To the Graduate Council:

I am submitting herewith a thesis written by Kevin Thomas Perry entitled, "An Architecture of Connection: A YMCA for Brenton, Kentucky." I have examined the final copy of this thesis for form and content and recommend that it be accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Architecture, with a major in Architecture.

Jon P. Coddington, Major Professor

We have read this thesis and
recommend its acceptance:

Thomas K. Davis

Tracy Moir-McClean

Accepted for the Council:

Interim Vice Provost and
Dean of The Graduate School

An Architecture of Connection:
A YMCA for Benton, Kentucky

A Thesis
Presented for the
Master of Architecture
Degree
The University of Tennessee, Knoxville

Kevin Thomas Perry
August 2000

dedication

To my wife, Triska, and my dog, Bailey, who are always there for me In addition, to small towns like Benton and the people that make those places special

acknowledgements

I would like to thank my committee, Professors Jon Coddington, T K Davis, and Tracy Moir-McClean, for their guidance and input Additionally, I am grateful to my wife and family for their support throughout my education I would also like to acknowledge my friends and classmates, Nathan Coyle, Bronte Lake, and Jay Gaw for being there through everything

abstract

This thesis attempts to reaffirm community by resisting sprawl and challenging conventional zoning. The thrust of the project is to gather and connect the people of a small town, Benton, Kentucky, by using a mixed-use YMCA facility It resists the spreading-out of communal activities and returns them to the traditional place of gathering, the Courthouse Square It is an example of the way architecture plays a role in community development

table of contents

ch 1 Introduction ..... p 1

ch 2 Discussion of Issues ..... p 6
Connection
Affirmation of place
Social engagement

ch. 3 Project Description ..... p 15
Project Location

ch 4 Site Analysis p.19

ch. 5 Design Vocabulary ..... p. 25
Function/ Usage
Location/ Configuration
Adaptation/ Reuse

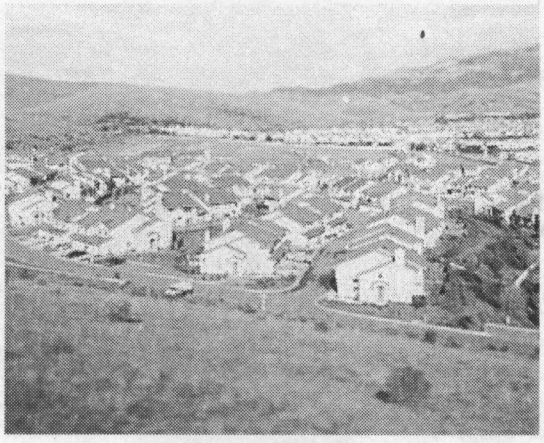
ch. 6 Design Investigation ..... p. 32
Benton YMCA/ Community
Center

Epilogue ..... p. 43

References ..... p. 44

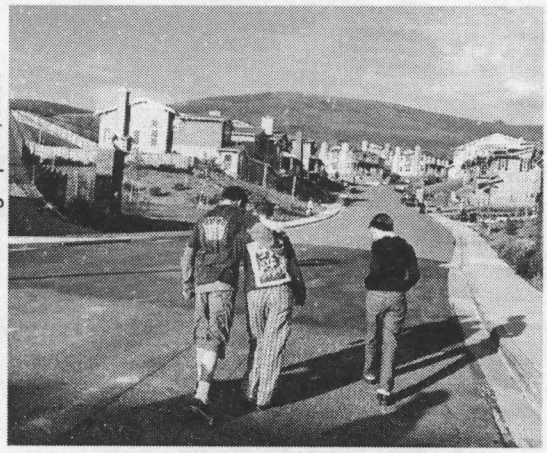
Vita ..... p 46

introduction



New York Times Mag. April 9, 2000

To many it is evident that a sense of community has been lost or diminished in our towns and cities today. This thesis propose that it is this sense of community which once held people together and made cities and towns more livable. The sense of community has been diminished and sometimes erased by sprawl, which has separated people both spatially and socially. Those interested in the making of communities must find physical ways to recreate and renew that sense of community within the built environment.



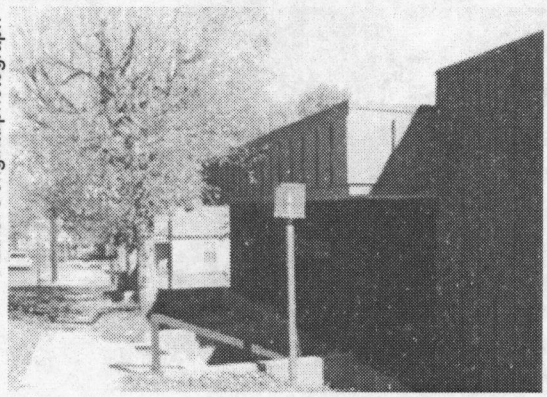
New York Times Mag. April 9, 2000

Can the design and adaptation of the built environment renew a sense of community in a small town? This initial question begins to emphasize the aspects of architecture which connect sociology and psychology to the built environment. The idea of 'community' as a social concept cannot be merely created at will. While it is apparent that architecture by itself cannot create community, it can potentially provide the built forms and public spaces that encourage and house a community's sense of itself and it's place.

Author's original photograph

In particular, this thesis explores how architecture can accomplish this through function, location and configuration; providing a 'place' for community activity. The means to explore this idea will be through the transformation of and additions to an abandoned church, converting it into a YMCA/ Community Center in Benton, Kentucky.

This thesis attempts to reconnect a town that has been separated both physically and socially by sprawl. The reconnection is designed to occur between new construction and old, between the people and the physical town, and between the people with each other. This thesis provides a way to resist the abandonment of the traditional Courthouse Square in Benton and challenges the development patterns of small town sprawl and the problems that arise from it. These problems occur from single-use zoning and the placeless-ness of generic design with little or no understanding of a location's history or tradition. Single-use zoning does not allow such things as living



Author's original photograph

Author's original photograph

Author's original photograph

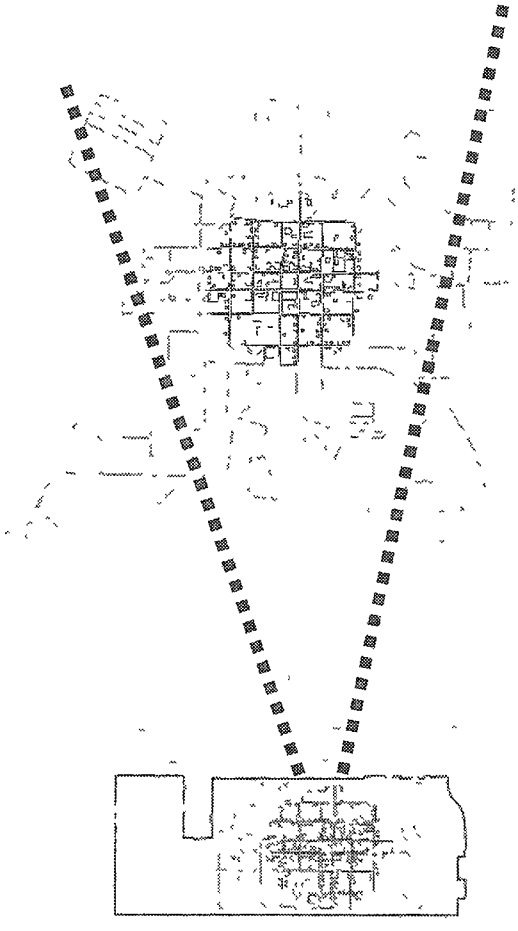
quarters above stores or restaurants. It also groups like uses, no longer necessary due to reduced reliance on heavy industry and controls of industrial and commercial pollution. Zoning typically favors the car over the pedestrian. One of the largest land requirements of zoning codes is that for parking. The required setbacks often designed to accommodate the car can ruin the character of a street. In addition to zoning, the issue most associated with sprawl is the generic design of its buildings. These buildings have little or no connection to the building tradition of a place and often could be located in any city, in any climate or any site (see any fast-food chain).

This thesis and its project intends to revive the town and affirm its sense of place by reestablishing the connections between the physical town and the people; between the people with each other; and between the old and the new built environment. Central to this idea of connection is the gathering of all members of the community and providing a place for

different modes of social interaction The thesis establishes this connection through its design vocabulary which is based on the functions, location, and configuration of a YMCA facility

By renovating an existing building, the thesis demonstrates that it is possible to renovate a town using that which exists and has established value This can be done without abandoning useful structures and building new ones outside of town, further contributing to the sprawl Through the use of an existing building, the thesis demonstrates how to link the past to the present, thus reinforcing and affirming the idea of place which has a living, useful history

The thesis project is mixed-use, which allows a wide range of the community to gather throughout the day and seasons in the facility's spaces It serves as a microcosm and concentration for much of the community's activities having places to work, learn, play, eat, and live In this way it is a part that relates to the whole of the town



Building as a micrcosm of the city

Although the project can be seen as a microcosm of the town, it is not self-sufficient It relies on its interdependence with its surroundings to thrive, such as the school, the library, local government, and the various businesses on the square

As a multiuse structure, the building houses activities for a cross-section of the local population There are educational areas, after-school facilities, a café, and temporary living quarters (typical of urban YMCAs), all in addition to the traditional athletic facilities

In Jane Jacob's *Death and Life of Great American Cities* she wrote that one of the most important aspects of a city is its diversity Two of the conditions she establishes for this diversity are mixed-uses and the need for aged buildings This thesis maintains that these conditions are also applicable to small towns as well A small town is very similar to a neighborhood in a large city and thus the ideas taken from such writers as Jacobs can be applied to this project Through its design, the thesis project provides the two conditions which Jacobs speaks of through its reuse of an existing structure and its design as a multi-use facility Through the building's multi-use functions, and its strategic location in town, the project challenges the conventional zoning mentality of single-use, large setbacks, and oversized parking all of which diminish the historic and rich vibrancy of a town center

discussion of issues

Mofield, pg .2

West side of the square, Main Street, Benton, Kentucky, March 5, 1974

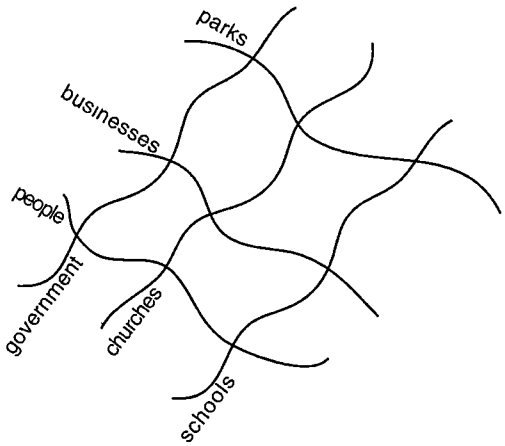
Author's original photograph

One way to resist the detrimental effects of conventional sprawl development is to reinforce the existing physical and social connections found within a town. This can be accomplished by recognizing the issues of connection present and reinforcing those that enhance the sense of community. Sprawl fragments and separates communities both physically and socially. One way to counter the fragmentation is to affirm the town as a place in which the community gathers on a daily basis. This promotes the interaction and engagement of the all the town's citizens.

Connection

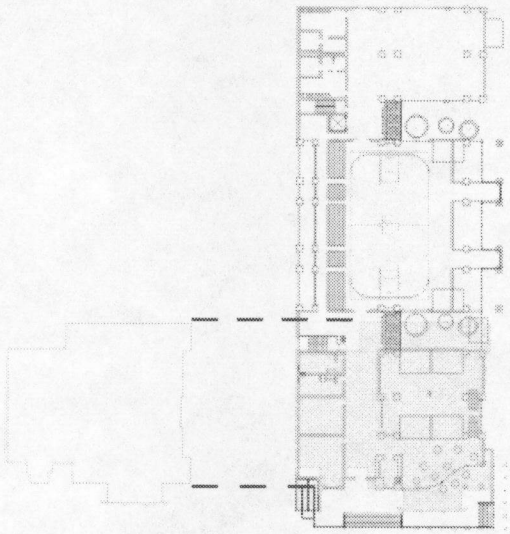
"I would rather discover a single causal connection than win the throne of Persia."
Democritus (460-370 BC)

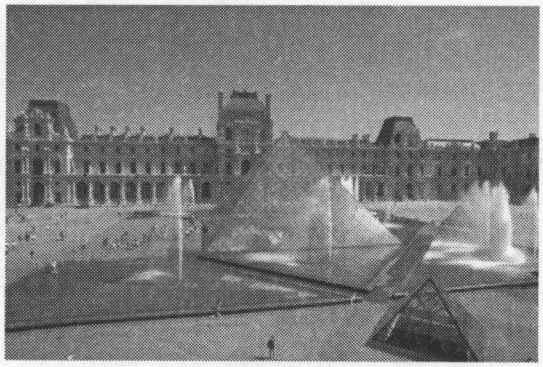
It is the connections within a community that hold it together. These connections are directly related to the interdependence of those parts of a community that strengthen it as a whole. If



one visualizes a community as a fabric, then the various parts of the community can be seen as being woven together This weaving is much stronger than any one thread and if one strand is removed there is a gap in the weave and the fabric is weakened Like the fabric, the community is strengthened by the connections of all the pieces which help establish it as a place The connections that this thesis speaks to are between the town and its people, people with neighbors, and new construction with existing

This thesis contends that the connection of a people to their town is realized through the establishment of a sense of place This allows the people to have a physical and communal place to identify with and to foster this connection When people are connected to where they live and work they tend to take better care of the place and enjoy being there A sense of belonging linked to a strong pride associated with place helps create a community





www.lourve.com

Connecting people with each other is essential to social engagement. The proliferation of sprawl has, in a sense, isolated people from each other, both by distance and empathy toward one another. By providing the means for social engagement through the creation of places to gather, the hope is to get people to interact and become more involved with their community. The lack of interaction today is alarming and very well noted by Robert Putnam. His research into civic involvement reveals the lack of connection between people and people and people and places.

The final connection, between the new and existing, is established in the architectural vocabulary of the project. It relates the transition and connection between the past and the present creating a living history of the town. Renovations of the sort proposed here find a way to honor both the old and the new by showing the relation between the two. The goal is to

weave new construction into the existing fabric of the town allowing each generation to contribute to the town's tapestry

Affirmation of place

"That which makes a place unique is worth celebrating and protecting with architecture "
–Doug Kelbaugh

To affirm a space as a "place", it is essential to recognize the connections the people of a community have with the buildings and spaces of the town This is to acknowledge their history and relevance and to show that such places can still contribute to the making of a community Critical to the understanding of this connection of people to a place is to understand "place" as a concept rather than as a location

People build images of places out of fragments of experience selected from personal and communal significance The experience may be our own direct sensation of a place, or it may be based on indirect knowledge such as hearing or reading about it, or seeing a picture of it Because all our senses are involved, the image can be an aroma or texture, as well as a spatial and visual Selected fragments are organized into a coherent image, which reminds us of the place and helps us to recognize it

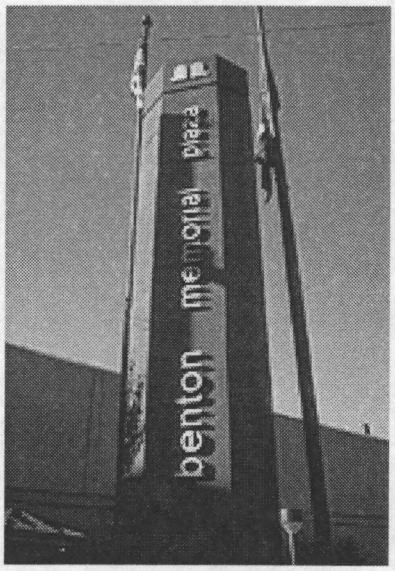
Author's original photograph

Author's original photograph

The idea of *place* is one which is often difficult to explain. It is often easier to describe somewhere that is not a place, such as a sprawling parking lot or suburban strip mall. Yet we almost all can recognize when we are in a *place* even if we can't define it. When we do define it we see it has a sense of totality and wholeness about it. A *place* is not created instantly, but over time and thus it has accommodated a range of activities. *Places* are recognizable, comfortable and always related to their context.

A sense of place helps protect a region's cultural heritage and promotes cultural awareness and strong kinship ties. A community should make every effort to maintain visual environments in harmony with the town's defined character. Local symbols reflect and enhance sense of place. This knowledge may be used to maintain and enhance place identity.

One of the movements, or theories, in architecture which uses the concept of place is Critical Regionalism. It is an attitude that celebrates and delights in



Author's original photograph

what is different about a place while still maintaining the connection to the larger world. It first and foremost, starts out with a love of place. It is critical of simpleminded or excessive importation of culture from other places, evident in the generic design of sprawl. It honors local climate, topography, vegetation, building materials, and building practices. It prefers local authenticity to sophisticated imitation. Critical Regionalism realizes that the better defined and evolved a place is, the less likely it is to be improved by random imports or change for change's sake.

It is evident that a place cannot be created instantly, because of the layers and additions of character that are added over time by numerous persons to make "places" unique. Given this idea, new projects should build upon the established. This will add another layer and slightly change the identity while being able to recognize the other layers. In addition, new projects need to respect the old, while at the same time using contemporary techniques to meet contemporary needs.

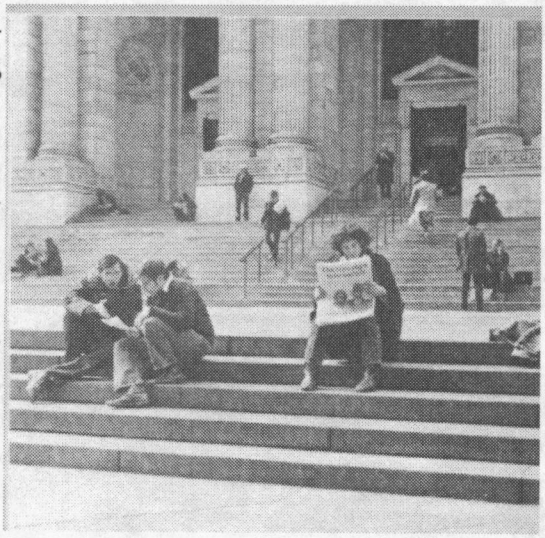
Author's original photograph

Just as there is pride in place, each generation needs to have a certain pride and confidence in its self to add its layer. Only this way will the layer have integrity and authenticity.

Social Engagement

"...more Americans are bowling today than ever before, but bowling in organized leagues has plummeted in the last decade or so."
–Robert Putnam

The last issue to discuss is the connection the people of a place have with each other. The above quote speaks volumes to the decline in social engagement in today's society. It is beyond the scope of this thesis to explain this empathy, but the thesis, with its project provides places for interaction and connections intended to resist this decline. To have a community, (in the social sense of the word) it is important to have a citizenry that is involved and supportive of each other. Architecture can provide



W. H. Whyte, New York public building steps.

places for engagement and for the chance encounters that are important to the develop and continuity of a community

Discussions of community often turn into discussions of building social capital Implementing architectural design elements to create space for social interactions to take place is one step in the process for building social capital Choices of architectural design elements influence the character and form of space where social interactions take place Thus, architectural design choices can be seen as enabling the social interactions needed to contribute to community building

Community and privacy are not always antithetical While people need to maintain the individual identity, they do not need to be in isolation to do so For instance, in parks and open spaces, a person can be "alone" while they are in the midst of many others In this way they have a choice of when to engage with others or when to disengage and be alone

Community facilities-libraries, police stations, community centers, and the like are the knots that connect the fabric of our towns and cities They enrich the quality of life for individuals to an extent that can only be attained through collective organization-who could afford to own thousands of books and a place to house them, or have their own indoor basketball court? And, who would want to? The best part of the richness of community facilities is that they are shared

One sign that a city or town is thriving in terms of its citizens is the degree of accidental meetings that occur among the townspeople When people use the public spaces of their town and visit businesses on a regular basis they tend to run into someone they know, someone they were supposed to call last week or, someone that was ill and missed church last Sunday The possibility of the accidental meeting is what makes the city or town a fertile place Too often we forget the social possibilities

of public spaces People position themselves in cities so as to be able to make contacts with others of common interest As Christopher Alexander put it, cities are a mechanism for "sustaining human contact " He goes on

"People come to cities for contact. That's what cities are· meeting places".

The modern city or town typically falls short in providing environments for this kind of communication Sociologist Ray Oldenburg calls these environments *third places* in his book *The Great Good Place* He describes the first two places as the home and the workplace The third place is where one bumps into friends and neighbors in an unplanned manner Such a place is a public place the coffee shop, the deli, and the gym

We speak constantly of neighborhoods and community But without the third place- the commons outside the home and workplace where people stumble into each other – we do not have a *neighborhood* or a town but simply a residential or commercial *area.*

This is the area where architecture finds its limits and its possibilities Buildings cannot make people interact or socialize, but they can provide comfortable and well designed places for interaction to take place

project description

The design of a YMCA in Benton, Kentucky is intended to be a generator of social interaction and civic pride This project contributes to the making of community through the design of place The facility explores the use of architecture to affect change as it relates to social interaction

The design of a YMCA would functionally and aesthetically be a source of civic pride to the city and promote social interaction To explore the proposed thesis, the design adapts an existing church building and transforms it into a YMCA and community center The YMCA believes people need a place to belong—a place where they genuinely care about one another, share in decisions, treat each other with respect and pull together in a common cause 'Y's bring people from different walks of life together in an environment where all can feel comfortable They are informal incubators for the ideas to help celebrate community and solve its problems Ys as community centers seek to stimulate, maintain, and deepen a "sense of community" Additionally a community center attempts to bring people of various backgrounds and interest together to meet, learn, voice their opinions, and development social connections

In this design, the program provides spaces for interaction for all types of people found in a community The cafe area nearest the public square is a place for people to converse, relax, and observe the activity within the building and in the public square Adjacent to the cafe is a multi-purpose room that can be configured for after-school functions as a study place as well as having recreation such as table tennis and other games. This space can then be converted and opened to combine both the cafe to form a large meeting or gathering space The two most public athletic facilities, the gymnasium and pool hold prominent position in the middle of the facility and have visibility to street and maintains it edge while still providing transparency/activity The more individual athletic facilities, weight room, aerobics, and racquetball are located farther into the facility In addition to the athletic functions, the YMCA has places for

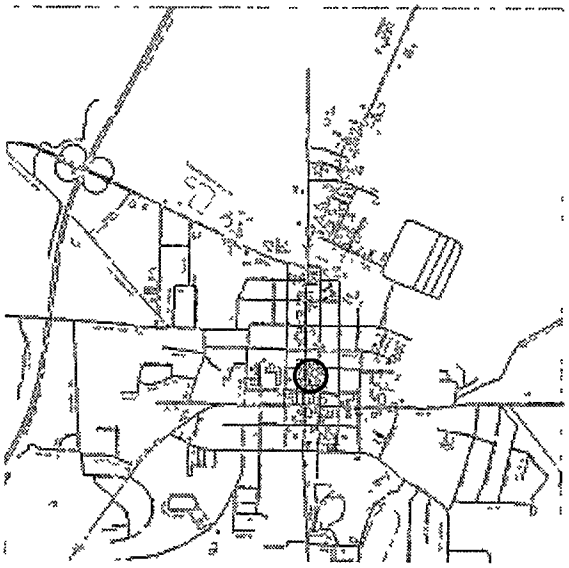
learning, with a large multi-purpose classroom on the ground floor just across the street from the public library In addition there is an art room with a kiln and space near the pool for aquatic lessons The day-care, on the ground floor, maintains easy access to these learning areas and to the atrium adjacent to the day-care Offices on the ground and the third floor can accommodate social service type groups that fit with the idea of the YMCA For example, child and family services could locate near the day-care and there is space for other groups such as Habitat for Humanity Typical of the traditional urban YMCA, this facility maintains living quarters on the top floor for temporary needs. If someone is passing through or has a misfortune and needs a place to stay for a while the YMCA can accommodate them. Some of the rooms can be joined if there is a need for a large family

The YMCA's motto to "build strong kids, strong families, and strong communities" can be further advanced by the design of this facility This is especially evident in the design's attention to affirming the town's square as a place of significance through its promotion of social interaction linked to function, location, and building configuration

project location

The investigation focuses around the Courthouse Square in Benton, Kentucky, a small town the western part of the state Sited on a prominent hill, it is a typical town square with the County Courthouse on a plinth at the town's center and small businesses, a church, and the city hall forming the perimeter The square is bounded on all sides by one-way streets with two of the parallel streets being the main thoroughfares of the town

The specific site for the proposal is on the northeast corner of the Courthouse Square On the site is the first church organized in Benton and one of the oldest in the county, dating back to 1849, the First United Methodist of Benton The building (soon to be vacated) and a vacant area behind the church are the focus of the design investigation The street forming the eastern edge along the length of the site, Poplar Street, is the main South to North corridor The site is near several important buildings in town Across one street is the County



Author's original photograph

1. First United Methodist Church

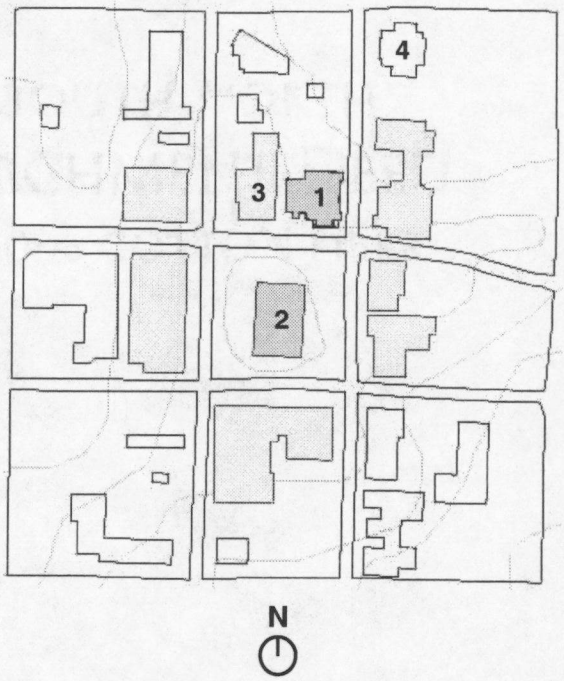
Courthouse and across another is the public library, and directly adjacent is the City Hall building.

Author's original photograph

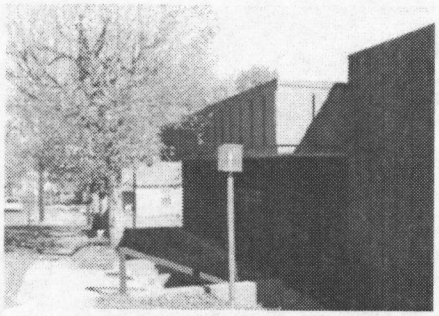
2. Marshall County Courthouse

Author's original photograph

3. Benton City Hall



Author's original photograph

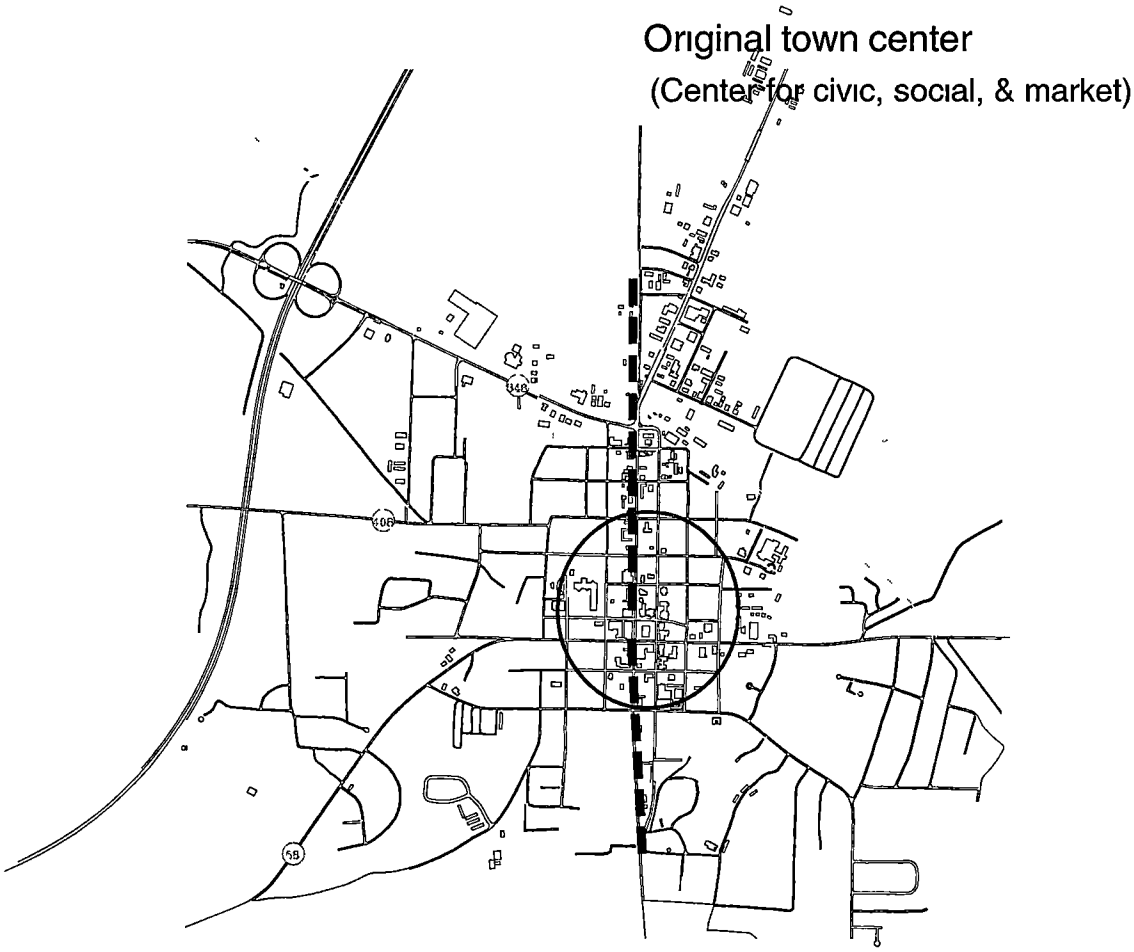


4. Benton Public Library

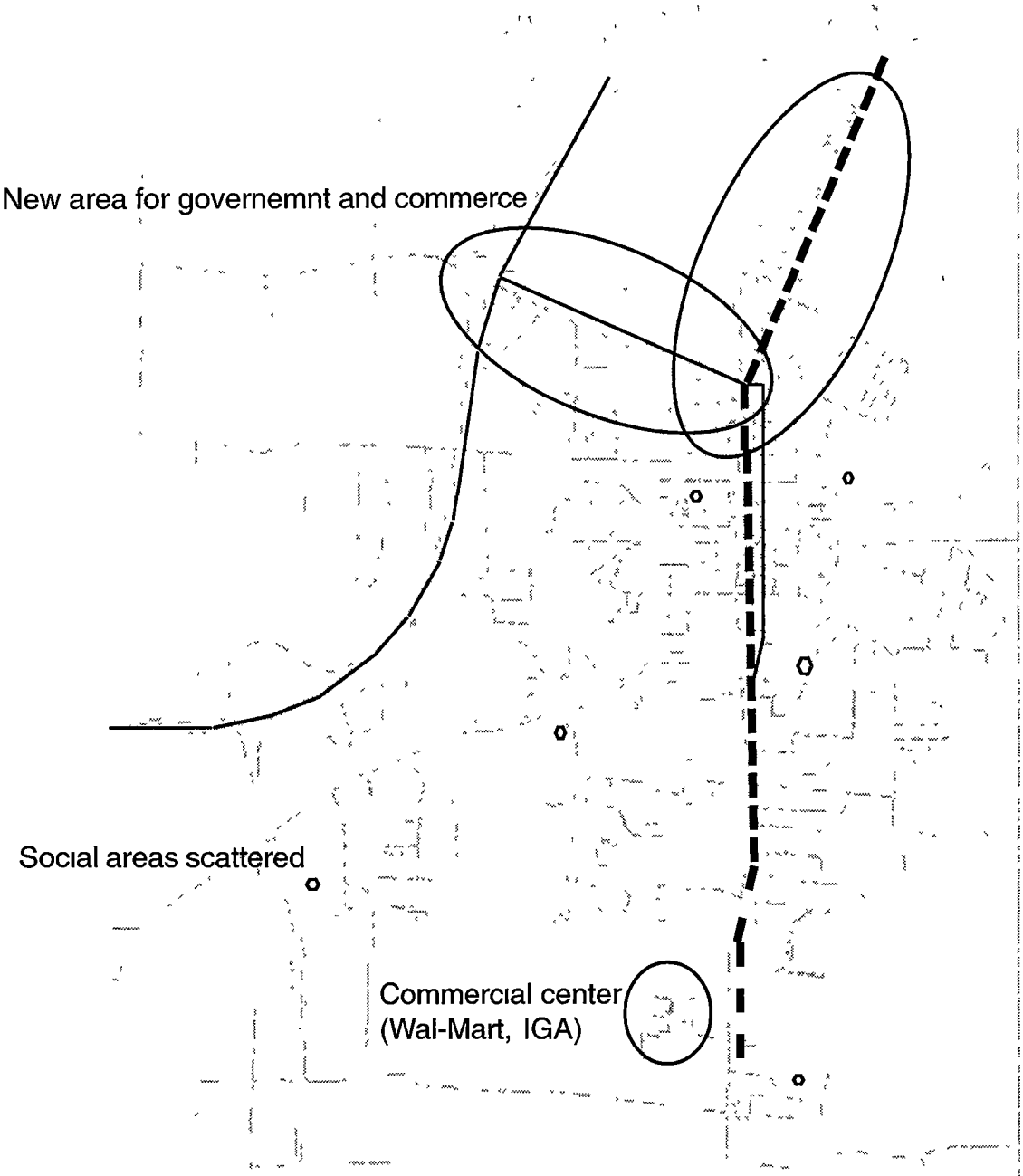
chapter IV

site analysis

Shifts in town structure

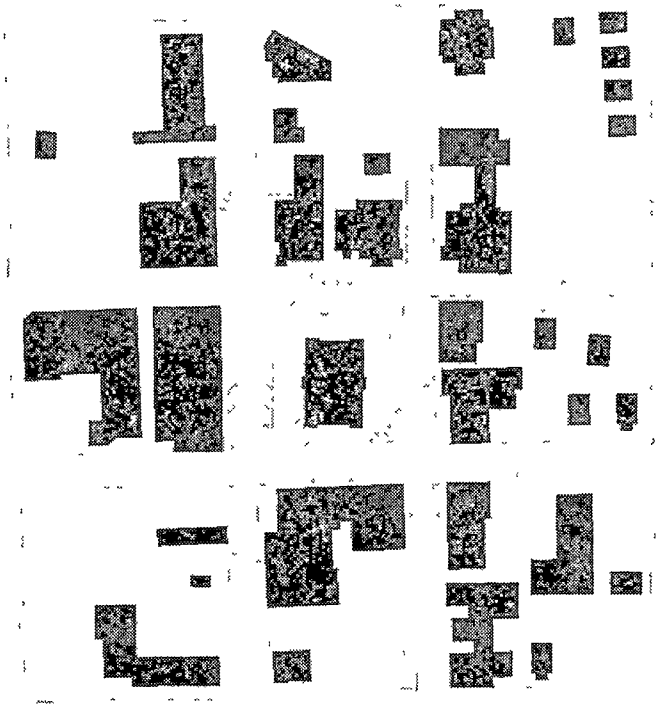


Similar to most American towns, the downtown of Benton was once the center for civic, social, and commercial interaction The core of the downtown is centered around the County Courthouse which contains both the county and city governments Businesses and churches surround the court square There were businesses that attracted visitors and events that brought people to the square It would be easy to interact with others because of the functions so prevalent on the square Also like most towns, Benton's growth has been linear and geared toward the automobile This is most evident in the development near the interstate exchange and then in the expansion of Main street north to a strip of businesses and south to the Wal-Mart shopping center In



addition the county government is relocating near the interstate and the social areas have scattered away from the square This sprawl has decentralized the town and hindered the growth of community by making interaction more difficult

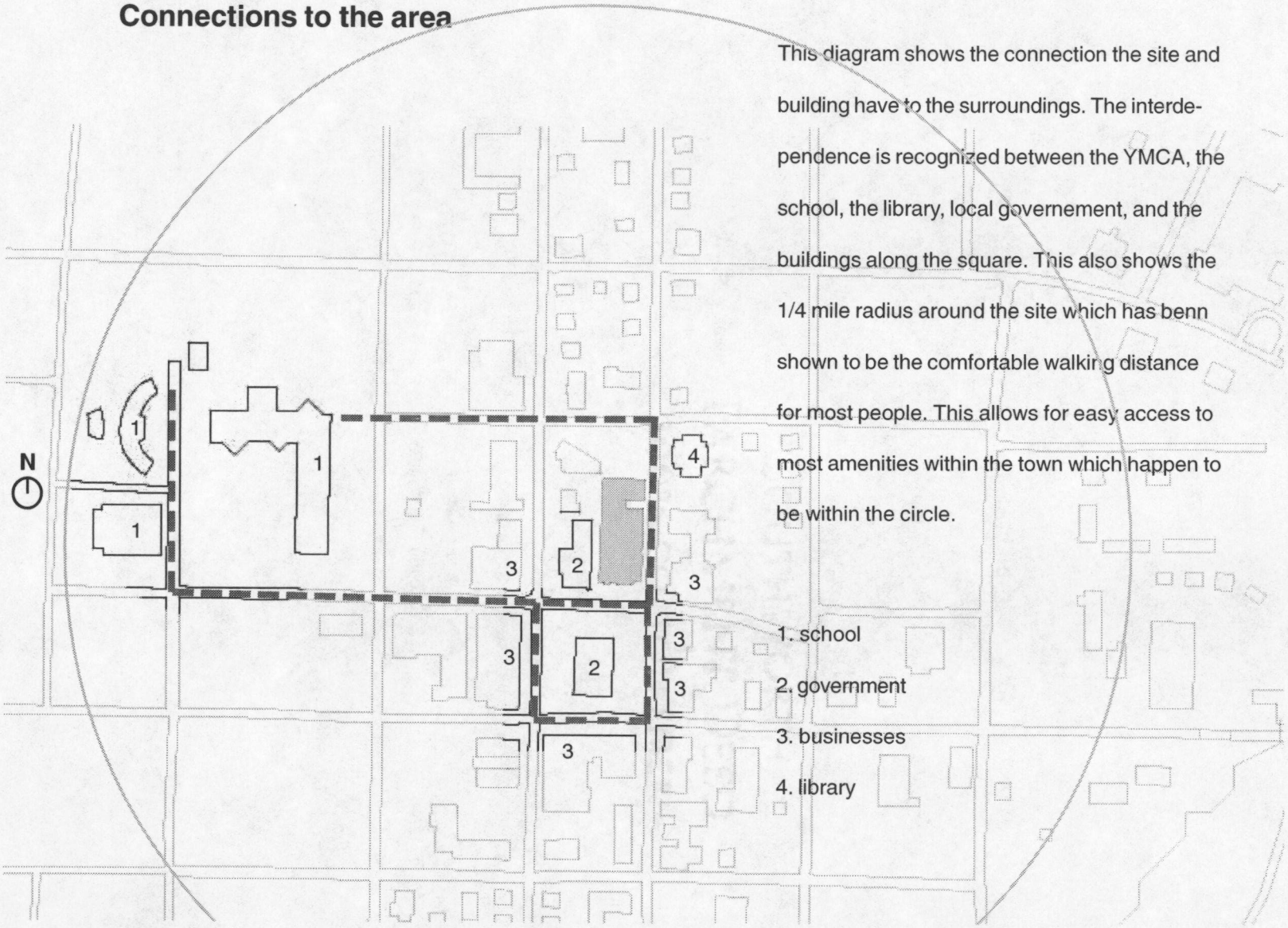
Figure-Ground (existing)



The proposed project fills in some of the "missing teeth" of the town This provides a more coherent street edge and gives street a scale more conducive to pedestrian traffic

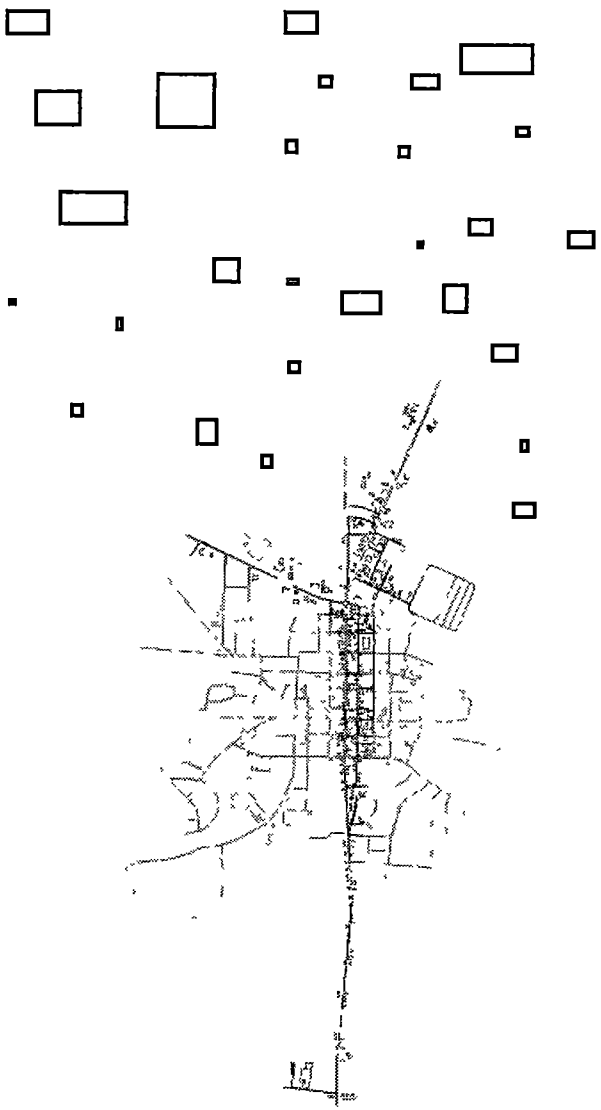
Figure-Ground (proposed)

Connections to the area

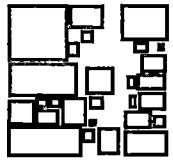


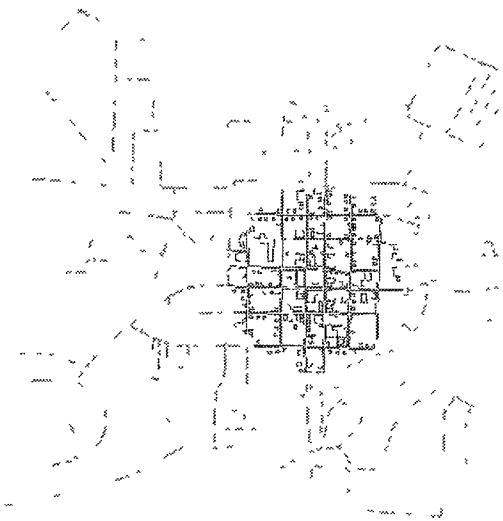
This diagram shows the connection the site and building have to the surroundings. The interdependence is recognized between the YMCA, the school, the library, local governement, and the buildings along the square. This also shows the 1/4 mile radius around the site which has benn shown to be the comfortable walking distance for most people. This allows for easy access to most amenities within the town which happen to be within the circle.

1. school
2. government
3. businesses
4. library



Sprawl and its scattering of the parts of the city versus the collection of these elements in a traditional city center





chapter v 25

design vocabulary

To make the connection between the issues discussed and the project, the thesis developed a design vocabulary based on three elements. These elements- Function/ Usage, Location/ Configuration and Adaptation/ Reuse- guide the design toward an integrated solution using existing context and the issues of the thesis Using these elements provides the thesis with a physical manifestation and a reasoned basis for design decisions

Function/ Usage

"People say they do not want to live near where they work, but that they would like to work near where they live "
-Zev Cohen

The importance of the function of a building goes beyond its specific program and usage The functions of a building are very important in regards to how it meets the city or town and its people By putting the social functions along the street edge and making them visible the mixed- use function of buildings can support the activity of the town and encourages social engagement Thus, placement is critical in regards to not just internal building functions/usage, but how it functions within the town

The diverse interest of the population and functions within a region should have a connecting fabric, which makes the region vital and inclusionary In addition, the neighborhood should have a balanced mix of activities-dwelling, shopping, working, schooling, worshiping and recreating This idea is applicable from the scale of a region, down to a neighborhood, and in this project, to the level of a single building

The idea of mixed-use is also evident in nature Natural ecosystems are richest at their edges where different habitats and their associated species overlap Mixed-use neighborhoods are often more resilient, stimulating and interesting than single-use neighborhoods

To make the connection between the issues discussed and the project, the thesis developed a design vocabulary based on three elements These elements- Function/ Usage, Location/ Configuration and Adaptation/ Reuse- guide the design toward an integrated solution using existing context and the issues of the thesis. Using these elements provides the thesis with a physical manifestation and a reasoned basis for design decisions

Function/ Usage

"People say they do not want to live near where they work, but that they would like to work near where they live "
-Zev Cohen

The importance of the function of a building goes beyond its specific program and usage The functions of a building are very important in regards to how it meets the city or town and its people By putting the social functions along the street edge and making them visible the mixed- use function of buildings can support the activity of the town and encourages social engagement Thus, placement is critical in regards to not just internal building functions/usage, but how it functions within the town

The diverse interest of the population and functions within a region should have a connecting fabric, which makes the region vital and inclusionary In addition, the neighborhood should have a balanced mix of activities-dwelling, shopping, working, schooling, worshiping and recreating This idea is applicable from the scale of a region, down to a neighborhood, and in this project, to the level of a single building

The idea of mixed-use is also evident in nature Natural ecosystems are richest at their edges where different habitats and their associated species overlap Mixed-use neighborhoods are often more resilient, stimulating and interesting than single-use neighborhoods

As a mixed-use building, the YMCA contains eating facilities, in the ground floor café, athletic facilities, the gymnasium, work-out area, etc , educational facilities, classrooms and art rooms, office facilities, for both the Y and outside community users, and residential facilities, for transient or temporary housing These elements combined make the YMCA a sampling of the entire city or as mentioned earlier a microcosm of the city Much like the city, these elements rely on their interdependence to thrive Users might come to use the café, but then take interest in the athletic facilities, or vice-versa Not everyone will use all the facilities but this fact is what makes it a diverse and vibrant place

In addition to the mix of uses, some parts of the building are multi-functioning The café can be opened-up by moving partitions and joining with the study area to form a larger gathering space It can also open-up to the outside via the porch In addition, the gymnasium can be used for very large assemblies with the track above even serving as a balcony Other spaces, such as the aerobics studio, weight room, and racket courts are open enough to serve a variety of purposes Even the residential portion of the building has a multi-function Some rooms can be opened-up to make much larger rooms depending on the users, be they single occupants or families This multi-functioning goes beyond the primary uses and creates diverse times for these uses so that the building can be a twenty-four hour facility and share its vitality with the surroundings

Location/ Configuration

> *"Civic services, such as community buildings, government offices, recreation centers, post offices, libraries, and daycares, should be placed in central locations as highly visible focal points "*
>
> -Peter Calthorpe

A well-known real estate slogan notes that three of the most important aspects of a property are "location, location, location!" The location of a building is as equally as important as its function or its design

The location can give form to the design as it responds to site forces Location can also reflect the social importance of a place because of its contextual setting

Public buildings should occupy important sites and usually the most important site in a town or city is its center A well-planned neighborhood gives priority to its public space and to the appropriate location of its civic buildings and spaces The suburban practice of locating government buildings and schools to the expediencies of land cost tends to undermine community formation. Suitable siting of public buildings and spaces enhances the importance of these civic and community structures

The work of William H Whyte explores how people use public areas in his study and book, *Social Life of Small Urban Spaces* This exploration showed that the design of public spaces is very important to their vitality. Design was shown to be especially important to the level of comfort visitors had, which had a direct impact on how long they stayed. Areas of congregation, places for privacy with in the area, and seating were particularly important It was also shown that no matter how good the physical design of the space, its location played a major role in its use The best places were located close to areas of pedestrian traffic and near where people worked and lived

One cannot have a center without a perimeter. Much of the life of a public square occurs around its edge If the edge fails, then the center cannot hold. In this way the periphery is as important as the center itself. Shops, restaurants, and workplaces usually are associated with the center and arrange themselves around its edge, giving vitality to the whole while honoring the civic center.

In addition to the location of the building, the location or configuration of the various parts of the building to its immediate context is also vitally important For example shops have display windows and buildings have certain amenities to draw people inside

By planning and designing in regards to location it is evident that connections can be established These connections link the building to the town and the various parts and functions of the building to related functions near the building This is one of the reasons for choosing the perimeter of the Courthouse Square as the site for the YMCA. Most evident is its relationship to the most public place in town and the benefits it receives from the public realm In addition, its location is well served by the activities around it The school, and businesses near the Y will most likely provide the majority of its users and its proximity to the public library ad local government gives it additional resources from which it can draw.

The location of the building, primarily takes advantage of the existing conditions in the town The proximity to schools, libraries, businesses and government are advantageous to the vitality of the YMCA It relies on the interdependencies already established and joins the network of the town

At a smaller scale, within the building, location still plays an important role. The various facilities, rooms, and areas are located for maximum benefit and to take advantage of their proxemics. For instance, the café is located at the front of the building near the square for maximum exposure to the public The majority of facilities front Poplar Street This is good for both, those inside and those outside It provides the best views to the outside and lines the street with its activity. Another area where location is important is the art and after school area It is located new 10th Street, which runs directly into the elementary school and across poplar from the public library. This enables students to walk there after school and share the resources of the library The child-care area is located with a direct ground level entrance and next to an indoor

atrium In addition it takes advantage of the visual stimuli of the existing round room, almost "made" for children (how can you be told to sit in the corner of a round room?) The residential units are located on the top floor of the building This is for both privacy and to take advantage of the views of the square and the rest of the city. The way these units are setback by terraces, it would be almost impossible to notice them from street level

Adaptation/ Reuse

"Conversation between buildings, as among humans, is a poignant sign of neighborliness "
-David Sucher

The way buildings relate to each other is very important in making a successful design This thesis contends that only those buildings of the utmost importance should even consider contrast to its surroundings The majority of buildings should attempt to speak the same language as their neighbors, while building and enriching the basic vocabulary

It is imperative to have old buildings in a town and it can be beneficial to reuse them for new purposes Jane Jacobs sees this as very important to the life of a city

"Cities need old buildings so badly it is probably impossible for vigorous streets and districts to grow without them. By old buildings I mean not museum-piece old buildings, not old buildings in an excellent and expensive state rehabilitation-although these make fine ingredients- but also a good lot of plain, ordinary, low-value old buildings, including some rundown old buildings."

Reuse of existing buildings is important in establishing a connection to the past, which relates very much to the affirmation and continuity of a place It is important to realize that reusing an existing building does not necessarily mean refurbishing it to its original condition It is only necessary to be able to maintain some identity of the original

structure so that the connection to the past is maintained Europeans have a much better grasp on this than we do in the U S The historic movement is wonderful but limits some of the structures that could be adapted

Buildings that have changed uses over time are often the most interesting and exciting Often the reuse takes on an entirely different function In this project the adaptation is really very closely related to the original usage. A Methodist church being adapted to a YMCA seems to make sense They both have Christian ties and a social mission to reach people of all ages and makeups

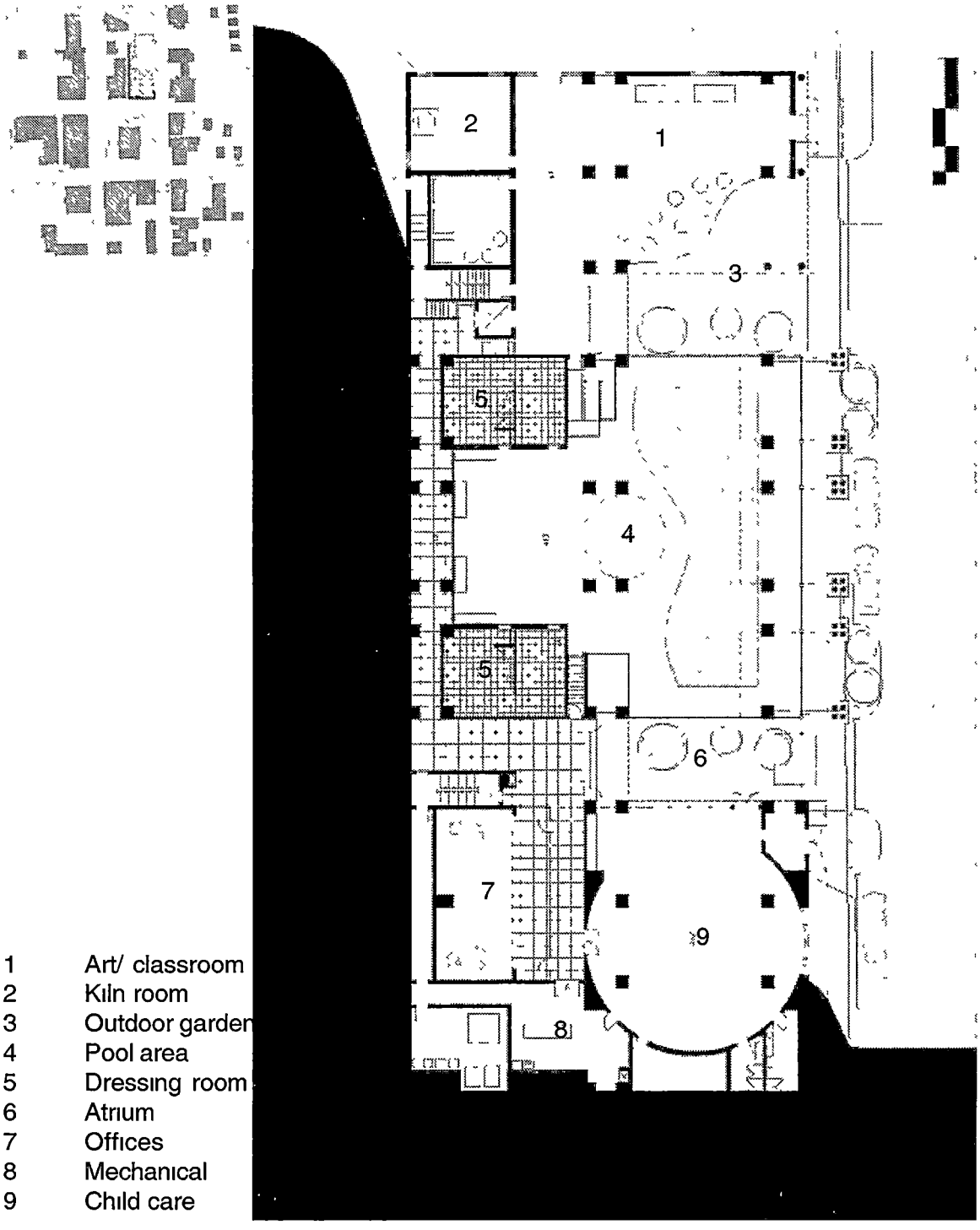
The old buildings are what make towns unique and give them character and identity Almost every town has the mirrored glass office building or the stuccoed bank. It is this generic design that is destroying the identity of place in America A Charleston, South Carolina travel brochure sums it up with a quote stating,

"A town without old buildings is like a man without a memory."

chapter VI 32

design investigation

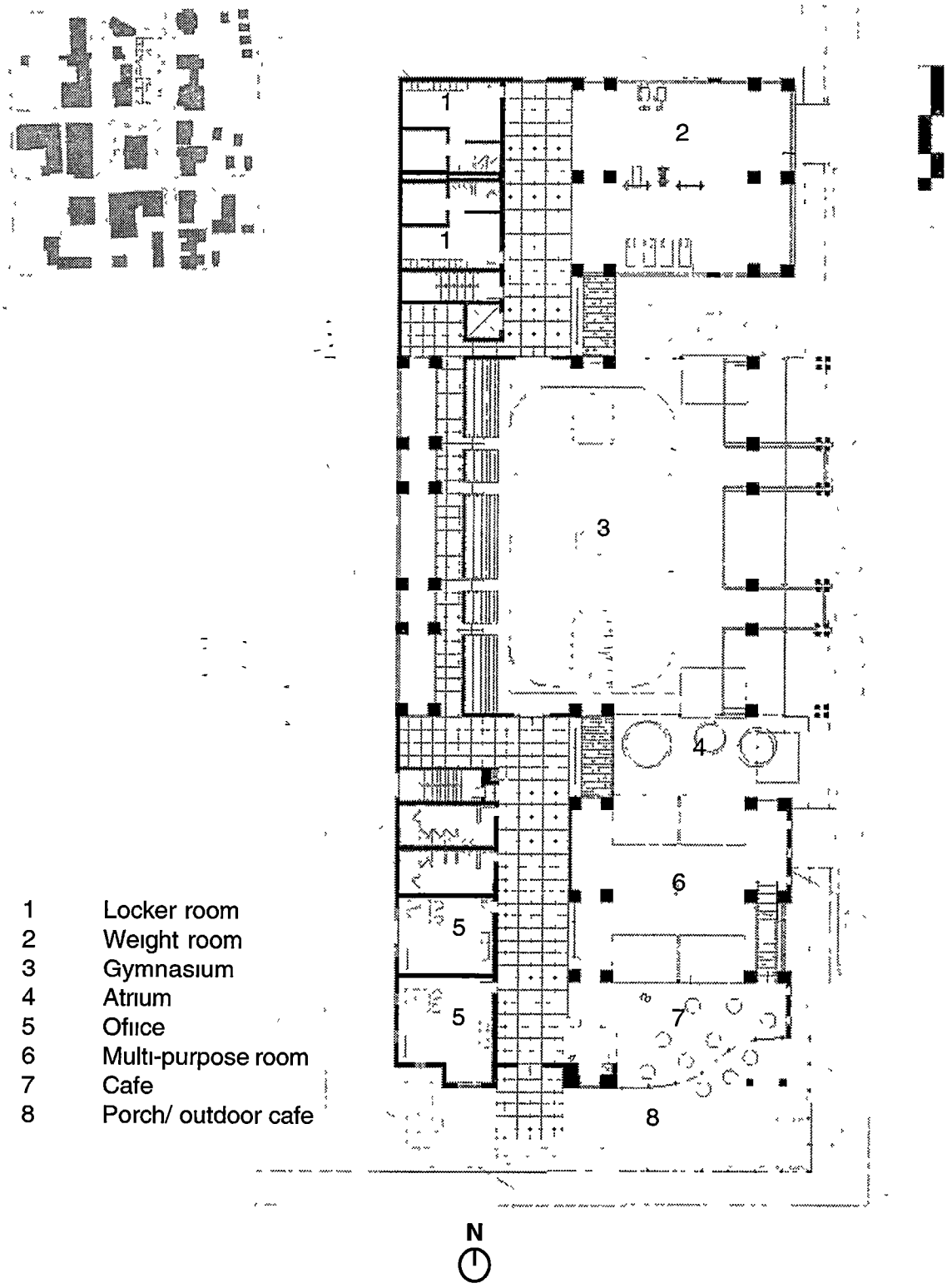
Lower Level Plan



1 Art/ classroom
2 Kiln room
3 Outdoor garden
4 Pool area
5 Dressing room
6 Atrium
7 Offices
8 Mechanical
9 Child care

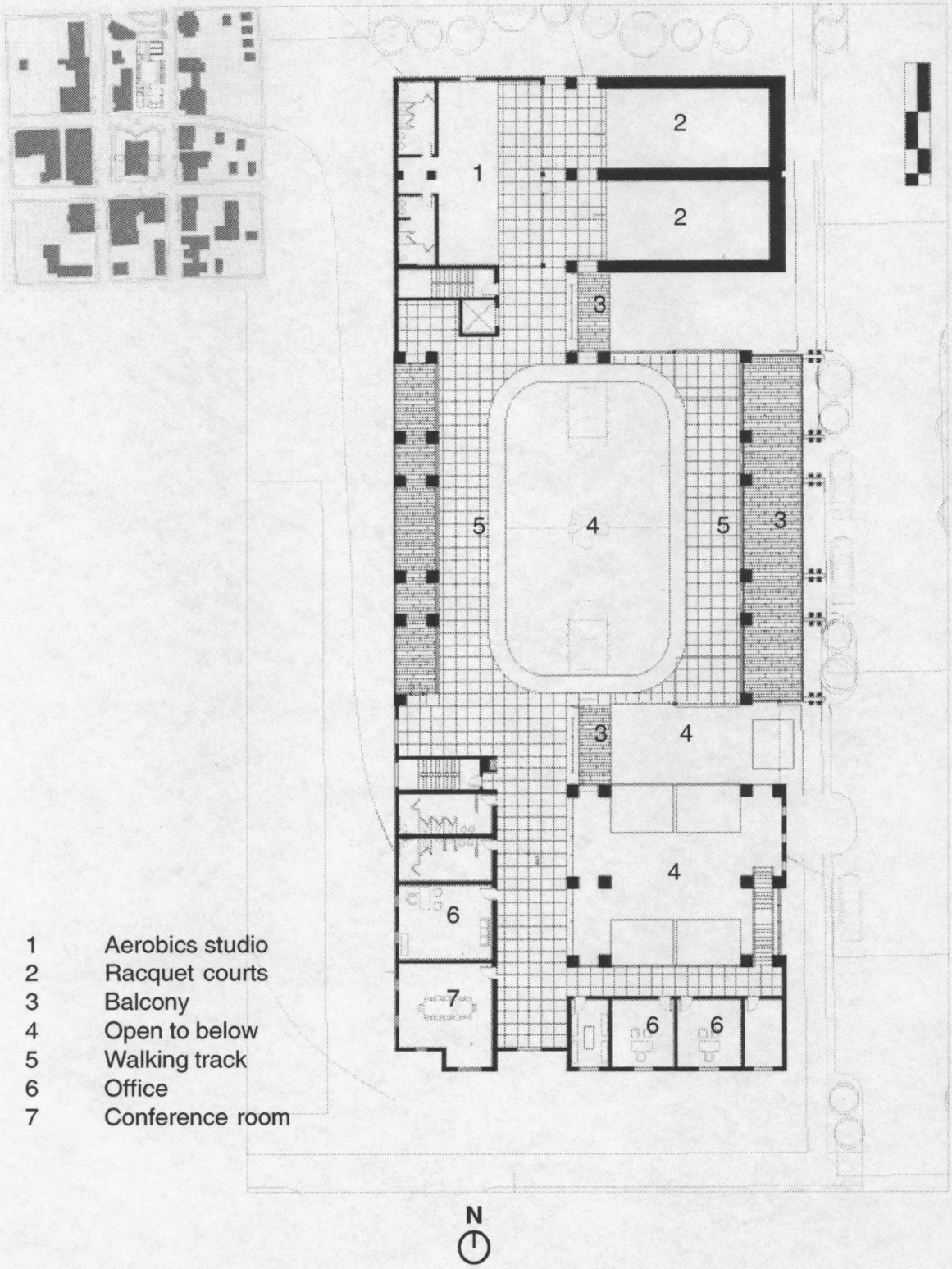
N

Main Level Plan



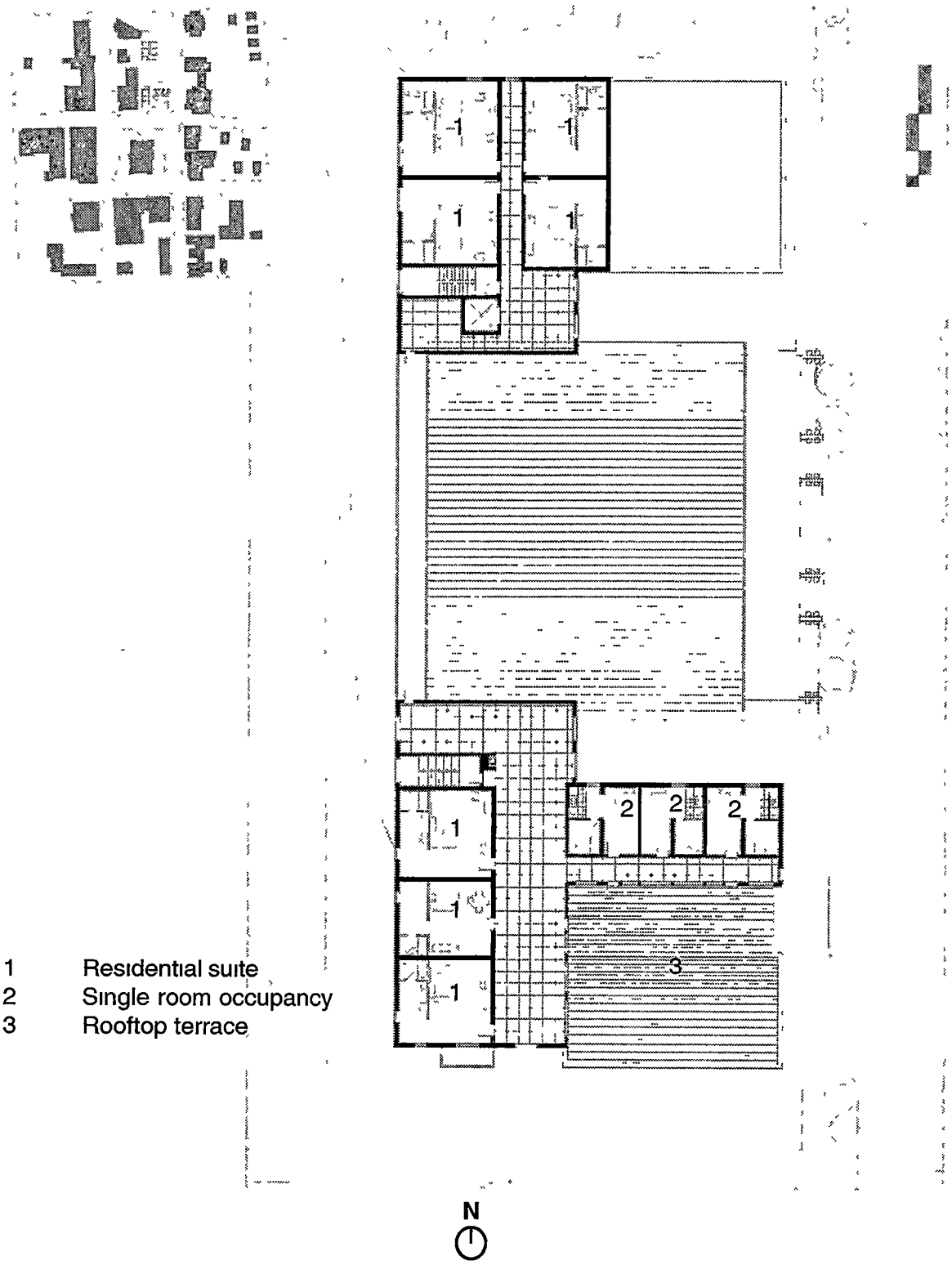
1 Locker room
2 Weight room
3 Gymnasium
4 Atrium
5 Office
6 Multi-purpose room
7 Cafe
8 Porch/ outdoor cafe

Second Level Plan



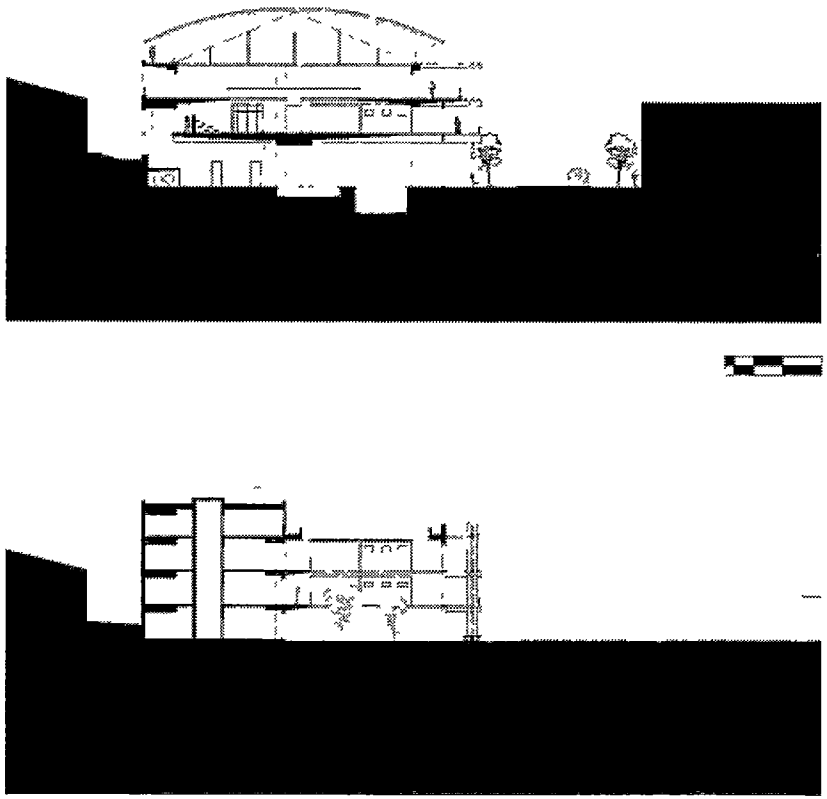
1 Aerobics studio
2 Racquet courts
3 Balcony
4 Open to below
5 Walking track
6 Office
7 Conference room

Third Level Plan



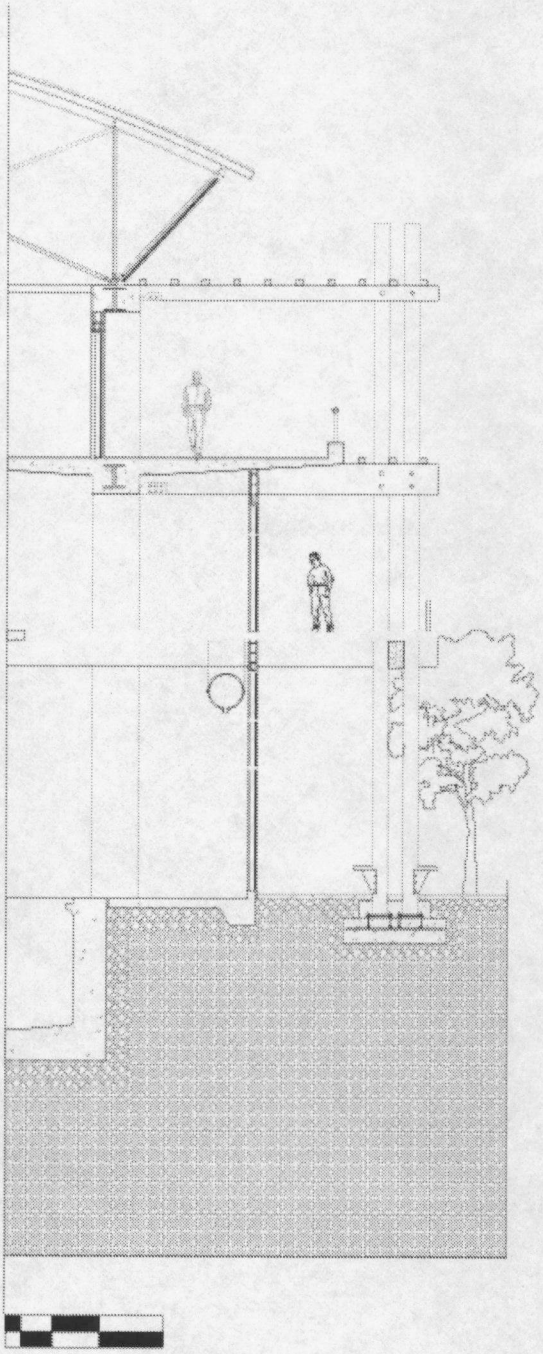
1 Residential suite
2 Single room occupancy
3 Rooftop terrace

Sections



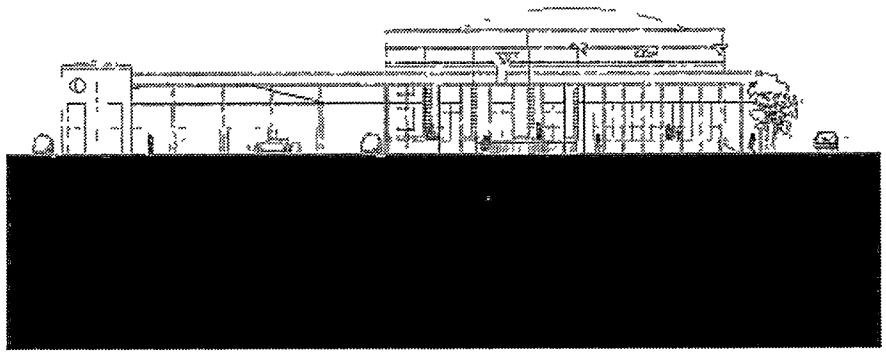
Sections

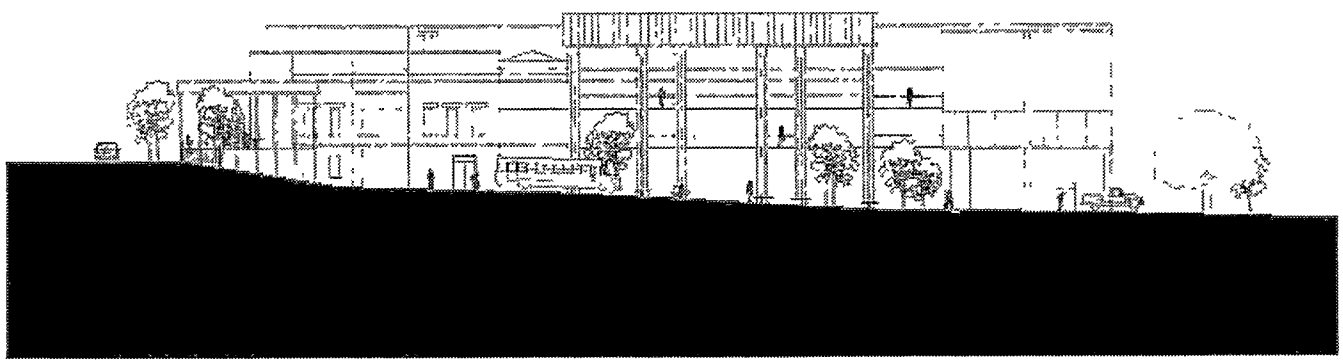
Sections

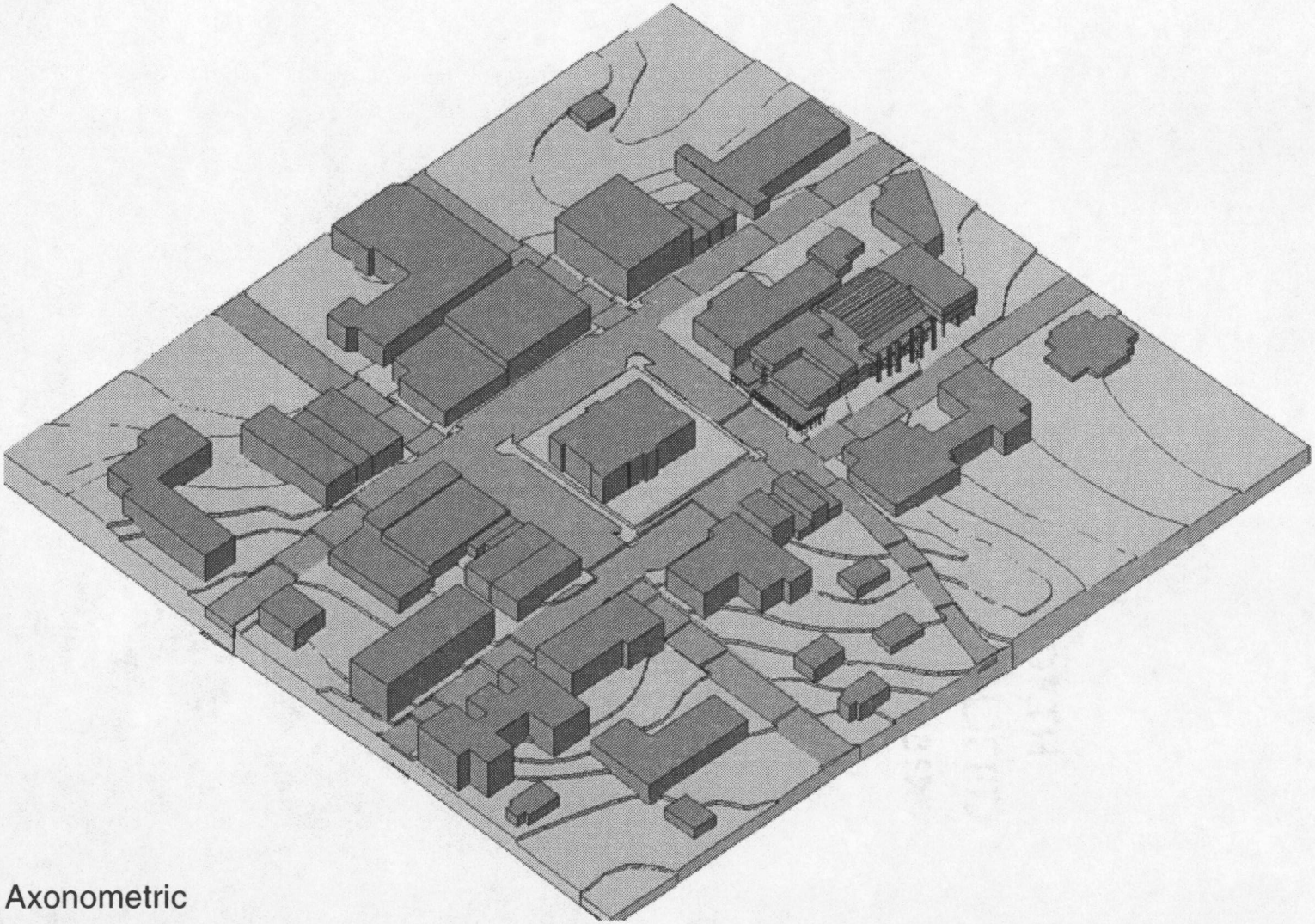


SectionSectionsSections

ElevationsSections







Axonometric

epilogue

"To affect the quality of the day, that is the highest of the arts."
- Henry David Thoreau

The ambition for architecture to be more than a solution for physical or functional needs of a single building should be the intent of all architecture The hope that a carefully thought out architectural intervention can beget changes in attitudes regarding community through the making of spaces which encourage social interaction is the inspiration behind this project Architecture as a social modifier is an idea that must be explored more often during the creative stages of our projects, taking into consideration such diverse components as the urban condition and location of surrounding activities, flexibility and use, openness and privacy; and adaptive reuse and new construction

This project has shown that a design can enhance the community both aesthetically and socially Projects such as the YMCA in Benton are ways to redevelop the downtowns that were once active and alive It is evident from this design solution that there are alternatives to the sprawl which is occurring outside of town centers Additionally there are alternatives to the continuously eroding social structure of our communities.

The YMCA for Benton presents ways to bring people together It also shows how to mix the uses of buildings, a needed example for the many empty upper levels of stores.

Through the consideration of affirming place and social engagement the return of more traditional values such as civic pride and community life are promoted. Additionally, through attention to location, function, and adaptation one can see how to challenge the contemporary notions that contribute to sprawl. I believe that this YMCA could become that connecting element that can achieve the higher goals that architecture should strive for, yet are so often forgotten

references

Alexander, Christopher ***A Pattern Language.*** New York Oxford University Press, 1977

Calthorpe, Peter ***The Next American Metropolis.*** New York Princeton Architectural Press, 1993

Jacobs, Jane ***The Death and Life of Great American Cities.*** New York· Random House, 1961

Katz, Peter ***The New Urbanism: Toward an architecture of community.*** New York· McGraw-Hill, 1994

Kelbaugh, Doug ***Common Place: toward neighborhood and regional design*** Seattle University of Washington Press, c1997.

Kunstler, James ***Home from Nowhere.*** New York Simon & Schuster, 1998

Kunstler, James ***The Geography of Nowhere.*** New York Simon & Schuster, 1994

Sennett, Richard ***The Fall of Public Man.*** New York Vintage. Distributed by Random House, 1990.

Smith, Gerald ***YMCA: A Recreation/Community Center for South Tampa Heights*** Tampa, FL· Masters thesis, University of South Florida, 1993

Sucher, David ***City Comforts: How to build an urban village.*** Seattle: City Comforts Press, 1995

Whyte, William ***The Social Life of Small Urban Spaces.*** Washington The Conservation Foundation, 1980

vita

Kevin Thomas Perry was born in Murray, Kentucky on July 23, 1973 He attended the schools of the Marshall County Public School System of which he graduted from Marshall County High School in May, 1992 He entered the Speed Scientific School at the University of Louisville as a Kentucky Governor's Scholar to study Civil Engineering He transfered to the University of Kentucky in 1995 and graduated with the Bachelor of Science in Civil Engineering in August 1996 After graduation he worked in an architecture firm in Paducah, Kentucky before entering the Master's program in Architecture at the University of Tennessee in June, 1997 From this program he received the Master of Architecture degree in August, 2000

He is currently working in both the architecture and engineering departments of a firm in Louisville, Kentucky. He plans to continue his studies toward the Doctor of Philosophy in Urban Planning and Development at the University of Louisville