

ABSTRACT

A WORLD RELIGIONS CENTER FOR DIVINITY SCHOOL
HARVARD UNIVERSITY CAMBRIDGE, MASSACHUSETTS

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Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master in Architecture. in the Department of Architecture on May 23, 1960.

In April of 1957, the department of World Religions was created at Harvard University and the first chair was established with an endowment provided by an anonymous donor. The department is devoted to the study of the religions of the world, not only from a scholarly, intellectual point of view, but, also from a point of view that can be gained only through close and intimate association.

The university felt that these goals could be achieved best by providing living and study accommodations under one roof. Not having space in existing buildings to achieve these goals, a house was rented on Huron Avenue in North Cambridge.

The environment provided by the house has not been adequate. It could only house eighteen students; the lease can not be renewed; it is located a considerable distance from the main campus and Andover Hall, the headquarters of the Divinity School. Beyond the physical limitations of the house, is the lack of a plant which states the philosophical concept of the World Religions Center.

To solve this problem Dr. Robert Slater, professor of World Religions, proposed that the University construct a new building to house the department. In March of 1959 funds, from the same donor that endowed the first chair of the Department of World Religions, were provided to build a center to the specifications of the department.

The purpose of this thesis is to design a structure and necessary adjunct facilities that will express and enhance the concept of this center.

Based on the program and recommendations of Dr. Robert Slater the following facilities have been provided: living accommodations, teaching facilities, worshiping facilities, recreation rooms, and necessary service facilities.

The structure designed to house these facilities has been organized in sections to provide teaching and administration space on the first level. Two storied apartments occupy the second and third level. Access to the apartments is provided by an all weather gallery at the second floor level.

The building is sited to form two courts; one private and one semi-private. The visual climax of the center is formed by a meditation chapel, two stories in height and contrasting in structure and form.

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Dear Dean Belluschi:

I hereby submit this thesis, entitled
"A WORLD RELIGIONS CENTER FOR DIVINITY
SCHOOL HARVARD UNIVERSITY CAMBRIDGE
MASS." in partial fulfillment for the
degree of Master in Architecture.

Very truly yours,

Jerome W. Lindsey, Jr.

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A WORLD RELIGIONS CENTER

FOR DIVINITY SCHOOL

HARVARD UNIVERSITY

CAMBRIDGE, MASS.

Introduction

The purpose of this thesis is to explore the possibility of creating a physical environment in which scholars and practitioners of the living religions of the world may come together to live and study.

At a recent seminar attended by the author the following statement was made by Dr. Slater, Professor of World Religion - Harvard University: " Religion, it has been said, is not taught, but caught through personal meeting and friendship. The same may be said concerning the study of religions. Much may be gained from lectures and books, but for deeper appreciation and understanding there should be opportunity for more informal and personal discussions."

The creation of the Department of World Religions of Divinity School, Harvard University was a crystalization of the idea expressed by Dr. Slater.

To further extend this idea of man understanding man, a building and all necessary adjunct facilities is proposed.

The following news release by the Harvard University News Office gives a brief description of the proposed building.

"Harvard University will build a Center for the Study of World Religions. Here graduate students and visiting scholars from all over the world will live while they study at Harvard and mix with faculty and students.

Construction will start in the near future on a modern structure near the Harvard Divinity School in Cambridge.

A residence at Harvard has already been established... in a rented house in Cambridge...for scholars of several religions of the world. The new Center will provide permanent facilities. A generous gift for this purpose has been received.

The new Center for the Study of World Religions will provide a meeting place for these visiting scholars and Americans at Harvard who are studying foreign religions. It will mean, for instance, that a graduate student in Indic studies might gain firsthand knowledge of his subject by exchanging ideas with a Hindu scholar from India well-versed in that field.

In future years, a Buddhist monk from Burma, a Shinto priest from Japan, and a Muslim scholar from the Near

East, all may be living in the Center, meeting informally with each other and with students studying for degrees in the Harvard Divinity School.

Funds for the Center have been provided by the same anonymous donors who endowed the first Professorship in World Religions at Harvard. The Rev. Dr. Robert H. L. Slater holds that chair.

The establishment of the Professorship and now the attractive facilities of the new Center are intended by the donors to "encourage communication between men of differing religious faiths." The growth of interest in World Religions today points both to the need for better understanding and also to the need for the kind of informal personal meeting and discussion that the new Center will make possible.

The Center is designed to allow for flexibility in its use. Basically there will be apartments for 20 married students and visiting scholars, their wives and children, eight apartments for single students, an apartment for a visiting professor and another for a faculty member and his family.

Each apartment has a small kitchen so that the residents may prepare their own food to conform to the dietary

regulations of their faiths.

The Center will have a lecture room for some 80 students, a library and smaller seminar rooms; a Common room and offices for faculty members.

In a small chapel or meditation room, residents may pursue their religious exercises according to the religious rites of their own faiths."

It is my desire and purpose to create a building that: is devoid of any religion's symbolism, but still sensitively expressive of the universality of all religions which strive to explain man's relationship to his God;

sponsors a maximum of intercourse in and out of class and at the same time provides an inviting retreat where one may live his own culture with dignity.

Concept And History Of Department Of World Religions;
Divinity School, Harvard University

In news releases to the Christian Science Monitor and UNESCO Dr. Robert Slater, the first Professor of World Religions at Harvard University, delineates the concept of the Center for the study of World Religions. The following excerpts from the news releases give the *raison d'etre* of the proposed center, the motivations for its establishment, its philosophical and theological basis, its underlying purpose, and its anticipated method of operation.

"To find out the Faiths by which men and women really live is not nearly so easy as some people seem to imagine. It's not just enough to read their scriptures or even to study their institutions. The only royal road to such knowledge is friendship. Across the world today there is a growing appreciation of what may be gained if class room and library studies of other Faiths can be supplemented by opportunity for more personal discussion. This is felt to be necessary not only in order to understand other Faiths but also in order to communicate our own views more effectively. It is an opportunity of this kind that the Center for the Study of World Religions aims to provide.

This center will be primarily a center for a scholarly approach to the whole subject. We shall have here a

good number of men who are typical representatives of their particular faith. We shall have men who in informal discussion, each one saying quite straightly and honestly what he really believes, will not only come to understand each other better, but, perhaps in the light of such discussion, understand their own search for religious reality. I should hope that many would come believing that it is possible not only to learn about other religions but to learn from them. I hope that Hindu, Buddhist, Muslim, and other students from the Orient with our students from North America will find here an atmosphere in which they will feel encouraged to explain and articulate their own beliefs and follow their own religious disciplines.

The Center for the Study of World Religions marks the development of a new program initiated two years ago. Responsibility for the program itself rests entirely with the University, and more particularly with the Harvard Divinity School with which the new Center is closely associated. This, of course is not an entirely new interest at Harvard, and the new program is closely related to courses of study previously established there in various departments, including courses leading to the doctorate degree in the History and Philosophy of Religion. One new course of study now arranged for provides for an advanced study of the

great religions in general, together with special study of the questions raised by modern research in this and related disciplines of general interests to all students of religion.

A good proportion of the thirty residents at the new Center will be engaged in this new program. They will include Christian students from the Divinity School and elsewhere who seek to qualify to give courses dealing with the great religions of the world. We also expect a group of students from the Orient, representative of other faiths, who have a similar interest in the study of other religions besides their own. We also hope to invite visiting scholars of other faiths and a number of post-doctoral and special students, who, while pursuing their own particular studies, may wish to share the life of the Center and contribute to our discussions."

Statement of The Problem

The problem facing the Department of World Religion, Divinity School is the lack of a physical plant in which to carry-out its program. The Department has attempted to solve this problem in part by leasing space in the immediate vicinity of Andover Hall, headquarters for Divinity. This has not been successful in the past, particularly during the current academic year. This year the largest space available could accomodate only sixty percent of the students. It is located about a mile from Andover Hall. This space is inadequate not only in area but also in design.

The initial attempt of the Department to solve its problem was exerted in the direction of remodeling existing space. When professional advice was obtained it became obvious that it would be impossible to achieve the broad aims of the Department in any environment other than one designed for such aims. It was from an anonymous benefactor that funds have been made available for the construction of such a building.

Sub-Problems

1. Living Accomodations

Apartments should be simple, of a kind suitable for university students. It is desirable to have seperate bedrooms and study when possible. The composition

(number of children per family, number of bachelors, and married couples) will always vary from year to year. Therefore, it will be necessary to have flexible apartments. The apartments should provide opportunities for free intercourse, but at the same time they must provide sufficient privacy to enable the residents to observe their own religious habits including dietary customs.

2. Professor's House

This apartment being the representative of the university must not dominate the complex, less it hamper the total program of the Department.

3. Library, Seminar Classrooms, Lounge, Meeting Room and Exhibition Chapels

These spaces must be generally available to visitors, and so must be placed such that the traffic generated by each does not destroy the atmosphere of the center.

4. Recreational Facilities

These facilities must be placed such as to discourage their use by out-siders and at the same time to encourage the residents to take part in a friendly game for relaxation.

5. Chapel

This space must be the climax of the whole complex. It

should be designed to symbolize the center. It must be devoid of all symbols if it is to be truly meaningful to all.

6. Service Facilities

Laundry, food delivery, garbage disposal must all be handled in a manner not obtuse to the purpose of the center.

7. Parking

Adequate parking facilities are provided in the two adjacent lots off Francis Avenue.

PROGRAM OF SPACE REQUIREMENTS

Space and facility requirements for the World Religions Center will be discussed in the following sections:
living facilities, teaching facilities, worshiping facilities, recreational facilities and service facilities.

1. Living Accomodations

- A. Studio Apartments, 10 @ 400 sq. ft. : 4,000 sq. ft.
Apartments shall provide study, bedroom, kitchenette and bath.
- B. One Bedroom Apartments, 10 @ 600 sq. ft.: 6,000 sq. ft.
Each apartment shall provide one bedroom, living-study room, kitchen and bath.
- C. Two Bedroom Apartments, 8 @ 800 sq. ft. : 6,400 sq. ft.
Each apartment shall provide two bedrooms, living-study room, kitchen and bath.
- D. Three Bedroom Apartments, 2 @ 1,000 sq. ft.: 2,000 sq. ft.
- E. Guest Lecturer's Apartment, 2 @ 1,200 sq. ft.: 2,400 sq. ft.
Each apartment shall provide two bedrooms, study room, living room, kitchen and bath.
- F. Professor of World Religions Residence,
1 @ 1,400 sq. ft. 1,400 sq. ft.
Residence shall provide reception-living room, dining room, three bedrooms, study, kitchen and bath.

2. Teaching Facilities

- A. Library, 1 @ 2,000 sq.ft. 2,000 sq.ft.

Library shall be designed to accomodate fifteen students. Room shall be shaped to provide not more than two large tables, the remaining seats shall be lounge chairs arranged in an informal manner. The present library totals eight thousand books. Fifty per cent of these must be shelved on the main floor of the library. The remaining may be stored in an adjacent stockroom.

- B. Seminar Classrooms, 5 @ 700 sq,ft. 3,500 sq.ft.

These rooms shall be designed primarily for seminar-type classes. Each classroom shall be equipped to show slides or movies, and provide adequate storage space within or adjacent to same.

- C. Meeting Room or Lecture Hall

1 @ 2,000 sq.ft. 2,000 sq.ft.

Meeting Room shall be designed for the gathering of 60 to 80 people to listen to lectures, take part in discussions, show

slides and for various religious programs that will be sponsored by the center.

- D. Exhibition Chapels 2 @ 800 sq.ft. 1,600 sq.ft.

These chapels will be only places where traditional symbols of the various religions may be displayed. The chapels will be furnished on a rotating basis, that is, during the course of an academic year all of the religions in residence will have an opportunity to display their symbols. This space shall be located on the first floor in order that they may be accessible to visitors.

- E. Professor's Offices, 4 @ 100 sq.ft. 400 sq.ft.

This space shall serve as academic headquarters for the professors teaching classes at the center. Space shall contain desk, file cabinets, book shelf and chairs.

- F. Director's Office, 1 @ 400 sq.ft. 400 sq.ft.

The directors office shall be located near the main entrance, with private access to coat room, lavatory and conference room.

Office shall accomodate desk,
work table, files, book shelves
and space for three visitors.

G. Reception Lobby, 1 @ 800 sq.ft. 800 sq.ft.

This space shall provide a
comfortable transition from
out doors to indoors. It shall
introduce the persons entering
to the center.

A secretary-receptionist shall
be located here.

3. Worshiping Facilities

- A. Chapel or Meditation Space 1,000 sq.ft.

This space must be completely devoid of all recognizable religious symbols. It shall be a space where all residents and their families may feel free to go and pay homage to their God. The space must be some what removed from the lines of traffic in order to maintain its atmosphere. This space must be the climax to the building complex.

4. Recreation Facilities

- A. Living Room and Lounge #1 1200 sq.ft.

This space shall accomodate general gatherings and discussion groups of students. A kitchenette shall be located adjacent to this area for the purpose of serving coffee or tea. The space must be located in a central position, preferably on the first floor. The room must be informal in atmosphere and open to students at all times.

- B. Living Room and Lounge #2 300 sq.ft.
Similiar to A, only smaller and more intimate in character.
- C. Toilets, 4 @ 200 sq.ft. 800 sq.ft.
Public toilets shall be located on each level of the center that is open to the public. They shall contain water closet and lavatory.
- D. Public Telephones 2 @ 6 sq.ft. 12 sq.ft.
Public telephones shall be located on each level that is open to the public.
- E. Game Room 1,000 sq.ft.
This space shall provide space for indoor games of skill and relaxation. The location must be such that it will not disturb the quieter operation and atmosphere of the center, but at the same time it must be readily accessible to residents of the center. This space may also serve as an indoor play area during inclement weather for the children who will be living in the center.

F. Roof Terrace

This space will function similarly to E. However, a portion of this space shall be set aside for quiet meditation and study. The entire roof surface shall be treated for use.

5. Service Facilities

A. Laundry Room 600 sq.ft.

Space will be provided for the care of textiles, four washing machines, four dryers and two laundry trays.

B. Trash Room 100 sq.ft.

This space shall provide for temporary storage of trash until it is burned or hauled away. There will be no garbage.

C. Storage 1,000 sq.ft.

A storage cubicle shall be provided for each apartment.

D. Mechanical Equipment 2,000 sq.ft.

Space for all mechanical equipment; heating, plumbing and electrical.

E. Janitor's Closet 300 sq.ft.

Space for storage of cleaning gear shall be provided on each floor.

Space Tabulation for the World Religions Center

<u>1. Living Accomodations</u>	<u>sq. ft. areas</u>
A. Studio Apartments	4,000
B. One Bedroom Apartments	6,000
C. Two Bedroom Apartments	6,400
D. Three Bedroom Apartments	2,000
E. Lecturer's Apartment	2,400
F. Professor's Apartment	1,400
	<hr/>
	sub-total area 22,200

<u>2. Teaching Facilities</u>	<u>sq.ft.areas</u>
A. Library	2,000
B. Seminar Rooms	3,500
C. Meeting Room	2,000
D. Exhibition Chapels	1,600
E. Professor's Office	800
F. Director's Office	400
G. Reception Lobby	500
	<hr/>
	sub-total area 10,800

<u>3. Worshipping Facilities</u>	<u>sq.ft.areas</u>
A. Chapel	sub-total area 1,000

<u>4. Recreation Space</u>	<u>sq.ft. area</u>
A. Living Room #1	1200
B. Living Room #2	300
C. Toilets	800
D. Public Telephones	12
E. Game Room	1,000

sub-total area 3, 312

<u>5. Service Facilities</u>	<u>sq.ft. area</u>
A. Laundry Room	600
B. Trash Room	100
C. Storage	1,000
D. Mechanical Equipment	2,000
E. Janitor's Closet	300

sub-total area 4,000

Total Areas

1. Living Accomodations	22,200
2. Teaching Facilities	10,800
3. Worship Facilities	1,000
4. Recreational Facilities	3,312
5. Service Facilities	4,000
6. Circulation and Construction	14,000

TOTAL AREA OF BUILDING - SQ.FT

55,312

Site Selection

The major facilities for Divinity School, Harvard University are located in the northeast corner of the campus. Divinity School is centered around its headquarters in Andover Hall on Francis Avenue. Expansion of Divinity School has been planned for in the area immediately adjacent to Andover Hall by the Harvard Planning office. It will be necessary for World Religions Center to make use of many of the facilities of Andover Hall, such as library, classrooms and professors' offices, in order to avoid wasteful duplication. It would also be advantageous to relate this center to the older, established centers of the school.

With these criteria in mind, the site opposite Andover Hall bound by Francis Avenue, Bryant Street and Irving Street was chosen. A vicinity map is attached to show the relationship of this site to the remainder of the campus to the south. A detail plot of the site is also shown.

The atmosphere of the area is very quiet urban residential. A change is taking place in the neighborhood at present. At one time in the past the area was quite obviously a very high income bracket residential area, covered with large single family homes. Today, few of the large houses are occupied by single families. A large number of them have been converted into rooming houses for students.

Harvard University owns all of the land in the immediate vicinity and leases it to private individuals. The total image of this area is one of slow, but definite change, from an urban residential use to an institutional use.

The site is well treed on all streets and on the interior of the lot. The age and size of the trees vary from young to old and small to large.

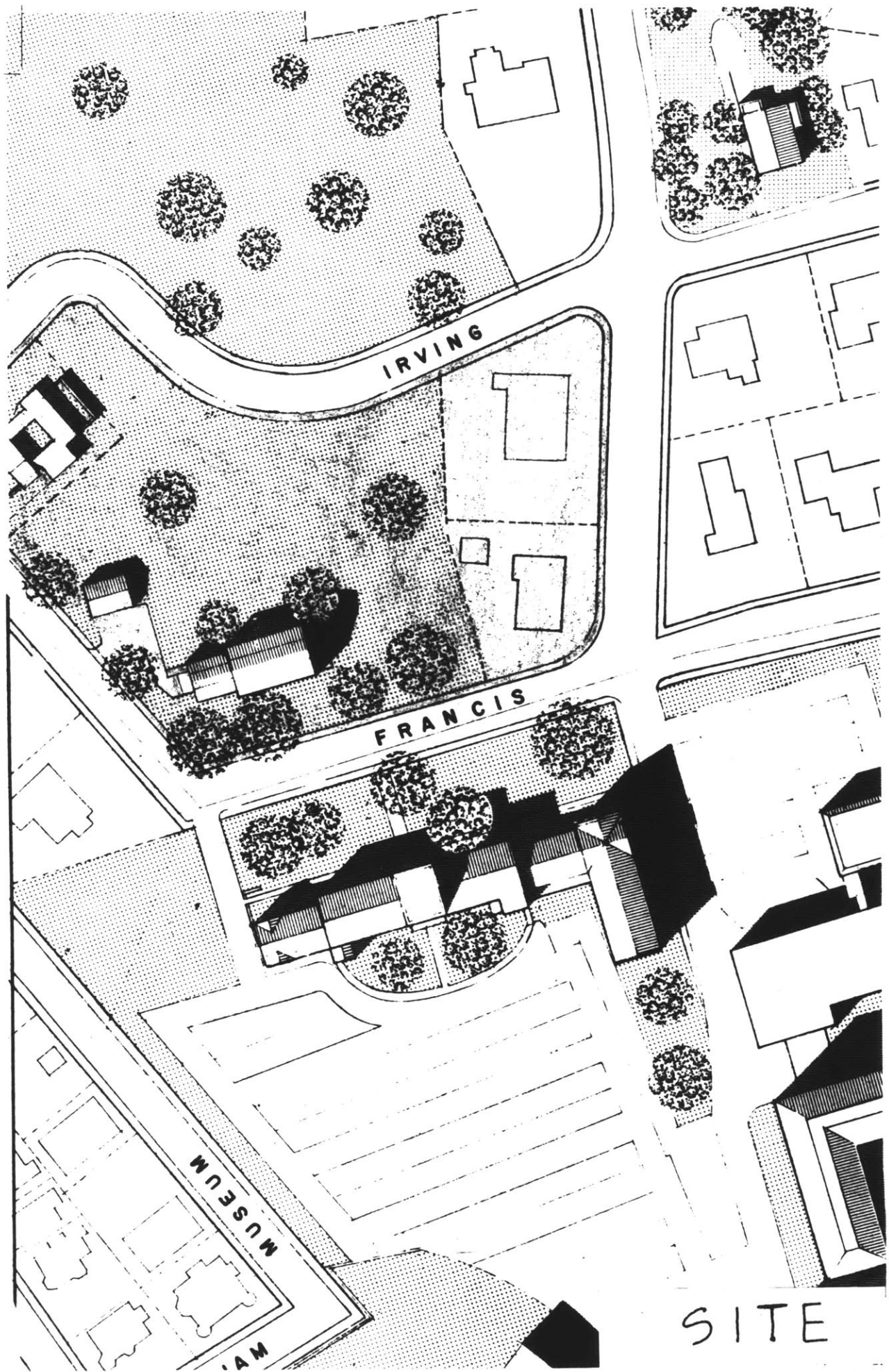
The slope of the land is from Francis Avenue downward toward Irving Street a total of five feet. This distance can not easily be seen with the unaided eye.

At present there are two houses located on Bryant Street. They are in fair repair. They will have to be removed in order to make room for the center.

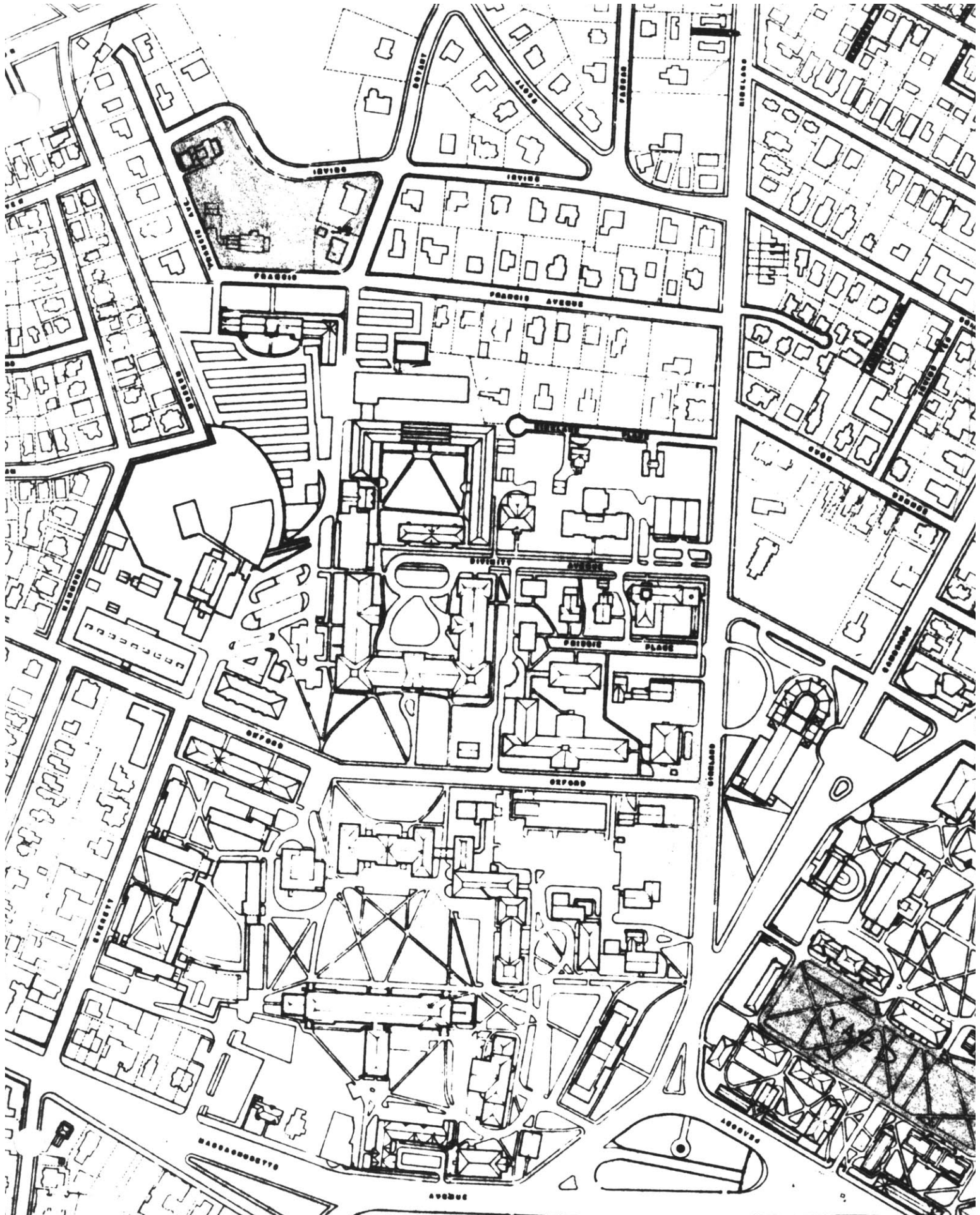
Neither Francis Avenue, Irving Street or Bryant Street are through streets. This condition considerably reduces auto traffic. The streets are used only as access streets to the residences.

The site is located one block from the M.T.A. line on Kirkland Street, which is five minutes from Harvard Square. Ample parking is provided in two large parking lots less than a half block away.

All of the previously stated facts lead to the conclusion that this is the site for the World Religions Center.



SITE



VICINITY MAP

50.

Solution to the Problem

To further the understanding of the universality of man is my interpretation of the purpose of the World Religions Center. The center aims to focus its attention on the individual religion and its practitioner and show by a study in similarity and contrast the common thread that ties all men together. This common thread is what I term the universality of man.

The center proposes to achieve this goal through the use of the classroom and the sharing of a common environment.

This environment must be such that it will promote a maximum amount of inter-change between the residents, and it must provide adequate and inviting privacy so that the individual residents may live their native cultures with ease and comfort.

It was my desire to create an integrated building. That is, a building where once the natural hierarchy of functions, spaces, volumes, texture, lines, rhythm and color are found, they can then be ordered to symbolize a force greater than the summation of the component parts.

With this purpose in mind, an objective, functional analysis of the program was made.: This revealed the following data.

1. Living Accomodations.
 - a. space to be used on individual level
 - b. access to accomodation by individual
 - c. need for flexibility to meet varying needs
 - d. volume of space must relate to man as an individual
 - e. total volume area one half of building cube

2. Teaching Facilities.
 - a. space to be used by groups
 - b. access to space by groups
 - c. varying uses; classrooms, library, lecture hall and offices
 - d. volume of space must relate to group
 - e. total volume one fourth of cube
3. Worshipping Facilities
 - a. space to be used by individuals or group
 - b. volume of space can provide a point of contrast
 - c. quiet, restful, somewhat removed from the elements of the center
4. Recreational Facilities
 - a. to be used generally by two or more persons
 - b. access by groups
 - c. flexible use
 - d. volume must relate to action room
 - e. noise problem
5. Service Facilities
 - a. to be used by individual
 - b. access by residents and service men
 - c. as central a location as possible

With this analysis several designs were worked out ranging from a complete and separate building for each functional element, to one vertical building containing all of the elements.

The form that I have chosen to express this analysis can best be described in three parts:

Section:

The teaching facilities - classroom, library, offices and assembly room - are located on the first level. The two story apartments occupy the second and third level. Recreational and service facilities are located on the basement level. The chapel rests on the third level and extends up to form a fourth level.

Plan:

The building is shaped in a bent "U" to form a large court, this court is further divided into a public access court and a private court.

This form solves the problem best for the following reasons:

1. Scale - The scale of the existing area is built up of free-standing three and four story buildings. This scale is further animated by a sharp play of light and shadow on a variety of materials. This is a very pleasant scale that relates quite well to the human figure. It was my desire to fit this building into that scale. With the space requirements of the program this implied a long building.
2. Atmosphere - The atmosphere required by the center is one of restful, quiet and contemplative repose. This atmosphere could not be achieved by facing the building on the street. It could be achieved by arranging the building around an internal space. This space serves as the point of orientation for any one entering the center. It is this space that will set the atmosphere for the center.
3. Climax - The meditation chapel forms, by way of contrast, a strong visual climax to the center.

The structure of the building was conceived in reinforced concrete. Post and lentic construction is used. The first floor bay is fourteen by twenty eight and the second and third floor bay is fourteen feet square. The exception to this is the meditation room. This change was made for a point of contrast in order to emphasize the space. This structure consists of a concrete shell supported on four posts.

The building is serviced by utility lines below the surface of Irving Street. Electrical service and a steam supply main owned by the university is located below Francis Avenue.

Within the framework of my interpretation of the purpose of the World Religions Center and an objective analysis of the program of space requirements I have endeavored to find a relationship which is consistently logical and expressive of the purpose of the Center. Once this relationship was discovered, the task was then one of ordering it and giving it as powerful an expression as possible.

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