

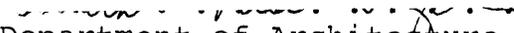
THE AMERICAN BOOK COMPANY:  
An Urban Study in Adaptability

by

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B.A. Wellesley College 1972

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements  
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## ABSTRACT

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This thesis explores one possible alternative for the future of a changing building in a changing city. In dealing with the adaptation of an existing structure, one cannot escape first comprehending the evolution of the networks and the form defining both the existing structure and the area around it.

The city is Cincinnati, Ohio; the building is the American Book Company (the 'ABC'), built in 1904 on Lytle Square, an area in the southeast corner of today's central business district. At the time it was built, the presence of the pseudo-Renaissance offices and printing plant marked the end of the opulent residential character of the Square and the flight to the suburbs. Now owned by the adjacent Taft Museum, (once the Taft Mansion), surrounded by a conglomeration of residential, office and industrial structures, the American Book Company faces a precarious future.

The first section of the thesis is an attempt to grasp a sense of the neighborhood, and to evolve a program of uses and design constraints from a morphological study of the growth and form of Cincinnati and Lytle Park. By reconstructing the respective "timelines" for the latter, the alternatives for their future become more apparent. The proper solution is that which places the future of the American Book Company in harmony with the positive growth of the city and area around it. From this will come an attitude toward the redefinition of the building's functions and its linkage to the urban network.

In response to the decisions thus made, the second part of the thesis presents a design solution for the adaptation of the building, concerned with the site made up of the Book Company and the Taft Museum. This solution is focused on the composition



1 View of Downtown Cincinnati from Waterfront Development under construction

of a network comprising all degrees of public and private space, involving decisions of scale, directionality, magnitude and function. The design also considers the different natures of the two existing structures (the prime pieces of the composition), and the fact that their site plans and design details still evoke associations with their previous lives.

The American Book Company is not an extremely unusual building — it is neither historically nor aesthetically overwhelming. It would be romantic to consider saving it as an isolated example. If it can serve an important role in the revitalization and identification of Lytle Park, if its structure can successfully adapt to uses and functions that would enhance and support the area and the city as a whole, within a viable economic framework, the American Book Company should be allowed to survive. This thesis hopes to furnish proof that there is a reason for its continued existence, focusing not on the economic benefits to owner and city, but on the unmeasurable benefit to the city's inhabitants of an environment sympathetic to their needs and perceptions.

Thesis Supervisor: Imre Halasz  
Professor of Architecture,

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*“It’s a magical operation, after all. ‘Magic’ is a very inflated word and very dangerous to use, but after all – it’s the phantoms in your mind that are becoming real in a physical and sensual sense.”*

**Federico Fellini**

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## INTRODUCTION: INFLUENCES AND DEFINITIONS

*“What we see or feel, now we think or act, depends upon the basic assumptions we hold, sometimes unconsciously. The world is real to us only on the scale of our inner model of space, purpose, and values. To see more than this we have to exchange elementary for advanced assumptions — as we all do, inescapably, in the course of growing up.”*

*George Kepes, The Visual Arts Today*

As in any good educational experience, other theories have helped to solidify thoughts already within myself. This does not mean that the ideas have been adopted in their entirety; perhaps the authors themselves would not recognize my use and interpretation. Nevertheless, before beginning the body of the thesis, it is necessary to discuss the ideas and define the terms which come from other sources.

The writings of Camillo Sitte, Eduard Sekler and Kevin Lynch, were instrumental in evolving the urban design orientation of the first part of the thesis. In particular, the concept of a morphological analysis, derives from the writings and seminars of Sekler. He defines a morphological analysis as one which considers form the result of a genetic process.

*“Form cannot be studied in isolation. All form is a result of two conditions: external conditions which influence the*

*genetic process from the outside and the internal ones which are brought forth by the own inner logic of the creative process.”*

This methodology is based on an understanding of both external and internal conditions, an attempt to reach the essence of their formal manifestations. Too often a study will be conducted preliminary to design which focuses only on current external conditions, (often expressed in numerical data). Much of our urban environment today suffers from this attitude. Similarly, the opposite has been equally as destructive at other times in history, when regard for only internal conditions predominated.

Since the thesis is dealing with an existing building in a very chaotic context with obvious city wide implications, it would be impossible to comprehend the situation if one didn't go back to the beginning of the city's history. The form of the neighborhood as it exists

*“The essence of an urban complex, which includes the relationship between forms and the people who created them and experience them, obviously cannot reveal itself to somebody who impatiently stays on the surface only.”*

*Eduard Sekler “The Josefsplatz in Vienna: A Study in Urban Morphology”*

*“To heighten the imageability of the urban environment is to facilitate its visual identification and structuring. The elements isolated above – the paths, edges, landmarks, nodes and regions – are the building blocks in the process of making firm, differentiated structures at the urban scale.”*

*Kevin Lynch The Image of the City*

makes no sense at all. At first glance there are only vague hints in which direction the architect should proceed. When dealing with an architectural problem in which any intervention will and should impact on the city as a whole, an understanding of the past, present, and future, and the resulting forms is absolutely necessary.

The morphological analysis, the formal and historical studies, are essentially tools to reach an understanding of the basis of peoples' perceptions of a particular place. This understanding can, evolve from interviewing people, researching previous documentation of perceptions, interpolating from various historical and contemporary sources, or simply sensitive living and participating in an urban environment, exposing oneself over a long period of time to the phenomenon in question. With this familiarity, it is possible to reduce a complicated urban situation into its perceived components. And vice-versa, a cityscape which is legible and clear will be easily perceived.

That this quality of “imageability” is essential in an urban environment is the assumption underlying Kevin Lynch's The Image of the City:

*"In this process of way-finding, the strategic link is the environmental image, the generalized mental picture of the exterior physical world that is held by an individual. This image is the product both of immediate sensation and of the memory of past experience . . . The need to recognize and pattern our surrounding is so crucial, and has such long roots in the past, that this image has wide practical and emotional importance to the individual."*

The most useful aspect of this method of analysis is that the academic exercise of simplifying a given environment into its image components and network is directly related to the design process. What is designed additively often reads additively, thus aiding the process of image-forming and orientation. Unlike a grid system, for example, this type of network lends itself more to a creation of identifiable places.

Lynch classified the five types of elements from which cities are composed as follows:

Paths: channels of movement

Edges: linear elements not used or considered paths

Districts: medium to large areas of the

city with a common identifying character

Nodes: strategic points, intensive foci to or from which one is travelling.

Landmark: an external point reference.

The terminology which is used in this thesis to define these urban elements is somewhat different than Lynch's, though based on the same approach. It is hypothesized that any given physical environment can be studied in terms of networks of two components: the link and the node. This is applicable at all scales.

The defining characteristics of a link are that it is directional, functionally discreet and inflexible (the system is not continuous at a link). This term corresponds to and includes Lynch's "paths" and "edges". A node, on the other hand, is non-directional with many functions, and the network is continuous at that point, enveloping the concept of "node", "district" and "landmark" as Lynch uses them. Hence, two nodes and a link represents an adaptable and open system.

A node occurs when two or more links, representing changes in direction or

*“ . . . In such a situation we do indeed comprehend the words of Aristotle, who summarizes all rules of city planning in observing that a city must be so designed as to make its people at once secure and happy.”*

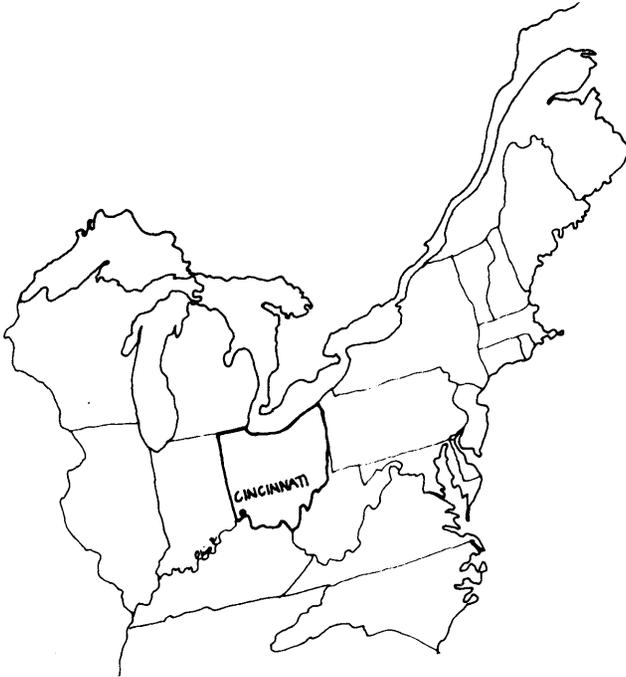
*Camillo Sitte*

choice of function, meet. Its form is dependent on the expression of the magnitude, direction and function of the links. If well executed, the resulting quality is non-directionality, a type of mental and physical equilibrium. This state is determined by innumerable and often undefinable influences. One is not dealing just with form and function but the meaning and symbolism inherent in different expressions of these two variables based on perception and association.

For example, one may be inclined to stop for a while to watch an activity, to partake of a special view or seating arrangement, out of the wind and in the sun. Many of these reasons depend on form or function, but there are many times when one responds to a symbol, (such as a red octagon, saying 'stop') or an associated meaning (feeling discomfort sitting at a deserted cafe).

This network concept was used in the hypothesis of an urban network for Cincinnati, in which Lytle Park acquired meaning; a network for Lytle Park in which the American Book Company had a major role; and the design of a new "micro-network" for the American Book Company which hopefully will integrate with the subsequently larger networks.

## A BRIEF HISTORY OF CINCINNATI



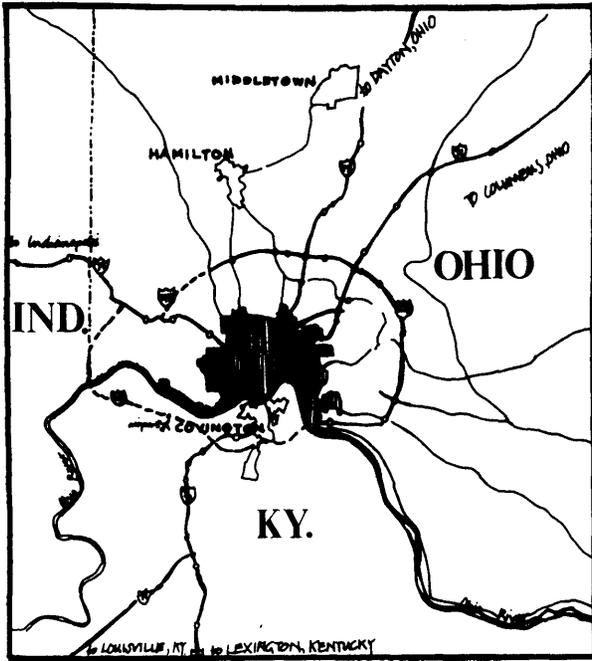
2 Cincinnati, Ohio

Four hundred million years ago, Cincinnati, Ohio, was on the floor of an ocean. Volcanic action, glacial run-off, and weather formed a natural basin, surrounded by hills, on the bank of the Ohio River. Indians lived a plentiful life in this basin until the latter part of the 18th Century, when the white settlers came over the mountains to "share" it with them. In the 1780's two million acres of land in the "Miami County" were sold to John Cleves Symmes by the Continental Congress for the purpose of establishing three settlements. Colonel Israel Ludlow and twenty-five others started one of these settlements in 1788, in what is now downtown Cincinnati. It was named Losantiville, a combination of Greek, Latin, and French which meant "the city opposite the mouth of the river".

Losantiville sat on a natural basin, twelve miles in circumference, surrounded by wooded hills. Colonel Ludlow started marking out streets in

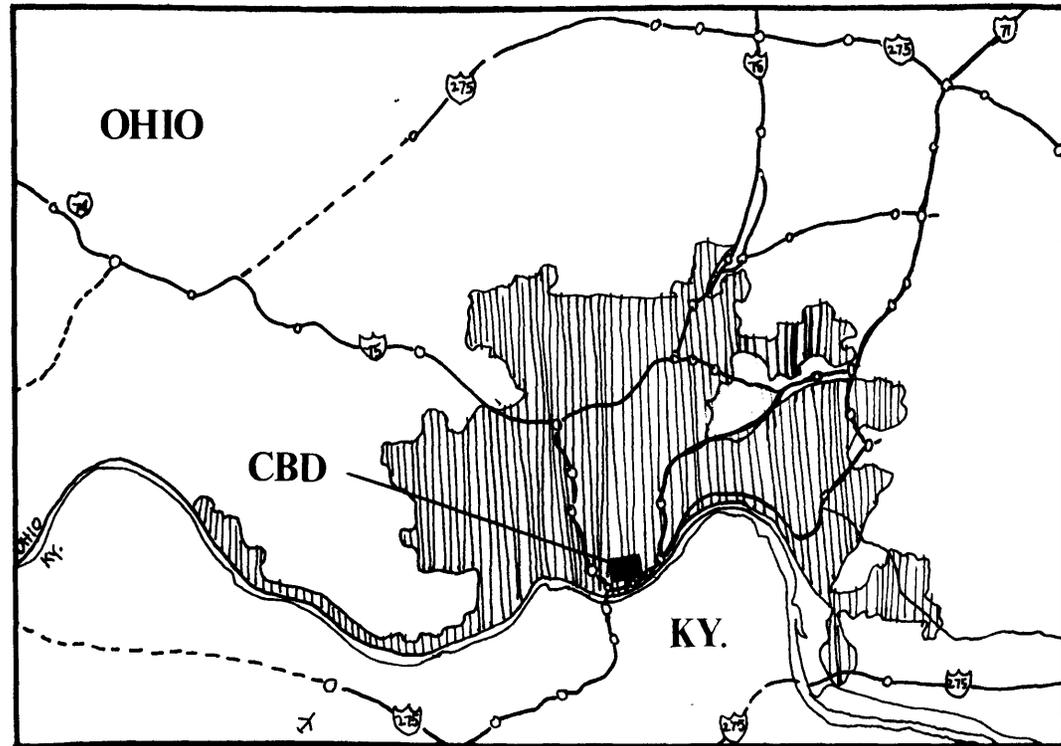
parallelograms, on the model of Philadelphia. Indian attacks led to the establishment of Fort Washington, built at what is now Third St. and Broadway, adjacent to Lytle Park. This site was chosen since it could offer the greatest protection to the greatest number of people, located on a small plateau at a bend of the Ohio River.

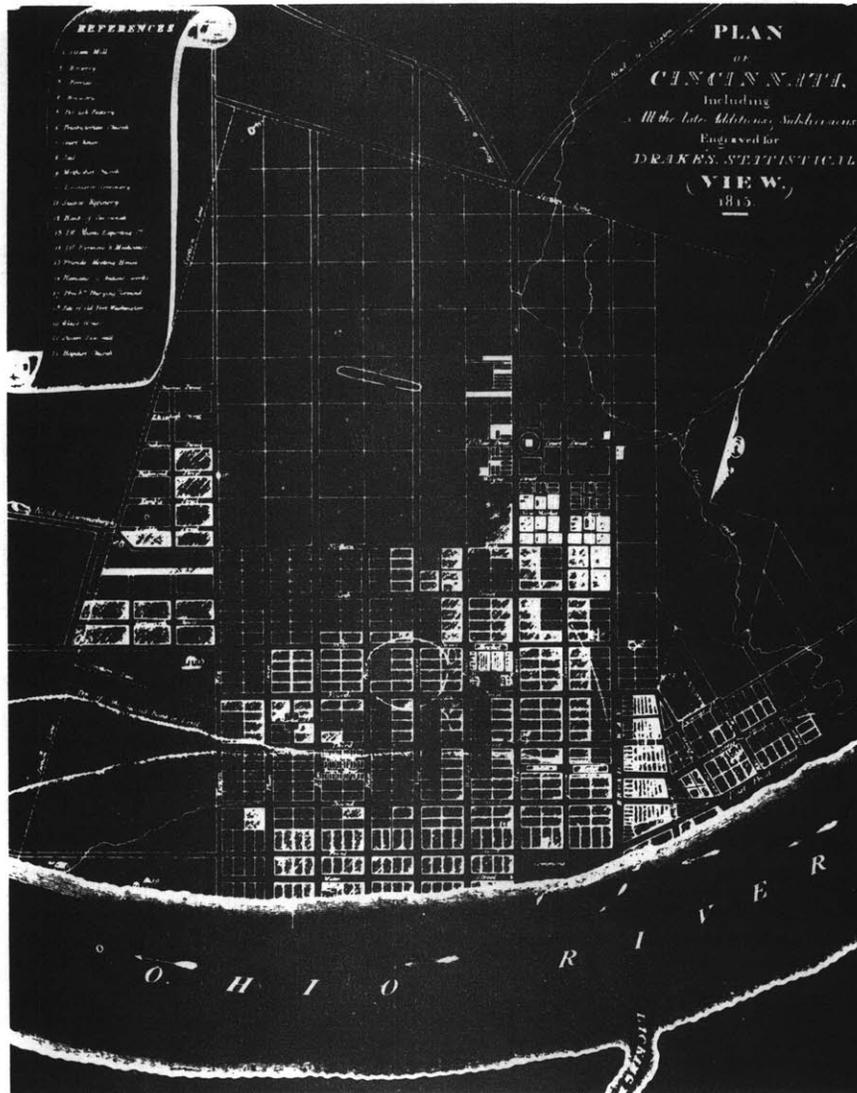
Less than two years after the arrival of the first settlers, Losantiville was renamed Cincinnati by Arthur St. Clair, the new Governor of the Northwest Territory. The name was derived from the society of Cincinnati, an organization dedicated to the care of Revolutionary War orphans and widows. Because Cincinnati was accessible from the east and offered routes north and west, it was a natural gateway. By 1818, the census records 8000 people, 1000 dwellings, 95 stores, 100 groceries, 400 warehouses, 214 factories and mills, and many smaller businesses all



3 Greater Cincinnati showing bordering states  
Indiana and Kentucky

4 Greater Cincinnati, orientation of Central  
Business District





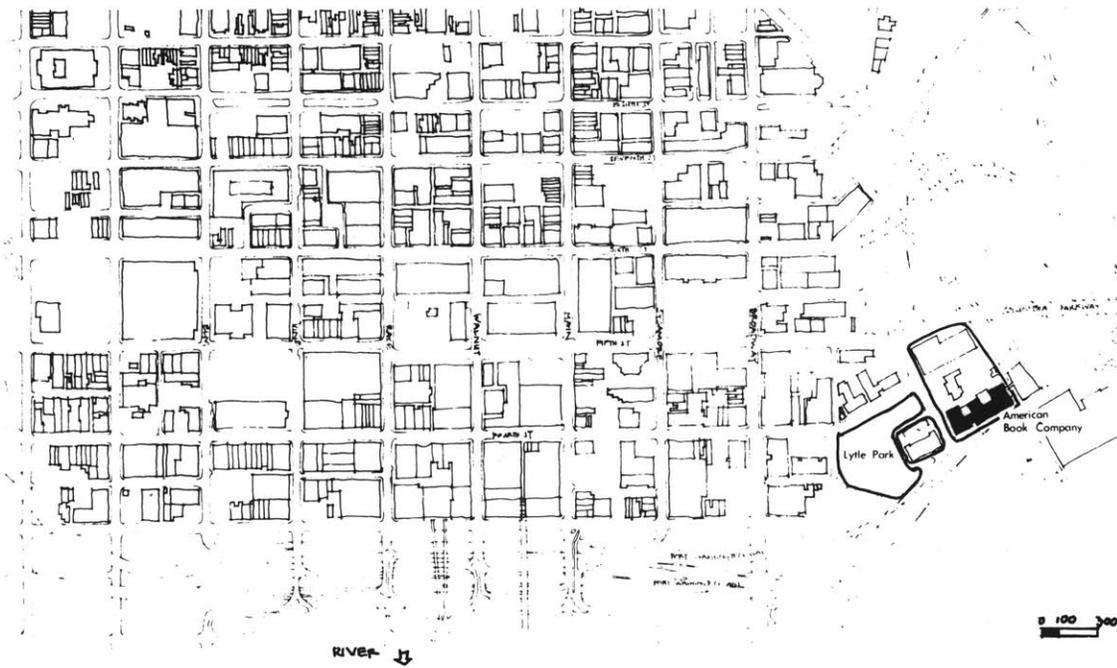
5 Cincinnati 1815

in 1900 buildings. In the next ten years, the population quadrupled. Corn and hogs, the initial industries of the area, resulted in further diversification into whiskey, soap, candles, and leather. Cotton and iron were next. Between 1840 and 1850 the population went from 46,000 to 118,000.

Because it had remained almost entirely in the original basin, Cincinnati was the most densely populated city in America in the late 1860's. To escape the smoke and dust of the basin, people started moving up into the surrounding hills. Cincinnati entered the Gay Nineties in style, characterized by Gothic houses surrounded by lawns up in the hills, and the "Over the Rhine" German section in the basin.

But the Civil War had dramatically changed Cincinnati. Trade with the South was lost, and the steamboat, which had brought so much business to Cincinnati had been replaced by the railroad, which went through St. Louis and Chicago. The city government was run by Bosses, and riots were not uncommon.

After the First World War, the city went in for reform. In 1925, Cincinnati



6 Cincinnati: CBD today

had a City Plan, the first American city to have one. But growth was faster than planning. The Monumental City Plan of 1948 and the Plan for Downtown Cincinnati of 1964 were further attempts to deal with the "urban crisis".

Through the latter Plan, the Cincinnati Skywalk, a stadium, a convention center and several new office buildings contributed to the revitalization of the Central Business District. Developers proposed a mixed use project along the river, with a new Public landing, residential towers, a park and other recreational amenities, which was approved in October of 1968 and is now under construction. Furthermore, many small businesses have made improvements in their buildings, facades, and signs. Old office buildings have been gutted and rebuilt. So far the occupancy rate of the CBD has held. The previous trend, that old businesses were leaving the CBD faster than new ones were coming in, has not only stopped, but has reversed itself.

## HISTORY: LYTLE PARK

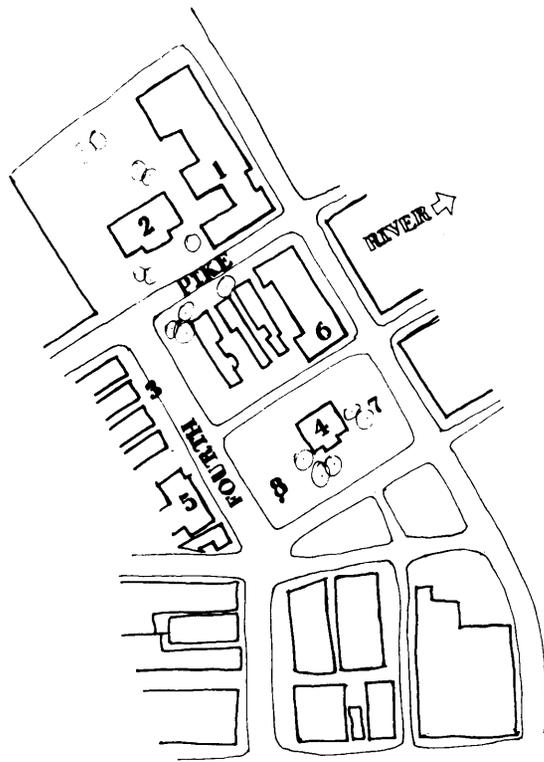
Lytle Park can trace its origins as a distinct place back as far as 1789, when the white settlers established their outpost, Fort Washington, at that location. The records indicate that a settler named Richard Allison, apparently related in some way to the military, purchased the area to the east of the Fort in 1789. In 1806, the land passed to General William Lytle and Martin Baum. By 1809, the General had built the Lytle Homestead in the center of the western portion of what is today Lytle Park. Five hundred feet to the west Martin Baum built a Palladian mansion of one and a half stories.

Because of the size of these original land purchases, the area remained unsubdivided while the rest of the river basin built up densely with shops, tenements and industry. Lytle Square, named after the general, was known as an oasis of the wealthy. Sadly, none of the beautiful townhouses for which the

area was famous in the 1830's remain today. Those years, from the 1820's to the Civil War, were known as the Golden Age of Lytle Square.

*"On summer evenings the families sat on their doorsteps and the beaux strolled up and down, stopping for conversation at each house. The daughters of these households learned to play the piano and sing and a musical evening at home, with callers in, was the best of good times."*

The residents of Lytle Square in the nineteenth century were gentlemen politicians, industrialists, real estate magnates, and Civil War heroes. Townhouses surrounded the Lytle Homestead on all sides. The old Pendleton mansion on the north side of Fourth Street, where a tall brick apartment building now stands, was the residence of "Gentleman George", a congressman. Nicholas Longworth, Grandson of



7 Lytle Park, 1809 to circa 1930

- 1 American Book Company 1904
- 2 Taft Mansion 1819
- 3 Townhouses circa 1830-1966
- 4 Lytle Homestead 1809-1907
- 5 Phelps Apartments circa 1920
- 6 Anna Louise Inn
- 7 Site of Children's Playground 1907-1966
- 8 Original location of Lincoln statue
- 9 Fort Washington 1789-1804

the Speaker of the House of Representatives, bought the Baum mansion on Pike Street. The mansion was later sold to David Sinton, who was often seen on the lawn wearing brogans and a red bandanna.

Charles, Taft, brother of the twenty-seventh President of the United States, (both were born in the Lytle Square neighborhood), bought the Pike Street mansion from David Sinton after the Civil War. At this time Cincinnati was beginning to experience its first flight to the suburbs, but the Tafts, Longworths and Lytles remained at Lytle Square.

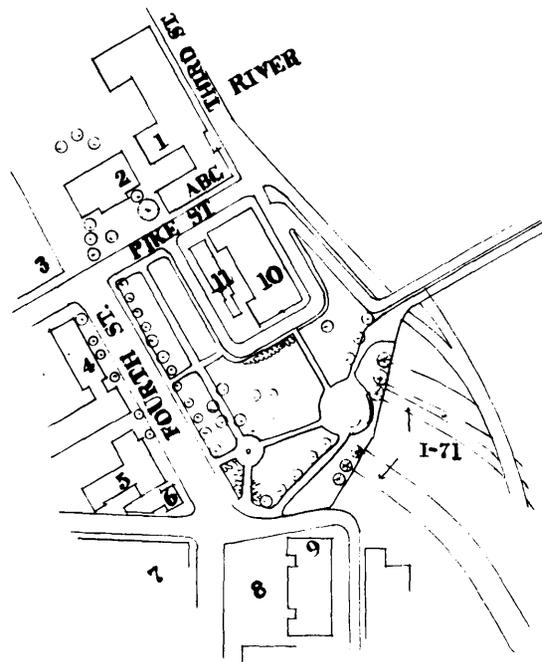
Eventually, Charles Taft, in his desire to join the flow to the hills, sold the land flanking the mansion on both sides for industrial development, to convince his wife to move. Thus the opening of the twentieth century marked the beginning of the industrial infiltration of Lytle Square. Construction began in 1903 on the American Book Company Building, a three and five story imitation of a Renaissance palazzo, forty feet to the south of the Taft mansion.

Coupled with the exodus of the more wealthy to the suburbs was the desire of the city to provide "breathing spots" for its less fortunate, who were forced

to remain in the sooty basin. Popular party boss Mike Mullen arranged to designate Lytle Square as one of these spots, and since many of its older, more established residents had already departed, the protest of those remaining was to no avail. In April 1905, Lytle Square, comprising the Lytle Homestead and the land around it, came into the possession of the city through condemnation proceedings.

*"Millions of dollars have been spent of late by our authorities in an effort to beautify the city: to provide breathing places for young and old: to minimize for its inhabitants the necessity of running away from the comfort of home during the heated term. On the subject of parks, Cincinnati had lagged somewhat behind her sister cities. One of the reasons of this neglect is no doubt to be sought in the fact that the city is blessed like no other city in the whole country with surroundings of surpassing beauty."*

Admired the cheers of children, Lytle Park was dedicated in the summer of 1907. It was "modest, but beautiful", consisting of a children's playground, an open air gym, bars, sandpiles, on the south half, and the as yet undemolished Lytle Homestead in the middle,



8 Lytle Park 1975

- 1 ABC
- 2 Taft Museum
- 3 Pugh Building
- 4 550 East Fourth Apartments
- 5 The Phelps
- 6 The Literary Society
- 7 Western and Southern printing plant
- 8 Parking Lot
- 9 The Guilford School
- 10 Anna Louise Inn
- 11 Earls Insurance Building

“raising its hoary head, dark and forbidding, in vivid contrast with its immediate present surroundings. The windows and the doors on the venerable pile are nailed shut, with naked boards at places, except at one point, where the watchman gains an entrance to where two curtained windows betray his abode”.

Two years later, the house was torn down and replaced by the Mike Mullen Bandstand and a children’s wading pool. In 1917, George Gray Barnard’s statue of Lincoln was placed in the Park, assymetrically located along the Fourth Street edge, possibly related to the perception of a person walking toward the park from downtown.

The Taft mansion, meanwhile, had been donated to the city by Charles Phelps Taft, along with his incredible art collection and one million dollars, to be matched by the City, specifically to create the Cincinnati Institute of Fine Arts. In 1932, the Taft Museum opened after a period of restoration. At this time there was an attempt on the part of the city to change the zoning of the area to a business district. The residents fought this and won.



9 Panorama of Lytle Park buildings from Lincoln statue

*"The plea for preservation of the character of the district, strangely enough, ignored the question of money, or property values. They spoke of traditions and gentle living. Commerce stood face to face with homemaking."*

The area remained fairly untouched for the next twenty years. Its use subtly changed from its inception as wealthy mansions and detached townhouses to multiple dwellings, civic clubs, and insurance agencies.

*"Over the years Lytle Park has been*

*one of the few sites which continue to give charm to downtown Cincinnati. It has been a place for kids to swim and play, for secretaries to enjoy a quiet lunch, for old folks to relax and meditate."*

This tranquility was shattered by Interstate 71, planned by the State of Ohio to cut a six lane swath through the middle of Lytle Park. No longer a community of politicians, the neighborhood had no political power, but the entire city rallied behind its "breathing spot".



It was first proposed that a tunnel be constructed under Lytle Park at the city's expense, but that was too costly. An alternative, to cut the swath and slab over the highway, seemed more feasible, although that meant the destruction of the town-houses in the north corner. The Federal government approved Cincinnati's plan with the stipulation that the city pay the additional half million dollars.

In this context, the question of "air rights" emerged. In the fifties it was such a new concept that Cincinnati

didn't know how to proceed. The attitude of the Federal government was unclear, and the city had no idea if the Federal government would also expect a cut of the revenue obtained from selling the air rights. However, it wasn't necessary to deal with the problem; the Western and Southern Insurance Company, whose headquarters are in Cincinnati adjacent to Lytle Park, offered to pay for the slab.

Originally their intent was to create a park not only where there had been one, but also on the corner where it



was obvious that the townhouses had no chance of survival. It was the city that suggested to Western and Southern that apartments be built on that site for the tax revenue they would generate. The final deal was that Western and Southern obtained the air rights to the northeast corner in return for construction of the slab and reconstruction of the park. The four story luxury apartments that were subsequently built fit into the polyglot of Lytle Park as well as can be expected.

What remains of Lytle Park and the buildings around it is an obvious result of its turbulent history. A Western and Southern form-printing factory faces a Pseudo-Spanish private school at the end of Fourth Street, the gateway to the park. Next to the printing plant is a tiny colonial townhouse, the only other original building remaining besides the Taft; it now is the Literary Society. The luxurious townhouses of the past have given way to a 50 year old



*“The possibility of ever making a unified and harmonious whole out of this conglomeration of buildings placed this way and that, standing about without any relation to each other like dresses at a clearance sale, has vanished forever.”*

*Camillo Sitte, in reference to the Zwinger in Dresden.*

brick high rise apartment, the new four story housing and a pillared residence for four hundred single women. The American Book Company, as previously described, flanks the Taft Museum. The ten story Pugh Building, a bland industrial structure, rises a few feet past the northern property line of the Taft. Not only are the uses of these buildings diverse, but the different styles comprise all the imitative architectural periods America ever went through.

Recently, The Cincinnati Institute of

Fine Arts purchased the American Book Company with the original intent that the structure would be demolished, and the Taft Museum's gardens extended. This would only increase the visual and audial impact of the elevated highway on the Taft. The new owners also realize how instrumental the American Book Company is in plugging the spatial drain of Lytle Park; its density and height create a focal point. They are therefore willing to consider an adaptation of the building which would not interfere with their image as a cultural institution.

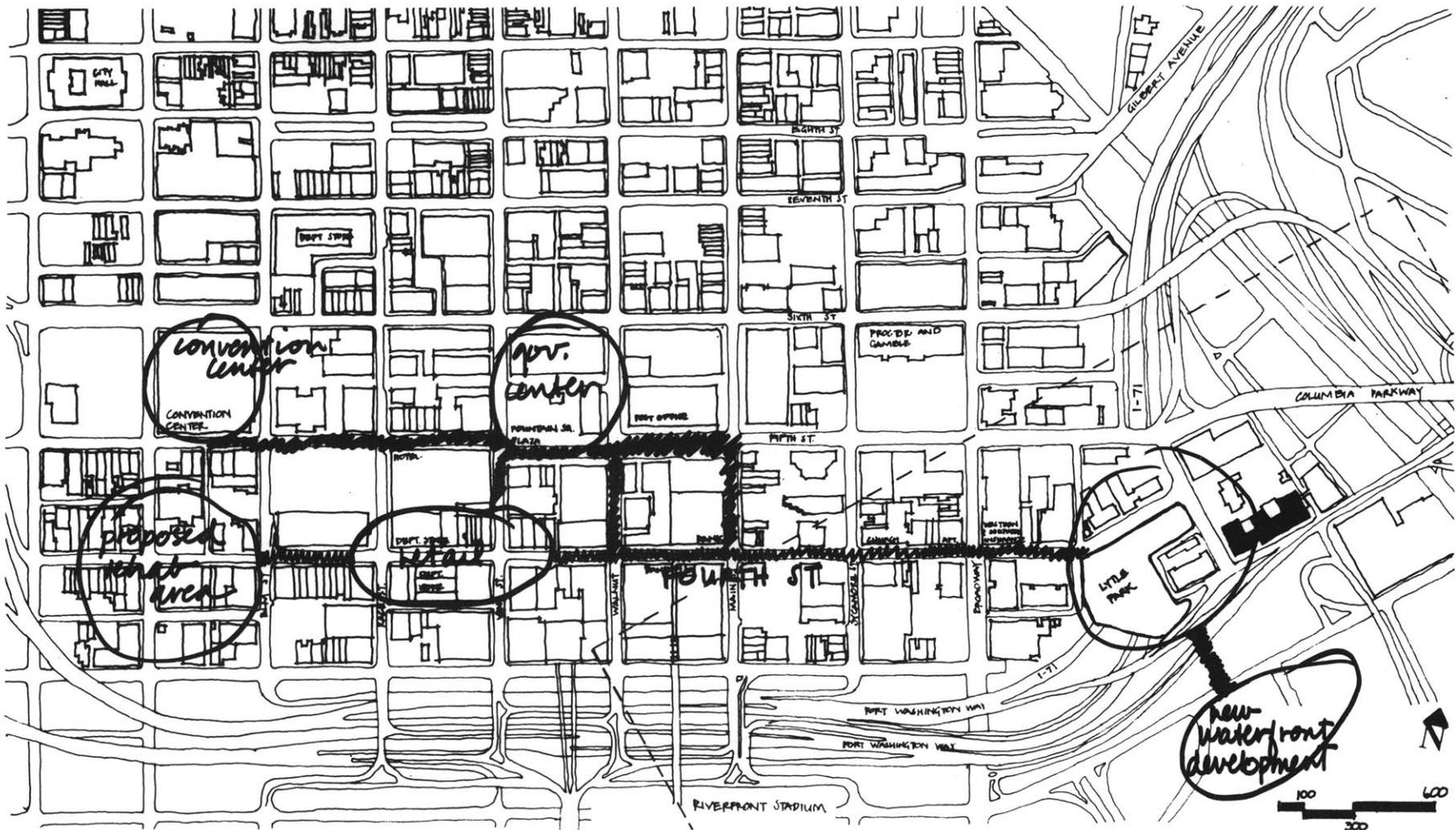
## MORPHOLOGICAL ANALYSIS: CINCINNATI

*“Studies on urban morphology are of particular relevance today when everywhere the urban landscape undergoes profound changes. Only too often there are far reaching interferences with the formative processes of a city without any consideration of other conditions than external ones. Sometimes economical and technical factors alone are heeded, sometime the belief in romantically unqualified progress is invoked or an equally romantic traditionalism which attempts to guard the essence of a city by the preservation of isolated buildings. As if something new which is capable of joining the best existing elements without imitating or outrying them could come into being without deep ties to all existing roots of an urban ensemble!”*

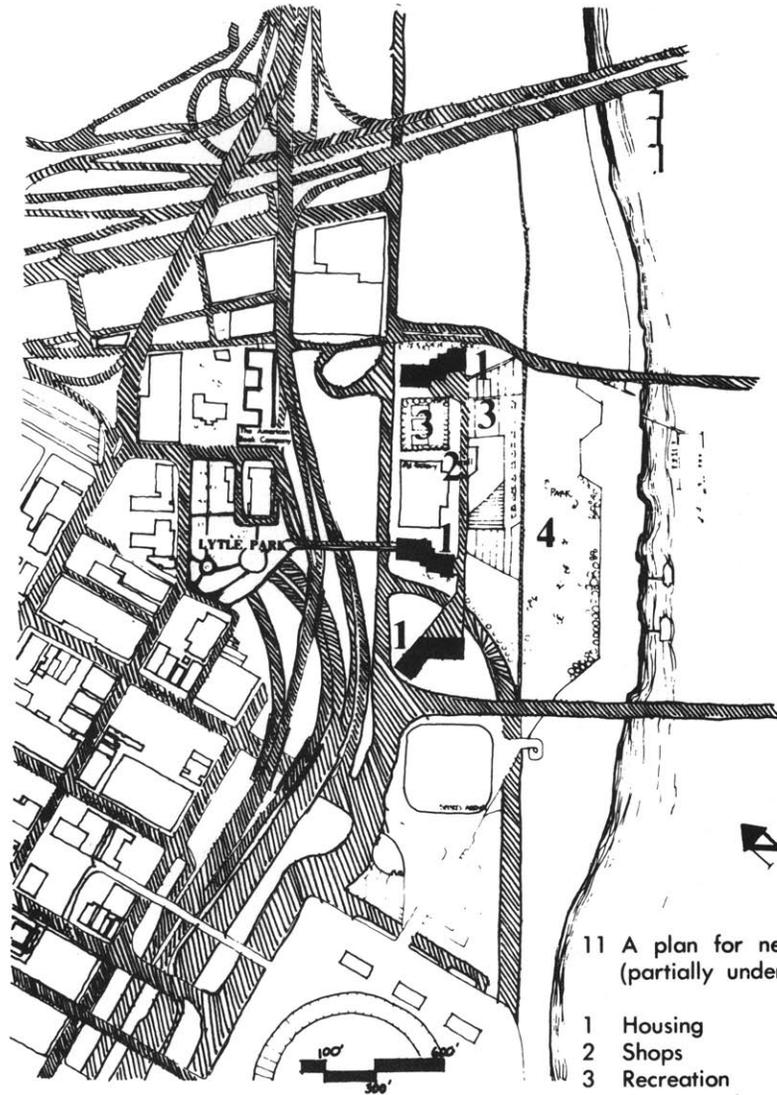
*Eduard Sekler, “The Josefsplatz in Vienna: A Study in Urban Morphology”*

As in most American cities, the perceptual and functional organization of Cincinnati is fairly difficult to pinpoint, especially for an outsider. Within the Central Business District (still contained in the original basin) there are certain obvious functional nodes, such as the urban renewal Fountain Square, the department store area along Fourth Street, and the new Convention Center on the western edge with its fourblock second story links going east on Fifth Street to Fountain Square. But in most cases these nodes are functional or mental, not formal; the use-character receives little support from the visual character. For example, one thinks of the shopping district as a place, but there is no true physical place there.

Two major developments are planned which could have bearing on the future importance of Lytle Park. There is an area on the western edge of the CBD, adjacent to the Convention Center,



10 CBD: Network of Links and Nodes

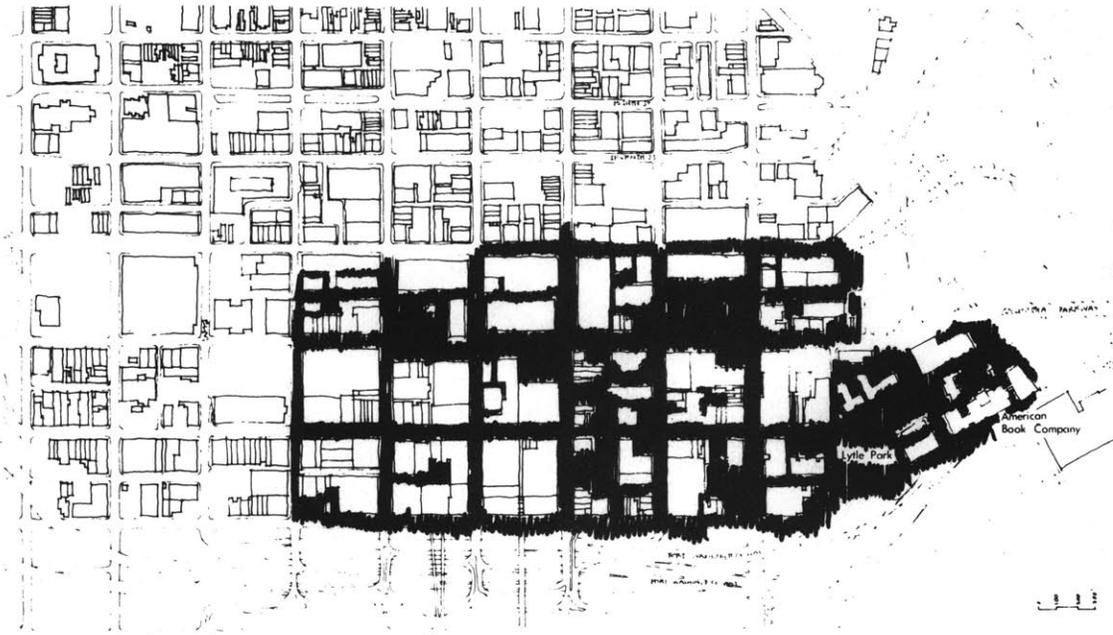


11 A plan for new Waterfront Development (partially under construction)

- 1 Housing
- 2 Shops
- 3 Recreation
- 4 Green park

which is to be rehabilitated into an artists' community. In the past few years the waterfront has also been the focus of large scale development, including a new stadium and arena linked to the city by bridges over the highways. (The city previously ignored its waterfront to which it owes so much, by lining it with twenty lanes of high speed traffic.) Between Lytle Park and the river are under construction a waterfront park, a marina, and three residential towers with all the amenities that usually accompany such developments. A combination foot and auto bridge will connect this area to Lytle Park, over the highways.

With these developments in mind, it is possible to hypothesize a fairly coherent system of links and nodes, incorporating the Lytle Park area into the Central Business District. From west to east, the nine block wide CBD begins with the Convention Center, linked to Fountain Square and the retail region. The eastern culmination of this system logically is Lytle Park; as it is now, the city dissipates rapidly. With the possible artists' neighborhood at the west end of Fourth Street and the important waterfront development on



12 Suburban character of downtown Cincinnati: non-built space shaded

the other side of Lytle Park, the focus of the city could shift, and the position of Lytle Park in the urban network would be strengthened.

Cincinnati used to brag about its excellent natural location, but the grid system and the inordinate amount of highways has done much to destroy this advantage. The grid, coupled with a midwestern inclination toward suburban cities (in which there is neither density nor open space) has eliminated all contrast and drama. One of the city's most obvious faults is a lack of a coherent system of links and nodes. Such identifiable forms would provide the urban dweller or visitor with a series of experiences and thus help to orient him in the city overall.

There is also a great deal of misplaced, left-over, open space in the downtown core, adding to its ambiguous suburban character; if one were to compare the amount of open to built space, one would find their percentages to be about equal. This is unlike both a European city, in which built form would predominate, and an American suburb, in which open space would be the larger percentage.

## MORPHOLOGICAL ANALYSIS: LYTLE PARK

*“When you are in the Campo, you know there is a city, when you are in the city, you know there is a Campo.”*

*Giancarlo de Carlo*

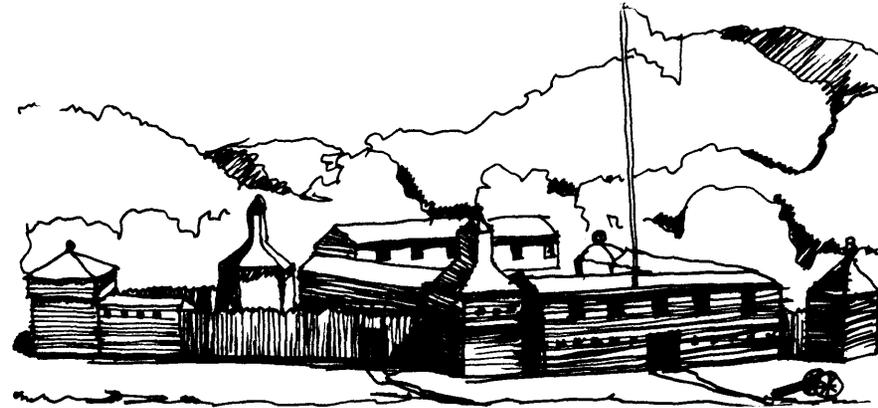
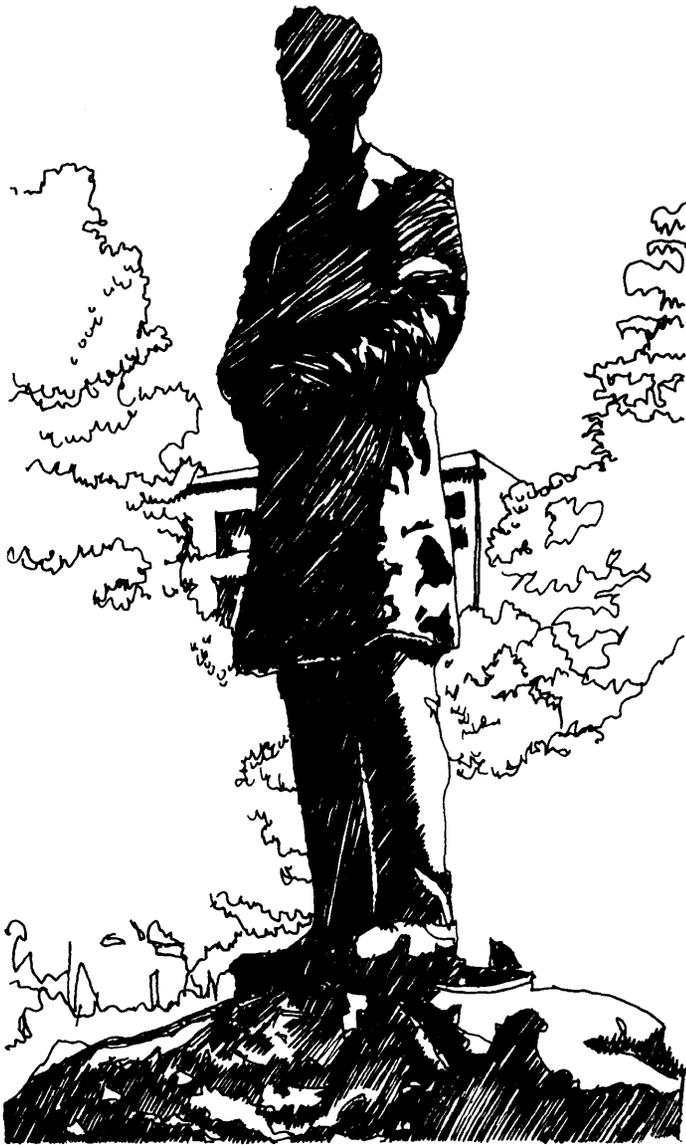
Lytle Park has never been an integrated part of Cincinnati in either formal or functional terms. Its ambiguous character has made it difficult for the area to establish any identity in relation to the city, other than “out-of-place”. Nevertheless, there have been times in its nearly two hundred year past when Lytle Park was more successfully in tune with its surroundings.

The Lytle Park area was born with a simultaneous birth defect and asset: the site is where the Ohio River bends, marking the end of a plateau from which there are significant drops to the south and east. A medieval city would use such a location to its advantage, but in those days streets did not fall in grids. The rest of the plateau measured out easily into four-hundred foot blocks aligned with the river, and the Lytle Park area never fit in. Previously, before the recent intervention of the highway, the problem had been simply resolved with a few small triangular

blocks, taking up the extra degrees until the grid could be reinstated.

But the contradictory nature of Lytle Park also kept it alive. The first settlers did place their fort there, and for a short time the area was the center of the city. When human intellect created the grid, it could not eradicate the subtle emotional importance of the site. A grid, after all, tends to equalize all places (hence the problem of finding nodes in such a city today), and Lytle Park is one of the only places in Cincinnati that has a distinctive character.

Perhaps it was only chance, or military influence, that allowed one man to purchase all the land now comprising the Lytle Park neighborhood. Possibly Colonel Israel Ludlow also thought of it as the end of the grid that he laid out, a no-man’s land. At any rate, this decision was instrumental in defining that area as an anomaly. As previously men-

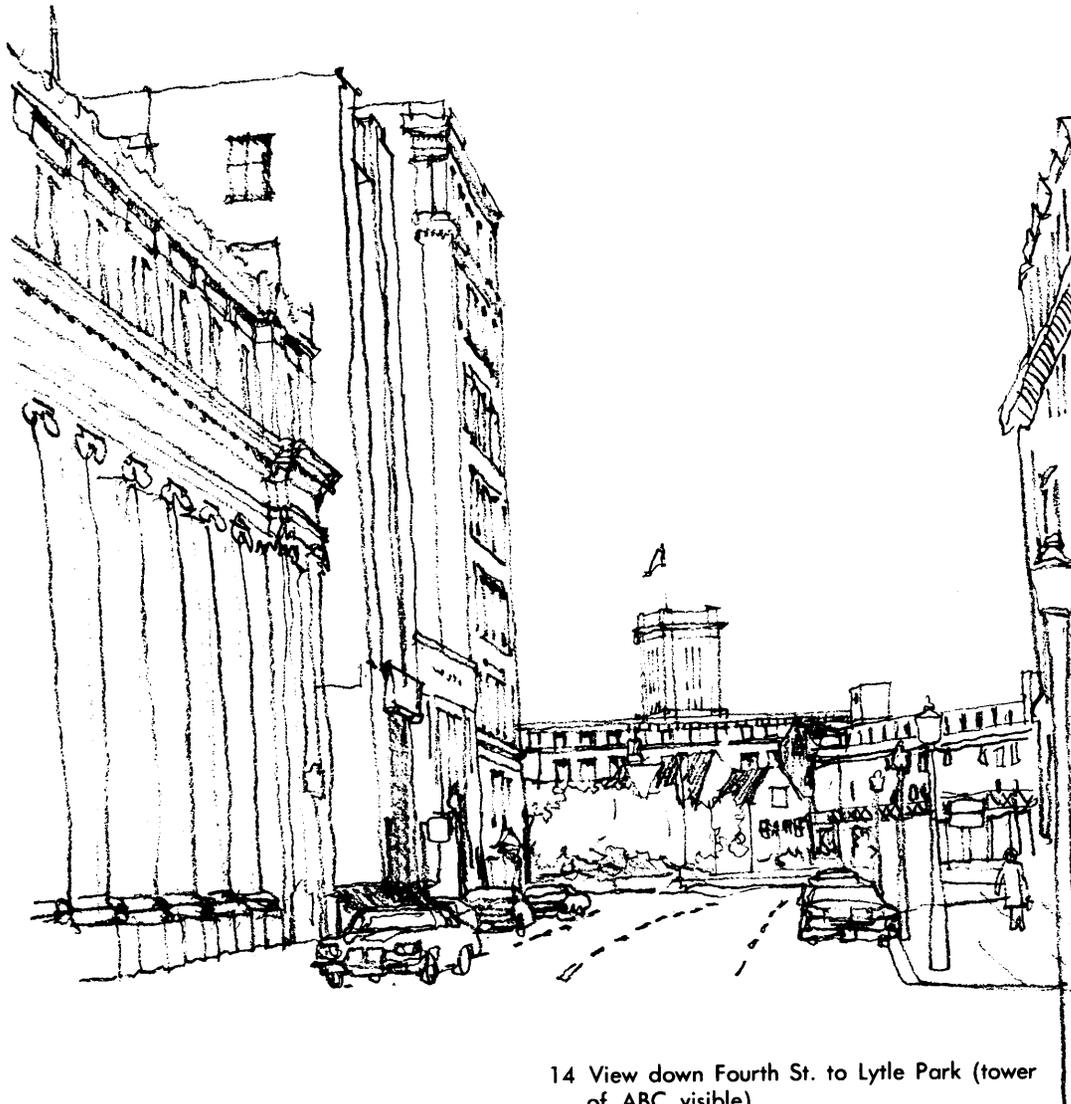


13 Lytle Square:

Barnard's statue of  
Lincoln, 1917

Fort Washington,  
1789

Townhouses, 1830's



14 View down Fourth St. to Lytle Park (tower of ABC visible)

tioned, the land was not subdivided as the rest of the city grew, but remained a few homesteads for the first thirty years of its settlement. Having already established a wealthy character, Lytle Square was eventually subdivided for fancy, detached town-houses.

The approach to the park from the center of town is devoid of any contrast or drama. The walk seems visually shorter than it is because the Park and the tower of the American Book Company are visible down Fourth Street. On the other hand, the time it actually takes weighs heavily on the pedestrian because it becomes very boring after the last stores are passed. Public street activities inspired by the retail district (window shopping, people-watching, deciding where to go next) give way to three barren blocks of federal and insurance buildings. The entrance to the park is also marred by the parking lot of the private school, which further allows the space to leak out.

There are no public activities located in or around the park (other than the small Taft Museum), yet its scale suggests a very public space. The dimensions are over-generous in relation to the buildings around it. This is most obvious in the case of the museum; a one



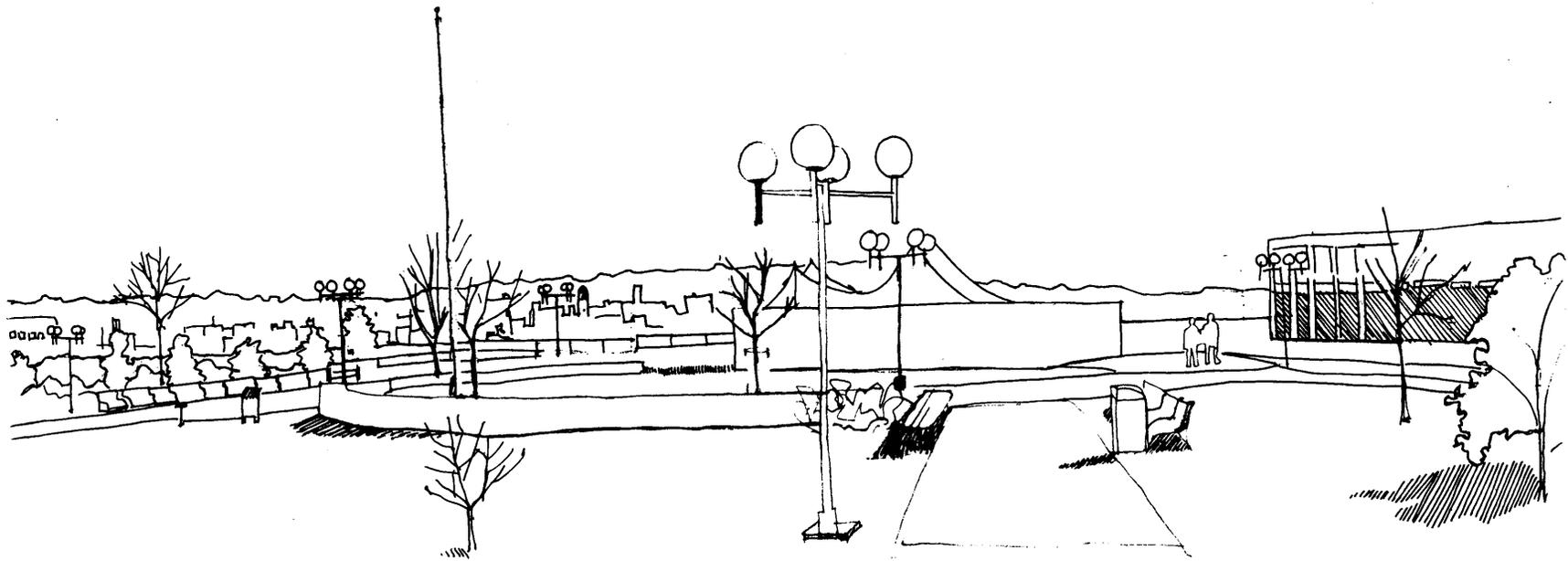
15 View of Lytle Park (ABC and Anna Louise Inn) across school parking lot



16 Landscape quality of Lytle Park (seen from Guilford School)

and a half story structure does not need a six hundred foot long axial approach (especially when one reaches the Taft and finds the entrance is around to the left side). This poor scale relationship makes the Taft appear dwarfed.

Viewing the Taft and the American Book Company, in fact, all the buildings around the Park, from such a great distance means that one's angle of vision becomes so small that perception is no longer an architectural experience, but a painterly one. That is, one sees the group of buildings and park as one would a landscape: the buildings are seen together with their environment and they do not fill the field of vision. Architectural perception, on the other hand, implies that the angle of sight is larger than forty-five degrees, that details become more important, and the building, not entirely seen, begins to infringe upon senses other than sight. Architectural perception is far more sophisticated than landscape perception; more senses are involved and there is a higher level of subtle tension as a result.



17 Southwestern edge of park, the panorama point

The eastern and southwestern edges of the park, from which there are substantial vertical drops, are extreme examples of this painterly nature. Looking toward the southern edge from the center of the park, one is aware of only the infinite Kentucky Hills; the river and highways are not visible because they are so much lower. Similarly, to the east, Mount Adams

rises behind the Taft as if there were no gully of cars and factories between them. However relaxing landscape perception can be, in the wrong context, and taken to excess, it can be unstimulating. As Sitte observed, "*One feels at ease in a space where the gaze cannot be lost in infinity*". Some spatial tension is desperately needed to help Lytle Park attain an identity as a place.

Lytle Park has always been an enclave of middle and upper class housing, but today it stands alone as the only residential neighborhood in the CBD. Cincinnati's CBD has become, as the name implies, a business district, and all the reasons that kept people living by the river have long since disappeared. Therefore Lytle Park is not only an oddity in form, but in function as well. This uniqueness might be responsible for its survival, but it is also one reason for its lack of urbanity, especially when one confronts the difficulty of creating urban form where there is little urban function.

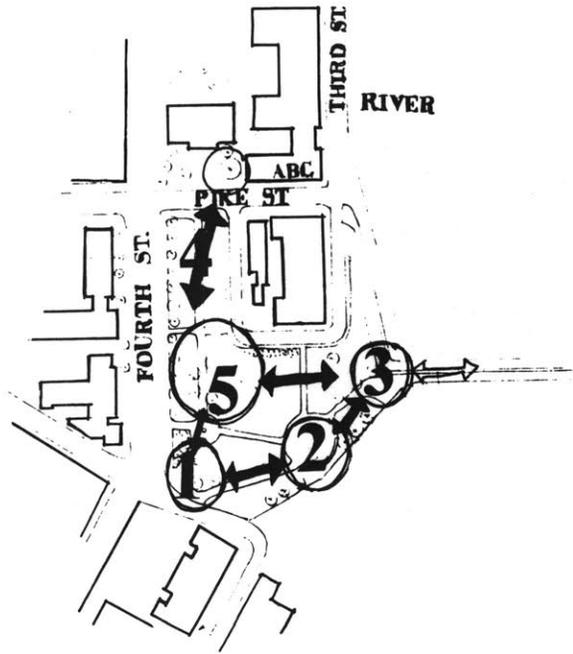
The amusement one initially feels about the strangely diverse buildings, standing awkwardly around the park ignoring each other, quickly gives way to frustration. (After all, one only appreciates a joke the first time,) It certainly does not lead to prolonged identification between user and park. Furthermore, the buildings are separated from the park by wide streets in such a way that any interaction between the two is impossible.

The rebuilding of Lytle Park over the highway did nothing to pull the area together; in fact, it has done so much damage, that the effort to save the park might have been in vain. Rather

than being an addition of the formal manifestations of different activities and characteristics, Lytle Park is constructed of leftover space. For example, the southern edge, with the strange angle overlooking the freeways, is so designed as to give the pedestrian no reason to wander over there at all. The forms are vague and the function seems non-existent. Similarly the bridge (under construction) from the planned waterfront community slams into the corner of this angled edge with no thought to the physical expression of its function.

Many of these negative characteristics could be successfully manipulated so as to be positive aspects. A green space is, after all, an amenity; the broad panoramic view across the river has some positive qualities, if it were better designed. Landscape perception is, to a certain degree, relaxing. As Lynch says, "A well managed panorama seems to be a staple of urban environment".

These problems prevent Lytle Park from presenting a cohesive image as a place. It is not even possible to define what kind of place it is, since it has the dimensions of a large urban space with the function of a small residential



18 Lytle Park: hypothesized network of links and nodes

- 1 entrance
- 2 panorama
- 3 bridge access
- 4 prelude to Taft/ABC complex
- 5 the body of the park

square. Its area does not nearly compare to a Boston Common or Central Park, yet it is much larger than Cincinnati's major hard surface public plaza, Fountain Square.

The solution is to create some new functions and clarify the existing ones to which the Park could respond in form.

While it is beyond the practical scope of the thesis to make changes in Lytle Park, the success of the ABC could depend on the ability of Lytle Park to (re-)acquire an image.

Although the Book Company could be important in the establishment of the Park as a place, one cannot expect a single building to change an entire urban environment. For this reason, some suggestions will be made in an attempt to deal with the Park's largest problem: lack of an identifiable network of links and nodes due to a lack of forms and functions.

Just as the last chapter hypothesized a perceived network for the downtown of Cincinnati, a similar network will be identified for Lytle Park, defining a formal situation to which the ABC can respond. The park, which is much too large now, would benefit from a system of readable nodes. The pieces which would together define the Park, and give the designer some rational

basis for his decisions would be: 1) the entrance; 2) the panorama; 3) the bridge take-off point; 4) the part related to the Taft and ABC; 5) the body of the park.

The entrance to the park is destroyed by the parking lot preceding it. A wall, hedge, or structure which would maintain some degree of focus would make the experience of walking to Lytle Park a more memorable one. Perhaps a change in paving, or the use of old symbols such as posts or gates could further articulate the entrance. An understandable network of links, clearly representing choices, and going somewhere, (in this case either to the body of the park or to the Panoramic edge) should emanate from this entrance node.

As it is now, there is no reason to walk over to view the Panorama. It is a dead end. Its only conceivable function, as a lookout, has been negated by a wall, obviously there to protect the observer from the sight of the freeways. Perhaps if there were a screen through which one had to pass before experiencing the entire panorama, walking over to that edge would be special. Furthermore, the strangely angled wall

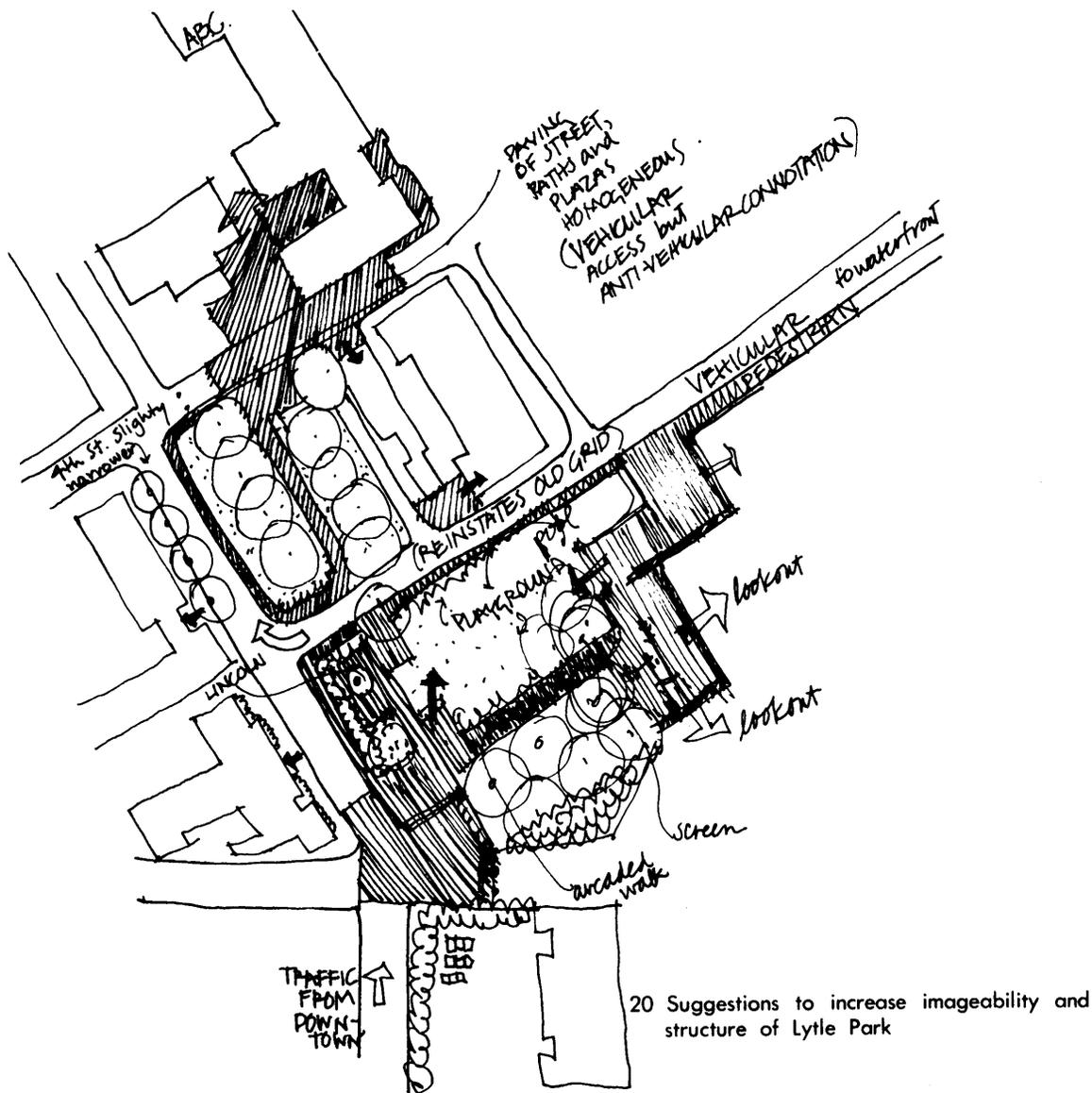


19 Standing at the entrance of Lytle Park looking back downtown

does not relate to any function; it doesn't suggest any place to stand or sit while looking out. It also makes no sense in the context of the city's visual patterns.

The third node, the bridge landing, as it is planned, is not considered a node at all, but two ambiguous branching links leading to ambiguous locations. Obviously it serves as a possibly major pedestrian entrance to the Park; therefore all the characteristics of an entrance also pertain here. The way that the automobile traffic is routed off the bridge seems almost physically impossible and dangerous; it seems far simpler to allow this low density road to cut across the Park, dividing it up and reinstating the original grid dimensions. This road would culminate at a small traffic circle at its junction with Fourth Street. The fact that some traffic will have to go up to Fifth Street to proceed west (Fourth St. is one-way east) is still less complicated than the route now planned.

The part of the Park which is considered a prelude to the Taft/ABC complex is essentially a fancy link. Although this stretch to the Taft is substantially less than the existing access which runs the length of the entire



Park, the distance is still too great and may tend to be out of scale in relationship to the Taft. It is conceivable that when the Taft was built this piece was part of its site, although in later years town-houses (such as the one immediately adjacent) stood here. Nevertheless, the space gives one the opportunity to begin to initiate the diagonal which will help eliminate the axial focus on the Taft (foolish anyway because the front doors are not operable) and bring the ABC into the Park.

The problem with the body of the Park is essentially a question of function. As it is now, the Park is a series of links, lined with benches, leading nowhere. Perhaps a more intense garden, a children's playground, a ground-form structure which would provide a number of different seating situations for lunch-time visitors, would give the Park, as a whole, more of a focus. It would also provide a screen, so that the pedestrian walking from downtown to the Taft/ABC complex, while conscious of the landmark water tower, will not see the major activities and forms until he is closer.

Although these are only very general observations, the thesis is based on these underlying principles. As was pre-

viously pointed out, there are many scales of nodes and links. This coherence should carry all the way down, from a city-wide scale, to a neighborhood scale, to the organization of a network within the ABC. It is important to recognize that these categories of nodes and links are merely for academic convenience, that in reality it is important that they be successfully patterned together to provide a cohesive and satisfying urban form.

*“Rather than enhancing each other by skillful placement and harmonious composition, each building plays a different melody in a different key. Viewing them all at once – the Neo-Gothic Votive Church, the University built in a noble Renaissance style, and the apartment houses which adhere to the most diverse schools of taste – it is as if one were listening to a fugue by Bach, a grand finale from a Mozart Opera, and a hit tune from Offenbach at the same time. Unbearable, truly unbearable! Whose nerves would not be shattered by this!?”*

*Camillo Sitte, in reference to the Zwinger in Dresden*

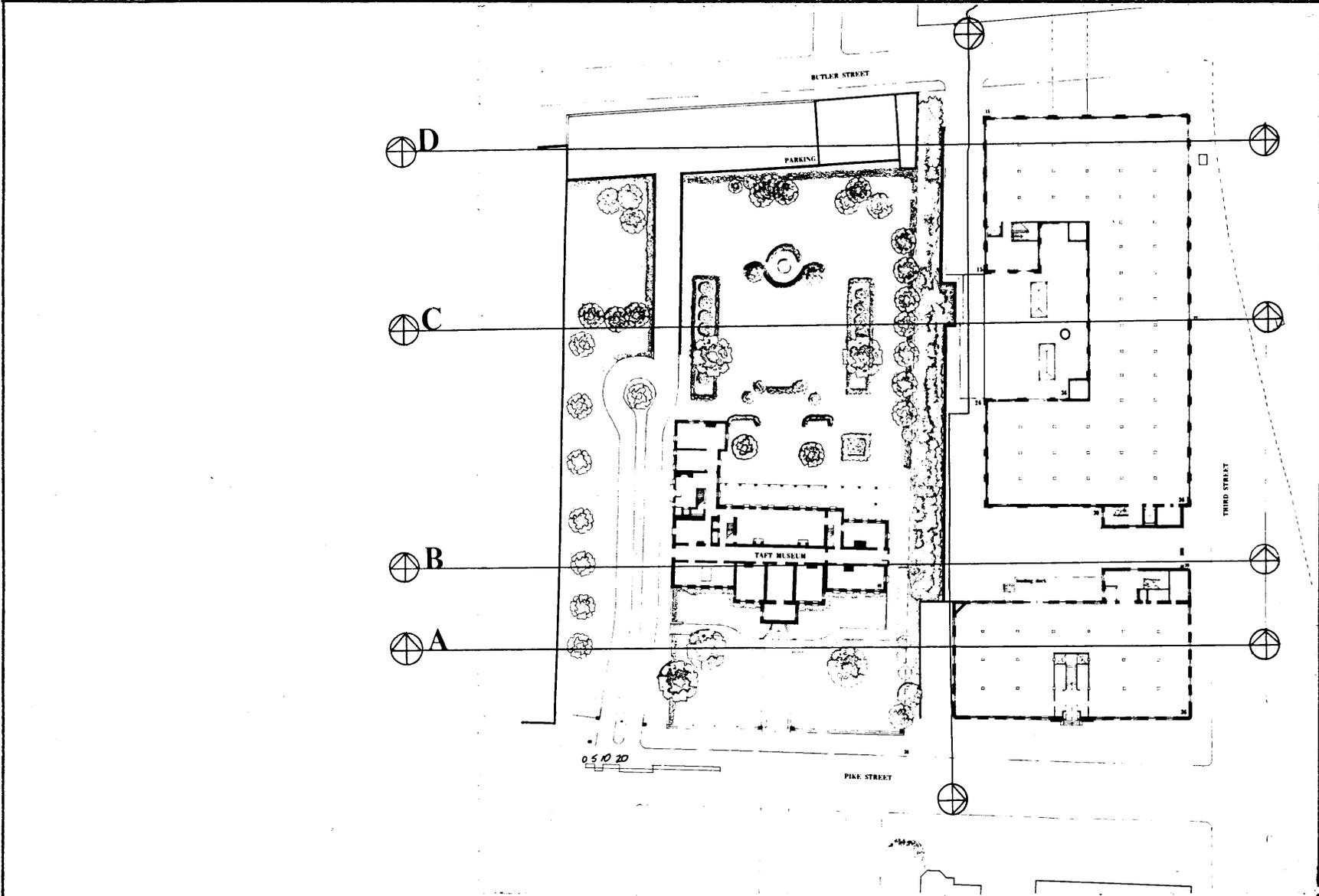
## THE AMERICAN BOOK COMPANY: BUILDING AND SITE

So far the thesis has concentrated almost solely on the urban design issues while seemingly ignoring the American Book Company building. It is here that possibly actual changes would be made which, if implemented correctly, could affect the image of Cincinnati in a positive way.

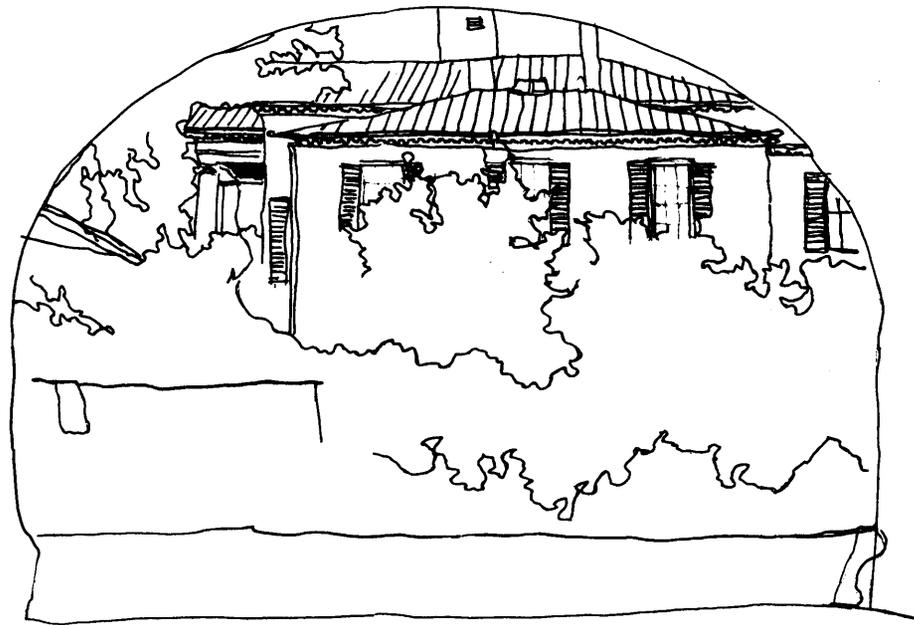
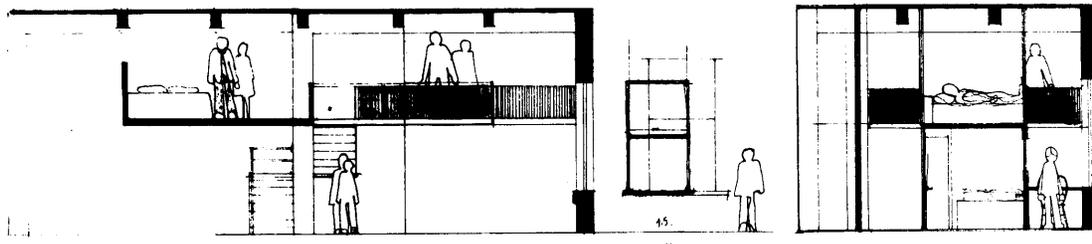
Since the only noteworthy points in the building's history were its construction, electrical re-wiring, and purchase and abandonment, the analysis will be centered upon those formal characteristics which have influenced the evolution of the program. While the American Book Company does not deserve salvation solely on its design merit, it does possess some special and extremely adaptable characteristics; notably, its siting, exterior detailing, functional bay and window sizes and the overall quality of materials and construction. These qualities have greatly influenced decisions on the mixture of uses.

The building is surrounded by wide sidewalks on three sides, the fourth side bordering the Taft Museum. However, the building does not cover the entire site, but forms an 'E-shape' with two open courtyards facing the Taft and its formal garden, and the backbone of the 'E' bordering on an elevated highway.

Especially considering that the highway was a later addition, the American Book Company was well sited for its previous use, and can easily be adapted for various new uses. The majority of the bays face either into the two large courtyards, the Taft and its greenery, or a panorama of the downtown skyscrapers across the park. Even the 'bad' side is often unaffected by the highway since the building is located on a plateau from which the ground drops drastically toward the river, and in many cases the view from inside the building is dominated by the Kentucky hills rising across the river. The thick



21 **EXISTING SITE PLAN**



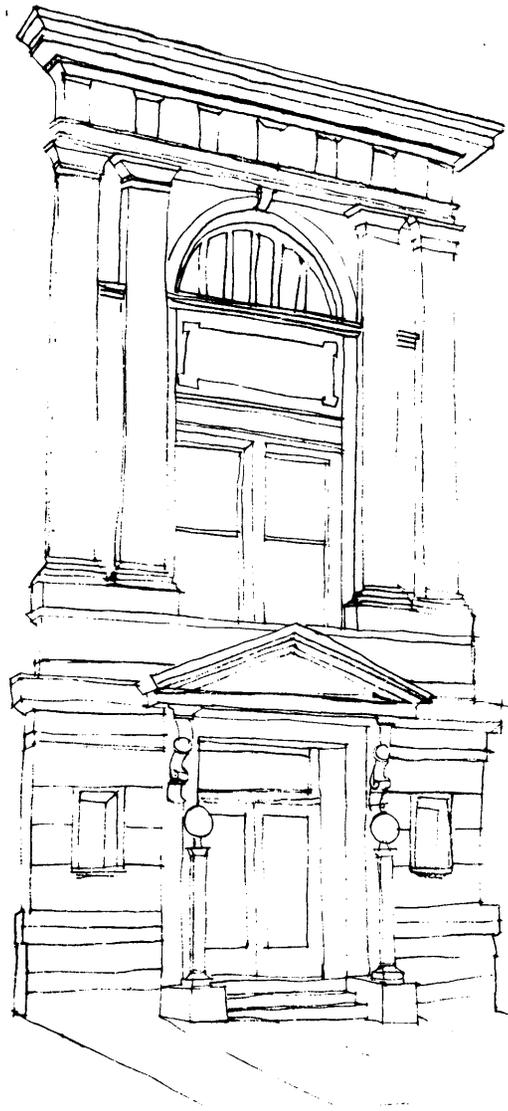
22 Studies for lofts on floors with 17' ceiling

23 View of side of Taft Museum, from Third St. across first courtyard-(through 'tunnel')

masonry walls help reduce the noise.

The building is made of reinforced concrete, stone masonry and brick construction, the entire structural part being reinforced concrete girders, beams, columns and slab. The bay sizes (17' x 20' in the first building, 15' x 20' in the rest) and the ceiling heights (generally 14' with one floor 17') are adaptable to almost any use, with the addition of secondary systems of concrete block and dry wall and wood stud partitions. (The exception, of course, is parking, and until the next-door parking garage planned for the future is built, there will be some over-generous parking spaces in the basement). The beams subdivide the bay into three pieces of about 7' x 15' (which allows an opening in the bay which conforms to Ohio State Building Code dimensions for a fire stair for this approximate density and use).

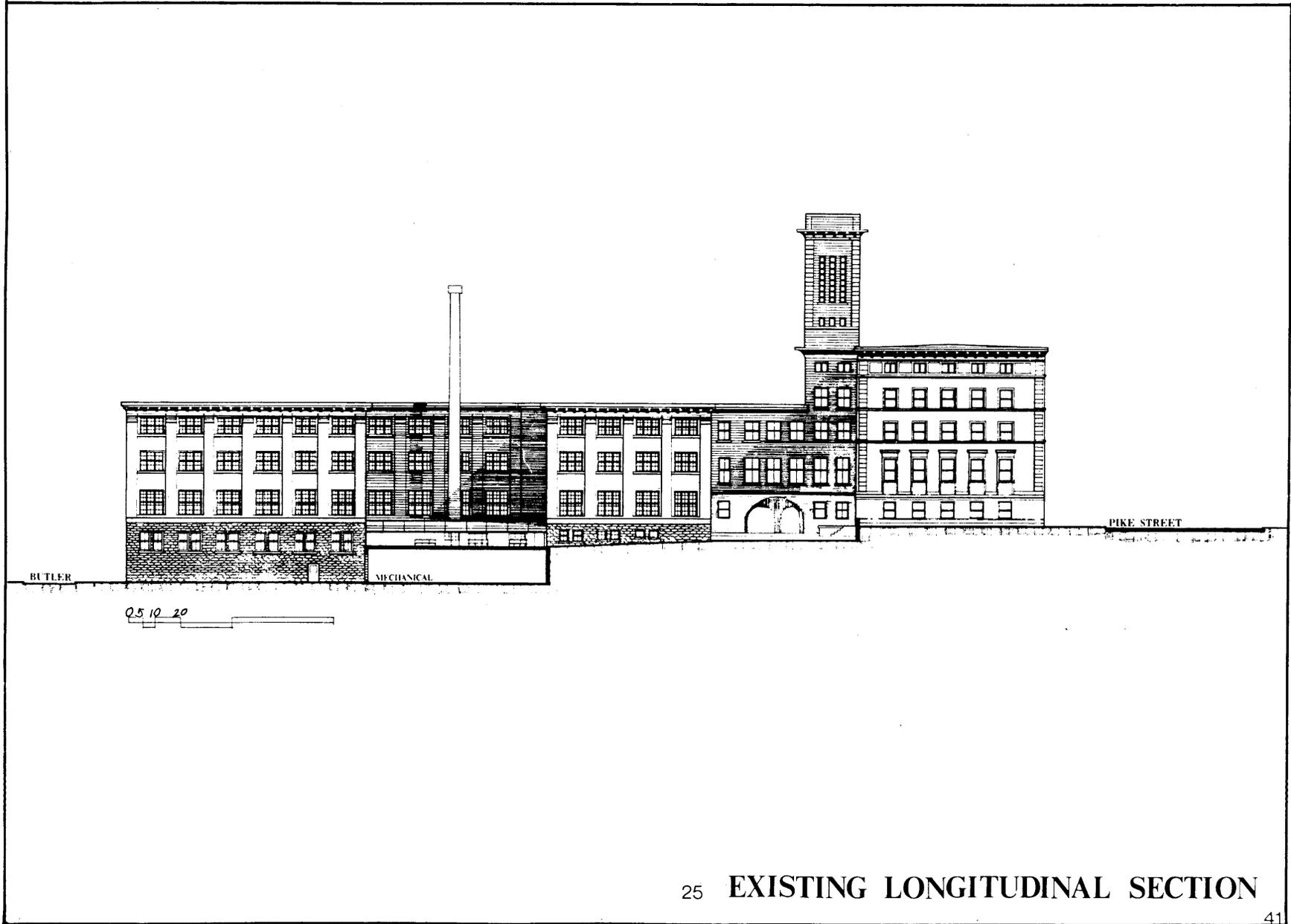
The first section is six stories (including basement) while the rest of the building is four. It was probably the office area while the rest was the printing plant. Because of its smaller scale, its special entrance, and proximity to the park, this part suggests adaptation to a residential use.



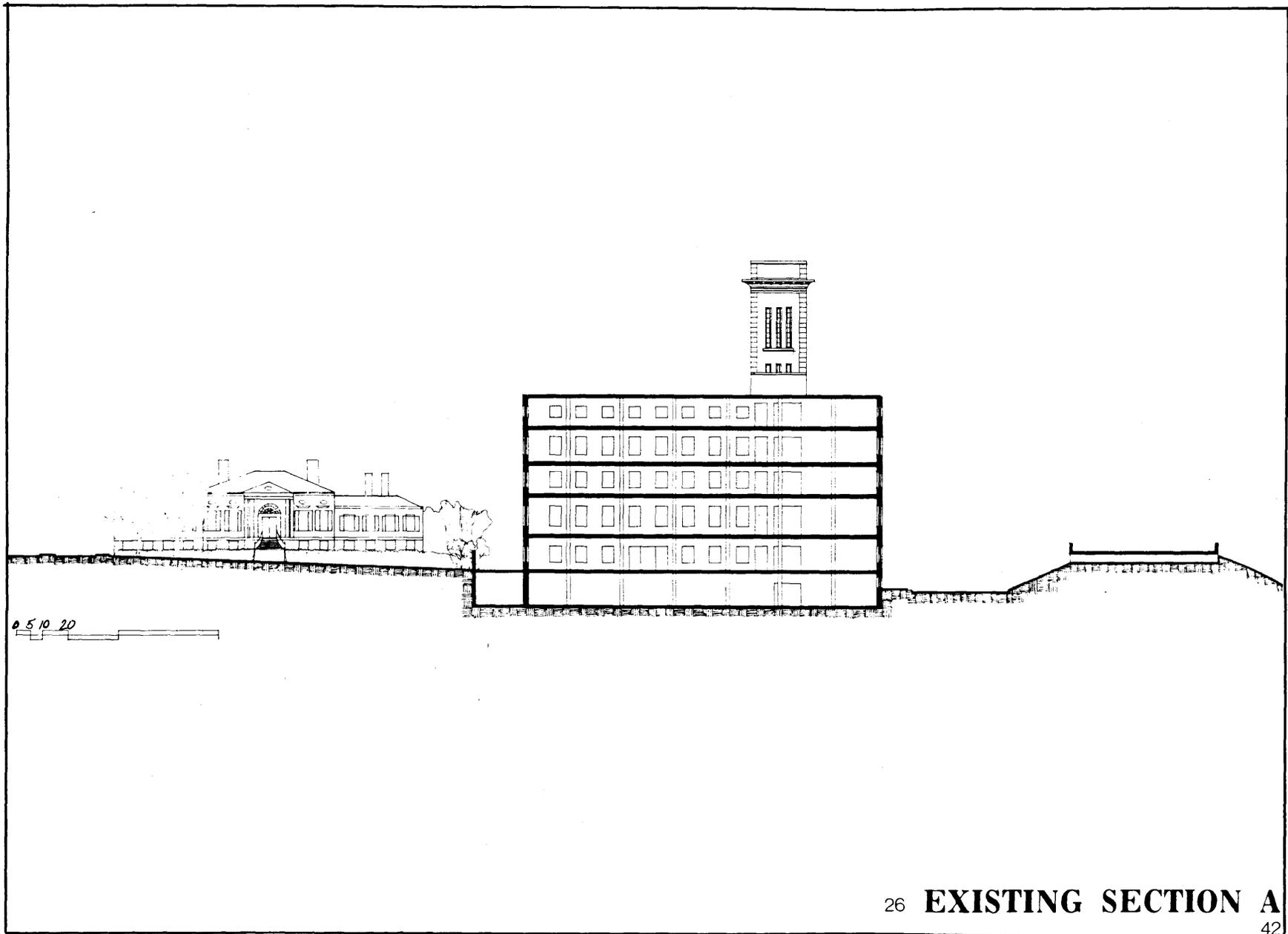
24 Pike St. entrance

The windows are frequent and large, decreasing slightly in height as the building rises, located above a parapet of sufficient height to meet code. While such large windows (in some cases 12 x 10) are often thought to be desirable, the new glazing has been subdivided to make them more useful, adding operable sliding windows and translucent panels and operable shades, where necessary because of function or location. Also, an attempt has been made, through the use of scale and association, to differentiate office, residential and retail facade articulation, facilitating the user's identification and orientation.

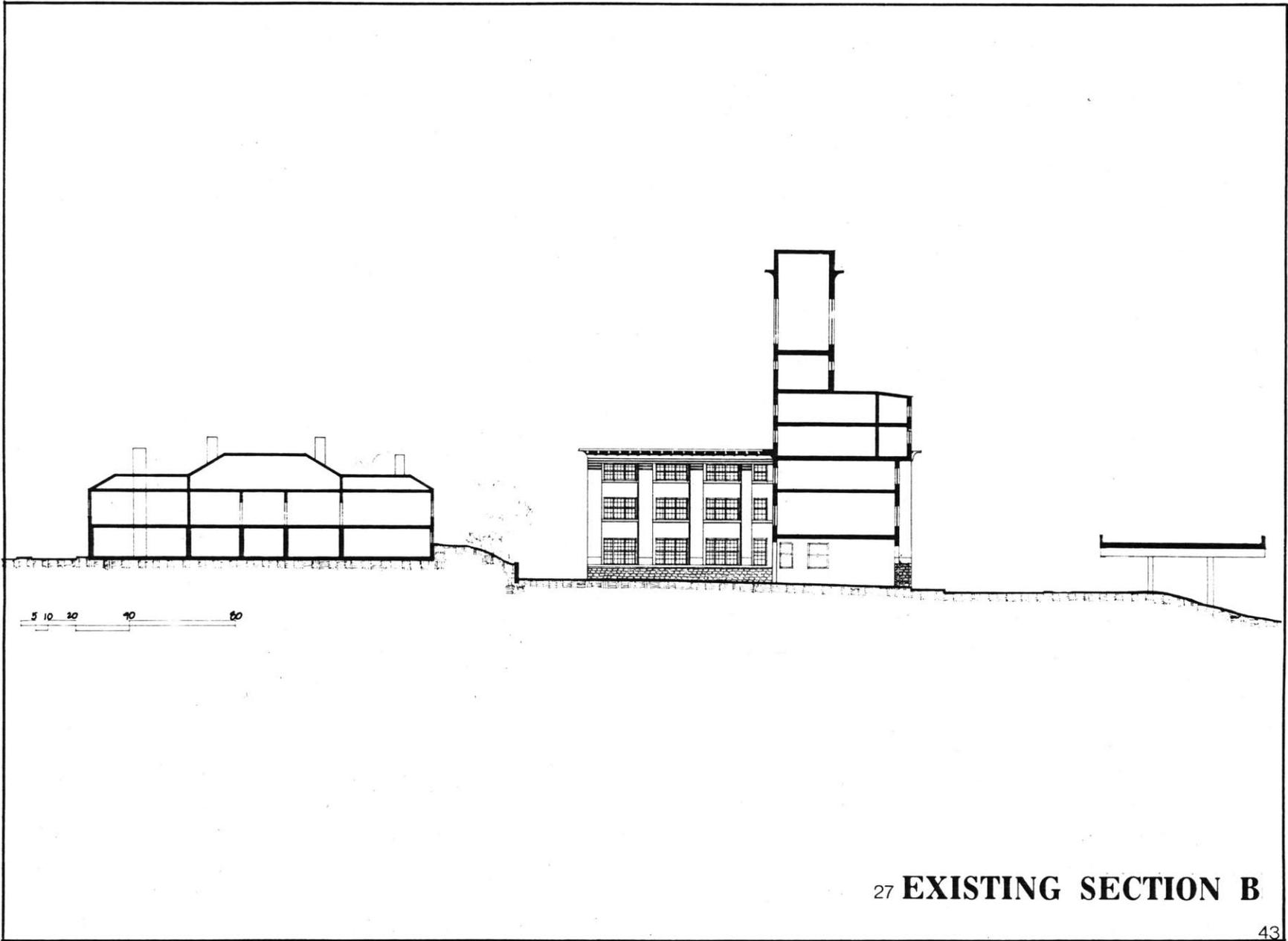
The exterior Renaissance detailing adds immeasurably to the building's identity and image in this day of boring and over simplified commercial design. Its highly visible tower makes it a landmark. The first of the buildings, closest to Lytle Park, is somewhat more distinguished than the rest, due to its smaller scaled windows, more decorated facade, and grand entrance. Unfortunately this entrance, while essentially on the Lytle Park side of the building, is too far down the street, limiting its visibility and its success as a major public entrance.



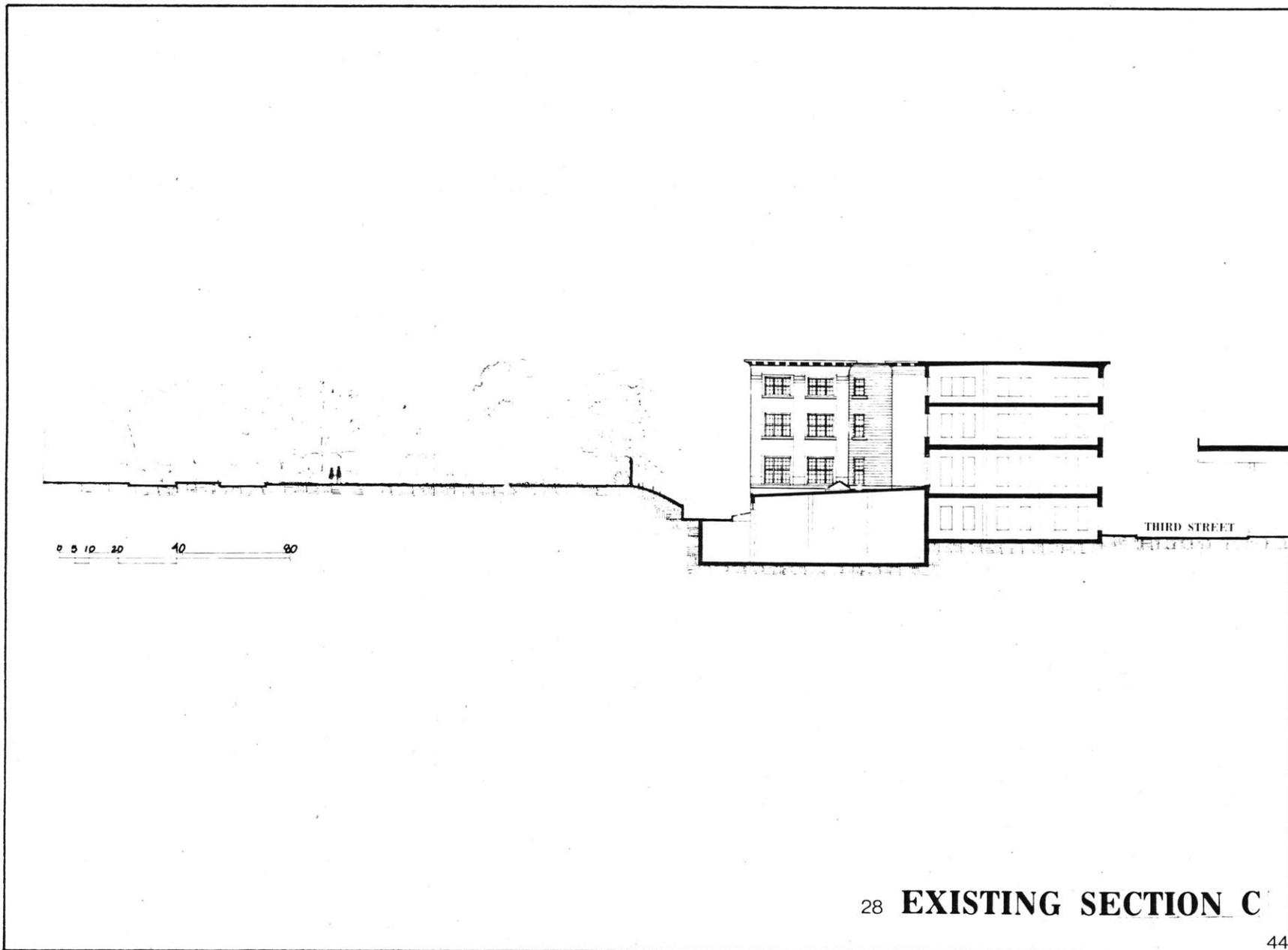
25 EXISTING LONGITUDINAL SECTION



26 **EXISTING SECTION A**



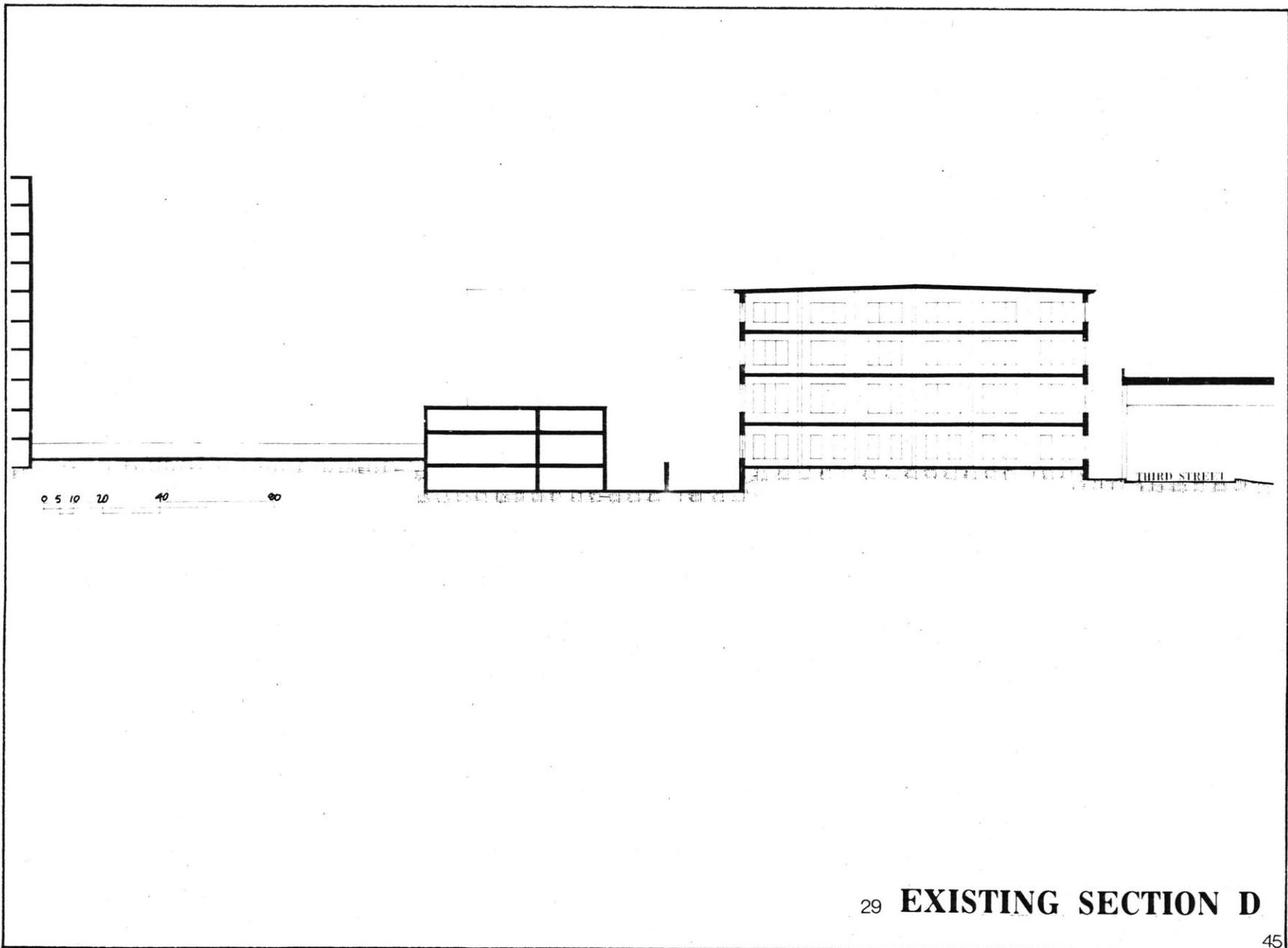
27 **EXISTING SECTION B**



0 5 10 20 40 80

THIRD STREET

28 **EXISTING SECTION C**



29 **EXISTING SECTION D**

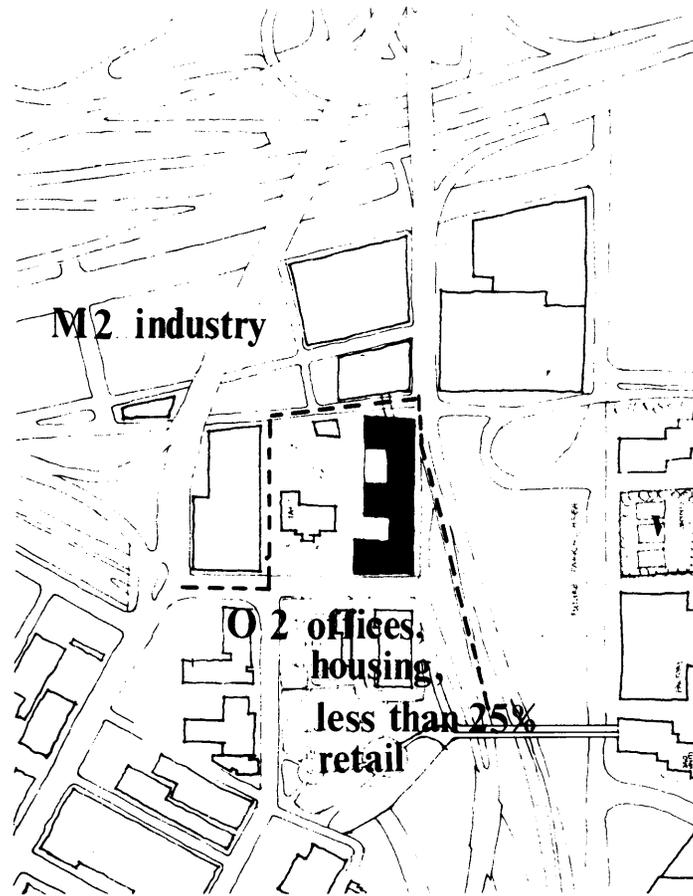
## THE MAJOR DESIGN AND PROGRAM ISSUES

The largest design problem in adapting the building is an outgrowth of the existing site plan. When the industrial structure was designed, it was intended that there be a barrier separating it from the Taft, allowing no interaction. The entire boundary between the two consists of a wall retaining a ten foot change in level (a result of the slope to the river). Not only does this cut the American Book Company off from the Taft, but also from Lytle Park. As desirable as this situation was seventy years ago, the successful adaptation of the building depends upon mutual interaction between the Book Company building, the Taft, and Lytle Park, to build an image of a place.

As mentioned previously, the elevated highway does not cause as many problems as might be initially assumed; however its presence was instrumental in the key network decision: the creation of a longitudinal walk along the boundary between the Taft and the ABC. This decision was further based on the

judgment that the new ABC complex should be related more to Lytle Park than to the waterfront, not only because the elevated road lay between the ABC and river, but because the linkage between the planned waterfront development and the ABC would be unwieldy and long, eventually resulting in the isolation of the ABC. It is not a building which can or should stand alone.

Oriented with the more decorative, short end of the "E-shape" toward the park, and a no-man's land at its far end, twenty feet lower, the ABC needed a longitudinal connector to make the back accessible. Third Street, along the elevated highway, was considered unworkable, as just discussed; moreover, there was the desire to tie the building into Lytle Park, to create a bond between the ABC and the Taft (now owned by the same institution), hoping to counteract the tendency of Lytle Park structures to ignore one another.



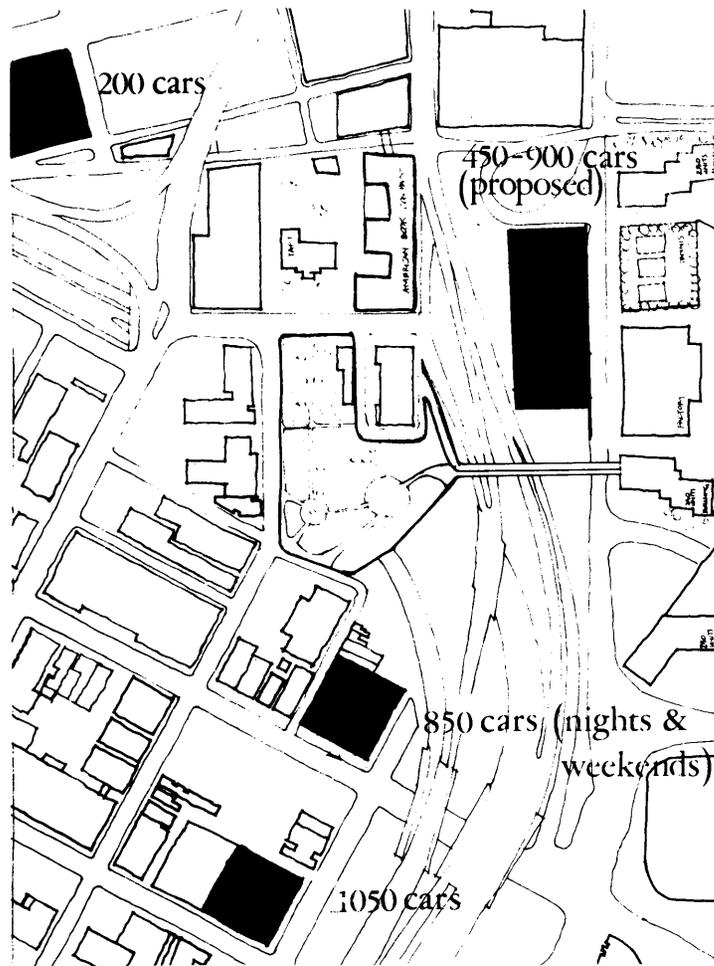
30 Lytle Park: zoning

other, by creating a cohesive, strong focus.

These goals and assumptions, coupled with requests from the Taft for more workroom, classroom, and parking spaces, are substantially the major input, along with the urban issues, in the creation of a system of links and nodes. This open ended and adaptable system will join the Taft and ABC together in relation to the rest of the city network.

The decision to allocate retail, office, residential, and institutional space to various parts of the building and to new structures, was a result of a give and take between the form and constraints set by the building and site, and those considerations dictated by the form and network of the city. A more public function such as retail, which depends on drawing people, should be located up front, just as it is logical to locate a function like office space further back but off a defined node.

All such decisions of use were made without any market knowledge other than that (1) Lytle Park was a mixture



31 Parking around site

of offices and multi-unit residences, devoid of residential amenities, services, and commercial activity to nurture the residents; (2) the new waterfront development would saturate an already conservative retail market, and the ABC doesn't have the capacity or location to become a Ghirardelli Square all by itself.

When the Institute of Fine Arts acquired the ABC, its first response was to tear it down to extend its gardens and have more parking spaces. Their stated need was for 20 - 30 spaces, with possible provisions for visiting school buses. Parking, therefore, has had some influence on the program, although the majority of parking, for the shops especially, is assumed to be located in the various parking garages existing or planned around the site (notably the garage planned on the other side of the elevated highway).

Probably one-tenth the size of a development such as the waterfront project, the ABC is hardly worth a sophisticated market study. Instead, all decisions as to use were made in such a way that the development can reach its own equilibrium; there are formal and functional overlaps in networks: offices which would easily fit into the retail net-

work to function as stores, undivided apartments which would serve as a conventional unit for a family of three or four, or an artist's loft, office space which could be rented by many small professional offices or a few large major companies.

After establishing the need for a longitudinal pedestrian path, and roughly defining the areas in which certain activity should take place, the links and nodes begin to emerge in form.

The first node, possibly the most crucial, is the most public. Its functions are to focus people's attention from across the park, provide access to a visible retail section and to the Taft Museum, and serve as the entrance to the new pedestrian walk.

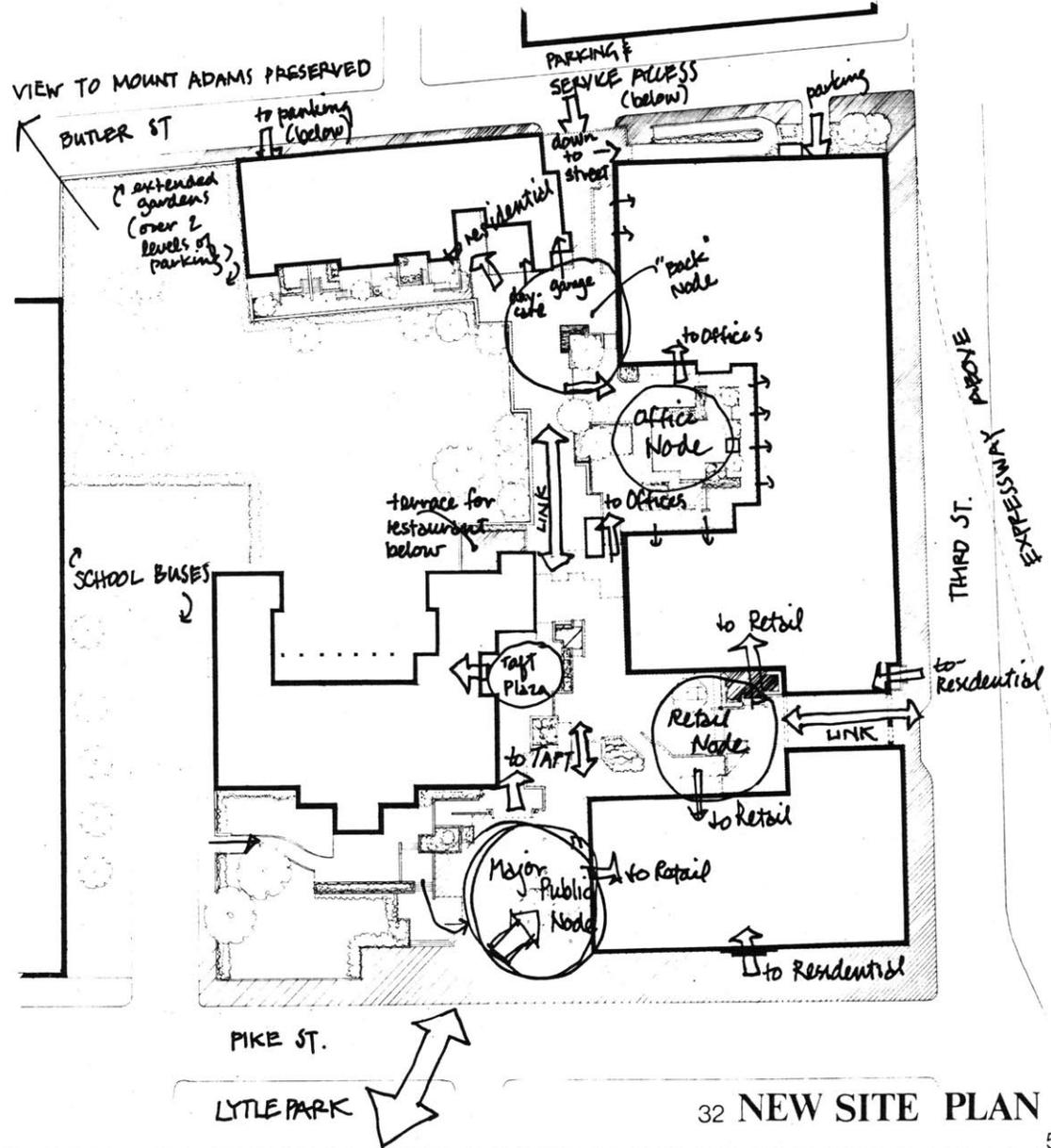
The entrance of the Taft has been moved from its far side to this first node, to create a cohesive and unambiguous organization and a single major focus for Lytle Park. An addition has been placed behind the major portion of the building, serving as an entrance, and access point to the link to the portion of the ABC which will be used by the museum for classrooms, lecture space, lounge and offices. Because

of the singularity of design of the Taft, this addition is attached to the Taft by a one story link.

The creation of this first major node eliminates part of the front lawn of the Taft. This is justifiable for a number of reasons. A classical building such as the Taft has three components: the way it meets the ground on a base or pedestal, the building itself, and the way it meets the sky. While it would be unforgivable (and difficult) to meddle with the body of such a building, the existence of a pedestal allows for interference; for example, on a sloped site, the pedestal base takes up the slope, so the building itself can sit above, pure and chaste. It is therefore not unreasonable to change that which occurs below the body of the building, in this case the gray and undecorated first story of the Taft, because it will not interfere with the essence of the building.

Furthermore, this first node creates a diagonal, de-emphasizing the axial symmetry of the Taft, which partially rectifies the confusing fact that the front entrance is no longer used. In fact, the Taft, changing from a residence to an institution, from private to public use, must also adapt.

A link of steps leads to the first courtyard, essentially a retail node with access to retail facilities on both sides.



32 NEW SITE PLAN

One can also walk through this courtyard under the bridge linking the first two sections of the ABC, under the elevated highway to the waterfront, but this is not a major path. The Taft's new entrance level overlooks this courtyard.

A short link connects this node to the next, the 'back' node where choices include climbing steps to an office courtyard, access to apartments, daycare, and parking, and a rear exit down to Butler St. (mainly considered a service road, which in the future could be bridged). The office courtyard provides access to offices. On the first floor, directly off the courtyard, these offices could become stores if there is a demand.

There are three residential areas: the five story building, using the old main entrance on Pike St.; the middle building with plans to expand two stories above the existing roof, which has an entrance next to the archway opening into the first courtyard; and the back building overlooking the formal gardens of the Taft which is entered off the back node.

The service network begins at an expanded loading dock off of Butler St., and leads to points in the buildings through the basement and service elevators. All residents and museum personnel and many of the office workers

will have parking spaces either in the new building on Butler St. or in the basement of the existing building, all reached from Butler St.

A list of the approximate gross square footages which result from this method of allocation corroborates the original intent that the complex be an essentially residential mixed-use neighborhood.

Residential	85,000 square feet (including storage)
Office	45,000
Retail	28,000
Parking, Service Mechanical	23,000

190,000 square feet

## **BASIC HUMAN NEEDS**

### **Life Maintaining Needs**

*hunger, thirst, shelter  
rest, sleep  
motion, repose  
physiological needs  
hunting, acquisition  
contest and conflict drives  
holding, hoarding, defense  
sex drives  
nesting, nurturing  
fabrication, tools  
herding urge  
speech drive, making symbols  
curiosity, orientation  
exploration*

### **Life Enhancing Needs**

*play  
sport  
companionship  
group pride  
compassion for group  
self-identity in group  
ritual, myth, image*

*Excerpts from lecture by Prof.  
Holcomb Austin, Harvard Philoso-  
phy Department*

### **Life Completing Urges**

*feeling for nature: kinship with  
the earth, water, fire, air  
feeling for aesthetic materials  
and forms, light, darkness, tex-  
tures, sounds, spaces, smells,  
rhythms*

### **Horizon Feelings**

*urge to know: science, philosophy  
urge to connect with the past:  
history  
urge to connect with the future:  
hope  
mortality, sense of terminus*

### **Beyond - Horizon Needs**

*immortality through children  
immortality through group, crea-  
tions, country  
cosmic identification (Plato)*

## **A DISCUSSION OF GOALS**

There are as many levels of goals as there are gradations of basic human needs.

In response to "Life-Maintaining and Enhancing Needs" such as shelter, hunger, nesting, play and ritual, I would say that my goal is to create a functional, adaptable and nurturing environment of housing, work space, and easily accessible facilities which will fill the gaps and tie Lytle Park together, enabling it to function and become identified as a mixed-use neighborhood.

Concerning "Life Completing Urges" such as feelings for aesthetic materials and form, rhythms and spaces, my goal is to design a viable environment which in its forms goes beyond the simple expression of a function to include a sensitivity toward human perception; an environment in which one will feel the time of day, which will

change with seasons and celebrations, continually rich in associative and visual data.

"Horizon and Beyond Horizon Feelings", such as the need to know, to connect with the past, the concept of human mortality, and the immortality of man's works, imply that the ultimate goal is "timelessness". Indeed, this is tied to the goal of urbanity, about which Sekler discourses at length:

*"One of the qualities that makes for urbanity is a capacity for absorbing and transcending to some degree the positive or negative emotions of the individual: something which sums up or stills the passing joys and griefs of the individual through its timelessness, through a reassuring presence that is not dulled but heightened by the passing of time; something which cannot be provided in the domestic scale of individual environment."*

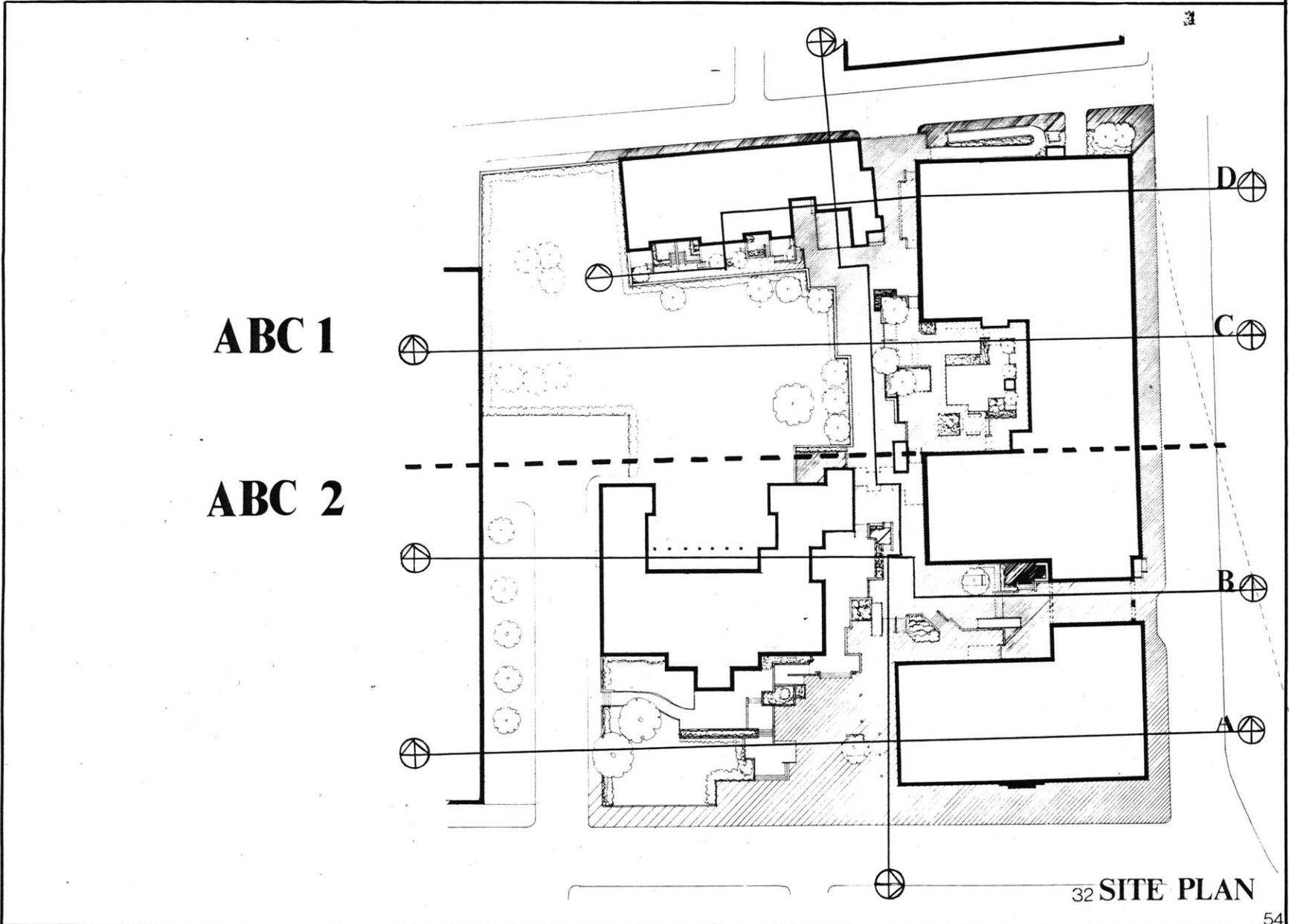
Although Sekler strongly acknowledges the growth process, it is implied that he finds the quality of urbanity only in fairly monumental and public urban situations, which often have not changed for over a century. Timelessness, how-

ever, can also be found in the repetition of custom and need, basic humanness, evidence of the growth and change of its physical expression. One can sense the same transcendence in viewing a person's small addition to another's creation ("the domestic scale of individual environment") as when surrounded by a magnificent urban composition by masters of many ages. For both are attempts of human beings to leave their marks. In other words, something is timeless if it inspires one to feel part of the human race. The sadness which accompanies such a realization of mortality mingles with the comfort of belonging, of limiting one's universe to what can be comprehended. It is one of the few ways we thinking creatures have of finding and defining peace with infinity in an absurd universe.

Qualities such as urbanity and timelessness obviously cannot transcend the pain of hunger, housing shortages, racism, imperialism and bureaucracy. The majority of the architect's decisions will be in response to the other human needs. And yet the architect's attitudes and responses to these Horizon Feelings will be apparent in what is created. The ultimate goal must respond to all human needs.

*"Indeed, when we try to consider the multiplicity of human needs, we are endangered both by the precariousness of the conditions of human life and the bewildering variety of human motive. But are there not some stubborn permanencies in man? Are there not some universal needs which we can point to as shared or shareable by all man?... The real program is one which not only connects with real needs, but which reconciles their pressing claims."*

*Professor Holcombe Austin, in a lecture to Sekler's seminar.*



**ABC 1**

**ABC 2**

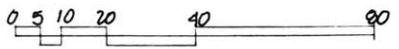
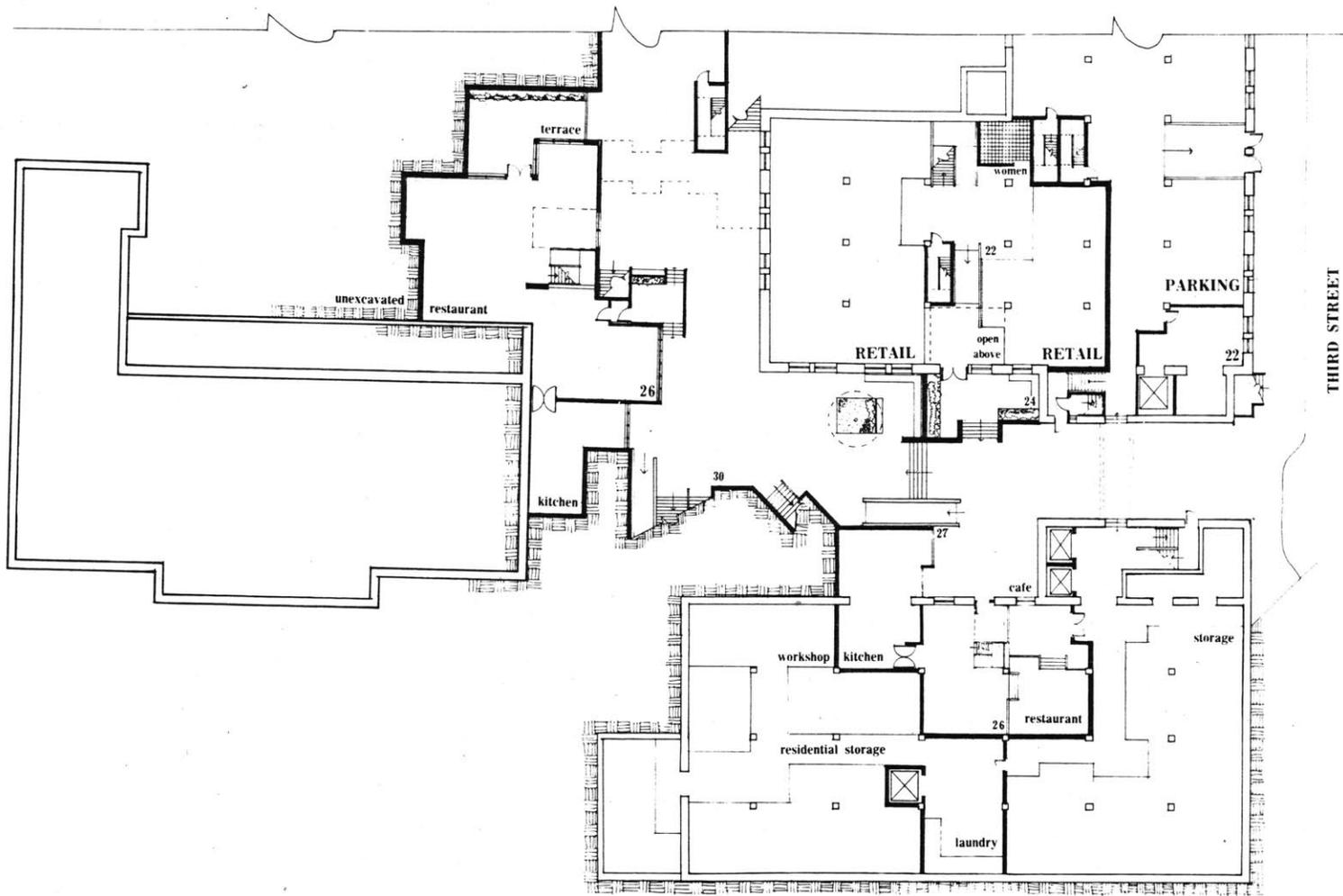
**D**

**C**

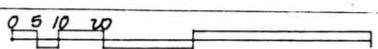
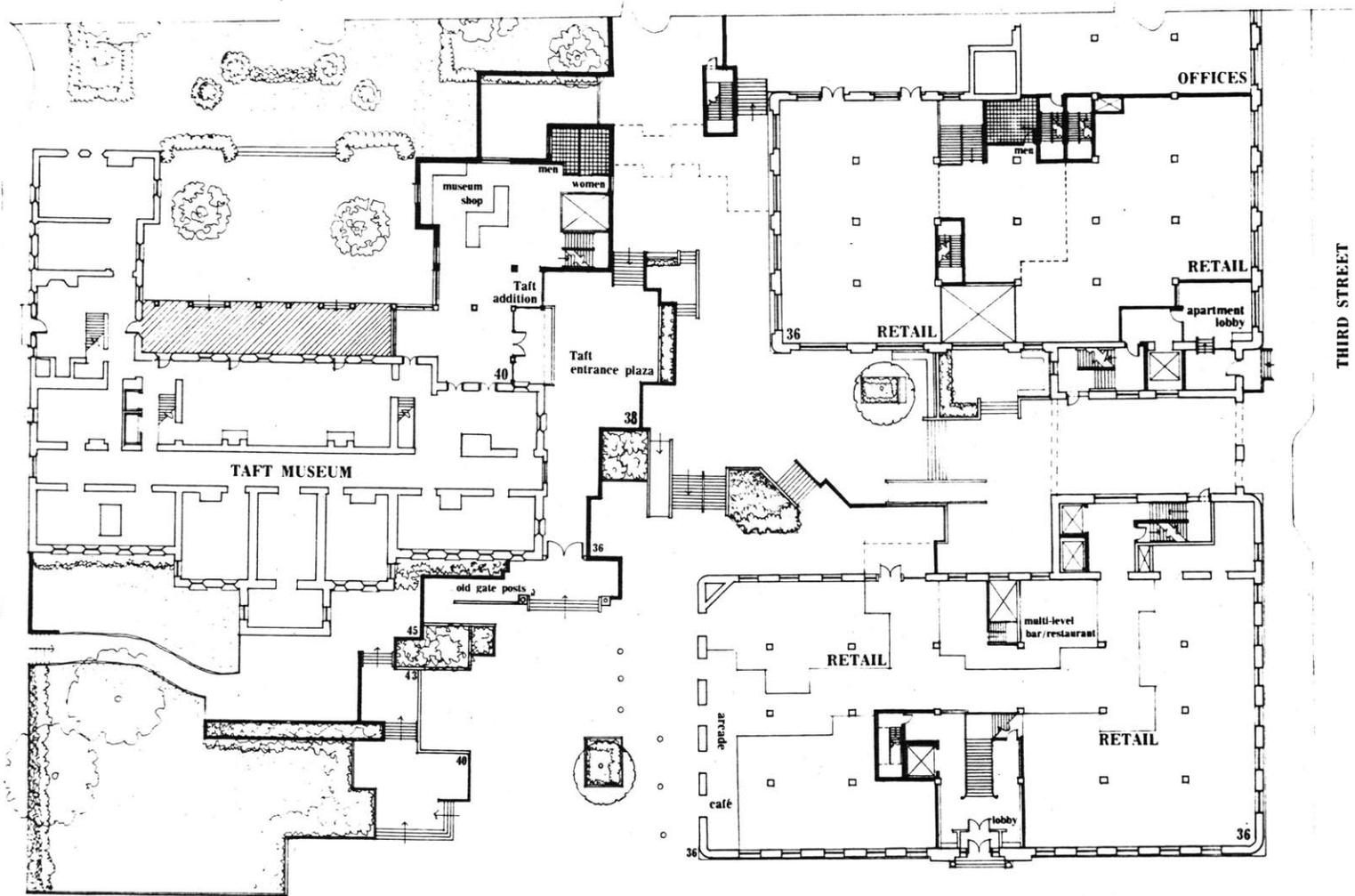
**B**

**A**

32 **SITE PLAN**



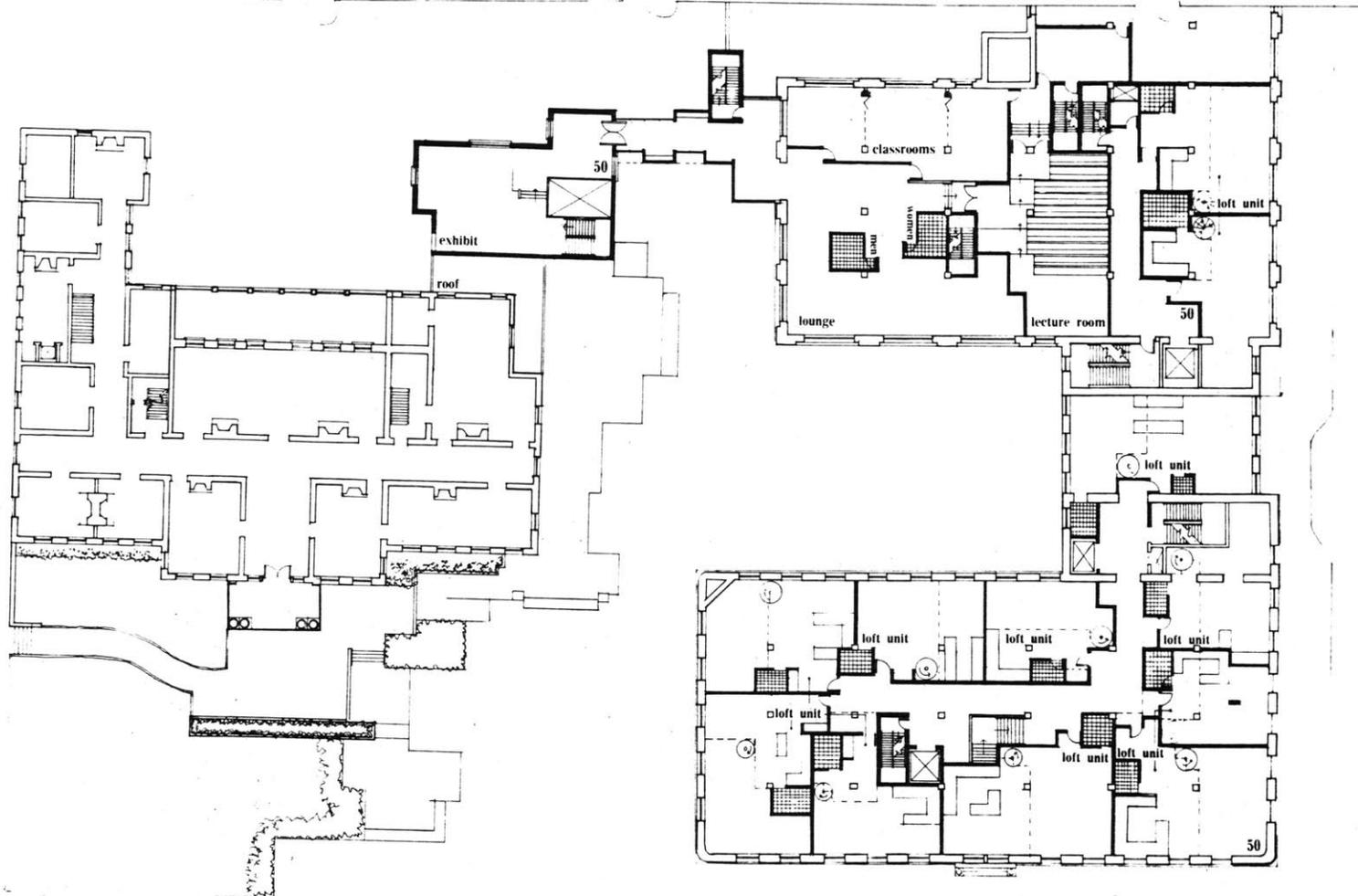
33 ABC/1 Level 22



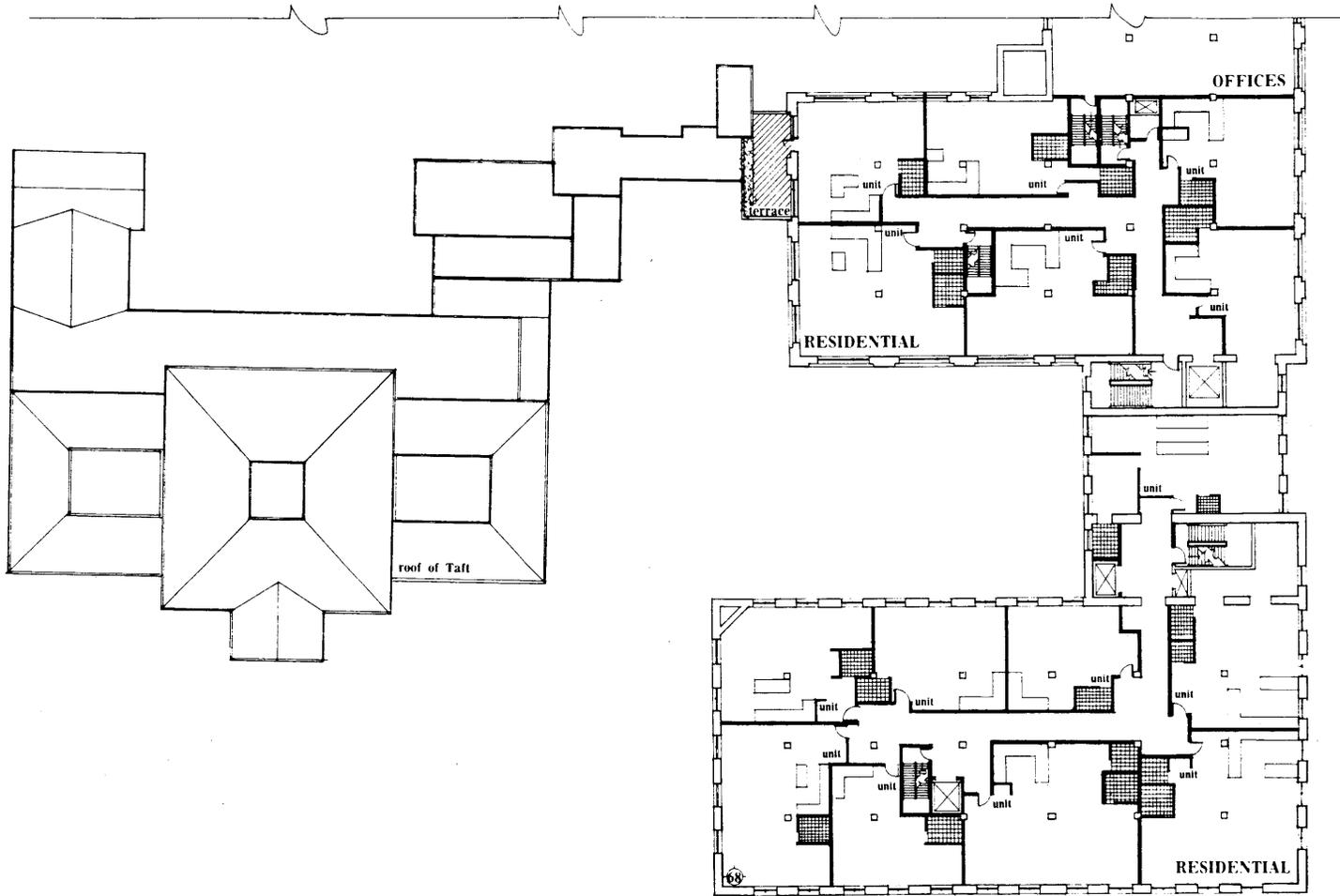
PIKE STREET

34 ABC/1 Levels 36 and 40

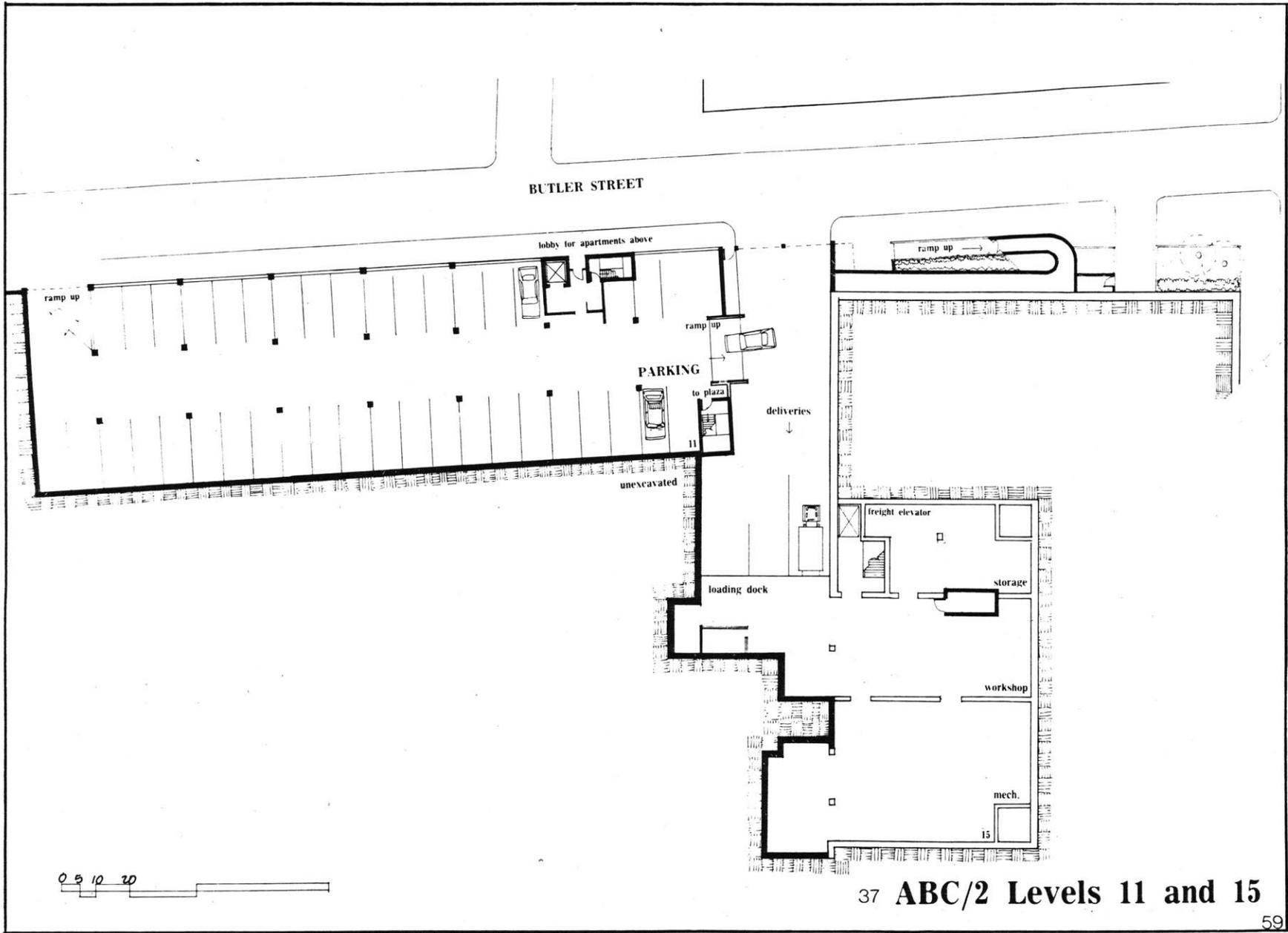
THIRD STREET



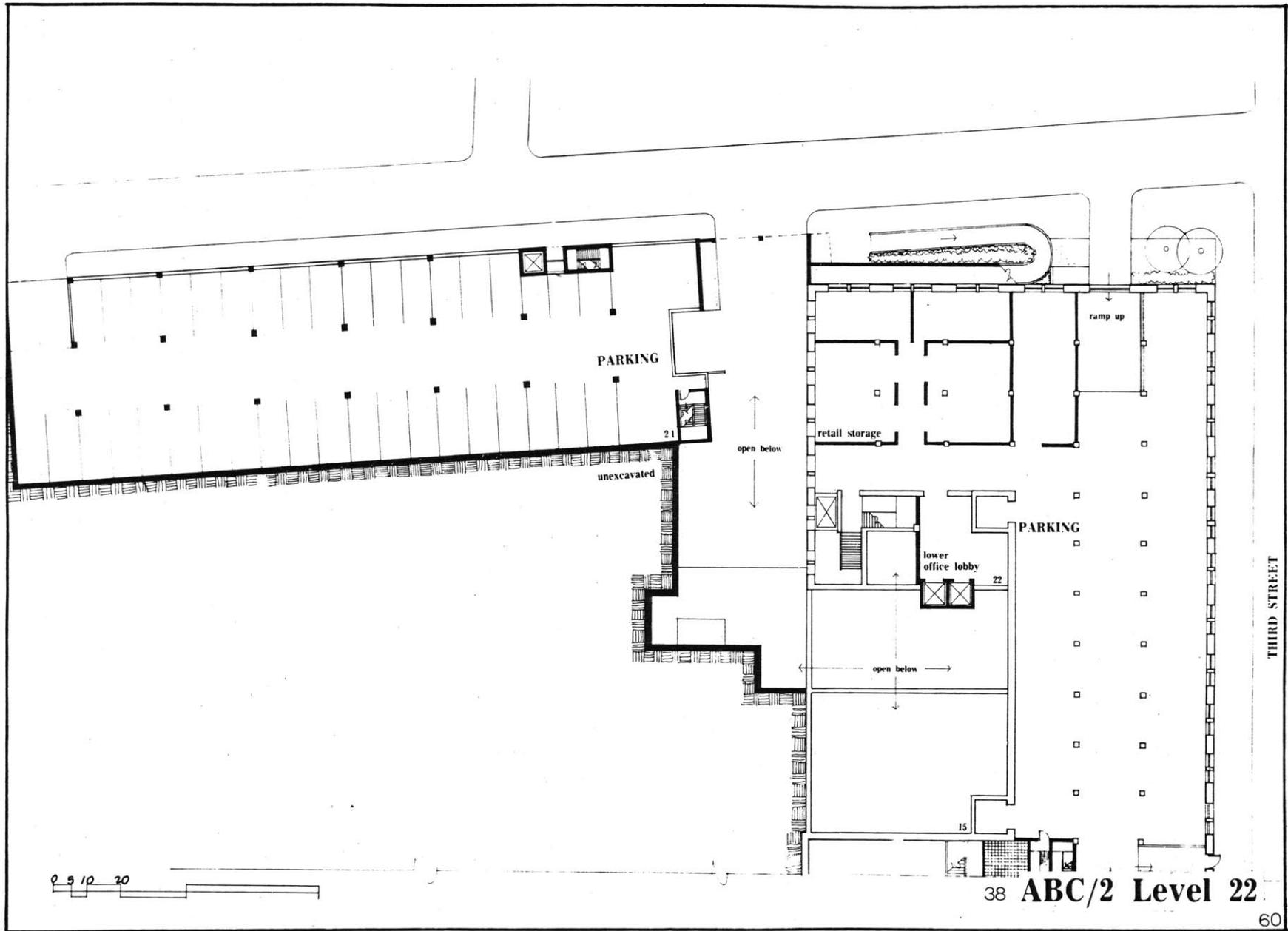
35 ABC/1 Levels 50 and 52



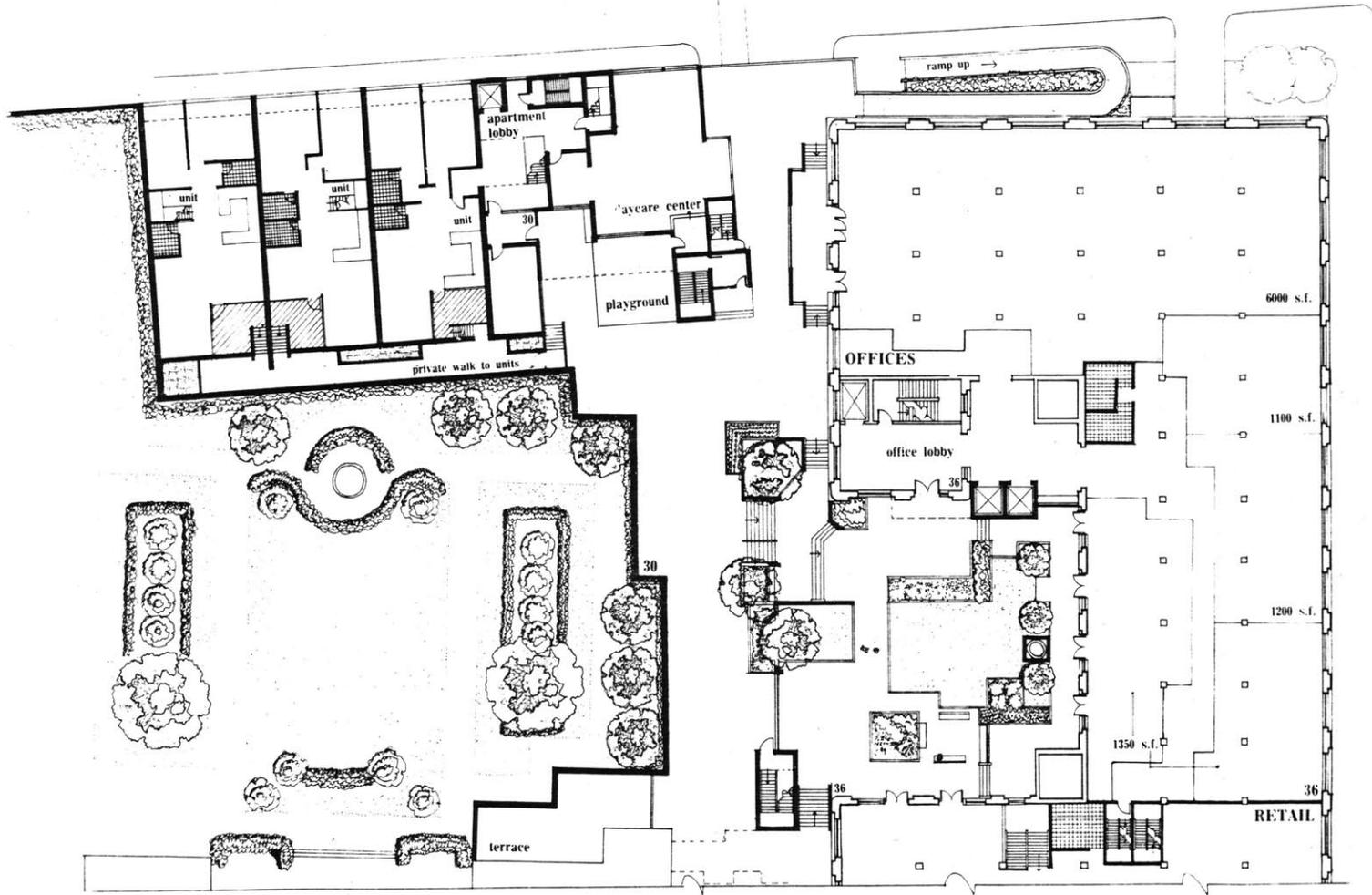
36 **ABC/1 Level 66**



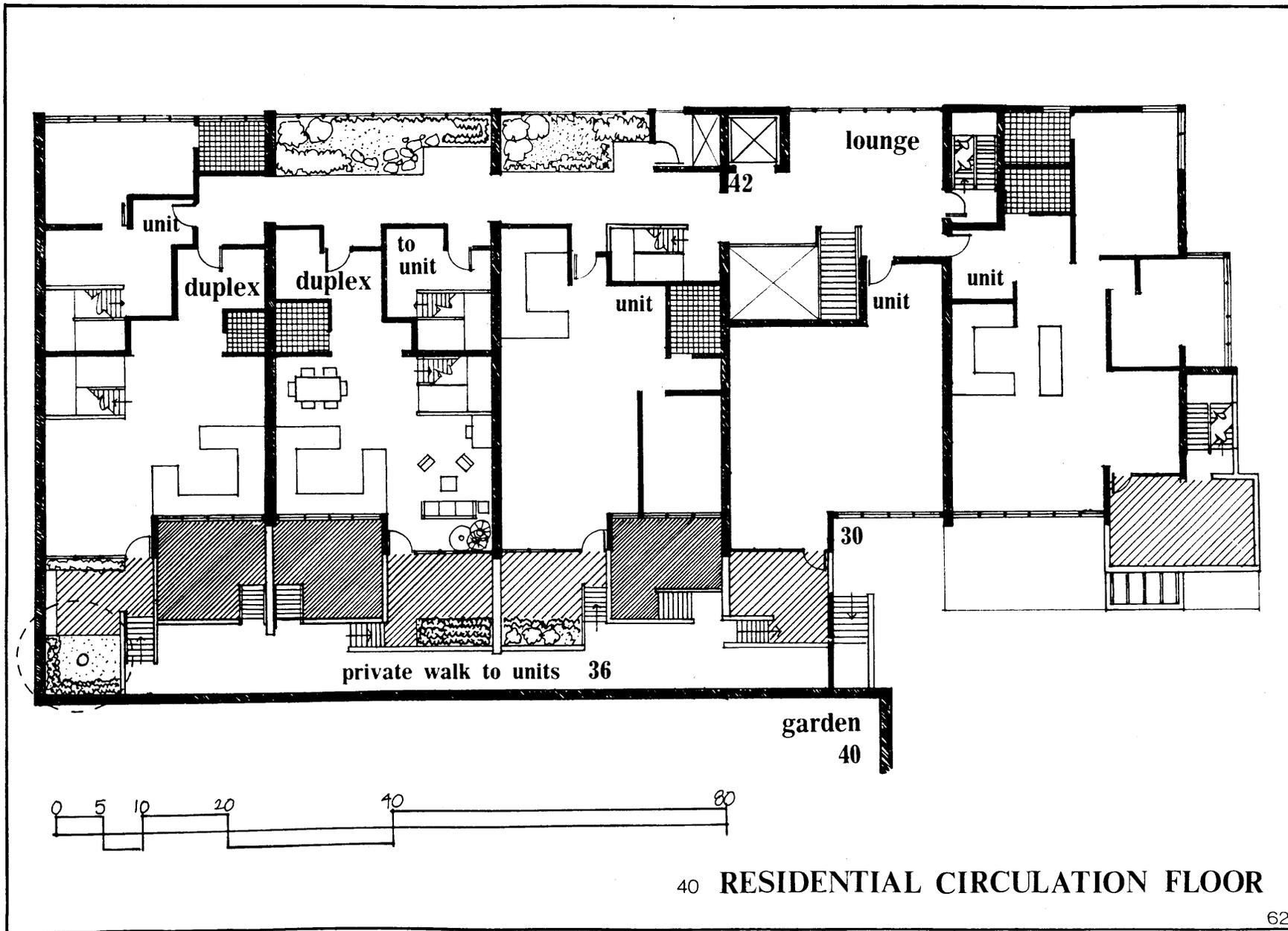
37 ABC/2 Levels 11 and 15

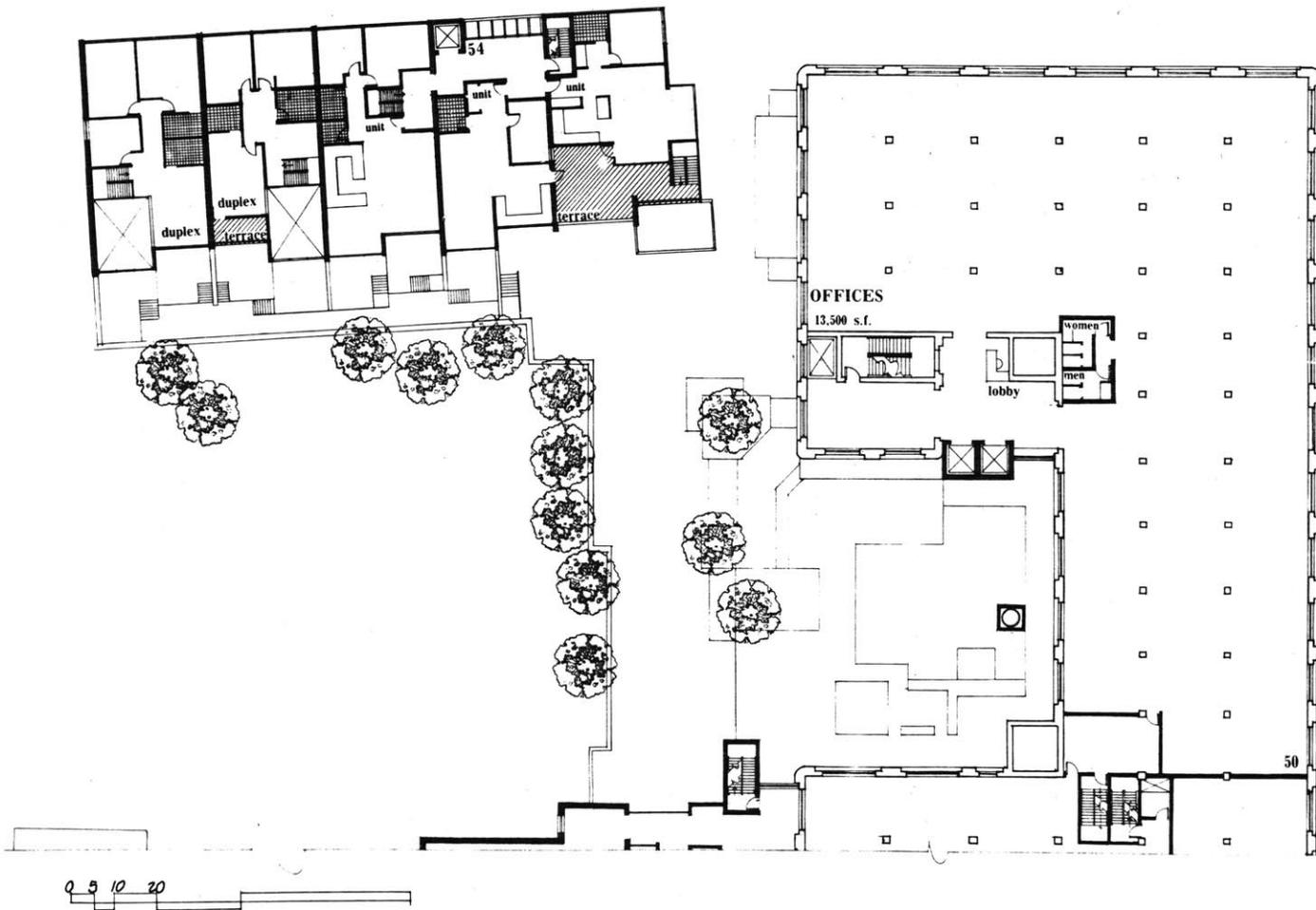


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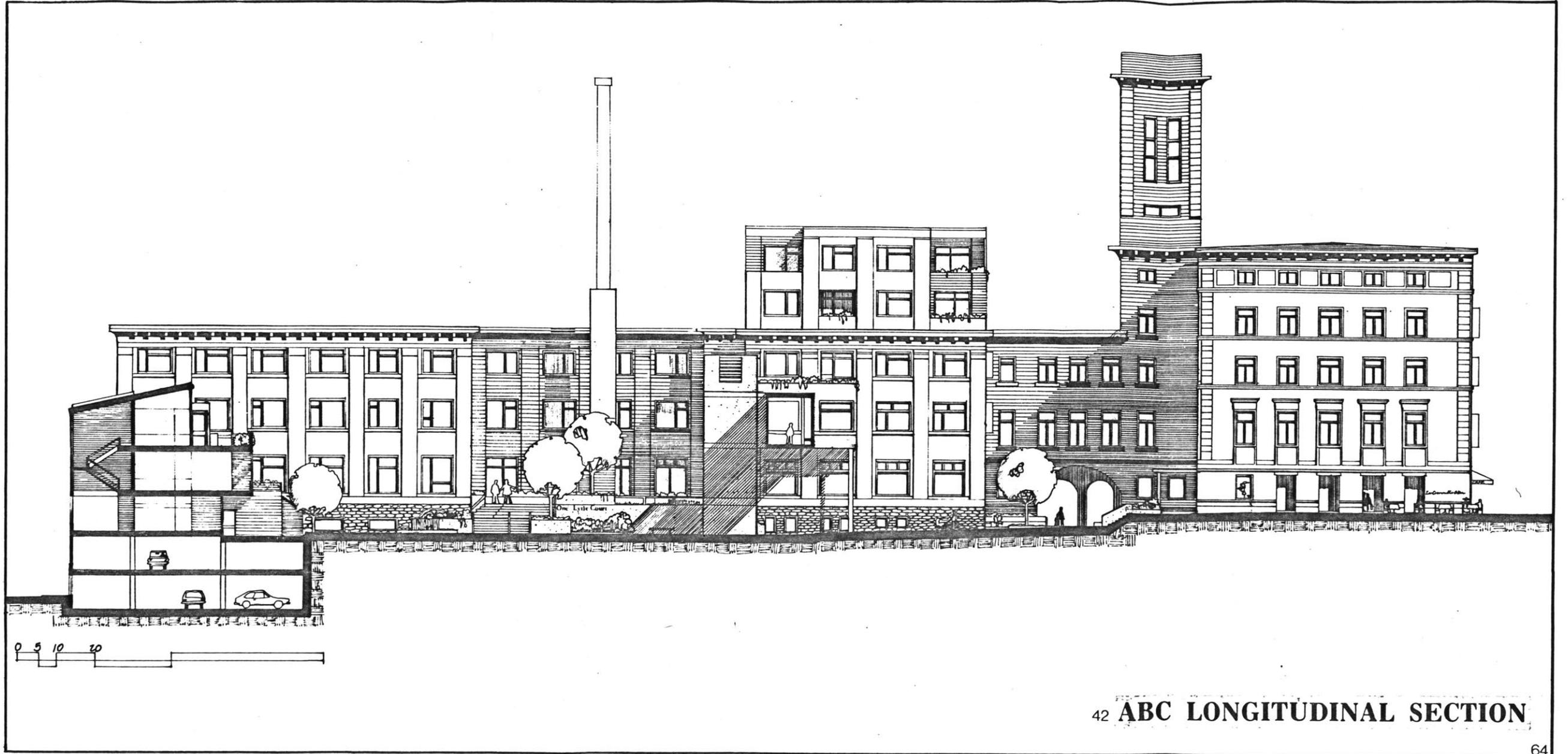


39 ABC/2 Levels 30 and 36

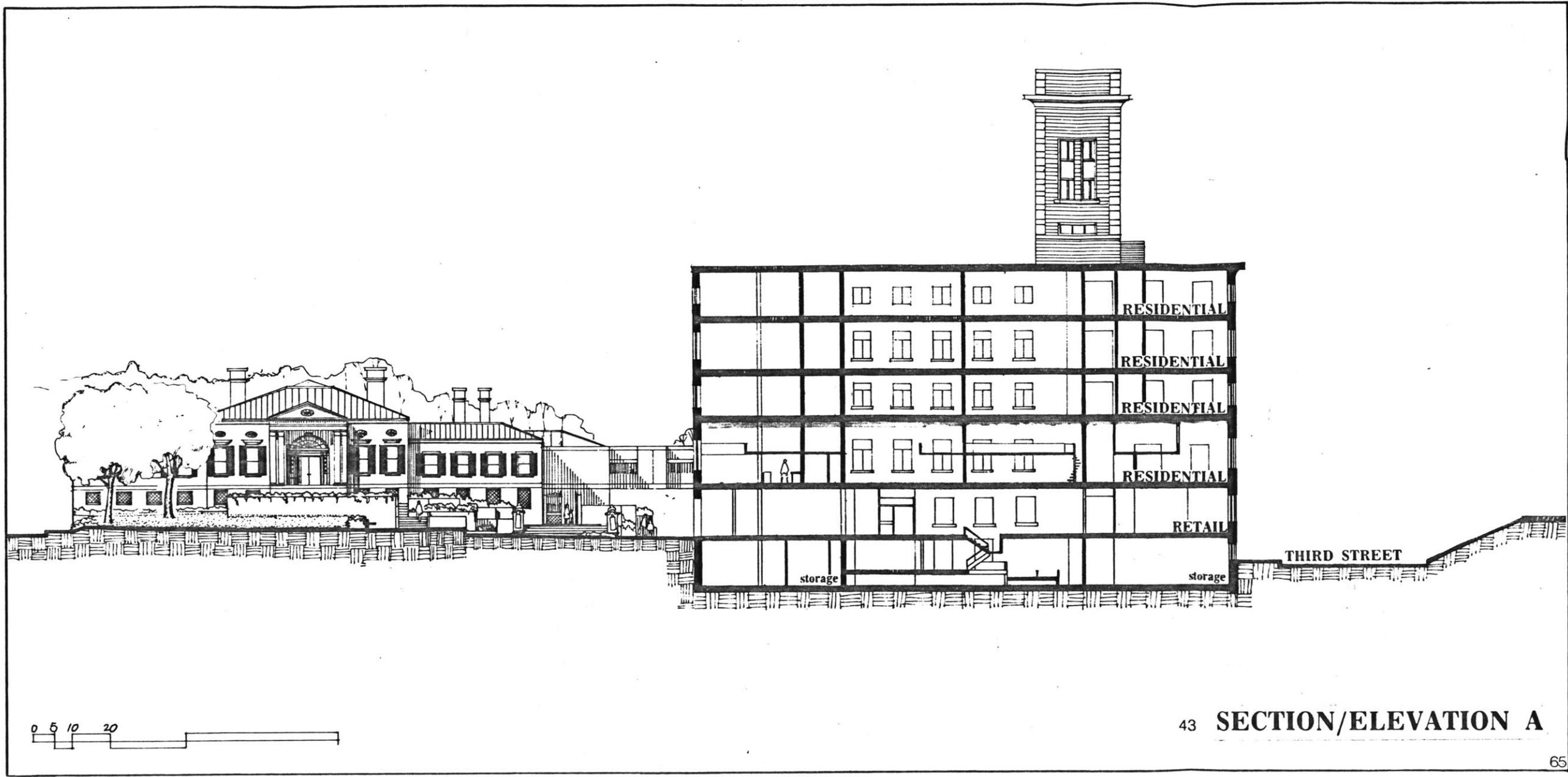




41 ABC/2 Levels 54 and 52

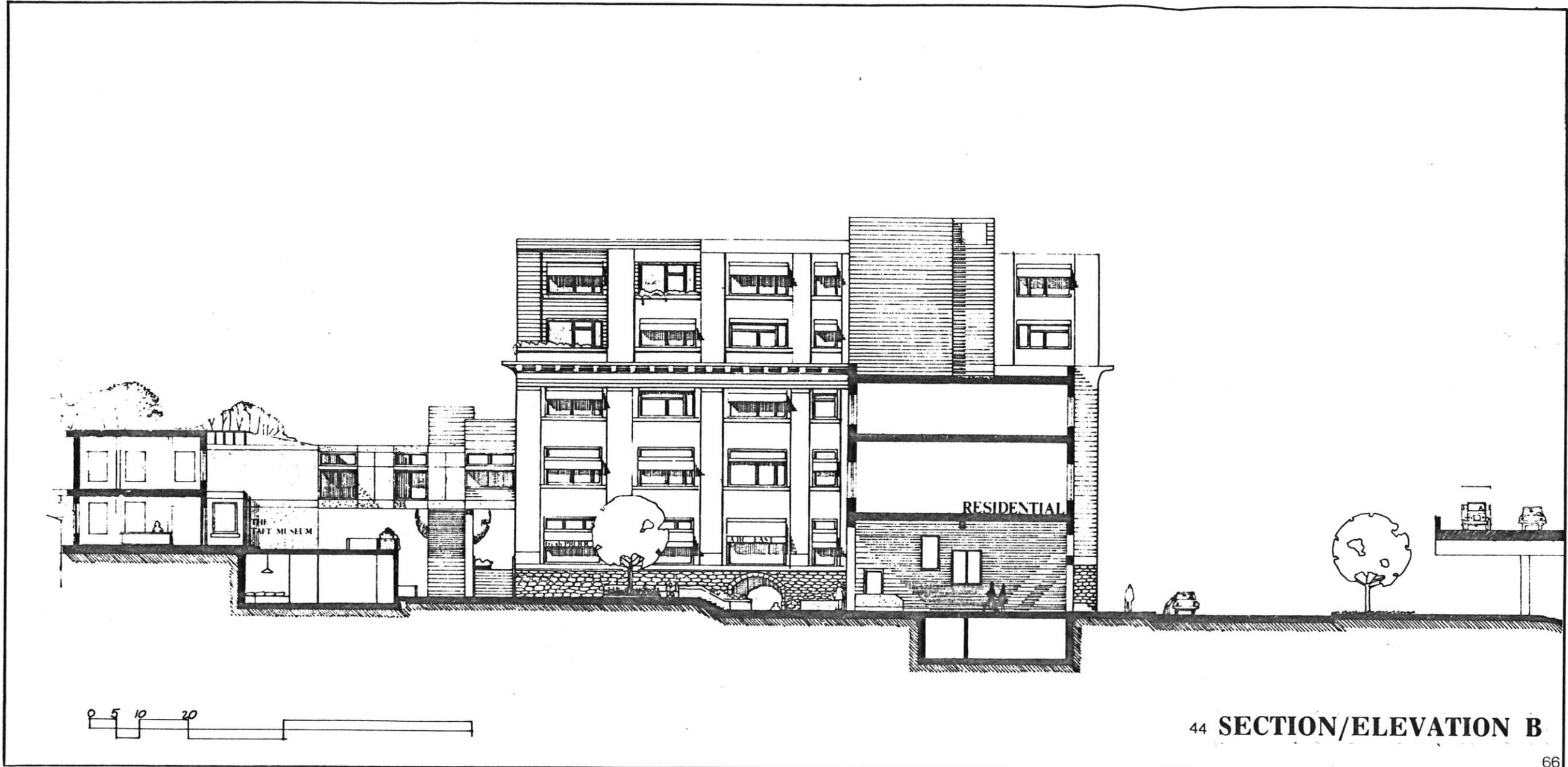


42 ABC LONGITUDINAL SECTION

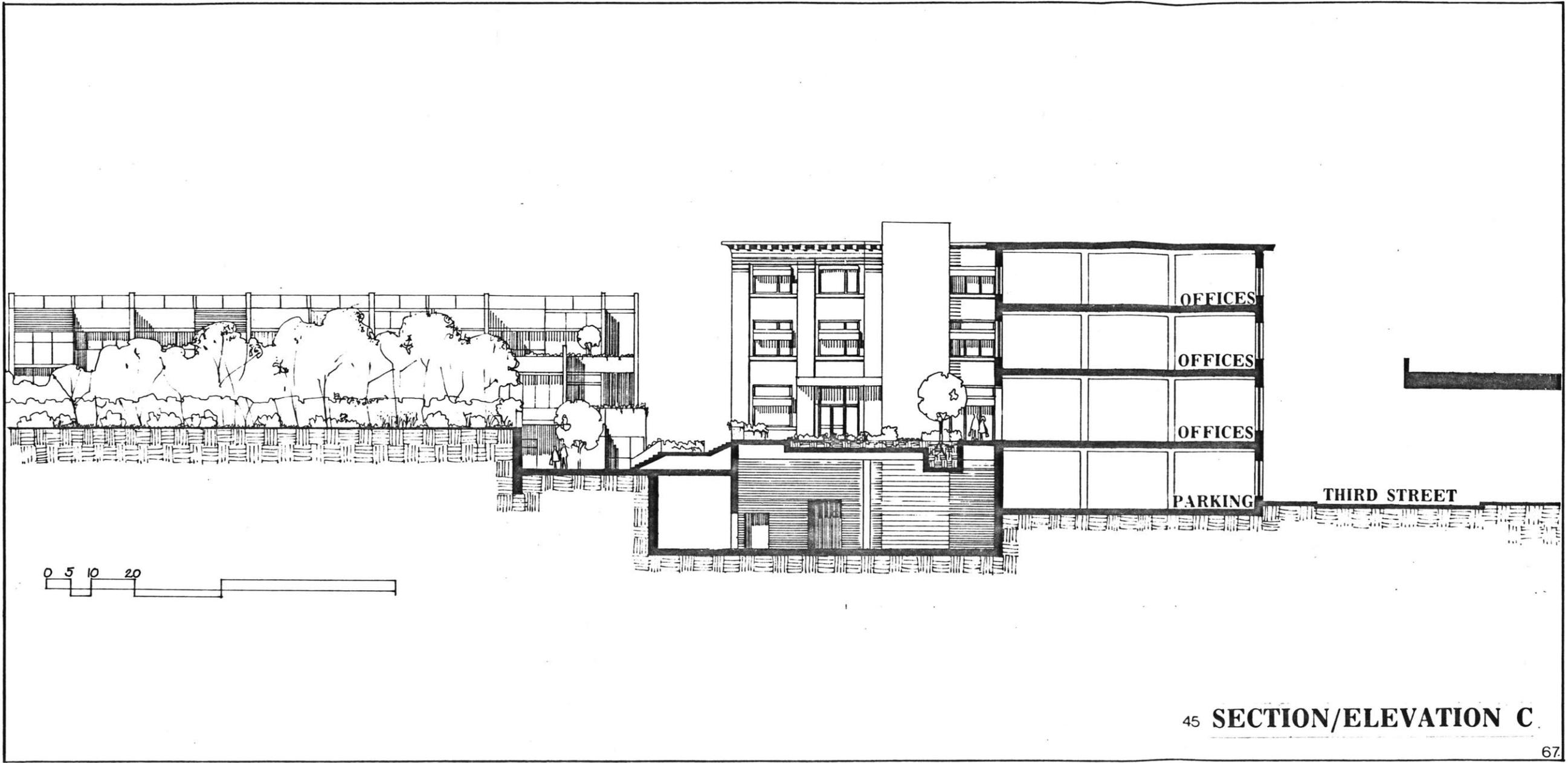


0 5 10 20

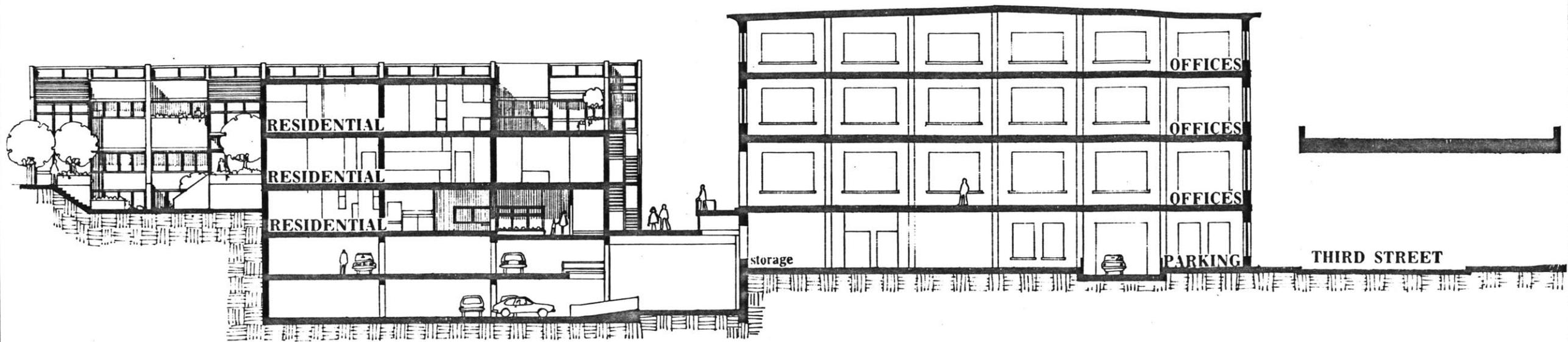
43 SECTION/ELEVATION A



44 SECTION/ELEVATION B



45 SECTION/ELEVATION C



46 SECTION/ELEVATION D

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This thesis is dedicated to my two Davids.