Culturally Responsive Architecture: 
A Community Center and Housing for Latinos in Roxbury 

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ABSTRACT 

This thesis will provide an example of how architecture can be an expression of a particular culture and still be generally contextual in relation to the site as well as responsive to unmet social needs. It will also explore the influence of culture on architecture by considering two "cultural models," Anglo-American and Latino. 
The vehicle I will use is a community center, housing, and public outdoor space for the Latino community in Roxbury, a neighborhood of Boston, Massachusetts. From the total Roxbury population, which comprises blacks, Latinos, Cape Verdeans and whites, I will focus on the Latino community. 

With this focus, I am by no means intending to isolate or favor this particular group. My main objective, instead, is to help strengthen and develop the Latino community and hopefully in the process build bridges to the other cultural elements of the community. The single overwhelming need that is shared by all the groups is the need for self-affirmation in cultural terms in a polycultural society that otherwise demeans its members. 

I believe that architectural design should seek to reinforce the major attributes of a given culture, adapting them as necessary to fit present conditions, while maintaining recognition of the original forms. The proposed design attempts to make conscious links and associations that recall the Hispanic heritage of the Latino inhabitants. When architectural form is inconsistent with the culture of its inhabitants, it becomes alienating. This alienation has the potential to affect the relationships among its inhabitants and could even challenge the collective social structure. 

The goals which I would like to achieve in the architectural design are the following: 
• promote continuity of Latino culture by preserving the indigenous values, orientations, and ways of life of the Latino community 
• give the Latinos greater control over the decisions that affect their lives and reduce the control of external forces over Latino institutions, services, and people 
• promote cultural pluralism in which all cultural groups (Latinos, blacks, whites, and Cape Verdeans) can live and work as equals, sharing information, resources, ideas, and experiences. 

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Preface

This thesis has its origins in my desire to select an architectural design project in which cultural characteristics, context, and unmet social needs would have to be addressed.

I have a personal reason for choosing to focus on the Latino community in Roxbury, the site of this project. It is the group with which I identify the most by virtue of having been born in Ecuador of an Ecuadorian mother. Also, as a "foreign service brat" I have had the opportunity of traveling and living in Central and South America. Thus, my interest in this project stems from having been exposed to both the Anglo-American and Latino cultures and wanting to understand how these two "cultural models" influence architectural form in different ways.

When I moved to the Boston area to attend college, I was surprised to find culturally distinct neighborhoods such as Chinatown, North End, East Cambridge, and South Boston. At first, I was not certain how I felt about those separate neighborhoods. On the one hand, they had a strong identity and cohesiveness; on the other hand, they seemed segregated.

After living near Boston for some years, however, I developed a different view about ethnic neighborhoods. It became clear to me that people (especially the newly arrived) by nature want to be around those who speak their own language and share the same culture.

With the growing number of Latinos in the Boston area, I became interested in seeking ways to build into an architectural design the major attributes of the Latino culture and to respond to specific cultural and social needs as a means of strengthening the community. Beyond that, I was also hopeful of helping to build bridges between a strengthened Latino community and the other ethnic groups.
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Chapter One

INTRODUCTION
Figure 1.1
Very early in the project I visited the Dudley Street Neighborhood Initiative (DSNI), a community action group involved in a community controlled revitalization program in that neighborhood. My purpose was twofold. First, I needed to zero in on a site for my project. Second, I wanted to gain a better understanding of problems and needs of the Latino community in Roxbury.

The site I selected offered several advantages. Perhaps most important were the presence of an ethnic mix and the site's mixed-use character. There was also proximity to downtown Boston and easily accessible transportation. The location of my site on a hill overlooking several Boston landmarks was also a clear advantage.

The ethnic mix, particularly the Latino community I have chosen to focus on, provided me a springboard to the theme from which this thesis draws its title: culturally responsive architecture. In my design, I wanted the Latinos to be able to recognize themselves in the built forms. This is not to say, however, that the design has to be assertively ethnic. Rather, the intent of the architectural design in this instance is to be contextual in scale, choice of materials and selection of architectural program in relation to the Roxbury site but also allow the architectural and spatial components to make conscious links and associations that recall the Hispanic heritage of the Latino inhabitants.

In selecting a plaza, community center and housing, I have chosen to design a multi-use program because I believe that a diversity of settings allows people to act in a variety of roles and provides many opportunities for new self-definition. Diversity also creates numerous chances for people to interact with others by permitting an increase in empathy and understanding, although I recognize that this process at times could also produce instances of conflict. I believe that the way individuals develop depends largely on the possibilities for interaction that are present in the environment.
Figure 1.1
Midterm site model showing community center and housing.
Based on discussions with DSNI and other involved individuals and organizations as well as private individuals, I have designed a project that is intended to respond to the major unmet social needs of the Dudley Street neighborhood. These run the gamut: housing, daycare, job training and employment, education, substance abuse and pregnancy counseling, recreation, and confronting an overwhelming sense of powerlessness on the part of the Dudley Street citizens. In the design of the housing I have limited my attention to the courtyard type housing.

Three main criteria have guided me in my architectural design. These criteria are: (1) the design must be consistent with the Latino concept of space and form; (2) the architectural program must respond to the specific unmet social needs of the Dudley Street neighborhood; (3) the design must be contextual to the Roxbury site. Thus, this thesis is divided into four major parts: Latino concept of space and the major attributes which must be incorporated in the design; the physical site and its contextual demands; the development of the architectural program, based on the needs of the neighborhood; and, finally, the proposed architectural design. In each part I have stated what I think were the major design criteria.
Chapter Two

CULTURAL CHARACTERISTICS OF LATINOS
Figure 2.1
View of St. Patrick's Catholic Church, approaching from Dudley Street.

Figure 2.2
Among Latinos religious life centers around the Catholic church and faith.
In the preface I stated that Latinos will be my main point of focus and gave my personal reasons for that emphasis. Now, as a general backdrop for my thesis, I should provide the reader a few comments on some of the distinguishing characteristics of their culture. In doing so, I hasten to add that this broadbrush profile represents largely my own views, and I recognize the possibility of exceptions and disagreement on some points.

The family occupies an exalted place in Latino culture. The Mexican poet, Octavio Paz, has written: "In the North American ethic the center is the individual; in Hispanic morals the true protagonist is the family." Within the family, elders are accorded a special degree of respect. For example, "abuelitos" (grandparents) assume various key roles in the family such as caring for grandchildren, keeping the extended family together, preparing family meals, and watching over the home. They often live with their children, which helps them carry out these roles more easily and adds further to the closeness of the family. The abuelitos are the "glue" of the extended family.

Religious life centers around the Catholic Church and faith. Again, abuelitos play an important part in insuring fulfillment of Catholic obligations such as going to mass on Sunday, observing holy days of obligation, and honoring all of the sacraments. The Latino family follows the teachings of the Church with respect to the sanctity of marriage and family.

Just as Latinos are a diverse group, so is their art pluralistic. Certain themes, styles, and images recur, yet there is great variety. Some of their art reflects the tradition of religious art and some reflects the culture of the urban barrio. Part seems to fit comfortably within the context of mainstream American art, while part is self-consciously and assertively ethnic. Further, the arts in America revolve around the personal experience, the interior life, the "me." Latino culture turns more toward the claims of community and shared impulse, thus putting a different stress on the claims of individualism.
Figure 2.3
Latino music can be characterized as being colorful and rhythmic.
Mural painting or mosaic is a key form of Latino expression either as art per se or as a vehicle for delivering political or social messages. Murals reflect social and cultural life by means of colors, textures and powerful graphic images.

Latino music likewise can be characterized as colorful and rhythmic. Dancing is very important as a basis for making friends and building a social life. It is an activity that occurs at most social gatherings.

It is a mistake to view Latinos as a monolithic group. While they share a common language and Hispanic heritage, there is tremendous diversity among Latinos, who come from many different countries. This heterogeneousness makes effective organization and leadership among Latinos difficult to achieve.

A clear comparison can be made between Anglo-American and Latino societies. The Latino society is less time-bound and slower paced. It is less acquisitive and less ordered. Latinos are more emotional than cerebral, and more expressive and effusive in personal and social contacts. Deep religious beliefs lead them to be more fatalistic and willing to accept suffering. The Latino society is more tradition-bound, especially concerning moral, religious and family matters. While less so than in the past, it is a male-dominated society.

A recent special issue which *Time* devoted to the Hispanic culture provided some interesting demographics. The number of Hispanics in the United States has increased thirty percent since 1980, to nineteen million. They account now for about 7.9 percent of the nation's population. Most trace their roots back to Mexico (sixty-three percent), Puerto Rico (twelve percent), and Cuba (five percent): the rest to the nations of Central and South America and the Caribbean. By the year 2000 their numbers are expected to reach thirty million, fifteen percent of the whole. *Time* observes
Figure 2.4
A diversity of settings allows people to act in a variety of roles and provides many opportunities for new self-definition.

Figure 2.5
One of the goals of the public plaza is to bring people into contact with each other.
that the term "Hispanic," which came into vogue in the 1970's and was quickly picked up by the marketeers, "seems to smudge a dozen separate nationalities into an ethnic blur."²

The Latino community which I will focus on in this thesis is made up primarily of Puerto Ricans, with some enclaves of Latin Americans. About half the Latinos that moved to Roxbury came directly from Puerto Rico, while a significant number were displaced from the Boston's South End.

No doubt partly because of the proximity of Puerto Rico to the United States, Puerto Ricans seem to have greater difficulty than other groups in adjusting and establishing roots here. Puerto Ricans may feel they have less of a stake in the United States because they know they probably will go back to Puerto Rico.

In his book, La Vida, Oscar Lewis addresses the special characteristics of Puerto Ricans in the United States as follows:

*The persistence of a Puerto Rican way of life, especially among the low-income group, even after many years of residence in the United States, is a result of several factors, one of which is the maintenance of close ties with Puerto Rico. One of the most distinctive characteristics of the Puerto Rican migration to the States is that it is a two-way rather than a one-way movement.*³
Chapter Three

CULTURAL CHARACTERISTICS REFLECTED IN
THE DESIGN

The house is an institution, not just a structure, created for a complex set of purposes. Because building a house is a cultural phenomenon, its form and organization are greatly influenced by the cultural milieu to which it belongs. Very early in recorded time the house became more than shelter for primitive man, and almost from the beginning "function" was much more than a physical or utilitarian concept. If provision of shelter is the passive function of the house, then its positive purpose is the creation of an environment best suited to the way of life of a people - in other words, a social unit of space.4
Figure 3.1

In Villa Victoria, in the South End of Boston, most of the elderly are housed in a high-rise apartment building located in the center of the public plaza.
The following section, consistent with what I set forth in the introduction, will discuss ways in which my architectural design highlights the distinct characteristics of the Latino culture.

One of the features of the Latino culture which I consider important is the role of the extended family. The extended family is accommodated in the physical design by a separate, private apartment for the "abuelitos" (grandparents) contiguous to the basic unit plan. The extended family shares communal areas such as the living room, kitchen, and dining room, while the abuelitos have separate living quarters on a different floor. In this scenario the abuelitos have the privacy of their own apartment and are, at the same time, in a position to fulfill their key roles in the family, such as looking after their grandchildren, family meal preparation, and other domestic activities. This is an application of the concept of providing individual freedom within a community framework. A totally different option for accommodating the elderly could have been to design a separate apartment building which is intended to meet their special needs. This approach was taken in Villa Victoria, a development for low and moderate income Puerto Ricans in the South End of Boston. There, most of the elderly are housed in a twenty storey apartment building which is purposely located at the center of the public plaza. From the distance of their balconies, the elderly are able to appreciate children at play, but their peace, quiet, and privacy is protected by not allowing children to enter the building. In my design, I have chosen not to separate the elderly from the families because I feel that mutual benefits can be achieved by housing them in the extended family apartment.

Greater formality in a whole range of family activities, tends to persist among Latinos. For example, Latinos generally prefer to eat meals together. In my design I provide ample dining space for a family to dine together. Wherever possible, I have located the dining room overlooking
Figure 3.2

Plaza Betances in Villa Victoria, Boston, Massachusetts. Architect: John Sharratt Associates, Inc. The design of Villa Victoria reflects the culture of its residents in its outdoor space, which was adapted from the traditional Puerto Rican plaza.

Figure 3.3

The pedestrian circulation is a spine that extends from the plaza to the main playground and enables street access to the front door of each unit.
the courtyard.

The high sociability of the Latino also makes it important to provide means for outward physical expression of the family and contact with the community. Some useful architectural forms to achieve this purpose are balconies, porches, and entrance stoops. In Villa Victoria, for example, residents can be seen at any time of the year socializing on their front high stoops, where they are visible from the street. In my design I have included porches and balconies, as well as defined outdoor spaces where the residents can interact socially.

The plaza, historically a key feature of the Latino culture, can inspire a strong sense of identity as well as a compelling community experience. As a public space, the plaza serves a dual purpose. It can be used for formal occasions such as festivals, concerts, performances, and dances which together comprise vital aspects of Latino social life. The plaza may also be used for informal social activity such as supervised toddler’s play, children’s play such as bicycling and skating, and socializing among the older crowd. In addition, the plaza can allow for passive participation by observers.

In recognition of the prime importance of the Catholic faith within the Latino culture, I took the opportunity to connect my community center to the already existing Catholic church on the site. As mentioned previously, I view the Catholic church as a symbol which unifies the diverse Latino population. The Catholic church is also the common focus which draws both family and community together.

I see the possibility of using murals to accomplish two purposes. One, as a means of artistic expression that allows the Latino community to personalize the space represented by the plaza, and secondly, as a means of disguising the back of the church, which is in plain view of the entrance plaza.
Figure 3.4
This mural was a community effort in Allston, Massachusetts.
I envision a group of local artists in conjunction with community members coming together to design a mural. The design and execution of the mural would be an opportunity to bring together the community's artists in a collective effort. The mural would add a vibrant piece of Latin art to the main entrance plaza and would offer the local artists a forum for expressing their talents.
Chapter Four

CULTURE AND BUILDING FORM
Any discussion of how culture can influence building form which compares the Hispanic and the Anglo models must give a prominent place to the lasting impact of the Laws of the Indies. This comprehensive body of law promulgated by the Spanish crown for the governing of the kingdoms throughout Spain's empire contained detailed codes of rules dealing with diverse aspects of colonial life, one of which was the laying out and settling of new towns.

The co-authors of Spanish City Planning in North America venture to claim that in terms of the scope of their application, "the city planning ordinances of the Laws of the Indies are the most influential body of urban law in human history." With reference to their application and impact on Latin American cities, specifically, Jose Guillermo Frontado has written:

*The part of the Laws of the Indies dealing with the physical environment of those communities, with its laying out and development, is only a minor one. Still, its impact on today's Latin American cities is stronger than the rest of the document's parts as the institutional, economical and social structures have changed while the physical one remains as a decisive feature of these cities.*

The city planning ordinances called for orderly procedure and layout, with ample provision for growth. They were designed to direct amateurs in laying out and settling new towns. In theory and law, little was left to chance.
Witness part of the detail in this description of a plaza:

The plaza should be a rectangle, prolonged so that the width is at least half as long as the length, because this form is best for celebrations with horses... The size of the plaza should be proportionate to the population taking into consideration that in Indian towns, since they are new and intended to increase, it should not be less than two hundred feet in width and three hundred feet in length, nor greater than eight hundred feet in length. All around the plaza and the four principal streets that start from it there should be colonnades because of the great convenience that they offer to the merchants who gather there.7

Analysis of ways in which, even today, we can see the influence on some American cities of the application of these Spanish city ordinances and also of how certain cultural attributes have been preserved and have persisted throughout centuries, while others have not, is a main concern of this thesis chapter. Let us consider, then, how culture can influence building form.

In order to determine which cultural attributes are important to incorporate in a design, one can look at changes that have occurred in urban structure and form. In one such examination, Nina Brew analyzes the continuity of historical Spanish urban form in the American Southwest; specifically, the towns of Santa Fe, Albuquerque, Socorro and Las Vegas, New Mexico, and Tucson, Arizona. As points of reference for her study, she uses culturally-embedded models of city form in 16th century Spain and 19th century North America, modifications to those models necessitated by the frontier setting, and the geographical context of the Southwest. Her method of analysis is based on a matrix of transformation processes and hierarchical levels of scale in the environment, which she applies to historic maps, photographs and written descriptions of the five towns. The method permits identification of elements of form and processes of change that continue to influence the form of these cities and are therefore pertinent to
today's architectural and urban design.

A central idea in Brew's analysis is that for any form in her study, there are two "cultural models," Anglo-American and Latino. In the table which follows, I have tried to present a summary comparison of the Latino and Anglo-American models which Brew discusses at great length.8
One of the major attributes of Latino architecture is an alternation of light, open space with closed, built space.

In the Latino model buildings are defensive in nature; they act as walls to enclose exterior space.

In the Latino model the idea of a building as a wall is repeated via a continuous built edge that defines the block and street.

In the Anglo-American model buildings are freestanding, complete "objects" surrounded by open space.

In the Anglo-American model the residential block is a rationally demarcated surface with buildings as discrete objects, placed in the center of its subdivisions.
Latino Model

- Buildings are generally defensive in nature; they act as walls to enclose exterior space
- Cellular building form and modular organization
- Basic dwelling unit is the room, which is eventually added to
- Earliest buildings were accretions of rooms of similar size beginning along street edge and then extending back to enclose the placita. Other transformations included addition of porches, balconies and pitched roofs.
- Recognized an alternation of light, open space with built, closed space while still maximizing the amount of enclosed space
- At room and house levels, dimensions are repeated fairly consistently in different towns. The house dimension, a little more than eighty feet, was probably determined by the size of original "solares," or plots, granted to the settlers
- At district level, idea of the building as a wall is repeated via a continuous built edge that defines the block and the street
- Blocks generally tended to be open at the interior, with land behind house originally used for subsistence agriculture. Pattern of transformation was an intensification of the street edge; the courtyard would be enclosed, and rooms added contiguous with the house
- The Laws of the Indies called for demarcation of the public spaces first, with private lots falling inside their boundaries
- The Laws of the Indies model of the city was a center-generated, place-making form. The Spanish grid has the intention of making place in the landscape. The process of founding and laying out the city began with and emanated from the Plaza (literally, "place")
- The Laws of the Indies prescribed both form and structure for cities
Figure 4.6

Site model showing one of the attributes of the Latino model: a continuous built edge which defines the block and street.
Anglo-American Model

- Buildings are free-standing, complete "objects" surrounded by open space, centered on plot of ground (Examples -- the house, public buildings, the church)
- Centralized building form
- Basic unit is the house, which is sub-divided into rooms
- Buildings grew awkwardly through addition of subordinate forms such as sheds and lean-tos
- Allowed rooms with no access to light, particularly in the long, narrow commercial buildings
- The residential block is a rationally demarcated surface with buildings as discrete objects placed in the center of its subdivisions -- a simple multiplication of form at the lower level. The commercial block has the same structure, but the building occupies the whole surface
- Pattern of transformation was infill of the block's interior through sub-division of land into narrow parcels, requiring extensions deep into the block
- The planned Anglo-American city of the 19th century grew out of a subdivision of the larger grid of the 1785 Land Ordinance. Combined with the railroads, it resulted in a line-oriented form emphasizing movement
- The Anglo conception of the city did not include the built form, only the surface structure and organization
Figure 4.7
Site model showing the courtyard houses which act as walls
to enclose exterior space. The existing houses are freestanding
objects surrounded by open space.
Continuity of culture is the intention. In colonizing a new land, settlers do not easily give up their own culture in preference for another, particularly if theirs is more highly developed. Settlers bring with them as much "cultural baggage" as resources, distance and technology allow. The *Laws of the Indies* is proof of this; in addition to its obvious administrative role, the Codice was an expedient way of transferring culture, given the great distances and transportation problems involved.

Continuity of form boils down to how much change can be permitted before the form is no longer recognizable when compared with the previous state. Put in cultural terms, it is the extent to which an environment can be transformed before the inhabitants can no longer recognize themselves in the built form. This condition is the same at each hierarchical level. Transformation of the structure of a city that clashes with the culture of its inhabitants will make it alienating; ill-conceived transformation of the form of a house can affect negatively the relationships among its inhabitants; and transformation in a neighborhood will challenge the collective social structure if carried too far.

The distinction between structure and form is important here. In an article on the historic structure of Santa Fe, planner Harry Moul makes the following statement:

*Structure, whether the original block forms surrounding the Plaza, the major trails leading to the city, or the early patterns set by irrigated agriculture, tends to be surprisingly enduring. No matter that individual buildings surrounding the Plaza have been replaced several times over-- the intent of the original plan is still evident.*

Is continuity of structure enough to preserve a sense of place over time? Nina Brew thinks not, taking the view that continuity of form, with its implications for materials and construction, is as much an expression of cultural identity as the structure. To carry Moul's statement above to the
extreme would call for replacement of all adobe buildings around the plaza with Victorian "commercial palaces," which in fact was the intention of the Anglo-American urban frontier, and was carried out in Las Vegas. The resulting environment would have the clarity of orientation and movement, but would certainly be less recognizable as a place tied to culture. The reverse is also true: it is not enough to maintain continuity of form without the structure. 10

The belief that continuity in the built environment has positive value is itself culturally-embedded in the 20th century. Historic preservation is the narrow view of this issue of continuity. In its strictest sense, it does not allow transformation at all but seeks to freeze for posterity select examples of the built environment: a house, a landmark, a monument.

In the Southwest, temporal continuity of the Hispanic environment is justified by its "present value," not only to the large percentage of the population that is Hispanic, but for its role in helping to forge a sense of regional history. It goes beyond holding on to some symbolic reference to a distant and foreign past whose only meaning today is its marketability. The stucco and tile that results is only a thin veneer of disguise for form and structure far removed from its reference -- something akin to the sham of painting brick patterns on an adobe wall. A deeper understanding of the attributes of form and the process of transformation in the hierarchy of levels makes possible design interventions in the present that will extend the continuity of the Hispanic past. Certainly not all of the attributes of the historic environment are desirable; in any case, architectural and urban design are extricably tied to the present -- technologically in terms of construction and materials; functionally, in terms of lifestyles and usage; and culturally.

Certain attributes, however, are of value in the present. One is the
alternation of light and open space and built, closed space inherent in the
courtyard house type. Another is the hierarchy of open space from the
public plaza and street, to the semi-public portal, and, ultimately, to the
private but still collective placita. The repetition of a concept at several
levels of the environment -- the placita, plazuela, plaza in the city, and the
plaza town -- is a strong current of continuity within the environment. The
zone of exchange between building and open space, both on the street and
surrounding the plaza, is another such attribute. The cellular form and
modular organization of the Hispanic building lends itself to growth and
change more readily than the centralized Anglo forms.\textsuperscript{11}

Today's design should seek to reinforce these positive attributes,
repeating and transforming them as necessary to accommodate and
express the present, while maintaining our recognition of the original forms.
Chapter Five

CULTURALLY RESPONSIVE ARCHITECTURE
Diagram A.
HIERARCHY OF OPEN SPACE

1 Plaza  
   public plaza

2 Plazuela  
   semi-public plaza

3 Placita  
   private plaza
In developing this design I have attempted to incorporate some of the major attributes of the Latino culture. As a starting point for my design I am using a courtyard house type which is not unknown to the Boston area. The courtyard house type is a good departure point for my design because it satisfies a number of design criteria listed in the Latino model. For example, the courtyard house type is defensive in nature; the building acts as a "wall" which encloses exterior space. I will refer to this exterior space as the "placita," a small, private, residential plaza. Inherent in the courtyard house type is an alternation of light, open and closed, built space.

Another major attribute of the Latino concept of space is the hierarchy of open space from the public plaza and street, to the semi-public plazuela, to the private, but still collective placita. I am transforming the orientation of the courtyard housing by inverting the courtyard so that instead of facing the street, (as is most commonly the case in Boston) the courtyard faces the collective semi-public "plazuela." The "plazuela" is a residential courtyard, which is a collective, landscaped outdoor space. The purpose of this transformation is to make clear the hierarchy of outdoor spaces from a very public entrance plaza, to a semi-public "plazuela," to a smaller, intimate "placita."

The transformation has further significance. It means that each courtyard building will have two front entrances, one on the street and the other from the "placita." I have essentially given up a back yard but gained a strong, internal, lively residential courtyard. The rationale for the two front entrances is that units can be back to back with a party wall in between. One unit looks out into the courtyard and catches the noonday south sun, while the other looks out into the street and gets the morning south light.

The sacrifice of front and backyards, as we know them, which results from this transformation, is compensated for by the plazuela. Realizing that
the future residents would still value the privacy of a "backyard" for hanging laundry and other activities, I have provided an area which would serve this purpose. This was done by closing off at the street, with a seven-foot gate, the space between the courtyard buildings. A smaller fence would close off the plazuela from the "backyard" space. Balconies at the different floor levels would become extensions of the private living space to the private outdoor space.

The Latino model also reveals that buildings were simple accretions of rooms of similar size beginning along the street edge and extending back to enclose the placita. Because I thought it was more important to accommodate a range of family types (extended, nuclear, single parent, and single person) I did not make all the units the same size. Instead, I disregarded the model in favor of responding to the social needs of the community. On the second point, however, I did think it was important to intensify the street edge. Inverting the courtyard again proved to be advantageous because the edge of the courtyard house which most implies movement, is the edge which faces the street.

The Latino model also shows that at the scale of the block, buildings were used to intensify the street edge with land behind used for subsistence agriculture. In my design it was important to have very strong edges. This not only reinforces the direction of the corresponding streets, but also helps to clearly define the outdoor spaces (the plaza, plazuela, and placita) within my site. I view the courtyard houses as one large building, not as three separate houses. Likewise, I thought it was important that the community center, a public building, have a strong and ordered presence on Dudley Street. The other elements of my project such as the interior courtyard, loggia, and theater, which are not directly visible from the street, take on a more free-form geometry. The courtyard is oriented on the axis of the
Diagram B.
OVERLAPPING TERRITORIES

The loggia, open on three sides, fuses four distinct spaces together.

Diagram C.
ZONES OF EXCHANGE
A zone of exchange is a space which serves as a transition between two distinct spaces.
church.

Another attribute of the Latino model is a "zone of exchange," which provides a transition between two different spaces. Through the use of an arcade, I was able to create a "zone of exchange" between the community center and Dudley Street, a major thoroughfare. The arcade is a bridge between the street and commercial edge of the community center because it reinforces the direction of the street through its structural rhythm of columns and arches, and at the same time provides shelter and accessibility (both physical and visual) to the retail shops. The arcade makes entry from Dudley Street into the shops less abrupt.

Another component of my design which has a zone of exchange is the loggia. The loggia, a gallery open on three sides, overlaps several distinct spaces: to the north, the church and entrance plaza; to the east, the rectory; to the south, the daycare center; and, finally, to the west, the community center. The purpose of this space is to collect the different territories into one continuous space, thereby eliminating the distinct boundaries of the four spaces. The loggia is able to integrate the four spaces because it is open and visually penetrable.
There may be some people who, for various reasons, would prefer to conceal the conditions described in this chapter. However, if anything is to be done to improve these conditions, the first step is to know about them. There is a popular Puerto Rican saying that is appropriate here: "No se puede tapar el cielo con la mano," or "You can't cover up the sky with your hand."

Indeed, you can't cover up slums, poverty and ugliness.

La Vida, Oscar Lewis
Figure 6.1

North

Vacant Land
In a vacant lot on Roxbury's Dudley Street, a kid pelts a burned-out hulk of an abandoned car with rocks. This is inner city recreation.

This description is like having a camera zoom in on a single frame of a sad, depressing inner city scene. Pull the camera back, widen the focus, and the viewer will take in the same or similar action on about 1,000 such vacant lots in a neighborhood of one and one-half square miles enclosed in an area between Dudley Station and Uphams Corner in Boston. Stark evidence of filth, neglect, and poverty will greet a passer-by who enters this no-man's land. Potential developers, surveying the same panorama, will see things differently; they will ogle and conjure up visions of future townhouses or condos. What an opportunity, at the same time, for them to provide Boston with a chunk of much needed housing!

Just how would the scene appear to the 10,000 Latinos, blacks, Cape Verdeans, and whites who inhabit this site? Would it really be too incredulous that in that near-nothingness the inhabitants could picture excellent sites for future affordable homes, small businesses, parks and recreation areas? Someone has said, "What you see is what you got." Maybe not. For some living on Roxbury's Dudley Street, filthy vacant lots become the stuff of dreams.

Alongside the bleak picture described above, nevertheless, there are numerous positive features in the neighborhood, not the least of which is the tenacity with which the residents want to stay right where they are. In fact, the predominantly black community, longtime residents in Roxbury, have developed strong ties to the location.
Figure 6.2
1855 map of Boston.
Indeed, Roxbury is one of the prime locations in the city of Boston. Take a rapid transit train from downtown Boston and you will be in Roxbury in only ten minutes. In addition to the proximity to the Central Business District, Roxbury has a hilly topography which frames the striking views of downtown Boston. The ongoing razing of the MBTA (Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority) Orange line tracks above the street will free up additional land and further increase the attractiveness of the neighborhood.

Roxbury has a strong history as well. The town developed from a farming village to a working class neighborhood in Lower Roxbury and a middle class residential neighborhood in the Highlands. It was founded in 1630, just before the settlement of Boston and was physically connected to Boston by a narrow neck of land which ran along Washington Street.\\(^{13}\)

In the early part of the nineteenth century, Roxbury Highlands, as it was called, grew as a wealthy rural community. Lower Roxbury began to develop as a New England mill town with textile mills, printing firms, foundries and stone yards. The sharp distinction between the middle class Roxbury Highlands residential area and the industrial and working class neighborhood of Lower Roxbury has prevailed throughout history. In the middle of the nineteenth century, Boston's street railway lines ran from downtown Boston along Washington Street, in the South End, to Roxbury Crossing. Construction of the Dudley Street elevated terminal, with rapid transit to downtown Boston, solidified Dudley Station as a dominant commercial area.\\(^{14}\)

In 1968, Roxbury was annexed to Boston, largely in response to the need for public works projects, particularly sanitation. Suburbanization began in the beginning of the twentieth century with the breakdown of the mill economy and the appearance of new forms of transportation. This new economy marked a change in the organizational structure of Boston. Factories were freed from their location near the central city, which allowed
Figure 6.3
View down Dudley Street showing site's mixed-use character: light industrial, retail, residential, and institutional.

Figure 6.4
View of small scale retail shops at the intersection of Dudley Street, Mt. Pleasant Avenue, and Blue Hill Avenue.
Roxbury has been the center of Boston's black but increasingly Latino community. The white population there is small. This inner city neighborhood has suffered from property disinvestment, abuse, and neglect of both the benign and malign varieties. The private market and the public sector have each been harsh on Roxbury. Those who live there have known enormous disruption from the loss of housing and industry at the hands of the market and injustice at the hands of the state, mainly through urban renewal and highway clearance projects. All the signs of intense poverty are present for anyone to see: nineteen percent (19%) unemployment, low participation in the labor force, low educational levels, a high crime rate, flourishing drug traffic, a high drop-out rate from high school, and a high rate of teenage pregnancy. Some of Roxbury's census tracts are among the poorest in the country, on a par with the poorest counties in Mississippi or with Indian reservations in the West. Once a thriving residential, commercial, and industrial neighborhood center of Boston, over the last forty years Roxbury has seen its economic strength sapped and its social fabric strained.

Focusing mainly on the Latino community in the Dudley Street neighborhood, the Alianza Hispana, which was founded in 1969 to direct Hispanics to services they had difficulty obtaining in the Boston area, gives this more specific profile of their largely Hispanic clients in the neighborhood:

Less than fifty percent of the people make over $3,000 a year. Unemployment is three times higher among Hispanics than among the general population of Boston. In a recent survey of clients, we discovered that seventy-five percent of our clients have household incomes of approximately $5000 a year and seventy percent are unemployed. Sixty percent speak little or no English.
Figure 6.5

View from Dudley Street, northwest of the site:
An abandoned building fronts a vacant lot.
The John Hancock and Prudential buildings, land marks of downtown Boston, can be seen in the background.

Figure 6.6

View from Dudley Street of mixed uses: retail and housing.
These figures present a graphic image of the typical family situation. The father cannot find work and teenagers have to quit school in order to look for a job. Mothers become the family wage earners by default rather than by choice. The problem is complicated because these same mothers have children to look after. Young women follow their mothers' pattern of having children early. School children end up on the streets to avoid spending their leisure time in a crowded apartment scene. The cycles of poverty and despair growing out of these unmet social needs are sure to be recycled unless new options and opportunities are made available.

What are the other main distinguishing features of the Roxbury neighborhoods surrounding Dudley Street? A study shows that this minority community is comprised of larger families than found in Boston as a whole, with many younger people and female-headed households with children. Those residents who are employed work in low and semi-skilled occupations and industries. Poor health conditions are a major problem. The housing stock is dominated by publicly assisted rental units, some in poor condition and many boarded and abandoned. There are significant financial problems affecting residential and commercial property, including the danger of loss of subsidies. Roxbury has also lost its industrial job base and has experienced a decline in commercial business. Probably the poorest neighborhood in Roxbury, aside from the public housing projects such as Orchard Park, which it borders, is the community known as the "Bermuda Triangle." It presents all the problems mentioned above, and in the case of housing, it has lost seventy percent (70%) of its stock to abandonment and arson in the last two decades.18

While Roxbury may have these special distinguishing characteristics, it is in many ways symptomatic of the current situation in working class communities of color in major cities across the United States. Chief among
Figure 6.7
Map of Boston Metropolitan Area.
the similarities these communities face is the problem of racism. It is a central determinant of the condition of life for neighborhoods like Roxbury, permeating every aspect of the economy, demographic structure, institutional environment, and political situation. It created the ghetto, and rendered its occupants vulnerable to the abuses of both the market and the state. It even determines the circumstances of the ghetto's demise. Once the ghetto has outlived its usefulness, the powers that be, both from the private and public sectors, facilitate its dissolution, or perhaps more likely, its breaking down and dispersal into separate concentrations less likely to generate resistance and political power.

Roxbury's proximity to the growing Central Business District of Boston is also no anomaly. Black and Latino migrations to northern cities moved into locations abandoned by a labor force which had fled the city in similar conditions throughout the country. Disinvestment, whether planned (as in Roxbury's history of redlining) or market driven, is a common condition among black and Latino neighborhoods. The majority of vacant land in Roxbury was in fact created not through local but national programs of "blight removal," urban renewal, and highway construction.

Just as new forms of abuse have appeared in Roxbury, so have new forms of resistance and struggle. The people of Roxbury have built an impressive and creative history of organization, struggle, and development. In its efforts to think in terms of neighborhood and local organizing, Roxbury reflects a growing trend by oppressed groups in this country to localize their efforts in order to mobilize their bases.

Central to this notion of localized effort is the idea that community members are the best judges of their own needs and the best catalysts and activists in pursuing those needs. "We didn't want to work from the top down," said Che Madyun, a prominent Dudley Street resident, in expressing disdain for the all too common process whereby city officials impose a
Figure 6.8

Annie Q's watercolor entitled, "The Eviction."
solution on the neighborhood. "We want to work from the bottom up and have City Hall work with us so together we can determine our own fate."19

It is fitting that this new spirit of local effort should come into being not only in response to the decades of economic, social and psychological abuse suffered by the residents of Roxbury, which produced an overwhelming sense of community powerlessness and a chipping away of community pride, but also as an answer to what is today perhaps the greatest danger facing Roxbury -- potential large-scale speculation and heavy investment that would produce gentrification and further massive displacement.

To address the results of many years of disinvestment and neglect in their community as well as the more recent threat of displacement of current residents, the Dudley Street Neighborhood Initiative (DSNI) was organized in 1984. The Rainbow Coalition and the 1983 Boston mayoral campaign of Mel King can be largely credited with helping to prod the area's various human services agencies into joining forces and developing that mutual trust that is vital to joint strategy planning.

DSNI is a collaborative effort of residents, agencies, businesses and churches concerned with the future of the Dudley Street neighborhood. Participants are diverse in age and occupation and represent the neighborhood's black, Latino, Cape Verdean and white cultures. DSNI has three primary objectives: organize the community; take control of the vacant land; and implement a comprehensive revitalization plan. This plan is divided into three components: structural and cultural rehabilitation; human services efforts; and economic revitalization. The following are some of the plan's specific concepts and activities: creation of an "Urban Village" that would include a village commons, retail and recreational space; construction of 800-1,000 new units of housing and the rehabilitation of 1,000 existing dwellings; formulation of a community-wide strategy for child-care, crime
prevention, education, counseling and organizing sports and recreational activities; and finally, development of an economic plan that would include employment training programs, incentives and assistance to local businesses. The plan would also seek to place neighborhood controls on property acquisition and resale in order to discourage speculation by investors. Under the plan, a community controlled management body would have power to buy, rent, or sell property; borrow or lend money; and plan and manage development projects. Financing would be generated from a combination of private and public money. The report also includes a call for comprehensive examination of community needs, increased community control over human services agencies, employment training programs, and greater coordination among service providers in the area so that programs are attuned to needs.\textsuperscript{20} The DSNI plan was instrumental in helping me to develop an architectural program for my project.

If DSNI is to succeed in empowering the citizens of the Dudley Street neighborhood to control their own future, it will need the cooperation of Boston Mayor Ray Flynn on many fronts: making the considerable number of city owned vacant lots available for priority community projects, keeping an eye on the private market, improving police protection, removing waste transfer stations that litter the neighborhood, and insuring that the BRA cooperates with DSNI leaders.

Two earlier examples of collaborative efforts by local communities to get greater control over their destinies are the cases of the Lower Roxbury and South End neighborhoods of Boston. The cases are relevant to the DSNI experience because they show how some of the same problems and possible solutions surface when local communities seek to improve their lots, how communities can learn from earlier attempts by others, and how very impressive results, over time, can come from persistent activist struggle
against varied and seemingly insurmountable obstacles.

In considering the problems and possible solutions for the Roxbury Dudley Street neighborhood, or for any local community undertaking a similar community improvement enterprise, a number of broad public policy questions need to be addressed. Among these are: the idea of "neighborhood" and sharing of law enforcement responsibilities.

First, the concept of "neighborhood." As a guideline for setting public policy, there is no useful way to define a good neighborhood, though most of us can agree on what constitutes a bad neighborhood. Few people would freely choose to live where rampant crime stirs fear, housing is deteriorated and ugly, and uncollected garbage lines the sidewalks and curbs. To describe these conditions as bad should not be taken as imposing middle class values upon the poor. Most assuredly, the poor would not oppose such middle class values as decent housing, safety, sanitation, and the freedom of choice that comes with having money in one's pocket and in the bank. With respect to so-called bad neighborhoods, there are essentially three public policy choices: ignore them, attempt to dismantle them and spread their problems among a larger segment of the population, or try to change the bad into less bad and, eventually, acceptable.

Lastly, law enforcement at the local level. Neighborhoods will be strengthened as residents themselves assume more responsibility for law enforcement, especially in the effort to stem the tide of crime and drug activities. In this are we have come to expect the local police force to be everywhere at all times and to feel impotent as citizens to take actions to combat crime. We have forgotten that community values are only operative when the people in the community act upon them. We should look to the "informal law enforcement agents" that exist in every community -- employees who work in neighborhood fast-food or convenience stores, people who walk their dogs, and old people who sit on park benches or
observe the street scene from their windows. This means new approaches to designing space which has clearly defined boundaries and which makes an intruder feel uncomfortable and a member of the community feel welcome, secure and confident. It suggests the need to explore part-time employment, through public funding of parents, retired people and others who would police schools and other public spaces. There is surely no neighborhood in which the residents do not wish to see the laws enforced. Yet the residents often feel that they cannot do anything to stop crime. The ways in which public policies have fostered the feeling of futility must be examined, and alternatives to such policies found.

An effective way to make communities safe is to pay special attention to the physical layout of a neighborhood. In my design of the housing and outdoor spaces, in particular, I have grouped dwelling units to encourage associations of mutual benefit. In addition, I have clearly defined paths of movement as well as clearly defined areas of activities throughout the site. My goal has been to create a clear understanding of the function of a space and who its users are and ought to be. Clear-cut definition of the boundaries of a site creates an opportunity for visual surveillance by the inhabitants and makes it possible both inhabitant and stranger to perceive that an area is under the undisputed control of a particular group.
Chapter Seven

RESPONSIVENESS TO SOCIAL NEEDS
Figure 7.1
Massing model showing community center along Dudley Street. The arcade and retail shops are at street level while the classrooms, training rooms, and offices are in the three floors above.
From the very beginning of this thesis project, I was determined to select an architectural design project that had as a main component a clear intention to respond to social needs. In the paragraphs which follow, I catalog the range of needs and the manner in which my design attempts to address those needs.

The community center will act as a catalyst for uniting the members of the community and for allowing them to become better acquainted with one another. Its multi-use character and the diversity of settings it provides should ensure that this catalyst effect is achieved. The community center will cater primarily to the Latino community through legal services, education, substance abuse and pregnancy counseling programs, employment and training programs, and daycare. It is also hoped that the center can serve as a bridge to other ethnic groups through its public spaces such as the retail shops, loggia, exhibit and lecture halls.

In order to provide a smooth transition from their country of origin to the United States, the community center will provide counseling for newcomers to help them through the immigration and naturalization process. Perhaps there could also be a support network which would help integrate the newly arrived more quickly into the community.

Because of the high drop-out rate among Latino teenagers, one function of the community center will be to provide alternative education programs that would teach basic math and reading and writing skills necessary to pass the G.E.D.

The program will also provide assessment of educational level in Spanish in order to help place students at the proper level in school and tutors for those students having trouble learning English or other subjects.

The literacy program within the community center is primarily for the elderly for instruction in their native language, Spanish. By becoming literate in Spanish the grandparents can help their grandchildren maintain
Figure 7.2

Study model of interior courtyard, retail shops and small businesses. The shops and small businesses are intended to offer a means to combat unemployment.
their mother tongue.

As one way to alleviate the drug problem, a substance abuse center will be located within the community center, where people can go to get help. The benefits of housing a substance abuse center in the community center are numerous. The most important are high visibility, easy accessibility, and low cost. I envision the center being run primarily by Latinos. This would ease the channels of communication by having staff who can speak Spanish. It is through such efforts, in which Latinos come together to solve their own problems, that community empowerment can be brought back to the Dudley Street neighborhood. Because of the large number of unwed mothers in the Latino community, the community center will also have professionals to counsel young teenagers who are pregnant.

The vocational training will reflect changes in the job market and will teach skills such as typing on a word-processor and computer programming in place of automotive repair, for example. Other basic life skills will be taught under family budget planning. This would include developing a monthly family budget and learning how to balance a checkbook.

The community center will also have a job search center that will act as a clearinghouse to solicit job openings. There will be a place where people can look for job listings. Job counselors will provide training on how and where to look for jobs, how to interview, as well as how to fill out job applications. In addition, counselors will give job aptitude assessment.

Small businesses and retail shops incorporated into the architectural program will offer a means to combat unemployment and related problems. New businesses will provide employment and Latino entrepreneurial opportunities, increase social interaction, and redirect the flow of money into rather than out of the neighborhood. These positive results will aid greatly in reducing the sense of powerlessness in the Latino community.
Figure 7.3
The architecture of much low-income housing encourages anomie. View of Orchard Park low income housing, northeast of the site.

Figure 7.4
Massing model showing housing. Addition of these low-income housing units responds to one of the major unmet needs of the Dudley Street neighborhood.
An important element of the community center is a coordinating office where the Latino policymakers can work together to monitor the efforts of the various service agencies and work toward improving coordination of their activities. Provision for this office is an outgrowth of a newsletter published by HOPE (Hispanic Office of Planning and Evaluation), which cited as the number one objective of the Latino community the consolidation of the efforts of the various Hispanic services agencies in Massachusetts as a basis for establishing a statewide policy. Planning and policymakers will also have conference space to carry out administrative, planning, and coordination activities.

Low-cost housing will provide shelter for different kinds of families, each with different lifestyles and needs. Approximately 180-200 people can be housed on the site. The housing is intended to accommodate families with different lifestyles and needs. The four different family types for which I have designed are: extended (six to ten people); nuclear (four to six people); single parent (two to four people); and single person. To take care of the newly arrived in the community, a small number of units will be devoted to transient housing. The location of the housing for temporary residents above the retail shops in the south part of the site will facilitate the orientation and support of people in transition. Families with children ideally will be accommodated in the courtyard type houses with fenced yards between units for private family life. The addition of these low-income housing units responds to one of the most critical unmet social needs in the Dudley Street neighborhood.

The architecture of much low-income housing encourages anomie, particularly in the case of high rise construction. This is one basis for the choice of scale in my design of the housing units (forty feet high) and also for rejecting a separate tower to house the elderly Latinos. Inappropriateness of scale can deprive residents of low-cost housing of a sense of identity both
Figure 7.5

Axonometric of collective dwellings units. Architectural Groupe E.D.
The different units are arranged in a U-shape around a central space. The central space is a semi-public zone that provides a transition between the public activity on the street and the privacy of the individual units. The shared space provides an opportunity around which a small community could form. Terraces and gardens are exterior extensions of the living space.
to the site and the community. This was true in Pruitt-Igoe housing in St. Louis, (an initially highly regarded but in the end unsuccessful urban renewal project) the lack of a connection to the street contributed to the problems of the residents.

The cooperative daycare facility physically located near the housing will enable mothers to take employment without worrying about how their children will be cared for during the working day. In my design I have chosen to locate the daycare in a highly visible area, central to the housing. It is accessible not only from the houses located on the site but also from other parts of the neighborhood.

The location will make for convenience and at the same time reduce daycare costs to the working mother. I envision a cooperative daycare arrangement in which family members would take turns looking after their children under a full-time paid employee who would provide continuity and guidance to the voluntary assistants.

Another goal of the project is to help the residents overcome their feeling of powerlessness and lack of identity and attachment to the site. Increasing the attractiveness of the neighborhood has yet another advantage in meeting this psychological need of the community. How does space become place? How do you connect people to their environment? These questions go to the heart of the discussion of how to respond to the social needs of the community.
Figure 7.6

The proposed design attempts to make conscious links and associations that recall the Hispanic heritage of the Latino inhabitants. Some of the features in the design which reveal the Latino concept of space and form are: the hierarchy of open space from the public plaza and street, to the semi-public plazuela, to the private placita. The arcade is another vehicle used to create a strong sense of identity for the Latinos.
It could be said that one of the purposes of architecture is to make a site become a place, to bring into presence the meanings potentially present in the given environment. A building's resonance depends on its stability (as things we inhabit) and on the appropriateness and richness of the socio-cultural experience it offers. Perhaps the most general attribute of place is the way in which it gathers the particulars of its surroundings. It gathers them with concrete presence. The particular way in which a location gathers its surroundings -- the circumstantial condition of locality and building task -- gives it identity, and its placeness.21

A key aspect of identity and placeness is closely related to the concept that certain features of the built form must be maintained in order to provide the inhabitants with a powerful sense of identity. The goal which is sought is to increase the likelihood of achieving and maintaining an imagery of place that affirms a larger sense of identity in both old and new American environments. If this link is not established, the community is not likely to take on a vibrant character. We need to find images in our built environment that awaken our curiosity about who we are, where we are, and inspire some reverie about our future there; and, perhaps, illicit a whimsical smile about where we have been.

In his book, *Architecture and Its Interpretation*, Juan Carlo Bonta wrote:

> Architects are deluding themselves if they believe that they are addressing submissive audiences...that their public wants by all means to understand the meaning of architecture as seen by the designer. Nothing could be further from the truth. What people want is to see their own meanings in the environment, their own systems of values, from their own frames of reference, and this is exactly what they do whether designers like it or not.22

It is only by making these meanings more accessible that we can restore a vision of place as a declaration of public value. It is this mental linkage to a sense of value, to a connection with community, that becomes the basis for an ethic for the built environment. Only with a
much deeper awareness of how to create an emotive value in the built environment -- based on something we can see, feel, understand, love, or otherwise have faith in -- can we provide alternatives to the banality that surrounds us. A symbiotic relationship should exist between the urban design and the contemporary community. When such a relationship is established, it becomes a means of community empowerment because it puts the community in touch with the sources of its identity and encourages the architect to create within a context that respects this identity or potential identity.

In summary, increasing the attractiveness of this centrally located site will produce economic, social and psychological benefits. As these benefits materialize, property values in surrounding areas will rise, which means that not only the Latino community will be better off but other Roxbury residents will also gain. In the process, a bridge between the Latino community and other residents will be built. Similarly, revitalizing this core area could offer a base for future development throughout the surrounding area.
Figure 8.1
Site model showing existing conditions as well as the designed contours of the plaza.
Figure 8.2
The proposed building site, which encompasses 53,200 square feet, is the parcel bounded by Dudley Street to the west, Magazine Street to the north, and Woodward Street to the south. Dudley Street travels in an approximately northwest-southeast direction and is parallel to Massachusetts Avenue, in the vicinity of the site. Magazine Street and Woodward Street are parallel to each other. They travel approximately in the northeast-southwest direction.

Six streets converge in a triangular plot of land where St. Patrick’s Church is located. In order of importance, they are: Dudley Street, Blue Hill Avenue, Hampden Street, Mt. Pleasant Avenue, Dunmore Street, and Magazine Street.

The proposed building site and its immediate surroundings have physical characteristics which are consistent in dimension and materials. Unfortunately, any semblance of rhythm is interrupted by empty lots which are overgrown with grass and strewn with garbage and abandoned cars. Some of the houses are abandoned and boarded up. This dilapidation creates a hostile architecture with a disjointedness in the streetscape.

One distinct advantage of the site selected is the presence of an ethnic mix and the site’s mixed-use character. I did not want to design the community center and housing in an exclusively Latino neighborhood. My intention, rather, was to avoid segregation and isolation of a single ethnic group, and instead establish a link between the Latino community and the remaining population.

Other advantages that influenced my selection of this particular site include: proximity to downtown Boston and a major transportation node, Dudley Station; presence of St. Patrick’s Roman Catholic Church on the adjoining site; location on a hill overlooking several Boston landmarks; and the scale of the site, exceeding a city block.
Figure 8.3
View of housing at the corner of Dudley and Woodward Streets.

Figure 8.4
View of the site from Woodward Street. Abandoned vehicles and garbage litter the site.
The site and vicinity are a pastiche of building types and uses. North of St. Patrick's Church is light industrial, while to the west is retail and offices. South and east of the site are primarily residential and open space. The proposed solution for improving the site is to create a compelling sense of place that would establish a strong identity for the residents.

Figure 8.5
Site model showing Roxbury's hilly topography.
Chapter Nine

CONTEXTUALLY RESPONSIVE ARCHITECTURE
Figure 9.1
View from the site looking at the back of St. Patrick's Church.

Figure 9.2
In order to establish a link between the church's front plaza to the new entrance plaza it was important to widen the existing sidewalk.
This design is meant to connect: to respond to, enlarge, and reinforce the local context and urban fabric. The principal existing structure on the adjoining site is the St. Patrick’s Roman Catholic Church. I view the church as the main vehicle for unifying the diverse elements of the Latino community. To maximize the possibility of the church serving as a public and unifying force, I have eliminated Magazine Street between Dunmore and Dudley Streets. This presented an opportunity to connect the church with the proposed community center. Elimination of Magazine Street, in effect, created a single site.

It quickly became clear that I had to reinforce the union of the two sites with the physical design of the new community center. The public entrance plaza, directly behind the church, is the ideal device to achieve this purpose. The powerful presence of the church radiates so much energy and strength that it needs a space more generous than the existing front plaza to balance it. The plaza’s orientation permits abundant south light and offers a logical point of entry into the public community center due to its openness and connection to the main pedestrian street. The mixed-use character of the proposed community center (with its retail shops, exhibit, and lecture hall) is supportive of social activity in the new plaza.

The next objective is to connect the front of the church to the public entrance plaza just described. My intention is to disguise or de-emphasize the back of the church because it is in plain view of the new entrance plaza. By linking the church’s front entrance to the public entrance plaza through a series of colonnades made up of existing trees and a new freestanding column structure, I have created a new plaza. The colonnades serve to join the two distinct plazas into one continuous plaza. This extension of the church’s front plaza to the new entrance plaza involved, on the one hand, widening the path from the church front to the entrance plaza, and on the other hand, narrowing the corresponding section of Dudley Street. It also
Figure 9.3
Early sketch showing a continuous built edge that defines the block. The retail shops along Dudley Street establish a clear and ordered presence. Likewise, the housing creates a solid edge along Woodward and Dunmore Streets.
involved cut and fill and continuous hard surfacing for easy access for wheelchairs and strollers along the Dudley Street side of the church. These changes were necessary because the church has only one public entrance, at the front. I envision religious processions spilling out from the front of the church along the path and continuing on to the public plaza, where festivities could be continued.

**The Community Center**

The most obvious primary decision made in this design is the orientation of the community center along Dudley Street. There are several reasons for this decision, the most significant being that this building is ultimately a public facility, a fact which carries with it some implications in regard to the choice of orientation. As a public structure, the building should primarily address the main thoroughfare of Dudley Street. It should also have a clear and ordered presence on the street. The retail shops and arcade seemed like appropriate vehicles to accomplish this task.

One of the greatest challenges presented in this design was the numerous directions I had to take into account in the design of my site plan. In addition to the strong directions of the three main streets: Dudley, Woodward, and Dunmore Streets, the axis of St. Patrick's church was another direction I chose to acknowledge. As mentioned above, the most significant decision for the orientation of the community center was that it establish a strong edge on Dudley Street. I was able to accomplish this by orienting the classrooms and offices (located above the retail shops) so that they reinforced the direction of Dudley Street.

By responding to the axis of the church, the community center with the courtyard space, retail shops, and loggia, took on an exciting geometry with intersecting grids.
REFERENCES

Figure 9.4
Plan of the Convent for Dominican Sisters, Media, Pennsylvania.
Architect: Louis Kahn. The buildings are oriented so that their corners touch, creating a connection without corridors. A "defensive" wall surrounds the buildings and gives order to the plan.

Figure 9.5
Site Plan of University of California at Santa Barbara, Art Museum.
Architects: Michael Dennis and Jeffrey Clark. The street edge is ordered and surrounds a gallery which has a freeform geometry. The hall and rotunda serve to connect the spaces on the street to the gallery.
courtyard space, retail shops, and loggia, took on an exciting geometry with intersecting grids.

Through this central three-storey courtyard space, the community center integrates the different functions of retail, lobby, loggia, offices, classrooms, and lecture and exhibit hall. At the onset of the project, I had in mind an image of the quality of the courtyard space. It was to have a very solid, textured appearance in the walls and floor. The masonry wall which encloses the courtyard is a non-structural wall and is meant to convey a feeling of heavy, solid enclosure.

The courtyard and loggia are contrasting spaces. The courtyard is an internal space shielded from weather and the environment; it focuses inward and is an effective symbol of privacy. The loggia is an external space, open, unobstructed for movement in the open air, with public and semi-public zones; with visual penetrability, its focus is outwardly directed.

The shops have access into the central connecting space described above. For easy customer accessibility, the retail shops are at street level along Dudley Street. Above the shops are the offices for the Latino planning and policy officers as well as classrooms. There is both visual and physical access to the courtyard space through a balcony. Also linked to the courtyard space is an exhibit hall, which displays artwork and artisanry. This is the most visually penetrable part of the building at the ground level; it facilitates orientation of the user. There is a lecture hall above the exhibit hall for community assembly, conferences, lectures, and audio-visual presentations.

The four storey community center is framed in a steel column and beam system, with typical spans of sixteen feet. In the interior courtyard the columns are coupled to allow the balconies to project into the courtyard space and to break up the circulation space at the ground floor.
Figure 9.6

Aerial axonometric perspective of housing adjoining a Neo-Gothic Church, Sainte-Clotilde basilica, in Paris. Architects: Brigette de Cosmi and Jean-François Brun. The project is a proposal for housing to be located between Sainte-Clotilde basilica and a rectangular block of residential buildings. The project is five or six storeys of housing, shops, a creche and other facilities for social activities including a restaurant, game rooms, and a bandstand.
Housing

The choice of location for the housing component of the design takes into consideration the existing fabric of the site. Accordingly, the housing fronts already existing housing.

The scale of the three courtyard houses (forty feet high) respects that of existing buildings in neighborhoods surrounding the site. There are six apartments in each courtyard building. One unit will have handicap access for the elderly and handicapped.

The materials used for the housing was very deliberate and took into account both scale and cost. Thus, the housing relies on concrete masonry walls at basement and ground level for their support and woodframe on upper floors.

The other housing follows the curve of Dunmore Street and extends back toward Woodward Street. I experienced difficulty arriving at an appropriate form for this housing. At first, I thought it would be important to reinforce the existing fabric by designing three separate houses similar in character to the three-storey three family houses in the neighborhood. This, however, presented two major problems. One was the lack of definition created by the spaces between the three houses on the edges of my site. The plazuela, (the residential plaza bordered by the housing) suffered most from the absence of a clear boundary. The second problem was that I was not too keen on imitating the freestanding house, which expressed anonymity and avoided any form of grouping. Instead, I decided on a form which suggested collective dwelling, similar to the courtyard house type, described above.

The housing along Dunmore Street is L-shaped and encloses the plazuela. The part of the building along the curve of the street has parking for eight cars under the units. This is possible because of the land's downward slope towards Dunmore Street. This building is also contextual
Figure 9.7
In Hadrian's Villa, non-directional, continuous forms were used to unite disparate elements. In my design, circles were used to join together different geometries.

Figure 9.8
Miguel Angel Roca's Paseo de las Artes Cultural Centre, in Cordoba, features, a group of plazas, low-income housing, gallery, lecture and false facades which recompose the image of the block.
in scale with the existing neighboring buildings. It is forty feet in height and house fifteen units. Close to this housing unit I have designed a cooperative daycare facility. Its location will provide convenience and reduce costs to the working mother.

Many of the benefits that will accrue from this project are realizable because of the very prominence of the site selected. By prominence I mean: proximity to downtown Boston and a major transportation node, Dudley Station; proximity to St. Patrick's Roman Catholic Church; the presence of mixed uses -- light industrial, retail, and residential; location on a hill overlooking several Boston landmarks; and the scale of the site, exceeding a city block.

Figure 9.9
The sequence of light and dark is shown in Fernando Domeyko's study of courtyards in Cordoba Spain. This drawing also reveals that entry into the courtyard was not directly to the center, but to the edge.
Chapter Ten

THE ARCHITECTURAL PROGRAM
The Program

Community Center
Lobby
Offices for coordinating and providing technical assistance (legal counseling, immigration, and tax)
Classrooms for education in Spanish literacy and vocational training
Daycare Center
Substance abuse center
Lecture space
Exhibit space
Loggia
Conference rooms
Utilities, Mechanical Spaces

Housing
Courtyard type houses with placita and private sideyard
Temporary housing for the newly arrived

Public Outdoor Space
Public entrance plaza
Plazuela (residential, semi-public plaza)
Placita (intimate scale, private plaza)
Chapter Eleven

THE ARCHITECTURAL DESIGN
a) St. Patrick's Roman Catholic Church
b) Rectory
c) Public Plaza
d) Semi-public Plazuela
e) Private Placita
f) Children's Garden
g) Daycare Center
h) Housing
i) Lobby
j) Retail Shop
k) Courtyard
l) Loggia
m) Community Offices
a) Extented family
b) Single person
c) Single parent family
d) Nuclear family

Second Floor Plan

Ground Floor Plan

Basement Plan
Typical Floor Plan and Theater

a) Classrooms
b) Counseling Center
c) Offices
d) Exhibit space
e) Theater
f) Restrooms
g) Lounge

Ground Floor Plan

i) Lobby
j) Retail Shop
k) Courtyard
l) Loggia
m) Community Offices
Chapter Twelve

A SUMMARY OF THE ARCHITECTURAL DESIGN PROJECT
Perhaps the best way to summarize my architectural design project is to re-examine the goals I set for myself, which are stated in the thesis abstract, and assess how close I have come to attaining them.

Goal one was to promote continuity of Latino culture by preserving indigenous values, orientations and ways of life of the Latino community. The essence of this goal is captured in my thesis title: Culturally Responsive Architecture. The goal was important to me because I believe that a design, if it is not to invite alienation, should reinforce major attributes of a given culture. Among the specific attributes of Latino culture which I have incorporated into my design are the following: alternation of open and built space inherent in the courtyard house type; the hierarchy of open space from the public plaza and street, to the semi-public plazuela, to the private but still collective placita; and the zone of exchange between building and open space. In my design project, I believe I have made conscious links and associations that recall the Hispanic heritage of the Latinos. And, also, that I have reflected in design the major characteristics of Latinos. Further, I believe I have succeeded in avoiding an architectural form that is inordinately ethnic through a design that is contextual in scale and selection of architectural program in relation to the Roxbury site.

Goal two was to give to Latinos greater control over decisions that effect their lives and reduce the control of external forces over Latino institutions, services, and people. By means of an architectural program that is multi-use in character, I have produced a design that provides diverse ways of responding to critical economic and social needs as well as to the basic psychological need for self-affirmation in both the individual and community sense. The community center offers opportunity for social interaction, personal growth and problem solving within the Latino community.

Low-income housing units will accommodate families of different types in finding solutions to their housing needs. New businesses will provide much
needed employment and Latino entrepreneurial opportunities. This will increase social interaction, and redirect the flow of money into rather than out of the neighborhood. All of these benefits, taken together will add greatly in instilling into the Latino community a sense of identity and empowerment.

Goal three was to promote cultural pluralism in which all cultural groups can live and work together as equals, sharing information, resources, ideas and experiences. I have spoken in this thesis of my intention not to isolate the Latinos but rather to help build bridges between a strengthened Latino community and the other ethnic groups in the Roxbury neighborhood. The opportunities for social interaction and increased understanding and empathy offered by the multi-use community center, including its retail shops, are significant first steps toward building these bridges. In addition, as the anticipated benefits materialize for the Latino community, property values in the areas surrounding the site should rise, for the betterment of all of the Roxbury residents.
Chapter Thirteen

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Chapter Fourteen

NOTES
Notes

3. Lewis, p. xii.
4. Rapoport, p. 16.
5. Crouch, p. xxi.
6. Frontado, p. 53.
7. Frontado, p. 53.
12. Lupo, p. 23.
15. Gaston, p. 11.
17. Alianza Hispana, p. 4.
22. Bonta, p. 45.