

'suburban > (spec · u · la · tion),

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## THESIS ABSTRACT

North American suburbs are growing at an unprecedented rate, and this growth is having a notable effect on our social environment. While housing developments are being constructed with matching architectural veneers, this attempt at cohesion is facilitating individualist social progression. The increase in individualist tendencies is resulting in social segregation and a general withdrawal from public engagement. As such, suburban environments have become socially inactive and lack the civic responsibility felt within many urban areas. In an attempt to encourage social interaction this thesis proposes a shift in the theoretical application of spatial barriers, which to date have been used strictly as a means of segregation. Physical boundaries are to be established in a manner which complements the social barriers present in active public environments. This thesis is a speculation about the possible outcome of re-interpreting the suburban gate/wall/fence and repositioning it as a catalyst for social engagement.

# suburban > (spec · u · la · tion)

- The activity of buying and selling goods in the hope of making a profit
  - Contemplation or consideration of a subject; meditation.
  - A conclusion, opinion, or theory reached by conjecture.
- 

Have you ever noticed the smell of wet rocks just as it's starting to rain? There is an aura of uncertainty that always envelops this event. Maybe it's the humidity, or the thought of the impending rainfall, and what it will amount to; running for cover, and then watching the rain furiously crash down all around you. And you think at first about how good your timing was, but slowly your thoughts drift. Maybe you watch the water pool on the ground, and maybe there's lightning in the distance, but at some point you become lost in your thoughts. You are left alone to contemplate.



Figure 1

The room is dark. Unexpectedly dark. In the distance I can hear footsteps. Footsteps and whispers, at least they sound like whispers to me. I take a moment to compose myself and use the slight trickle of light at my disposal to observe the room. Metallic. Switches and pull levers densely packed, with what appears to be an endless amount of circuitry. I wonder how long it's been.

Above the hum of the equipment in this room a faint vibration enters my head. This vibration turns into a fast approaching rumble. Lights are now shining in, revealing my derelict surroundings. Closer inspection of these gadgets is halted as if by a presence from above. Monitoring my actions? The steady stream of light becomes a pulsating illumination distracting me from the deafening noise above. A strobe, capturing my movements as a series of stills. And then darkness, quiet darkness. I've had enough. My curiosity is fleeting, being replaced by nervous tension. I use my hands to investigate the wall in this now complete darkness, being mindful of the electrical current which is no doubt running throughout. Metallic surfaces are oily... or is it soot? Filings perhaps. My fingers stumble upon a clean metal surface. A closed loop, semi circular and fixed on both ends. I give myself a wry smile, and pull open the door.

Adjusting my eyes to the light, I pull a cigarette from the pack in the inside pocket of my jacket. Finally able to focus, I now orient myself in my surroundings. A glance at my watch shows that it's impossibly early in the day... which would explain the crowds. An endless sea of people busily attending to their early morning matters, no doubt en route to their respectable/necessary jobs. Fatigued even by watching the spectacle I glance down at my shoes. I'm afraid of what I'm going to see. I open my eyes just a crack. Surprising. My shoes are spotless, much to my amazement. I look up, preparing to cross the street. The cigarette falls from my mouth. No one.

I walk slowly across the street. Six lanes that were moments ago full of traffic are now empty. The traffic lights go through their cycles, as if expecting vehicles from the opposite direction. I drop my lighter, and watch it fall to the ground as if in slow motion. The slight flick of my finger as I dropped it is making it rotate end over end as it falls. I swear I can hear it moving through the air. I look up as it's still falling. Now on the other side of the street I can see into the window of an office. It is

full of people, full of life. Now completely confused I glance back across the street, which is once again busy with traffic. In my contained panic my muscles have seized. I begin the process of trying to calm myself, relaxing my clenched muscles. My hand opens, revealing my lighter.

Continuing on I discover a more confusing building complex. I can't really identify a store front, but somehow I know it is one. The lotto sticker on the door I guess. I walk in, and breathe in the stale air that always seems to accompany these stores. Maybe it's something in the magazines. They always try unsuccessfully to cover it up with the smell of bubble gum and candy. I used to love the smell of candy as a kid. I buy a pack of cigarettes and turn to leave. With one hand on the glass door, the guy behind the counter motions to me. Being as indifferent to social interaction as I am, I continue to open the door. The guy is now shouting at me. I stop to make sense of what he is saying, but I'm overwhelmed by a sense of déjà-vu. Rumbling, and seemingly without notice a train is hurtling past the door, the wind nearly throwing me off my feet. And in a moment it's gone. The guy behind the counter goes back to reading his newspaper.

Outside it feels cool. That crisp cool in the morning that lingers in the shadows that have yet to be exposed to the light of day. It offers me a moment to relax, and collect myself. The feel of the surfaces are cold, and as I lean against a wall I can feel the cool slowly moving through my jacket. It is now calm, and I can see the sun making its way into this private shaded space I find myself in. I can hear birds in the distance. Sitting down, I am consumed by this tranquility and quiet calm. Nearby, a mother is walking her child. She is whispering little jokes and words of encouragement to her son as they make their way to wherever it is they are going. The sun is shining through the openings of the trees, making the leaves appear to glow. A warm breeze blows by, and I can sense it is time to move along. I put my hand down on a smooth and still cool steel surface. I

grasp the metal for a few moments, allowing the cold to permeate my hand. I knock on the metal and wait for an echo or reverberation, some sign that perhaps through this echo the steel is acknowledging my presence. I stand and walk out of the shadow. The cold is gone. I look into the distance and start walking. No echo.

I turn down a narrow path, one that looks like it doesn't get much use. A few steps later, I can hear what sounds like voices at the other end. I become disoriented. This path now seems like a fissure, carved through a wall of stone. Although sunlight is piercing into this void, the intense strip of light being cast is overwhelming, and the areas in shadow appear to fade into complete darkness. The walls defining the path turn, and for the moment I find myself unable to see where I entered or how I will exit. Turning the corner, the light is nearly blinding. I can hardly keep my eyes open. I turn my head slightly to get my bearings. With my hand on the wall I now understand that these walls are tilting in above me. It feels as though they are about to collapse, engulfing me in their return to the ground. I can make out the sound of children playing, but it almost sounds as though it is coming from above. Using my hand on the wall as a guide, I continue down the path hoping soon to remove myself from this maze, when my fingers inform me that I've reached another corner. Once past this threshold I am greeted with the smell of fresh pastry, which fills the air. Now out of the light I can see groups of fast moving people, no doubt on their way to and from work, stopping for a croissant and a coffee.

As a spectator to the event, it is really quite intriguing. You can almost feel the stress being carried by some of these people. The bakery is being run with trained precision, the lines are long but are fast moving. I stand in line behind a man who is focused on the wireless device in his hand. He is furiously typing something, reinforcing every typed word with a physical gesture and facial

expression. Behind me two people are talking about some financial issues, some company buying something from somewhere, which will affect someone else, and will cause stock prices to fall. I glance away, trying to escape from this abyss in which I've become entrenched. I look up to the sound of a shouting voice. Above the bakery, someone is shouting down a breakfast order to the staff behind the counter. An affirmative first name reply indicates that the order has been received, and that these people know each other. Sitting on a bench a few moments later, I see the man rush over to the bakery, pick up his order, and take a moment to tell a few jokes before walking away smiling. The bakers are still laughing well after he has left, and they are the only ones among this crowd with a smile on their faces. I stand up and take one last look around. The sunlight is playfully making its way through the leaves on the trees, retail shops are opening for the day, and the feel of early morning is now fading into midday. I take off my jacket, and throw my coffee in the trash. So now what?

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I find myself contemplating the suburb, and the influence its mandate is having on the social fabric of residential communities. Although we have been creating a residential culture which is becoming more reliant on gates and walls, there is rarely a point at which these walls are in a position to be engaged. Consider these contemplations as an attempt to inhabit the wall. To live in the gate itself, and understand what a partition and threshold could be. Though separation and seclusion are a dominant (and desired) characteristic of the current suburban model, these creature comforts need to be challenged. The lack of undesirable spaces and the dominance of single use spaces are resulting in communities that more closely resemble movie sets than viable social environments.

In its inception, the suburb was simply an idea. It was a conjecture. And yet, the theoretical speculation which was responsible for developing this concept has been completely overrun by the commercial enterprise and the real-estate industry. This is not simply an exercise in semantics. There has been a distinct shift in the manner in which suburbs are speculated upon. Grounded in a study of the current methods and the resulting effects of market style speculation, this thesis offers an examination into the rebirth of suburban speculation; speculation as a vehicle for conjecture and possibility, and not simply a means for capital gain.

# suburban > (spec · u · la · tion) 1

- The activity of buying and selling goods in the hope of making a profit
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*"Nothing can be predicted quite so easily as the continued proliferation of suburbia."*

Herbert J Gans

While attributable to numerous factors, the expanse and abundance of natural resources have made possible the North American model for development. This system, which is founded on principles of limited density and maximum land use, has had deep and long lasting sociological effects on its inhabitants. These effects can be seen in the manner in which these developments have been planned and the physical structures which have been built within them. Although these developments have been shown to be socially detrimental, the suburban population has never been higher. Among the most appealing characteristics offered by the modern suburb is cost efficiency (size of land and house per dollar), which is achieved at the sake of most other elements. Perhaps the result of capitalist influence, modern times have seen social benefits consistently outweighed by economic influence. To this effect, entire economies can be created through real estate speculation, a practice which effectively turns land into a marketable commodity. This development-ready real estate is then parceled in a manner which will harvest the greatest yield. The result is a modest and affordable community which is altering the definition of social interaction within its confines. The suburb stands as being economically liberating while at the same time socially restrictive.

## **FORMATION**

This thesis is directed towards the development of the North American suburb, but for the sake of the investigation and given historical progression, the developmental aspects will be directed

towards events occurring within the United States. Given geographic proximity and economic interchange, the evolution of dwelling habits in the United States closely resembles that which has transpired in Canada as it relates to issues of urban sprawl and the development of suburbs since the Second World War.

The development of the United States and the creation of suburbs are directly related. From the moment of its establishment as a sovereign nation, the US was under the planning leadership of 'gentlemen/amateur architect' Thomas Jefferson. Jefferson's architectural influence was derived from his experiences in Paris where he adopted a preference for a Franco-Romanesque architectural aesthetic<sup>1</sup>. This influence is evident in US government buildings. More important to the physical development of the nation, was his impression of the bustling French urban centre. Jefferson regarded "great cities as pestilential to the morals, the health and the liberties of a man"<sup>2</sup>. This point of view was the catalyst for the creation of a country consisting of low density country towns and resulted in the mapping and development of a large portion of the continental United States. From its inception as a nation the US established a language which was fundamentally suburban and directed toward the individual and not the collective whole<sup>3</sup>.

Government policy has aided in the establishment of decentralized development through specific use of policy and financial measures. During its greatest period of infrastructural expansion, in which the interstate highway system was being built, government policy was set in a manner to encourage growth. While large sums of money were being spent on new construction, there was

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<sup>1</sup> Dennis, Michael. Court & garden : from the French hôtel to the city of modern architecture.  
(Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, c1986) 231

<sup>2</sup> Dennis 231

<sup>3</sup> Dennis 236

little to no provision for the repair of the existing infrastructure. And because these growth projects were undertaken by federal funding, sprawl was being paid for by the urban taxpayer as well as the suburbanite. But perhaps the most influential government measure was the tax incentive given to homeowners. Under this policy, which remains in place to date, both property tax and interest paid on a mortgage was tax deductible, whereas rent was not. This created a situation which not only promoted the development of suburban communities, but also offered suburbanites economic benefits, which were not available to those living within urban centres<sup>4</sup>. Simply stated, the revenue policies put forward by the government not only encouraged sprawl, it suppressed urban development and put those living within urban areas at a financial disadvantage.

## **PROLIFERATION**

Despite the sprawl created by the American growth policy, the intent of the government was not strictly to decentralize the population. These policy measures were successful with respect to meeting the demands of the rapidly increasing population, and provided the opportunity for American citizens to own their own houses. Moreover, these growth measures in effect created a wealthier nation, since the increase in the purchase of housing created an increase in equity for the average citizen. As the demand for housing continued, the cyclical relationship between housing growth and suburban sprawl became more pronounced. And while government policy did play a large role in making housing more affordable and increased the demand for single family dwellings, policy was not the only factor that lead to low cost housing and the increase of suburbs in the US.

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<sup>4</sup> Jackson, Kenneth T. Crabgrass frontier : the suburbanization of the United States. New York: (Oxford University Press, 1985) 293-295

The relatively low cost of housing in America is a result of its unique and abundant geography. Natural resources have helped make the US the world's wealthiest nation, and in effect the message conveyed by the US is not one of freedom, but one of economic abundance<sup>5</sup>. Its spatial vastness has allowed for land to become relatively inexpensive and has made possible large scale speculative land purchases. The burden of accessing these often removed tracks of land has been overcome by readily obtainable private transportation, and America remains the cheapest place to own and maintain a motor vehicle in the world. American ingenuity has also lead to new building techniques, which have resulted in the construction of housing developments in a near assembly-line manner. This more efficient method of erecting structures has decreased building time and subsequently, housing costs. But perhaps the most pervasive influence in suburban development in the capitalist system itself. The 'free market' system provided incentives to all parties involved, from speculators to lending institutions, to continue the lucrative proliferation of middle-class suburbs<sup>6</sup>.

### Levittown

*"If suburban life was as undesirable and unhealthy as the critics have charged, the suburbanites themselves are blissfully unaware of it"*

Herbert J Gans

In the late 1950's William Levitt was in the process of planning his latest suburban development in a middle class area of New Jersey. Although he had already built a few similar developments, this was to be the largest, and would become the most historically significant. Levittown provided its residents with affordable housing, and offered three housing models of differing size and price.

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<sup>5</sup> Jackson 290

<sup>6</sup> Jackson 291-296

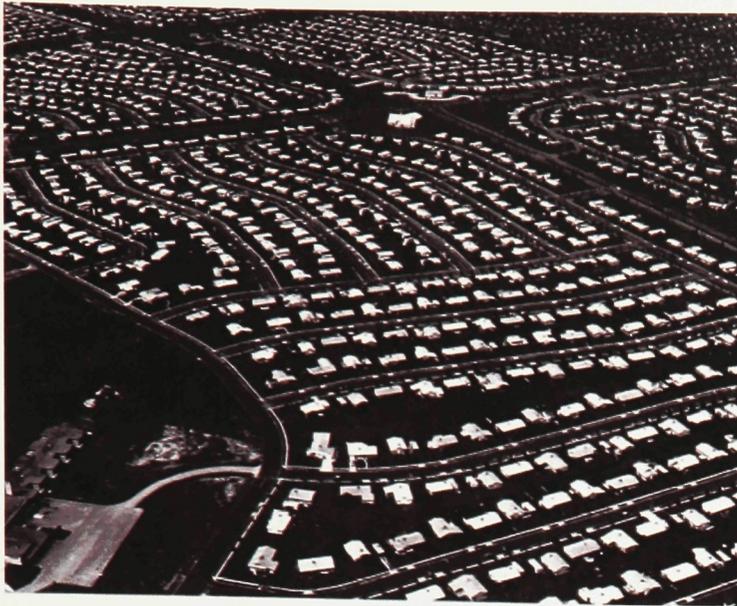


Figure 2 – Aerial view of Levittown

Houses were constructed quickly, and this subdivision became a critical case study of social interaction in a relatively isolated suburban community.

Suburban developments are often marketed under the label of a 'planned community' while the intent to build community elements within them

remain ambiguous. In certain developments the resulting social structure becomes their defining element, as was the case in Levittown. Community is defined as a social group whose members reside in the same locality. While being geographically bound, it became evident that there was little desire among residents to form social groups within Levittown. Those moving to the area often did so because their current residence was not meeting their needs, not because they were drawn to the development. The majority moved to own their own house and/or have more space, 'pushing' them to Levittown because it was the best value in their price range<sup>8</sup>. The focus on economic benefits is common among suburban populations, which are seeking foremost to better their private environment. To this effect, 95% of Levittowners hoped for improved family and private social life in moving to the area, and less than 5% had any aspirations for promoting activities within the wider community<sup>9</sup>.

<sup>8</sup> Gans, Herbert J. The Levittowners; ways of life and politics in a new suburban community. (New York: Pantheon Books, 1967) 32

<sup>9</sup> Gans 40

Although the residents of Levittown were not active in the creation of the community, the builder was responsible for the most important community based decisions, the first of which was the targeted demographic, which in Levittown, was the middle and lower middle class because of local income levels<sup>10</sup>. Had Levittown been built for the wealthy, a different standard of living would have been expected, and it is doubtful that the same master plan would have been successful.

However, William Levitt did allow for some form of responsiveness in Levittown in that the planning of local institutions was left to the residents. This policy allowed local values to be implemented into the social structure of the area relatively quickly<sup>11</sup>. The decision to integrate the three distinct housing models, with different price points, within the same block also added to the social structure of the development. This orientation allowed for an integration of classes and a mix of interests which added to the fabric of the neighbourhood<sup>12</sup>.

However, these small moments of interaction were overshadowed by the general lack of social integration within Levittown. As a result, builders required stores and gas stations to conform to similar façades in an architectural attempt to create unity and cohesion which was absent within the social system<sup>13</sup>. This aesthetic conformity was an ineffective veil that paralleled the area's struggle to create a well connected homogenous community. Among the formative principles in the creation of Levittown was amassing similarly minded people in order to create a more appealing and marketable development. This principle was directed through measures of cost separation, with the expectation that those in similar income brackets would be in similar positions of class and would tend to be like minded. Overlooked in this rationale are social variables, such

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<sup>10</sup> Gans 135

<sup>11</sup> Gans 136

<sup>12</sup> Gans 137

<sup>13</sup> Gans 146

as citizens in differing stages of career, in which households with similar incomes can have vastly different interests<sup>14</sup>. This illustrates the fact that the voluntary social integration required in a community can be encouraged, but must come from the will of the inhabitants themselves. The architectural homogeneity of a housing development such as Levittown does not equate to the social homogeneity of a community.

### Fundamental Fragmentation

While suburbs may not be offering an ideal social environment, the popularity and growth of these developments has been staggering. In the United States, 18 of the 25 largest cities have suffered a net loss in population from the mid 1950's to 1980<sup>15</sup>. This trend has seen a social migration away from the urban centre towards suburban developments, and has increased the community indifference seen in Levittown. The spatial separation of the suburb is also constructing boundaries of class and ethnicity which in turn is furthering the lack of social integration found within these areas. The result of this segregation can be seen in the fragmentation of the urban metropolis, which is an end caused by three predominant factors: the polarization of urban neighbourhoods, the failure of municipalities to extend their boundaries, and the changing nature of modern entertainment<sup>16</sup>.

Urban polarization is a North American epidemic, and is no doubt paired with suburban development. Terms such as "white flight" are used to describe the migration of the wealthy to suburban neighbourhoods and away from urban centres. The result is a concentration of lower

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<sup>14</sup> Gans 166 "Of the three earning [similar wages] one might be a skilled worker at the peak of his earning power, another a white collar worker with some hope for higher income and the third a young executive at the start of his career"

<sup>15</sup> Jackson 283

<sup>16</sup> Jackson 274

classes within the city centre which has increased economic disparities between the urban and suburban environments and has led to further migration of the wealthy. This cycle is referred to as economic polarization; cities get 'poorer' while suburbs get 'richer', and draw profitable enterprises away from the urban core<sup>17</sup>.

Urban migration has greatly increased the number of suburban residents, and has therefore created the demand for increased growth. However, municipalities were not able to keep pace with this growth, and were unable to annex these affluent areas while it was still possible. As populations increased suburbs began to incorporate, creating an independent condition in which they were not subject to the governance of the region. These wealthy incorporated suburbs considered cities to be inferior, based on notions of real-estate value, education quality and personal safety. Behind the autonomy of incorporation, these areas were able to dictate who could and could not live within the area, systematically zoned out the poor, and refused public housing. These forces act together to prevent social integration, and solidify the notion that integration would be detrimental to their 'community'<sup>18</sup>.

The rejection of integration is a reflection of the social self-containment found within suburban environments. The spatial segregation of the suburb has led to a change in patterns of interaction and has created self-sustaining forms of entertainment. Cultural exhibitions in grand theatres have been replaced by pay-per-view movies and gaming systems. Social patterns are now focused within the house, instead of within the neighbourhood or community. The influence of television

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<sup>17</sup> Jackson 274

<sup>18</sup> Jackson 275

and air-conditioning has been to literally close the door to the outside world and enjoy a self-contained and secluded environment<sup>19</sup>.

## ADAPTATION

*"What is most significant is not the influence of urban culture,  
but the general suburban resistance to it."*

Robert C. Wood

The social significance of suburban developments has been to increase the prevalence of individualism and social anonymity. In modern times, the community has by definition become less about location and more about individual freedom. And it is perhaps this notion of freedom which has been implemented in the design of such developments. In general, these 'communities' do not evoke any impressions from their inhabitants that together they are part of something larger. As a result, the residents have no personal stake in these places, and what results is an environment which is socially disposable<sup>20</sup>.

The challenge for a new suburban development is to create a sense of community out of independent lives. It needs to create an 'us-ness' out of seemingly unrelated lives in an attempt to create a greater whole<sup>21</sup>; the coming together of the constituent parts of a social unit in order to create a community which is integrated within the locality. What risks being lost in these segregated developments is the sense of citizenship, of civic virtue, which is the foundation for social development. Citizenship is a component of community, it is the physical embodiment of the

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<sup>19</sup> Jackson 275

<sup>20</sup> Garreau, Joel. Edge city : life on the new frontier. (New York : Doubleday, 1991) 269

<sup>21</sup> Garreau 282

'us'<sup>22</sup>. And while some developments are attempting to create this sense through the creation of gates and security measures, those inside do not bear on each other and remain isolated.

The establishment of an integrated community is reliant upon two conditions: there must exist voluntary action of its citizens and there must be sufficient time for interaction to occur. Instability becomes the enemy of the community, causing communities to often retaliate against change<sup>23</sup>.

However, change has become the standard of modern society. The average suburbanite moves every six years and the time required for community development is scarcely available.

Community is doubtlessly being replaced by social individualism, as defined by De Tocqueville:

Individualism is a calm and considered feeling which disposes each citizen to isolate himself from the mass of his fellows and withdraw into the circle of family and friends; with this little society formed to his taste, he gladly leaves the greater society to look after itself.

While under the label of "master-planned community" it becomes increasingly evident that what is being mass produced is the lifestyle of individualism. What follows is not the traditional community, but social associations of like minded individuals. These associations can be found throughout North America, since they are not dependant on geographic proximity. As successful and pervasive as these groups have been, their prominence solidifies the notion that social interaction and the place of dwelling are becoming two separate entities.

The establishment of suburban developments as the standard in housing has no doubt had an effect on the way we live in and see the world around us. Suburbs have changed the way we dwell, the way we inhabit spaces, and has irrevocably changed our perception of community.

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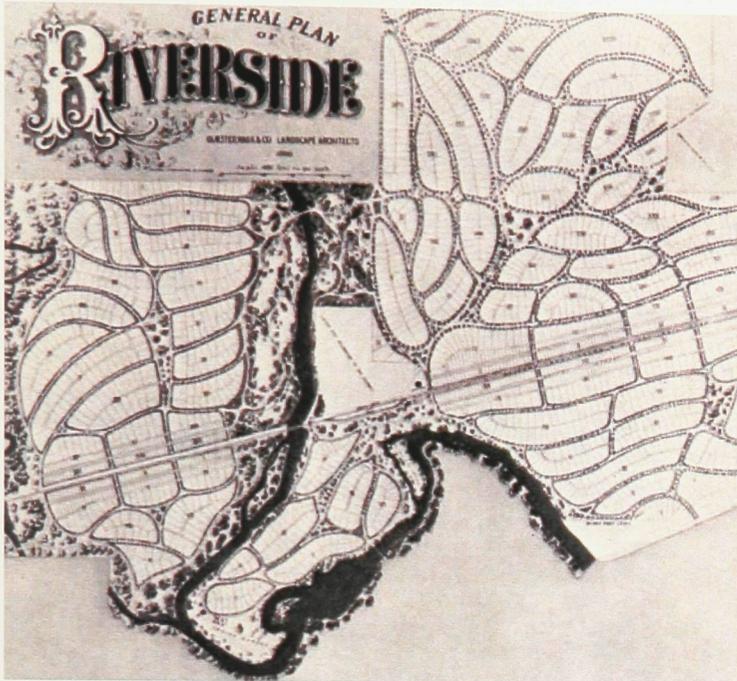
<sup>22</sup> Garreau 286

<sup>23</sup> Garreau 287

Although it would be naïve to think that the proper course of action would be to attempt to 'turn back the clock' and re-establish communities of years gone by, suburbs remain a valuable model by which to measure our current practices. It is worth noting that neighbourhood communities which are in place today are extremely resistant to growth, and the typically heated opposition to change brings into question their true value given the dynamics of modern society. However, the mass produced indifference of individualist suburban culture is detrimental not only to the immediate neighbourhood, but will have a damaging effect on society as a whole. To discuss community is in fact to speak of society, which involves the threshold at which the private becomes public. The implications of this shift from public to private, and the importance of the threshold itself are discussed next.

# suburban > (spec · u · la · tion) 2

- Contemplation or consideration of a subject; meditation.



**Figure 3** - Frederick Law Olmsted's plan for the wealthy Chicago suburb of Riverside. The organic forms prevalent in his designs are visible in the street layouts, which empty into park spaces.

The original suburbs were places for the wealthy and were designed in a manner which took pride in the environment being created.

Renowned design professionals such as Nash and Olmsted were used in the planning and design of these suburbs.

Their designs resulted in a rich blend

of nature and built form. These

communities were comprised of parks

and meandering streets, appearing as if they were winding through a forest and revealing houses

in instances where a break in the trees was sufficient. While these developments had the same

degree of planning and sculpting as those being built today, the fundamental difference was the

desire to create a socially engaging atmosphere. And while modern day developments do little to

satisfy the social needs of its inhabitants, one need only look as far as Olmsted's Riverside housing

development to see that planned communities can yield successful results. And while the romantic

desire of the early suburbs may no longer exist, the neglect of social imperatives within suburban

areas is changing its orientation with the municipality. The notion of a suburb being comprised

within the city is shifting into a struggle for autonomy from the city. This struggle between the

individual and society has been strengthened through spatial segregation and is changing the dynamic of the social collective.

## DELIBERATE

The roots of the modern day suburb can be traced back to urban planning initiatives which attempted to meet the housing demands resulting from a population increase during the early 1900's. Across Europe and North America, urban design innovations were being proposed and implemented in order to meet the growth demands of these areas. And yet, among the planning initiatives proposed, Otto Wagner was among the first to identify that the needs of the inhabitants should govern the planning of the modern urban environment. Wagner realized that a great city embraced many different types of people and each type required a different form of dwelling<sup>24</sup>. This line of thought supported the heterogeneity and social vibrancy found within older urban areas, and was a call to support diversity as a manner of sustaining the growth of a community.

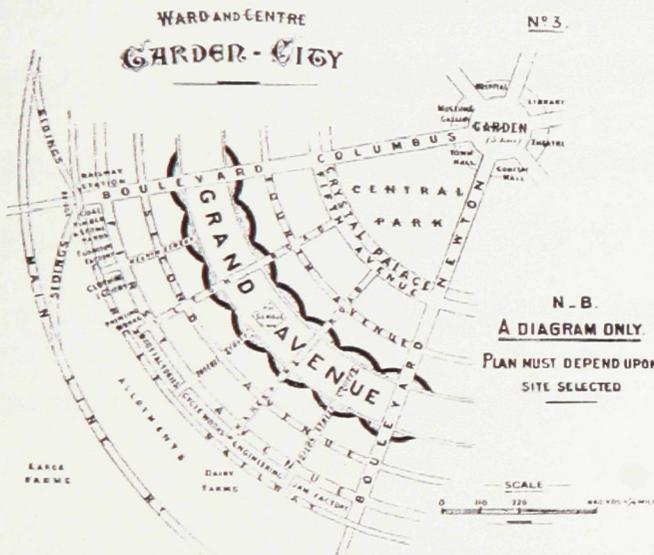


Figure 4 – Plan of Howard's Garden City model

The idea of creating an adaptive community was also at the heart of Ebenezer Howard's Garden City model. Although this plan featured expanses of green space and parks, the essence of the design was related to the control of land use. In his scheme, Howard proposed that the community be in control of real estate,

<sup>24</sup> Giedion, Sigfried. Space, time and architecture; the growth of a new tradition. (Cambridge, Harvard University Press, 1949) 685

and that any profits resulting from increasing land values be collected by the municipality for future community needs. The effective result of this theory was that land speculation, which in most cases is detrimental to integrated communities, would essentially be eliminated and market forces would not dictate land use<sup>25</sup>. This provision would allow the community to become a dynamic entity, able to respond to the demands of its citizens. The Garden City began an important discourse about urban planning and its need to be an adaptive entity, responsive to the changing demands of its inhabitants.

Social evolution is a dynamic entity whereby changes in social patterns are dictated by the degree of public engagement within a locality. This dynamic is the result of a balance of individualist and socialist factors which must be held in equilibrium in order to produce an integrated environment<sup>26</sup>. Individualist factors are comprised of capitalist motivations in which 'free market' tendencies are responsible for a large number of decisions. Individualist motivations are at the heart of the spatial segregation of the suburb, and the increased land values which may then be speculated upon. Socialism on the other hand, is influenced by the desire to have state influence over a majority of decisions in search for equality. Similar to the intentions behind the formation of workplace unions, over time these entities can result in the creation of a near monopolized condition in which most activity is controlled. The ambitious inequalities of individuality and the homogeneity of socialism are equally oppressive to a socially engaged community<sup>27</sup>.

Through the continued integration of individualist and socialist tendencies, small groups and neighbourhoods begin to differentiate themselves within the collective. Each group forms a pattern

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<sup>25</sup> Gideon 686

<sup>26</sup> Mumford, Lewis. Culture of cities. (London, Secker., 1940) 455

<sup>27</sup> Mumford 455

of individuality, and through their close relation within an urban environment provide an endless amount of variation and transformation within the members of the group. In this respect individuation is achieved through social interaction, and the environment that contains these activities becomes the unifying body<sup>28</sup>. Through the balance of diverse factors, individuality is shifted from market driven homogeneity towards an interactive social environment.

## AMALGAMATE

*"Impersonal streets make anonymous people."*

Jane Jacobs

Social environments are made more engaging through diversity, for it is diversity that is responsible for instilling a dynamic within a community. In creating a community, the pertinent issue becomes encouraging diversity in order to engage the neighbourhood. While diversity cannot be forced, there are four conditions which tend to promote its establishment within a locale: multi-use spaces, reduced infrastructural scale, a mix of built form, and the establishment of population density<sup>29</sup>.

The implication of multiple use spaces is analogous the notion of intensification. The difference between density and intensity is that density simply represents a greater number of people in an area with no bearing on the manner in which a space is used, other than in greater volume.

Intensity however, involves the bringing together of multiple programs in the same location. When program elements are brought together, such as offices, apartments or restaurants, the manner in which the space is used is drastically modified. Intensification in itself is a form of diversity, and can be used to ensure that a particular space is in use at all hours of the day. Typical business

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<sup>28</sup> Mumford 456

<sup>29</sup> Jacobs, Jane. The Death and life of great American cities. (London: Jonathan Cape., 1962) 150

districts are an example of a lack of intensification, and their activity levels after working hours are indicative of the lack of diversity within them.

Infrastructure at a reduced scale is essentially infrastructure oriented to the human scale. It implies the construction of short blocks and 'walkable streets' which allow for an increase in spontaneous social interaction. When streets are built in a manner that encourages pedestrians, foot traffic increases, encouraging interaction, and as a result, the street becomes more than just its function. Heterogeneous built form entails the construction of buildings of differing size, type and age in close proximity. Different buildings tend to have different uses, and as such add to the diversity of an area. Finally, the area itself must have sufficient density in order to have a population sufficient to allow for interaction. Most importantly, these four elements are required simultaneously in order to encourage diversity within a locale. The loss of just one of these elements can have a significant impact on the diversity and engagement of a community. Although these notions were proposed as a measure for improving the vitality of an area, there must still exist the desire to be immersed within a social environment for these elements to take effect.

Through the proliferation of individualist culture and subsequent spatial separation, modern society is increasingly opting not to engage socially. Technological advances have accelerated the process set in motion by free-market desire, and as a result immersion in the public world has become a matter of formal obligation<sup>30</sup>. Urban streets that were once vibrant have been relegated to their programmatic use, and have lost their experiential meaning. As a result, public areas have

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<sup>30</sup> Sennett, Richard. The fall of public man : the forces eroding public life and burdening the modern psyche with roles it cannot perform. (New York: Knopf, 1977) 3

become spaces which are to be moved through, and not lived within<sup>31</sup>. In a somewhat circular trend the lack of social engagement is leading to a further lack of physical engagement and as a result the individualists are becoming more individualized.

The continued growth of individualist neighbourhoods is having distinct effects on the social calibration of urban areas. Suburban sprawl has made the social collective irrelevant and has resulted in the deadening of the city centre as an organism<sup>32</sup>. The role of civic duty has evolved from upholding the moral value of a society to become simply a means of tolerance for those within a neighbourhood. Modern civility has become an activity that simultaneously protects people from one another while allowing a restrained amount of socialization. The essence of this form of civility involves masking oneself in an attempt to be shielded from the public realm and those within it<sup>33</sup>.

The excessive influence of individualist culture has resulted in the degradation of the urban environment to the extent that it is often difficult to discern between its dominant inward focus and the lack of public will which is allowing this trend to take place within our communities.

Continued individualist influence has led to a condition of social detachment which is compromising traditional relationships of larger socio-spatial entities. These entities are the municipalities and neighbourhoods which combine to form cities and have become subject to an imbalance in the social dynamic. The insurgence of individualism over socialism has resulted in a fracturing of city hierarchy, in which the outlying localities are abandoning their supporting role. Whereas historically communities were comprised within the city, modern genesis has created a

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<sup>31</sup> Sennett 14

<sup>32</sup> Sennett 262

<sup>33</sup> Sennett 264

condition in which communities are opposed to the city and seek independence<sup>34</sup>. The ambition of this communal independence is essentially to solidify further isolation from the public realm, and is a statement of withdrawal from an urban dialogue. This measure is a defence from the impositions of the outside world, and is a conscious decision away from attempting to instil social change through engagement. A locality chooses to oppose an urban centre not as a means of challenging political process, but as a means of being removed from the process altogether<sup>35</sup>. Although the influence of individualist ideologies is apparent in these events, it is also a reflection of the lack of value being placed on the social benefits of the urban centre. The diminished value placed upon social incentives has resulted in the degradation of social diversity, integration, and ultimately public perception of civic duty.

“Only when the scale and functions of urban life return to the simplicities of the late medieval era would people find the kind of mutual support and direct contact with each other which makes a city a valuable environment.”

Camillo Sitte

## CONVERGE

In addition to the resulting social conditions, the market driven tendencies of individualism are having a distinct impact on the development of the physical environment as well. The large scale shopping areas typical of the suburbs speak of economic efficiency while being indifferent to social dynamics. These structures are typically comprised of inexpensive and impermanent building materials, which suggest the temporal nature of the influences occupying these buildings. The implementation of single use spaces within these developments has resulted in the destruction of the multiplicity of functions within a space. While being profitable in practice, these ventures are not practical for use since they cannot respond to the functional changes of an evolving

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<sup>34</sup> Sennett 294

<sup>35</sup> Sennett 295

community<sup>36</sup>. Through the use of single function spaces these constructions communicate the essence of their segregated suburban environment and serve to increase issues of isolation and polarization.

While individualist culture has been a catalyst for spatial and economic segregation, excess communal influence tends towards segregation of a different type which also becomes detrimental to the social collective. Although communities are the embodiment of public engagement, they can also display the volatility of social interaction. As bonds form between members of a community, there develops a threshold between those within and those on the outside. However, the collective image of the community is never solidified and the number of those who 'belong' gets smaller<sup>37</sup>. As a result this small group becomes an entity of its own, and is socially fractured from the community. Eventually, the collective personality of the group will feel that the community is not responding to its needs and will head towards isolation from the greater social discourse. If the collective personality is intensely felt within a group it can become destructive<sup>38</sup>. These socially destructive forces which often result in isolation, can arise between a group and the community, or within the group itself. In order to curb these effects, social conventions have been instated as a method of distancing immediate desires from the self<sup>39</sup>. These conventions are the foundations of civility and civic duty, and it is through their distancing that equilibrium is restored to the social equation.

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<sup>36</sup> Sennett 297

<sup>37</sup> Sennett 265

<sup>38</sup> Sennett 265

<sup>39</sup> Sennett 266

The process of distancing, whether social or spatial, is the required means of establishing order within a community. Spatial barriers must adhere to notions of social equilibrium if an interactive environment is to be produced. Should spatial boundaries develop, conditions of segregation and isolation result; whereas the lack of any barriers quite often results in sterile and unused space. This desire for boundary is due to the human need for separation from intimate observation by others in order to feel sociable<sup>40</sup>. Social contact decreases in environments with no barriers from intimate contact and observation. This can be seen in the quiet hum of most open office environments. With the introduction of physical barriers there begins to be a heightened sense of communication. It is a point from which people can choose to be social, choose to enter the public realm, and choose to interact. From this point of view, individualism can be seen as the result of advances which have allowed people the choice to be social or not, between entering the environment of the unpredictable or not. In this regard, barriers form protective boundaries, and give a physical threshold to the division between private and public. It is only when people have some protection from each other that they can begin to interact socially. Without the barriers that form impersonality and individualism, social interaction becomes destructive<sup>41</sup>.

The conditions which are present in socially interactive communities are not the determinant characteristic for the vitality of the locale. In order for an engaging environment to exist there must be a balance between opposing characteristics, for it is through the manner in which these differences are resolved that the character of a community is built. When there are few polarities to be resolved, the community loses its dynamic until ultimately it becomes dominated by uniformity. The threshold conditions which form the distinction between public and private have become

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<sup>40</sup> Sennett 15

<sup>41</sup> Sennett 311

essential components in the social environment, and must be inserted while maintaining equilibrium. While these boundaries establish separation from intimate observation and allow social interaction, individualist tendencies threaten to extend this separation to the point where their impact has a negative effect on community engagement. Instead, it is the appropriate use of a physical boundary as a catalyst for increasing the social function of space within a suburban environment that is the basis for the design component of this thesis.

# suburban > (spec · u · la · tion) 3

- A conclusion, opinion, or theory reached by conjecture.
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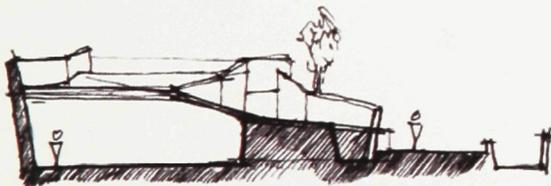
The social degradation of the suburban environment has become enforced through its continued spatial segregation and the resulting use of territorial boundaries. These boundaries are made physically evident as barriers, and have become synonymous with suburban developments and the isolation contained within them. Because of this, the exploration of the characteristics implicit within a barrier is an essential element in the development of the design component of this thesis. It is an architectural contemplation which pursues the idea of a suburb becoming a socially engaged environment through the reinterpretation of its gates, walls, fences and other physical boundaries.

The rationale behind the establishment of physical boundaries is fundamental to the development of the public environment. In order to create a socially engaging environment these boundaries must be formed in a manner which maintains social equilibrium and responds to the changing demands of the social body. Since these barriers must be capable of resolving the opposing tendencies of socialism and individualism, the transition of these social barriers into physical

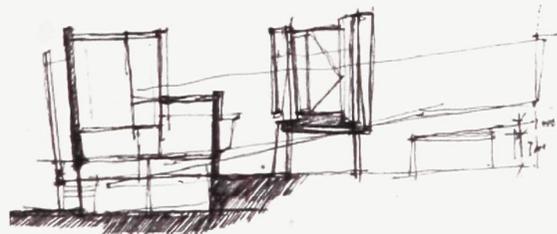
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## (spec · u · la · tion) > boundary wall

The following few pages will investigate the boundary walls, their composition, and speculated effect on the area



**Figure 6** – The sectional relation of spaces and the elevation of grade levels are determined by the boundary walls.

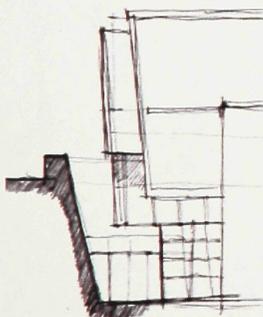


**Figure 5** – The boundary walls become a defining component in the physical structures, creating vertical partitions and threshold conditions

barriers is a process of physically affirming social demands. These materialized thresholds must be able to solidify the interrelationships at hand, and offer a physical barrier to combat the negative influences of these two social conditions. Through the construction of these barriers, communities become physically defined, while maintaining their necessary spatial divisions. The creation of physical boundaries within an environment reinforces sociological values, and aids in the promotion of a diverse and engaging community environment.

## CONSTRUCT

Physical intervention is essential in the creation of an engaging social environment within a suburb. Although a physical structure will not cause the development of a social network, its influence lies in the ability to sculpt/choreograph public interaction. As built form becomes densely grouped in populated areas, the resulting physical divisions become associated with the social culture of these urban centres. And because densely built urban environments are comprised of a more diverse and interactive population base, it is reasonable to assume that the built environment enables social interaction. A change in the built environment results in a shift in reaction to social activity, which demonstrates the influence of built form on the social network. While the construction of a building is due to some form of public desire, the composition of built form can become a catalyst for social interaction and the intensification of public space. To this effect, a site exists only by virtue of building, and as such the creation of physical barriers within the built environment



**Figure 7** – A section showing the grade change provided by a boundary condition. In this sketch, a piazza is created which allows views into a gathering space, while the upper levels of the structure relate to elevated ground conditions.

becomes a determinant component in the social character of a locale<sup>42</sup>.

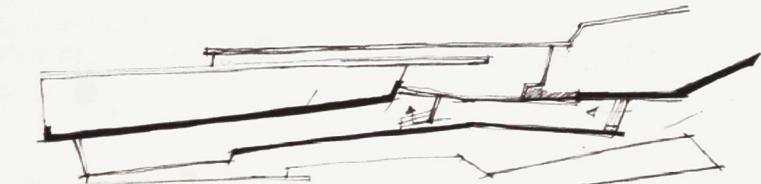
Since built interventions within the physical environment are determining the character of public space, they must respond to the dynamics of social engagement. Because construction involves the creation of boundaries, the composition of the physical intervention plays a critical role in facilitating social interaction. From this point of view, the act of building serves to define current social and physical boundaries and has the ability to influence future development. As a result, physically realized boundaries serve not as a point of restriction, but are articulated as elements of expression<sup>43</sup>. These barriers convey their awareness of interaction, adaptability, and their desire to encourage the development of a socially engaged environment. It is through the use of built form as a socially responsive element that diversity and social engagement can be physically reaffirmed.

### Creating Parameters

The physical boundary is the fundamental principle in this design exploration of the suburban environment. This project is defined through a series of physical boundaries which are positioned throughout the site in order to establish a series of spatial boundaries which can be developed into



**Figure 9** – Plan diagram showing the boundary walls which are informing spatial divisions, while allowing for flexibility



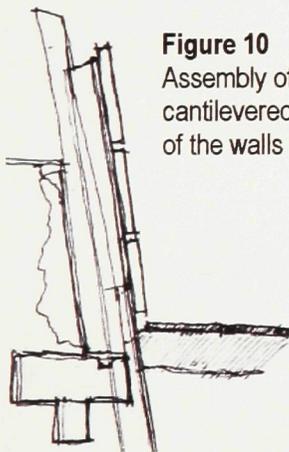
**Figure 8** – Plan showing a boundary wall as it engages the residential complex. The barriers suggest spatial enclosure and circulation routes

<sup>42</sup> Heidegger, Martin, Poetry, Language, Thought (New York: Harper & Row 1975) 154

<sup>43</sup> Heidegger 154

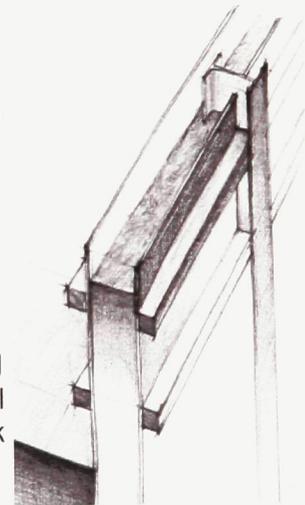
enclosed spaces. The boundaries will stand as permanent monolithic concrete walls, articulated through geometry and finish to provide an array of spatial conditions and possibilities for interaction. These physical barriers are in place to give material definition to the necessary social boundaries within a community. The orientation of these boundary walls is such that they will ensure spatial proximity and, therefore encourage programmatic intensity and the development of a socially engaging suburban environment.

There has been much discussion in regard to the suburb and its sprawling nature. Various planning committees throughout countless cities and regions have attempted to curb spatial growth and the resulting social isolation through political intervention. These political measures are often implemented through planning provisions, in which devices such as zoning by-laws and building permit restrictions are commonly used<sup>44</sup>. Planning initiatives have also been proposed through policy and written guidelines, which encourage certain types of neighbourhood development and growth patterns. However, these policies often become ineffective in challenging the social obstacles of the built environment because they are not directed towards the configuration of physical boundaries. Manifestos such as those of new-urbanism promote social interaction



**Figure 10**

Assembly of boundary wall with steel reinforcement, acting as a cantilevered retaining wall. This construction alludes to the permanence of the walls as well as the physical imposition involved in their creation.



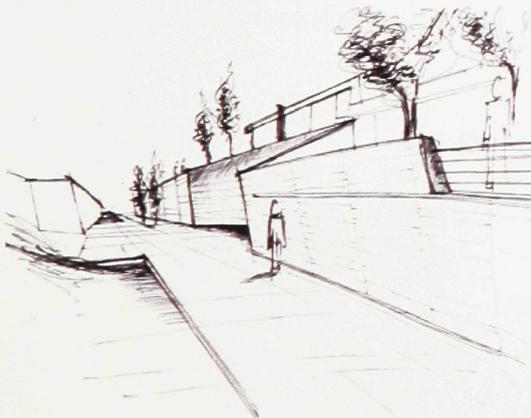
**Figure 11**

Isometric drawing of wall assembly, showing steel section and formwork

<sup>44</sup> Wolch, Jennifer et al. Up against the sprawl : public policy and the making of Southern California. (Minneapolis, Minn. : University of Minnesota Press, c2004) 258

through various forms of development provisions, yet seldom address physical construction at a base level. Since their intent is not expressed through building, these measures do little to alter the current orientation of physical barriers within the suburb. Because social environments are sculpted through the use of built form, policy measures which are not directed specifically to issues of physical construction will have little impact on the resulting social environment. For this reason the regulating characteristics for this exploration will be embodied within the construction of its built form.

The design component of this thesis is an architectural intervention which is comprised of residential, small and large scale retail and other mixed-use areas. The intent of this intervention is not that it be inserted as a completed object, but instead as a network of boundary walls which will serve as defining elements. The intervention is to be constructed in a manner that will allow for future growth, and the boundary walls will be constructed in a fashion that is to be adaptive to later construction. In the early stages, this intervention will be comprised of a few enclosed structures and the remainder will sit in wait. Measures governing the growth of this area will be executed through the composition of the boundary walls themselves. These walls will act as the infrastructure for the built environment of the intervention. As the locale expands over time, the pavilion will see the addition of new structures as dictated by its inhabitants. In this respect, the



**Figure 12**

Typical pedestrian streetscape illustrating the presence of boundary walls in their formation. Although their construction is based in concrete, they are not monolithic structures. Their shape, orientation and surface texture is designed at a smaller, more human scale.

intervention becomes responsive to the surrounding environment and facilitates evolutionary development. There is to be no restriction to the form, material or methods of new construction. The only rule for future construction is that the continuity of the boundary walls be maintained.

In its fully developed state, this intervention is to be a collaborative venture. The walls will act simultaneously as the catalyst for creation as well as the measure for maintaining social order. It will be a construction which adapts to the demands of its physical and social environment, and is regenerated through reuse and modification. Most importantly, it is a statement that a community is embodied in built form and it is through built form itself that the future growth of this pavilion is governed.

Concrete, extruded steel sections and glazing are used in combination throughout the intervention. Though each material is used differently, together they are expressed in a manner which conveys not only their application but also the construction method employed to create these structures. Given the vast amount of material, manipulation and shear will to create even a modest sized suburb, these aspects are rarely conveyed in built form. Because of this, the process of construction, of reinforcing, and shoring will be made evident in the construction of these walls.



**Figure 13**

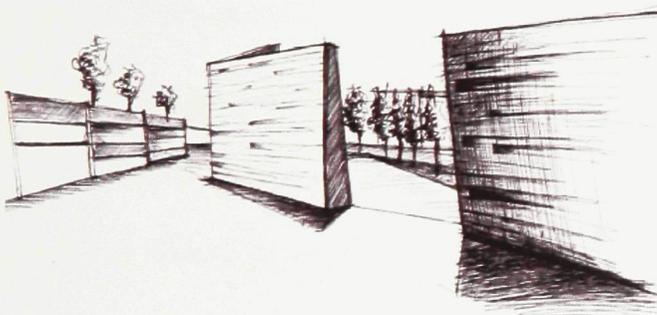
This section depicts the spatial composition suggested through these walls. Boundary conditions create both interior and exterior thresholds, allowing for increased social interaction.

The majority of the concrete boundary walls will be built in a manner that utilizes the benefits of both concrete and steel, though not in the typical fashion. Concrete will be reinforced mainly by steel sections, not re-enforcing bars. As mentioned, the construction will be done to maximize the benefits of both materials. In the creation of the walls, excavation will occur to meet the desired depth of concrete. Before the concrete is poured, the steel sections will be rammed to sufficient depth to provide stability to the wall which in most cases will be tilting or leaning in various directions. After the steel sections are in place, they will act as a support for the concrete forms, and act similar to soldier beams and lagging during typical site excavation. Once the concrete has been poured the formwork is removed, revealing one flange of the steel section exposed and suitable for cladding.

## INITIATE

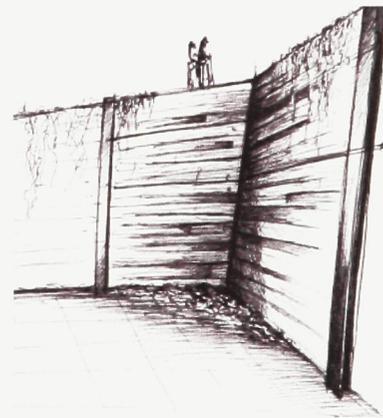
### Site Selection

The infrastructure required to develop and sustain the lifestyle of this community became a deciding factor in the selection of a site for this exploration. With the announcement of a proposed



**Figure 14**

Breaks in the boundary walls allow for visual connections and create threshold conditions



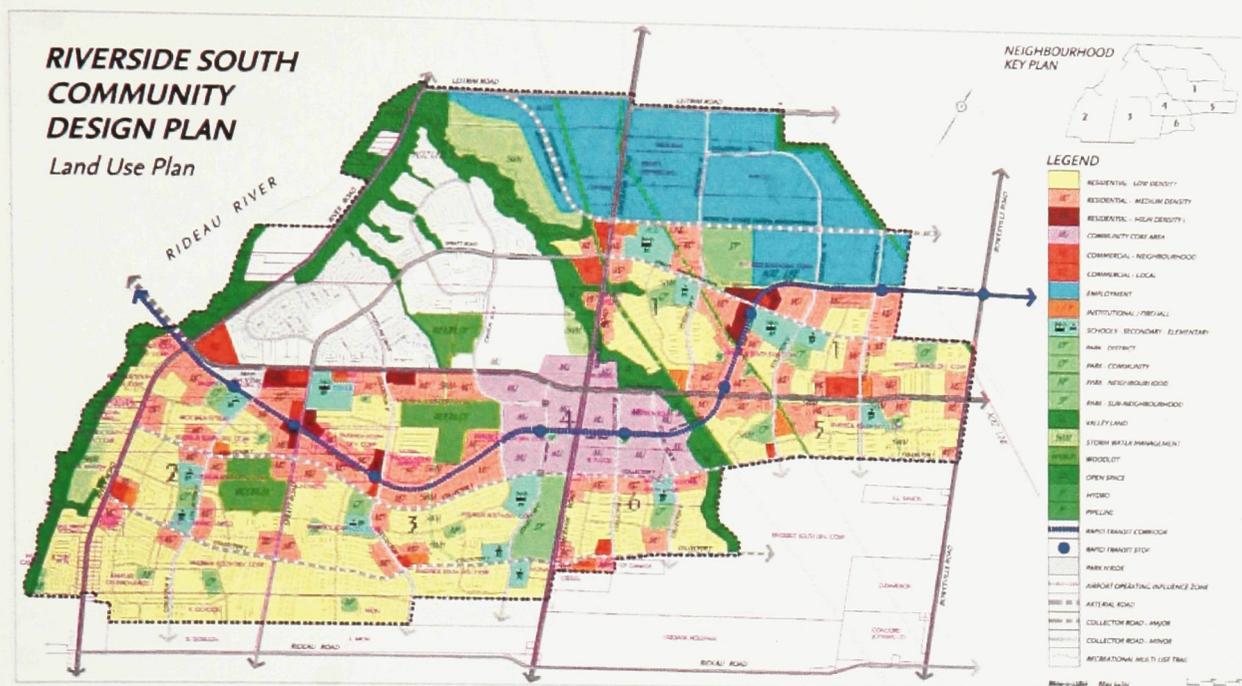
**Figure 15**

The permanence of these walls requires that they are able to age and adapt to changing conditions. The walls are anti-suburban in that they don't attempt to mask the grit and dirt found within any built environment. The concrete will stain, cracks will develop and the walls will show signs of age.

light rail transit route to the south of Ottawa, the developing suburban community of Riverside South will be among the first of Ottawa's outlying areas to have access to this new form of public transit. The implications of rail transit gave opportunity for the development of a new model of suburban development within Riverside South, and the City of Ottawa adopted a design for the area in accordance with principles of new-urbanism. This developing community is the site for my design analysis and my thesis project is an attempt to offer a rebuttal to the design proposed for the area.

### Urban Componentry

Riverside South is located twenty kilometres south of Ottawa, adjacent to the Rideau River. Its multi-phased development has already seen the creation of typical suburban homes, as well as large scale box-type retail outlets. The site is divided into four quadrants by the major arterial routes, Earl Armstrong Road (with a planned extension) running east-west, and Limebank Road (which is set for expansion) running north-south. The proposed light rail transit (LRT) route is set to run east-west adjacent to Earl Armstrong, in a meandering fashion. The approved plan by the City of Ottawa will see a 'core' created near the intersection of these two main arterials. This core area will house retail outlets, restaurants, shops and offices as well as transit stations. Though designed under the banner of smart growth and promoting characteristics of 'walkable cities' the actual plan does little to promote these activities. Given the size of the site itself, it is doubtful that the proposed centralized core is an appropriate strategy.



**Figure 16** – The approved City of Ottawa development plan for the community of Riverside South. The route of the Light Rail Transit is noted.

In order to establish a framework from which to expand, the street layout proposed by the city has been used as an infrastructural base. From this point, my first planning decision involved changing the proposed layout from a centralized plan to a 'nodal' form of development. In this condition, the core has been eliminated and infrastructural elements have been distributed into a series of nodes placed strategically throughout the site. These nodes have been established no further than one kilometre from each other, ensuring that the services provided are always within a walkable distance from every home. The nodes are positioned at points where different types and scales of infrastructure come together, for it is these intersections which encourage moments of integration and interaction.

## INTEGRATE

### Revising the Singular

With built form in place as the guideline for development, two programmatic elements have been inserted as a catalyst for the social development of the area. A large scale retail outlet is placed adjacent to the LRT stop, and a residential block is positioned across the street from the retail outlet. These two elements are introduced based on typical development strategies, which can be seen in the existing area. Currently there are several parcels of land containing detached single family homes with a few box stores nearby. Yet the physical proximity of these two elements to each other is offset drastically by the infrastructural layout, which requires an elongated route from one to the other, subsequently promoting car use and limiting social interaction. In the proposed pavilion, these two programmatic elements will be in close proximity to each other, and this locational proximity will strive to increase the intensity of the area.

The design of the large-scale retail outlet is an exercise in designing for future adaptation. Box stores have continued to grow in terms of square footage, and their size is largely determined by the location and the potential for revenue. As such, this building has been designed in a manner that foresees the possibility of multiple moderate sized tenants, one large tenant or even one exceptionally large venture. However, given the current size standards, it is assumed that one venture alone would not be the sole proprietor of this structure. The layout of the building itself is an assembly of retail scales, with small retail divisions surrounding a core space suitable for a larger tenant. The idea being that smaller scale retail ventures are better suited to pedestrian traffic. This shift in scales is accentuated in the building of the structure, with more intricate detailing complementing the more intimate scale. The goal of this programming is to provide a

horizontal integration of uses in a particular space. The building is not simply a box store, and its shift in scale will allow for a greater variety of businesses and patrons, which in turn will serve to increase the diversity and social interaction of the area.

The residential block is to be comprised of row units in an enclosed public space. This public space is formed by occupying the interior of a boundary wall, and it is through this wall that programmatic elements are brought together. The residential units are built around and on top of a different programmatic element, and remain separated from one another before converging in the atrium created by a void within the wall. It is assumed that this separate component will be developed as a school or a community centre given its boundaries (yet the future use of this space remains entirely open). In the atrium, the lobby and major vertical circulation of the residential units are interwoven with a gathering area or auditorium for the school, which in turn will create a vertical integration of multiple programmatic uses. In this condition, the residents become an essential participant of the spectacle taking place below. This also creates an environment in which the residents are constantly engaged with the dialogue of community events and will curtail the social withdrawal which is commonplace in suburban environments.

### Fractured Planes

While the construction of the pavilion itself utilizes vernacular materials common to the suburb, the force and will required for such a development remains to be conveyed. As a result, this pavilion will attempt to communicate the implications that are involved with the construction of a suburban project, and the massive amount of earth that is typically displaced. Instead of the establishment of a dedicated grade level, there are multiple and changing grade levels throughout the pavilion. In

some instances the change in level will identify a threshold of program, in others it will mark a variation in the type or scale of an environment. The shifting grade levels will communicate that while construction alters an environment it still rises from the ground and because of this the two share an indelible tie.

These shifting planes also serve to convey the notion of vertical intensification. The pathways and walkways that run throughout this pavilion at various elevations will at times rise to accommodate an enclosed structure below. The shifting walkways will serve to potentially blur the boundaries between park space and enclosed space, between the urban and rural. They convey the notion that the ground is also a constructed entity and therefore repositions arguments about the built and natural environments.

### Urban Insertion

In concluding this section, it should be conveyed that the purpose of this design exercise is to contemplate and offer conjecture to the dialogue of the analysis of the suburb. It is a speculation. However, the influence of physical barriers on suburban development is an integral determinant in the resulting social condition. The physical barriers in place in the common suburb seek only to further their spatial segregation, and offer little to the social dialogue of the area. The defining element in the construction of the typical development is that of temporality. From the scale of the house to the retail outlet, most structures are built with inexpensive and lightweight materials that can be easily transported. It only follows that the average suburbanite is a temporal inhabitant, moving to different areas frequently. But it is in temporality and change that issues of social engagement and community development are lost. An older neighbourhood with older houses

features a stronger community because there is permanence associated within it. A house that has been in use for a generation is occupied differently than a mass produced suburban dwelling.

The proposed design is based upon speculations involving physical barriers. It addresses the idea that physical boundaries can be used to increase social interaction when implemented in a manner which is responsive to social demands. Through their physical composition, these boundaries can govern/stimulate use and future growth, and that through the use of enduring building materials, permanence will be conveyed in the boundary condition and therefore in the community as well.

Through the integration of these elements, the impact of built form can be felt in the establishment of a community. While the role of the architect in the development of a suburb remains in question, the influence of built form as a means of encouraging diversity would suggest that architecture has a strong role in the continued evolution of suburban culture.

# suburban > (spec · u · la · tion)

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## CONCLUDING

The true significance of the suburb lies not in its physical sprawl, but in the manner in which it has altered the interaction within the social environment. The suburb has been responsible for a migration of the wealthy away from urban centres, and as a result has caused a depletion of resources within the city. This urban polarization has led to a concentration of the under privileged population in the city centre, while the wealthy have moved literally to greener pastures. Although spatial isolation is prevalent within the suburb, the social segregation that has ensued is a much more alarming trend.

The modern day suburb has become the residence of individualists, who prefer not to be involved with issues of the public realm, nor to interact with their neighbours. Perhaps the true irony in these individualist developments is the uncompromising uniformity of the dwellings themselves. And while there may not exist a tie that binds the area as a social unit, the architectural aesthetic of these developments attempts to suggest otherwise. The resulting visual homogeneity has served to further social anonymity, and has therefore increased the ability to move through the area uninterrupted by community interaction. While under the label of "master-planned community" it becomes increasingly evident that what is being mass produced is the lifestyle of individualism.

## REMARKS

My investigation into the suburb has afforded me the opportunity to delve deeper into the underlying issues within these developments, and has helped me to understand their nature. I

entered this thesis with the mindset that I was going to embrace the suburb, and discuss it as a necessary element which need not be eliminated. Having been raised in suburbia, I was well aware of the benefits offered to the residents. Parents were able to provide their children with a large house, a big yard, and they were given the peace of mind of having a safe environment in which to raise their children. However, when the implications of creating these developments and the social influence contained within them are considered, the justification of the suburb becomes a difficult task.

It was through inspiration from Heidegger that I began to understand the implications involved within the act of dwelling. What I took from his writing was that dwelling is more than simply the inhabitation of space, it is the manner in which a space is inhabited. In this respect dwelling is the act of living within and among those around us and is the product of a multifaceted relationship, not an autonomous condition. This act is a catalyst for social integration and only exists when the public environment is engaged. At issue are the social benefits involved with dwelling. There are no financial gains at stake, and the measure of success cannot be seen in a quarterly report. The conscious act of dwelling results in the development of a heightened sense of social responsibility. It is social responsibility, the feeling of citizenship, which is essential in the formation of an integrated public atmosphere. This is the responsibility which is lacking in typical suburban developments.

In reading the work of Richard Sennett, I began to understand the role of division within social environments and began to speculate about their possible use in the suburban environment. Barriers become necessary devices for social interaction because they shield unwanted observation, while creating the divisions necessary to keep order within a communal group. When

applied to notions of dwelling, it only follows that these divisions can be used to encourage the act of dwelling and social integration as well. In this condition, barriers become instruments which physically reinforce the opportunity for diversity within the suburban environment. With these motivations in mind, walled communities can become interventions of social inclusion rather than segregation.

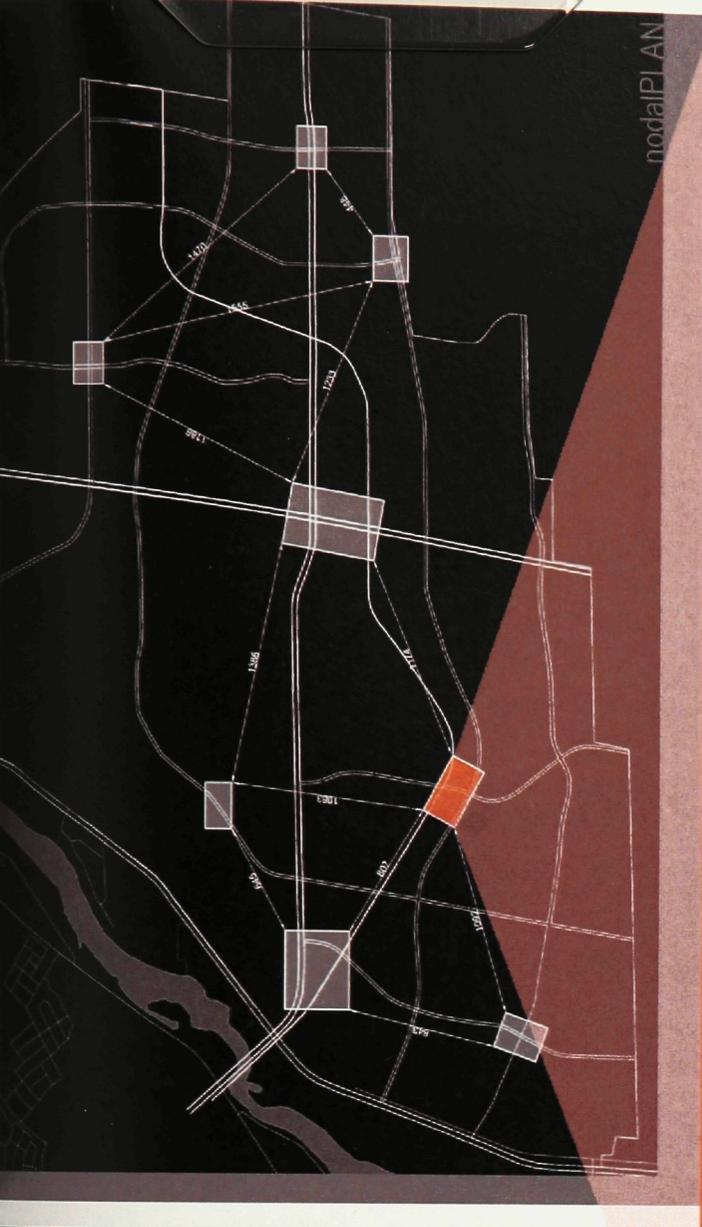
I believe the suburb will never disappear, and my prime concern is that these developments will further entrench individualist tendencies within society. It is my position that the resolution of this condition lies in reclaiming the role of the boundary within the suburb. While gates are being used for purposes of separation, they are embodied with the potential to reaffirm needed social boundaries which aid in the establishment of an engaged public environment. The reinterpretation of the wall into an implement of social integration involves a theoretical shift in the objectives of a housing development. In this respect the value of economic speculation is adjusted to reflect social benefits. This results in the contemplation of possible outcomes when social prerogatives play a leading role. The definition of a boundary as a means of facilitating the act of dwelling is a tectonic method of encouraging social interaction within the suburban environment.

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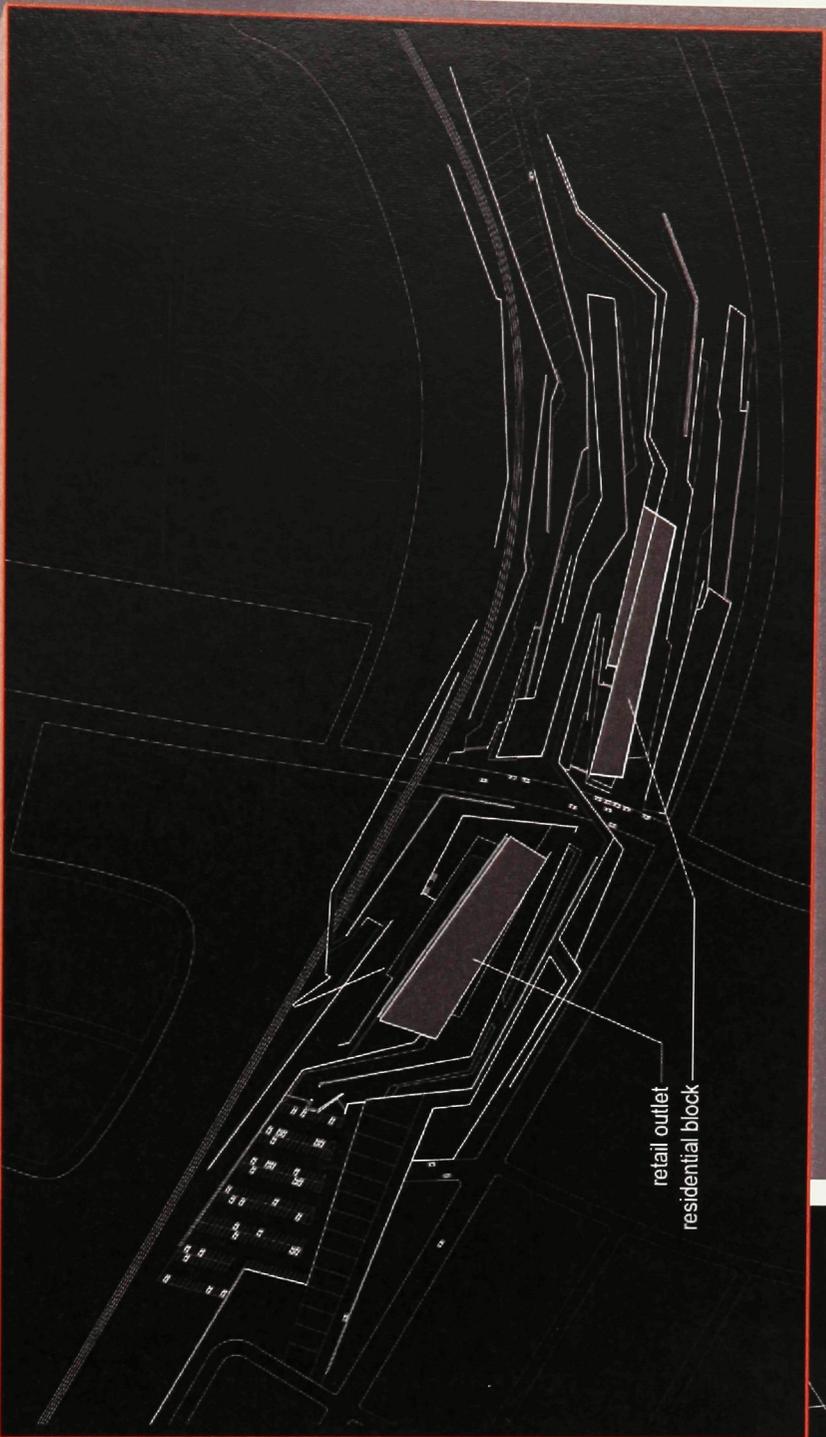
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regionPLAN



nodalPLAN



interventionPLAN

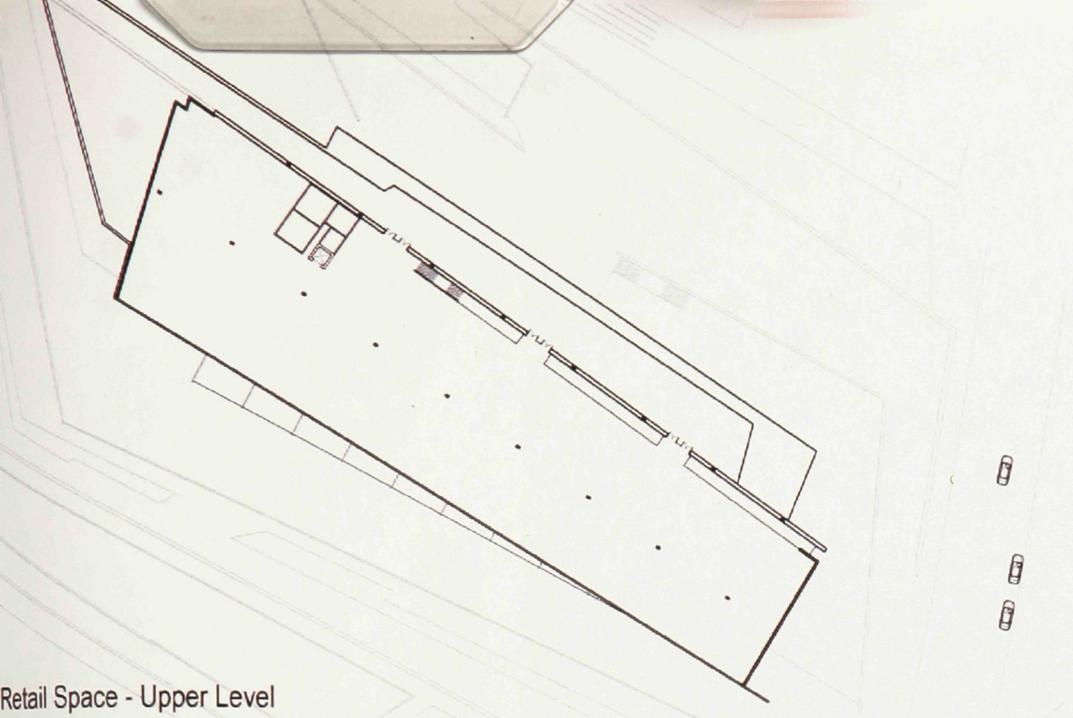
RETAIL OUTLET  
small & large scale retail adjacent to transit stop  
horizontal programmatic intensity

MASS ELEMENT  
possible areas of enclosure as defined by boundaries  
programmatic use yet to be determined

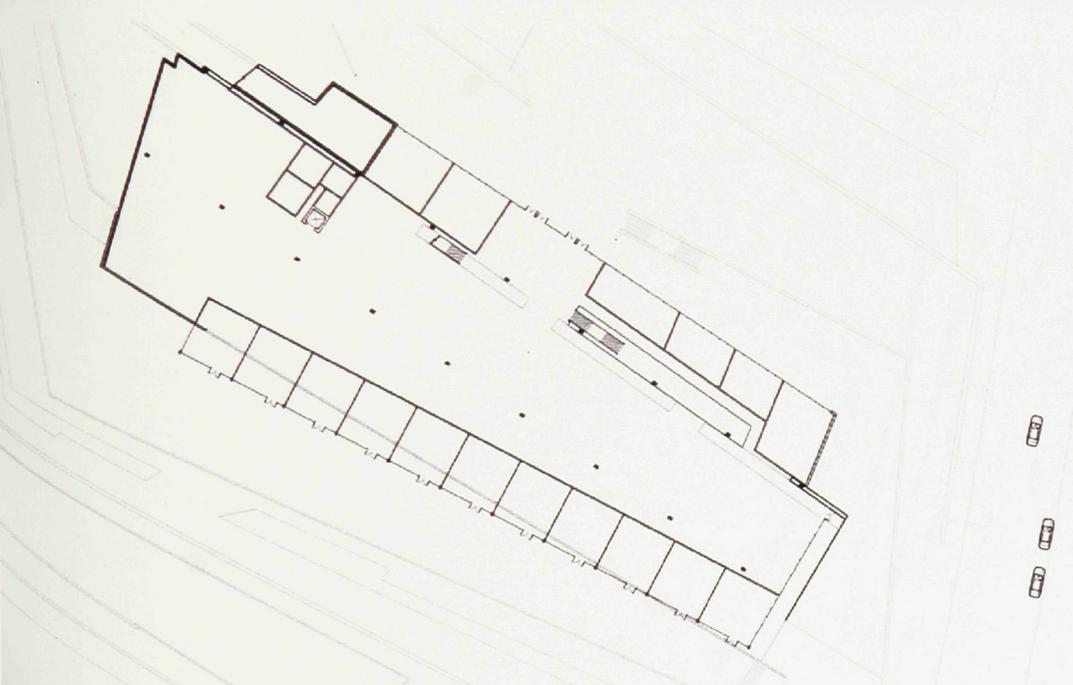
COURTYARD  
gathering area linked by various pedestrian routes  
and adjacent various programmatic elements

RESIDENTIAL BLOCK  
row housing accessed through a central atrium  
entry occurs by inhabiting a boundary wall  
rear garden defined by boundary condition

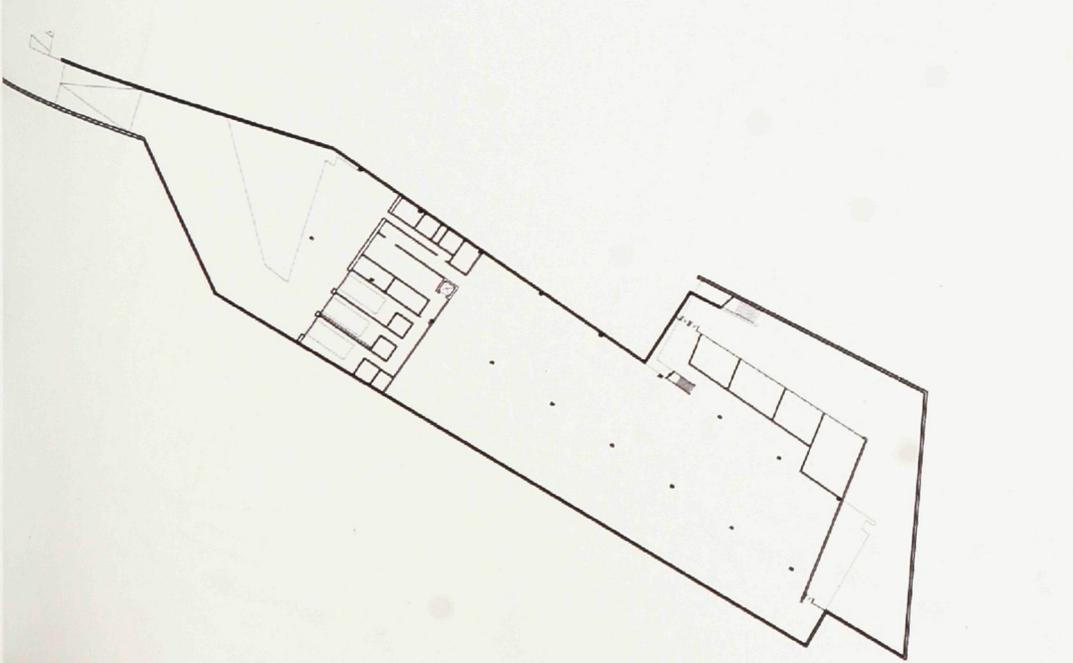




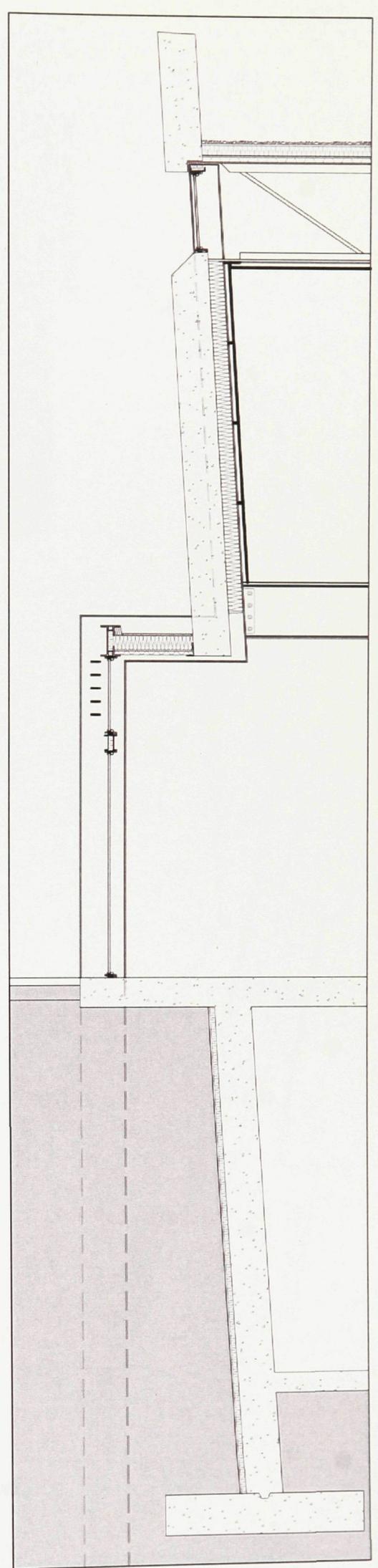
Retail Space - Upper Level



Retail Space - Ground Level



Retail Space - Lower level

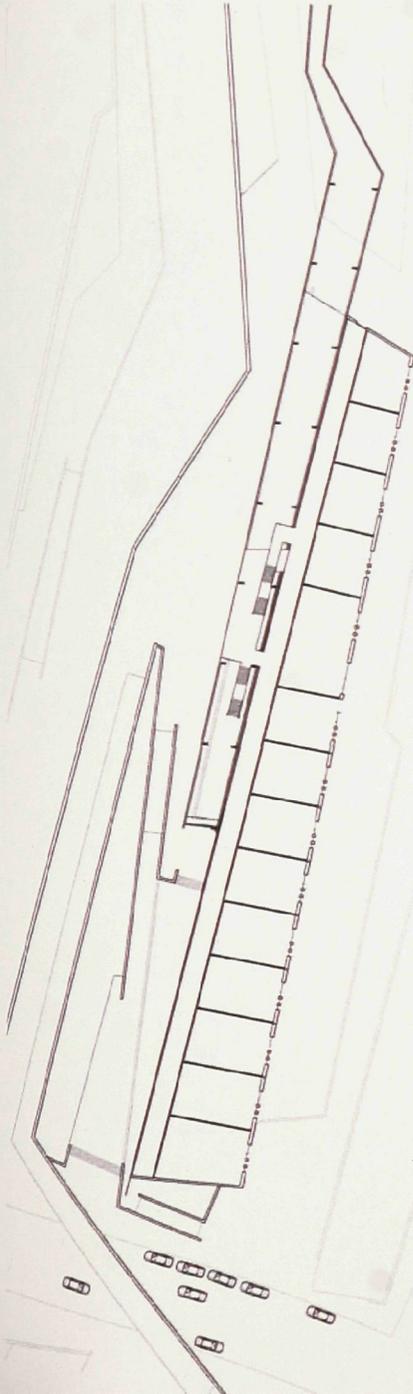




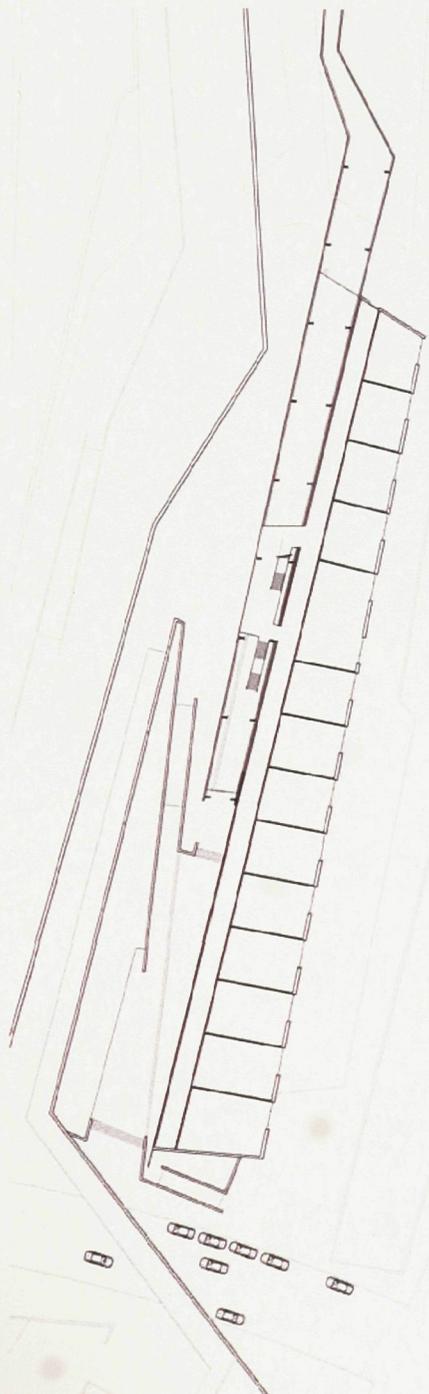
view looking into courtyard



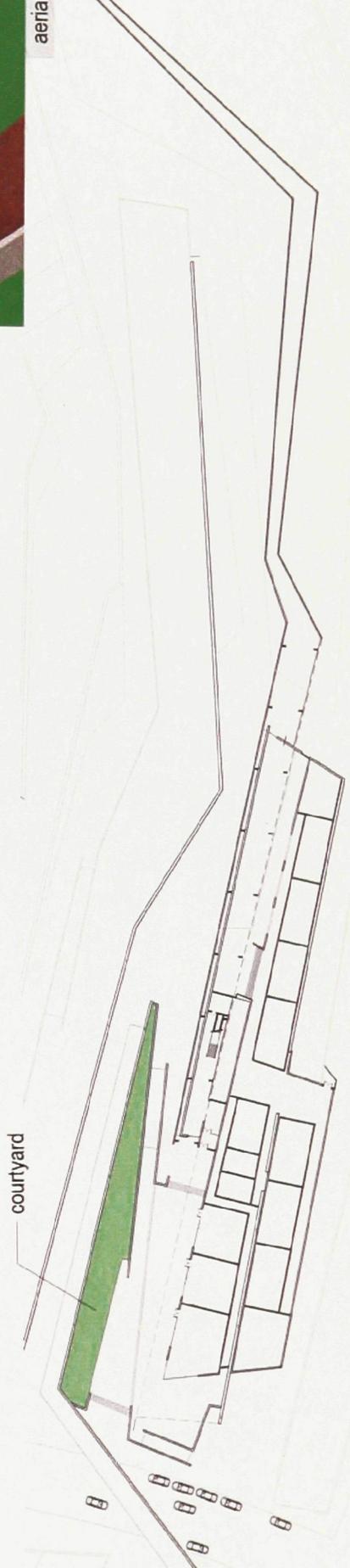
aerial perspective of residential block



third floor PLAN



second floor PLAN



courtyard

ground floor PLAN



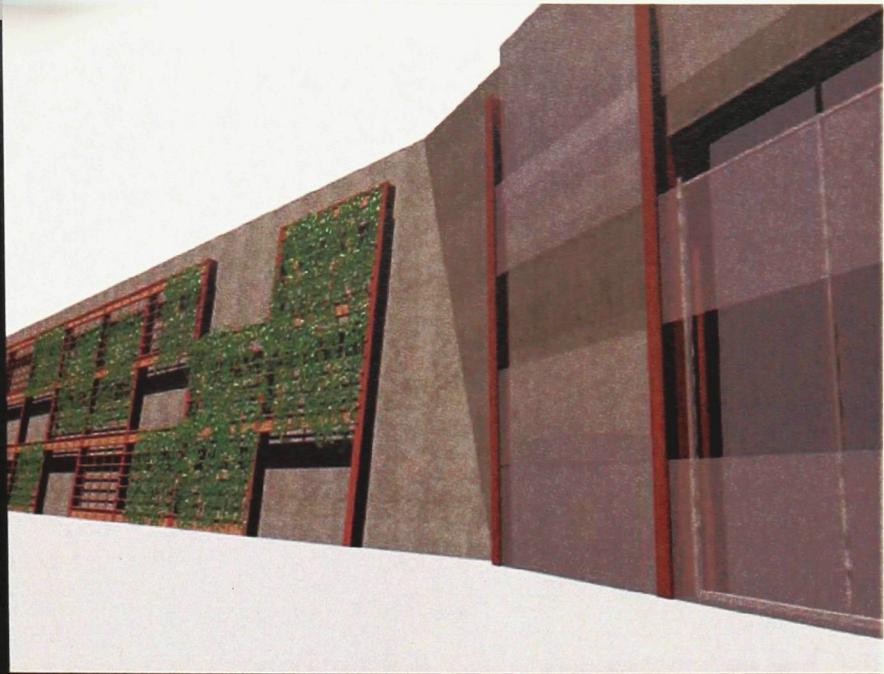
view of pedestrian space and retail outlet



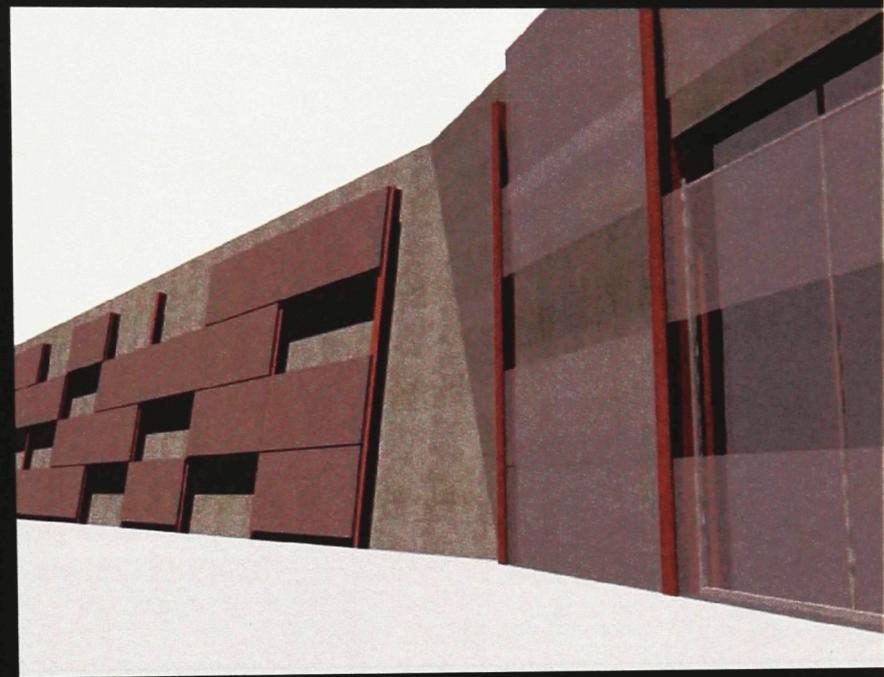
view of courtyard and residential block



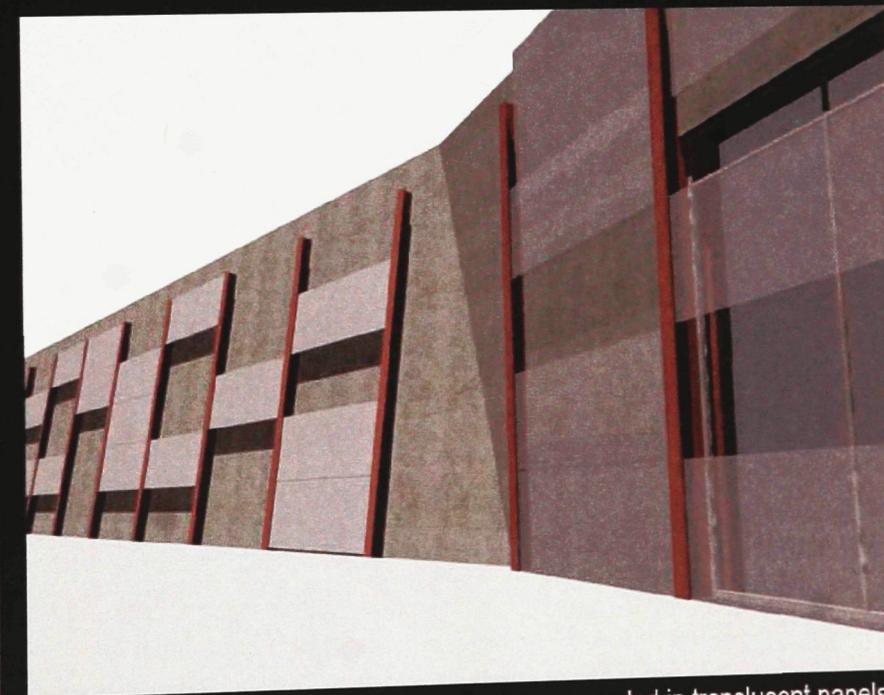
view of courtyard and residential block



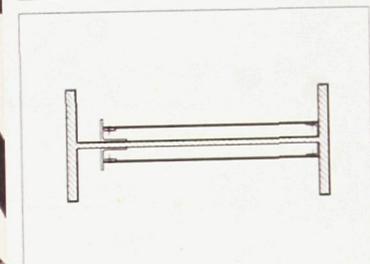
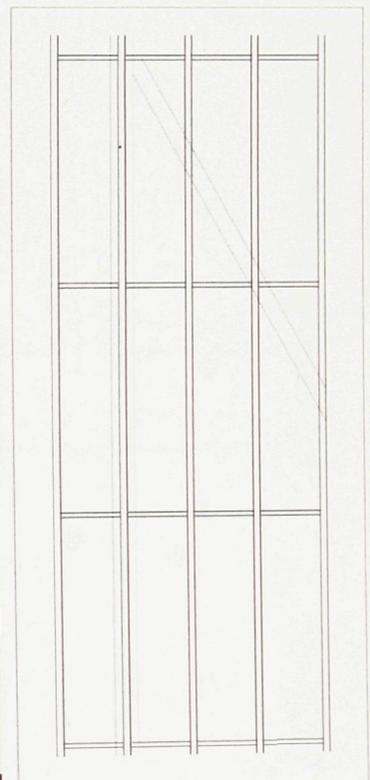
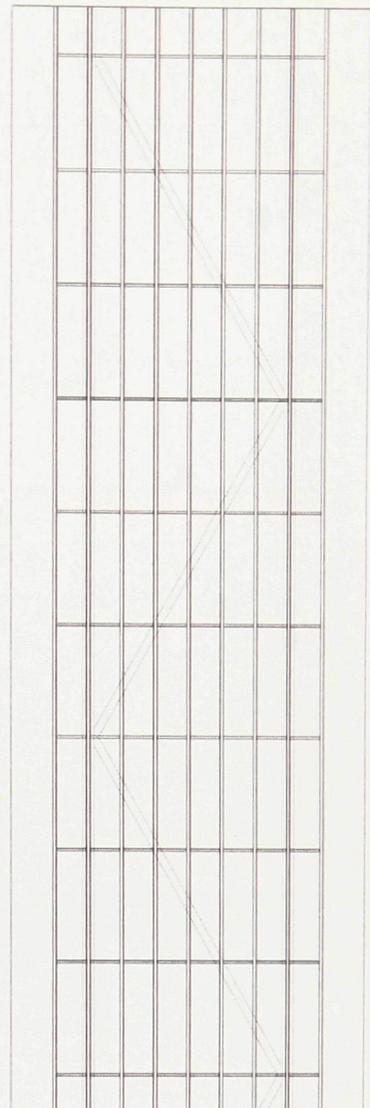
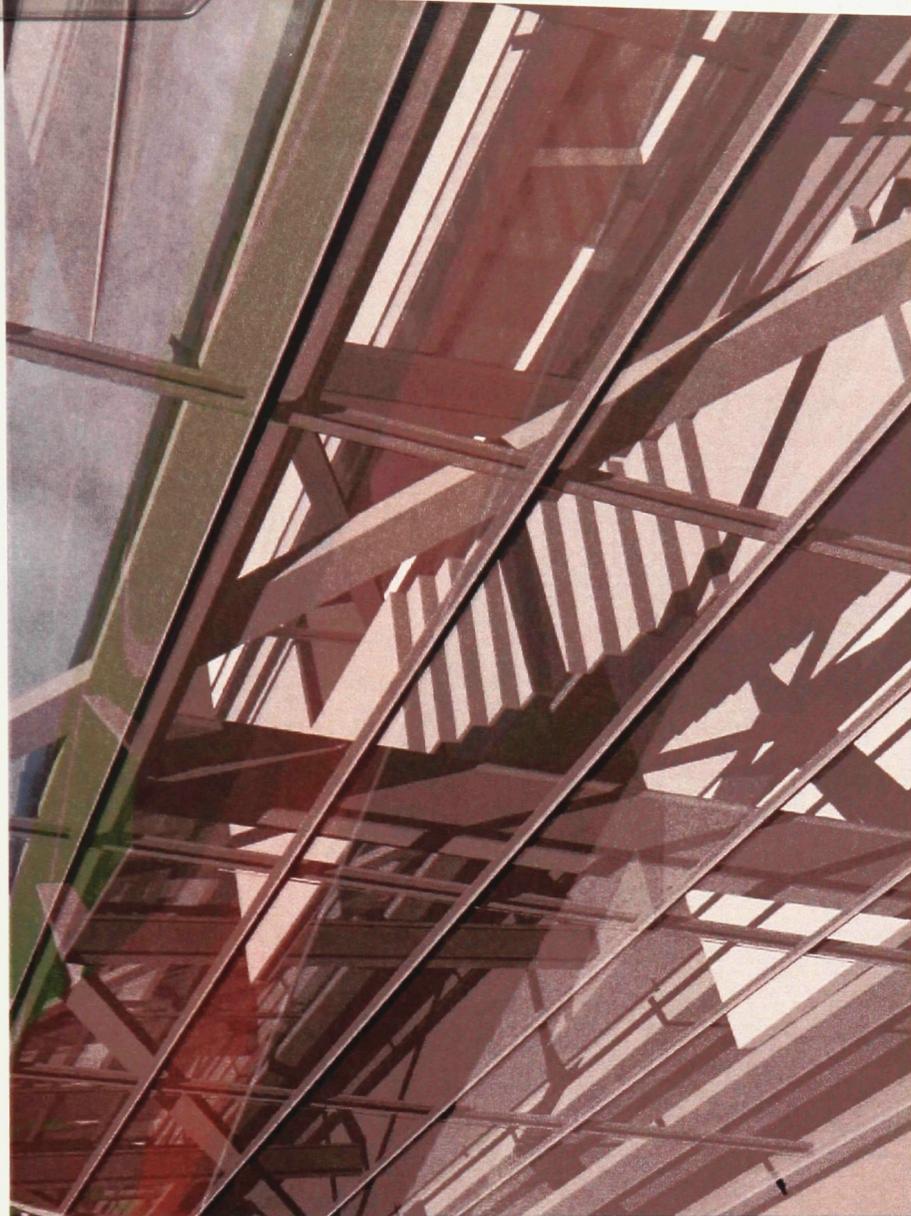
clad in growth medium

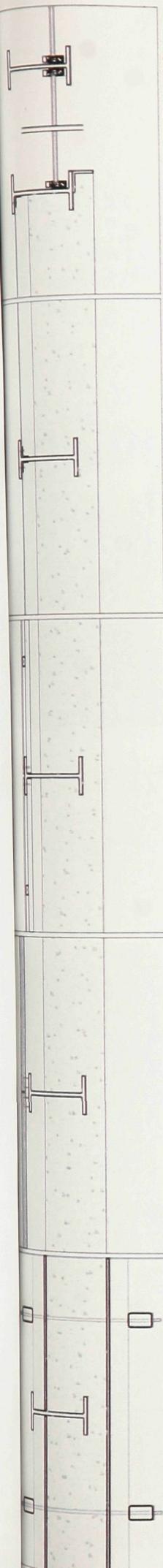


clad in stone panels



clad in translucent panels





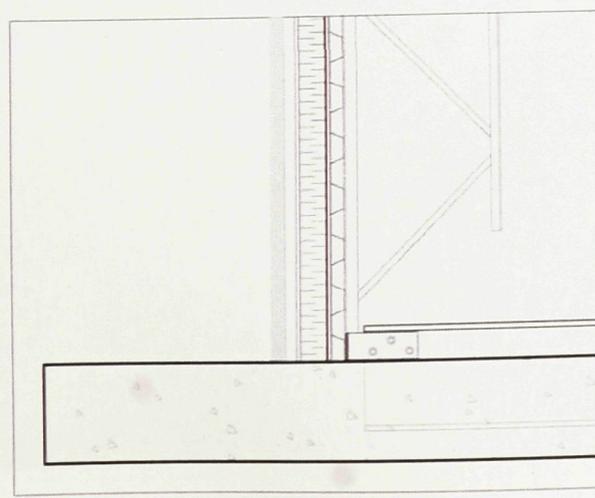
FORMING

STONE CLAD

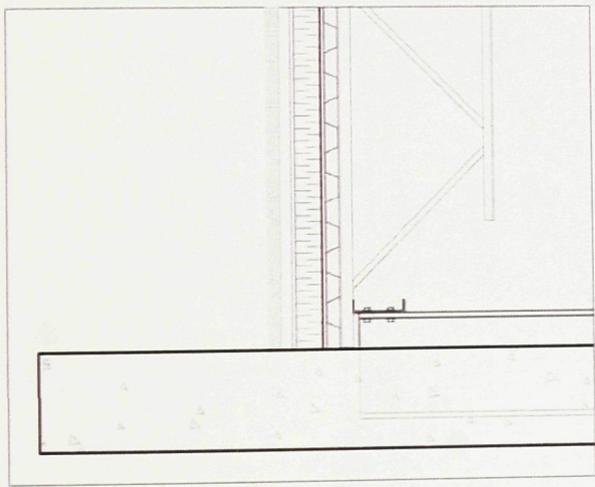
WOOD TRELLIS/GROWTH

BACKLIGHT ACRYLIC CLAD

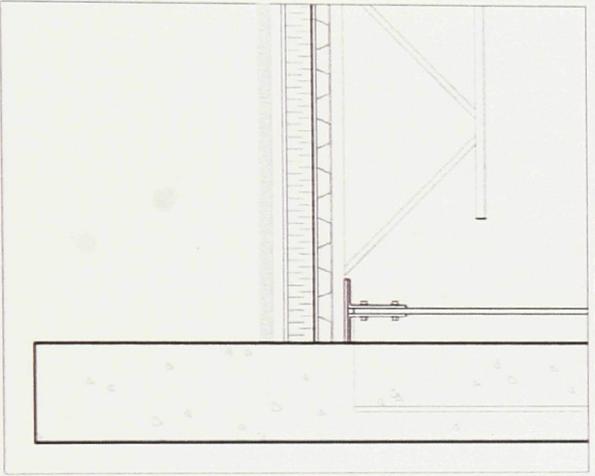
CONNECTION AT OPENINGS



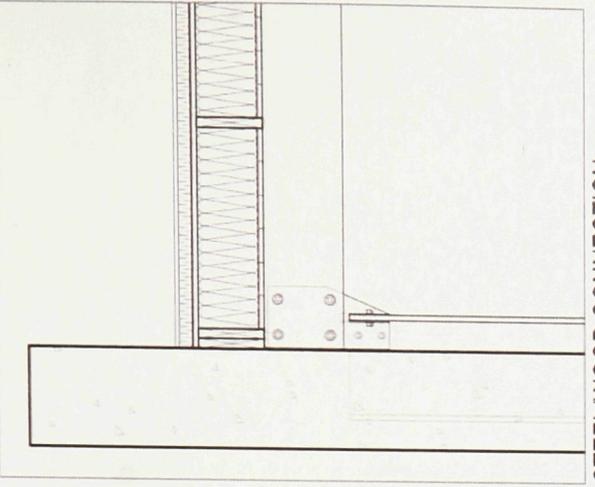
STEEL CONNECTION 1



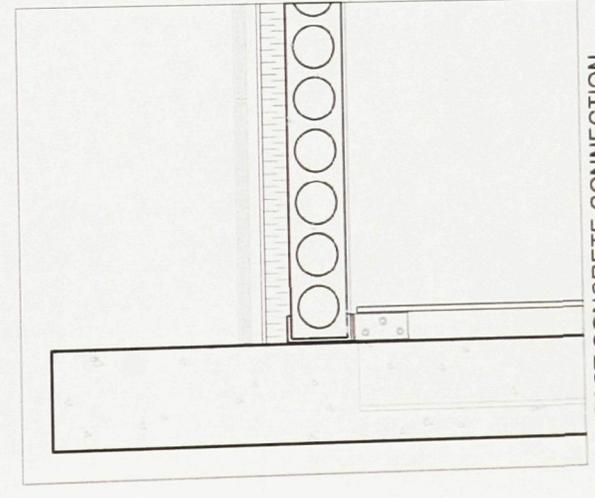
STEEL CONNECTION 2



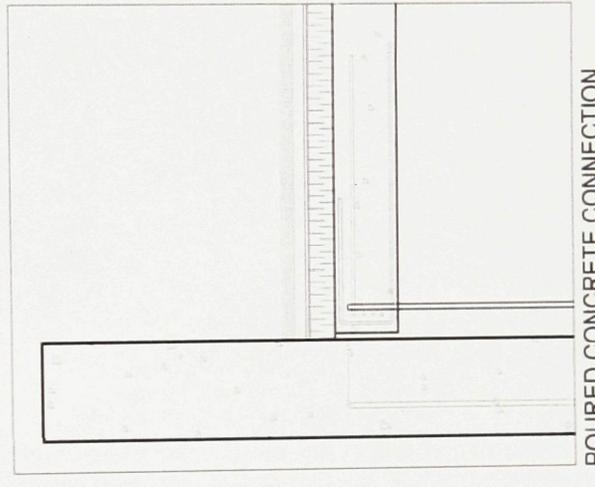
STEEL CONNECTION 3



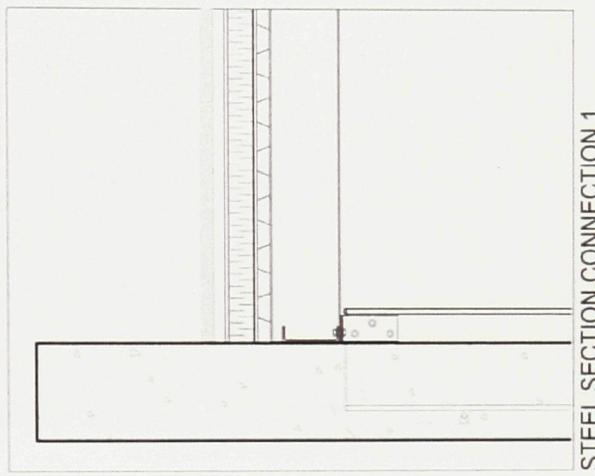
STEEL/WOOD CONNECTION



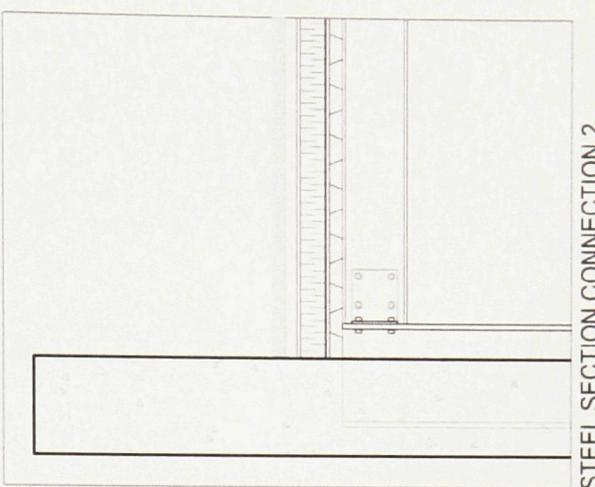
PRECAST CONCRETE CONNECTION



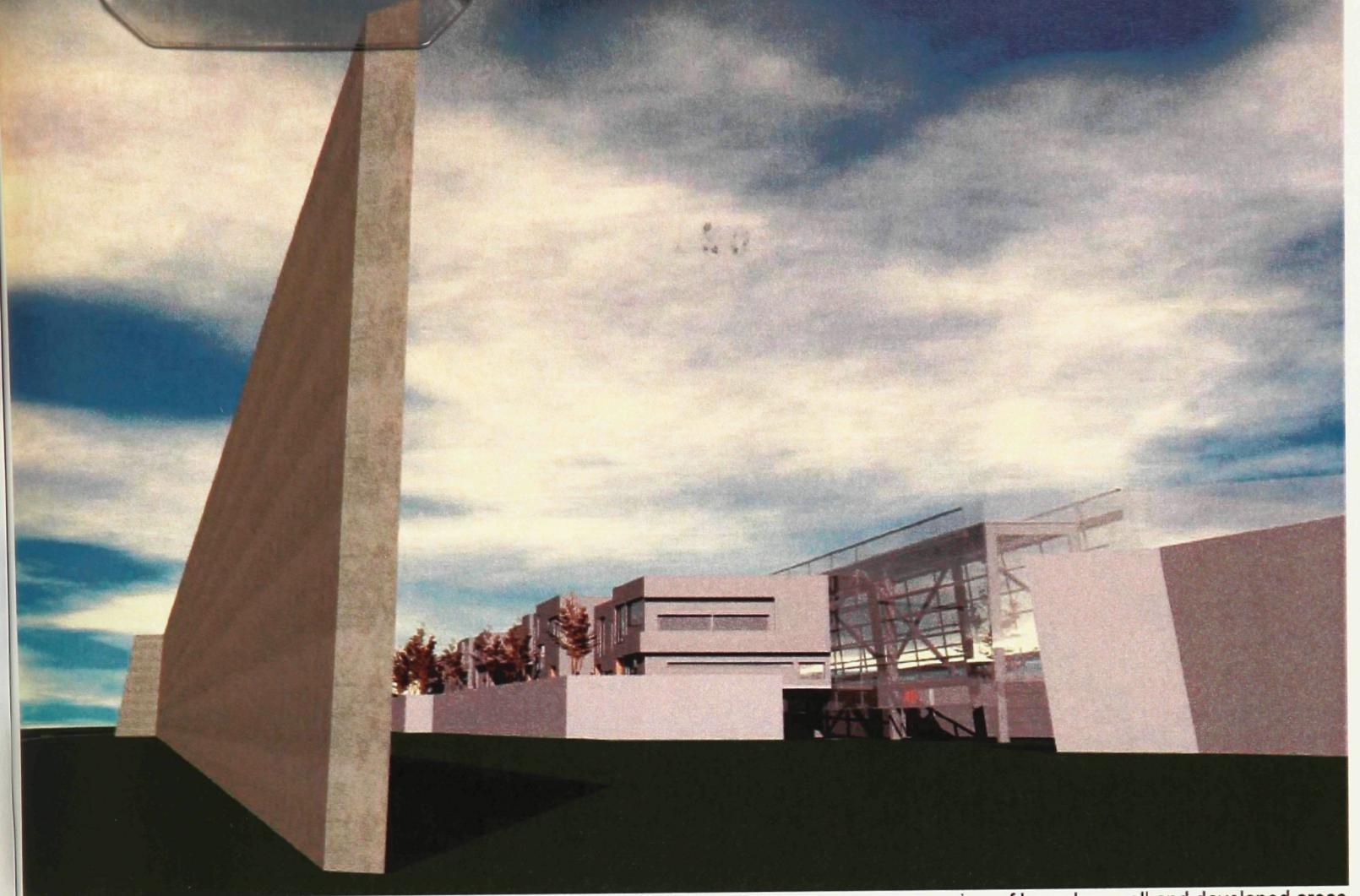
POURED CONCRETE CONNECTION



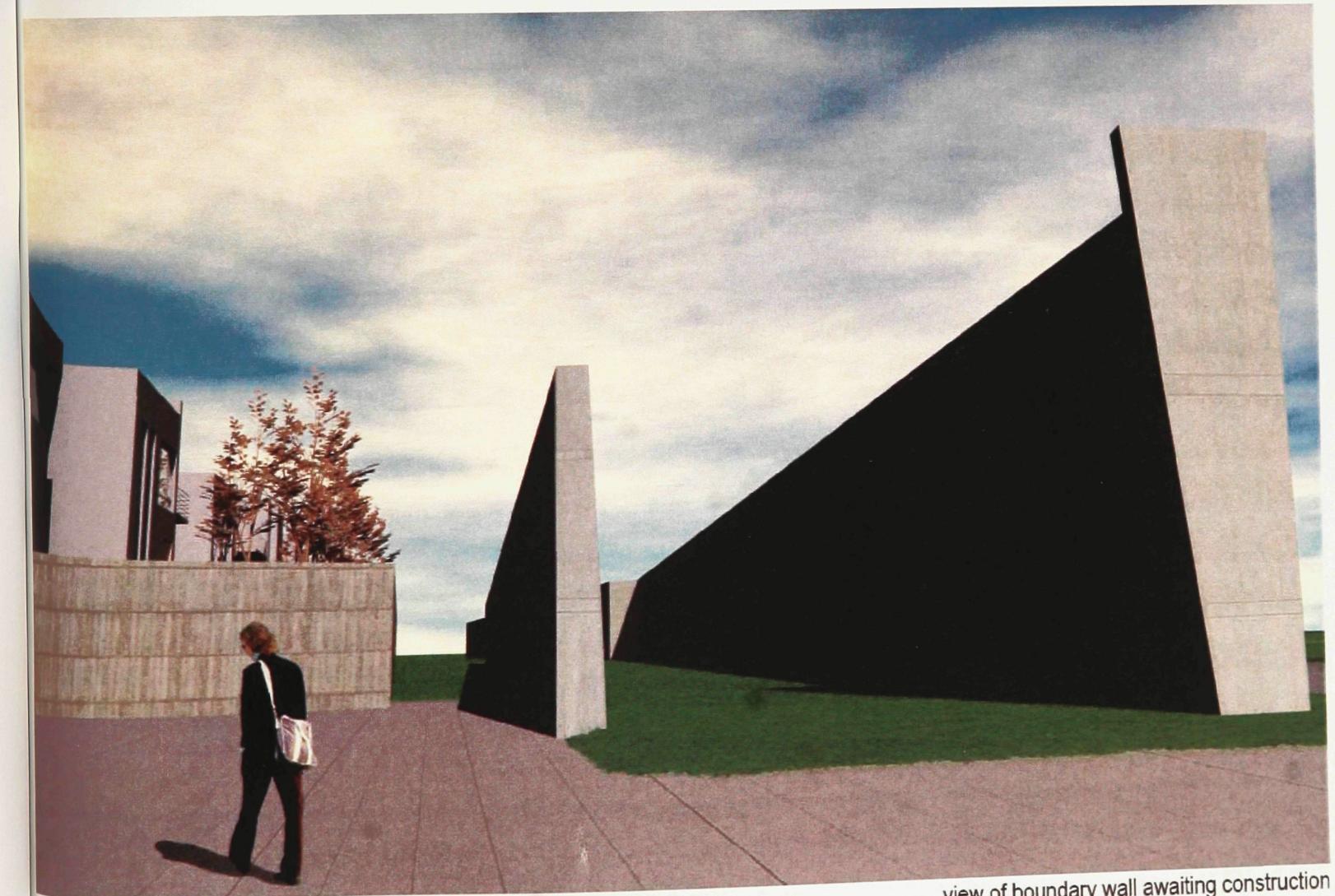
STEEL SECTION CONNECTION 1



STEEL SECTION CONNECTION 2



view of boundary wall and developed areas



view of boundary wall awaiting construction