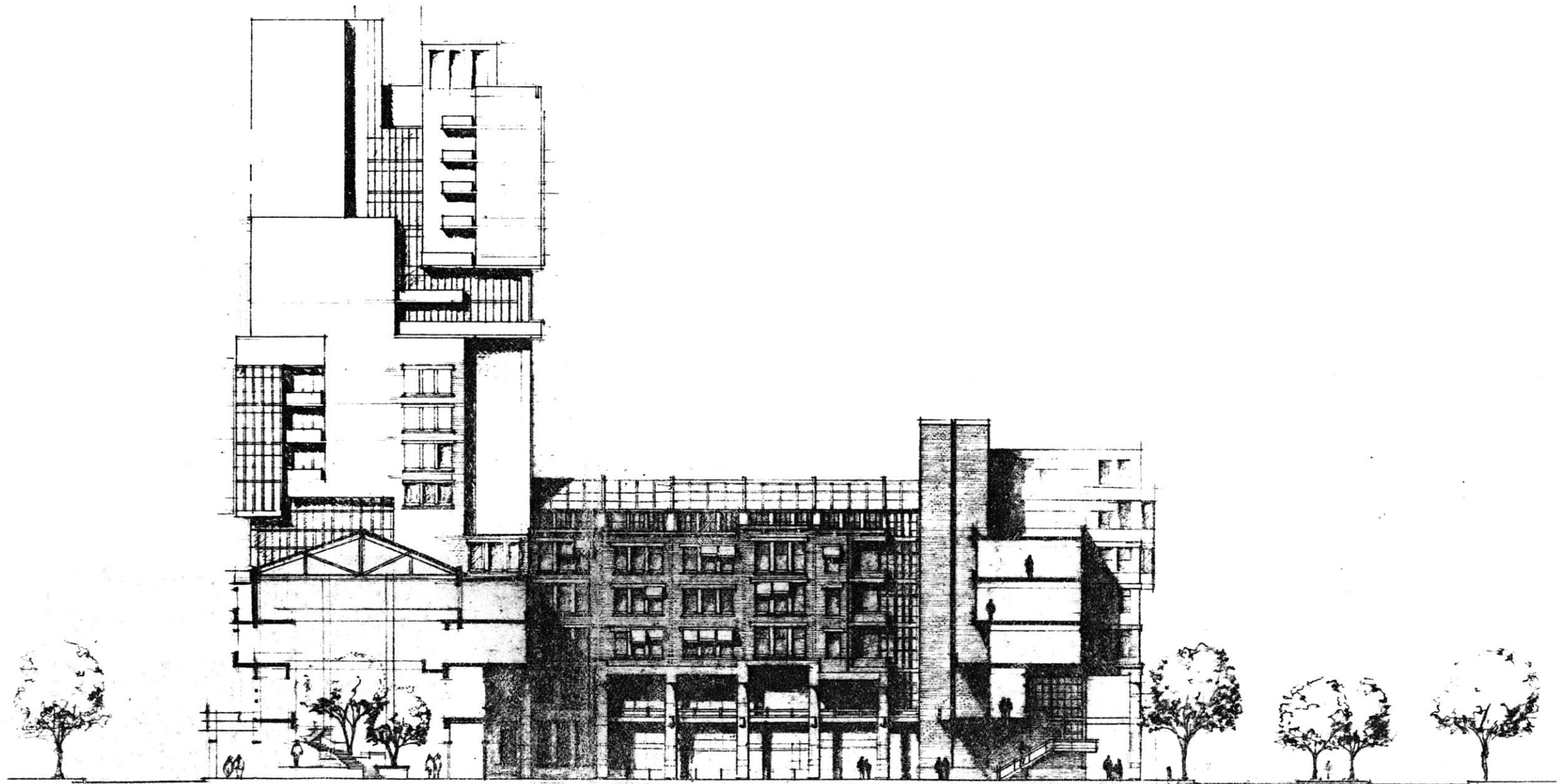
A commercial area comprised primarily of speculative office space and ancillary retail would be well suited for the southeastern extension of the study area. This includes the blocks flanking the new Franklin Town Boulevard, air rights over the Vine Street Expressway and frontage of one block along the existing railroad trench.

The almost peninsular shape of this portion of the site and its close proximity to a high-volume traffic artery suggest that residential development would be inappropriate. Because the width of the site in this area is minimal and the street pattern irregular, it lacks the structure necessary to establish any continuity between blocks at the neighborhood scale. Housing here would be "out on a limb," so to speak.

On the contrary, commercial development could span across Vine Street towards the

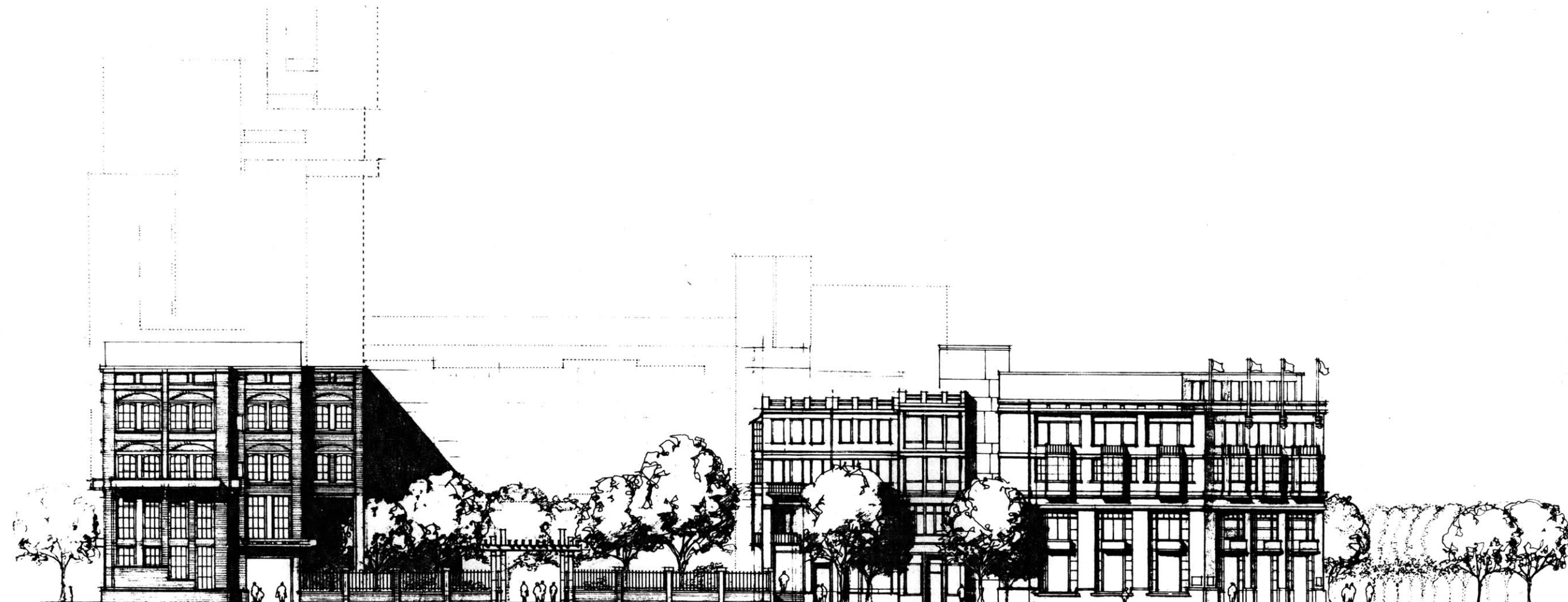






18th STREET

BOULEVARD



18th STREET

VINE STREET

OFFICE / BANK

BOULEVARD

existing downtown core to the south. This would diminish the divisive effects of the expressway, by linking similar uses across what is now one of the boundaries of Franklin Town.

Development could occur along 18th Street over the depressed expressway. This includes the lot adjacent to the Cathedral of S.S. Peter and Paul which is now occupied by a minor parish building. This would be an ideal site for a large institutional structure that could effectively complete the closure around Logan Circle. The new building should reflect the massing and material of the existing broad civic buildings.

What is indicated by the Area Plan, and the more detailed plan of a particular block, is the desire to develop a framework for office buildings as incremental pieces within each block that define the open spaces. These blocks, in turn, are linked together by reciprocal spaces and a network of paths. Here, office space particularly suited for smaller professional suites could be structured around larger common spaces, both interior and exterior. This is

thought to be preferable to the many undefined plazas that seem to address only one building. Like the "agreements" that describe continuity in the residential area, this area should also have a degree of consistency with respect to spatial differentiation and vocabulary.

The plan suggests alternative choices of movement to the grid but also allows random and free exchange with it. Multiple points of access, intensification of the building edge and some high-volume commercial activities (cafe, restaurant, etc.) would keep these spaces lively. Small alcoves off the main path, which could serve as a lunchtime retreat, should be accompanied by more formal, but not excessively large, spaces for group gatherings.

Connections between separate buildings on the block could be resolved by bridges of dimensions smaller than the buildings themselves. Obviously they could be inhabited by office space rather than being just bare walkways. These connections would also help to define the courtyard-like qualities. However, bridges would not extend across public streets.

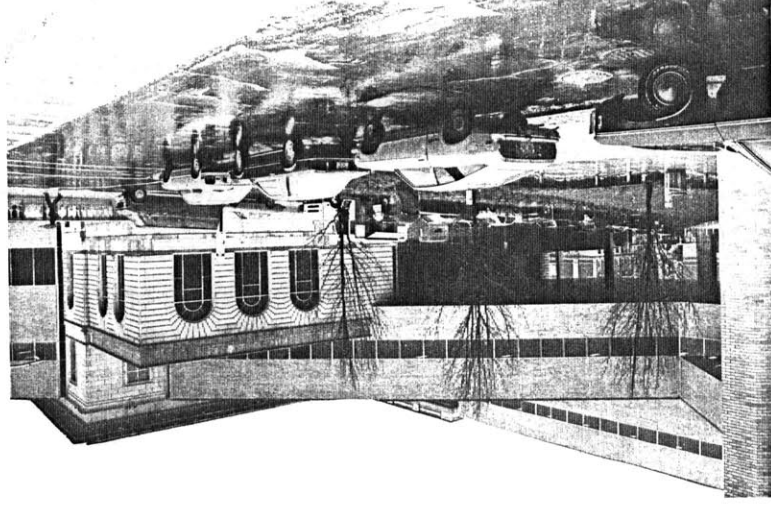
The accompanying elevations demonstrate one approach at reducing the scale and potential monotony of development over an entire block. The structural bays are reminiscent of the repetitive dimensions found throughout the city. Continuity is expressed by a consistent use of materials (in this case, brick bearing on reinforced concrete) and virtual vertical registration. For pragmatic reasons, the floor elevations throughout the connected buildings should be aligned. However, small variations in the size and distribution of window and parapet heights are feasible and could add qualities of movement to the facade. A differentiation of building elements could reflect, in some systematic manner, the various types of spaces behind the facade similar to the themes developed for the residential area.

The vocabulary and the attitude that the place of work and the home should have near-equal prominence in their physical environment may be in conflict with the existing norms of commercial office buildings which must compete with one another to evoke a distinct image. For

speculative office space, however, where numerous business concerns must share a building, this distinct image may be less important to the tenants than a quality environment as measured by the common spaces that are accessible to them.

COLLEGE AREA

A small survey conducted in the Spring Garden neighborhood indicates that there is a concern among the residents that the community college will expand into the now-vacant areas separating their neighborhood from the downtown. Although the college recently completed a major new building adjoining the former U.S. Mint, it can be assumed that the institution will require additional space in which to expand. Of immediate concern is a plan for a 600-car garage on the site of the unoccupied Lit Brothers Warehouse. This is just along the northern side of the Reading Railroad trench. The planned garage would have a negative impact on the area in two respects. In effect, the college would be turning its back on the larger community and any new development that might occur to the south and west. Many residents from the Spring Garden area, who traverse the site daily, as well as the future residents of Franklin Town itself, would be forced to walk



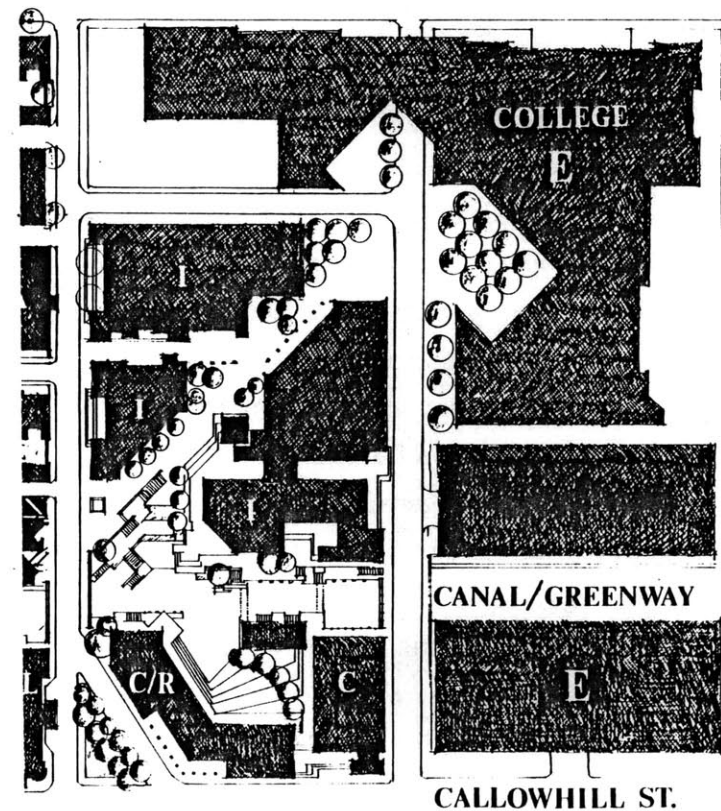
past a massive and no doubt oppressive structure. Placement of the garage at this location may very well have a detrimental effect on luring quality residential, or for that matter any development to the surrounding blocks. The other major drawback of the garage is that it may discourage people-oriented activity at the park (presently in the Franklin Town plan) or preclude altogether, the development of the railroad trench into a public resource such as a canal or greenway, as is suggested here. Furthermore, the garage would negate the significance of the large angle so prominent in new college building.

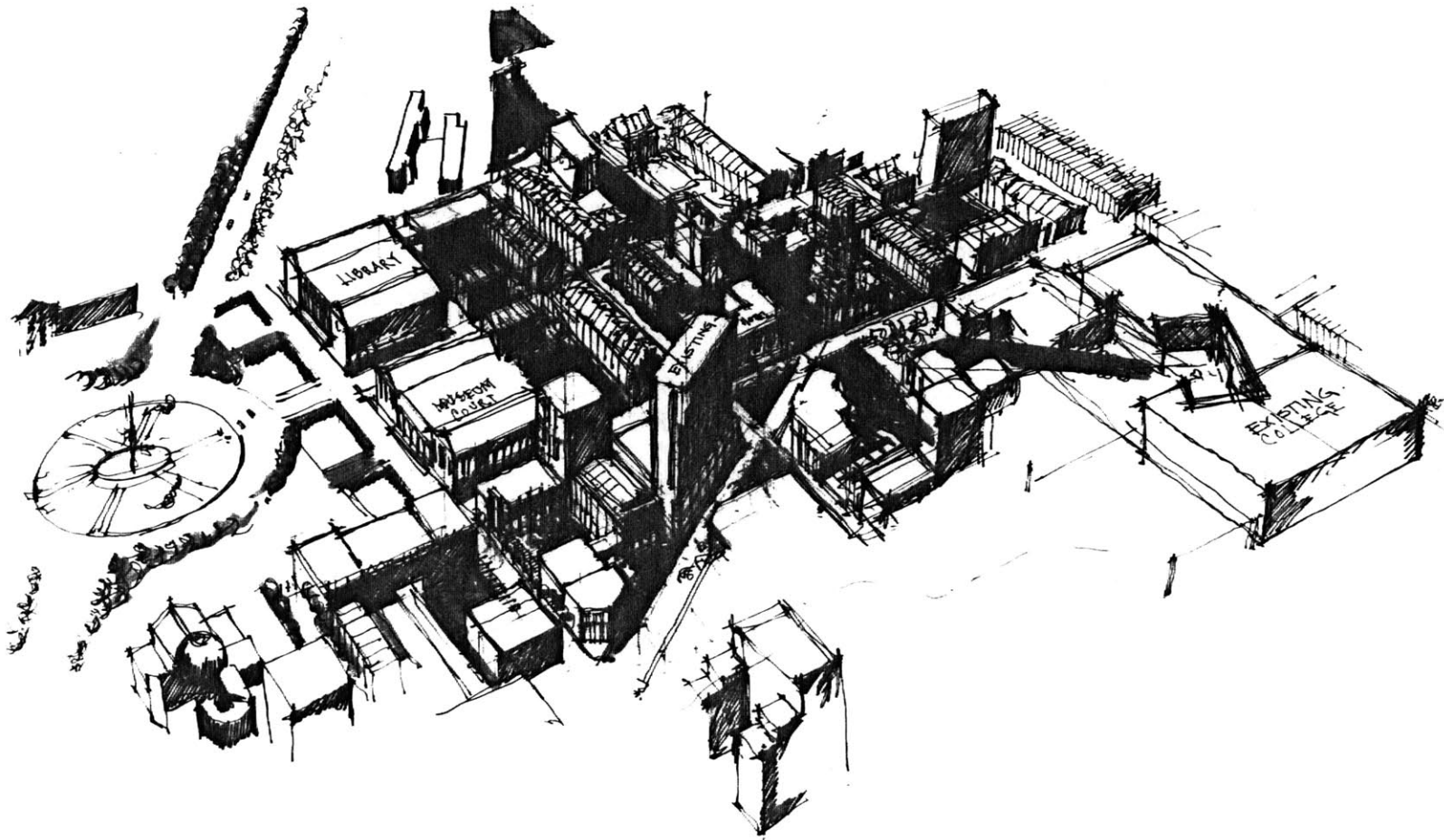
Although the vocabulary of the new college is somewhat introverted in nature, with its narrow ribbon windows, internalized classrooms and cold grey brick, the overall form of the angled courtyard suggests that the building might address future academic buildings in some coherent manner. It provides a clue for beginning a framework.

What is proposed in the accompanying plan is development of a small cohesive campus that would contain its growth and acknowledge the planned community. An axis generated by the existing angle, an open ended "quad" or a colonnade could tie together future buildings while addressing the intersection, or node, that would logically become the focal point of the neighborhood. A student center or theater could occupy part of the college's frontage along the railroad. This would become the public edge of the campus.

If the college is embraced by the community, provided that it grows within prescribed limits, it could be a major asset to the development of Franklin Town. Because the school is in

session in the evenings, it would draw a significant number of people to engage in the kind of off-hours activity that would support small shops and restaurants.





CANAL GREENWAY

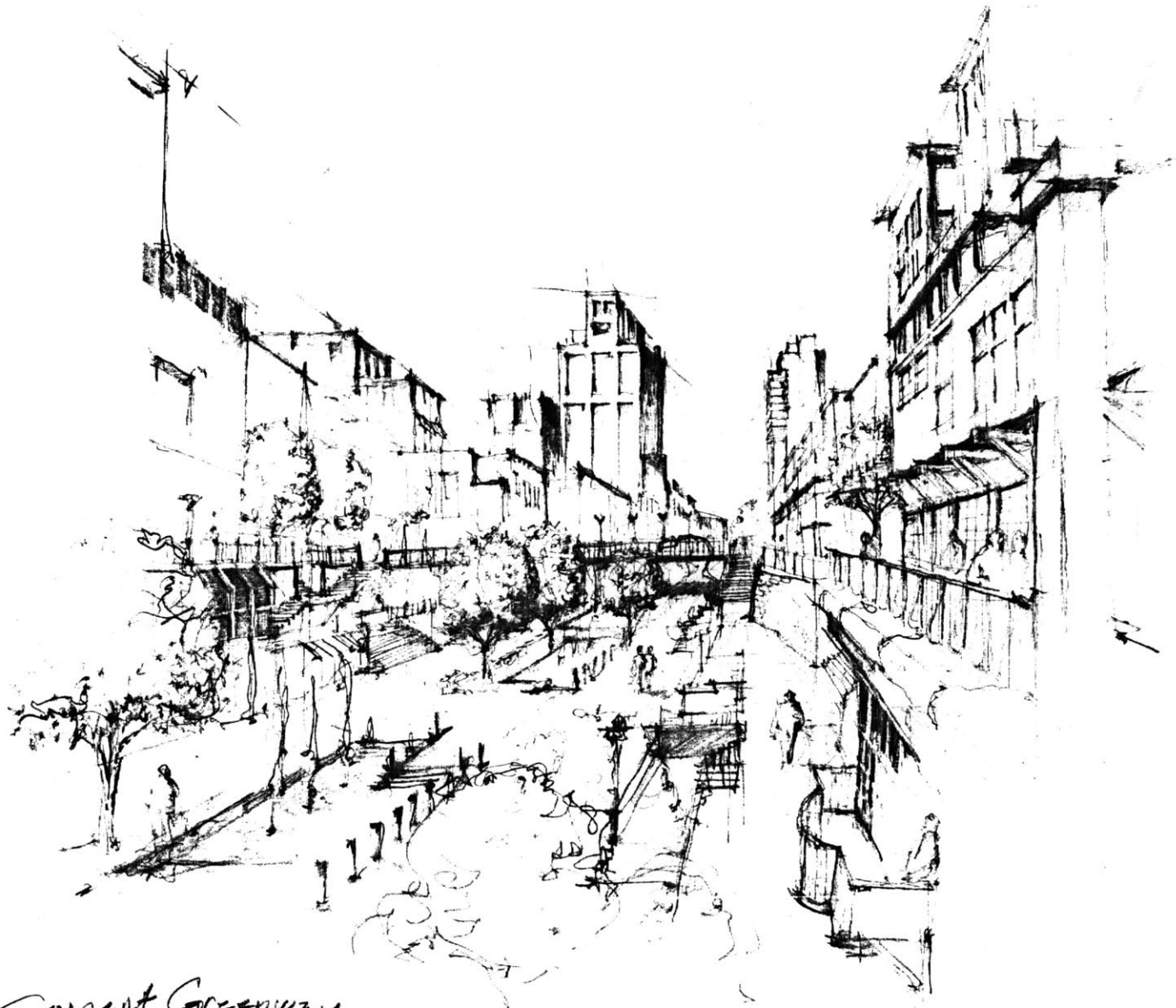
As the one existing topographic discontinuity on the site, the Reading Railroad trench deserves special consideration. Because it is continuous and well defined, without interruption by the street network above, it represents a unique opportunity for the development of a focal point for the neighborhood and perhaps an even larger part of the city. It is the one characteristic of the site with inherent "place" value.

Two alternative ideas are put forth here as a way of stimulating interest in its transformation into a resource. The first proposal is relatively modest in the effort and expense involved in its implementation.

A continuous public or semi-public "greenway" could be developed along the length of the Franklin Town site. The width of the trench, which varies from 75' to 90', provides ample space for a jogging track and verdant bicycle

and pedestrian paths free of traffic for a length of six blocks. Lush greenery, perhaps even a small arboretum, sculpture gardens and fountains would bring the park back into the city.

The eastern terminus of the Greenway would be the existing facilities of the Philadelphia Inquirer. Moving west a block would be the new campus of the Community College. The western end would be at the intersection with 22nd Street, where Pennsylvania Avenue, a wide axis virtually parallel to the Parkway, heads out towards Fairmount Park.

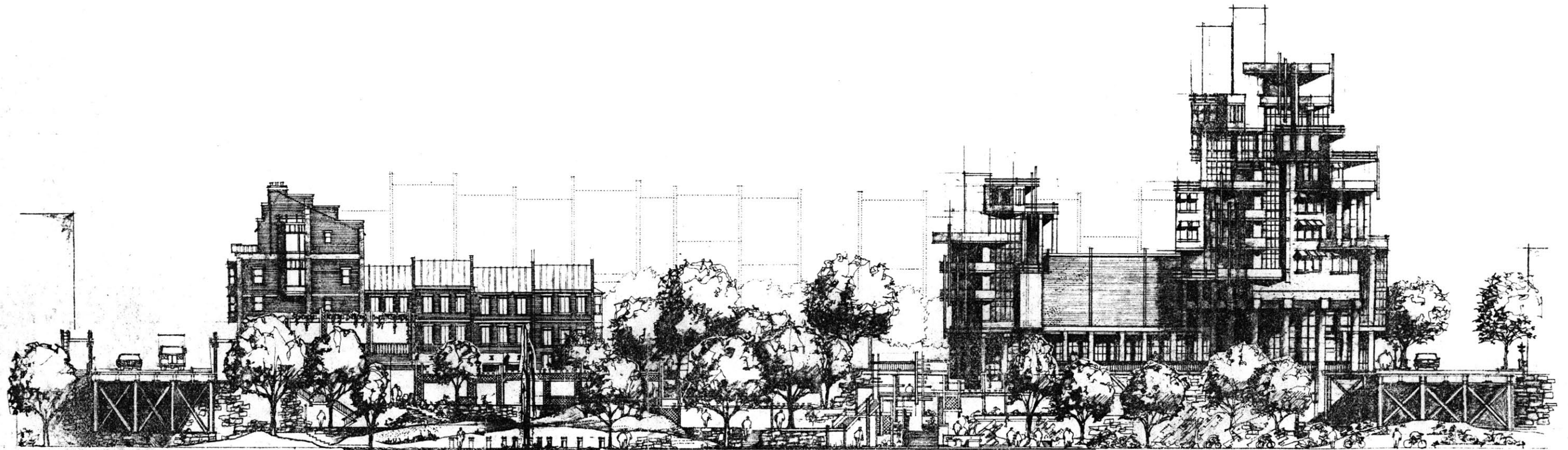


Concept Greenway.

Alternatively the railroad trench could be transformed into a canal linking the Schuylkill and Delaware Rivers. This would permit access between some of the city's greatest recreational, commercial and cultural resources. The journey, whether by boat, or by bicycle or foot along adjacent paths, would traverse five zones of potentially varied character: Fairmount Park, Brewerytown, Franklin Town, Broad Street, East Callowhill, and the Delaware Avenue Waterfront. The sequential experience of passing between these two distinctly different rivers could be quite dramatic. The Delaware riverfront, currently undergoing massive commercial and residential development (Penn's Landing, the Riverwalk and residential piers) would be joined with the tranquil Schuylkill and Fairmount Park (Boathouse Row, Philadelphia Museum of Art, the Zoo and Mann Center of Performing Arts.)

The canal could be a major catalyst for the development of some of the most potentially valuable but at present underutilized sections of the city. Much of the corridor of land between Vine Street and Spring Garden, east

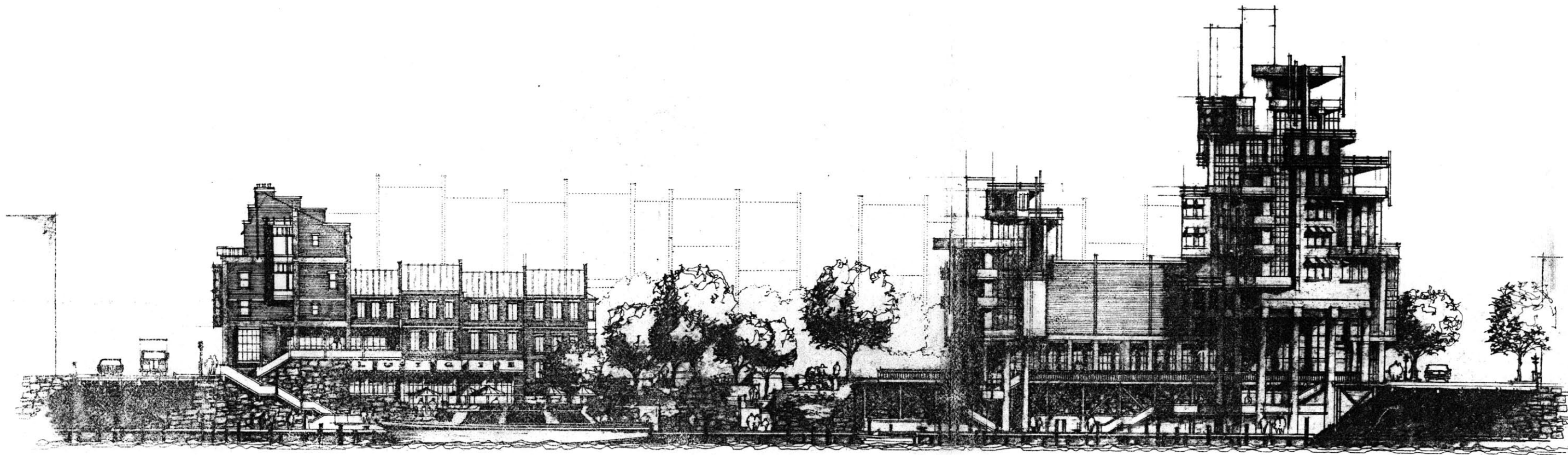
of Franklin Town, is also characterized by marginal uses. Large loft buildings, many of which are historically certified, remain vacant or only partially occupied despite investor interest. This is because of a questionable city policy prohibiting residential development in favor of maintaining the area as a protected zone for small pseudo-industrial/service businesses that cannot afford more expensive or prestigious locations. However, it appears that the area allocated for these vital businesses could be consolidated, so that the larger area could be improved. Further east towards the Delaware is another "industrial" district. New, cheaply-constructed single-story structures housing factory outlets and wholesale distributors stand isolated, surrounded only by large parking lots. This area totally lacks any spatial hierarchy or continuity. Continued development along these lines threatens to further divide the downtown from the neighborhoods to the north. But again, despite its proximity to the Center City, most of this corridor remains undeveloped.



19th ST.

PUBLIC GREENWAY

BLVD. & 18th ST.



19th ST.

CANAL

BLVD. & 18th ST.

Of course, the construction of a canal would require a considerable commitment of funds and a major engineering effort. Admittedly, the excavation and erection of canal walls east of Broad Street would be costly as would a mechanical lock, should it be necessary. It is interesting to note, however, that an historic map of Center City, dated 1796, indicates that an effort was made to link the two rivers through partially completed canals that extended inland from both the Schuylkill and the Delaware.

It is doubtful that either a canal or a greenway would make viable any large concentration of retail space since downtown has a recently revitalized retail core. This kind of use would also discourage neighborhood development. However, some inspired use of the railroad trench might elevate the property values at the center portion of the site, where it is presently the most difficult to attract investment. A picturesque, easily-accessible public environment with characteristics unique to its place would probably support smaller

commercial establishments such as restaurants, galleries, specialty shops and professional suites scattered along its edges.

What is envisioned from a design standpoint is the partial erosion of the massive granite retaining walls. Multiple levels of circulation, some continuous, others broken, would form the edges of the trench. At each block's end, development would be fairly dense while the edges at mid-block would be set back and less defined. Terraced levels could descend from the residential squares down to either the canal or greenway. Small structures could project beyond the dark stone walls while others could be perched above. Height limitations and setbacks could be established to safeguard exposure to sunlight.

Both the canal and greenway elevations depict a design projection for a public building, perhaps a community center, that could become a landmark at the neighborhood scale. This node would occur at the intersection of the canal or greenway, 18th Street, the new Franklin Town Boulevard, and the Community College campus. This "place" would clearly mark the point of coincidence between the commercial, institutional and residential areas of Franklin Town. Although the building form is not resolved, it represents a fairly literal effort to integrate figural contrast into the fabric. In contrast to the surrounding forms and vocabulary, the building could reflect the divergent orientations of the orthogonal street structure, the angled boulevard and the skewed campus. The building's emphasis on the vertical direction indicates that a significant level change occurs between the elevation of the street and the public paths below. The scale and intensity of the place may seem prodigious relative to nearby forms. It is diminutive, however, in relation to monumental places at the larger city scale.

CONCLUSION

The design ideas put forth in this thesis illustrate a rather loosely-structured and open-ended process. They are the result of the efforts of one designer, over a relatively short period of time, in collaboration with one critic. Undoubtedly, a structured approach, through the participation of representatives from the various building professions and laymen alike, would yield more highly-resolved solutions embodying a fuller range of possibilities.

The relative merits of this design are somewhat less significant than the fact that the exercise demonstrates that a fairly committed rendition of the potential character of a "place" can be developed quickly as a basis for argument as to how to proceed. Hopefully, a dialogue would ensue that might produce "agreements." These in turn would provide an example of what could be done or serve as a gauge by which to evaluate subsequent proposals for

specific pieces of an area.

The ambiguities so often found in the "masterplan" really serve no one's interests in the long run. Because we, collectively speaking, often insist on the total resolution of the larger scale before we responsibly move on to the smaller scale, there is the tendency to "not know where we're going until we get there." The process of building in the city is seldom linear. Problems should be tackled simultaneously at many scales. There is probably no more efficient method than "jumping in and getting one's feet wet."

The specific ideals expressed in this design, such as theme and variation, continuity within the context, tolerance for repetition, collective open space, etc., are more or less arguable. Nevertheless, these are precisely some of the issues that would hopefully arise if everyone in the process, including nearby and potential residents, had access to clear images

of what the place could be like. This should occur as early in the process as possible, before successive commitments in time and money render any voluntary change of approach impossible.

A great many of the precedents or references used in town planning have evolved incrementally over time. While we no longer seem able to afford time for our new places to evolve, we can still plan to develop large places incrementally with the participation of many interests. This inevitably occurs anyway, so it becomes a question of whether or not we wish to court a "free-for-all." On the other hand, if development proceeds within an established framework, where the intended effect is clearly illustrated, the resulting environment may come closer to achieving some of the qualities of the reference that originally inspired the idea.

Of course, this can be the case only when there is a clear reference or ideal as opposed to an obscure, wholly novel or futuristic aim where the qualities are quite unfamiliar. This gives some credence to adopting, whenever pos-

sible, the best attributes of a given context as a reference. The context is a tangible, familiar and easily accessible model for those who must actually execute and inhabit the plan. Well-conceived frameworks can be developed that would not at all hinder the creativity of either the designers or the users.

The reduction of grain size, the arrangement of forms so as to create space rather than simply occupying it, and the capacity to allow variations to occur from one increment to another (even within a single, necessarily large building) may enhance the complexity of the urban environment and lessen the tendency toward monotonous forms. Apart from the benefit of variety and close exchange between activities, incremental development also limits the impact of any discrete decision. Simply put, the ramifications of any single architectural "blunder" at the small scale will not undermine the entire framework. There is strength in numbers.

CREDITS

Photographs and diagrams marked by the following numbers originated in the corresponding sources.

- 1 Anderson, Stanford (ed.), On Streets.
- 2 Foundation for Architecture, Philadelphia Architecture.
- 3 Harvard Architecture Review, Vol.2 1981
- 4 Mikelides, Byron (ed.), Architecture for People.
- 5 Norberg-Schulz, Christian, Genius Loci.
- 6 Wurman, Richard; Gallery, J. Man-Made Philadelphia.

I wish to acknowledge the invaluable assistance of the following individuals at an early stage of the semester.

Edmund Bacon
Former Director, City Planning Comm.

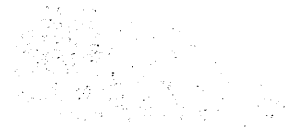
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Samuel Gransback
Maria Nocito
Eugene Pasymowski
Allen W. Rubin



1911

Building of the
1911

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