

UNION CITY
TOWN CENTER

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Architectural Thesis 1979-1980
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ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

This project is a culmination of five years of studies at Ball State University. I would like to take this time to thank all faculty and staff, past and present, that were a part in making this moment possible.

I especially want to thank Prof. C. Daniel Woodfin, my chief critic of this project, for his wisdom, insight, and patience in helping me understand the principles of The Timeless Way. He has helped me open my eyes in more than one way.

I would also like to thank the citizens of Union City for taking the time to help me understand their community. I would like to give special thanks to Tod Christianson, Special Projects Manager, Union City, Indiana, for the extra time he spent with me.

Finally, I would like to thank Jim Cordell, a fellow graduate, for his encouragement.

CONTENTS

THE PROBLEM

- A. Philosophy of the designer 2
- B. Union City - Description and Needs 5
 - Country Towns
 - Community of 7,000
- C. Project Overview 9

PROBLEM ANALYSIS AND SOLUTION

- D. City Scale Analysis and Policy Development 12
 - Community Unity
 - Identifiable Town Focus
 - Identifiable Neighborhood
 - Activity Nodes
 - Promenade
- E. Development of the Architectural Program 16
 - Life Cycles
 - Men and Women
 - Night Life
 - Local Town Hall
 - Necklace of Community Projects
 - Small Public Squares
 - Market of Many Shops
- F. Physical Design Studies 20
 - Building Complex
 - Connected Buildings
 - Arcades
 - Circulation Realms
 - Wings of Light
 - Light on Two Sides of Every Room
 - Positive Outdoor Space
 - Courtyards Which Live

The Problem

A. Philosophy of the Designer

Man is a social animal. He seeks and desires environments that foster his social habits. On the small scale these environments may consist of nothing more than a small bench where people can sit and talk or a shaded path along a garden. On the large scale they are cities with their vast intertwining networks of transportation, communication, and circulation systems with housing, workplaces, and parks scattered throughout. And these cities combine to form even larger political units that rely on each other in varying degrees.

In between these extremes are countless other settings, such as schools, markets, civic areas, and sports arenas. But, the one thing all of these settings have in common are people.

Many of the decisions about these settings are made by the people that use them; someone setting down and designing their own home, a shopowner deciding how to renovate his store, etc. However, many decisions about our environment are made by people that will never personally use the facility, name architects and developers. These are often large scaled decisions that have an impact on the growth and direction of our cities. It is these types of decisions that I speak of.

My interest in design lies in the way an environment responds to a social setting. They need to be designed to accommodate the events that take place within and around them. We must think of not only the obvious users and events, but also the not so obvious ones. For example, a housing project should include not only individual housing units, but also should include communal outdoor and indoor spaces where residents can meet other res-

idents and visitors and gain a feeling of community. With steel and glass office megastructures that often lack both identity and pedestrian scale, thought needs to be given to not only the workers inside, but also to the people that walk by it every day. They should not be intimidated by the large, overpowering scale of the structure, but should feel welcome to walk along side it, protected from scorching sunlight. Placing pedestrian oriented shops and gardens on the ground floor would also greatly enhance this feeling.

These are both cases where I feel the designer fails to look at the way a facility interacts with its environment to create a new social setting and the way people interact with it. I feel that many settings could be improved by a more thorough and careful analysis of both the site and the program.

Many site analysis consist of only topography, access, utilities, sun angles and an occasional good or bad view. Any site is a part of a larger network of patterns; for example, what part a shop or park plays in the formation and identity of a neighborhood. It is the designers job to investigate what role the site plays in these larger patterns and designs with this in mind. He needs to not only reinforce the good patterns that are present, but also repair the ones that are not fully existing on the site. It is only by being on the site and observing what is happening around you, that a site will reveal its subtle patterns.

The designer must also become more familiar with programs, than just square feel requirements. To do this, one must do background studies and try to understand how the users will interact with the

facility. One way of accomplishing this is to get the users involved in the design process. You must also design for the not so obvious users, such as the people walking by on the street or an occasional visitor, and make their interaction with the site a pleasant one.

To accomplish these goals, we must not only open our eyes to the present, but also observe what has been done in the past. "...a great architect's creative power, his capacity to make something beautiful, lies in his capacity to see...(it) comes from his capacity to observe the relationships which really matter--the ones which are deep, profound, the ones which do the work. (Christopher Alexander, The Timeless Way of Building, pg. 218) By studying the past it is possible not only to avoid their mistakes, but also to capitalize on their successes. In this analysis, we must look beyond the obvious question of what was done, and study why it was done that way, and what part it plays in the larger scale pattern. This can keep one from initiating inappropriate responses to an existing problem.

I choose Christopher Alexander's books, The Timeless Way and Pattern Language as a background for this project because it best fulfills these goals. It is a study whose primary interest lies in observing social patterns, and how they interact, influence, and are influenced by their settings.

B. Union City-
Description and
Needs

UNION CITY - DESCRIPTION AND NEEDS

Union city is a small town of 7,000 people located on the Indiana-Ohio border about 40 miles east of Muncie, Indiana. About 4,500 people live on the Indiana side, while the remainder live in Ohio. The town, which was founded in 1848, is located at the crossing of two major railroads. These lines still exist and continue to play an important part in the townscape.

Over the years the town has grown from a railroad oriented town to one with a strong industrial base. These industries, which are strongly automobile oriented, hire about 4,000 people. About one half of the employed live outside the city.

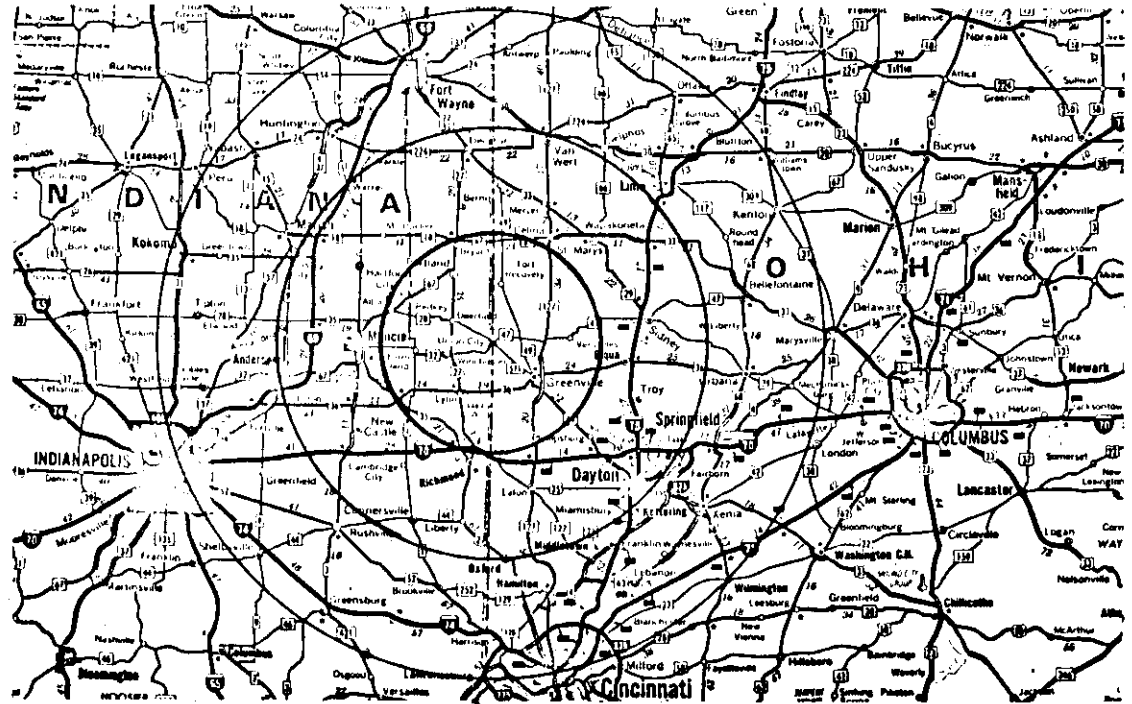
The town is surrounded by Indiana

and Ohio farmland. The nearest large cities, Muncie, Indiana and Dayton, Ohio are both a distance of about 40 miles. The town serves the important function of providing shopping facilities and other commercial functions for itself and the surrounding areas. In response to this, the town has a large variety of shops and stores.

The town also has a variety of public facilities which includes a library, several good schools, an 80 acre park with a swimming pool, and even a 50 bed hospital, something seldom seen for a community its size. These are examples of what the community can accomplish when they work together for a good cause.

COUNTRY TOWNS

Preserve country towns where they exist; and encourage the growth of new self-contained towns, with populations between 500 and 10,000, entirely surrounded by open countryside and at least 10 miles from neighboring towns. Make it the region's collective concern to give each town the wherewithal it needs to build a base of local industry, so that these towns are not dormitories for people who work in other places, but real towns—able to sustain the whole of life.



Because of its location in two states there is a duplication of many services, including police department, fire department, water and sewer services, school system, and town government. This location has also caused disagreements between the two sides in the past, and occasionally at the present time, but it often appears to be due to a lack of communication.

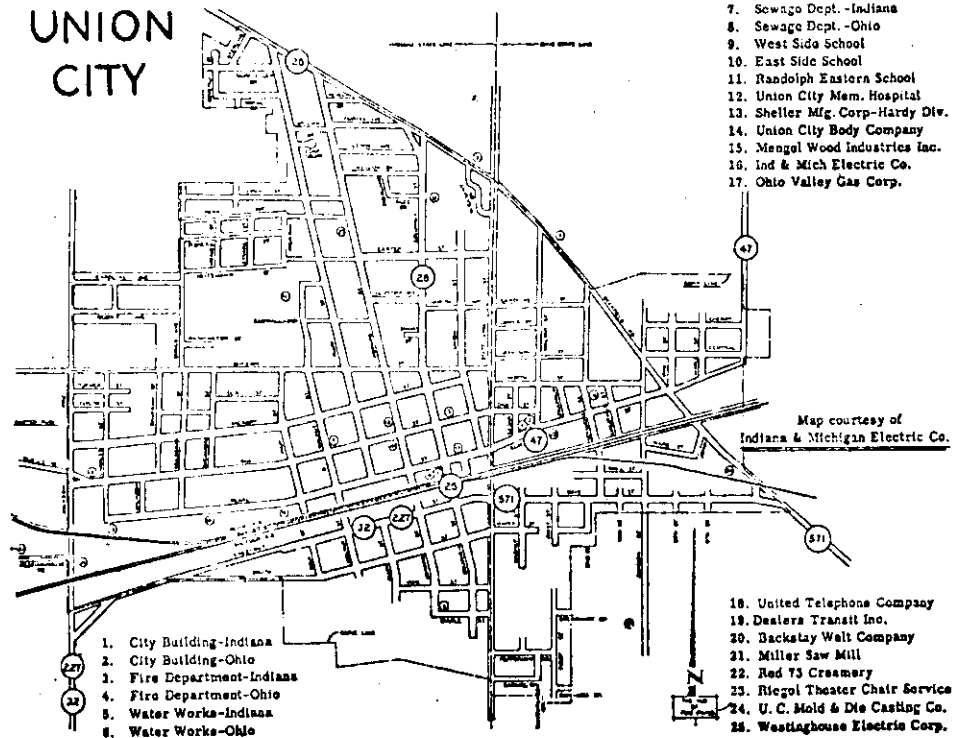
However, the two sides do share many aspects of the town, including the Central Business District, the parks, library, and hospital and any community festivities.

The town has a very traditional

life style. Local organizations, including the Elks, Jaycees, Lions, Rotary, American Legion along with several sororities. There is a definite lack of entertainment establishments in the community, especially for the youth and elderly. The existing entertainment facilities are restricted to a bowling alley and several bars. For other forms of entertainment, such as movies, rollerskating and dancing, the townspeople must rely on other communities. There is currently an elderly group which gets together for meals and socializing. An effort is being made to organize an entertainment facility to meet the

COMMUNITY OF 7000

Decentralize city governments in a way that gives local control to communities of 5,000 to 10,000 persons. As nearly as possible, use natural geographic and historical boundaries to mark these communities. Give each community the power to initiate, decide, and execute the affairs that concern it closely: land use, housing, maintenance, streets, parks, police, schooling, welfare, neighborhood services.



needs of the youth of the community.

Union City is an example of what a small midwestern town can do for itself. It is relatively autonomous and self sufficient and possess enough motivation and self pride to get things done. I found it to be a fine community in which to work and learn.

C. Project Overview

PROJECT OVERVIEW

Because of my interest in socially oriented architecture, I decided to pursue a project dealing with the link between a government center and the community it serves in a small town. I choose Union City for the project for several reasons. Union City gave me the immediate feeling of being a healthy, well balanced community that had enough self pride to get things done on it's own. Also, because of the community's size, I felt the resulting project would be of an appropriate scale, large enough to have an impact on the community, yet small enough so as not to get lost in its own bureaucracy. And finally, there was a definite need for this type of a facility in this community. The Indiana City Hall, which housed the government structure of a Class 5 Indiana city, was housed in a cramped store front, and was actively looking for a new home. There was also a need for a public gathering and socializing area to act as a focus in the down town area.

My interest was to study the community and the problem and design a facility that would link the government center with the community, increasing communication between the two and the effectiveness of the government. I felt this facility would be the natural town focus.

After many interviews and related studies, I came to the conclusion that Union City needed a communication center, a place that would house not only the government center, but also include public gathering areas. This would include both interior meeting areas, and an exterior public square. I also decided to include rooms that any organization could secure as their office, until they became autonomous, and able to move out on

their own. There was also a need for an interior public arena, and a small public park in the downtown area.

A restaurant was included on the site because of a need for one in the community, and for its potential as a communication center of its own. Many important decisions are made over a cup of coffee.

A daycare center was added to the site because of a need for one in the community, and because the playground could be used as a park during evenings and on weekends by the townspeople.

My intent was to unite these three settings into a continuous community facility that would serve all of the townspeople.

I am using Christopher Alexander's books, The Timeless Way and Pattern Language as a basis for the development of this study.

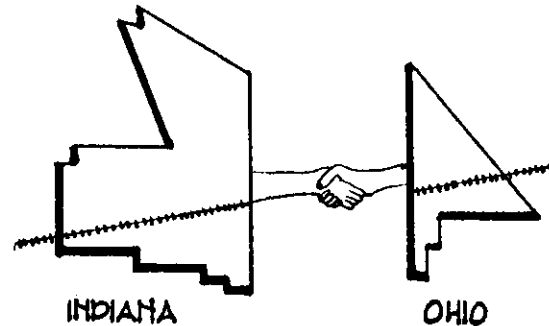
Problem Analysis and Solution

**D. City Scale
Analysis and
Policy Development**

The following is an analysis of the existing site and its surroundings and the influence it has had on the development of this project. Included in this analysis are policy changes which I feel may be initiated by a facility of this type.

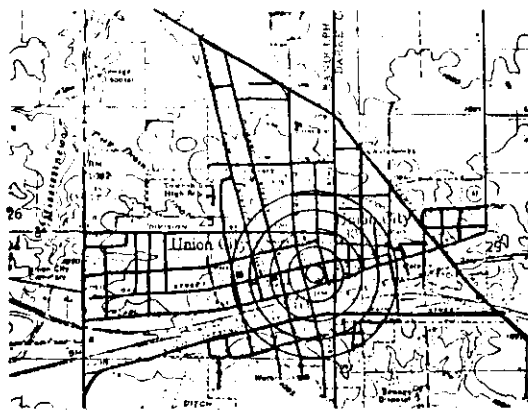
The patterns listed are the ones that I feel had the most impact in the initial development of the project. These patterns set the basis for any future development since any new development should be compatible and reinforce the existing social and physical conditions.

COMMUNITY UNITY



Union City, because of its location on the Indiana-Ohio state line, finds itself faced with a unique problem of being influenced by a duplication of community services, such as government, city council, schools, police, etc. Any new community facility needs to be located in a position that allows it to be readily accessible to anyone from either side of the state line. Ideally it would be close to the state line on a major road connecting the two sides. The facility also needs to contain elements such as meeting rooms and shopping facilities that could be used equally by people from both sides.

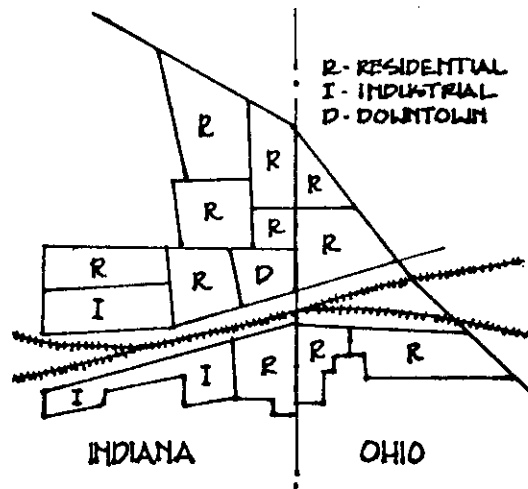
IDENTIFIABLE TOWN FOCUS



Another major goal of such a facility would be to create an identifiable town focus. This is based on principles set down by Kevin Lynch in his book Image of the City. At this time, although the downtown area is very well maintained, there is no place in the downtown area that acts as a focus, a place to orient oneself both spacially and socially. Any new community facility should help create such a feeling in the downtown area, and provide a place which is a natural focus for community events.

IDENTIFIABLE NEIGHBORHOOD

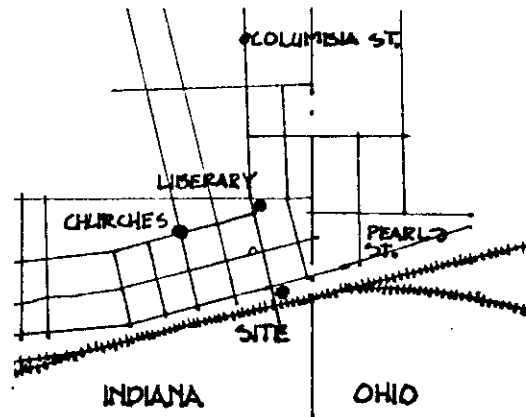
Help people to define the neighborhoods they live in, not more than 300 yards across, with no more than 400 or 500 inhabitants. In existing cities, encourage local groups to organize themselves to form such neighborhoods. Give the neighborhoods some degree of autonomy as far as taxes and land controls are concerned.



In doing this, we will also reinforce the image of the downtown as a neighborhood of its own. It will be a place to go for public socializing and community events. A downtown focus will help complete this image as a central public place to shop and meet people.

ACTIVITY NODES

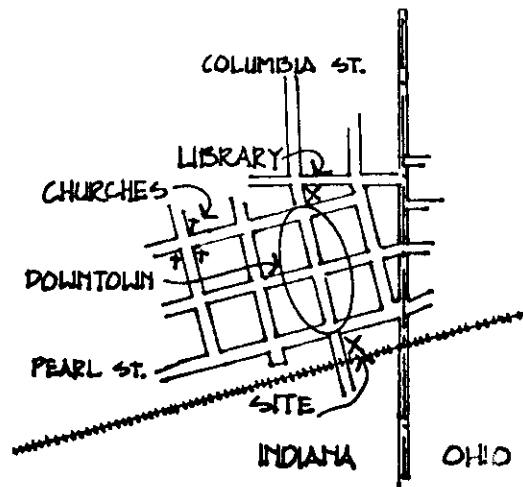
Create nodes of activity throughout the community, spread about 300 yards apart. First identify those existing spots in the community where action seems to concentrate itself. Then modify the layout of the paths in the community to bring as many of them through these spots as possible. This makes each spot function as a "node" in the path network. Then, at the center of each node, make a small public square, and surround it with a combination of community facilities and shops which are mutually supportive.



The new facility will create an activity node in the downtown area. In order to be a true activity node, it needs to contain more than just government offices and meeting rooms. It also must contain other supportive facilities, such as restaurants and outdoor public areas, that are mutually supportive of both its new function and the existing shops which surrounds it. It must also be located near major paths for both vehicle and pedestrian access.

PROMENADE

Encourage the gradual formation of a promenade at the heart of every community, linking the main activity nodes, and placed centrally, so that each point in the community is within 10 minutes' walk of it. Put main points of attraction at the two ends, to keep a constant movement up and down.



By creating an activity node at the south end of the downtown commercial area you would also be reinforcing the image of a promenade in the shopping area. The other activity nodes that exist are the library/park area at the north end of the commercial district and the group of churches at the west end.

These patterns, I feel, were the basis for the location of the facility on several vacant lots on the southeast corner of Pearl and Columbia Streets. It is located at one of the busiest intersections in the city with a strong relationship to both the downtown area and the Ohio side. Its location also helped define the program for the facility based upon its relationships with these large scale patterns.

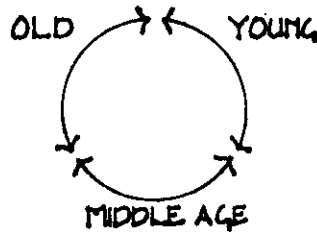
E. Development
of the
Architectural
Program

Like the site analysis, the architectural program for the project is based upon both observations I made of the community while doing my initial research and the social patterns that I feel need to be present to make this a viable town center. This section is devoted to those observations and how they relate to the planned facility. It contains the major patterns that influenced the architectural program and gives the basis for my decisions relating to other developments of the project.

LIFE CYCLE

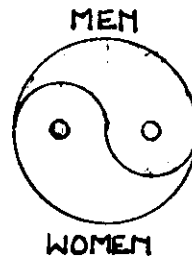
Make certain that the full cycle of life is represented and balanced in each community. Set the ideal of a balanced life cycle as a principal guide for the evolution of communities. This means:

1. That each community include a balance of people at every stage of the life cycle, from infants to the very old; and include the full slate of settings needed for all these stages of life;
2. That the community contain the full slate of settings which best mark the ritual crossing of life from one stage to the next.



MEN AND WOMEN

Make certain that each piece of the environment—each building, open space, neighborhood, and work community—is made with a blend of both men's and women's instincts. Keep this balance of masculine and feminine in mind for every project at every scale, from the kitchen to the steel mill.



As mentioned previously, my goal in this project was to create a government center for Union City, Indiana, with a very strong link to other community activities. In order to have the potential to get everyone involved, activities and settings had to be developed for members of all ages of like to participate on the site. This was accomplished on several levels.

The restaurant, town square, garden, and public lounge provide a place for spontaneous gatherings of all ages at anytime, while a variety of meeting rooms provide a place to hold scheduled meetings. The government center brought people into the site to talk with officials and pay municipal bills. The surrounding shopping facilities also act as a draw.

The daycare brought in not only the children, but also the parents as well. The playground also could become a public play area after school hours and on weekends. The elderly have access to all of the meeting and lounge areas previously mentioned.

NIGHT LIFE

Knit together shops, amusements, and services which are open at night, along with hotels, bars, and all-night diners to form centers of night life: well-lit, safe, and lively places that increase the intensity of pedestrian activity at night by drawing all the people who are out at night to the same few spots in the town. Encourage these evening centers to distribute themselves evenly across the town.

LOCAL TOWN HALL

To make the political control of local functions real, establish a small town hall for each community of 7000, and even for each neighborhood; locate it near the busiest intersection in the community. Give the building three parts: an arena for public discussion, public services around the arena, and space to rent out to ad hoc community projects.

NECKLACE OF COMMUNITY PROJECTS

Allow the growth of shop-size spaces around the local town hall, and any other appropriate community building. Front these shops on a busy path, and lease them for a minimum rent to ad hoc community groups for political work, trial services, research, and advocate groups. No ideological restrictions.

RESTAURANTS
MEETING ROOMS
SHOPPING
GATHERINGS
STROLLS

MAYOR
CLERK-TREASURE
CITY ATTORNEY
CITY COUNCIL
JUDGE
WATER DEPT.
SECRETARIES



The site began to transform into an activity node where night life was a major theme. This is because much of the evening socializing is centered around public meetings, stopping someplace to drink a cup of coffee with a friend, or stopping to say hello to someone you meet on the street.

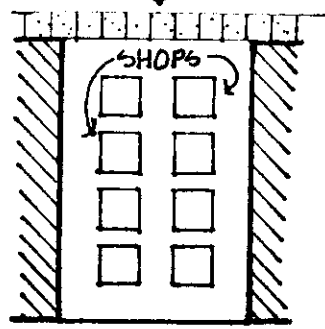
The town hall needed to contain the government offices for a Class 5 city in Indiana. In addition to this, I also included the police station on the site because I felt they needed to be represented as another government service, not as a secluded office one comes in contact with only when help is needed. A large arena provides the physical link between the town and the government. This can be used for exhibits, shows and for public meetings.

Several community project offices are located adjacent to the arena. These are to be used by any community organization that chose not to have an office of its own and needs public exposure. Examples of such organizations would be the art club and the elderly group.

SMALL PUBLIC SQUARES

A town needs public squares; they are the largest, most public rooms, that the town has. But when they are too large, they look and feel deserted.

Make a public square much smaller than you would at first imagine; usually no more than 45 to 60 feet across, never more than 70 feet across. This applies only to its width in the short direction. In the long direction it can certainly be longer.



TOWN SQUARE

A public square will provide the last informal link between the building and the rest of the community. It is a place where people can meet informally and also a place to hold small civic festivals.

MARKET OF MANY SHOPS

Instead of modern supermarkets, establish frequent marketplaces, each one made up of many smaller shops which are autonomous and specialized. (cheese, meat, grain, fruit, and so on).

This square can also double as a farmers market or flea market.

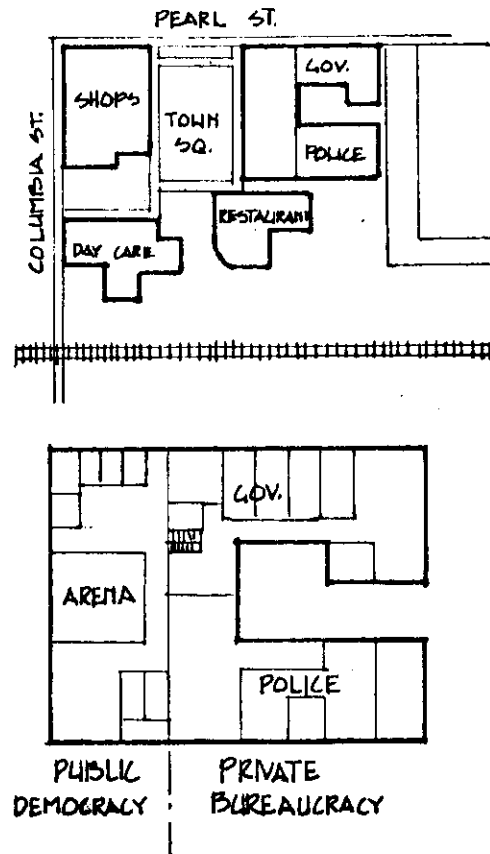
**F. Physical
Design Studies**

With the knowledge gained from both the site analysis, I was ready to begin the actual design of the facility. The following is a summary of the major patterns and how they helped shape the physical layout of the buildings on the site.

BUILDING COMPLEX

Never build large monolithic buildings. Whenever possible translate your building program into a building complex, whose parts manifest the actual social facts of the situation. At low densities, a building complex may take the form of a collection of small buildings connected by arcades, paths, bridges, shared gardens, and walls.

At higher densities, a single building can be treated as a building complex, if its important parts are picked out and made identifiable while still part of one three-dimensional fabric.



The architectural program which has been developed for the site includes a variety of functions and settings. The physical configuration of the buildings should also reflect this fact. This is done to make it easy for visitors to comprehend their surroundings and understand the layout of the site, using three separate buildings, a town hall, a restaurant, and a daycare center. The town hall and town square were placed at their location because of their relationship to both the downtown area and the Ohio side. The restaurant was placed in a central position next to the town square because of its ability to draw people into the site, and its ability to add life to the town square. The daycare center was located next to Columbia Street to make easy for parents to drop off and pick up their children.

The town hall also reflects this pattern in its division between private and public areas, and also by its distinct police and government wings.

CONNECTED BUILDINGS

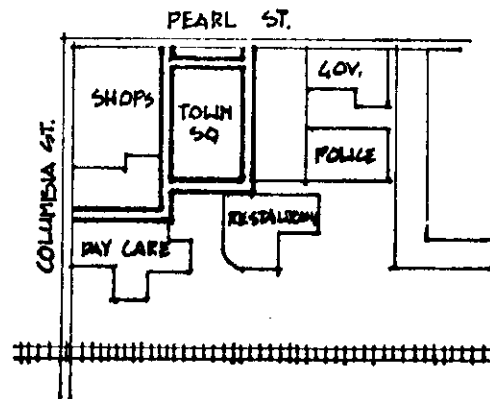
Connect your building up, wherever possible, to the existing buildings round about. Do not keep set backs between buildings; instead, try to form new buildings as continuations of the older buildings.

ARCADES

Wherever paths run along the edge of buildings, build arcades, and use the arcades, above all, to connect up the buildings to one another, so that a person can walk from place to place under the cover of the arcades.

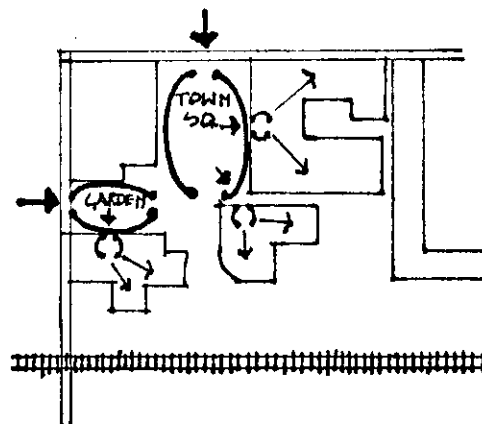
CIRCULATION REALMS

Arrange each building so that it breaks down into wings which correspond, approximately, to the most important natural social groups within the building. Make each wing long and as narrow as you can—never more than 25 feet wide.



These buildings, although separate, need to work not in isolation, but rather in harmony with one another. For this reason I have connected them with a series of arcades.

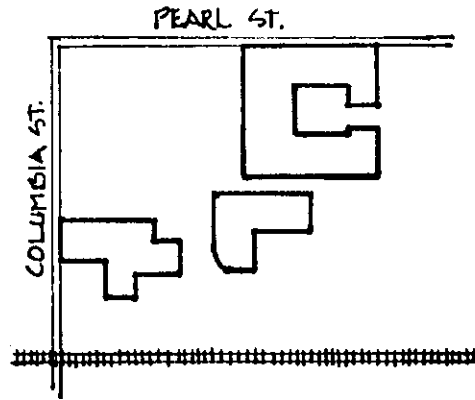
These arcades will not only provide a form of protection to the pedestrians, but will also provide a way for people to come in contact with and observe activities taking place in the town square and garden, without being required to be in these spaces themselves.



Further articulation of the buildings on the site was based upon the pattern of circulation realms. One enters the site through the largest and most public realms on the site, the town square and the garden. From there you proceed into the public areas of the structures, and finally to the most private areas of the buildings.

WINGS OF LIGHT

Lay out very large buildings and collections of small buildings so that one reaches a given point inside by passing through a sequence of realms, each marked by a gateway and becoming smaller and smaller, as one passes from each one, through a gateway, to the next. Choose the realms so that each one can be easily named, so that you can tell a person where to go, simply by telling him which realms to go through.

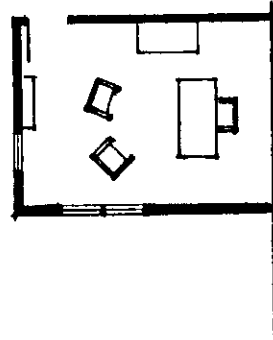


I feel that the natural lighting and ventilation, along with allowing the users of a building to always have contact with the outdoors is very important in any building. For this reason I have reduced the width of the structure so that you are nearly always within 15 feet of an exterior wall.

By breaking down the town hall into government and police wings, I have also helped complete the previously mentioned patterns of building complex and circulation realms.

LIGHT ON TWO SIDES OF EVERY ROOM

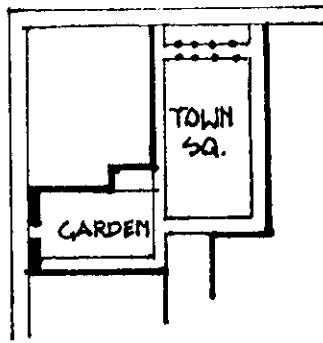
Locate each room so that it has outdoor space outside it on at least two sides, and then place windows in these outdoor walls so that natural light falls into every room from more than one direction.



The idea of natural lighting and ventilation is also reinforced by my attempt to provide windows on two sides of every room.

POSITIVE OUTDOOR SPACE

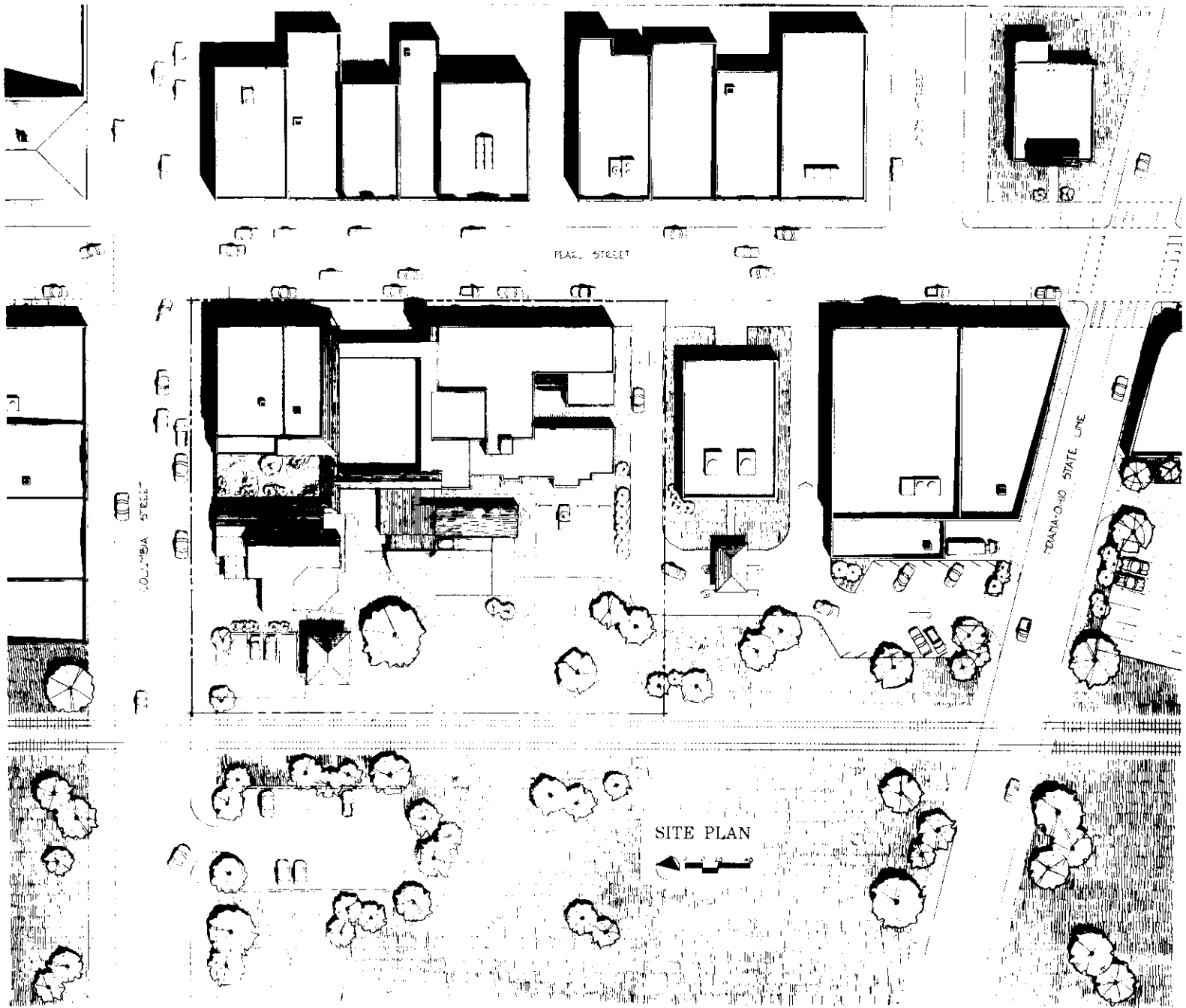
Make all the outdoor spaces which surround and lie between your buildings positive. Give each one some degree of enclosure; surround each space with wings of buildings, trees, hedges, fences, arcades, and trellised walks, until it becomes an entity with a positive quality and does not spill out indefinitely around corners.

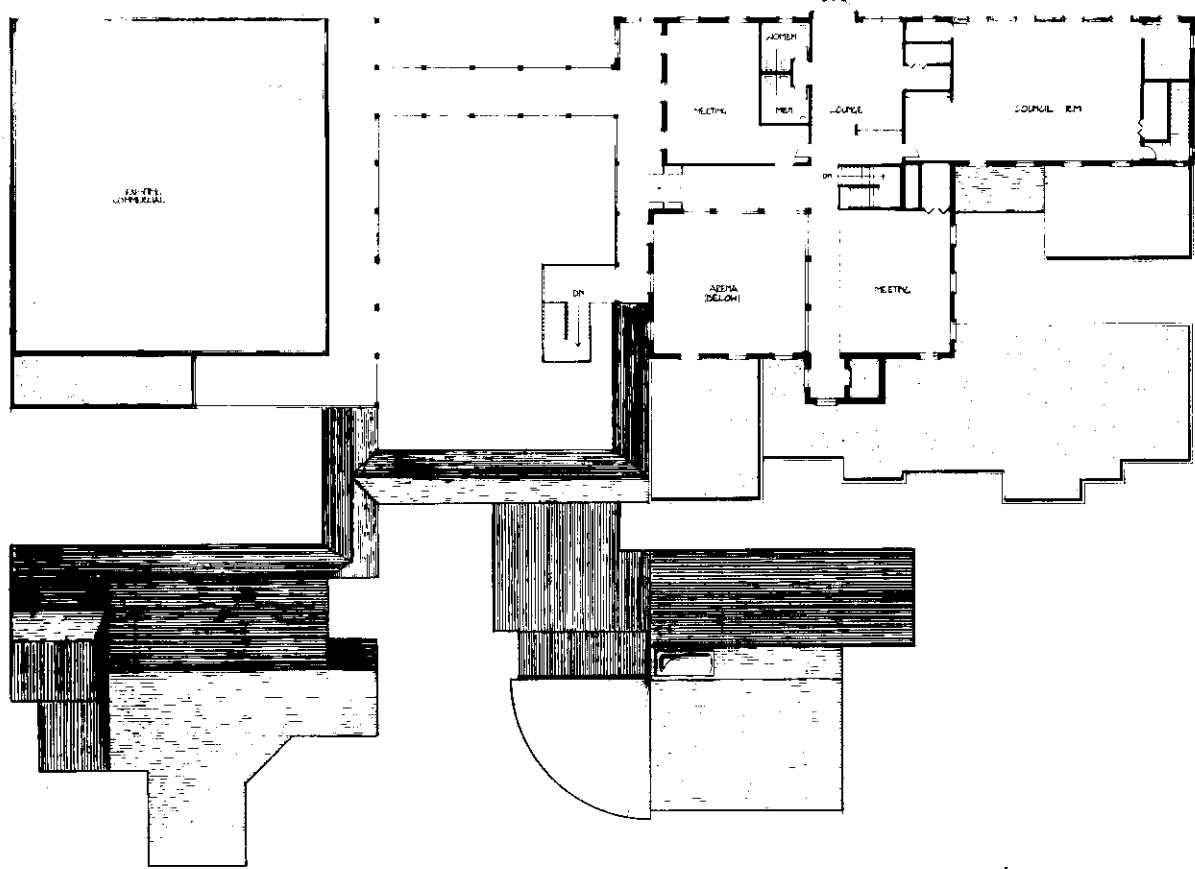


The two patterns which played a major role in the development of the external spaces were Positive Outdoor Space and Courtyards which Live. In response to these patterns I have given the town square and the garden some degree of enclosure while still allowing views to the outside and into each other. I have also opened the main entrance of the buildings into these spaces.

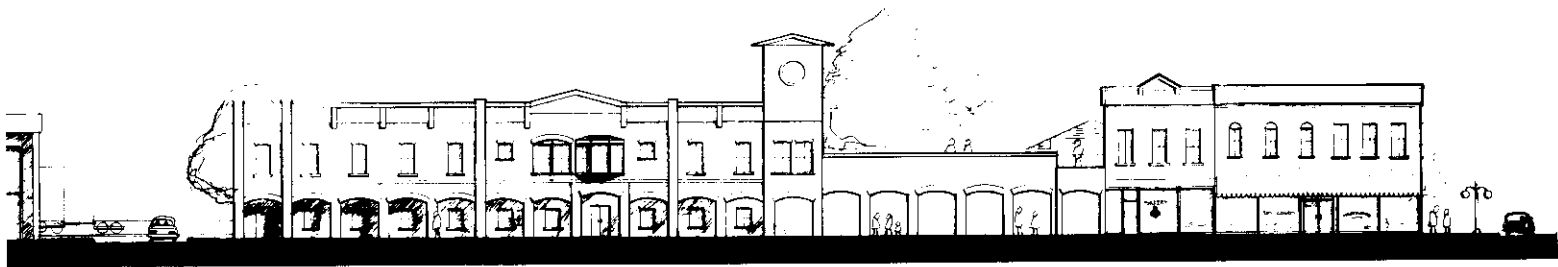
COURTYARDS WHICH LIVE

Place every courtyard in such a way that there is a view out of it to some larger open space; place it so that at least two or three doors open from the building into it and so that the natural paths which connect these doors pass across the courtyard. And, at one edge, beside a door, make a roofed veranda or a porch, which is continuous with both the inside and the courtyard.

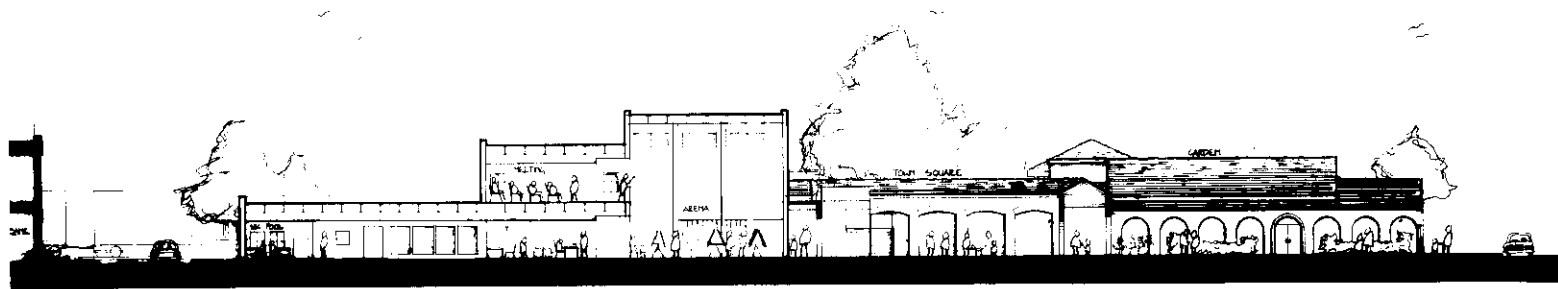




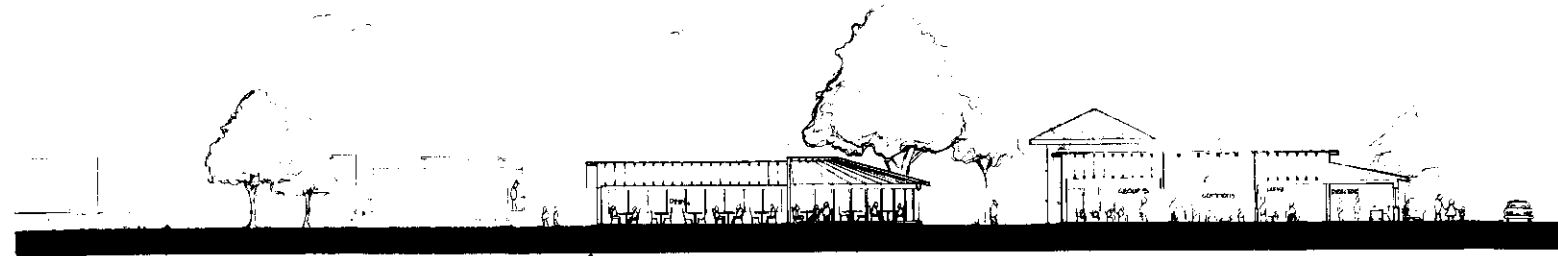
SECOND LEVEL



NORTH ELEVATION



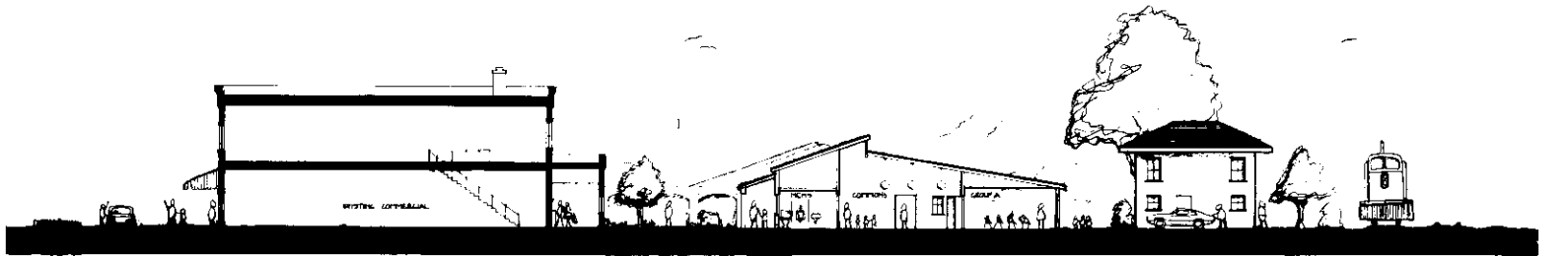
SECTION A



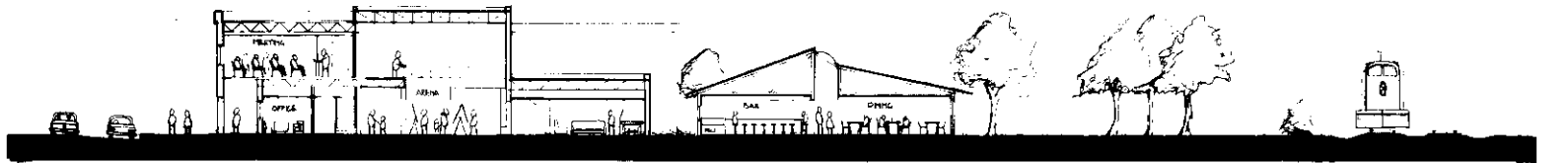
SECTION E



WEST ELEVATION



SECTION C



SECTION D