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i n   E a s t   V i l l a g e

A p l a c e t o l i v e  
i n E a s t V i l l a g e

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November 27, 1998

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Dr. Paul Maas

A Master's Degree Project submitted to the Faculty of Environmental Design in partial fulfillment of the requirements of the Master of Architecture degree. Faculty of Environmental Design, The University of Calgary.



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The University of Calgary  
Faculty of Environmental Design

The undersigned certify that they have read, and recommend to the Faculty of Environmental Design  
for acceptance, a Master's Degree Project entitled

A place to live  
in East Village

submitted by Teresa Corina Johannesma in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of  
Master of Architecture.

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Date

# A b s t r a c t

As this Master's Degree Project grew and evolved, the question of what it was about became much clearer. As an architectural resolution the project is relatively large, but the underlying issues and design responses are basic. Reflecting the process of research and design, the written discussion of the project is divided into three separate yet interrelated sections - setting, people, and design.

**S e t t i n g** The setting of this project includes the area of East Village on the east of Calgary's downtown core, and the site - the two blocks in the southwest corner of East Village. Together they are representative of the old, rundown and deteriorated pieces of land in the downtown core that have been left vacant over the years and are awaiting redevelopment. Such areas are unattractive because of the negative externalities surrounding them. Seemingly unfit for human habitation, they often end up as large surface parking lots for downtown workers.

**P e o p l e** In the end, this project is about and for the people, considering their relationship to each other and the urban space around them. It is for the people who work and live in East Village now, who need buildings and a sense of community, and it is for the people of Calgary who need or would like an affordable place to live in the downtown. How to build in the downtown requires an understanding that the places people live effect their lives, whether at the smaller scale of their residence or the neighborhood it is apart of.

**D e s i g n** The intention behind the architectural response is to connect the site and people to each other and together to the rest of the city through buildings and the spaces between them. This has led to a composition of twelve low - scale buildings broken down into four blocks. Programmatically the buildings are mixed - use with a combination of residential, commercial, educational, social and leisure spaces with a special emphasis on transforming East Village into an Arts District for downtown Calgary.



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# I n t r o d u c t i o n

Calgary's current economic growth and rapid population increase is only making the desperate need for affordable housing worse. Little, if any, affordable rental construction in the city, combined with a rush of migration of people looking for work, is leaving a lot of people without a place to live. With few resources or options many have been forced to live on the streets and look to one of the often crowded shelters for a warm place to sleep.

In response to the need for low - income and affordable rental housing in Calgary, the initial focus of this Master's Degree Project was to explore the social and architectural issues of this type of housing for the downtown. While also responding, within this context, to the economic constraints that such a project [or any project for that matter] dictates. This was a humble beginning to the project that resulted. Although I never wavered from the intention of designing affordable housing for people who need such places, the size and scope of the project became much larger because ultimately the program and design solution was strongly influenced by the final choice of the site.

Once the building type for the project was chosen, the search began for a feasible building site within the boundaries of downtown Calgary. This task quickly proved difficult since the appropriate site required not only a land value low enough to realistically be considered for low - income housing, but also a suitable area for people to live. My options were limited.

East Village stood out because it is difficult to ignore - an old rundown area on the eastern edge of downtown few people realize exists or at least try to believe it doesn't. I admit that this area started out at, and remained at, the bottom of my list of potential sites for quite a while. Rather than a place just in need of a little dusting off and cleaning up, East Village appeared to be too far gone to be considered for anything, least of all housing - any housing. In desperate need of mass redevelopment - empty land and economic feasibility seemed to be the only criteria it fulfilled. East Village is a troubled area - an area that has been victimized and left to suffer the consequences and problems of the misguided urban planning practices of the past.

The problem of East Village is that there are too many problems. There are too few people, too few buildings, infrastructure problems, it is desolate, fragmented, cut off from the rest of downtown and has an awful reputation.

It was only when I spent time walking [rather than driving] around the area on a sunny summer day that I began to imagine what East Village could be rather than what it is. I saw a man enjoying the morning sun, sitting on a bench reading a newspaper, while two neighbours, with their happy children in tow, had stopped on the side walk to say hello and how are you. I soon saw East Village as an area with potential, in need of a lot of attention and the most suitable area for this project.

There were many vacant lots to choose from in East Village on which to place the building. After looking at most of them and thinking about the programmatic needs of the project, I chose a parking lot on the west side of the King Edward Hotel, fronting onto 9th Avenue SE. It turned out to be the first site I chose but not the last.

I will not soon forget the words of Paul Maas as I showed him the site I had chosen. He said something like - this is an average site, and there are no real problems with it, and sure you could design a building for it, but what about this site over here - the one behind the Municipal Building with the LRT tracks running through it .... And that was it, little did Paul know he had triggered the question of what if, that I could not turn away from, even though it meant that one city block had turned into two and one building would quickly turn into twelve. And so goes the story behind my 'large Master's Degree Project' - a large site.

A site in East Village that needs and deserves to be reconsidered.

A site that is a victim of the roads that surround it and the LRT tracks that run through it.

A site that has been neglected and isolated, but mostly ignored, over the last thirty years.

A site, where the connection between the downtown office core to the west and East Village to the east, has been broken, leaving this piece of land as an island in the middle, and not really part of either.

Although the project essentially remained a design for affordable rental housing for those in need, the difficult condition and prominent location of the site, meant it quickly became much more. Instead, and more appropriately I think, the design for this lot in East Village has become about creating a place to live in a more wholistic and communal sense.

Rather than just one building, the project became about a collection of buildings that together with the spaces between them, and filled with the people that inhabit them, begin to recreate the community of East Village. To create a place where there isn't one now - or rather, create a place not just for the parked cars and the parking attendant who spends his days in the little ticket wicket - and doing this by creating buildings and spaces for people to live in.

Essentially, this project for the community of East Village is guided by the idea that -

" A good place to live is indeed a living place, it has and it remembers its past, it is responsive to the needs of its present occupants and it suggests that there will be future changes to come".<sup>1</sup>

This Master's Degree Project consists of two parts - a written analysis and a design solution, with the former a foundation for the latter. Through several research topics ranging from urban to dwelling design, the program and physical formal structure of the design project took shape.

The scope of this project is more general than specific. The design proposal for East Village developed from an urban and architectural design perspective. The essence of the scheme is in the larger gestures, such as the massing and organization of the buildings and the creation of public spaces, rather than in the details. The design

proposed in the end is meant to demonstrate one way to use buildings to address, in a positive and human way, a difficult urban condition and the social and dwelling needs of the people who are assumed to want or need to live there.

It is hoped that a greater appreciation and understanding may be gained about the urban environment and the design of buildings and the spaces formed between them. Designing them in a way that they enrich the downtown core, functionally, experientially and aesthetically. By using them to reduce or mitigate the impact of existing negative forces affecting a piece of land and to avoid such problems in the future.

It is also hoped that this project will increase the awareness that everyone deserves a good place to live and the way to create the opportunity through design, that a person's house will also become their home.



S e t t i n g

T h e o t h e r s i d e o f t h e t r a c k s



## The other side of the tracks



This project began with the selection and study of the setting, and as such it only seems natural that this also be the case with the discussion. Identifying and understanding the forces present within the setting while also appreciating its uniqueness was important to getting the project started. Reflecting this process, the discussion that follows is descriptive yet critical, forming a framework to legitimize the design principles and resolution to follow.

Once the setting was chosen, the project began with the broader geographic context of East Village and then focused in on the site in its south - west corner. The characteristics and problems of the site cannot be fully understood without this progressive decrease in scale because the two areas are connected not only physically, but also historically and psychologically. The negative conditions of the site, although specific to that corner, are rooted in the past with East Village's growth, evolution and transformation throughout the years. Any type of building intervention on the site, particularly at the

scale proposed here, will affect the area surrounding the site in all directions.

The formal structure of the design was strongly influenced by the site and its contextual conditions. The streets and buildings that surround the site have a lot to do with how it is physically and how it feels psychologically or emotionally. As one intention of the project was to use the design to mitigate many of these negative forces acting on the site, it meant that in many instances the choices were obvious, such as determining the heights of the buildings, or looking at them in a different more positive way, such as the glass facade of the Municipal Building. The internal composition of the site, had a similar affect, determining such responses as elevating many of the buildings over the Light Rail Transit [LRT] tracks.

The deep rooted physical problems of East Village cannot be solved so easily or quickly, for much work is yet to be done, over a long period of time.

Building on the site and minimizing its internal and external conditions, will not be so grand a gesture as to magically restore East Village to its former glory and repair its awful reputation and image held by Calgarians. Just as the redevelopment of East Village will not solve the ills of Calgary's lacklustre downtown, Instead, this project seeks to stir the imagination and offer a beginning to a process that is typically difficult to get started.



## E a s t V i l l a g e



Within downtown Calgary there is a modern day - ghost town, a grey area wedged between the blue glass wall of the Municipal Building and the golden grassland of Fort Calgary. East Village has all of the recognizable signs of abandonment - old buildings, boarded up houses, empty streets, torn up side walks, vacant lots and overgrown grass. The remaining buildings, defying time and uselessness, stand in isolation from each other to form a loose grouping, each struggling to recall a more honourable past. The Simmons Warehouse on the edge of the Bow River, is a silent reminder of East Village's industrial roots. To the south, mature trees and old two and three storey brick buildings line 8th Avenue SE, clues it was once mainstreet, with shops and services for the residents of the community. And further down, several houses are proof that East Village was once a place, not only to work and shop, but also a place to live.

Today, the spaces between the buildings speak louder of the past than the buildings that remain. More than thirty years ago, most of the buildings were abandoned as businesses and residents left

East Village to enjoy the wide open spaces of the industrial parks and the suburbs.

Although several businesses continued to operate, deterioration of the area was inevitable. By 1970, downtown Calgary, similar to many North American cities, was a prime target for urban

renewal - mass demolition of the older buildings and the existing urban fabric surrounding them. In the name of progress and rejuvenation of the city, the land was cleared to make way for new office towers and high - rise apartment buildings, subsidized by the federal government.

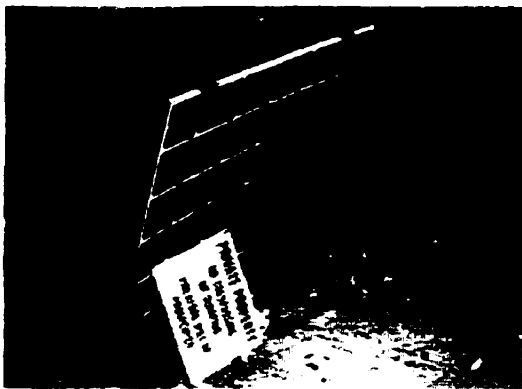
Only in East Village much of the land was never replaced as planned, except for the building of three seniors apartment buildings isolated in the southeast corner of 9th Avenue and 6th Street SE. Instead, the vacant lots became large surface parking lots for downtown workers commuting to work each day from their houses in the suburbs, the most profitable use of the land.

For many people, East Village is only an area to drive through, a short cut north from 9th Avenue SE across the Bow River to Memorial Drive. East Village is not a place to visit, let alone live. It is quiet and still, an area where nothing really goes on. On a nice day at the east end of 8th Avenue SE, old men and women sit on benches outside of their apartment building, sitting alone or chatting



with friends: while at the other end of the street scruffy homeless men lean against the St. Louis Hotel under the "HOTEL" sign, all of them are watching and waiting for something to happen. But, idleness has created a fragmented community with little hope and dignity to hold it together: East Village is a collection of vacant lots - voids -

"... waiting to be filled with purpose, with function, wishing to become a place with vibrant spirit; hoping to part - take in the living activities."<sup>2</sup>



The plight of East Village has not gone totally unnoticed or ignored. The potential for redevelopment of this area has been batted around by city officials and planners since the 1970's. Several studies have been done on East Village, mainly in the late 1980's and early 1990's, with the completion of several reports by both the City and private consulting firms. The most recent and comprehensive is the **East Village Area Redevelopment Plan [ARP]** produced by The City of Calgary's Planning and Building Department in 1994.

The ARP was created in part from the information gathered through the East Village Community Planning Advisory Committee, the Task Force on Housing in the Downtown, The East Village Community Study, and public meetings. The plan includes ten broad goals to be realized over time with the implementation of a series of policies including: land use, residential, commercial, industrial, open space, community facilities, transportation and urban design. The creation of a vital residential downtown neighbourhood where people come to work, live and visit is envisioned.

The largest stumbling blocks facing the redevelopment of East Village are the general negative perceptions and pessimistic attitudes held by those familiar with the area. Real - perceived, or a mixture of both. East Village is seen by outsiders as a rundown, no - man's land littered with drunks and bums passed out on the grass and hookers strolling the street. An area that attracts the criminal element, unsafe in the light of day let alone during the night. This view has only been growing stronger as the years have gone by, so now the vacant land in East Village seems unsuitable for anything, least of all a place to live.

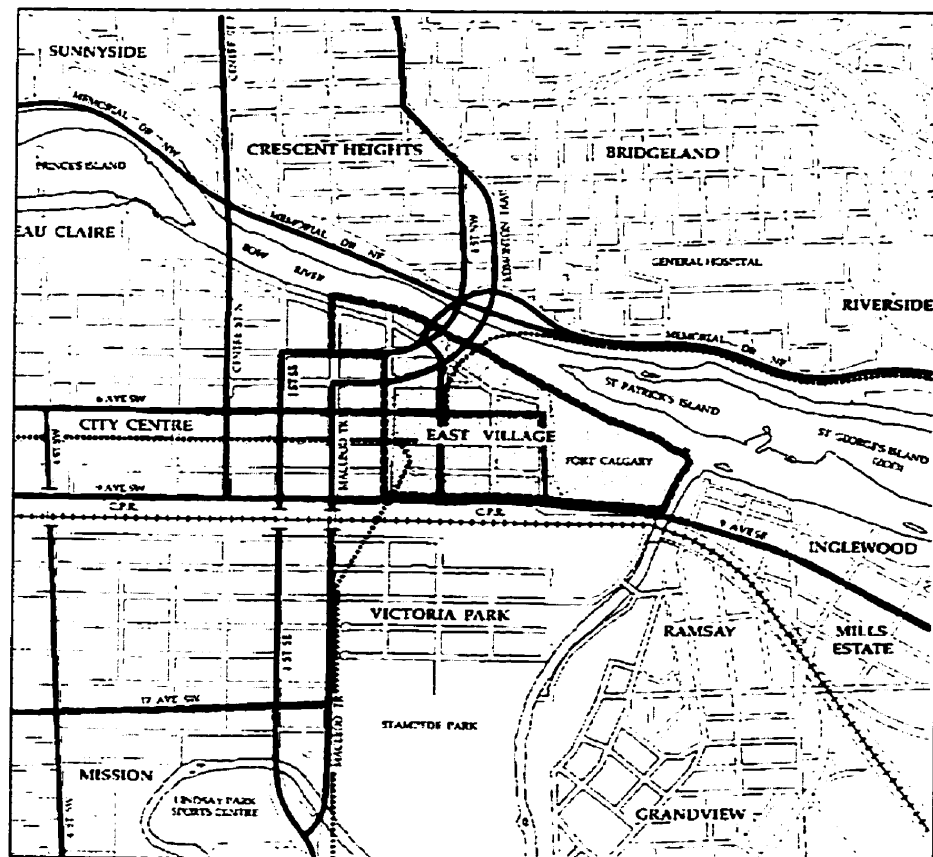
Because this area does attract the down and outs of society, social service organizations such as the Calgary Drop - In Centre and the Salvation Army Single Men's Hostel, are concentrated in and around East Village. Because the shelters are here the homeless keep coming. The most prominent and well known buildings in East Village are the bars with one room suites above them housing poor and transient people - mainly men. A general lack of ownership and responsibility for the area by

the residents has only perpetuated the lack of concern for East Village by the rest of Calgary.

Private developers are not blind to the rundown nature and not deaf to the bad reputation of this area. The state of East Village right now makes it an undesirable place to live and therefore a risky area to invest in building new residential and commercial space. As a result, the ARP document outlines the key role the City of Calgary must take in order to imitate the redevelopment of East Village.

Although the City supports redevelopment and has addressed a variety of issues so far, further action is needed to make this area more attractive to private developers and future residents.

Starting on the other side of the tracks



Area map of East Village and surrounding neighborhoods



# S i t e



a carving found on the site - beside the tracks

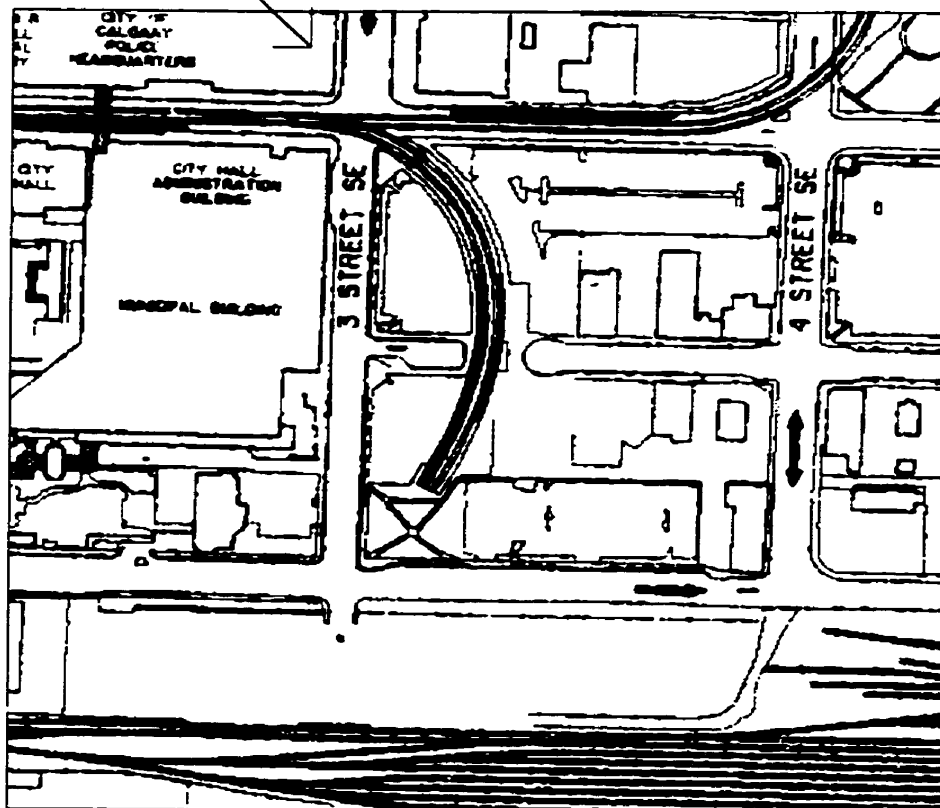
Although relatively small in size, East Village is geographically and contextually diverse. This is reflected in its common subdivision into four areas - the Northeast Quarter, Southeast Quarter, Western Blocks, and the Commercial Center. The Commercial Center is the site chosen for this project.

The site is composed of two City owned blocks in the Southwest corner of East Village, within 3rd and 4th Streets SE and 7th and 9th Avenues SE. It is a piece of land - a transition space - lying between the downtown core and the area of East Village, connected to neither and isolated from both.

This part of East Village was once part of its original shopping precinct with three and four storey buildings strung out along 8th Avenue SE - the primary pedestrian connection and focus of the community. Today, this function has been lost, and the site's significance lies in its ability to hold the parked cars of visitors to downtown and the Municipal Building across the street. In the left over space, at the corner of 3rd Street and 9th Avenue SE, punctuating the LRT tracks as they descend underground, is a small landscaped park.



Sitting on the other side of the tracks



Topographical map showing south west corner of East Village



Looking south east towards the site and East Village beyond

## O n t h e e d g e

In an automobile dominated city center, the streets and avenues circling the site are not unlike most of those in downtown Calgary. Built for speed, these roadways are laid out on a grid - straight and wide, to move rush hour traffic quickly into and out of the downtown core. The LRT tracks, that run along the north side of the site, aggravate the lack of three dimensional enclosure of the streets as they disrupt the flow of movement and leave 7th Avenue SE as an empty corridor much of the time.

The crossroads that frame the site, have suffered at the hands of the primacy of these streets. Too few buildings and a lack of enclosure is the typical condition of this area. The corner of 3rd Street and 7th Avenue SE is probably the worst. Although the intersection is well used with people walking or standing waiting for the walk sign, the feeling is eerie and uncomfortable with two old parkades on one side and the heavy sandstone clad concrete base of the Municipal Building on the other. The corners of 3rd Street and 9th Avenue SE and 4th Street and 7th Avenue SE are not much better as they are too exposed and barren to be comfortable places to be.

N o r t h - of the site, lies 7th Avenue SE, containing the north and south bound LRT tracks. On its north edge stands a raised platform station with an old four story concrete slab parkade for police vehicles and Rick's Auction Galleries behind it.



N o r t h



E a s t

E a s t - along the east side of the site, 4th Street SE runs north from 9th Avenue SE through East Village and over the Bow River to Memorial Drive and Edmonton Trail. Because it links the north and south sides of the river, 4th Street SE is mainly used by people as a short - cut route from one side to the other.

S e t t l i n g - The other side of the tracks

N o r t h - The site is bounded to the north by the east side of the tracks, which are owned by the Canadian Pacific Railway.

E a s t - The site is bounded to the east by the tracks, which are owned by the Canadian Pacific Railway.

S o u t h - The site is bounded to the south by the tracks, which are owned by the Canadian Pacific Railway.

W e s t - The site is bounded to the west by the tracks, which are owned by the Canadian Pacific Railway.

N o r t h - The site is bounded to the north by the tracks, which are owned by the Canadian Pacific Railway.

E a s t - The site is bounded to the east by the tracks, which are owned by the Canadian Pacific Railway.

S o u t h - of the site lies 9th Avenue SE running parallel to the CPR railyard with long lengths of parked rail cars. As one of the main feeder routes out of downtown to the eastern side of Calgary, this strong boundary is a three lane 'speedway' with an average weekday traffic volume of 10 000 cars per day.



South



West

W e s t - Third Street, similar to 4th Street SE, connects the north - south areas of downtown. The east facade of the Municipal Building strongly defines the site on the west side with a brown brick high rise apartment building to the south.

## A d j a c e n t   t o   t h e   s i t e

Seven buildings stand adjacent to the site as small islands in a sea of parked cars - or asphalt, depending on the time of day or day of the week. These buildings represent Calgary's industrial and downtown history and the life that is determined to remain in East Village. Although more business operations have moved out than in over the years, there is an eclectic mix of retail, repair, service, industrial and wholesale businesses, serving both the residents and visitors to the area.



Several of Calgary's oldest buildings stand in East Village and a sight for sore eyes in a city of a relatively short history and few remaining original buildings. Five buildings are considered potential heritage buildings, including the St. Louis, King Edward and Cecil Hotels, the Hillier Block and the Simmons Warehouse, dating from the early 20th century. It is within the tough and gritty nature of these buildings that East Village's character and identity can be found. In a city of so much 'newness' these qualities can be explored and nurtured, rather than ruthlessly disregarded, demolished and paved over.



4th Street SE   gas station   closed down Italian Restaurant   Hillier Block   parking lot   site   3rd Street SE

North elevation



3rd Street SE site parking lot yellow brick building parking St. Louis Hotel house white building 4th Street SE

S o u t h e l e v a t i o n



## The existing condition



In its present condition the site is one of the most problematic areas both functionally and visually within East Village. As one of the least attractive lots it also affects the attractiveness and viability of the areas around it. The site has been in this state for so many years now that ignoring its condition and avoiding the problems seems to be the only way to deal with it. As the Municipal Building appears to demonstrate so well, it is much easier to look the other way.

The problem of the visual quality and the difficulty of building on the site is the result of a combination of negative internal and external conditions, that have occurred or been placed in the area over time. Wholesale land clearing practices of the 1960's, location and size of transportation networks and architectural autonomy of nearby buildings, have left the site as an unsightly and fragmented vacant lot, common in East Village and other areas in and around downtown Calgary. The south west corner of East Village is now in a state of perceived worthlessness and uselessness, a condition that tends to discourage redevelopment.

## V a c a n t   l o t s



East Village is filled with vacant lots because large scale demolition of several adjacent blocks was permitted, in the hopes of attracting private development and the elimination of the slum conditions. The vacantness and vastness of this area is obvious and even exaggerated beside the higher density of downtown, and the older communities of Bridgeland, Inglewood and Victoria Park that surround East Village. The few remaining buildings dot the flat landscape of asphalt, gravel and grass, rather than form it.

The lack of buildings has prohibited the common approach of revitalization or gentrification of older communities in East Village. With so few buildings the typical approach of infilling by small scale developers cannot be done here. Mass redevelopment of the land is the only choice remaining with such large empty lots.

The problem that must now be faced, as East Village has faced for some time now, is the reluctance of private developers to be first in line. Large vacant areas create an atmosphere of

uneasiness and uncertainty for capital investment and building style. Many of the blocks have only one or two buildings on them, a much different physical landscape than it once was with a high density built environment. Many of the buildings that remain are not worth keeping due to their age and unsavagable level of deterioration. This physical

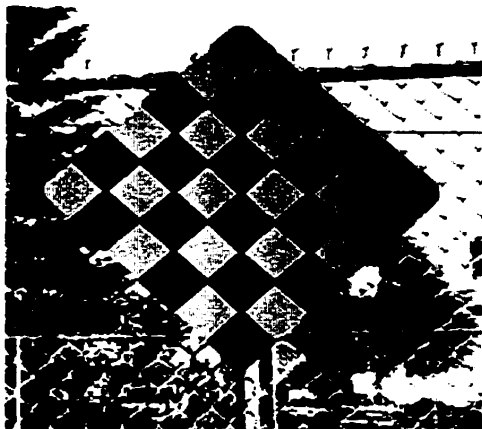


Figure 1 ground drawing of East Village (center) and surrounding area

condition makes redevelopment of East Village difficult even if it has the support and backing of the Municipal Government and planners.

The uncertainty of future surrounding development and land uses makes redevelopment, particularly small scale building risky and unlikely. But small scale is what East Village needs in order to rebuild the area incrementally and in a scale appropriate to East Village and the surrounding neighborhoods. As East Village has little to offer people as it exists right now, particularly with the lack of amenities, convincing investment into the area in the initial stages is unlikely without proposing a comprehensive approach for the entire area. Attracting condo buyers or renters without shops and services, combined with the uncertainty of surrounding use of the land is one of East Village's largest problem.

## The downtown grid



The downtown street grid is an urban system of movement and organization that is legible - it is expected and understood by people who live, work or visit the core of a city. While it is a simple and basic system, the streets and back alleys formed by this system allow the various functional and pragmatic activities of a city to function. The front of the building is the place for more formal and public functions, while the back is a place where the more informal and private functions, such as garbage collection are performed. In *Ladders*, Albert Pope writes of that the grid

"its ability to support complex heterogeneous environments must not be ignored. An urban environment that obtains a higher level of complexity is invariably generated out of simple rudimentary forms."<sup>4</sup>

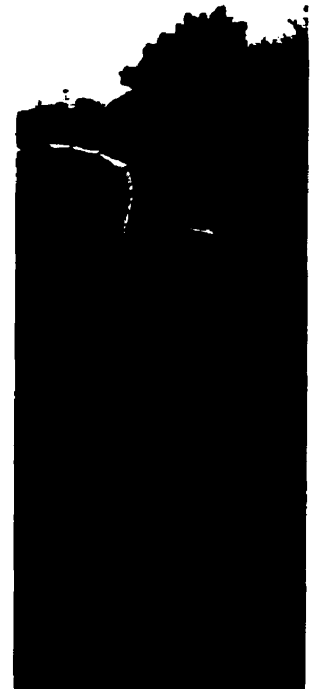
Within East Village, the legitimacy of Calgary's downtown grid is compromised because the pieces of land within the geometry of the grid are mostly empty. Rather than the buildings that fill the block as

the form gives to the rectangular nature of the grid, the streets of this area merely exist as a rigid and seldom used transportation network. The grid has been disrupted with the arc of the LRT tracks cutting through the site.

While East Village has been neglected by some and forgotten by most, the site has been left to fend for itself witnessing the daily activity of the city whirling around it. Its usefulness was measured in how many parked cars it could hold and in turn how much money could be made. When attention was finally focused on this piece of land it only resulted in internal abuse and violation.

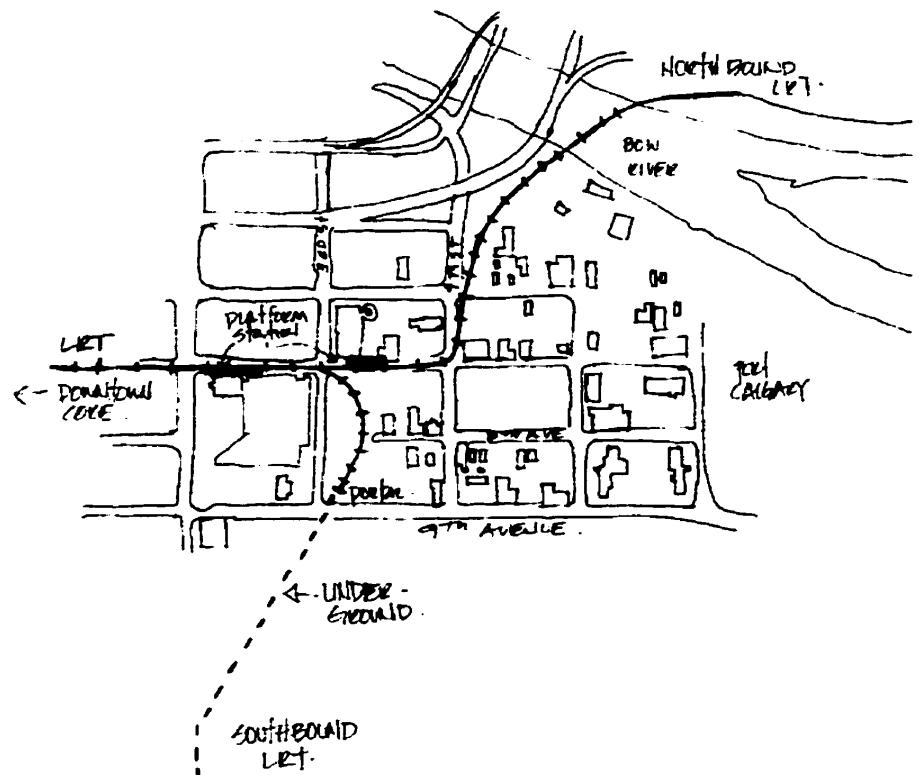
Transportation planners, requiring a corridor for the southbound Light Rail Transit tracks drew an arc through the site shooting the train through an underground tunnel. 'Looking good' on paper this gesture in real life ruthlessly cuts through 8th Avenue SE and further disconnects East Village psychologically and physically from the rest of the downtown core. Now the force of the train cannot

be denied - it is a repetitive motion that beats a path back and forth along the track. Formally, an arc against the rigidity of the grid is an interesting contrast, but in this case it has resulted in a negative disruption of the downtown grid in East Village.

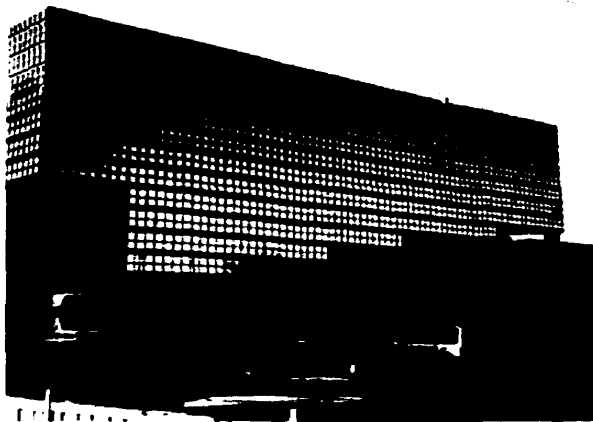


Eighth Avenue SE is now terminated by a cul de sac at its west end cutting off both vehicular and pedestrian traffic between 4th and 3rd Streets SE. Pedestrians, mainly the seniors walking from their apartment building to the downtown, are forced to walk either along 9th Avenue SE or 7th Avenue SE, with neither providing a comfortable environment with the noise and speed of the cars on the former or the LRT on the latter.

When it was built, this LRT route was considered to be a temporary solution as the tracks are planned to 'one day' run under the Municipal Building to align with 8th Avenue SE. However, this may not occur for a long time - if ever, and the damage to the site has been done. Although this break did not create the downfall of East Village, it has perpetuated its deterioration and degradation.



## The Municipal Building



While the roads are harsh two dimensional edges, the Municipal Building is three dimensional - a dramatic 36 meter mirror - clad curtain wall resting on a sandstone clad concrete base. Because the form is angled and terraced on the west side (to accommodate sun angles) but not on the east side, the Municipal Building appears to be 'turning its back' on East Village and its residents, or as Barry Johns states in his critique, the building is "seemingly oblivious and with an upturned nose to its surrounds". The Municipal Building is an example of an architecturally autonomous building that has little connection to the buildings or spaces that surround it.

On the west side the massing of the Municipal Building is broken down and detailed on a human scale at grade level. The building descends to four storeys with a contoured plaza, street furniture, sculpture and landscaping laid out as a welcome mat to those who work or visit the building. While the east side, standing thirteen storeys is an obvious 'back door' to the Municipal Building. A steep stairway is the only relief to the tall stone arcade

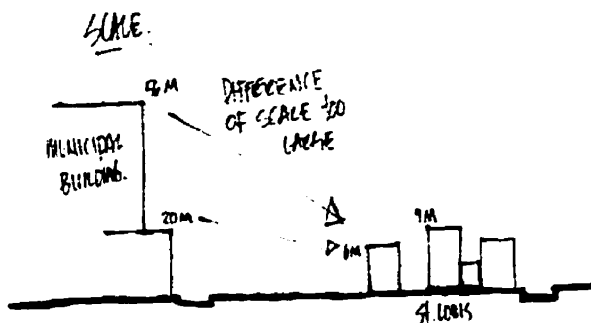
modulated with large columns and oversized stone flower planters between them. The building looms overhead casting a shadow onto the western side of the site for most of the day.

Intending to provide a neutral back-drop for the historic City Hall in front, much of the exterior of the Municipal Building is clad in horizontal ribbons of reflective mirror. On the east side, this material has a much more dramatic effect than on the west. While standing at the foot of the building or within East Village, if the light and angle of view are right, the facade appears blue with puffs or streaks of

white within it. This melding, with squinted eyes, of building and sky is almost enough to forgive the bulky single-mindedness of the form.

Similar to the LRT tracks through the site, the placement and form of the Municipal Building violates the street grid. In a half hearted attempt to replace 8th Avenue SE - an enclosed retail mall [with one shop and a bank machine] and pedestrian walkway runs through the Municipal Building forming part of the large atrium lobby. The more positive result of this planning decision is the ease with which Calgarians and tourists walking along 8th Avenue SE to the east can enter and pass through the building.

Although the Municipal Building is quite low compared to the office towers of the downtown, it seems taller because of the much lower scale of the existing buildings of East Village, particularly those adjacent to the site. The elevational drop from the top of the Municipal Building to the top of the closest building across the site is 50 meters.



Building heights east and west of the site



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1. The City of Calgary - Planning and Building Department. **East Village Area Redevelopment Plan and Background Information**. ( February 1994), p.5.
2. The City of Calgary. **Downtown Calgary Map** No: DT: 3295050906. Aug. 1996.

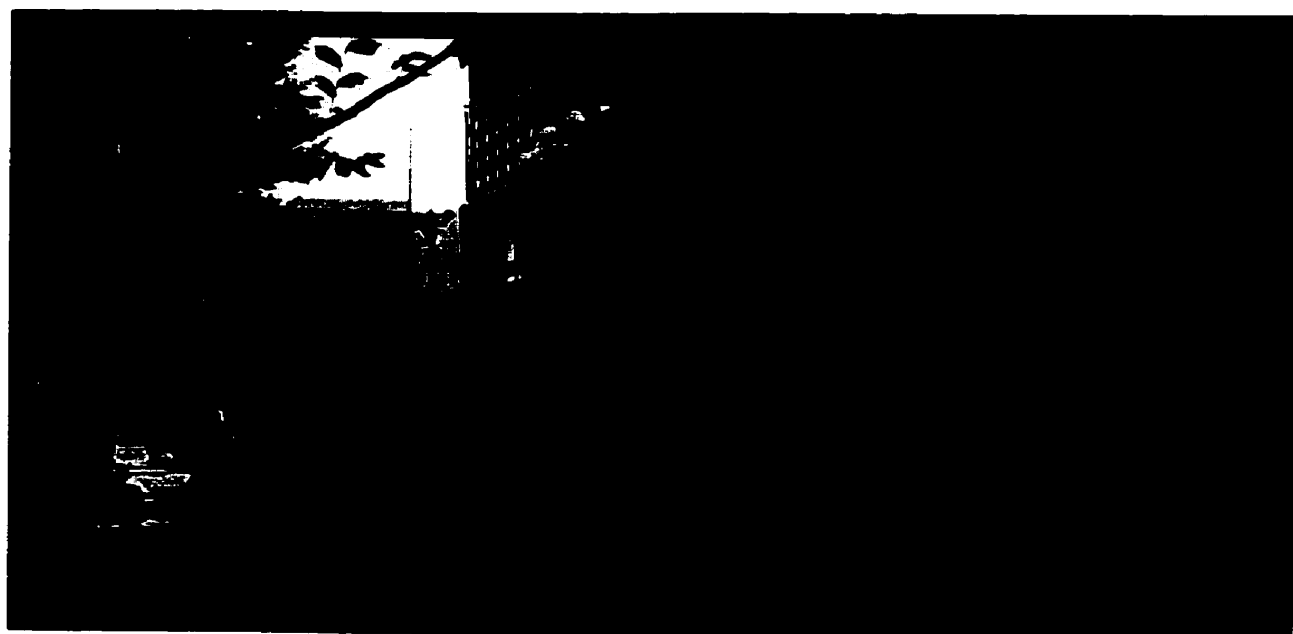
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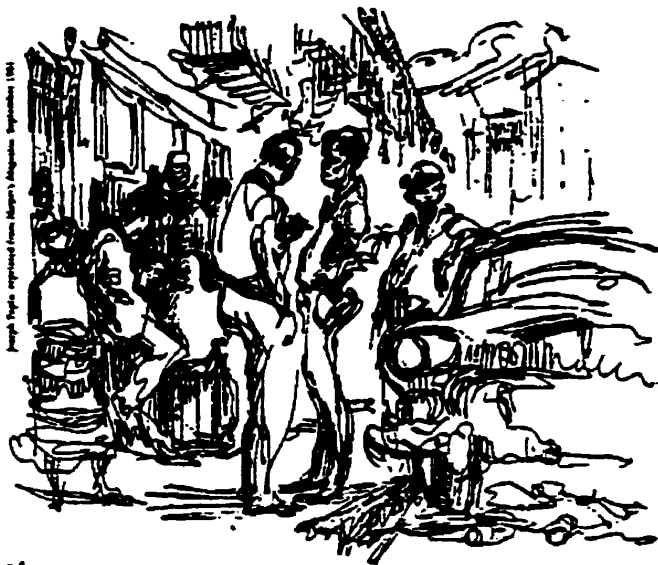
A t h o m e i n t h e c i t y

## A t h o m e i n t h e c i t y

While the previous section deals with the physical qualities of the site, this section is about the people. The most obvious thing about East Village is that there are so few people there. The lots are vacant and so are the streets. The activity created by people filling the side walks making their way through or lounging on a patio chair sipping a coffee, we have come to expect from downtown and inner city neighborhoods - like Kensington or 4th Street SW are missing in East Village. Except for small pockets of activity, East Village is socially and spiritually dead.

Improving the site's condition by placing buildings is a start to making the East Village look better, but this alone will not recreate the community. More people are needed to come live, work and visit East Village, filling the empty space with the daily activities of their lives. Even though people have continued to live and work in East Village over the years, there are too few to have much effect on their surroundings and maintain a positive and exciting sense of community.

While East Village sits relatively vacant, Calgary is currently experiencing a housing crisis with a shortage of affordable rental units, especially in the inner city neighborhoods. People who have a steady income are no longer immune to homelessness, making local shelters over crowded. The creation of new shelters to accommodate the demand is helpful but does not respond to the underlying issues.



New housing needs to be built within the downtown area with rental units that range in location, size, configuration, and price for a variety of lifestyle choices and incomes. Places to live that respond to the present needs of Calgarians with places that accommodate both living and working in the same space and small bachelor suites for those in transition.

The design of the housing also needs to be suited to the downtown environment and community in which it is built. There are many examples around North America and Europe of good and bad multi family housing built in the downtown core of cities. Those that demonstrate a concern by the architects and an obvious focus on the attributes that make a house a home seem to be the ones that are most successful. In particular, allowing residents, even those who rent, to participate or personalize their surroundings seem to be most worthwhile.

## T h e   p e o p l e   o f   E a s t   V i l l a g e

As one of Calgary's oldest neighborhoods, East Village was once filled with buildings, and the life and activity of the people they held within their walls. Situated between the south bank of the Bow River and the CPR rail line, East Village was a mixed - use working class community that grew up around the industrial and manufacturing operations that were concentrated there.

Over the years East Village became a diverse community, growing and evolving with the lives of its residents. In those day, working families, shop keepers, business owners, workers and newcomers to the city lived side by side in houses and tenement buildings. In a time when transportation was limited, most of the people who worked in East Village also lived there, with many living 'above the shop'. A result, buildings stood close together, creating a high density area.

For those who could afford it, the street car and then the automobile carried the people to the outskirts of the city in the 1950's and 1960's. With them went the future of East Village. With little

reason to stay, the shops and services followed them, leaving behind empty buildings as the artifacts of a once prosperous and active community. A few hardy residents and businesses remained but without its residents East Village began to waste away.

The people who moved into East Village did so out of need rather than choice. It was turning into an urban slum no one wanted, attracting the people know one wanted - the transient and the aged.



The homeless came to East Village lured by the promise of a free meal and a mattress at the shelters. They stayed because no one cared that they were there. Without 'no loitering' signs and no one to call security to escort them off of the premises, they were anonymous and left to blend in with their surroundings.

In the 1970's, the poorer seniors of Calgary were brought to live in the newly built government subsidized apartment buildings. High above the streets, they were disconnected and isolated from the land below and imprisoned by the walls surrounding them.

Time seems to have stood still in East Village for the last 25 years, as little has changed. More businesses and people have moved out than in and buildings have come down rather than gone up. The homeless still walk the streets and use the shelters, the seniors still sit in the corner of the community.



## The East Village Community Study: final report 1991

A study of the people who work and live in East Village was done by P. Lynn McDonald and Tracy L. Peressini in 1991. The information collected was to be background research for the Task Force on Housing in the Downtown and the area redevelopment plan for East Village. The importance of this 10 month study was not only that it took place at all, but that McDonald and Peressini actually came into the community and met with the people they interviewed.

Members of the four main groups that were identified: business and community organizations, service providers, the homeless and the seniors were questioned about the proposed redevelopment of East Village and their needs and desires from such a change. Information was gathered through self administered questionnaires, telephone surveys and face to face interviews from 349 respondents and presented in the final report - The East Village Community Study. In addition to survey results, demographic information, and recommendations for redevelopment, a literature review on homelessness was provided.

A distinction was made between the people who work in East Village - the business operators and service providers, and those who live there - the seniors and homeless people. Their perceptions, attitudes and concerns were assumed to be different.

The business and community organizations and the service providers were questioned not only about redevelopment but also their views and feelings about the people who live in the area. Although both groups showed concern for the seniors and homeless, the business organizations had little tolerance for the homeless. Redevelopment of East Village was generally seen as a positive move, particularly commercial and general housing development.

The homeless and seniors live in East Village and whatever community exists it does so because of their presence during the day, and particularly at night. The members of these two groups share certain characteristics - the most obvious being that they are poor, and have similar feelings and needs for the proposed redevelopment.

## T h e h o m e l e s s

The homeless people are the more obvious residents of East Village. Unlike the seniors, they spend much of their time on the streets, along the western edge closest to downtown and the main road ways. Although most of the homeless were found to spend their days in the downtown, visiting social service facilities or looking for work, they are a common sight throughout the day.

Many of the homeless are single men who receive food and a bed from one of two shelters in the area - the Calgary Drop - In Centre and the Salvation Army's Single Mens Hostel. It was learned that most of the men come from blue collar families and some are or were employed in blue collar occupations. Almost all of the men surveyed ( 98.2 per cent ) had a previous place to live and many had become homeless for the first time in the previous year. Rather than a set way of life, these men seem to be in the midst of a difficult phase in their lives and their homelessness may be short term.

The homeless people are also open to redevelopment in East Village, particularly residential development. Because the basic needs of food and shelter are not secure, it is not surprising that these are their main concern. Low - income housing, with bachelor and one bedroom suites - small but clean, was most requested. Many of the men can afford to pay some rent with the money they get from working, income transfers or other sources. The reason why they do not have a place of their own is the lack of affordable rental housing in Calgary and the difficulty in saving enough money to pay for first and last months rent and utility hook ups. McDonald and Peressini state in their report

“...the homeless in East village show considerable potential for change, given the recency of their homelessness, their short period of homelessness, and the fact that they are educatable and their willingness to work.”<sup>2</sup>

## T h e s e n i o r s

The southeast corner of East Village appears as a mirage - new within old, order within disorder. Three high-rise apartment buildings stand together, with a park between Murdoch Manor and the George C. King Tower, and East Village Place across the street. Mature trees and bushes provide closure and shade, flowers give color and grandeur to an otherwise dreary environment. Human activity fills the base in front of the buildings with the coming and goings of the people who live there and those sitting on the benches enjoying the sun and each others company.

The residents of these buildings are the poorer seniors of Calgary, most ( 79 per cent ) are dependent on income transfers from the government.<sup>3</sup> Many of them live alone in one bedroom or bachelor suites. They spend their time in their units or visiting with friends in theirs or the other buildings. Only when they walk to the downtown along 7th or 9th Avenues SE do they spend time in the rest of East Village.

The seniors in the study were generally open to the redevelopment of East Village, although not entirely enthusiastic. Most are quite satisfied with their living environment, their building and individual suites. As high-rise apartment buildings are generally not favoured for housing by older people, McDonald and Peressini attribute the relatively high level of satisfaction to the research finding that - although low rise is the preferred housing form, high rise living is often the favoured building type when located in an undesirable area.<sup>4</sup>

Since the seniors are satisfied with their housing, their request for commercial development in the community was not unexpected. A grocery store, restaurant, medical clinic, swimming pool and hair dresser within walking distance were most popular. With You'unique Beauty Services moving into an older building along 9th Avenue SE, directly across from the apartment buildings, it seems that at least one need has been fulfilled since the study was done.

During the study - while learning about the groups in East Village and creating recommendations for the proposed redevelopment of this area, McDonald and Peressini also considered the state of the community as a whole. Their research showed that there is little sense of community in East Village. A number of small social networks exist in the community, but they seem to be operating independently of each other with little contact.

**"If a sense of community is what is desired by the planners, then it will be important to foster interpersonal and intergroup linkages and integration and coordination of the formal organizations in the area."<sup>5</sup>**

Interestingly, the homeless showed concern for the seniors while they were concerned about the homeless, even though their paths rarely crossed.

Although the intention of this project is not to satisfy the needs and wishes of the existing groups in East Village, consideration of the effect any new project will have on them and how they can be involved is important.

The business and community organizations and shelters must be considered to determine whether they are suited to their present location or require relocation within in the area or further east into the downtown core.

The homeless must be considered since redevelopment of an existing area typically means their displacement. How they can be accommodated either within this area or in another is important and cannot be ignored. Finding ways to involve the seniors in the larger community of East Village, either actively or passively, seems to be a worthwhile pursuit.

## T h e E a s t V i l l a g e A r e a R e d e v e l o p m e n t P l a n 1994

The East Village ARP is the most recent development plan for the area. Although rather stiff and bureaucratic, it is based on the vision of East Village becoming a residential community with a positive sense of identity and character. A distinctive community within Calgary's downtown core for people who wish to live in this area and enjoy the experiences and amenities this centralized urban environment has to offer.

One day, East Village is expected to have a residential population of 4500 - 5000 people, predominantly middle income downtown workers. Its future success as a community however, will ultimately be determined by the people who live there. Encouraging a vital and socially balanced community with a diverse demographic and income level is preferred. To create this heterogeneity, a variety of housing types and densities will be allowed, both rental and owner occupied. Townhouses, stacked townhouses, and low - rise apartment buildings are favored with decreasing density from the southern boundary of 9th Avenue SE towards the north, along the Bow River.

Since a predominantly middle class income community will have little toleration for homeless people walking the streets, the ARP recommends moving the Salvation Army's Men's Hostel out of East Village and closer into the downtown core.

It does however, recognize the need to build long term housing for the homeless people. Therefore, the plan includes the provision of transitional housing as well as social service facilities in the Commercial District of the community, as recommended by McDonald and Peressini in their report.

To attract and sustain a residential population, more commercial, recreational and community facilities will be built in East Village. Shops and offices are to be street oriented to create a comfortable pedestrian environment. As well, sensitivity to the existing historic buildings through scale and design of the new buildings is strongly encouraged. Areas of open space are planned throughout East Village to promote a balanced and healthy lifestyle.

Continuation of the Golden Age Club will be encouraged, in addition to the creation of other community organization such as a community center and daycare.

The ARP concludes with a discussion of the steps needed to implement the plan, with the full redevelopment of East Village to take place over a period of time. Since The City of Calgary owns roughly one half of the land, its role in redevelopment is key. The report recommends both objectives and actions for the City, to begin implementation of the plan. For instance, roadways and public utilities must be upgraded - including raising and resurfacing the roadways in the Bow River flood plain, on the north side of East Village.

As well, right of ways and city owned land needs to be cleaned up and improved to make it available and more attractive for lease or purchase by developers and non - profit organizations. In favor of development, the City has taken a few of the necessary steps towards redevelopment. A significant move was made in the early 1980's, when one half of the land in East Village was re-designated from industrial zoning to Direct Control, allowing the construction of high density residential buildings.

Since redevelopment has not even begun in the last four years with the release of the ARP, it seems that it may be necessary for The City to take a stronger lead if indeed development is desired.

## Current housing needs in downtown Calgary

The redevelopment of East Village and the need to attract residents to this area, provides a good opportunity to begin to address the desperate need for affordable housing in Calgary. There are many people, particularly singles, who cannot find a place to live that they can afford. The city's rapid growth and lack of construction of affordable apartment space has meant vacancy rates are at record lows, and rental rates have increased in response to this demand.

It is difficult to imagine what it is like to be in this situation - not having a place to live. The personal stories of strangers have recently filled the television and newspapers, people with no where to live. Many have jobs but sleep at a shelter because of the difficulty of saving for a damage deposit and first months rent, or people living in apartments and facing rent increases they cannot afford.

Rick is a friend of mine who is in this situation and knows what it is like to worry about finding a place to live. Rick is one of the thousands of people who are caught in the web of Calgary's housing market.



Rick lives in an apartment in an older house on the south side of downtown. His place is small - around 325 square feet, and probably the smallest of the six units in the house. He has a living room, kitchen, storage area and bathroom.

The house shows the signs of age and deterioration, and a strange combination of old and new. With nine foot high ceilings, thick wood mouldings and exposed pipes, not to mention the peeling paint and water stains, we date the house to be from around 1920's -30's. A couple of weeks ago, Rick was presented with a letter from the landlord alerting him of a renovation, with no mention of exactly what was going to be done. When I came to talk to him I found a blue-green house instead of a grey one, the hallway inside had also been painted and Rick had just received a new kitchen faucet - one that spouts water every 10 minutes or so - on its own. A rent increase hasn't been mentioned yet but we agreed it's probably on the way since his six month lease will soon be up. Rick moved here because the rent at his old place [across the street] went up from \$395 to \$485 per month - without renovations, except for a newly painted hallway. Rick says that if the rent does go up where he is now he will look for a new place. The amount of the increase will determine how quickly and how far he looks.

Rick's income is derived from a variety of sources - working at odd jobs, a disability cheque, trips to the pawn shop and the odd welfare cheque. He has chosen to live as he does and says he would not change the type of places he lives in even if he had more money - his place is easy to maintain and he feels no threat it will be broken into. But for Rick - an increase in rent means it is time to move on - again.



Rick is not alone in Calgary, there are all types of people, from different sections of society that share in common the fact that they live on a limited income. One of the most needful groups in Calgary right now are single people who often live in or close to the downtown core. Twenty - year olds starting out on their own, artists, entrepreneurs, students, laborers, downtown workers, service workers, widows and widowers, single parents and the homeless working poor, need good places to live.

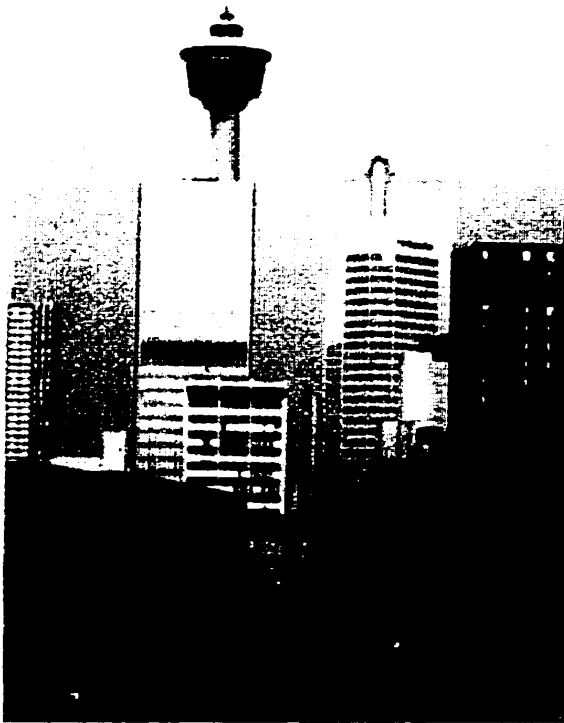
A 1996 Housing Research Program for downtown Calgary found that "at present, downtown housing product is viewed as very specialized, targeted to a sophisticated and very thin segment of potential consumers."<sup>8</sup> While responses from participants found that renters in the downtown "... are slightly more diverse, with a bimodal age distribution, less employment, fewer cars, higher mobility, and less downtown experience."<sup>9</sup> To fill the demand, future housing construction in downtown Calgary, needs to be aimed at those groups who need it most, finding ways through

design and construction to provide 'good' housing that is economically feasible.

The people who may come to live in East Village, include those people who choose to live downtown or those who need to. Herbert Gans, an urban sociologist, identifies five types of inner city residents. While the 'cosmopolites' and unmarried or childless groups choose to live there, the 'ethnic villagers', the 'deprived' and the 'trapped' or 'downward mobile' do not.<sup>10</sup> Those who choose, do so for a variety of reasons including the urban atmosphere, cultural, recreational and leisure opportunities, views, and the efficiency of time and transportation cost.<sup>11</sup> The others, usually end up downtown because of the social service organizations and anonymity available to them there.

Creating places to live for people of all income levels should be a goal of every city, based on the understanding of the needs people have in terms of where they live. In an area such as East Village, it is possible to create housing for many of these groups and thus create a more balanced community.

# B u i l d i n g i n t h e d o w n t o w n



Building in the downtown is different then anywhere else in the city and therefore needs special consideration and response. With less ground space and high land values, it requires a built environment that makes the best use of limited space. Housing many people in this high density area or in one building, creates a design challenge to ensure the comfort and privacy of the individual within this more public and diverse environment.

Many ways have been tried by architects to house people in the city. With the rapid growth of cities in the postwar period, high density multi - family housing was needed to fill the demand. But looking back, this housing type has anything but a glamorous past. The Modernist - large scale high rise apartment projects from the 1960's, such as Pruitt Igoe in St. Louis - demolished because it was such an awful place to live, are not easily ignored or forgotten.

In the last thirty years or so, architects have been designing alternatives for multi family housing and learning what people need and desire while living in the downtown environment.

## H i s t o r i c a l c o n t e x t

### M o d e r n i s m

While passing out blame for the past failures of multi-family housing in the city, the road usually, although not entirely fairly, leads back to French architect Le Corbusier. As one of the leaders of Modernist architecture his influence on urban planning and housing cannot be denied or minimized.

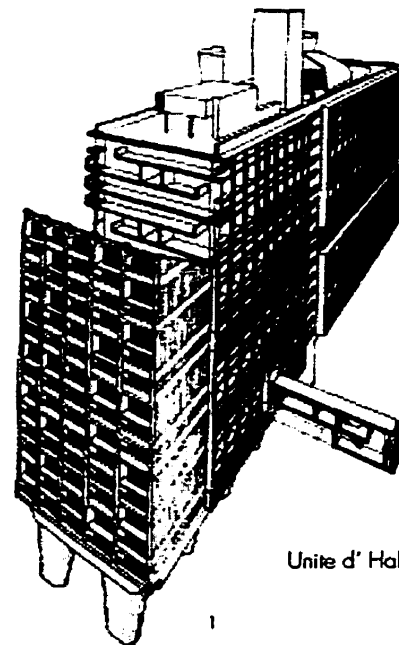
In a time of growing urbanization and crowded and unsanitary living conditions, Le Corbusier and his contemporaries believed that a new way of city design and building was required. Only the new building technology and materials of the day could rid society of such problems. With the ability to build high already demonstrated in the construction of office buildings, using this building form to fill the desperate need for housing must have seemed a logical solution.

As his writing and schemes clearly show, Le Corbusier sought to control the design and dictate to the user how to live in the space, whether at the scale of the city or the single family home. Contrary to the traditional hands on approach to housing

construction, his dwellings were to be created before habitation and the occupant was required to adapt to the building, rather than the other way around.

Le Corbusier's theoretical city plans were highly organized, based on a strict geometry, wide roadways, and singular zoning as shown in *The Ville Contemporaine - A Contemporary City for Three Million Inhabitants* [1922] and a further evolution, *The Ville Radieuse - Radiant City* [1930-35]. Within these cities, housing was to be provided for the residents with multiple rows of high rise apartment buildings of concrete and glass.

His ideas of high density housing were physically manifested in the *Unite d' Habitation* [1945 - 52], of Marseilles, France. Although initially conceived as a collection of high rise buildings, only one was commissioned by the French government as a mass housing prototype. Standing 18 storeys high with a collection of units able to house 1600 people, the *Unite* stood as a model for the new way of urban living.



Unite d' Habitation, Marseilles, France

With the construction of the *Unite*, Le Corbusier believed he had discovered the universal solution to urban mass housing. Responding to the desperate needs of the poor, he hoped it would become a standardised building typing for low - income housing. As time would soon tell, he was not alone in this belief, for it was not long before the *Unite d' Habitation* became the model for public housing around the world.

## Post - war housing

The high rise apartment building became the building form of choice for public housing during the years of urban renewal in Canadian and American cities. Le Corbusier's urban planning and mass housing models seemed to be the perfect solution to the problems plaguing these rapidly growing cities. Besides the standardization and the repetition of building elements of these buildings, their large size was obviously seen as their redeeming feature.

But rather than the solution, Le Corbusian high rise housing blocks became the problem. Although many people who really needed it were provided with new clean housing, the loss of their existing neighborhoods, segregation and the industrial and monotonous facades left them with little better than what they had. In many cases this new housing broke the spirits of the people who had no choice but to live in them.

These buildings isolated and disconnected their residents from the community and streets surrounding them at their base. Without quick and easy access

to the outside from their units, the streets lost their purpose as a place to be and not just a surface to drive on. People could no longer sit out on their front stoop to watch their kids play and chat with neighbours - a cheap form of socializing and entertainment. Without this neighborliness and physical and visual surveillance, the area surrounding the projects became a sort of 'no man's land' further compromising the security and safety of the residents.



high rise apartment building in East Village

High rise housing has both its proponents and opponents. The negative affects on people have been well researched, studied and documented. Today, high rise buildings are generally not considered a 'good' housing form for any income level group, but least of all for low income. Christopher Alexander, a strong critic of this building form, believes high rise buildings can "damage people's minds and feelings"<sup>11</sup> and adds:

**"In an urban area, no matter how dense, keep the majority of the buildings four stories high or less, it is possible that certain buildings should exceed this limit, but they should never be buildings for human habitation."**<sup>11</sup>

Low rise buildings are the desired building form for multi - family housing because the residents are able to maintain a visual and physical connection to the street and the other residents. This scale is in keeping with that of the traditional city and is more in tune with ideas people have the look of vernacular architecture and the feel of domestic space.

The seemingly inevitable failure of the low - income high rise projects is well known. Residents began to react against the awful living conditions the buildings created and perpetuated. The problem was not only the form of the buildings, and all of the troubles they created, but the assumption of the needs of the residents and their inability to be involved in the design process. The mass housing of the past did not create the problems in the lives of the people living in it, such as poverty, crime, and unemployment, but it did compound and aggravate them. Many projects failed to allow the residents to create and feel at home in the places they lived.

Since the surge of high rise construction, the worst have been demolished and many others have been renovated. Although the architectural design of these buildings was not solely responsible for their failure, the underlying disregard for the needs and desires of the residents was. The negative results of Modernist dwellings did not go unnoticed and led to the attempt by many architects to design alternative housing models.

D u t c h   S A R  
F o u n d a t i o n   f o r   a r c h i t e c t u r a l   r e s e a r c h

The construction of high rise mass housing projects meant a radical shift in the way housing in the city was perceived and provided. How people would like to live became subordinate to size and efficiency of space. In response, it was not long before this new form of housing became the focus of critical architectural discussion and debate.

Many architects began the search for a better way to house people in the city. Dutch architect, N. J. Habraken responded harshly to the mass housing projects of the day in his book **Supports: An Alternative to Mass Housing** (1961). But in his attempt to find a better way he went too far in the other direction. While Le Corbusier revoked individual involvement in the housing process, Habraken exaggerated it.

Attributing the housing problem to the removal of the individual from the housing process, Habraken feels that mass housing has failed to solve the housing shortage, both in numbers [since housing 1000's of people in one building has yet to fulfil demand] and design, by removing the user from the process.

Mass housing precludes the involvement of the user by nature, as the form is designed and built before the resident moves in.

**"Mass housing pretends that the involvement of the individual and all that it implies simply ought not to exist. The provision of housing therefore cannot be called a process of man housing himself. Man no longer houses himself: he is housed."**<sup>12</sup>

As an alternative he proposes the 'support structure' - a stacked three dimensional concrete structural - infrastructure system into which blocks - individual housing units, are to be placed. This form a housing is neither a dwelling nor a building, but rather

**"A support structure is a construction which allows the provision of dwellings which can be built, altered and taken down, independently of the others."**<sup>13</sup>

In practice, individual dwellings are to be purchased and layered within this structure. Future

residents would be able to view and choose from a selection of manufacturer's dwellings on display in a show room. Within each block a range of floor plans would be provided with many features to choose from.

To further his cause, Habraken formed the Dutch SAR which:

**"rigorously investigated basic questions of shelter provision, although rarely embracing the more symbolic and expressive aspects of housing. Consequently, there was always a need for upward translation...from these basic considerations into architectural form."**<sup>14</sup>

Ultimately, Habraken's approach did not offer a better alternative, but rather proposed a form of housing that seemed it would alienate its residents as much as the Le Corbusian models did because of the rigidity of the structure and lack of spontaneity of the form.



## C o m m u n i t y a r c h i t e c t u r e

Reaction against the Modernist high rise buildings continued into the 1970's with the rise of community architecture, rooted in the belief that:

"...the users of building developments should play a key role in the design of the environments in which they were to live and work."<sup>15</sup>

This type of housing which had some popularity in Europe, was meant to provide the residents with the chance to participate in the design and development process, building and improvement work and management and maintenance of where they live. In practice, involvement in this process is often limited by the skills of the residents.

A successful community architecture project is British architect. Ralph Erskine's low - rent worker housing complex at Byker, England from 1968 - 1974. In this project, urban redevelopment of a community was based on approaching habitation as a process, encouraging the residents to be involved in the planning and design of not only the housing, but the community as a whole. The Byker project is,

"one example in England of an architectural response carefully considered and predicated upon the idea that architecture can improve people's lives."<sup>16</sup>

For several years the design team collaborated with the residents, the 'user clients', to create a project suited to everyone. To facilitate communication between the two groups, an on site office was set up and a resident committee - with open membership and an informal structure, was formed.



2

The housing design began with a pilot project so that comments could be gathered by the residents and implemented in the following schemes.

The largest building of the project is the Byker Wall - a physical response to a proposed motorway along the northern boundary of the project. As a long, undulating building that shields the other buildings it looks out onto on its south side, the Byker Wall is both a residential complex and a noise barrier. The design reflects this as the north elevation, facing the motorway, is heavily massed with patterned brick and punched out windows, while the south elevation is much lighter and personalized with an articulated facade, balconies, and large windows.

From photographs, the community and its low - scale buildings seem to architecturally reflect the participatory process. The customization of the units by the residents guided by the architect, both inside and outside, has created facades that show an orderly sense of individuality. The buildings seem to have a sense of spontaneity, comfort and ease about them.

## Contemporary context



3

More recent designs for living in the city seem to show that lessons have indeed been learned from the past. In both written and design works, much exploration has taken place rather recently to find ways of creating places for people that are more suited to a variety of lifestyles and the economic realities while being conscious of uniqueness of living in the downtown environment.

For instance, Jonas Lehrman and A.N. Senguta, found that privacy, identity, comfort, choice, adaptability, accessibility and interaction were the essential qualities for living within high densities and close proximity, without losing humanity.<sup>17</sup> Architects seem to be responding to such findings within their small and large scale residential designs.

These qualities seem to enable a person to make a home of their house. The connection and interdependence between these two ideas is important to approach the design of housing with a sensitivity to the needs and desires of the residents.

## H o u s e   a n d   h o m e

### Home

A choking warmth comes piling  
through rolled-down windows  
as slowly you drive east  
through an ancient  
and dilapidated sunlight  
on the last leg  
of Seventeenth and past  
the corner Mobil where you're greeted  
by the brave little Elm St.  
traffic light. It's been  
here all along, on duty  
the weeks you've been away,  
has gone preciously nowhere  
for the summer. You continue  
past the bleached limestone  
that is Field School, familiar  
as your furniture, and turn  
left on Grandview, down  
this brief, dead-ended tunnel  
and recognize your house,  
waiting like an abandoned stage set.  
The porch is peeling. Later  
you'll open every window wide.  
The night's incessant gossip  
will crowd in through the screens -  
locusts, cat fights, voices  
of all your old relations  
staked out as far as you can hear  
in their predictable positions,  
meaning that you're back  
in the middle of nowhere,  
and everything in this toy  
and humid world is famous, even you  
are famous to yourself.

Jonathan Holden

Within the words of J. Holden's poem lies this connection people form between their house and home. As he leads you along a journey through a neighborhood back to a house, feelings of home are triggered and the difference, yet dependency of the two, becomes clearer. Holden writes,

**"... and recognize your house,  
waiting like an abandoned stage set ..."**

For really this is what a house or apartment unit is - a collection of construction elements of different style, shapes and color - the pieces that form a backdrop holding and reflecting our lives. We choose these props carefully as they silently yet powerfully set the tone of the story, they move or change over time, but the drama of our lives continues. A house only comes alive - becomes a home, with the presence of people.

While a house may be described, as in the poem, a home must be felt. The title of the poem - Home is not really necessary because as you read the lines an image of home, whether a creation of

the one described in the poem or your own home - past or present - is imagined. Peeling paint, dogs barking and coming home to an empty house are so familiar to us that we can conjure up the images and feelings merely by reading the words. This ability to remember and feel at home is called a sense or feeling of home. Although home means different things to different people, an understanding of it at its basic level is shared. For

**"... Home is a place of security within an insecure world, a place of certainty within doubt, a familiar place in a strange word, a sacred place in a profane world. It is a place of autonomy and power in an increasingly heteronomous world where others make the rules."<sup>19</sup>**

As we grow and move into different houses our childhood home remains as a foundation, a memory and a measuring stick to which all others in our lives will be compared. We realize overtime that living in a house does not guarantee the feeling of home.

The relationship between house and home is complex and dependent upon many factors, with few involving the actual architectural design. But the design of a person's environment can affect how they live, and it needs to respond to them in some ways. The results of ignoring this need have been well demonstrated in the past.

People have different needs and expectations from where they live, even within the wide ranging group of people who live in downtown neighborhoods. What each person considers as the 'right place for them' is rooted in who they are as people. For a person to feel comfortable and at home in the place they live it must suit their lifestyle.

The connection between house and home in a design sense is based on a person's ability to physically personalize and express themselves in their surroundings. After years of speaking with many people about the places they live, architect and writer, Clare Cooper Marcus concluded in her book *House as a Mirror of Self: Exploring the Deeper Meaning of Home*, that

"The key seems to be in the personalization of space: more and more I found in the stories I heard, that it is the moveable objects in the home, rather than the physical fabric itself, that are the symbols of self."<sup>20</sup>

The way a person wishes their dwelling to be is dependent upon many factors such as age, sex, taste, and function. For instance, people who work at home often need a space in which they can conduct their work. Depending on how much privacy or separation they need from the living space will determine the spatial configuration that they need from their dwelling. Loft spaces are popular because they infer maximum control with an adaptable open plan the occupants section off with interior walls and partitions of their choosing.

Surface personalization is also common, more so of the interior than the exterior. But there are many advantages to encouraging residents to make changes to the outside wall surface of their dwelling, Clare Cooper Marcus also wrote in her early book *Housing as if People Mattered*, that

"many housing authorities are now encouraging residents to take over responsibility for improving and repairing their dwelling exteriors because of rising maintenance cost; so an increasing need for designers to facilitate these changes arises. If personalization and modification are discouraged [through lease arrangement, lack of ownership, or an inhibiting design] a significant, incremental, long term opportunity to upgrade the housing stock is forgone."<sup>21</sup>

Although personalization does not require ownership, it does seem to be a prerequisite. The popularity in North America of owning your own house is based on this perception of maximum control of an environment. While at the other end of the scale, multi family rental housing implies a much lower level of control by the residents.

To incorporate opportunities into multi - family housing is a design challenge. By its nature it does not encourage individual expression on the exterior facade. To make matters worse, residents move in after the building as been built, so their spatial and

aesthetic needs have been assumed by the developer, architect and builder. Physical constraints or those enforced by the landlord may further restrict a resident's ability to personalize their dwelling.

To encourage personalization, enough, but not too much, ambiguity in the design and construction of the building is needed. Articulated facades, permeable cladding and component replacement in the design can be used to provide the residents with the opportunity for self expression. As well, the potential and richness of collaboration with the residents should be explored, as in the case of Ralph Erskine's Byker Project.

## A s e n s e o f c o m m u n i t y

The feeling of home may also be felt within the community or neighborhood. But rather than this relationship based and strengthened by personalization, it rests on the way a neighborhood feels. For many people who live in the downtown, the neighborhood they live in is as an important decision as the house they choose. For

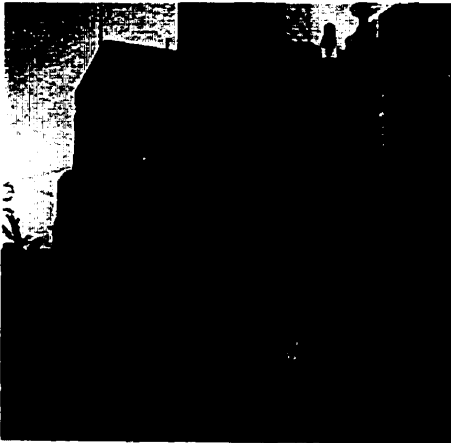
"... houses and homes are integral parts of the neighborhood and the urban environment; thus home is more than simply the house, it also encompasses the neighborhood."<sup>23</sup>  
and it is often the place " ... in which some of the most meaningful aspects of life are experienced..."<sup>24</sup>

A neighbourhood that has a positive sense of community usually has many similar qualities of home, but in a more public and shared sense. Communities, within the larger urban landscape that have a 'small town or village' feel to them make people feel at home. Fine grained urban areas with different places - little one of a kind shops, intimate restaurants and cafes, and public urban spaces - small parks and plazas, are designed for the pedestrian. It is these types of places that become comfortable, convenient, personal, and

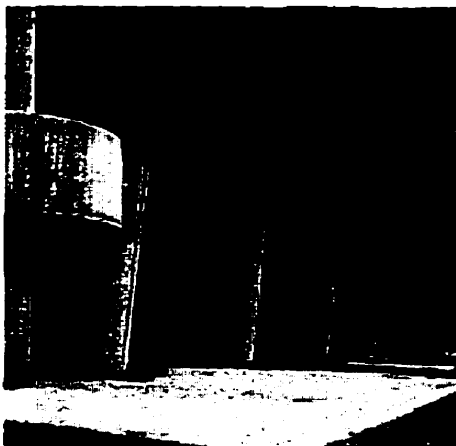
safe for the people who live in the area or for those who come to visit and enjoy the experience. As people can live, work and shop in the same neighborhood, it makes it a more lively place merely with their presence. A place that provides opportunities for people to meet, waiting for spontaneity and human activity to happen on its own. The feeling or spirit of an area is the goal for

"... a sense of place is something you can't photograph, it's something you have to live."<sup>24</sup>





shops along Stephen Avenue Mall



the base of the Unite d' Habitation

The city and housing schemes proposed by Le Corbusier and implemented in part, by architects and planners around the world, were unsuccessful because they did not create or encourage these feelings of home and sense of community.

The large scale repetition and standardization of design and construction these apartment buildings was a new approach to housing - treating everyone and their housing needs the same. By assuming, rather than asking the future residents - or even residents of other housing projects, and then not providing opportunities for physical changes to be made, feelings of home were not encouraged or able to grow.

At the neighborhood scale, the apartment buildings were situated within large pieces of grass with few buildings and even less definition between them, very different from the traditional urban landscape. The residents, disconnected by height from their surroundings, did not become emotionally attached to their neighborhood. Without shops and places to be at the base, streets often became barren and empty.

## M o r e   r e c e n t   p r o j e c t s

Many city projects have been built in the 1990's that were conceived with notions of home and sense of community. With the design groups or architects consciously designing their buildings to positively affect the people who would use and live in them and the communities they were situated in.

In response to the individual, different types of dwelling spaces - live/work, artist studios are more common, responding to more contemporary uses of space and design. On an urban planning level, an understanding of community and the advantages of mixed - use projects to bring convenience and diversity to an area. Architects working with the problem of homelessness and low income housing through their designs, are finding ways to fold the buildings into existing communities, contributing to the lives of the residents and at the same time the rest of the neighborhood.

The following projects are representative of more recent projects showing design solutions to urban redevelopment, the community and various places to live.

## Urban redevelopment

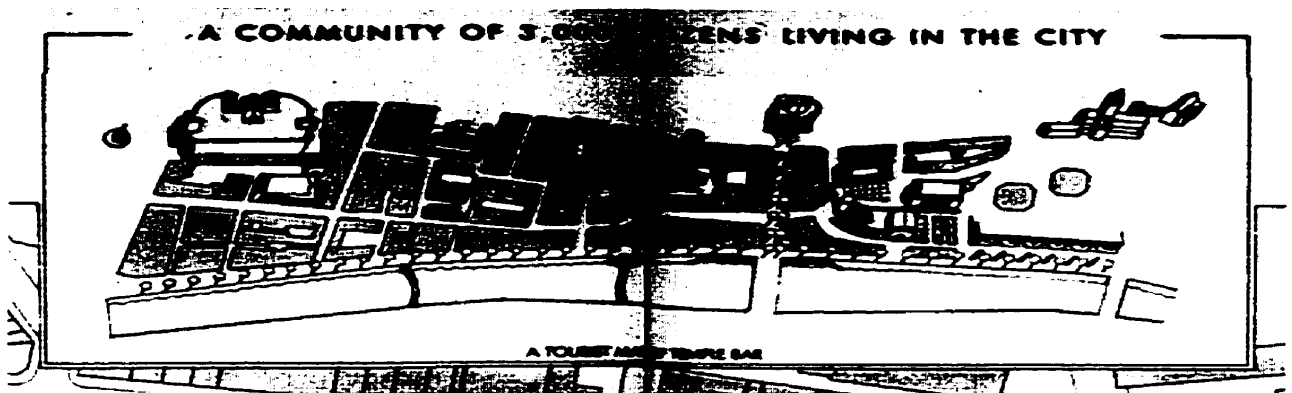
### An Arts District

#### Temple bar . Dublin . Ireland

Temple Bar is a older neighborhood in Dublin that underwent urban regeneration in the early 1990's transforming it from an area of decline and decay, into a Cultural Quarter concentrating on cultural, leisure, small business and residential uses.

Over the years, much of the area had come under state control and was slated to become a large transportation center for the Coras Iompair Eireann [CIE] consisting of a city bus station that would be connected to underground rail links. As this development would mean the demolition of large parts of the neighborhood with its historic streets and buildings, it was met with much opposition. After a lengthy process of meetings, debates and hard work by interested Dubliners, a new development proposal for Temple Bar - turning into an arts district instead was accepted.

Today, with the completion of phase one of the redevelopment plan, Temple Bar stands as a successful example of the regeneration of an old area of the city. It is filled with interesting and well designed



buildings appropriate in scale and use to the existing context. Temple Bar is now home to many forms of the arts housed in buildings such as the Arthouse - Multimedia Center for the Arts, Gallery of Photography, Irish Film Center, Temple Lane Studios, Black Church Print Studio and The Ark - A Cultural Center for Children. Artistic expression can be found not only in and on the buildings themselves, but also with a collection of art pieces displayed on the streets.

Temple Bar offers a successful example of the redevelopment process of an older, deteriorated area within the city. Hard work by the people who cared was the key, as private sector investment in cultural and urban renewal was needed, with little contribution, except tax incentives, by the state. John Mulcahy, an Investment and Development Partner notes that with Temple Bar "the main lesson, it seems to me, is that to harness market forces to non-market ends you must embark on a highly interventionist approach."<sup>25</sup> In doing so, it was found that the purely profit-driven forces of the private sector, may be controlled and focused into a more socially balanced renewal process.



6

7

8

9

## C o m m u n i t y

### M i x e d - u s e

H o t s o n B a k k e r  
A r c h i t e c t s  
V a n c o u v e r , B . C .

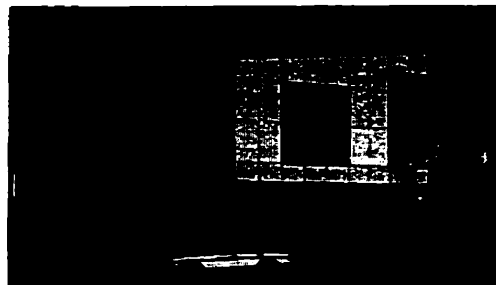
This complex in the Kitsilano community of Vancouver shows how a mix of uses within a dense urban environment can be architecturally expressed. The massing of the relatively large project has been broken down in response to its small scale context. Each block has been provided with a semiprivate courtyard providing a permeable form and vertical access to the rest of the complex. While the first two levels are for commercial uses - retail and office - the top two contain residential apartment units.



10

F e r n a u & H a r t m a n  
A r c h i t e c t s  
B e r k e l e y , C a l i f o r n i a

The Tipping Building represents a creative design solution to the challenge of combining residential and commercial uses into one building. The building consists of parking and a restaurant on the ground floor with office and residential space for Steven Tipping on the two floors above. As an engineer, the owner wanted a design expressive of the simple and honest use of materials. The massing that followed has created a building of human scale that also fits within the larger setting.



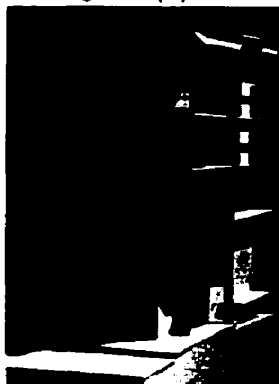
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## D w e l l i n g s

### L i v e - w o r k   a n d a r t i s t s   s t u d i o s

A c t o n   J o h n s o n   O s t r y  
A r c h i t e c t s  
V a n c o u v e r , B . C .

This artist live/work studio and warehouse was built after much lobbying for amendments to zoning and building bylaws. It is located in a light industrial area adjacent to the downtown core. When built the studios were left incomplete so the residents could build out and personalize their space. To minimize construction costs, basic and economical materials were used including poured concrete, concrete block and pavers, exposed steel structure, corrugated metal cladding and plywood.



12

P e t e r   C a r d e w  
A r c h i t e c t s  
V a n c o u v e r , B . C .

Within an area of existing single family homes close to the downtown, is Cardew's live - work studio building - a new low scale design approach to the older combination of live and work space, yet within the more modern contemporary city setting. The form is rectangular with a small courtyard within four double height minimal studios, two on each side, resting on the ground floor garage and workshops. The building mass is light, clad with large windows and galvanized metal.



13

## Low - income housing

Les architects  
Boutros + Pratte  
Montreal, Quebec

This low - income housing project fits into its urban setting so well because it fronts the street edge and is scaled to other buildings in the neighborhood. The three buildings, with a semi - private park nestled by one, contain 117 units. Several unit types and size within each building respects the needs of several groups, such as for singles, on upper floors or families on the ground floor. With brick, the facades are articulated with punched out windows and recessed balcony spaces.



14

Rob Wellington  
Quigley Architects  
San Diego, California

La Pensione is a single-room occupancy building [SRO]. With its thoughtful design, this building offers proof that housing for the poor can contribute to a community. A lady who owns a restaurant near by said it was a "shot in the arm" for the neighborhood. Similar to their other SRO designs, RVQ spoke to the residents of the Baltic Inn, to find out how they could be done better. Placing the laundry room in a central location so people could meet while washing their clothes was the result.



15

## P a r t i c i p a t i o n

I v o W a l d h o r  
A r c h i t e c t  
M a l m o , S w e d e n

This five story apartment building is an example of a contemporary participatory project. It is the result of four years of collaboration between the architect and the future residents. Individual choices were allowed inside the units, and on the exterior facades. Windows and doors were painted by the residents and therefore their units are identifiable from the street. Even with such high level of personalization the architect was able to maintain a harmonious building mass.



16



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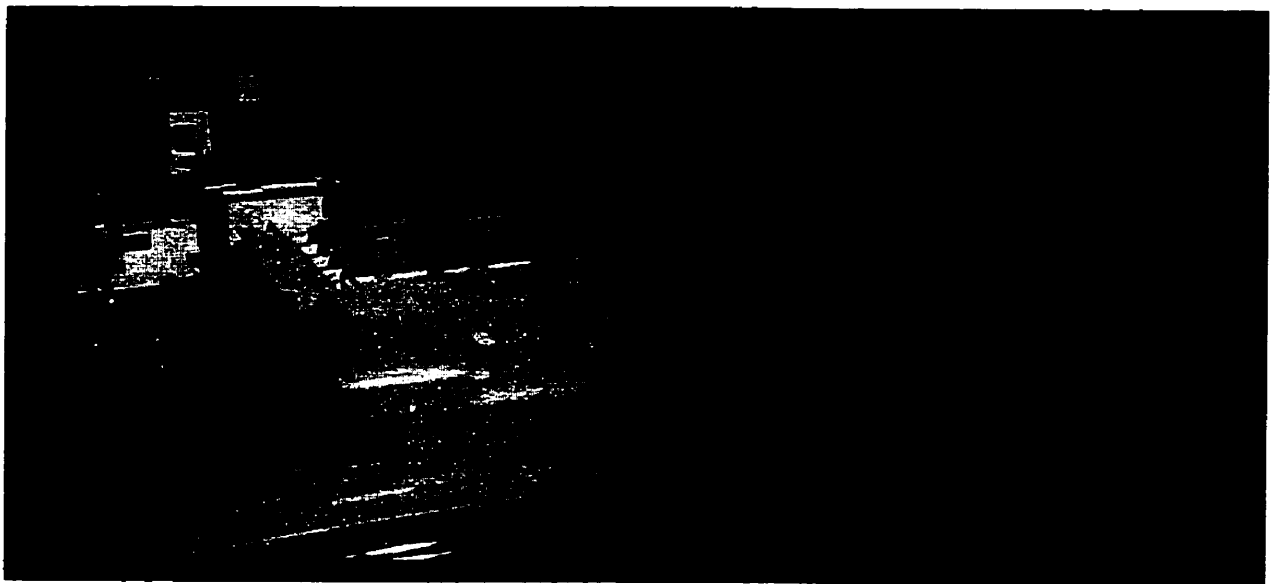
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D e s i g n

A p l a c e t o l i v e

## A p l a c e t o l i v e

The first two sections of this project - the setting and the people, led to the third - the design. The architectural design followed the first two as the physical way to address the conditions of the site and the needs of the existing and future residents and visitors of East Village.

In bringing the setting and the people together it is hoped that each will be better off as a result. The intention of this design project is to create a 'good' place to live in East Village, that is to become a home, both at the scale of the individual resident and the community as a whole. In response to this, the design was conceived from a vision of a new community emerging out of the vacant land that lies there today, into an active and diverse place rooted in the reality of every day life.

As such, the design solution is in a sense seeks to show how the redevelopment of East Village may begin. The design does not propose something new, but rather applying what has been learned by those who have dealt with similar urban issues, to the site and the needs of the people.



## D e s i g n   p r i n c i p l e s

The critical evaluation of the site and the desire to create a place for people in East Village resulted in the identification of six design principles. Together they informed and guided the design process and led to the design solution.

G r i d - alignment of streets and back alleys

M o v m e m e n t - vehicles, trains [LRT and CPR], pedestrians.

S c a l e - massing of surrounding buildings.

O r i e n t a t i o n - sun, wind, shadow, views, vistas

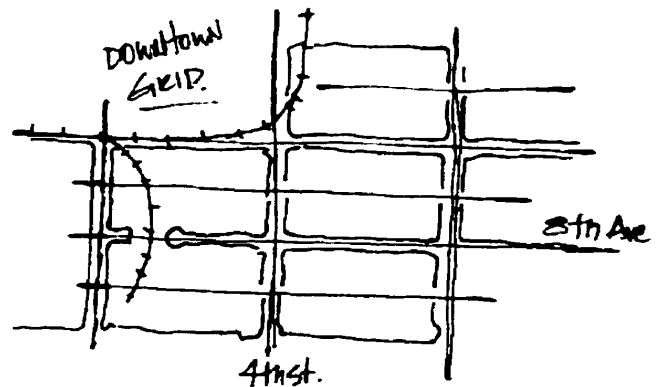
I n t e r l o c k i n g   s p a c e - the relationship of buildings to each other and the spaces formed between them

S e n s e   o f   C o m m u n i t y - creating a positive spirit and feeling in the places people live together



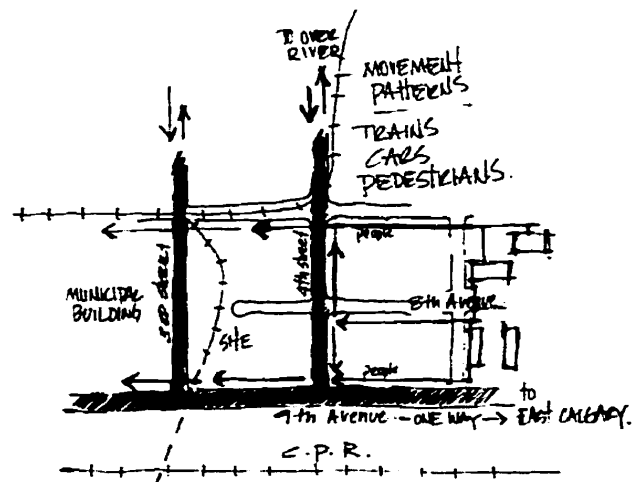
## Downtown street grid

The street grid is an important organization system for East Village and the rest of downtown to the west. Presently, 8th Avenue SE is terminated in a cul de sac on the east side of the LRT tracks. This historically significant pedestrian pathway must be re-established to connect East Village to Calgary's downtown core.



## Movement patterns

Currently, there are several movement patterns operating in East Village. Vehicular traffic is the most significant in terms of numbers, while the LRT tracks and trains cutting through the site are the most troublesome. Pedestrian movement is severely restricted, forcing people to walk around the site either to the north or south. Pedestrian movement through the site is strongly needed.



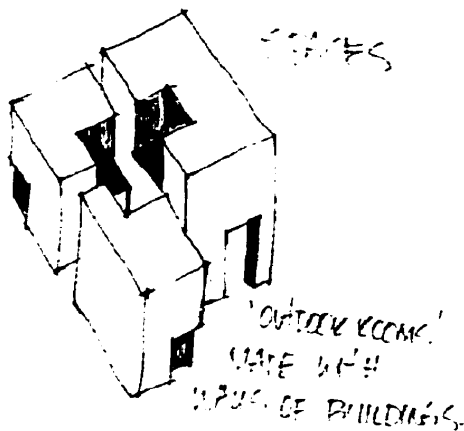
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## Interlocking space

The lack of buildings on the site allows for the development of a scheme that demonstrates the careful placement of buildings to create 'outdoor rooms'. Building placement and elements, as well as articulated facades can be utilized to create useful, interesting and enjoyable outdoor spaces of different size and feeling.



## Sense of community

With so few buildings, residents and visitors, East Village lacks a strong and positive sense of community. With a mixed-use design for the site that brings in amenities, work places and dwellings together the community will be able to attract a wide range of people to live, work and visit the area. This in turn may form the basis of creating an interesting, safe and convenient place that encourages and supports social interaction.

## D e s i g n   s o l u t i o n

### T h e M u n i c i p a l B u i l d i n g

As easy as it is to see the Municipal Building as the enemy to East Village, as it so harshly disregards its existence, it is much more useful at this point to find its more positive gestures. For instance, rather than viewing the East facade as an unyielding wall, it is a backdrop – a neutral background and a part of the sky. The buildings and space to be placed in front then became like props that people could move through and among as they act out the daily drama of their lives. Rather than minimizing the role of architecture, seeing it in a similar light to stage props recognizes its necessary role in requiring people to activate and interact with it, while involving the audience by way of spatial and aesthetic experiences and appreciation.

While some communities are bounded by a soft edge, creating difficulty in understanding where the community begins and ends, the Municipal Building is a strong and recognizable boundary to East Village. This type of definition provides a shared understanding of territoriality and responsibility. But because this building has taken a confrontational stance towards the east, the buildings do not return

this challenge and instead turn to the side and look the other way. More appropriately for the project and the primary role of 8th Avenue SE, the buildings along 3rd Street SE are oriented toward the north or south rather than to the west. The buildings along 8th Avenue SE on its north and south edge face onto it and each other. This allows people to enter into these buildings and the shops and offices on their ground floors from the elevated pedestrian plaza.

In response to the dramatic difference in scale from the Municipal Building to the existing low scale buildings in East Village, the height of the buildings on the west side are of a similar height (20 meters) to the stone clad arcade base of the Municipal Building. While on the east side, the heights will be similar to buildings like the St. Louis and Hillier Block (9 meters). In a sense, the buildings terrace in order to break up the height difference from east to west.



s e c t i o n b b

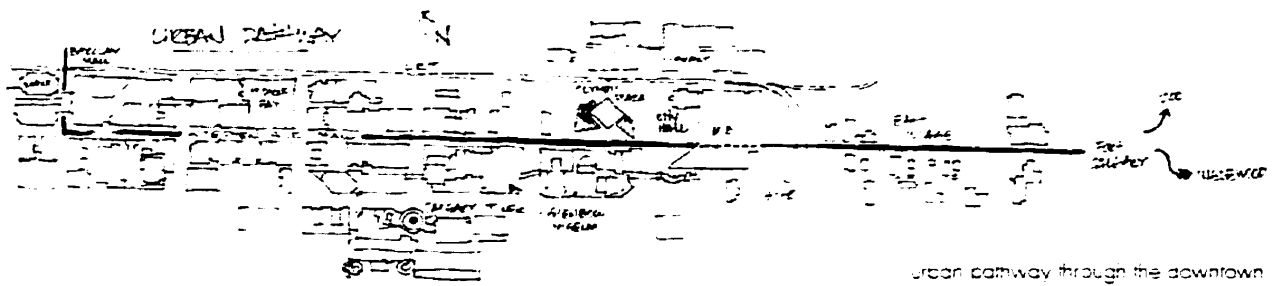
## The Downtown Grid



Urban pathway along Stephen Avenue Mall

One of the first responses to the grid was to bring 8th Avenue SE around south to 9th Avenue SE, creating what would most likely be 3A Street SE. This serves to remove the existing cul de sac and to improve accessibility and increase vehicular traffic into and through the central part of East Village. For pedestrians, the continuation of this street up and over the LRT tracks reconnects the east and west sides of the site. People can once again walk through the site allowing this transition space to unify rather than divide the urban landscape.

Reconnecting 8th Avenue SE also creates an almost unobstructed urban pathway from downtown to Fort Calgary. People can walk along Stephen Avenue - a pedestrian mall closed to cars during the day, lined with shops, offices, galleries, restaurants and cafes, in older refurbished brick and sandstone buildings, through the Arts district, past Olympic Plaza, along the 'interior street' of the Municipal Building, over the site, through East Village and discoveries, while linking significant places, spaces and events.



urban pathway through the downtown

In her article *Paths: The Nature of Linear Public Space*, Lisa R. Findley writes

"Paths provide an opportunity in our destination-oriented world to engage our bodies and minds in the space between - both the space between origin and destination and the space between the edges of the path itself".<sup>1</sup>

In building over the train and reconnecting 8th Avenue SE the project essentially becomes a bridge, both physically and symbolically. Not only must there be a actual pedestrian bridge connecting the elevated plaza of the project over 3rd Street SE to the Municipal Building and

beyond, but the project itself links the downtown and East Village in peoples minds. East Village will be apart of the downtown. People will be able to move easily in and out of the neighborhood, with bridge as a recognizable and experiential gateway from one side to the other.

The arc of the tracks through the site strongly influences the design solution merely because of its presence. Rather than encapsulating it, to somehow hide and ignore its existence, its shape has been reflected or traced in the massing and built form to in a sense echo its energy and movement in the design. The pedestrian circulation pathways and the building form follow the arc, to

create a subtle sense of the movement of the train below. As a result, the existence of the LRT can be experienced from within and above the site.

Building the project over the LRT tracks, created a new ground plain roughly six meters above grade for the length of the site. The reinforced concrete structure forms a base for the buildings above, while providing shelter for the parked cars below.

Following the streets and alley ways of East Village and the lots adjacent to the site, the buildings have been massed into four separate, yet connected and interdependent blocks. Two on the north side of 8th Avenue SE and two on the south side. In this way, the two dimensional grid that exists at street level three dimensional and spatial within the site. People can move across the site, as well as around and through the buildings.



photo of model showing the four blocks - looking west



Socially, the residents will be part of one block - a smaller community within the larger whole, rather than living in one large project with hundreds of dwellings and anonymous faces. This is intended to create a good place to live within a more intimately scaled environment based on face recognition. Safety may therefore be increased with a sense of belonging and responsibility felt by the residents.

The spaces on the new elevated ground plain and directly over the train, will be restricted to more public uses, for practical and metaphorical reasons. These spaces are the social and active areas of the project with people coming and going throughout the day and little if any use during the evening.

With the tracks moving through the centre of the project this space seems more appropriate to commercial use rather than residential. Stringing the social spaces and buildings along the length of the

train tracks creates a functional rhythm that both residents and visitors of this area can read and understand. Concrete columns align both sides of the tracks along their length, to support the main concrete floor and to set up a consistent rhythm. As well, they change in use above the floor, from structural posts to railing and lighting supports. Architecturally a different style than the residential buildings around them is legitimized and provides another layer of expression.

Functionally, this break down of the organizational structure provides direct access onto and into the site for by service vehicles and crews for such activities as garbage collection, loading, and service calls. As well, it is possible that the project could be built in four phases over time as resources become available and public knowledge and interest increases.

## Interlocking spaces



model photo looking north over the site

This design of a collection of twelve carefully composed buildings is also intended to demonstrate how the relationship of these buildings to each other their immediate context can begin to fill in the pieces of a city block to create meaningful spaces for people to inhabit. The availability of so many vacant lots in East Village provides the opportunity to build a dense human scaled, truly urban community with a sequence of spaces and activities, not found anywhere else in Calgary.

"The soul of the city is mirrored not only in the character of its buildings, but even more decisive is the relationship of these buildings to each other and, most importantly of all, the spaces created between them."<sup>2</sup>

The idea that outdoor spaces are volumes rather than areas is important to understand the relationship between urban form and space. Placement of the vertical elements of a building should be decided by not just how it forms and sculpts the interior space, but also how it does this with the exterior space. The exterior walls with all of

their textures, extrusions and recesses, can be used to form the interior walls of the space with the ever changing quality of the sky, as a ceiling. In doing so, these 'outdoor rooms' as urban public spaces can provide a similar richness of experience as those inside. Clare Cooper Marcus writes,

**" Postoccupancy research indicates that the success of clustered housing depends more on how the spaces between the buildings are handled than on interior design."**<sup>3</sup>

The careful positioning of the walls can create many types of these outdoor rooms displaying a range of qualities - compressive - expansive, light - dark, and peaceful - active. These spaces get their valued feeling of intimacy and comfort through their enclosed character, maintaining easy access and circulation, views and vistas.

Within the project, there are a variety of outdoor spaces, with many along or adjacent to the main circulation pathway that extends from one end of site to the other, along its length. The opportunity to

creates such spaces resulted from the large size of the site, allowing for a design of a collection of buildings. Within them there are three types of urban spaces - plazas, courtyards and roof top terraces.

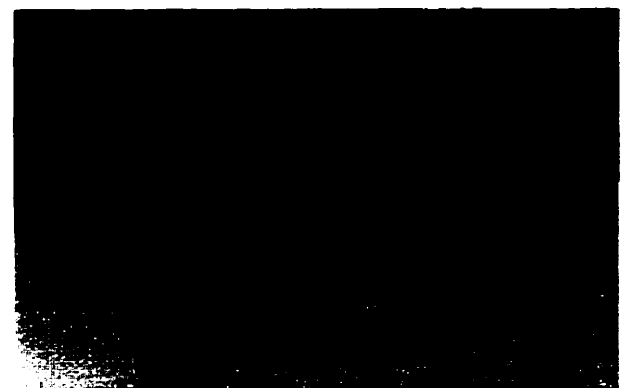
**P l a z a s** The hard surface plaza spaces are centrally located with the main one elevated over the tracks along 8th Avenue SE, with a smaller one at the bottom of the stairs adjacent to the lower portion of the community center. It is intended that both will be filled with seating, landscaping, sculptures and water features to create more intimate areas for sitting, reading, talking and



**Courtyards** Two main courtyard spaces have been designed within the project, enclosed within the buildings that surround them. One sits in the northern section between Blocks 1 and 2 shown in the top photo. The other is located in the southern section between Blocks 3 and 4, shown in the second photo. Both have been placed along the main pedestrian circulation pathway that arcs through the site following that of the LRT tracks, in order to encourage casual meetings as people come and go. However, because they are set within the buildings they are intended to be more quiet and peaceful as they are removed from the more public buildings and areas along 8th Avenue SE.



**Roof top terraces** There are several roof top terraces throughout the project for the residents. Most of them are elevated several stories and surrounded by apartment units providing both shelter and privacy. It is intended that they will be casual places for meeting, determined and personalized by the residents with furniture, plants, flowers and privacy/ sun screens.



## Urban redevelopment



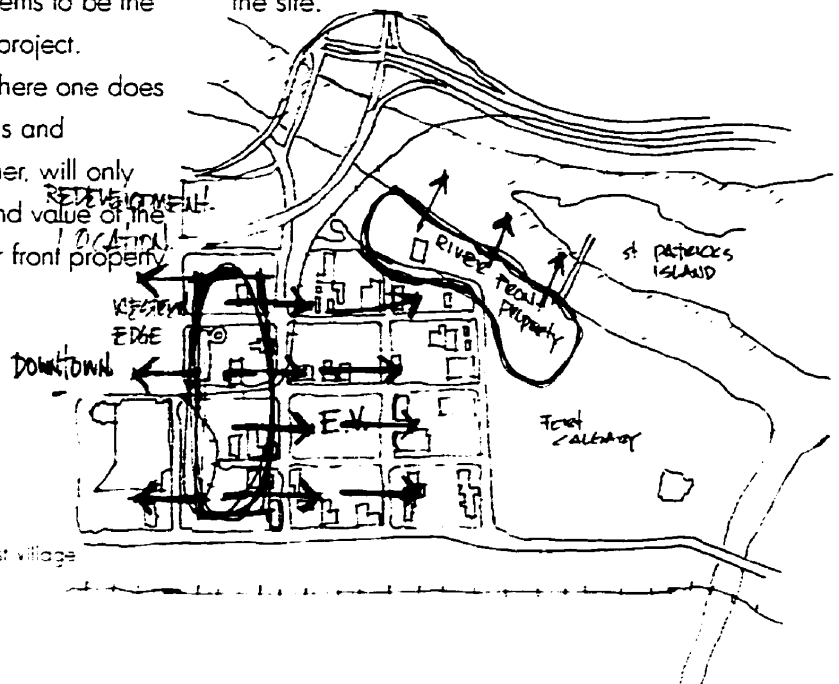
Because East Village has been left untouched for so many years, its redevelopment must now be strategic, rather than haphazard. To balance the social, economic and political forces that are at work, many factors must be considered and carefully weighed. For instance, the first project planned for the area will be the first in a long time and will set the tone for those to follow merely by its presence. The location and program of this project will effect not only the site and its immediate context, but also the rest of East Village.

The more obvious area to begin construction in East Village is within the Northeast Quarter, along 5th Avenue SE and the Bow River, the current site of the Simmons Warehouse. This is the most desirable land for residential construction, as it is surrounded by a natural landscape and pedestrian pathways along the river bank, and furthest away from the most rundown areas to the southwest. Medium to high priced units would be relatively easy to sell or rent to downtown office workers and the profit would be considerable. However, development of

this area early on in the redevelopment process may be detrimental to the rest of the area. Building on the best land first will offer little incentive for continued construction throughout the rest of East Village. The housing and its residents along the river, can easily turn their backs to the rest of the area behind it in favor of the view to the north.

The western edge of East Village - the more undesirable and rundown section, seems to be the more appropriate choice for the first project. Creating a positive sense of place where one does not exist, with well designed buildings and meaningful spaces for people to gather, will only serve to increase the attractiveness and value of the rest of East Village, including the river front property.

The sites odd internal shape and the ownership by The City of Calgary, makes it an area that is economically feasible to develop. Although the cost of the reinforced concrete structure and isolation from the noise and vibration of the train will be considerable, it may be balanced by a lease or purchase agreement with the city [since the project is using the air space above the site] and the ability to place a mixed - use project on the site.



Predicted direction of the redevelopment in East village

The site is one of those western sites, and arguably one of the worst in East Village. This south west corner of East Village is the proposed location for a neighborhood shopping precinct. Low scale, street oriented buildings will be encouraged and residential spaces above ground level shops and offices will be allowed. Preferable but often not allowed, this mixed - use zoning opens up a range of design opportunities and possibilities for this area of East Village.

The benefits of mixing residential, commercial and recreational uses are well known with the insistence of urbanist Jane Jacobs, that a mix of land uses is what every city and downtown neighborhood needs and what urban living is all about. Creating places for people to live, work and shop within a small geographic area is known to promote diversity and vitality. With different types of people on the streets at different times in the day they become interesting and active places to be. Since

people attract people, this only increases or intensifies the urban experience. Safety, or at least the perception of it, is increased based on the idea of 'eyes on the street'. There are also economic advantages to mixed-use projects in the downtown that East Village could benefit from.

**"Since there is an inherent discrepancy between investment returns on commercial developments and those on housing projects, a combined use would not only enable a fair distribution of development opportunities, but also make housing construction feasible where otherwise the land cost for the housing sector could be absorbed in mixed-use projects by non-residential components."**<sup>4</sup>

Because the area of East Village is a risky place to build right now, developers and builders may be more receptive to invest in a mixed - use urban project as it can help to minimize their risk.

From its inception East Village was a mixed - use community with houses, shops, offices, hotels, warehouses and even a movie theatre. Although it is unlikely or even desirable to recreate this mix throughout the community, an integration of uses on and around the site seems appropriate and timely. Initiating the redevelopment with this integration of uses would provide new housing for people who need it, provide convenient shops and services for the existing and new residents, and create a much need focus and gathering place for the community.

In regards to services and amenities this project is directed at several groups who would use them at different times. During the week, this project seeks to be a place for nearby downtown workers and visitors who may come to eat or run errands during their lunch hour or after work. With the Municipal Building right next to the site, it is likely that many workers from this building will come to visit due to its convenience. On the weekends, just as Calgarians visit other inner city neighborhoods,

such as Kensington or Inglewood to stroll, shop and visit the coffee shops and restaurants, East Village can be a place offering these activities as well. By reconnecting 8th Avenue SE, this urban pathway can lead people along Stephen Avenue Mall and through to East Village. By creating an exciting and diverse urban environment people other than those who live or work there may wish to visit.

With the Arts and Government districts so close to East Village it seems likely that businesses related to these industries or those who would like to be centrally located, would be attracted to this area. With them, service business catering to downtown workers, such as dry cleaning or newspaper shops may wish to locate here.

As such, several types of commercial space have been created in the project for a range of retail, service, office and restaurant operations. Except for a few places the commercial space is confined to the first level above the parking structure.



## Shops

Retail space in the project is concentrated within the bottom floor of the buildings fronting the elevated 8th Avenue SE plaza, the main pedestrian corridor through the site, and along the newly created street of 3A Street SE running south to 9th Avenue SE. Possible retail establishments might include: book/newspaper, art supplies, clothing, bakery, stationary, flowers and gifts and the like. The spaces vary in size and configuration, as they are expected to be adapted and transformed to suit the needs of the tenant.

## Services

A range of services are expected to be needed by the existing residents of East Village and those to come. Because services are less dependent on visibility to attract pedestrians, these spaces are close to, but not along, the main circulation paths. Possible service establishments include: hair design, dry cleaning, photocopying, dentist/doctor's office, lawyer and so forth.

## Offices

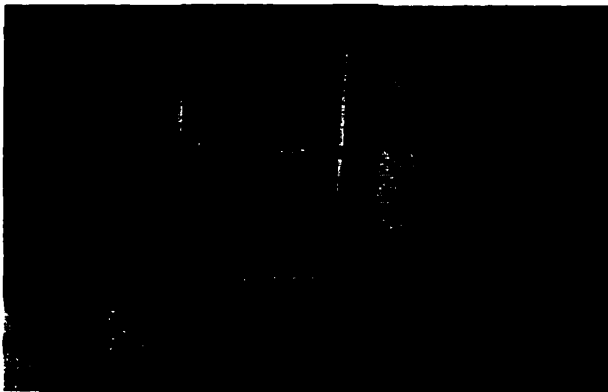
A variety of spaces have been provided particularly appropriate in size and location for small offices. They are located throughout the project in several buildings, but concentrated in the corner of 3rd Street and 7th Avenue SE. This area of the site seems to be suited to this use because of its high use and visibility, and close proximity to the LRT and surrounding office buildings. Similar to retail and service, the office spaces have been left as large open spaces, to be reconfigured by the occupants.



shops and dwellings above parkade along 3rd Street SE

## R e s t a u r a n t s   a n d   c a f e s

Eating establishments are intended to be valuable spaces in this project providing places for residents and visitors to eat, gather and mingle. Although the project is expected to have several restaurants and cafes, only a few spaces have specifically designed to do so. First, a restaurant has been plan for Block 1, the most northerly, at the corner of 3rd Street and 7th Avenue SE. It is located directly above the LRT tracks with a curved form and two facades completely glazed. It is intended to be a recogniz-



front view of restaurant above the southbound LRT tracks

able form that provides the patrons seated inside t a view of the oncoming southbound trains as they run underneath the floor.

Two cafes have been planned for the community center located in Block 2. The first is at the front of the building with an outdoor patio looking out onto the elevated plaza allowing patrons to watch the passing pedestrian traffic. Internally, the cafe has a high ceiling with a loft space covering a portion of t. A counter would service coffee and menu items such as sandwiches, soups and salads.

The second sits at the back of the ground level plaza in the lower portion of the community center. Similar to the cafe above, this one looks out onto a more intimate plaza providing places for people to sit and eat or drink along leges and under trees. The cafe sits under an identifiable sloped roof with glazed walls.

## T h e   r e s o u r c e   c e n t e r

The resource center is a social service place for the existing and new residents of East Village, as well as visitors to the community. Its function is relatively undetermined so as to accommodate a range of uses and organizations, whether private or voluntary. It is intended to be a place where people can come for information and assistance in areas including medical, employment, and general counselling - such as for drug or alcohol addiction. As well, continued education may be encouraged by offering instruction on a variety of topics.

Programmatically, the resource center is distinct yet connected to the retail/office/residential building beside it. The main entrance is on the south side of the elevated 8th Avenue SE plaza, directly across from the community center, creating a well defined public space between them. The exact use of the of the space has not been determined, as this is expected to be done based on need and interest of various public and private organizations and the residents. However, in this design, several spaces have been included based on the program intended, and include a front reception or

information area, semi-private offices below, several meeting rooms upstairs and a casual loft space looking over the front reception area.

As this building sits directly over the arc of the LRT tracks, the architectural form of the resource center follows its curve. The structure and roof plain are intended to be of lighter construction materials such as steel, cables and glass, so as to imply a sense

of energy and openness to the form and space. The walls of the front portion of the center are glazed allowing people to see in and out. In the evening the glow of the lights, next to the darkness of the surrounding space, will illuminate the resource center making it a focal point and an easily seen destination. The inside is opened up with single and double volume spaces and views from one level to another.

The resource center is identifiable with



## The community center

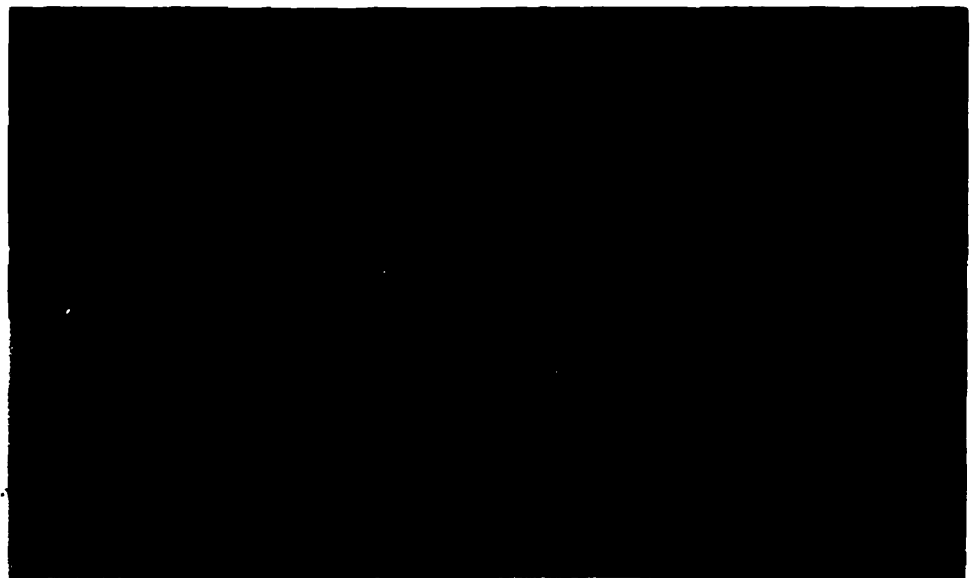
As the commercial district for East Village, the project and the sites around, it will most likely become the focus of the redeveloped community. To encourage public gathering and a positive sense of community among the residents, a community center or meeting place has been designed for a prominent location on the site. Sitting at the corner of 8th Avenue SE and the new street linked to 9th Avenue SE, this building is visible and entered from several directions and levels. It was conceived as a multi-functional building for people to casually spend time, get a cup of coffee, people watch and meet with friends.

A cafe with indoor and outdoor seating sits within the space at the front or south side of the building, along the elevated 8th Avenue SE plaza. Spaces have been designed within the center with a variety of sizes and orientation. Their programmatic function is expected to be decided in the with the future occupation of the business organizations or community groups that rent or lease the spaces for short or long term use.

The architectural design of the community center is similar to that of the resource center as it is also positioned over the arc of the LRT tracks and is constructed of lighter construction materials. The steel and glass also serve to set up an interesting contrast with the heaviness of the concrete substructure. The curved form and glazed walls of the center, wrapping around the support columns that mimic the pathway of the tracks, seek to

emphasize the public nature of the spaces next to the more private nature of the housing that stand behind and beside it. The community center seems to flow down over the elevated concrete floor as it terraces down to ground level, opening up with a hard surfaced landscaped plaza below. With multiple levels set off each other and the use of rooftop terraces, people are able to see and hear each other from one level to the next.

The multi-use community center is



## East Village as an Arts District

East Village is situated well to become a continuation or a second Arts District for downtown Calgary. Cultural Buildings lie directly west of East Village, centered around 8th Avenue SE. Creating spaces for the arts - in all mediums, would add to the others, such as the Triangle Gallery, the Glenbow Museum, the Calgary Performing Arts Center and many other galleries and shops along Stephen Avenue Mall.



Transforming East Village into a cultural area would give local artists a place to learn, work and display their products, create a character for the area and attract other Calgarians and tourists to the community. East Village seems to be a natural choice with the King Edward Hotel, a well known blues club and the community of Inglewood - an area concentrated with antique and furniture shops just over the Elbow River to the east.

Calgary lacks a strong Arts District in the downtown core which is probably a symptom of space and financial constraints than desire or need. A centrally located Cultural neighborhood seems to be needed

in downtown Calgary to attract Calgarians and visitors during non - business hours. As well, Calgarians would be exposed to the various expressions of art. East Village could also provide indoor and outdoor venue space for the annual festivals Calgary holds including the Jazz Festival, Folk Festival, Children's Festival and Art Week.

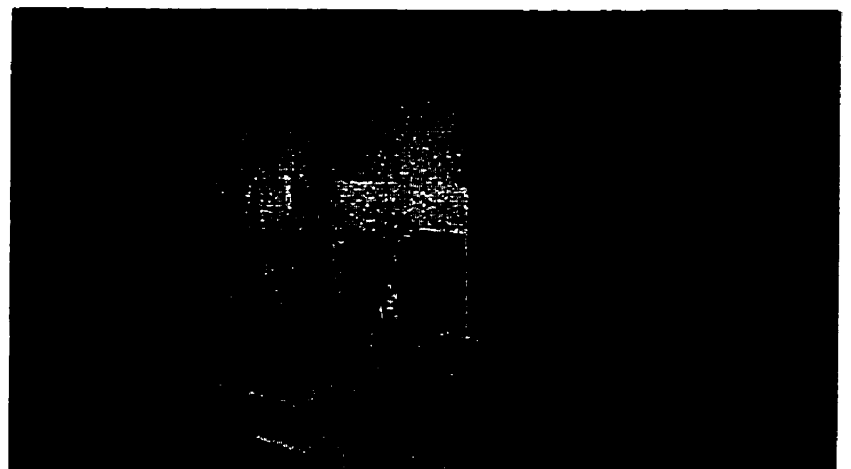
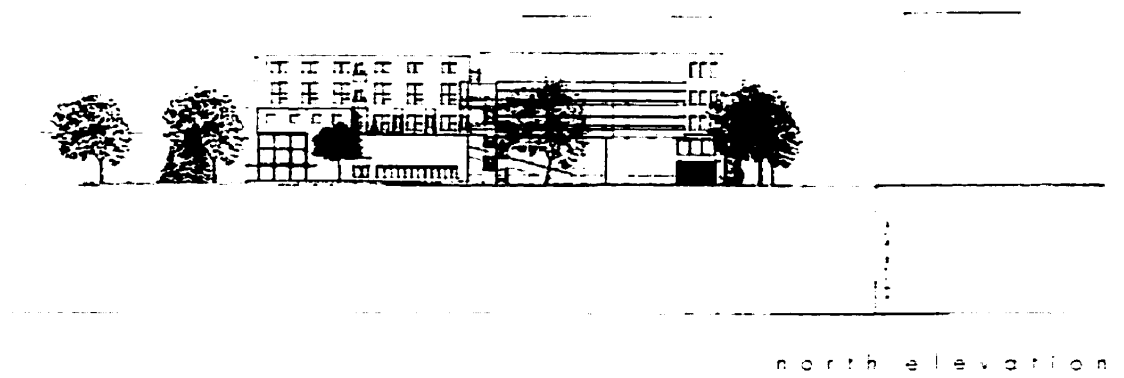
It is assumed that Cultural buildings similar to those in spirit to those in the revitalized community of Temple Bar in Dublin, will be built through out East

Village, but concentrated in this core area. Within the design several areas have been programmed with this in mind. At the north end of the site - Block 1, has been dedicated to artist endeavours. A workshop with a gallery space has been placed on the ground floor facing north and east respectively. Large windows allowing for pedestrians or people waiting across the street at the LRT station to see inside the workshop. Offices dedicated to artist organizations and live/work studios make up the rest of the spaces in the block.



a photo of how the workshop may look and operate





aerial of model showing the north-east corner of Block 1 with workshop and gallery on ground level

## D w e l l i n g s

The project for East Village is oriented towards the more adventurous segments of the people who would like to or need to live there. People with a pioneering spirit [bohemian types] will be needed to help initiate the redevelopment process and keep it going as the process gains momentum. Once this occurs they will help to give life and character to the area with their more 'urban lifestyle'. Participation in the community, both active and passive, will hopefully secure its future growth.

Within the four blocks of the project, several types of living spaces were designed to accommodate a range of lifestyle choices, including - maisonettes, live/work studios, 1 bedroom suites, and studio or bachelor suites, best suited to single people or couples. Flexibility of living style and price are the key determinants of size, layout, and location within the project. A range of unit size have been designed to promote a range of rental rates. Positioning of the buildings and units within them were based on functional concerns as well as attaining maximum privacy, cross ventilation, sunlight and view and vistas for the residents.

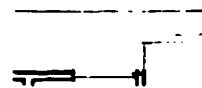
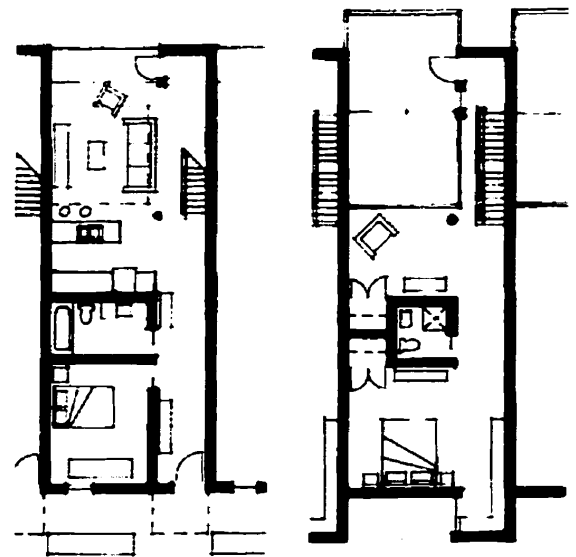
## M a i s o n e t t e

Seven maisonettes sit along the southern edge of Block 4 fronting 9th Avenue SE. Each unit is two stories high with a net floor area of 121 m<sup>2</sup> [1302 ft<sup>2</sup>]. Although the rectangular shape and exterior walls are set, the interior space can be designed around several different floor plans.

The maisonettes are the largest units in the project and somewhat removed from the main commercial area centered around the elevated plaza. It would most likely be suited to young professionals either single or couples, single parents, or older people who wish to live in this area.

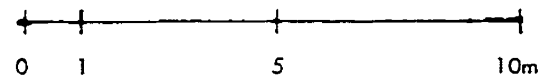
Entry into the units is gained from a linear courtyard on the north side of the units under a cantilevered floor and sitting area with a rectangular flower pot. The double volume living area and galley kitchen sit at the south end of the unit.

The second level or loft space contains a reading, den or hobby area, bathroom and sleeping space with closet in back. Access to the balcony is also gained from this level.



first level floor plan  
(Block 4)

second level floor plan



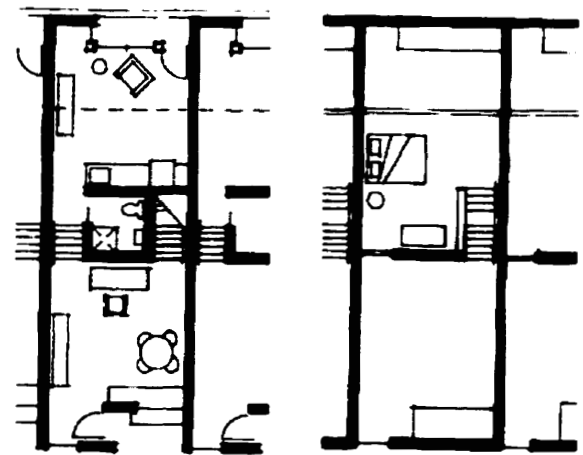
## Live / work studio

In several buildings, a living space has been placed directly above a commercial space, both retail and office, for people who wish to live close to where they work.

The floor space for the live/work studios range from 55m [592 ft ] to 75m [807ft ], based mainly on an open plan with a combination of living room - kitchen space, enclosed bathroom, and sleeping loft. Some live/work studio floor plans have a separate space for work while others assumed the work spaces will be included in the living space.

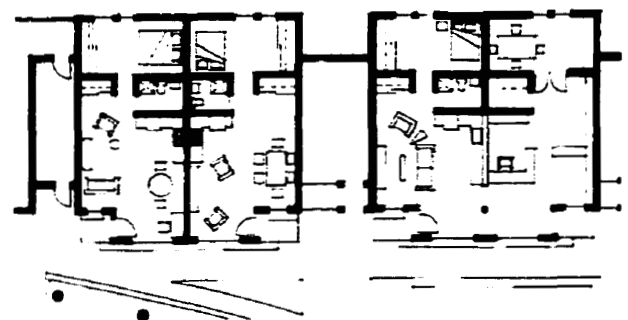
The live/work studios within Block 1 provide places for artists or others who wish to work within their home. Within each, three main spaces have been created - a work space [adjacent to the outside door], a living space and a sleeping loft above.

In Block 3, the opportunity exists for a resident to occupy a single unit or to rent a double by having the central dividing wall removed. In this way the work space can be on one side and the living space on the other.



first level floor plan  
(Block 1)

loft level floor plan



single unit floor plan  
(Block 3)

double unit floor plan

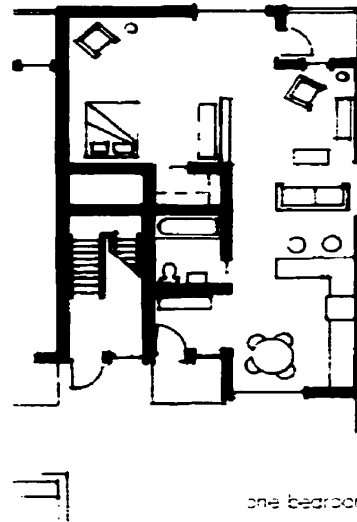
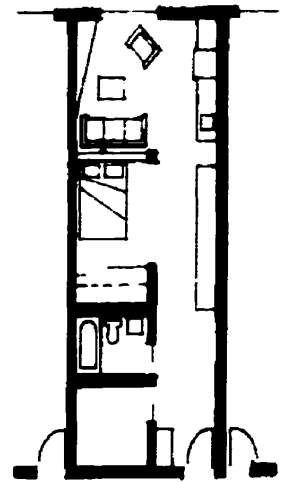
## One bedroom unit

One bedroom apartment units were designed for Blocks 2, 3 and 4, with a variety of shapes and sizes ranging from 60 m<sup>2</sup> [646 ft.<sup>2</sup>] to 75 m<sup>2</sup> [807 ft.<sup>2</sup>]. Although of similar size, these units are distinguishable from the live/work studios because access by the general public is not as obvious as they are removed from the main commercial precinct.

Within Block 2, several one bedroom units sit directly above shop and office space allowing residents to live close to where they may work. Shown on the right, many are long and narrow in plan, requiring a non-typical approach to room and furniture arrangement. For instance, the sleeping space is not surrounded with walls, but instead sits within the larger living space, bordered by columns, half walls and possibly screens or curtains added by the resident.

To the south, in Block 3 on the west side, four levels of one bedroom units look across 3rd Street SE towards the existing apartment building. The bedroom in these units is somewhat more defined yet can still be seen from the living space, depending on the height of the separating wall.

one bedroom floor plan (Block 2)



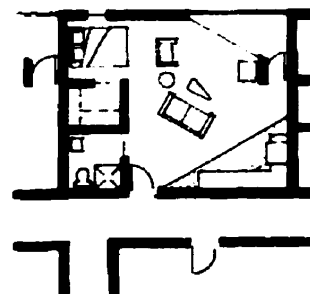
one bedroom unit floor plan (Block 3)

## Bachelor / studio suite

Within the project, many units are very small in size in order to have units with a low rental rate. The idea behind these units, that are 30 m [322 ft.] to 45 m [452 ft.]), is that some personal space is better than no space at all. These units were designed for those Calgarians who can afford to pay some rent and need a place of their own to live rather than sleeping at a shelter. Placing these units within a larger project may help to avoid the common problem of stigmatization of the poor.

The first unit, from Block 2, shows how angles can be used to make a space appear larger by extending the view of the resident as they look across their unit and out through a glazed wall onto their balcony and beyond. To strengthen this feeling the furniture is set on an angle and the kitchen flooring tiles are laid in a triangular shape.

The studio unit in Block 3 is more typical with an open plan, front window and balcony. In this case there is a combined living space with the sleeping space placed towards the west side of the unit. The east and west walls are perimeter walls providing maximum sunlight and cross ventilation.



studio suite (Block 2)



studio suite (Block 3)

## Participation and personalization

This mixed-use project did not begin with a completed as far as the type of services and units to be included, but rather the program evolved over time, as the sense of place became clearer. While all of the spaces have been accounted for and assigned a use in order to facilitate design, they - similar to the physical fabric and detailing of the buildings would be expected to change once the future residents and user groups would become involved. The intention of this project was not to dictate the completely, but instead to provide and let the buildings transform, as they were used and the needs of the people change.

Participation is considered to be a large part of this project with input in many ways of the existing residents of the community and those who may wish to live there. Although the overall scheme would most likely remain as designed, there would be several ways individuals could be involved throughout the design and construction of the project. Once the project is complete, resident participation may be concerned with the management and upkeep of the area.

Personalization of the individual dwelling units would also be encouraged within this project, both internal and external. Within the dwellings, the opportunity has been provided through the design, with open floor plans, unfinished units, permeable building materials and so forth, for the residents to alter their surroundings to suite their lifestyle and personal needs and tastes to a certain degree.

Exterior personalization of the dwellings is architecturally encouraged with articulated facades, permeable cladding and

and component replacement. Ledges by the door may be painted or hold personal items such as signs or plants, as well as provide a place to rest articles or to sit. Residents would be encouraged to paint window and door frames, paint and personalize wall surfaces around doors, choose their own balcony railings and detailing, place furniture and flower pots on balconies, hang different colored awnings over the windows and so forth.

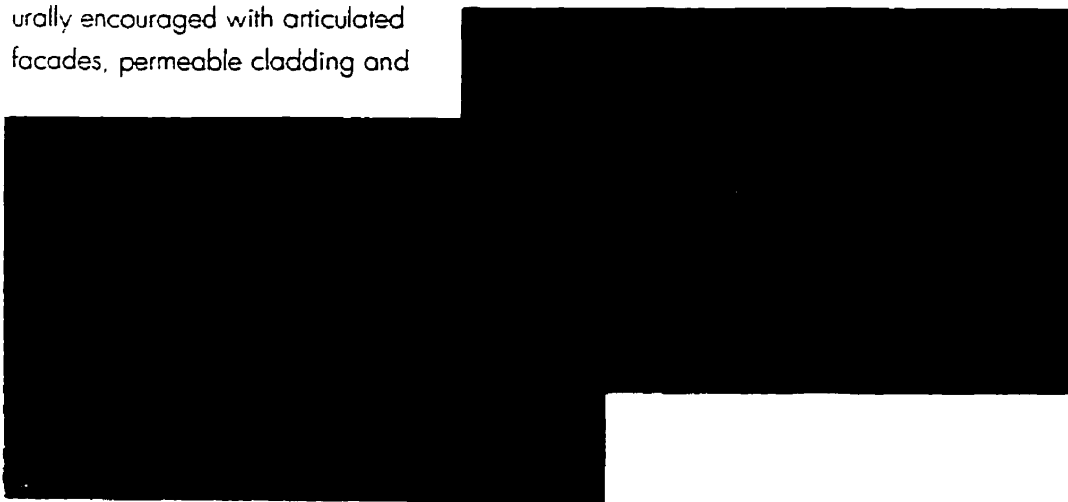


photo of model looking east over site



## C o n c l u s i o n

The problems in East Village are many that will require much time, money, resources and effort to solve. Arguably, this lifeless area could easily be left as it is, as the end of the line for homeless men, hookers and the seniors. Right now, East Village does have a feeling about it, a feeling of a hard reality of being down and out - much like the people that are attracted to it. East Village's fate already seems to be settled and accepted as an old rundown area in the downtown destined to be used for parked cars.

But the intention of this project is to not look the other way and let East Village continue as it has for so long. It seeks instead to create a place to live, a place to learn and grow, a place to give and share. A place different from anything else in Calgary and the downtown, with one of a kind spaces and places for people to experience, discover and enjoy their surroundings and each other. A significant place within Calgary's urban landscape.

Further than a design solution for a particular site in Calgary, this project and everything it proposes and is ultimately a challenge to everyone who can make a difference in the provision of affordable housing.

It is a challenge to the politicians to find ways to initiate and pursue the redevelopment process.

It is a challenge to the architects, planners and urban designers to fill the East Village with meaningful places and spaces.

It is a challenge to the developers and builders to find the money and techniques to see it through.

It is a challenge to the public and private committees and organizations to speak out, demand action and make it happen.

But perhaps most of all, it is a challenge to everyone to care, to care that there are people in our city that need 'good' places to live and a setting in the city that needs people to live there.

## N o t e s

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3. Marcus, Clare Cooper and Wendy Sarkissian. *Housing as if People Mattered*. Berkeley: University of California Press,(1986), p.24.
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## F i g u r e s

All photos and drawings were taken or drawn by the author with the exception of:

1. Walter Sauer. "Proactive Practice-Visionary Thought and Participatory Action in Environmental Design." *Places*. 12.2 (1999), p.63.

# P r o g r a m

## N o r t h

### B l o c k 1

Parking  
Mechanical Rooms  
Loading Dock / Storage  
Garbage Collection

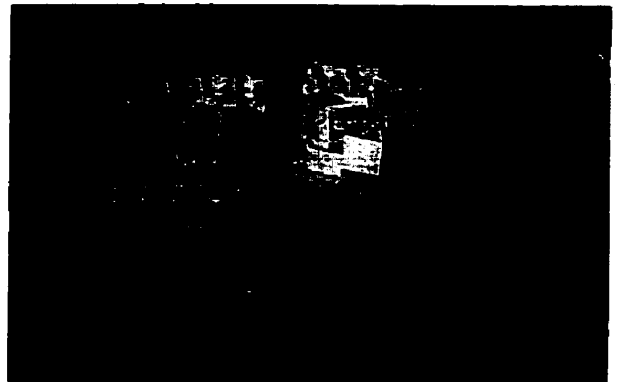
Bachelor Suites  
One Bedroom Units  
Live / Work Studios

Workshop  
Gallery

Restaurant Space  
Entry / Seating  
Kitchen / Storage  
Washrooms

Office space  
Washrooms  
Storage

Soft surface plaza



4

3

### B l o c k 2

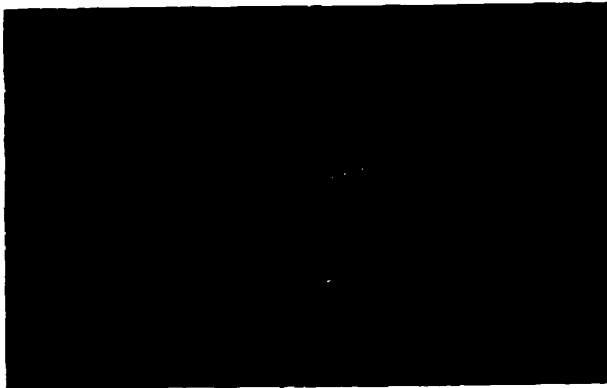
Parking  
Mechanical Rooms  
Loading Dock / Storage  
Garbage Collection

Bachelor Suites  
One Bedroom Units

Social Center  
Coffee Shop  
Commercial space  
Washrooms  
Kitchen  
Plaza

Retail space  
Office space  
Laundromat

Roof top terrace  
Courtyard  
Hard Surface Plaza



2

1

S o u t h

### B l o c k 3

Parking  
Mechanical  
Loading Dock / Storage  
Garbage Collection

One Bedroom Units  
Bachelor suites  
Live/Work Studios

Resource Center  
Entry Foyer  
Office space  
Meeting Rooms  
Kitchenette  
Storage Room  
Washrooms

Retail Space  
Office Space

Roof top terrace  
Courtyard  
Hard Surface Plaza

### B l o c k 4

Parking  
Mechanical  
Loading Dock  
Garbage Collection

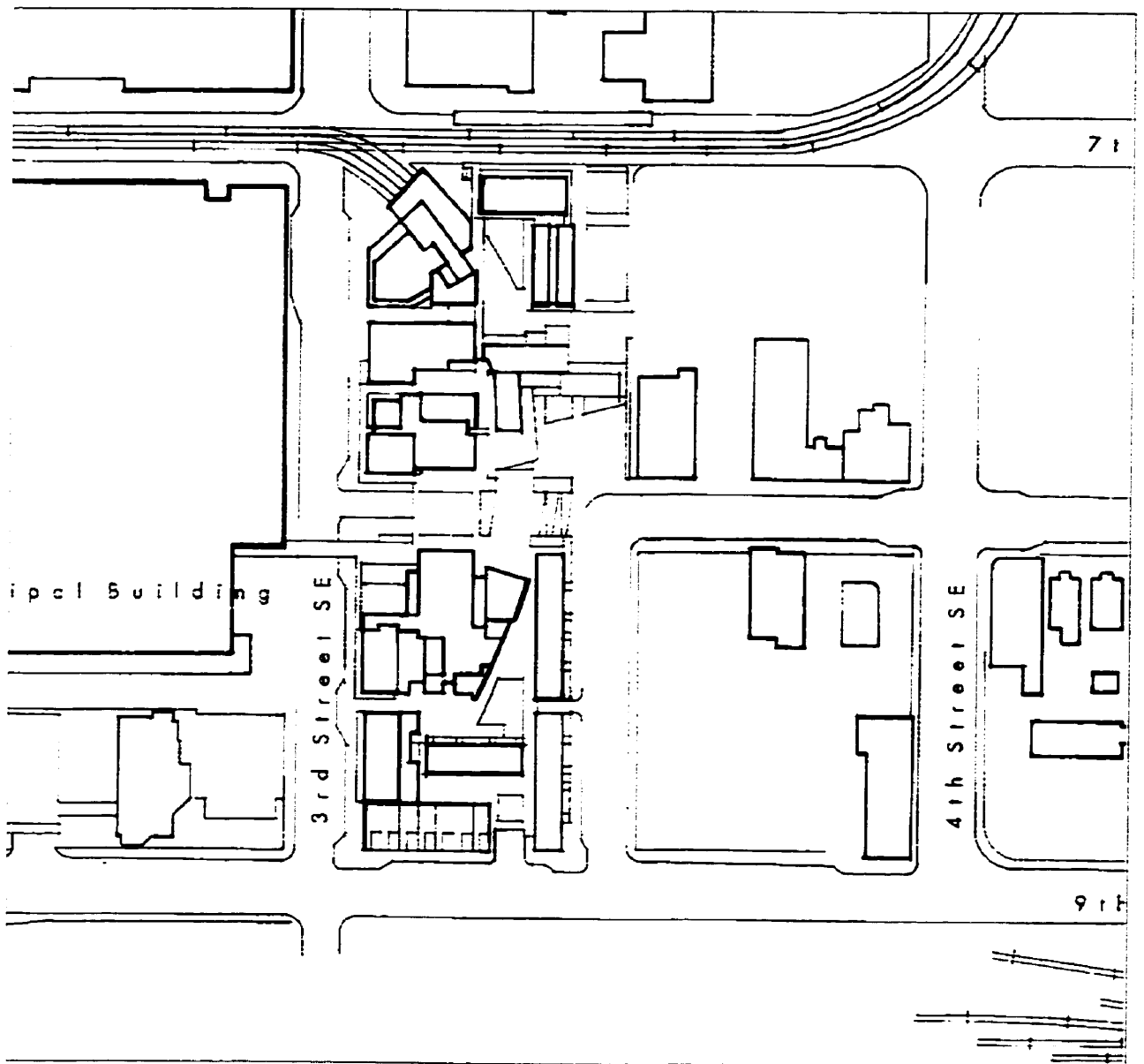
One Bedroom Units  
Two Bedroom Units  
Live/Work Studios  
Maisonettes

Laundromat

Roof top terrace  
Courtyard

D r a w i n g s

# S i t e p l a n



# F l o o r p l a n s

1970

1971

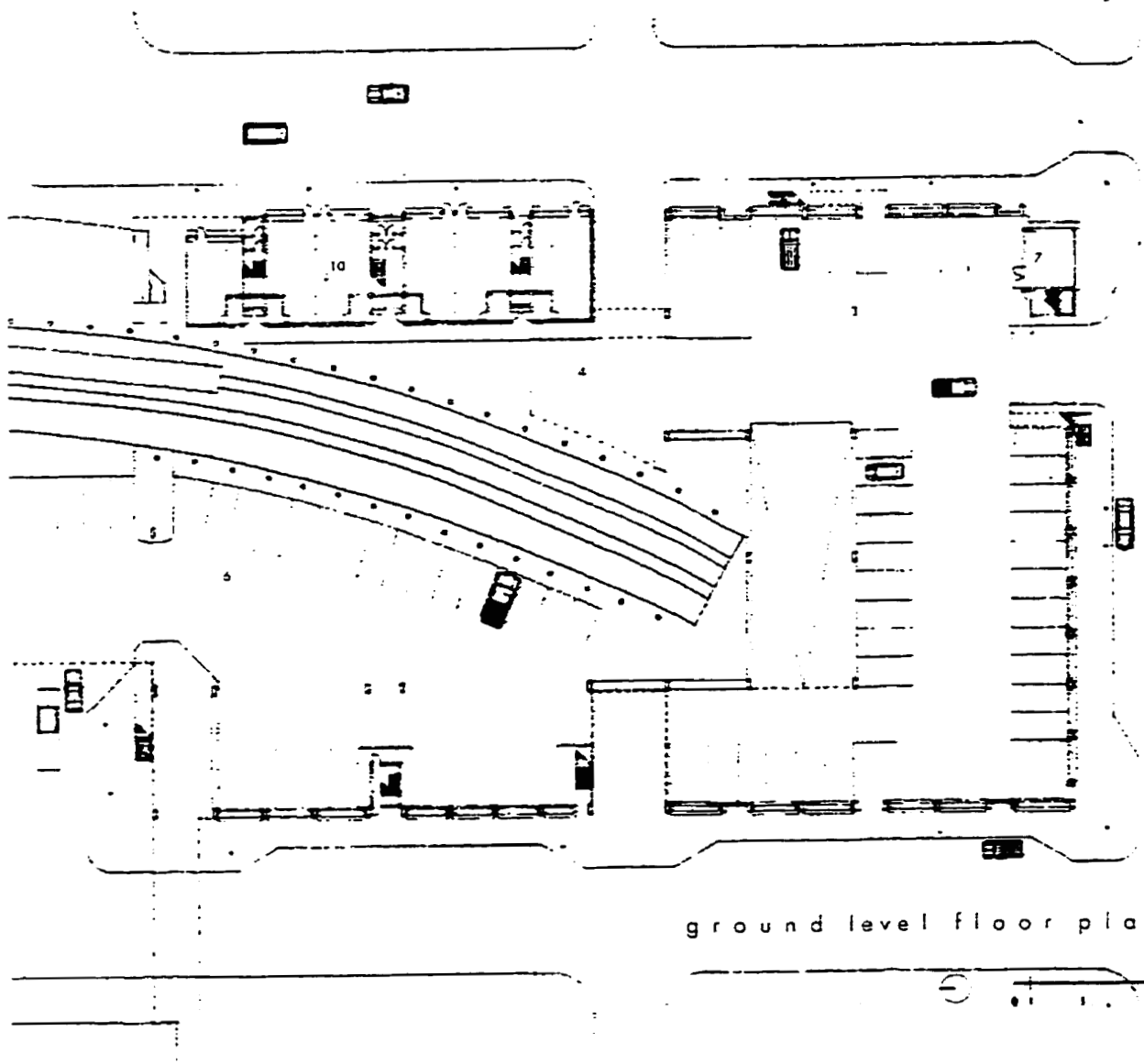
1972

1973

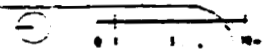
1974

1975

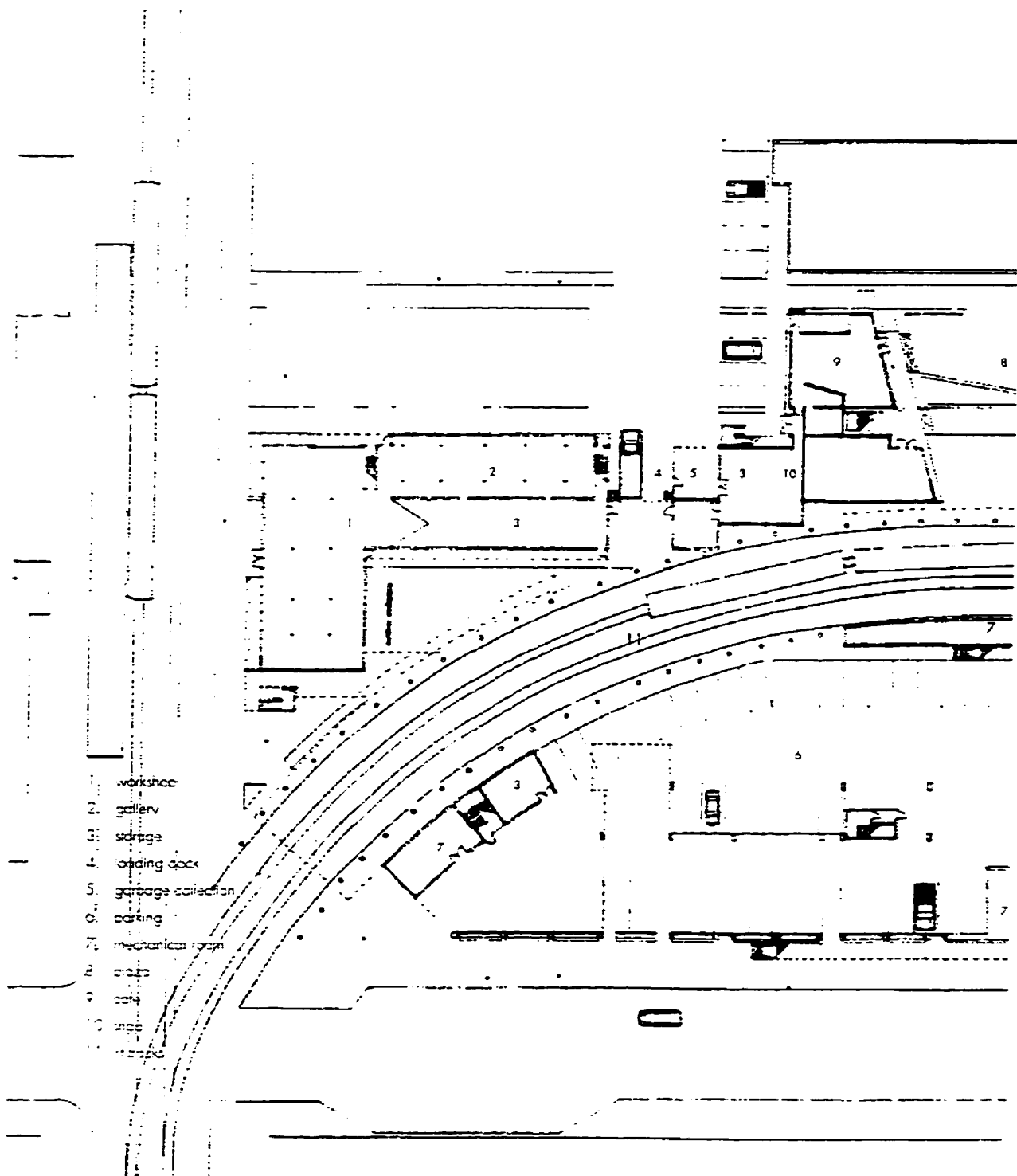
1976



ground level floor plan



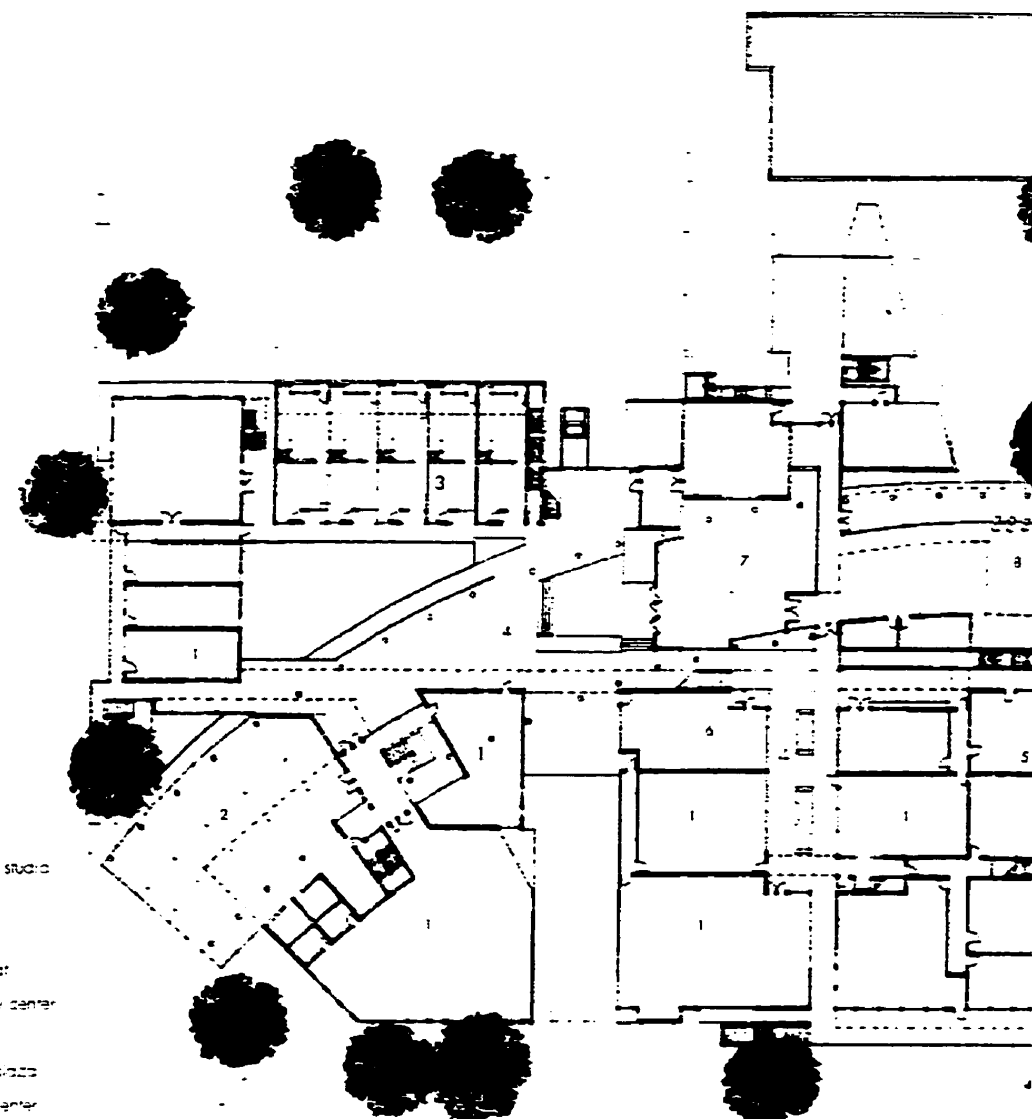




Block

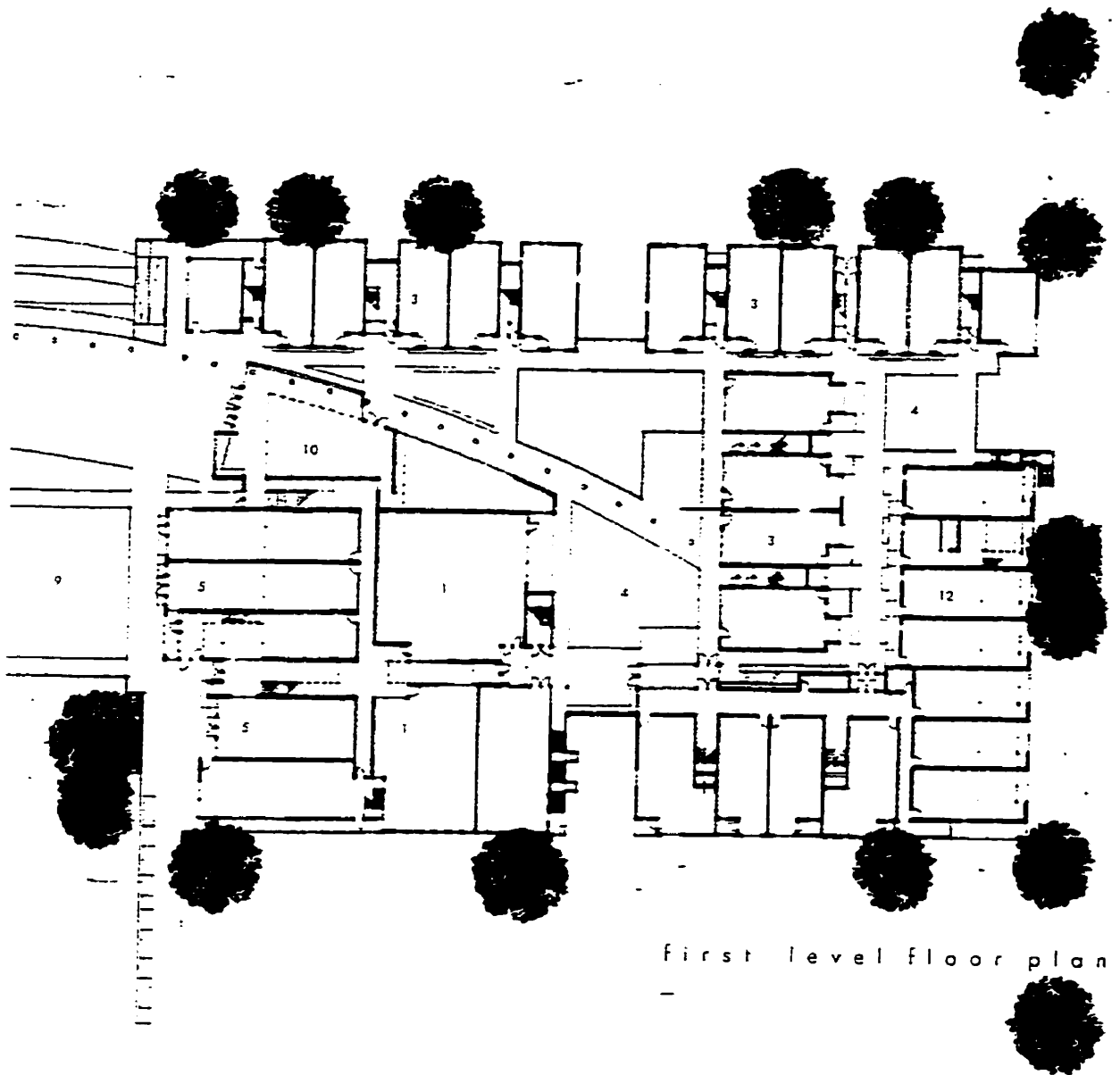
1

2

- 
- 1. office
  - 2. restaurant
  - 3. live/work studio
  - 4. courtyard
  - 5. shop
  - 6. laundromat
  - 7. community center
  - 8. cafe
  - 9. elevated plaza
  - 10. resource center
  - 11. one bedroom unit
  - 12. multipurpose

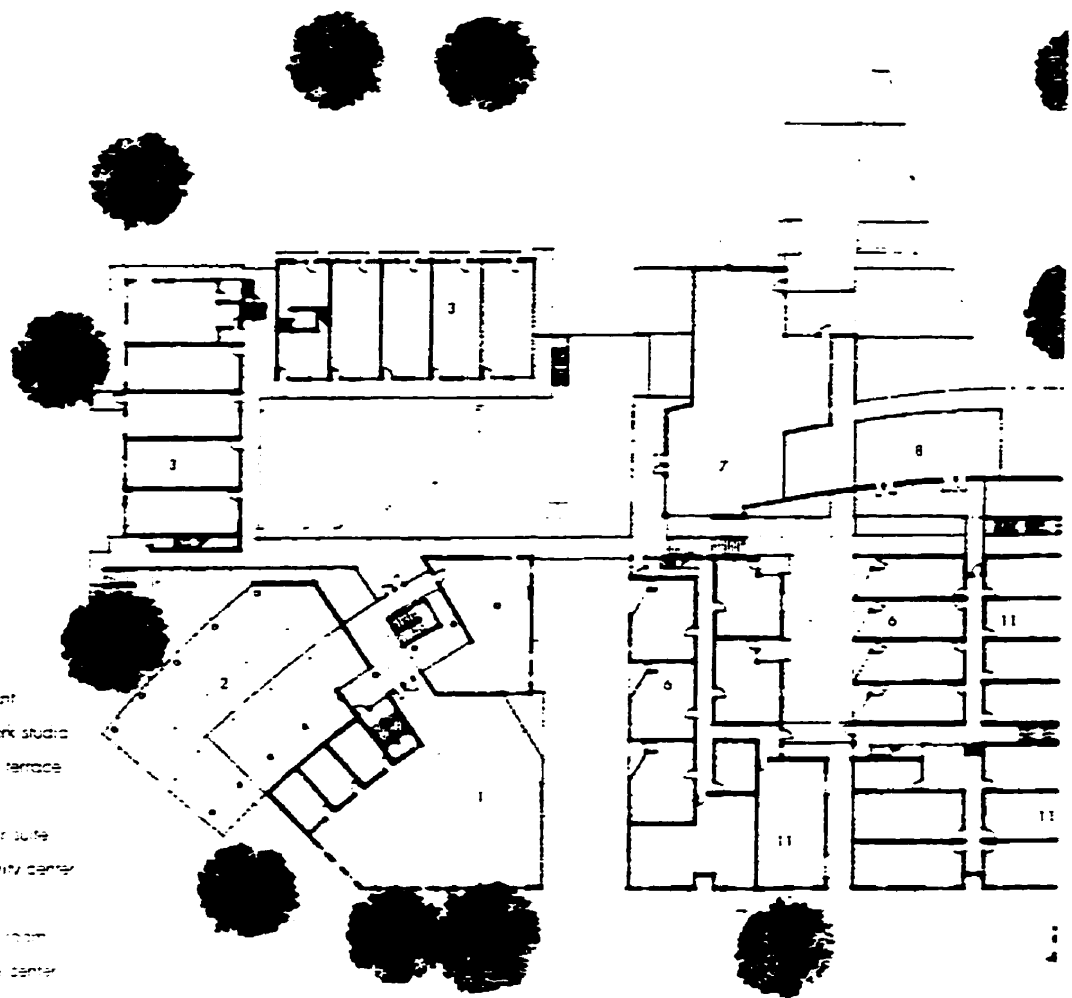
3

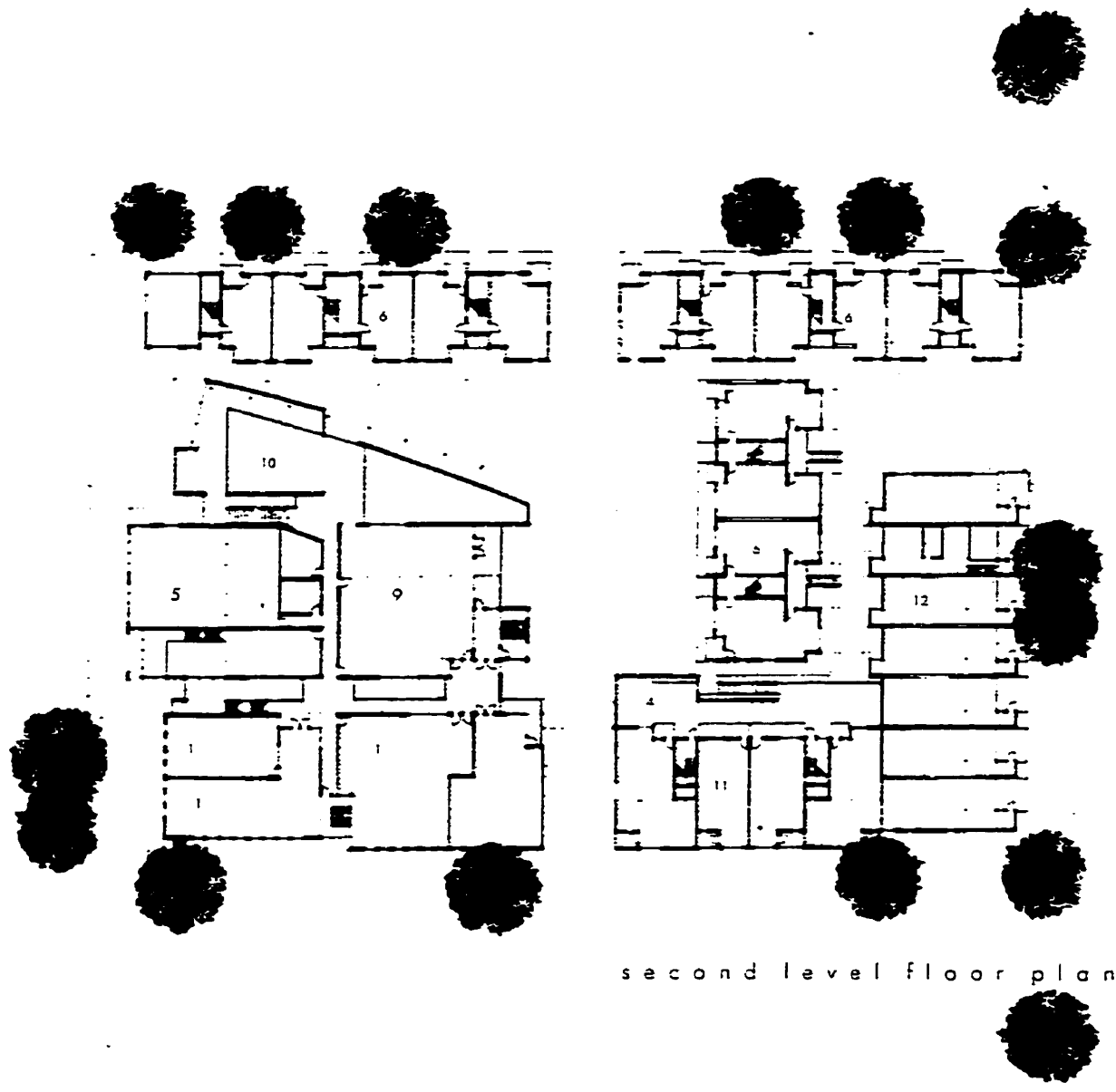
4



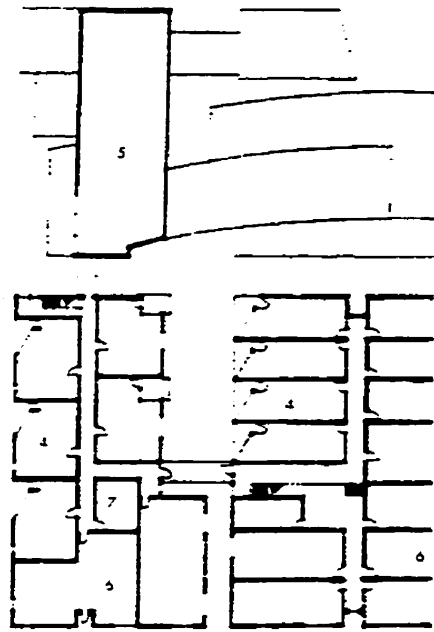
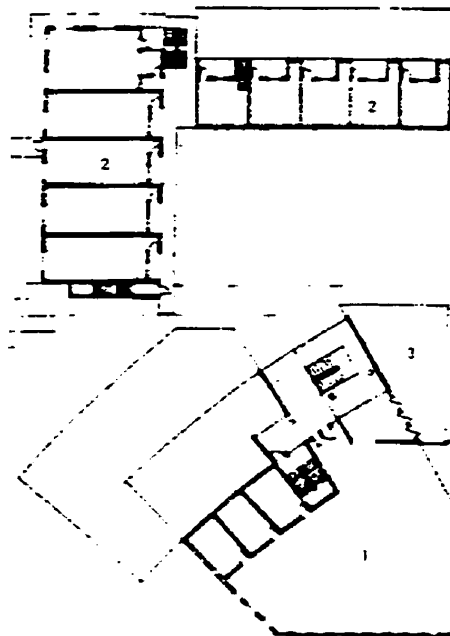
First level floor plan

1. office
2. restaurant
3. live/work studio
4. roof top terrace
5. shop
6. bachelor suite
7. community center
8. care
9. meeting room
10. resource center
11. one bedroom unit
12. two bedrooms

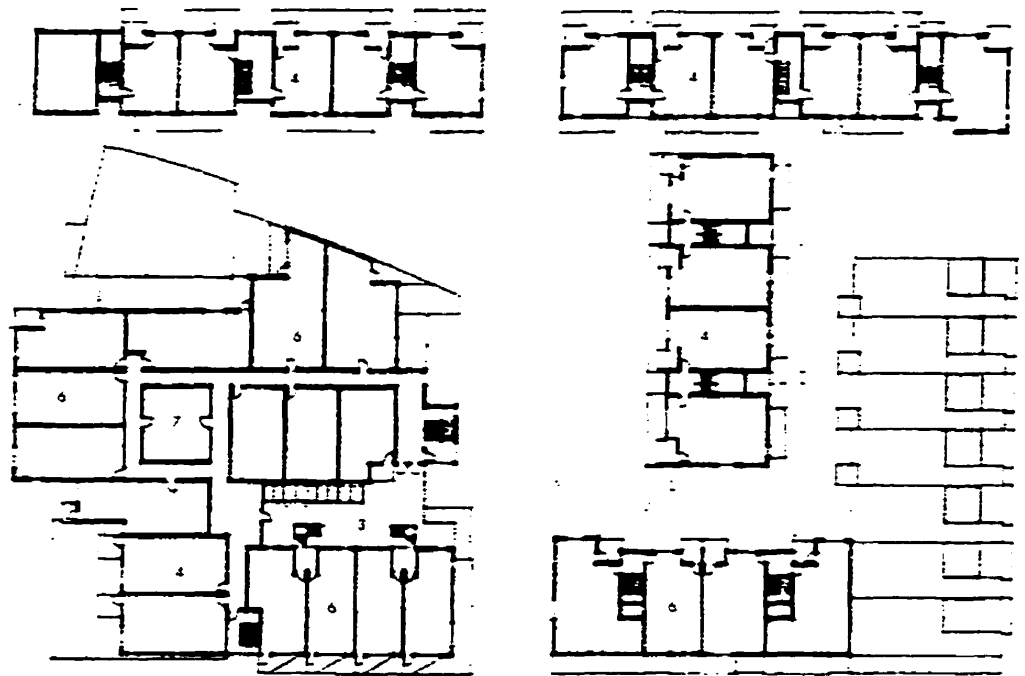




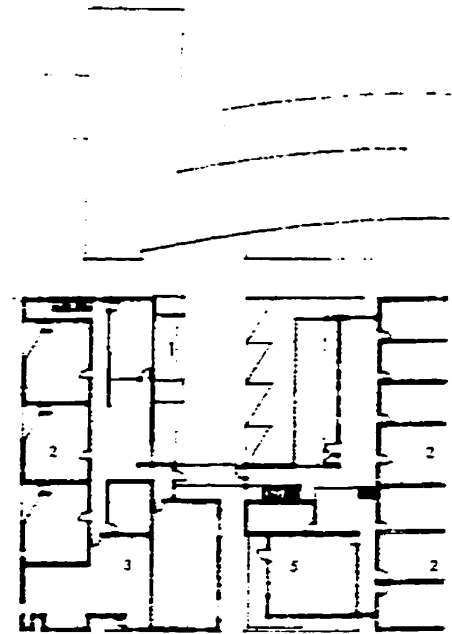
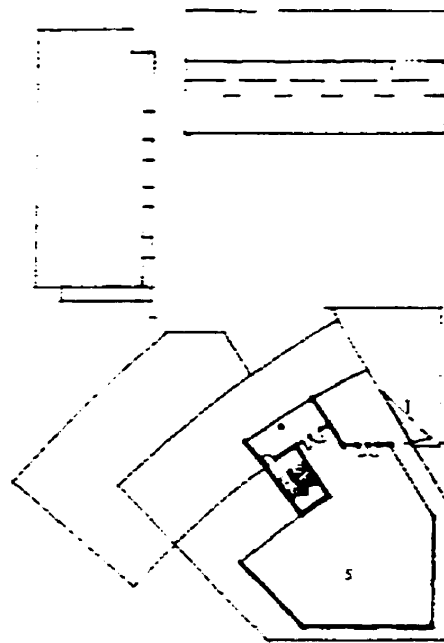
second level floor plan



1. office
2. live/work studio
3. roof-top terrace
4. bedroom suite
5. community center
6. one-bedroom unit
7. resident storage

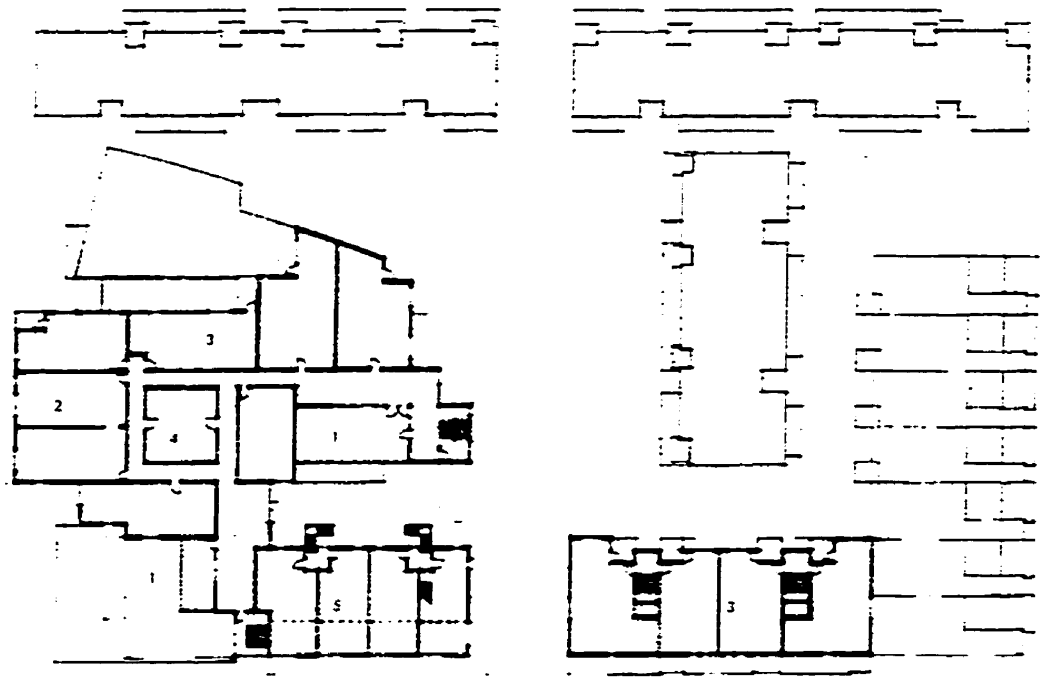


third level floor plan

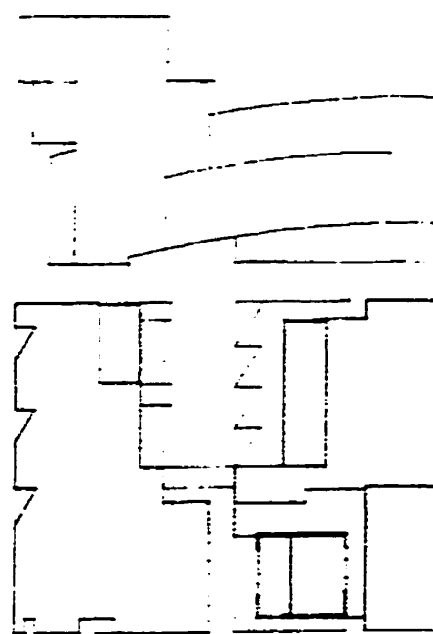
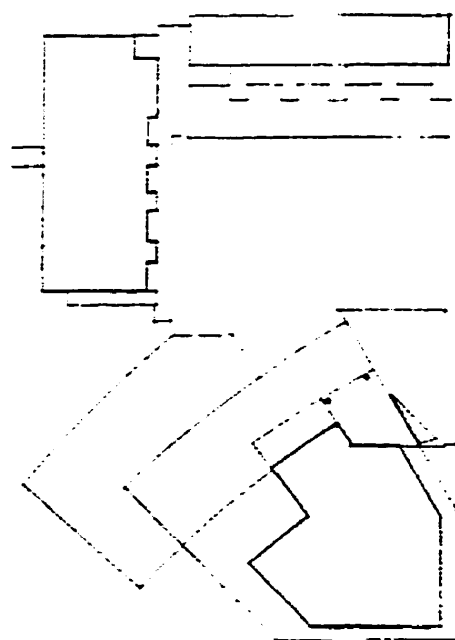


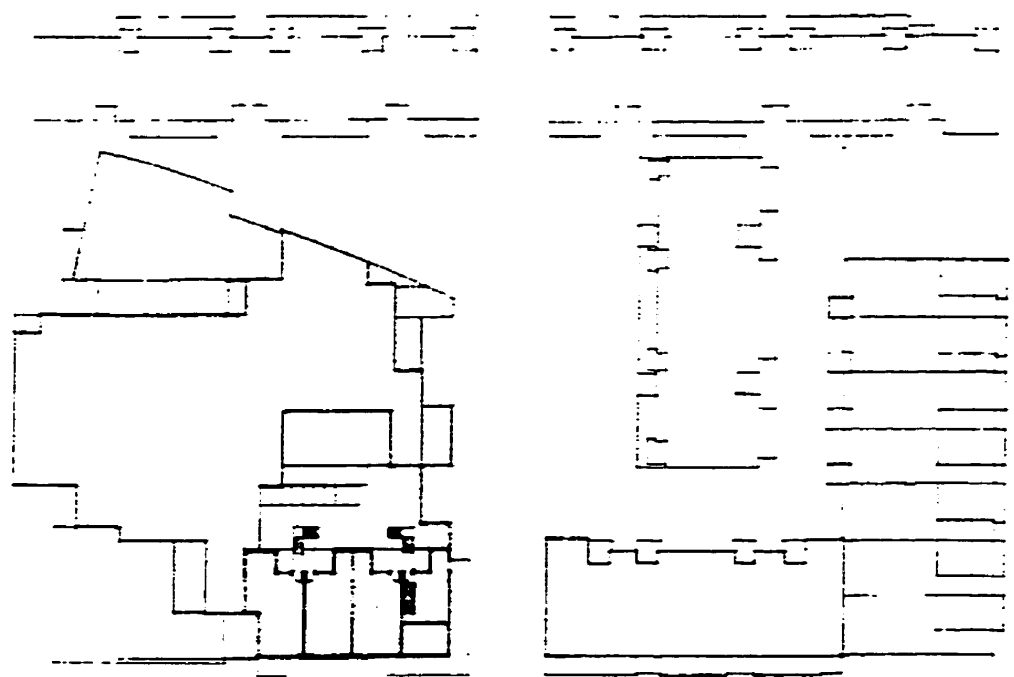
- 1 roof top terrace
- 2 3rd unit
- 3 one bedroom unit
- 4 resident storage
- 5 3rd unit





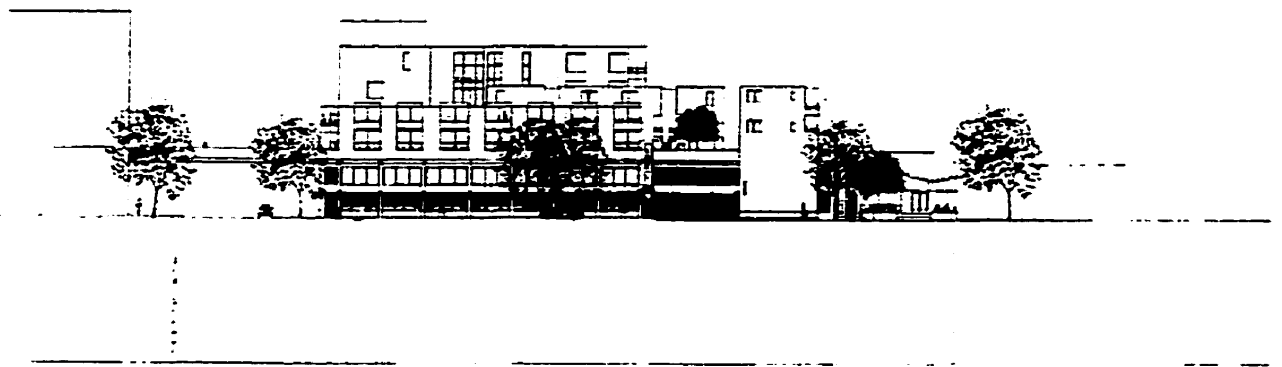
fourth level floor plan



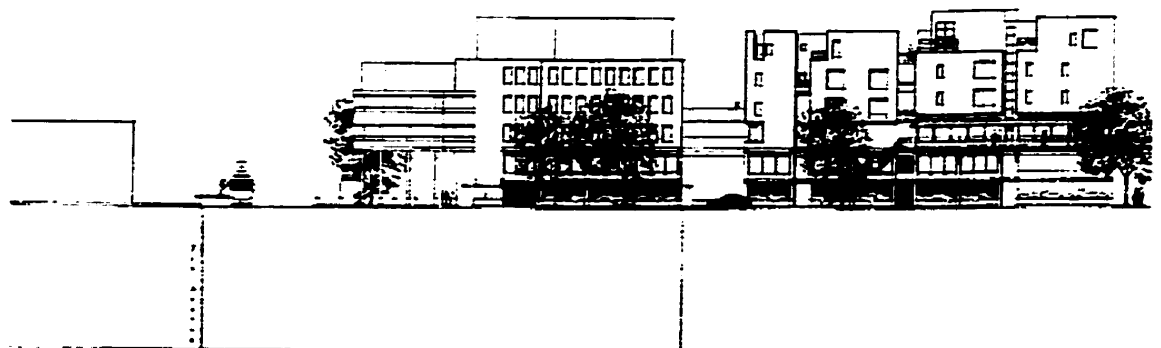


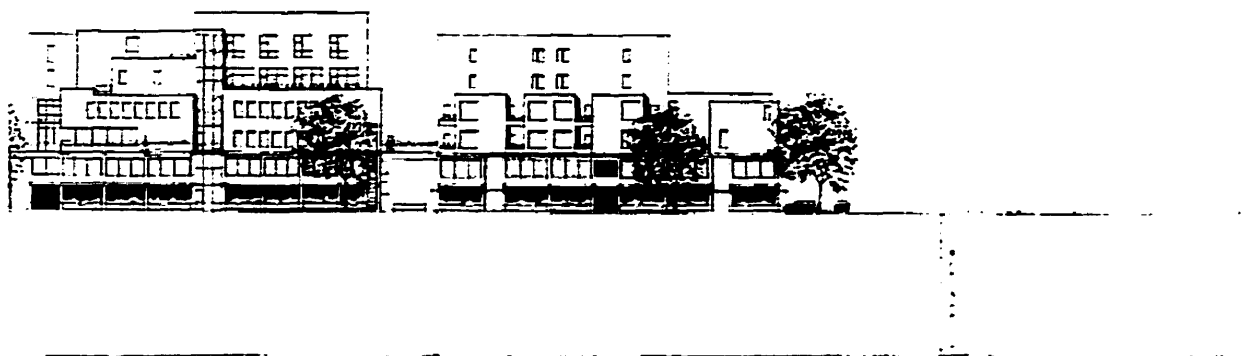
fifth level floor plan

E l e v a t i o n s   a n d  
s e c t i o n s

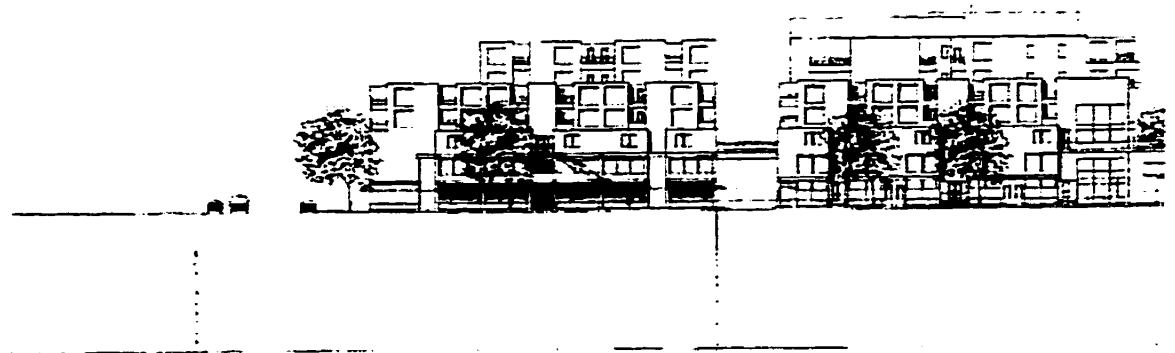


s o u t h e l e v a t i o n

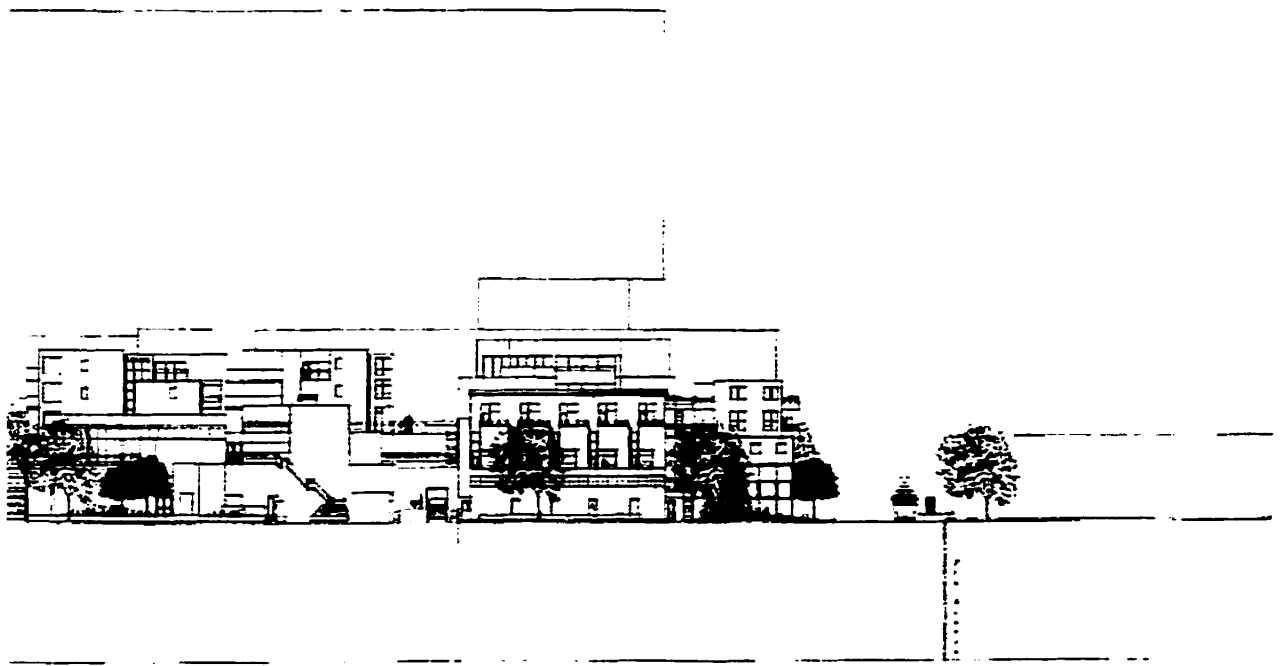




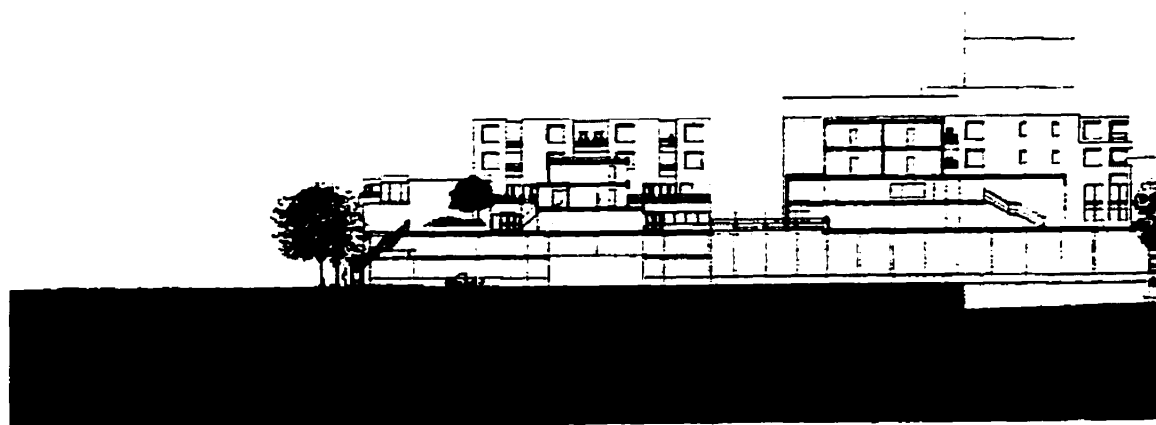
w e s t   e l e v a t i o n

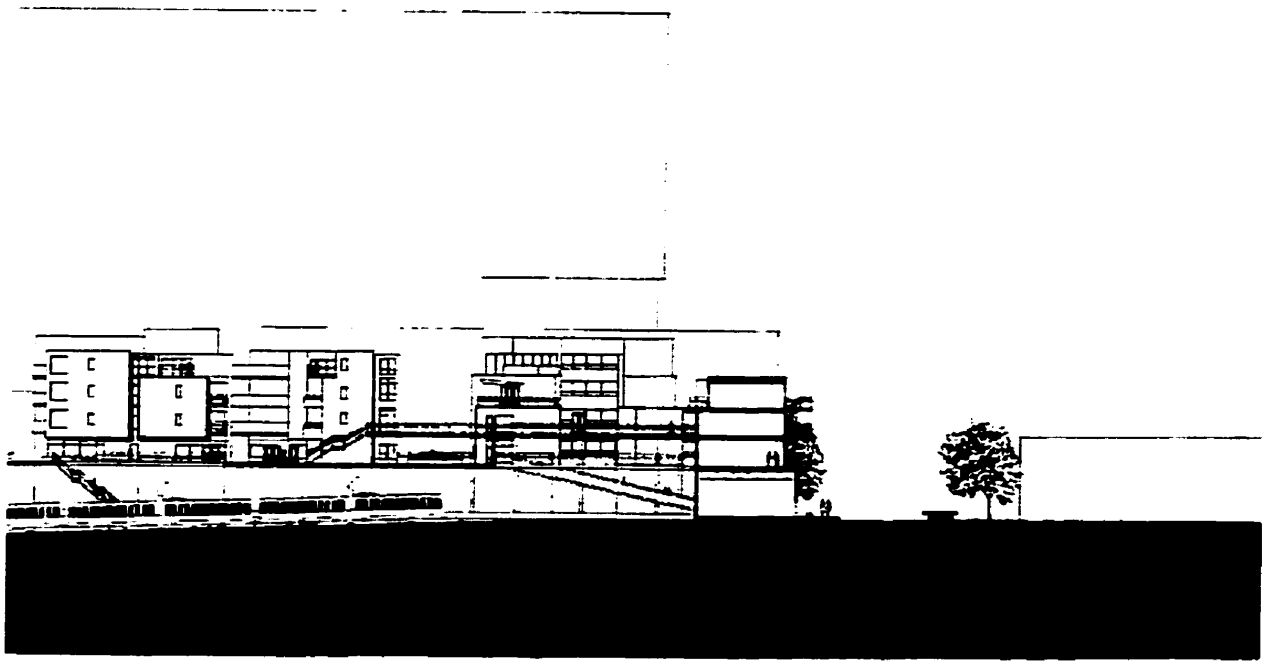






e a s t e l e v a t i

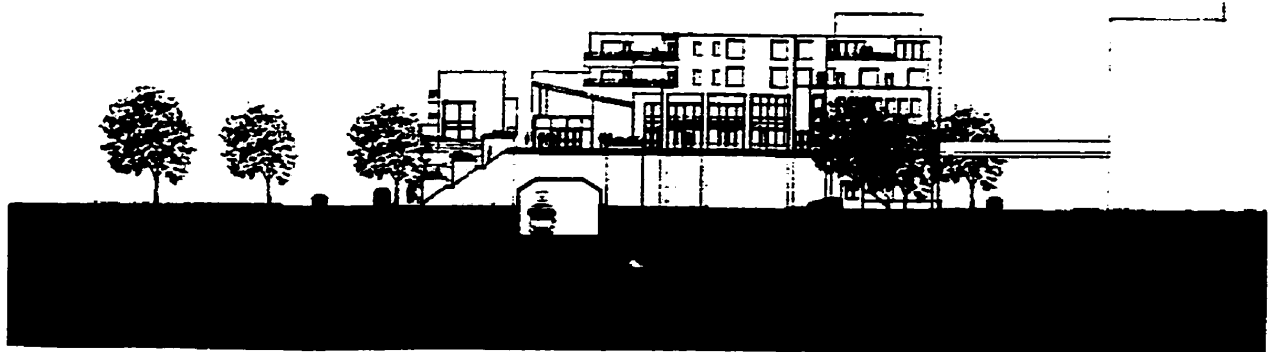




s e c t i o n   a a



n o r t h   e l e v a t i o n



section b b

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