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Alleys: Negotiating Identity in Traditional, Urban, And New Urban Communities

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ALLEYS: NEGOTIATING IDENTITY IN TRADITIONAL, URBAN, AND NEW

URBAN COMMUNITIES

A Thesis Presented

by

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DEDICATION

In memory and honor of my grandmother, Mary Frances Horton, who always reminded me that

the possibilities and opportunities of life are both limitless and exciting.

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ABSTRACT

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Alleys evoke powerful images in our collective fear and, yet, play an important role in our American culture. Currently, communities are recognizing the value of the alley to their social landscape and designers and planners are reviving the alley in designs for new communities. What is it about the alley that has communities so excited? Why are alleys being reincorporated into today's design language? What do alleys contribute to a community's landscape and how do they contribute to its identity? What do we have to learn about community and urban design from the alley?

To answer these questions, this study compares a spectrum of five communities with various types of alleys – Holyoke, Amherst, and Northampton, Massachusetts; New York City; and Kentlands, Maryland. The conclusions drawn from this study indicate that the alley is an expressive landscape in which communities communicate their collective values and ideals and residents negotiate their community's identity through control, order, and organization, including the naming, maintenance and use of the alley. It is also where boundaries of class, economic status, and affluence are navigated and expressed. Furthermore, the implications of these findings are that urban designers, landscape architects, planners, and engineers must resist the temptation to over-design and micro-manage a place if a truly organic and expressive community is desired. Within this framework, these professionals must also anticipate that a community will change and to allow for its alleys and other spaces to respond to, and reflect, these changes.

CONTENTS

LIST OF FIGURES

CHAPTER 1

ALLEYS IN A SOCIAL, HISTORICAL, AND CHRONOLOGICAL CONTEXT

> More often than not I would prefer to walk in the rear alley, precisely for all those little hints of life, activity, transition which the placed visual arts of suburbia did their best to suppress or politely disguise.
>
> – Lewis Mumford[1]

Introduction

In American culture, the alley evokes powerful images in our collective fear. We imagine the most heinous of crimes being committed around the corner, in the dark alley. In the alley, rapists, murderers, and muggers await the innocent and naïve. It is the urban version of the rural crossroads, where deals with the devil are made and lives begin a wayward path toward damnation.

Writers, artists and politicians are among the many who invoke this imagery to tell stories, to instill fear, to dissuade and to persuade. It gives adventure movies like John Wayne's *Blood Alley* (1955) a rough and tumble credibility. It is used as political propaganda like the term "back alley abortion" with its connotations of unsafe and unsanitary medical practices. The alley is used as a means of conveying ideas about immorality and sexuality, as Michael Chabon does in *The Amazing Adventures of Kavalier and Clay*, in which a young man faces his homosexuality: "He knew about homosexuality…he had assumed, to the degree he had ever permitted himself to give it any thought it all [sic], that the whole thing must be a matter of…[sex] in dark alleyways or the foul practices of love-starved British sailors" (Chabon, 2000, 254). For much of United States history, the alley has had a negative image. And yet, as we shall see, it has served crucial roles in traditional and contemporary cities.

Simply put, an alley is a space between buildings that connects the front street with the service and accessory spaces to the building sides and rears. Alleys vary in form and design –

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[1] As quoted by Grady Clay in *Alleys: A Hidden Resource*, 1978, 13-14.

they can be as narrow as a few feet or as wide as forty feet; some are intentionally created while others are the left over spaces from ill-coordinated building projects. However, all alleys share a common functional purpose – providing access.

The alley is a part of communities both old and new. In older communities, there are ideally a variety of uses (recreation, school, workplace, and residential) in close, walkable proximity to each other and alleys facilitate these networks. These urban neighborhoods and their street patterns, including alleys, inspired the new alley communities of New Urbanism (Moudon 2000). Also known as neotraditional planning, New Urbanism is a modern movement that harkens back to the form of the traditional American city and town, but it does so with the added technology and enlightenment of the late 20th-century (Katz 1994). Using the pre-World War I community as its model, New Urbanism rebels against the sprawling, placeless building projects that characterized urban renewal and the New Deal in the hopes of halting the downward spiral of urban sprawl and community degradation.

In the current community design trend of the New Urbanism, the alley assumes the role of a community space. The New Urbanists recognized the potential of alleys in the 1980s and now communities outside of the New Urbanism are just beginning to embrace their alleys and praise their landscapes. In a January 2002 issue of *Mt. Lebanon*, a community magazine published by a Pittsburgh suburb, the editors featured the alleys of Mt. Lebanon as the cover story with the headline "10 Awesome Alleys" (see figures 1 and 2). Inside the magazine, the editor-in-chief, Susan Fleming Morgan, praised the community and their new slogan, "Mt. Lebanon…A Community With Character". According to Morgan, Mt. Lebanon's unique character can be found in the community's demographics, diversity, regional cooperation, neighborhoods, landscape, and alleys (2002, 1). The feature article by Elaine Wertheim, "How About Those Alleys?" touts the virtue of a community landscape made up of alleys. Wertheim cites the New Urbanist appreciation for alleys and devotion to community. In doing so she validates the uniqueness of Mt. Lebanon's alleys. She also notes that "alleys turn us into voyeurs" where we can't help but look at other people's stuff and space (2002, 36). It's where we find "visual

treasures" – oddities in the landscape of the normal – and informal, adventurous playspaces for children (2002, 36).

Figure 1: Mt. Lebanon (Pa) Magazine Cover. January/February 2002. Reprinted with permission.
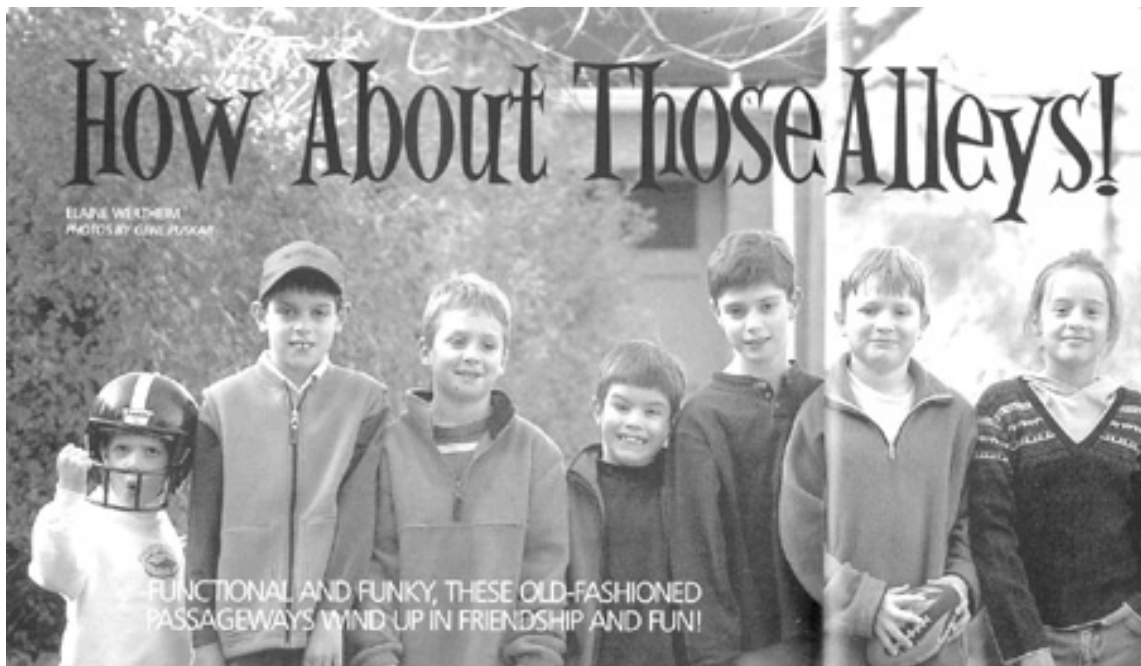
Figure 2: Mt. Lebanon (Pa) Magazine Feature Article. January/February 2002. Reprinted with permission.

Although alleys are valued landscapes in the traditional town and New Urbanism copies the alley design, the form (or overall general character, use, shape and size) and function of alleys are not identical in every community. These differences are explored in this study. The conclusions drawn from this study indicate how alleys reflect a community's evolution over time or how it changes, grows and responds to changing social and economic conditions. Furthermore, this thesis explores the visual landscape of the alley as a place that reflects community ideals and values. Keeping these aspects in mind, the alley then reflects the community's efforts to redefine and negotiate its identity by controlling and manipulating its image and physical landscape.

Older, pre-World War II traditional communities and urban neighborhoods evolved under a variety of influences and economic conditions. New Urbanist communities are very young and so they have not had the benefit of time, age, and evolution, nor have they been forced to redefine their identity. However, both old and new alleys are an expressive landscape where communities communicate their collective values and ideals and residents negotiate their communities' identity through control, order, and organization, including the naming, maintenance

4

and use of the alley. The alley is also a place where boundaries of class, economic status, and affluence are navigated and expressed.

The remainder of this chapter supports these conclusions with an historical perspective of the use, form, and function of the alley in the American landscape. Then, in Chapter 2, observations of the physical environment of alleys leads to a comparison of contemporary alleys in both old and new communities – Amherst, Holyoke and Northampton, Massachusetts, New York City, and Kentlands, Maryland. Through this analysis, I developed a classification system to define what types of alleys exist and how they function. Placed in an historical and contextual perspective, I use these classifications to compare alleys of both old and new communities. By observing the physical environment and making these comparisons, a great deal can be learned about some of the larger social aspects of community identity. This paper does just that. Specifically, the results of this analysis show how communities control, order, and organize their landscapes – i.e. how the various uses in the alley are arranged, spatially defined, and monitored – how this plays out in the alley and how these aspects of control, order, and organization impart an identity on a community. Ultimately, this exploration of community identity leads to design and planning implications for community design professionals.

Yesterday's Traditional Alley Communities – An Historical Perspective

Prior to World War II and urban renewal, the alley was a common element in the landscape of urban America. As an indispensable part of the urban fabric, the alley served mainly a functional role in a city's infrastructure. The alley provided direct access to the back of the deep lots and it was here, furthest from the house, that the undesirable but necessary parts of life were stored – stables, privies, chicken coops, cisterns, and trash (Veiller 1911). Utility lines and garages were later added to the alley corridor and the stables were converted to dwellings.

James Borchert (1980) and Ellen Beasley (1996) conducted extensive research into the social networks of the alleys of Washington D.C. and Galveston, Texas, respectively. In their research, they found that the alley, its form and function, was closely tied to slavery and servitude. Beasley noted that Galveston included alleys in its original plan in 1838 and municipal

ordinances required that slaves live on the property of their owner where they could be properly watched over. This meant that slaves and servants were housed in the stables and backbuildings of their masters' or employers' property.

After the Civil War, the booming economy exerted pressures on growing cities such as Galveston. As a result, housing was scarce – especially worker housing that was accessible to businesses, industry, and services. However undesirable the alleys might have been with their stables and privies, they provided extra street frontage in sections of the city that were accessible either by foot or trolley and, thus, were highly valued to the working classes. Because of its lower status and cramped conditions, alley housing was a cheaper alternative than front street housing and it was an economical choice for many freed slaves, transients, and immigrants, especially when rent and chores were divided among the many members of a household (Beasley 1996).

Life in the alley exerted its own pressures on those who lived there. Although the alley provided the residents with direct access to jobs, the conditions of living in the alley were poor at best. Often speculators converted stables into tenements or apartments and because there were little to no building codes regulating their construction, they were of poor construction. Because of the necessity to be located near the central city, the efficiency of the alley and economic status of the tenants, in the late 19th-century, the alleys became the landing spots for overcrowded tenements.

Reformers like Jacob Riis recorded the overcrowded congested conditions of the alley. Riis' *How the Other Half Lives* is a journalistic account of the New York City tenement and alley in the early 20th century. Here, Riis painted a picture of tenement life and indicated how the tenement functioned in immigrant life and fostered assimilation into American culture (see figure 3). Riis understood that the alley was an integral part of the tenement and often referred to it in both his journalistic and fiction writing, using it to tell the story of immigrant survival. In his short story, "Death Comes to Cat Alley", Riis said, "Cat alley is a back-yard isolation of the theory of evolution. The fittest survive, and the Welsh babies were not among them" (Riis 1905).

Figure 3: Jacob Riis' Bottle Alley. Collection, Museum of the City of
New York. Reprinted with permission.

When Borchert analyzed the 19th-century alley of Washington D.C. in his book *Alley Life
in Washington* (1980), he applied Riis' ideas about immigrant survival in the alleys of New York
City to the late 19th and early 20th-century alleys of Washington D.C. He argued that the
overcrowding, which reformers like Riis viewed negatively and found threatening to the morals of
the public, was essentially an indication of the flexibility of an alley resident and/or family. By
taking in boarders, housing an extended family and economizing on space, the alley dwellers
acted on their need to survive. Borchert extensively documented this social structure of
congestion and determined that, while it was not the most desirable living condition, it was a
beneficial system that encouraged individuals, out of necessity, to band together and form
communities. These communities focused on mutual financial and emotional support and
survival. Every part of the "disorderly" alley actually played a role in the system of survival,
according to Borchert. The piles of trash, wood and other debris that accumulated in the alley

7

served as resources for the alley family, facilitating their survival. One example he cites is how alley residents reclaimed lumber from demolished buildings and stockpiled it in the alley for later use as fuel (1980). In this sense, Borchert notes the lives of alley dwellers literally spilled out into the alley (1980).

At the height of America's alley communities, city planners such as Charles Mulford Robinson recognized that the degree of importance of the alley space was directly related to the economic status of its residents:

> The streets and alleys are to the people of a well-to-do district only a convenience for transit. In an overcrowded district there is little else more important to the happiness and welfare of the people (1911, 137).

Similarly, Borchert claimed that the different views on alley life and alley conditions were relative to one's status as either an insider in the alley community or an outsider (e.g. a person of greater financial means and who did not live in the alley) (1980). As he pointed out, the alley dwellers were confined by economics and space and could not afford to live up to the standards of the middle and upper class. And while alley dwellings were not considered impeccably kept by outsiders or those with more money, they were well kept when considered in light of the resources and ingenuity of the alley dwellers.

Despite the virtuous and thrifty use of alley space, reformers like Riis saw dirt and filth in the alleys. The spread of tuberculosis and outbreaks of cholera in New York City and the bubonic plague in Galveston caused great panic in many communities in the early 1900s. Increasingly, the reformers concerned themselves with sanitation in the city and improving the tenements and the tenement residents (i.e. immigrants and the poor). An early social work and reform publication, *The Survey*, featured stories on drunkenness, venereal disease, housing, congestion and open spaces. In an article in *The Survey*, "Housing Health and Recreation", Lawrence Veiller, the secretary of the National Housing Association, recapped the events of a conference where Jacob Riis strongly suggested that the role of social workers and the challenge facing them was to clean up the cities. This was necessary, according to Riis, because the current condition of filth was suppressing the immigrants' ability to adapt and be responsible citizens in their new country (1911). Chicago's assistant superintendent of streets, W.C. Galligan echoed this concern

8

over the immigrant, his "cleanliness", and assimilation. In "Clean People Make Clean Streets", a 1929 article that appeared in *The American City*, Galligan so eloquently wrote:

> Many sections of large cities are but transplanted communities from Old World [sic] countries, the residents bringing with them their customs and habits, many of which do not make either for cleanliness or for good citizenship…many of them having little conception of even the elementary laws of sanitation and failing utterly to give to cleansing officials that helpful cooperation that is so essential to the proper maintenance of clean conditions (January 1929, 134).

For Galligan, healthy streets and alleys made "for courage, comfort and a sense of satisfaction", fostering the creation of desirable cities and ethical, hard working citizens (1929, 134).

City planners joined in with the social workers in the attack on alleys and alley dwellers. The themes concerning social workers – immigration, congestion, sanitation and air and light circulation – carried over to the field of planning. At the 1910 Second National Conference on City Planning, congestion was a major topic of discussion with papers presented on congestion in various cities. In each city, congestion (or overcrowding) was cited as a threat to the public health. In Chicago, it was attributed to the proliferation of alley dwellings, which combined with the general rundown character of streets and alleys to give the city a "general impression of disarrangement and sordidness" (1910, 50). In Philadelphia, the planners noted that economic necessity forced "unskilled workers, mostly foreigners and negroes" to inhabit the alleys and live amongst surface drainage and privy wells (1910, 59).

During this same conference, Lawrence Veiller presented his paper "The Safe Load of Population on Land" wherein he blamed the problem of congestion on the immigrants and not economic conditions. Specifically, he cited the tendency of the Italians, Russians, and Polish Jews to pack as many people as possible into an apartment (1910). Veiller also assigned blame to city planners who allowed for the overcrowding and unsafe and unsanitary conditions to blossom by continuing to develop city blocks of an unhealthy depth, coupled with dangerously tall buildings (1910).

One year later, at the Third National Conference on Planning, Veiller again addressed his colleagues, this time he did not place blame, but offered a set of suggestions for "intelligent city planning". Veiller suggested minimum widths for new streets and maximum heights for new buildings. He admonished the deep lot (measuring 150' or more) as a critical problem because it

9

required the presence of an alley, which encouraged the development of tenements (1911). Furthermore, Veiller advised his colleagues that it was wise "to establish as the standard a lot of the shallowest depth practicable" (1911, 85). In large cities, he suggested that lots should not exceed twenty-five to thirty feet in depth (1911). Larger and deeper lots could be included in a city plan if the intended target market group was both large enough and affluent enough to maintain a lot of such a great size (1911).

In addition to eliminating the alley from the plan, Veiller's suggestions included paving the existing alleys and having the city assume responsibility for their cleaning, policing, and lighting. He noted, "In few cities are the alleys policed or lighted at night. They become often, therefore, the haunt of criminals, and naturally lend themselves to practices which shun the light" (1911).

Veiller's treatise was not limited to action items and suggestions, but included moral judgements on the health of the alley. Despite its benefits, he called the alley both "a blessing and a curse" and was very direct in indicting it:

> The alley is generally…an evil. As a minor street, hidden away at the rear of everything, it becomes the dumping-ground for all the cast-off material of humanity…The privies generally are close to it. Piles of manure, those pest factories which breed uncontrolled the typhoid fly by myriads, frequently overflow into it. Uncollected garbage, in the hot summer months, lies there in decaying heaps. Surface water, slops, wash-tub emptyings, leakage from privies and from stables cover the surface with slime. Old paper, tin cans, rubbish, and refuse of every kind are everywhere; huge rats, living and dead, add to the general horror…In many cases, these are the playgrounds of the children and the working people (1911).

Surpassing planning and reform, the automobile played a major role in the life and death of the alley and dramatically changed the landscape of cities and towns. When the auto was first popularized in the 1910s, owners converted alley stables into garages because they needed a place to store their vehicles. As cars grew longer and fatter, they outsized the stable and so owners parked them on the street where they became a sign of affluence and modernity (Clay 1978).

Most importantly, the automobile forever altered the settlement pattern of the country. With the mass produced automobile widely accessible after World War I, people had greater control over their travel patterns and housing options. Instead of being forced to live within

walking distance of their work or a train or trolley line, the automobile allowed the middle class to move from the congested city into the newly developing suburbs, favoring the open, organized landscape over the crowded urban one (Borchert 1980).

Planning efforts to develop automobile oriented suburbs further removed the alley from the landscape. First, the Garden City model, proposed in Britain by Ebenezer Howard in 1898, caught on in the United States in the 1920s and 30s with the work of Clarence Stein and Henry Wright and the design for Radburn, New Jersey in 1928. Ideally, the Garden City relieved the crowding of the major cities by developing smaller satellite cities that required the use of the automobile to travel between the different zones of the city, such as housing and industry. Now the automobile was a prized possession to be showcased on the front street, and the horse and stable were, therefore, obsolete. Indoor plumbing removed the need for privies and the reformers and the City Beautiful movement promoted healthy, clean, and orderly cities that included parks and open spaces. Combined, these efforts fostered the development of newly built communities – the suburbs – whose city blocks did not include alleys because they were unnecessary (Borchert 1980).

In 1929, in light of the popularity of the automobile, the Army Corps of Engineers' J. Franklin Bell took a more moderate approach in setting forth specific guidelines for the planning of a city block. He suggested that existing and new blocks be lengthened to five blocks to the mile, instead of ten blocks per mile because the automobile made the pedestrian inconsequential and the walkable city obsolete (1929). His plan did allow for inclusion of the alley, but stipulated that it must also serve the automobile and be of a standard level of cleanliness. In these regards, he maintained that it be paved and at least twenty feet wide "so that automobiles can turn in and out of garages without difficulty" (1929, 139). He saw no need for allowing enough space in the block layout to provide for "stables, storage, chicken-houses, board fences, and other nondescript structures that littered up the back yards a generation ago and still persist to worry our fire marshals" (1929, 139). Responding to these suggestions, an engineer and town planner from Chicago, Jacob L. Crane, questioned Bell's plan for the city block and, like Veiller, advocated the creation of blocks "deep enough to permit sizable playgrounds…which requires a depth of not

less than 250 feet" (1929, 141). Essentially, this meant replacing the alley with open space. Similarly, in that same year, as a precursor to the urban renewal movement that would begin in the 1940s, Veiller made a more drastic recommendation that cities raze entire blocks of existing urban areas and rebuild them with single family homes or apartments around the perimeter, while maintaining an open park-like space in the center of the block for public use (1929, 102).

A few years later alley opposition was growing to a head in Washington D.C. Under the urging of both President and Eleanor Roosevelt and the New Deal, Congress created the Alley Dwelling Authority in 1934 with the purpose of clearing the capitol city of its alleys. However, the pressures of World War II stifled the full implementation of the Authority's power and eventually the legislation was repealed due to the efforts of historic preservationists and affluent city dwellers who had taken a liking to the quaint streets and alleys of Georgetown and subsequently converted the alley dwellings into coach houses (Borchert 1980).

The most significant blow to the alley was issued when the National Housing Act Amendments of 1938 were passed. The Act established a guaranteed mortgage program for newly constructed single-family homes and to parties that were involved in clearing and rehabilitating slums and blighted areas. The federal government also promised returning soldiers guaranteed, low-cost VA loans for new home purchases (Girling 1994). With the guaranteed mortgages, the government backed the loan in case of a default on the part of the borrower. Guaranteed mortgages appealed to both developers and bankers because it allowed them to take chances in speculation and provide loans to potential homeowners at a time of great financial instability.

The Act is significant because under it a building or development plan needed to be approved in order for a mortgage to be guaranteed. To assist developers, financiers and prospective homeowners in getting a guaranteed loan, the Federal Housing Administration (FHA) published technical bulletins that suggested housing and development plans that would be approved by the FHA for a guaranteed loan. These "suggestions" shaped the city block and the American landscape by effectively discouraging the city grid and its alleys and encouraging a plan with wider and shorter lots, central green spaces, cul-de-sacs, and *no* alleys (see figure 4).

In one technical bulletin published by the FHA entitled "Planning Neighborhoods for Small Houses", the federal government encouraged planners, developers and architects to develop lucrative whole communities, not just haphazard speculative developments:

> [The goal is to] set…the principles which must be followed if appropriate planning is to be achieved; and it endeavors to offer suggestions to sub-dividers [sic], architects, engineers [etc.]…which will result in the production of more neighborhoods…which, with investment secure, mortgage money will flow at attractive rates (1938, 2).

The bulletin advised against "inadequately improved subdivisions" because they "seldom develop[ed] into stable neighborhoods" (1938, 4). The federal government's interest was in creating orderly landscapes that were purely American in character, which meant that they were unique in their spatial organization and housed only those who were accepted as Americans, to the exclusion of the poor and immigrant classes.
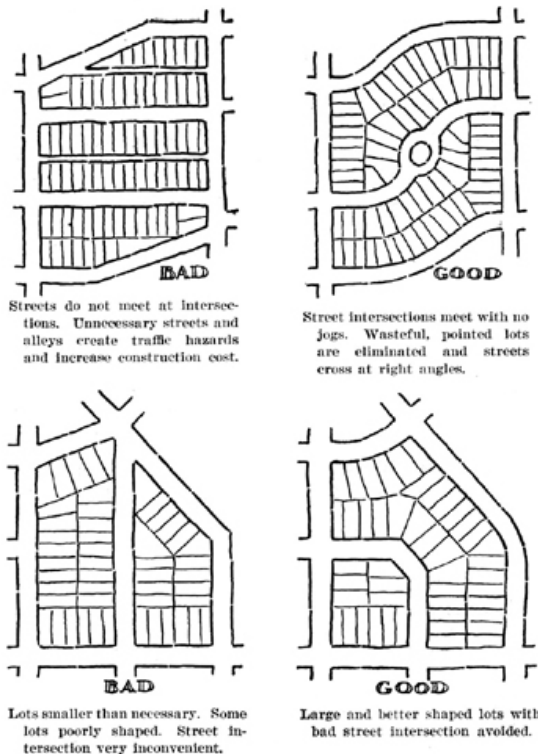
Figure 4: FHA Technical Bulletin No. 5., 1938.
Note that the "Good" alternative removed the alley
from the "Bad" Alternative.

The bulletins removed the traditional design language from the vocabulary – eliminating features, such as the alley, that plagued the tenements, slums and congested cities. The bulletins also echoed the suggestions of planning professionals active in urban reform. The grid was discouraged because it bred monotony and wasted paving. In its place, the FHA specified that roads follow the topography in "an attractive and unforced curvilinear layout" that was more cost efficient and aesthetically pleasing (1938, 15). Other specifications included blocks that were 600' to 1000' in width, with unnecessary cross streets removed and parks provided in the interiors of the blocks (see figure 5) (1938). The guidelines allowed for alleys in limited circumstances, however, it also noted "the tendency to the wide and comparatively shallow lot…eliminates the necessity for an alley. Such elimination is to be recommended wherever possible" (1938, 22). Plans for subdivisions also encouraged the superblock model of the Garden City's Radburn, New Jersey, which joined several blocks together and provided greater amounts of open space at the perimeter and/or exterior of the block.

Figure 5: FHA Technical Bulletin No. 7., 1938.
A recommended curvilinear subdivision layout.

At the 1939 National Conference on Planning, planners were still promoting the Garden City as well as pushing urban renewal as a radical change in land use that would effectively clean and organize the cities and suburbs. Under the programs of urban renewal, large areas of cities (including their alleys) were bulldozed to make way for highways to carry the automobiles to the suburbs and new, modern, placeless, high-rise housing surrounded by open space was built for the lower income city residents. Proponents of urban renewal believed these changes would provide efficient transportation routes for the modern auto-centric [white] family and would replace the dangerous, unhealthy, unclean, dim city blocks with light and airy public gathering and open spaces (Mayer 1939).

With the successful building of new planned communities on the urban fringe and urban renewal's clearing of entire city blocks, the alley was removed from the public view and concern. While urban renewal efforts continued, in part, into the 1970s, it was effectively hampered by the anthropologist, community activist, and author, Jane Jacobs, who fought against the clearing of her New York City neighborhood in the West Village to make way for an expressway. In addition to organizing her fellow community residents, she also wrote about her urban neighborhood in *The Life and Death of Great American Cities* (1961). Her landmark book praised older urban neighborhoods, including their streets and alleys, for their uniqueness and tightly knit, healthy communities. Jacobs' work not only influenced historic preservationists, but it also influenced the New Urbanists. Spurring the planning and design professionals to recognize the value of older, established communities. It was with the New Urbanism that the alley resurfaced in the 1980s with the design for new American communities like Kentlands, Maryland.

The New Urbanism – Keeper of Today's Alley Communities

The problems that plagued communities at the turn of the century are obsolete today and urban renewal has run its course. In most communities, streets and sanitation no longer cause grave concern for public health and utilities and wastewater treatment systems have eliminated the threat of diseases spreading through the open air. However, the desire to improve the community landscape and the lives of its residents still exists. The most popular of these efforts

is the New Urbanism. In the New Urbanism, planners and designers replace superblocks with urban infill projects and, in the spirit of the Garden City movement, guide regional, suburban, and rural development. Like the turn-of-the-century reformers, these professionals are eager to turn around communities and their superblock housing projects and failing social structures that alienate single people and ignore broken and dispersed families. To do this, the New Urbanism builds upon the design and form of pre-World War II communities, focusing on the neighborhood and its network of streets and alleys as the central building block of a city.

Peter Katz, one of the founding members of the Congress for the New Urbanism, noted that this is a direct reaction to the costs of suburban sprawl, the "creeping deterioration of once proud neighborhoods, the increasing alienation of large segments of society…constantly rising crime rates and widespread environmental degradation" (1994, ix). The New Urbanism is also a response intended to mend the collapsing downtowns, fractured communities, and the development and zoning laws that contributed to them (1994). The suburban American dream was one of privacy, mobility, security, and home ownership – all fed by the freedoms afforded by the automobile. In place of the city problems the suburbanites escaped to in their cars, they found, in the long run, "isolation, congestion, rising crime, pollution and overwhelming costs – costs that ultimately must be paid by taxpayers" (1994, xii).

To respond to these conditions, a consortium of architects, urban designers, developers and government officials formed the Congress for the New Urbanism in 1993 to address socially, economically, politically and environmentally responsible community growth (www.cnu.org). Adopted in 1996, the Charter of the Congress for the New Urbanism outlined development guidelines to create walkable, compact communities with distinct neighborhoods and districts (www.cnu.org). Significant projects of the New Urbanism include the communities of Seaside, Florida designed in 1981 by Duany and Plater-Zyberk Town Planners; Kentlands, Maryland in suburban Gaithersburg planned in 1988 by Duany and Plater-Zyberk Town Planners; a 1990 community, Laguna West, in Sacramento County, California by Calthorpe Associates and Mashpee Commons in Cape Cod, Massachusetts designed in 1986 by Duany and Plater-Zyberk

Town Planners (www.cnu.org). As designed communities, they bear the marks of the New Urbanist principles and the goals of the New Urbanist Charter.

Ideally, the goal of these communities is to have housing, shopping, recreation and the workplace physically linked to reduce the reliance on the automobile and promote community interaction. A grid street pattern, narrow roads, small setbacks, and clustered homes characterize New Urbanist communities. These design guides make "for a smaller [building] 'footprint' and reduc[e] the need for expensive infrastructure" (Tomalty 2000).

Alex Krieger explored the qualities of the urban environment and concluded that the health of the city and its neighborhoods was derived from its density, its diverse range of housing types, its strong physical identity and its ability to allow for, and create, opportunities for community interaction (Krieger 1996). Andres Duany (1989) and Peter Calthorpe (1991), also founders of the New Urbanism, maintain that the social structure of the older communities can only be achieved in current planning and design by reincorporating the needs of the pedestrian and the public transit system into the community infrastructure. This should be done in conjunction with the automobile and its needs, not to the exclusion of it. This is a key component of New Urbanism and it is with this in mind that the alley is included in the New Urbanist approach to planning. The New Urbanists recognize that the alley expands the circulation network, allows streets to be narrower, places the automobile and service vehicle to the rear of the home or business, and establishes additional places for community interaction and individual expression.

These design features promoted in the New Urbanism are strikingly similar to the design elements that Veiller, Riis, and other reformers reacted against in older communities (Katz 1994, Clay 1997, and Martin 1996). However, thanks to the work of people like Jane Jacobs and Kevin Lynch, an MIT professor who studied the urban design of Boston, it is recognized that these features create distinct paths, identifiable landmarks, clearly defined boundaries (or edges) and a recognizable form and structure (Lynch 1960). These qualities and characteristics of traditional communities, such as Boston, are what the New Urbanists seek in their designs.

Like the reform efforts of the Progressive Era, the New Urbanism attempts to impact change on a larger scale than simply re-creating the character of older communities. According

to the Charter for the Congress for the New Urbanism (2000), the larger goals are to address diversity, citizen participation, sprawl and the lack of a sense of community through the provision of public spaces for community interaction and by mixing housing types within a community. The goal of designing retrofitted and new communities under these premises is that they will be the best of both the urban neighborhood and the all-American small town, functioning more as an idealized healthy, prosperous, equitable, and intriguing communities.

The structure of the city is of critical importance to the New Urbanists and it is very clearly spelled out by its founders and practitioners. For example, Duany and Plater-Zyberk described districts and corridors as the fundamental elements of the community (1994). The neighborhood is the core of all forms of urbanism and the district is the "identifiable focus [that] encourages the formation of special communities" (1994, xx). Corridors connect and separate neighborhoods and districts and are of an "inherently civic nature" (1994, xvii-xxii). The alley is an example of this space of civic connection. As the corridors of a community, streets and alleys are the "communal rooms" in the landscape and not the dividing lines between neighborhoods (1994, xxiii).

Duany and Plater-Zyberk further described the street, block, and building as interdependent in shaping neighborhoods and districts. Blocks "are the field on which unfolds both the building fabric and the public realm of the city" (1994, xxii). On behalf of the New Urbanism, Duany and Plater-Zyberk recommend that blocks measure between 250' and 650', but they can be formed as squares, rectangles, or other irregular shapes. The inclusion of the alley in the middle of the block is encouraged to "absorb [the] parking and service loads and allow the outer faces of blocks to become more pedestrian" (1994, xxiii).

Of additional importance to a neighborhood is how its form and structure influences the safety of a neighborhood. In the Charter for the Congress for the New Urbanism, another founding member, Ray Gindroz, wrote on the importance of safety to a community. His insights noted that the important aspect in regards to neighborhood safety is not the realistic existence of safety, but the perception of safety (2000). Without a managed, cared for landscape this perception of safety is elusive and so it requires an orderly, well lit, and clean landscape that is

obviously populated by other people who maintain a watch over the area (2000). With this, the New Urbanists again looked towards Jane Jacobs for inspiration, as this was taken from her writings on street safety, observing that the "eyes on the street", or people watching over the street, are powerful deterrents to crime. An interesting note to this is that this concept of safety does not necessarily apply to the alley according to Gindroz's focus on the safety of the street, recommending that the front streets be "lined with continuous storefronts" that allow for a transparent view into a building and around corners (2000, 136). He concluded that in order to achieve this, service and storage facilities should be hidden in the alley, which avoids the presentation of "blank walls, garage doors, or hidden corners" on the front street, (2000, 136). Furthermore, Gindroz specified that these utility spaces, which are placed in the alley and made up of "back yards, [and] garages are [to be] screened from the public" (2000, 136). One might then wonder how these spaces are to be safe if they are not visible to any members of the watchful public?

Safety is just one of the issues in which the New Urbanists express their concern for providing the right environment for an appropriate community behavior. Katz best summarized their overall approach to design this way, "The New Urbanism seeks a fresh paradigm to *guarantee* [emphasis mine] and to order the public realm through individual buildings" (1994, xxi). Katz further stated, "an accessible (socially and physically) and truly shared place can be guaranteed at the most elemental scale through [New] urbanist principles" (1994, xxii).

How do these guarantees play out in the landscape of a community? Katz recognized that the alley was one of the many elements in a community that could be guaranteed and shared, but how is the guarantee accomplished in the alley? How do control and order contribute to this guarantee? More importantly, how do they contribute to the creation of community identity and how do these communities compare to the diverse and dynamic landscapes of the traditional communities?

The following chapter, "The Alleys and Their Communities – Considering Their Context and Form", takes the next step in addressing these questions. Here, the alleys of traditional New

England towns (Northampton, Amherst, and Holyoke, Massachusetts) and cities (New York City)

are compared to the alleys of the New Urbanist community of Kentlands, Maryland.

CHAPTER 2

THE ALLEYS AND THEIR COMMUNITIES – CONSIDERING THEIR CONTEXT AND FORM

Do New Urbanist communities and their alleys function in the same way as their traditional counterparts? As an elemental part of both traditional communities and neo-traditional communities, alleys, like the residents who choose to live there, offer an insight into the community and reflect its values and ideals in its landscape. This chapter explores these alleys and what they say about their communities. From the exploration of the alley's social and design history in Chapter 1, this chapter pushes this further by building important criteria, based on historical precedent, for evaluating and reading the alley by examining the patterns, features, characteristics, and contemporary issues of historical alleys. These readings contribute to, and allow for, the classification and identification of the various types of alleys present in each of the communities. These types contribute to a contextual analysis of the alleys, which feeds an exploration of the role of the alley in community identity, as explored in Chapter 3, "Control, Class, and Community Identity".

Reading the Alley – Looking at Evaluation Criteria in an Historical Context

Chapter 1 discussed historic alleys in terms of both their form and function. Particular features of today's alleys reflect their history and evolving role in the community landscape. Issues and concerns of modern times have also influenced the alley and changed its landscape. Reading the alley requires a consideration given to both these historical aspects and the current issues of the contemporary alley. Looking closely at these historical aspects and contemporary issues leads to insightful criteria that may be used to observe the physical landscape of the alley and make comparisons between alleys.

From the history explored earlier, Borchert and Beasley's studies of alley communities found that the traditional alleys of Galveston and Washington D.C. were adapted landscapes whose form was personalized and changed in response to the desires and needs of the alley users or residents, who added businesses or shops along the alley. First, stables and privies lined the alleys. Later, these stables were converted to apartments and makeshift housing for blacks, immigrants, and the poor. Still later, these buildings were either replaced by, or converted to, automobile garages. From between these buildings, the life of the alley residents spilled out into the alley, with yards and other open spaces allowing for a more public view of the otherwise private alley spaces. For the purpose of observing alleys today, this history of change, land use and the personalization of space in older alleys leads to evaluation criteria that provide an indication of the age of the alley, the way the alley has changed over time, and the way the community uses the alley. The evaluation criteria that correspond to these items include the surrounding land use, the primary use of the alley, the personalization of space, and the presence of adapted structures such as overhead connecting structures, and whether buildings or residences front onto the alley (see Appendix C).

In response to the alley spillage, reformers focused on cleaning up the alley and controlling the alley landscape by improving the maintenance and sanitation of the alley, specifying the type of paving used, the width of the alley and height of the surrounding buildings. This study considers the physical environment of the alley in light of these issues. Criteria that reflect this include the width, surrounding building height, utilities, pavement and pavement condition (see Appendix C).

Jane Jacobs' study of New York streets revealed the importance of the "eyes on the street" in order to maintain a safe environment. These "eyes" can peer out from windows, doors, and porches to watch over their neighborhood. Heightened pedestrian activity in the alley functions as a roving community-policing task force and discourages inappropriate and illegal activity by simply being present and watching over the street and alley activity. Recent research by Thomas Herzog and his colleagues Jennifer Flynn-Smith (2001), Kristi Chernik (2000) and Edward Miller (1998), applies issues of street safety to the alley. This research indicates that

alleys are perceived to be more dangerous when not well maintained, have insufficient lighting, or are of a long length. Rather ironically, the research also shows that perceptions of alley safety increase when the alley is curved or bent or the alley is more open and less enclosed.[2] In consideration of these issues, alley evaluation criteria include: noting the presence of concealed spaces that are potentially dangerous, as well as porches, windows and doors that provide an opportunity for people to watch over the alley; open spaces along the alley; the apparent length and curvature of the alley; alley use (including pedestrian activity); maintenance; fencing; gates; and lighting (see Appendix C).

In today's alleys, some of their historic uses and elements persist. For example, alleys are still a mixed-use landscape, with both businesses and residences surrounding, or located along, the alley. Like the privies of the pre-indoor plumbing days, various utilities edge the alley landscape where they are easily accessed, yet relegated to a lower profile area. New formal elements also appear in today's alleys, reflecting a change in culture and values. The saturation of the automobile in our culture requires parking lots and spaces. The alley connects these spaces with the street, businesses, and residences. It also hides the automobile, just as it once hid the stable and its manure. There is also a current trend in communities to name alleys, provide directional signage at alley entrances and mark them with artwork. This trend indicates the pride and ownership that communities take in their landscape. Conversely this ownership or territoriality can also be expressed in a more subversive manner with graffiti. This study considers these contemporary trends as well, including observational criteria indicating the presence of signage, parking lots, graffiti or artwork, and garages, in addition to noting the naming of the alley (see Appendix C).

All of these alley elements and issues, both the historical and the more contemporary ones, provide a basis for evaluating and comparing the alleys in their form and function and so the presence, or lack thereof, of these elements or criteria in a particular alley and community

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[2] As Herzog and his colleagues discuss it, theoretically a curved or bent alley provides the optimistic illusion that an exit or an alternate escape route is just around the corner. Conversely, the straight and long alley offers no appearance of an exit or alternate route.

must be scrutinized. These elements establish the criteria that contribute to reading the alleys of Kentlands, Northampton, Amherst, New York, and Holyoke. Overall, these criteria indicate the form, function, organization, perceived safety, and degree of control within the alley, and by extension, within the community. Using these criteria to read the alleys places them within a contextual framework of both the historical and contemporary issues of a community and reflects its changing, or negotiated, identity. To this effect, the reading of the alley, or the observation of the physical landscape indicates what a community values, what its priorities are, what issues it is facing, who its residents are, and how they interact with their community landscape.

<u>Alley Typologies – Classifying the Alley as Means of Understanding a Community</u>

Beyond the mere presence of specific alley elements, a broader look at the types of alleys present in a community and their condition indicates the overall state of a community, how it functions, and how it manages its identity and image. To facilitate this kind of analysis and to allow for the comparison of alleys across a broad spectrum of communities, this research led to a classification system of alley types. These typologies facilitate understanding the broader function of alleys and include a range of eight alley types, as seen in Amherst, Holyoke, Northampton, Kentlands, and New York. The eight types are: pedestrian alley, pedestrian/vehicular alley, commercial alley-street, commercial service alley, commercial/residential service alley, residential service alley, residential court, and residential service court.

- Pedestrian Alley

The pedestrian alley is exclusively for the use of pedestrians and connects front streets with building sides and rears. Frequently, the pedestrian alley provides access to a parking lot or garage. Because it is limited in function, the pedestrian alley is less common than other types of alleys such as the commercial or residential service alley. However, two of Amherst's most prominent and popular alleys are pedestrian alleys (see figure 6).

- Pedestrian/Vehicular Alley

Serving pedestrians and automobiles, the pedestrian/vehicular alley is primarily a thruway for both vehicles and pedestrians (see figure 7). While it serves as a connecting corridor, it does not allow for the servicing of buildings that characterizes so many other alleys.

Figure 6: Pedestrian Alley (Boltwood Walk) in Amherst, Massachusetts.

Figure 7: Pedestrian/Vehicular Alley (Cracker Barrel Alley) in Northampton, Massachusetts.

Figure 8: Commercial Alley-Street (Button Street) in Northampton, Massachusetts.

- Commercial Alley-Street

Occurring in a commercial district, the commercial alley-street is on the cusp of transcending the role and definition of the alley; thus the name commercial "alley-street" and not just commercial "alley". Instead of strictly serving the building sides or rears, as an alley does, the commercial alley-street developed in such a manner that it now functions as a commercial street, or closely resembles one. Once providing access to building rears and sides, it now provides access to well-maintained and important building façades that contain the primary entrances for several businesses (see figure 8). The commercial alley-street may also contain parking along its edge and serve as a thruway for both pedestrians and vehicles.

- Commercial Service Alley

Commercial service alleys provide access to utilities and service functions along their length. Unlike the pedestrian/vehicular alley, users of the commercial service alley are supposed to stop in the midst of the alley and use it – whether it is to empty dumpsters or to make deliveries to a restaurant or store. The primary focus of the commercial service alley is not to serve residences. Although residences may be located along the alley, above or next to the commercial uses, they

are in the minority and do not directly engage the alley with residential automobile garages (see figure 9).

Figure 9: Commercial Service Alley in Holyoke, Massachusetts.

- Commercial/Residential Service Alley

   The commercial/residential service alley mixes the commercial or industrial uses of the alley with the residential. Businesses and residences line the alleys in fairly even proportion. In some instances, the commercial uses dominate the street level, while the residences dominate the upper stories of a building.   In this case, the alley becomes a stage and the upper story residences are the balconies, overlooking the activity below. Street level activity is animated by the access to garages, utility lines, yards, and/or building rears.   The alley also provides a thruway for automobiles, pedestrians, and service vehicles (see figure 10).

- Residential Service Alley

Residential service alleys are dominated by the residential landscape and its accessory spaces such as yards and garages. Occasionally, other uses such as commercial buildings interrupt the alley. From the residential service alley, pedestrians and/or vehicles can access the rear residential utility spaces filled with items such as garbage cans, dumpsters, porches, garages, and yards (see figure 11). Because of its location among residential units, the residential service alley also functions as a play space where children ride their bikes or play games such as basketball.

Figure 10: Commercial/Residential Service Alley in New York City.

Figure 11: Residential Service Alley in Kentlands in suburban Gaithersburg, Maryland.

- Residential Court

The residential court is a combination of the commercial street-alley and the residential service alley. Like the residential service alley, the residential court focuses on the residential landscape. However, like the commercial street-alley, the residential court diverges from the traditional alley function of serving building sides and rears. Instead, residences directly front onto the alley, with little, to no, access to the secondary façades of the residences. Therefore, the alleys do not serve a secondary function, but take on the primary access role. Furthermore, pedestrians and vehicles cannot use the residential court as a connecting corridor because it is closed off to thru traffic, essentially becoming a common drive or cul-de-sac (see figure 12).

Figure 12: Residential Court Alley in New York City.

- Residential Service Court

Residential service courts also limit the use of the alley as a connecting corridor. It does provide rear or side service access to residential buildings. However, various obstacles block travel directly thru the alley, in effect this contains the alley, making it a private space (see figure 13).

Figure 13: Residential Service Court in New York City.

These eight types of alleys cover a broad spectrum of functions. Although these classifications categorize the alleys into a limited number of types, there is still room for a great deal of variety within each alley type. More importantly, when considered together with both the evaluation criteria and the context of a community, the alley types reveal much about the character and identity of a particular community.

<u>Context Matters - The Communities and Their Alleys</u>

Alleys exist across a range of community types and in various areas within a community. The relationship between the alley and its community is a negotiated and evolutionary one, where the alley persists through multiple generations, carrying its history with it and opening itself for reinterpretation with each new generation. Therefore, the community context of the alley matters and the alleys of Amherst, Holyoke, Northampton, Kentlands, and New York must be understood in the context of their communities.

A comparison and contextual reading of this sort demonstrates that the alleys function in a similar manner in different communities. However, a more complex picture emerges showing that across the communities, a spectrum of alley conditions and treatments exists, where the control and organization of an alley varies according to the community. As a community becomes more affluent and image-conscious, alleys become more tightly controlled and are given an amount of attention and detail that is comparable to a streetscape. With so much attention given to the alleys, they cease to operate as secondary landscapes in which the more intimate and seemingly haphazard details of life are revealed.

While the next chapter – Controlling the Alley – covers this in more detail, the following sections provide the necessary background for understanding the communities and their alleys. Of the forty-nine alleys initially explored, the study examines sixteen alleys in depth, with regards to the evaluative criteria, because these sixteen represent the full spectrum of the forty-nine alleys. Appendix A includes a demographic profile of each community and Appendix C includes a full accounting of the criteria and whether, or to what degree, each criteria apply to each alley. Together these different sets of data speak to the overall form, function, and organization of the alleys and lead to conclusions about an overall assessment of the community, how the community's identity is reflected in the alley, and how the alley reflects back on the community.

Understanding Holyoke, Massachusetts

Strikingly different from the more upscale Western Massachusetts towns of Amherst and Northampton, Holyoke has a long industrial history at the core of its identity, which it struggles to redefine today. Initially incorporated as a town in 1850 and then as a city in 1873, Holyoke's industrial past is due, in part, to its location along the Connecticut River. The fifty-seven foot change in elevation along the river drove the creation of dams and canals and provided the muscle to power Holyoke's numerous paper mills. Ultimately, this led to the establishment of Holyoke as a planned mill town, which was laid out on a grid.

Today, Holyoke has a revitalized historic town center with high pedestrian and commercial activity. However, it is struggling to redefine and revitalize its economic and industrial core, as well as its residential areas, where the majority of its alleys are located. Of the 39,838 of Holyoke's residents who live in these areas, thirty-four percent (13,641) are non-white and the median community per capita income was $11,088 in 1990 (US Census 1990 and 2000).

Holyoke's Alleys

Holyoke's regular grid pattern includes alleys in virtually every block. The regularity of the grid and the consistent use of the alley is an indication of the importance of the alley to the efficient operation of the city. Within the alleys studied in Holyoke, three types of alleys emerge – the commercial service alley, the residential service alley, and the mixed commercial/residential service alley. The residential service alleys in Holyoke are a major element in the city's landscape. The no-frills character of these alleys and their prevalence in the community communicate Holyoke's working-class roots, date the city to the industrial revolution and reflect the importance of efficiency and function in a community geared for heavy industry. Lacking embellishments and decorations, Holyoke's alleys reveal a community struggling with its economy. Immigrants once fueled Holyoke's industrial rise. Today, the high proportion of non-white residents coupled with Holyoke's low per capita income suggest that the city is still enmeshed in its culture as a working-class community where immigrants and minorities can establish a home, however modest it may be.

- The Commercial/Residential Service Alley–Between Main and Clemente Streets

Running between Main and Clemente Streets, not far from the mills and canals, a long and linear alley primarily functions as a service road for the abutting residential and commercial properties. Long lines of utility poles run its length, its surface is irregular and unpaved, and potholes and deep ruts collect trash and debris (see figures 14 and 15).

Figure 14: Holyoke, Massachusetts Figure Ground Diagram.
The gray box and star indicate the location of the alley between
Main and Clemente Streets.

Figure 15: Alley between Main and Clemente Streets in Holyoke,
Massachusetts. This poorly kept alley is filled with trash and graffiti.

Despite the one to four-story buildings that line parts of this alley, there are large gaps between the buildings, some of which are vacant lots or parking lots. Changes in building

setbacks create numerous nooks and crannies as the building line varies along the alley's length. In spite of its narrow width of fifteen feet, these open spaces work with the varied building heights to establish an alley that is open, instead of enclosing. Large trees and other vegetation grow sporadically in these open areas, but do not create a continuous street canopy.
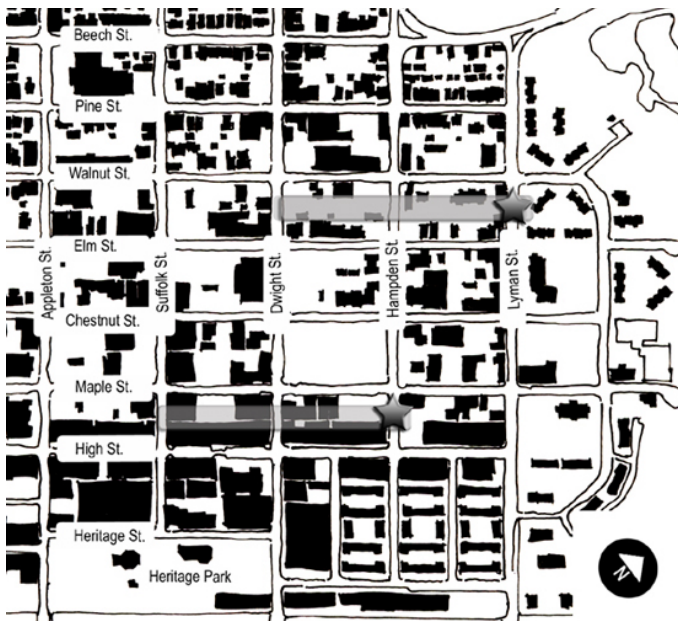
Figure 16: Holyoke, Massachusetts Figure Ground Diagram.
The gray boxes and stars indicate the alleys between Maple
and High Streets and Walnut and Elm Streets.

- The Residential Service Alley–Between Walnut and Elm Streets

Between Walnut and Elm Streets, a tree-lined residential service alley runs through a neighborhood of three to four-story, multi-family, and single-family residences (see figures 16, 17, and 18). Occasionally, a corner store introduces a commercial use into the predominantly residential area. Larger buildings are set in closer proximity to the streets they front on, opening up the rear sections of the property, which line the alley. Consequently, the open landscape of this alley includes numerous backyards and a public open space, Gramps Park, which is accessible from the alley. Only fifteen feet in width, this alley appears wider. Essentially, it acts as a service corridor for automobiles accessing the alley garages and garbage trucks, although it appears that more garbage is left on the ground and along the fences than is actually picked up.

Because the alley is not entirely enclosed by buildings, there are ample opportunities for visibility and surveillance. Porches on the multi-family residential building overlook the park; windows, doors, and porches on the single family and multi-family residences also watch over the alley. Additionally, the open back yards allow for direct sightlines into the alley, while chain link fences distinguish between the private backyards and the shared access way.

Figure 17: Alley between Walnut and Elm Streets in Holyoke. Notice that open yards line the alley, as opposed to a solid line of garages or buildings.

Figure 18: Gramps Park. The alley provides access to Gramps Park, while the apartment building overlooking the alley provides a spot to watch over the park

- The Commercial Service Alley–Between High and Maple Streets

Holyoke's most active alley runs through the commercial center, parallel to High and Maple Streets (see figures 16, 19, and 20). Many businesses clearly address the alley as a pedestrian zone by using signage and doors intended to attract and welcome alley pedestrians. Rear access provided by the alley also makes it a primary corridor for maintenance and utility locations, with garage doors, bulkheads, dumpsters, manholes, and utility poles placed along the alley. Fire escapes along the alley also indicate the necessary use of the alley as an accessible safety way. The commercial center begins to give way to the residential area along Maple Street and near Lyman Street. Here the buildings change scale from the larger four-story buildings to three-story multi-family residences and garages.

Figure 19: Alley between High and Maple Streets in Holyoke.

One of the key elements of this alley is its changing composition. Along its length, the alley width varies between fifteen and twenty feet. Although larger buildings dominate this alley, breaks in building height and mass create a variegated pattern within the alley, adding contrast to the landscape and, therefore, heightening its dramatic appeal. Staggered setbacks and occasional breaks occurring at public parking lots also reinforce this, creating a rhythmic pattern of open and enclosed spaces, including nooks and crannies, throughout the alley's length. Near Dwight Avenue, a building walkway and fire escape extends over the alley, creating a short length of tunnel. This tunnel is a focal point within the alley and contrasts with the openness of the rest of the alley. Just west of the tunnel, the alley expands into a parking lot serving a medical building, which has its main entrance off the alley.

Figure 20: An overhead fire escape creates a tunnel through Holyoke's downtown alley.

These unnamed and unadorned alleys characterize Holyoke's alley landscape. As a community, the alleys' functional role as a supplementary utility space is of greater concern than its ability to communicate a positive public image. The fact that the alleys are unnamed, have graffiti on their walls, and are in a poor condition supports this conclusion. However, this is also a community that values physical expressions of cultural values as shown by the murals painted on the alley walls.

While Holyoke's alleys operate as a part of a community landscape with the presence of yards, doors, windows, garages and porches opening onto the alley, they are a supplementary space that receives attention only when more important needs have been met. This struggling community must first redefine itself and rebuild its economy, before it can spend money and time on prettying up its alleys. Like Borchert's Washington D.C. alley residents, Holyoke's residents must concern themselves with more critical issues of daily life than worry about the state of the alley. Because of these social issues, Holyoke's alleys have changed slowly and do not take on the appearance or role of a highly considered landscape of the middle and upper class. Instead, Holyoke's alleys provide an immediate and tangible insight into an historical and contemporary working-class, immigrant, and minority community.

Understanding Amherst, Massachusetts

Originally an agricultural community when it was incorporated in 1775, today Amherst is an education-based community that hosts the University of Massachusetts, Amherst College and Hampshire College (Massachusetts, Department of Housing and Community Development, 2002). This educational focus and the notoriety of its colleges, especially Amherst College, contribute to an affluent and educated community of 35,000. Although its 1990 per capita income of $8,165 indicates a less affluent community, these figures reflect the high proportion of students that make up Amherst's population, and so Amherst's alleys and community landscape reflect the more affluent status of the community.[3]

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[3] Income and poverty figures are not yet available for the Census 2000; therefore 1990 figures are used here for per capita income only. The per capita figure for Amherst refers only to the central business district and not to the entire town. The per capita figures for Holyoke, Northampton, and New York refer to the entire town, city, or study area. See Appendix A for a full demographic profile of each community.

Amherst's Alleys

Amherst's alleys are concentrated within the town center, making important connections, both vehicular and pedestrian, between the street, parking, and retail. The two alleys studied here are pedestrian alleys and are significant because of their scale, their role in Amherst's pedestrian network and their dramatic effect in the landscape. Their dramatic nature contributes to the character of the trendy shops and restaurants that line the well-maintained streets and sidewalks, which teem with activity throughout the day. Both of these are simple, clean, and well maintained, lacking intricate details and vegetation. Each space is personalized on a formal level –with both businesses and their signage addressing the alley– and on an informal level with a limited amount of graffiti. Like the alleys in other communities, there is a potential for danger lurking around the corner of Amherst's alleys, especially because these end at tight, abrupt corners with limited visibility. However, these alleys appear safer because of a combination of factors including their presence in a more gentrified community, are well-maintained and detailed

Figure 21: Amherst, Massachusetts Figure Ground Diagram.
The gray boxes and stars indicate the locations of the alleys.

with signage and/or lighting, businesses face onto the alley and the building rears, windows overlook the alleys, and, most importantly, they are continually traveled by pedestrians. Northampton's alleys operate in a similar fashion to this, while New York addresses alley safety by limiting access to the alley. In contrast, Holyoke's alleys, with the exception of the alley between High and Maple Streets, appears to be less safe because they are not well-maintained and are not traveled by pedestrians.

- Pedestrian Alley–Boltwood Walk

Boltwood Walk is a major pedestrian corridor connecting Main Street with the surface parking lot at the center of the block and businesses situated in the alley (see figures 21, 22 and 23). Signage at the alley's entrance signals the presence of restaurants in the alley and draws pedestrians in off the street. Because of this, pedestrian traffic through this corridor is high. Currently, a new multi-level parking garage is under construction to replace the surface parking lot behind the buildings. Added vehicular traffic from this garage will make the alley an even more important pedestrian space in Amherst's urban landscape.

Boltwood Walk's most appealing feature is an arched, covered walkway, which is formed by the overhead extension of the upper stories of buildings fronting on Main Street. For those sitting on one of the benches in the alley or walking through the alley, it becomes a stage where the actors are the pedestrians and cars that travel along Main Street. This visual play is made all the more dramatic by the darkness of the alley contrasted against the brightness of the street and short bursts of crossing traffic.

Figure 23: Pedestrian use is encouraged in Boltwood Walk. The presence of benches and businesses encourage people to use the alley.

Figure 22: Amherst's Boltwood Walk. The alley cuts underneath a three-story building to connect Main Street with a rear parking area.

- Pedestrian Alley–Between North Pleasant Street and the Rear Parking Lot

A tiny alley only eighteen inches wide accessible from North Pleasant Street compliments the pedestrian network established by Boltwood Walk (see figures 21, 24, and 25). Wide enough for only one person to pass through at a time, this alley perhaps pushes the limit on the definition of an alley, similar to some of the other alleys studied in this thesis. As is evident by the signage directing pedestrians to the restaurant in the rear, people are encouraged to use this narrow passage as an access point to rear businesses and spaces. This narrow space is an important and intriguing access point to the parking area and the restaurants at the center of the block.

The interior of this alley is simple–a wall of brick on one side and wood panels on the other. At the end of the alley, near North Pleasant Street, a small, black vertical panel is wedged between the walls and supports the *Thai Corner* sign. Together, the sign and the panel create a small, but noticeable, gateway to the alley. A rather significant grade change also occurs within the alley, dropping approximately two feet over its twenty-foot length.

Simple details such as the dramatic grade change, narrow width, and entrance sign establish the alley as a complex space where pedestrians must negotiate their movements and

the sharing of space. One must watch and wait while another passes through, while those traveling in the same direction must walk single file. This becomes part of the experience and, indeed, part of the entertainment of visiting downtown Amherst. For those who remain on the outside of the alley, sitting on one of the benches on North Pleasant Street, the excitement is watching who will literally "pop" out of the alley.

Figure 24: Residual spaces become important public spaces. This is evident in how residents appropriate them for their use.

Figure 25: An overhead sign points pedestrians to the restaurant along the narrow alley.

Amherst's alleys are simple, clean, and well-maintained. However, strikingly different from Holyoke's unadorned alleys, Amherst's alleys take on a more quaint appearance with their small scale and dramatic effect in the landscape. The alleys reflect Amherst's more affluent, up-scale, and gentrified character. Furthermore, by maintaining the alleys, giving them names such as Boltwood Walk, and promoting them with signage, the community also communicates a desire to manage its image. It is important to note that this public relations effort is superimposed over, and is predicated upon, Amherst's history.

Unlike the industrial mill town of Holyoke that was planned for density and efficiency, Amherst's agricultural history did not require high density and optimum efficiency. Furthermore, because this agricultural community grew gradually over its three hundred year history, its developed area was spread out over a larger area and was then filled in with residential and commercial uses. Because it was not planned at a particular moment in time and was developed around agriculture, Amherst did not require an efficient residential alley infrastructure like Holyoke. Instead, Amherst's alleys are concentrated in the town center area where, before the rise of the automobile, there was a desire and need to maintain a compact area of central services. This necessitated the efficient use of space and, consequently, there are alleys squeezed between buildings to provide access to much needed rear building spaces. In some cases, leftover spaces between buildings take on this function, such as is the case with the narrow pedestrian alley along North Pleasant Street.

These alleys reflect a transformation of cultural values and uses over time. The once left-over spaces and stable/rear building accesses now accommodate the automobile and pedestrian. Control exerted by the community over the alley, its form and use, reflects a negotiation between the agricultural history of the town, its current role as an active, collegiate hub, and the desires and ideals of the community residents.

Understanding Northampton

Similar to Amherst, Northampton is an older, thriving community dating to 1654 that is now centered on education, industry, and retail, entertainment and healthcare services. Home to prestigious Smith College, both the young and old populate the downtown area, which serves as the cultural center for much of the Connecticut River Valley. In the 1980s, Northampton was a struggling community, attempting to improve its economy and maintain its character. Today, gentrification has revitalized the community of 29,000 and now a thriving street life and pedestrian activity feed the salons, galleries, and boutiques that line Main Street and its side streets.

Figure 26: Northampton, Massachusetts Figure Ground Diagram.

Northampton's Alleys

Concentrated in the downtown area, Northampton's alleys primarily link pedestrians and vehicles with parking areas, building rears and the bustling streets. Though they function in similar manners, the alleys vary slightly in purpose and significance. The two most prominent alleys are pedestrian/vehicular corridors; others are commercial alley-streets or commercial service alleys. Like Northampton's street pattern, the alleys follow a modified grid, which may cause some confusion to the uninitiated. However, their limited length allows for clear visual connections to the front streets.

Two significant features characterize Northampton's alleys. The first is that the buildings forming Northampton's alleys have clearly distinguished front and back façades with the alley either located at the rear or along the sides of buildings. Some businesses have their primary entrances along the alleys; however, this is the exception rather than the rule, as the majority of businesses are accessed from the front streets. The second item of note concerning Northampton's alleys is their high degree of visual interest and variety. Art, graffiti, overhead

structures, signage, patterns of light and dark contrast, and varied building lines all contribute to a layered visual environment, which, in turn, creates visual interest and intrigue.

Figure 27: Button Street in Northampton functions much like a street.

- Commercial Street-Alley–Button Street

    Button Street is a short alley and an informal commercial street, running only the width of one block, measuring approximately 120 feet in length (see figures 26, 27, and 28). At State Street, it terminates with a view of a hillside church. At Masonic Street, the alley faces the public parking lot across the street. Pedestrians continually travel Button Street, using it as a shortcut between the parking spaces on State Street, the parking lot on Masonic Street and the businesses on Main Street. Its other primary function is to provide pedestrian and automobile access to the businesses and building rears located along the alley. With a varied width between twenty-five to thirty-five feet, two and three-story buildings line the alley, creating awkward angles and residual spaces. In the alley, the converted warehouses, garages, turn-of-the century office buildings and a modern church use their side and rear façades for building access and service. A handful of businesses use this area as a primary entrance.

Figure 28: Businesses on Button Street
treat their alley entrances as front doors.

Because it is privately owned and maintained, the property owners abutting Button Street maintain control over the use and appearance of the alley. The greatest indication of this is the private parking lining the alley and the access provided to an additional private parking lot located mid-way through the alley. Like other Northampton alleys, it is well-maintained, however, because of its private status, parts of the alley have added details uncommon in many alleys, such as decorative lamps and door stoops. Although, it is privately owned, Northampton pedestrians and vehicles still use Button Street as a thoroughfare, oblivious to its status as private property.

- Pedestrian/Vehicular Alley – Cracker Barrel Alley

Pedestrians and vehicles continuously flow in and out of Cracker Barrel Alley (see figures 26, 29, and 30). The continuous flow of both pedestrian and vehicular traffic makes the alley a safer place, during both the day and nighttime, because those using the alley maintain a watchful eye over the space. The traffic also signals its significance as a vital connection between Main Street and the parking area located off of Masonic Street.

Located at the bend on Main Street, Cracker Barrel Alley occupies a significant position in Northampton's downtown landscape. This pivot point along the street easily draws the attention of passers-by. "Skateboarders," a mural by Jonathan Kohrman, adorns the alley wall and highlights the entrance. On the building that edges the parking lot at the rear of the alley, a Northampton women's history mural also grabs the attention of the alley travelers. Together, the murals draw the pedestrian through the alley, creating a progression of visual events. Visual interest within the alley is also enhanced by the modest paving details. Although the alley floor is mostly concrete, warm toned bricks line the alley and echo the materials of the surrounding buildings.

Figure 29: Cracker Barrel Alley's paving details and irregular building walls create visual interest.

At its narrowest point, Cracker Barrel Alley is twenty feet wide. However, within the alley, the continuous building line is disrupted by a triangular shaped piece missing from a building wall. The result of this disruption varies depending upon the perspective of the viewer. From Main Street this awkward corner establishes a mysterious edge and potentially dangerous corner. From the parking lot, the alley appears more open, indicating nothing about the potential dangers around the corner. Coupled with this missing chunk of wall, a dramatic slope of eight percent inside Cracker Barrel Alley creates a dramatic, high contrast public space.

Figure 30: Cracker Barrel Alley's mural creates a focal point for pedestrians on the street.

- Commercial Service Alley – Between Crafts Avenue and Old South Street

Quite different from the first two alleys studied in Northampton, the third alley is more of a rough and tumble, less prominent and showy landscape. One indication of this is that this is the only unnamed alley of the four studied in Northampton. Located between Crafts Avenue and Old South Street, the alley bends, turns, and runs up and down hill in a distorted "T" shape (see figures 26, 31, and 32). A small length of the alley, which runs into Crafts Avenue, is paved with

concrete. Although this section is publicly owned, the adjacent businesses use it for their personal parking and storage use.

Narrow in width, but tightly edged with three to four-story buildings on one side and shorter two-story buildings on the other, the alley functions as a secondary service point for businesses and residences on the front streets. A few businesses marked with signage maintain their primary entrances on the alley. Fire escapes and trash dumpsters dress the backsides of the buildings; windows and unassuming rear building entries line the cinder alley. Parking is at a premium here with private parking lots accessible from within the alley and other cars tucked where they can fit.

Figure 31: Crafts Avenue's alley is unassuming, yet complex. Dumpsters, fire escapes and cinder paving lend to its simplicity while the variety of uses makes it complex.

Although it lacks the fancy window dressing of the other alleys, this alley is a visually and functionally complex landscape. Part of its complexity stems from the change along the alley – it shifts from a wide-open landscape where it meets the active sidewalks of Old South Street to a

more enclosed, remote section behind the Crafts Avenue businesses. Here cars use the alley as a narrow passage more than the pedestrians or service trucks use it. Nonetheless, signage, wires, utilities, and fire escapes all contribute to the creation of visual layers, which give clues to the alley's use and reveal small details about the lives of its users.

The decoration in this alley comes from its minimalist, but complex and intriguing form. Shifting building lines and a turn in its line at mid-block shields part of the alley from view and establishes a sense of mystery by forcing one to question the safety of the alley. The lack of lighting within the alley enhances this sense of mystery and contributes to a heightened sense of danger. Rough cinders lining the ground create a landscape that is bare and rustic – and perhaps slightly unkempt – which is in contrast to the highly finished streets of downtown Northampton.

Figure 32: A mix of uses in Crafts Avenue's alley points towards Northampton's history. The mixture of businesses, services and pedestrian use of the alley and its bare bones aesthetic indicates the variety of uses over time.

- Commercial Service Alley – Kirkland Avenue

Functioning much like Cracker Barrel Alley, Kirkland Avenue's main role is to connect the public parking area along Hampton Avenue to the activity of Pleasant Street (see figures 26, 33, 34 and 35). Like other commercial service alleys, the buildings forming the alley maintain a primary front street façade, while the alley façade serves a secondary or auxiliary function for the apartments and businesses. Here, surrounding apartments and businesses can access their necessary utilities, fire escapes and trash cans.

However, unlike other alleys, Kirkland Avenue runs underneath two four-story buildings forming two consecutive tunnels. Between these tunnels, a small court projects from the alley. Along Pleasant Street, Kirkland Avenue tunnels through a building. The overhead structure forming the tunnel maintains the illusion of a continuous building line along the street. The alley then occurs rather surprisingly at a dark and hollow break along the street. Looking into the alley, through the first tunnel, a pattern of light and dark contrast highlights the sign on the second overhead building structure reading "Kirkland Avenue".

Figure 33: Overhead signage marks Northampton's Kirkland Avenue.
The tunnel serves as a public connection between a rear parking area
and Pleasant Street.

Similar to Amherst's Boltwood Walk in its dramatic landscape effect, an interior vantage point within the alley offers a place to watch over the activity of Pleasant Street. From the exterior streets and sidewalks, the alley is an intriguing landscape that looks like it just might be dangerous enough to excite one who travels through its tunnels. Graffiti on the alley walls indicate some of the mischievous activity that goes on here. Although parts of the alley appear to

Figure 34: Graffiti marks the alley as a place of mischievous activity and potential danger. However, its playful nature also decorates the alley.

be more daunting and dangerous, the well-maintained, landscaped interior court lessens the danger by signaling the ownership, or assumed ownership, of a portion of the alley. In reality, Kirkland Avenue is an anomaly in the downtown landscape because it is does not belong to any individual or the city. A remnant space from an earlier property division, Kirkland Avenue belongs

to the public. In this respect the use of Kirkland Avenue indicates the ability of the community to negotiate the alley's purpose and function.

Northampton's varied alleys reflect a changing economy, a changing landscape, and a changing community. Choices made by the community during the revitalization process are visible, signaling a kind of community decision to maintain a portion of its working class and industrial identity, yet also create a more refined and sophisticated community landscape reflective of its prestigious status as an enlightened cultural mecca.

Each alley displays the spectrum of Northampton's identity, although one aspect may be more visible than another. For example, the alley along Crafts Avenue speaks to the industrial and service nature of Northampton, while Cracker Barrel Alley, with its high profile painted murals that embrace youth culture and the arts, and Button Street, with its decoratively detailed business entrances, speak to the gentrified cultural community. Within these alleys, there is a negotiation among the community members as to how the alley will be used and by whom. While Button Street is privately owned, all members of the public use it, and another alley, Kirkland Avenue, is not owned by anyone, yet is appropriated by many. With these negotiations, the community redefines and reinvents itself while acknowledging its past.

Figure 35: Kirkland Avenue's courtyard is a public space. It is negotiated for both private and public use.

Understanding New York

Dating to the 1600s, Greater New York is the nation's largest metropolitan area, having reached its all-time population high with the Census 2000 count of 8,008,278 residents in the five-borough area. Early New York settlements were located in lower Manhattan, south of Canal Street and, consequently, now the streets are of a more organic and random nature here than in upper Manhattan, reflecting the pattern the cow paths imposed on the land. Outside of lower Manhattan, the streets closely follow a grid pattern. Most alleys in Manhattan and the surrounding boroughs are a result of those former cow paths or mews that were too small to be converted to full streets. More recently developed alleys provide light, air, and emergency access to buildings. The mixed pattern of Manhattan and its boroughs' landscapes indicate that it is a physically diverse city with layers of history. The population of the city also reflects the city's diversity with 55% (4,431,893) of its residents identifying as non-white.

Historically, New York is a city based on markets. Because of its importance as a market and financial center and the need for people to be based here, the land in New York is as much of a commodity as any other market product. Consequently, there is a continuous battle to own and control property in the city. This market culture has permeated all of the city and its infrastructure, including its alleys.

New York's Alleys

Within Manhattan's alleys, four different types emerge as characteristic New York alleys – the residential service court, the residential court, the commercial service alley, and the commercial/residential service alley. The residential service court is common in areas like Harlem, which were built after Manhattan's grid pattern was established and they provide light, air, and emergency access to the buildings. The residential courts, such as Washington Mews and MacDougal Alley, are smaller streets or mews, which were previously used for horse stables. However, gentrification has made them quaint and attracted wealthy citizens who enjoy the private and secluded nature of a private residence. The commercial/residential service alley provides private parking spaces and a place for storage of trash and utilities. Finally, the

commercial service alleys are most likely remnants from New York's early settlement patterns. Part of the city infrastructure, they are perhaps former cow paths, but now function as streets, contributing to the free flow of traffic and servicing the buildings they border.

In New York, the majority of the alleys are gated, with the control of the alley clearly articulated. Those not authorized to use the alley are restricted from entering it. The exception to this is the commercial service alley. Functioning as a street, these alleys are open to the public and display some of the idiosyncrasies of New York's street life. Because New York is a city of markets, with space at a premium, it is no surprise that the desire to control land and real estate extends into the alley as ownership and control over land is integral to the concept of markets and real estate. Furthermore, the very real threats of crime and the desire to protect one's own territory leads to the use of gates to control who may enter and who must stay out of the alley

- Residential Service Court – Between 109th and 110th Streets

Connecting 109th and 110th Streets on the Upper West Side in a residential section of Harlem, this alley's primary function is to bring light and air into the surrounding multi-family residential buildings (see figures 36, 37, and 38). To do this, the building line within the alley shifts, creating

Figure 36: Harlem Alley, New York City, Figure Ground Diagram.
The gray box and star indicate the location of the alley.

additional light and airshafts. Consequently there are numerous windows overlooking the alley. Like many of Harlem's alleys, this one is a gated private court set below grade. These sunken courts provide a means of accessing the utility areas of a building, such as the basement, and they are also used as storage areas for trash and air conditioning units.

Because the alley is set eight feet below grade, a dumb waiter provides access from the sidewalk level to the lower service entries. Inside the gate, the alley is divided into separate levels. Interior fences separate these levels and limit the flow of pedestrian traffic in the court. Both the fencing and locked gate provide added security, limiting access to residents who have a key, emergency personnel and services. Little, if any, graffiti, artwork, or personalization of this space can be seen in these gated alleys because of their more secure nature.

Figure 37: Harlem's alleys are set below grade. Interiors are divided into terraces.

Figure 38: Dumb waiters move goods from the street to the alley's lower level.

- Residential Court – MacDougal Alley

Residential courts like MacDougal Alley are private dead end streets. Located off of MacDougal Street, near Washington Square Park, MacDougal Alley is a former mews, or street where private stables are located (see figures 39, 40, and 41). Today, the stables that once lined the alley have been transformed into trendy apartments that are recognized as part of the Greenwich Village Historic District. In contrast with these two-story stables, taller multi-family residential buildings surround MacDougal Alley.

Unlike other alleys investigated here, MacDougal Alley and other alleys that fit this gated, private court type actually cease to be alleys. Instead of functioning as a corridor that supplements, but does not replace, the front street's activities and functions, MacDougal Alley has its own identity as a front street. Although the buildings may be smaller in mass and scale, the building façades that face onto MacDougal Alley are clearly not rear façades. The decorative treatments of the windows and doors indicate that these are, in fact, the primary entrances to the residences. This is similar to Northampton's Button Street and its treatment of doorways; however, in Northampton, the alley does supplement the front streets and the alley façades are of a secondary importance to the front façade. In MacDougal Alley, these former stables do not function as a rear or side entrance to any building.
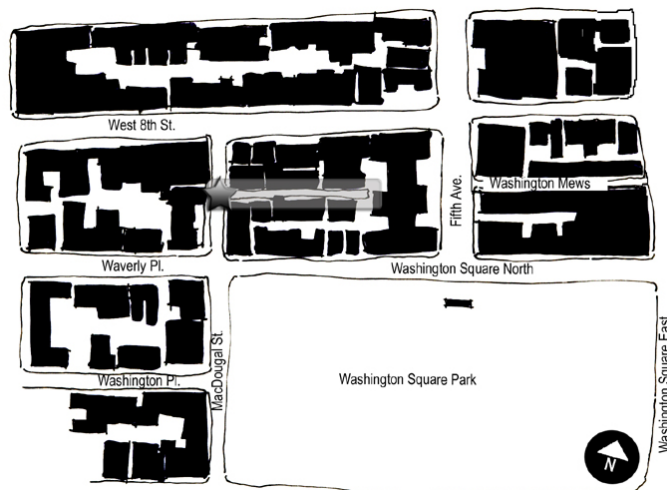
Figure 39: MacDougal Alley, New York City, Figure Ground Diagram.
The gray box and star indicate the location of the alley.

Once home to a thriving artists' community and a building that was the pre-cursor to the Whitney Museum of American Art, MacDougal Alley is now owned by New York University. The significance of this private court and its buildings is indicated by clear expressions of ownership and care. Well-maintained building windows are detailed with flower boxes, modillions, and intricate grills. Mature sycamore trees line the alley and vintage gas lamps decorate the building façades. Signs posted at the alley's gated entrance suggest that trespassers kindly stay out.

Although it is not gated, MacDougal Alley has a twin on the other side of the block. With the same historical role as a storage space for stables and now functioning as a private court, Washington Mews references its role in New York's historical landscape through its name. Furthermore, as private residential courts, both of these alleys appeal to those who have an interest in history, the historic landscape, and historic preservation as it is played out in the small quaint streets of lower Manhattan.

Figure 40: MacDougal Alley's gated entrance set it apart as a private street, not a public alley.

Figure 41: Restrictive signage reinforces the private
status of MacDougal Alley.

- Residential Service Alley – Jones Alley

Like other alleys in New York, Jones Alley is gated and private, however, it is much more in
the style of a typical service alley. This alley type contrasts with the alleys seen in Harlem and
the quaint gated communities of Greenwich Village. Instead, Jones Alley is as much of a
functional landscape as the alleys in Holyoke or Northampton, although access is limited to those
who possess the key to the gate. Running only part way through the block between Lafayette
Street and Broadway Avenue, the alley's primary function is to provide light, air, and emergency
access to the surrounding residential and commercial properties, as exhibited by the fire escapes
that trim the building walls (see figures 42, 43, and 44). Secondarily, it creates functional storage
space where people park their cars amidst the trash dumpsters, ventilation ducts, and building
mechanical systems that fill the alley floor.

As in the case of Northampton's Crafts Avenue alley, the functional nature of Jones Alley
contributes to a complex visual layering. The many functional elements create layers of activity.
Building masses on the eastern portion of Jones Alley shift in and out and turn corners, creating
residual spaces and obscuring a clear view through the alley. Piles of refuse and graffiti
decorated walls contribute to the visual layers and confirm that the most significant role of the
alley is that of a utility space, rather than an elite, quaint residential court.
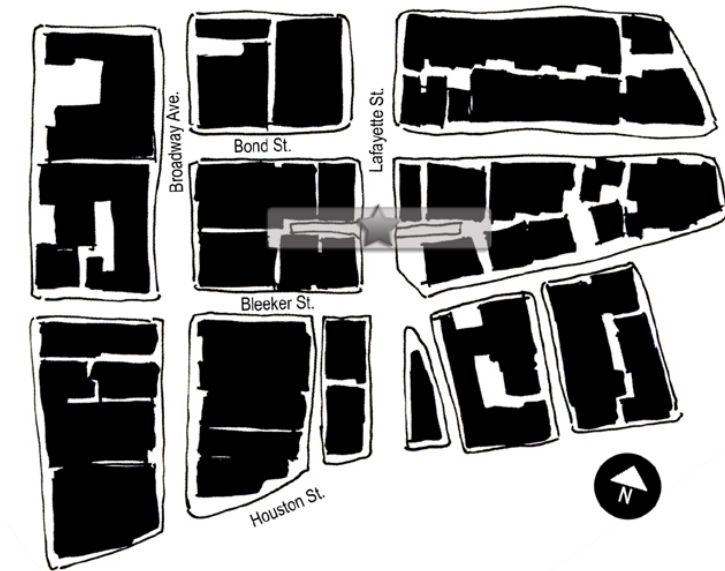
Figure 42: Jones Alley, New York City, Figure Ground
Diagram. The gray box and star indicate the location of the
alley.

Figure 43: Jones Alley is a functional storage space. In
addition to storage facilities, it provides light, air and
emergency access to its surrounding buildings.

Figure 44: Gates limit access to Jones Alley.

- Commercial Service Alley – Cortlandt Alley

Fitting the stereotype for urban alleys, lower Manhattan's Cortlandt Alley is narrow, dark, and dingy (see figures 45, 46, and 47). Located in Chinatown, this alley functions as a side street, augmenting the flow of city traffic and providing a service access to the surrounding five and six-story mixed-use buildings. With their primary façades facing the front streets, fire escapes dominate the building backsides, creating filigreed patterns on the alley walls. Signage for businesses direct service vehicles as they come and go while workers enter and exit the buildings. Steam pours from windows in the adjacent buildings, indicating the possible location of a sweatshop hard at work. Occasionally, pedestrians use the alley and its sidewalks as a shortcut between Walker and White Streets, while the homeless use it as a urinal, as was the case while I was touring the alley.

61

Perhaps less glamorous than other alleys examined thus far, it is nonetheless an interesting landscape. Cortlandt Alley is filled with graffiti and evidence of homelessness and antisocial behaviors such as drinking. Alley users deposited liquor bottles of all kinds in the alley, some in paper bags and some neatly lined up on the buildings' loading docks and a homeless person stashed his/her clothing and bedding in a stairwell. In addition to this scruffiness, part of Cortlandt Alley's appeal is its dramatic contrast to the intersecting streets. Walker and White Streets are bathed in sunlight and bustling activity, which is a strong contrast to the dark shadows and relative emptiness of Cortlandt Alley. Because of this contrast, it is all the more appealing to unassumingly watch the street from the refuge of the alley.



Figure 45: Cortlandt Alley, New York City, Figure Ground Diagram. The gray box and star indicate the location of the alley.

Figure 46: Cortlandt Alley has a scruffy character. This is due to its use as a commercial service alley and dingy, dark appearance.

Figure 47: Clothes and bedding are stashed in a stairwell on Cortlandt Alley. This indicates that homeless people use the alley as a living/sleeping area.

As seen in Cortlandt Alley, New York's urban alley environment runs the risk of becoming a threatening place where the ills of society manifest themselves. New York has a history of reacting against the alley and trying to improve it. However, the city also has a history of being market driven, focusing on economics and real estate; it is only appropriate that the alley reflect these forces as well. And in fact, New York's alleys do reflect these market forces, as well as the history of the city and the contemporary issues it is facing. In a city where land is expensive and each piece is highly prized, the gated residential courts like MacDougal Alley indicate the wealth and status of its residents who are able to afford this small, but expensive, extra piece of land. Furthermore, because real estate is so expensive in New York, it is rare to have accessible storage space or to even have small pieces of land that are unbuilt. Therefore, each piece of land is highly prized and protected. In the alley, this is manifested in the gating of the simplest alley. While gating the alley is a sign of ownership and upper-class status, it is also a response to the crime and safety that characterize dense urban areas.

The alley also reflects social conditions of New York. The inclusion of the alley to provide light and air circulation to buildings is a direct response to the work of the reformers, who sought

livable building conditions for all residents, yet dark and narrow alleys from Manhattan's early history, such as Cortlandt Alley, still exist. Readapting stables and mews into residential courts and cow paths into functional streets is a progressive attempt to transform the city, with consideration given to its history. These responses also play out in the details and form of Manhattan's alleys. Some are clean and revitalized, such as MacDougal Alley, which expresses a more cultured and elite community value. Other alleys, such as Jones and Cortlandt Alleys, are purposeful and functional, however grungy they may be, indicating that New York is still a gritty, industrial city that works and offers opportunities to all types of people.

Understanding Kentlands

Kentlands, in suburban Gaithersburg, Maryland, lies twenty-three miles northwest of downtown Washington, D.C. Designed in the New Urbanist style in 1988 and constructed between 1990 and 1993, it is a community based on traditional values and ideals in which the architecture and urban form contribute to the creation of community bonds, and the automobile is considered deleterious to the community's image. And so it is only appropriate that the automobile should be hidden in Kentlands' alleys, just as the older, traditional communities used the alleys to hide their undesirables.

As its design is based on the pre-automobile city, Kentlands is oriented towards the pedestrian as well as the automobile. To this effect, Kentlands and other New Urbanist developments ideally contain a mix of residential and commercial uses, with the goal of providing employment opportunities within walking distance of the homes of the community's 8,799 residents.[4] However, the residential landscape dominates Kentlands and commercial uses within Kentlands are limited, as are the white and blue-collar jobs that accompany these businesses. Therefore, most of Kentlands' residents must leave the community to find work.

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[4] The Kentlands area referred to for demographic purposes is the census tract from the Census 2000, which includes a small housing area neighboring Kentlands. This area was the smallest group of demographic information available.

Kentlands' Alleys

Like Manhattan's Washington Mews, Kentlands' alleys are called mews, although they have no historical connection to the stable. The residential areas contain the majority of the mews, however, a few alleys exist in the commercial center to make connections between parking areas and businesses. Like Kentlands' plan, the alleys basically follow a modified grid pattern. However, the alleys do deviate from the grid, complicating it with bends, curves, and branching alleys.

In Kentlands, three different types of alleys surfaced in this study – the pedestrian/vehicular alley, the residential court, and the residential service alley, which is the most prevalent. Kentlands also has a system of walkways that tie the alleys directly into a pedestrian system circulating through the development. These alleys are clean and well-organized, harboring automobiles, garbage cans, and the occasional basketball hoop. In fact, their order and cleanliness is extreme, with the buildings and fences lining the alley creating a highly regular and repetitive pattern. In contrast to the older communities already surveyed, the cleanliness and order of Kentlands' alleys reflects its newness and their lack of complexity and history. Instead, the "mews" borrow the history of older, respected communities and landscapes such as New York's MacDougal Alley and Washington Mews, but its widespread application to alleys confuses the purpose of each individual alley.[5]

- Pedestrian/Vehicular Alley – Between Main Street and the Rear Parking Lot

This short unnamed alley connects Main Street with the rear parking area in the mixed-use commercial district (see figures 48 and 49). Only as long as the buildings are deep, it provides the main vehicular access to the rear parking area and accommodates pedestrians with a four-

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[5] A confirmation of this is that one of the named mews contains a sign that reads "No Parking in the Alley". Furthermore, the term "mews" has completely replaced the more common term of "alleys" as evidenced by my conversation with the Gaithersburg town planner: when I mentioned that I was looking at Kentlands alleys, he corrected me and said that they were referred to as "mews".

foot sidewalk along one edge. Building access can only be obtained along the front street and within the parking area.

Solidly lined by three-story buildings, the alley is linear and uncomplicated. Open to the parking lot and the big box retail stores that form its rear edge, this alley is little more than a driveway with walls, not unlike Northampton's Cracker Barrel Alley. However, it contains no graffiti, artwork, lighting or distinguishing characteristics. Nor does it contain the utility lines that drape across many of the other urban alleys. Instead, all of the distinguishing characteristics are reserved for the front streets and the utility lines are neatly buried under the streets.

Figure 48: Kentlands' Midtown Mews and Main Street Alley Figure Ground Diagram. The gray boxes and stars indicate the location of the alleys.

Figure 49: The alley connecting to the parking area is little more than a driveway with walls.

- Residential Service Alley – Otis Mews

Otis Mews, a residential service alley, typifies the most common alley in Kentlands. Perhaps closer to the traditional rear alley, this "mews" is a functional landscape where the automobile rules. Here garages form a continuous wall along the alley (see figures 50, 51, and 52). Occasional breaks occur between garages where small yards edge the alley or where walks connect the alley to the street. These walkways make the most direct, functional connections between the alley and the front street residences. In the space between garages, residents tuck away the visual details of their lives, such as basketball hoops, grills and trashcans, which are a fairly common occurrence in the mews. More personal expressions in the alley show that the residents have a vested interest in, and assume ownership of, the alley; these expressions take the form of hand-crafted signs and plantings, some of which screen properties and fences or mark gated entrances to private property.

Figure 50: Non-descript garages dominate the landscape of Otis Mews.

The dominant feature of Otis Mews is the garage. Together, the garages and alley fences form a continuous wall within the alley. Because there is so little variation in the garages due to the repetitive pattern created by the mass-produced siding, a continuous and non-distinct pattern is created in the alley. In an attempt to offset this anonymity, all the garages have numbers corresponding to the number of the front street residence. Unlike many urban alleys studied here, there is a continuous source of lighting within the alley from the lights positioned above the garage doors. While the alley hides the most despised technology of this community – the automobile – other less offensive utilities such as large utility boxes crop up at various points in the alleys, as well as at intersections with cross streets.

Figure 51: Like Otis Mews, most of Kentlands' alleys make several turns. This bending and twisting turns the urban grid on its head.

Despite the large number of windows facing the alley, the garages obstruct the view from the homes into the alley, limiting the amount of the alley visible from the home. Greater visibility of the alley is afforded at points where the alley turns a corner or where there is a break in the line of garages.
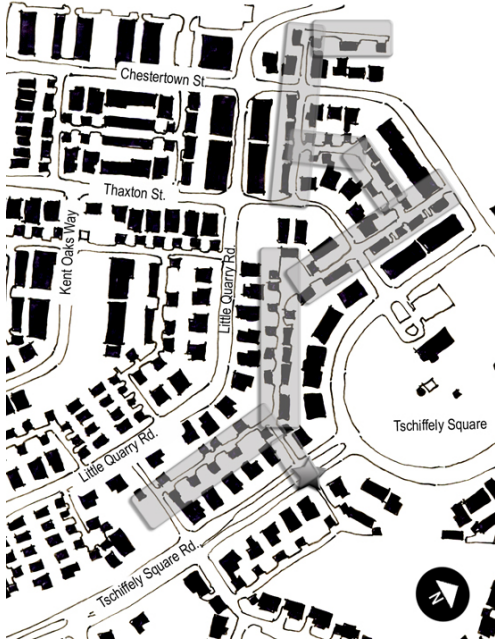
Figure 52: Kentlands' Otis Mews Figure Ground Diagram. The gray boxes and stars indicate the location of the alleys.

- Residential Court – Midtown Mews

Jutting off of Midtown Road, Midtown Mews is not an alley in any sense (see figures 48 and 53). Functionally, Midtown Mews is a common drive or a cul-de-sac. Though oddly enough, its name, "mews", puts it in the same category as the other alleys in Kentlands. Unlike the intermixing of alley names in places like MacDougal Alley and Washington Mews, this "mews" maintains no direct connection to equine history.

Instead, single-family homes line the mews and, here, the residents access all services such as mailboxes, front porches, and garages. Unlike the buildings located along other alleys, these homes do not have another street or way that they front on. Their primary façade faces the alley. This is most significant aspect of this "alley". Instead of servicing the backside or secondary façades of buildings, this alley's focus is on the primary façade of the home. The only buildings or homes that do not directly face the mews are those located at the corner where Midtown Mews joins Midtown Road.

Figure 53: Like New York's MacDougal Alley, Midtown Mews is essentially a private street.

Houses located on Midtown Mews are spread out in the same way that houses are distributed around a cul-de-sac – in an almost radial pattern. None of the dwellings on the mews create a continuous building line to form walls enclosing the alley. However, like the residential alleys in Holyoke, fences in yards line a portion of the mews' edge, although some of Midtown Mews' yards are front yards and thus take on a different status within the social hierarchy of the landscape.

Lacking the history of urban settlement that the other studied communities possess, Kentlands and its alleys reflect the contemporary values of educated and elite people, such as their disdain for the automobile. While other communities redefined their identities, Kentlands identity was *pre-determined* through its design. This is visible in the alleys, where orderly, controlled, well-maintained landscapes communicate the values of middle and upper-middle class people. As this was part of the design intention, Kentlands actually appealed to, and attracted, the middle and upper-middle class. As it is still too young to have had to struggle with its identity and break away from this pre-determined form, Kentlands reflects only the values of this limited group and not the broader histories and varied cultures of the older communities.

While the following chapter – Controlling the Alley – examines this critical difference between the new alleys of Kentlands and the older alleys of the traditional communities, this chapter set the stage for this comparison. It built important criteria for reading the alley including, but not limited to, the surrounding land use, the primary use of the alley, the personalization of space, and the presence of adapted structures, and buildings or residences fronting onto the alley. These criteria provide a framework for observing alleys and, indeed, the larger landscape. This framework, as we shall see, helps observers to learn about the history, social conditions and identity of a community. Finally, this chapter took these observations and, from them, outlined eight categories of alleys: the pedestrian alley, pedestrian/vehicular alley, commercial alley-street, commercial service alley, commercial/residential service alley, residential service alley, residential court, and residential service court. The classification of alleys into these eight types allows for the comparison of the communities in the next chapter.

CHAPTER 3

CONTROLLING THE ALLEY

This chapter explores how these alleys compare to each other and how they vary across the spectrum of communities. It addresses how issues of control, order, and hierarchy play out in the alley landscape. The degree of control over the alleys surfaces as the most important factor in determining the character of the alley and is also the most telling about a community. When the control of a space is relinquished and allowed to become more fluid and organic, the result is a landscape that is filled with mystery, variety, drama, and intrigue. These are characteristics that set the traditional, older established alleys apart from their New Urbanist counterparts.

Alley Types of Older Communities Compared to the Alleys of New Communities

The alleys studied here represent a spectrum of communities in which the alley is controlled to varying degrees. Essentially the traditional alleys are not designed at all and have a less deliberate form that is more fluid, loose and irregular than the new alleys of Kentlands. In these older communities, less attention is paid to the details and form of the back alley than what one is accustomed to on a main street, clearly establishing the alley landscape as one of secondary importance. In Kentlands, this hierarchy is blurred as the rigid and regular form of the alleys conveys a sense of control as orderly as a front street. To look at this more closely and fully, this chapter compares the new alleys of Kentlands, which are comprised of the pedestrian/vehicular alley, the residential court, and the residential service alley, to their counterparts in the traditional communities.

Beginning with the pedestrian/vehicular alleys in Kentlands and Northampton, subtle but significant differences are noticeable. In Kentlands, the alley joins Main Street from a rear parking area (see figures 48 and 49). While the quaint residential alleys are named, the alley in the commercial center is unnamed, in an attempt to downplay the lack of creativity in dealing with the commercial alley, the incongruousness of this kind of alley in Kentlands' landscape, and the

necessary large-scale intrusion of the automobile in the commercial district. The best comparison for this is Northampton's Cracker Barrel Alley (see figures 26, 29 and 30), which also connects the Main Street shopping district to a rear parking lot. Primarily, each one is simple in its form and function, both providing direct pedestrian and vehicular connections through solid street fronts. In Kentlands, the alley is approximately twenty feet in width and forty feet in length, walled by two solid buildings on either side. These brick buildings have little variation along their length and are only embellished with a few windows and electric utility boxes. The entrance to the alley is opposite an apartment complex.

By contrast, Cracker Barrel Alley holds an important position in the community landscape, sitting opposite the Northampton City Hall and, by naming the alley, the city celebrates this important space – and their ability to effectively and positively deal with automobiles and parking. Occurring at a major pivot point where Main Street makes a dramatic bend, Cracker Barrel Alley is the only break in the long, solid building wall of the street. At this turning point, a large mural on the wall, "Skateboarders", a few errant pieces of graffiti and a street sign mark the entrance to the alley. From here, the alley slopes down into the parking lot and is hedged in by brick buildings. However, instead of a solid building wall, the interior of this alley has an irregular form, with one wall having an awkward, angled chunk almost literally plucked out of its massing.

This "chunk" is the major formal element that sets it apart from the Kentlands alley. Significant in its difference, the small space created by the change in building mass breaks the wall and adds variety, mystery, and intrigue to the enclosed alley. Awkward spaces such as this indicate that a certain amount of control was relinquished in the planning of this landscape and the design of the neighboring buildings, allowing the building massing to take on a more organic form. In this sense, the accidental creation of space makes the alley more interesting. Additional drama and interest are added to the alley by murals and graffiti. Again these latter elements illuminate the extent to which a community responds to built spaces and community landscapes in both encouraged, legal ways, as in the case of the mural, and in covert, illegal ways, as shown by the graffiti. The grade change is an example of how challenging site conditions can be

embraced to create a more dramatic experience. Unadorned and purely linear in its form, the Kentlands alley's lack of variation prohibits it from developing character.

What is important to consider in comparing the form and details of these alleys is if, and how, the rigidity and regularity of form breaks down into a less controlled and more organic landscape. In Northampton, the alley is an important component of the city's landscape, however, it nonetheless expresses a willful and playful ignorance of the building and maintenance norms that front streets follow, which include having solid buildings that are well detailed and are free of irregularities, defects and graffiti. Kentlands' alley merely accepts these norms, leaving them unchallenged.

Turning to the residential court alley, it is clear that the alley used in this way begins to diverge from the true function of the alley, which typically provides service and/or access to building rears. As a private court, the streetscape is more about providing a quaint living experience than establishing connections or fulfilling a service function. In Kentlands, Midtown Mews (see figures 48 and 53) falls into this category and it is comparable to New York's MacDougal Alley and Washington Mews (see figures 39, 40, and 41). All of these alleys function as narrow, private courts, blurring the line between alley and street. Midtown Mews is made up of private, single-family homes, which are only accessible via the Mews and all of their activities and services front onto what is, essentially, a common driveway. Both MacDougal Alley and Washington Mews are private streets that are lined with apartments housed in former stables and other service buildings. As in Kentlands, these homes are similar in treatment, detail and organization to front street buildings because they present their primary façades to the "alley".

In New York, MacDougal Alley and Washington Mews once served a functional role by storing stables. As residential courts, they have maintained their historic origins in their titles. However, the widespread use of the term "mews" in Kentlands bears no relationship to the reality of the site; its history is merely borrowed. Furthermore, in Kentlands the term "mews" is used interchangeably with "alley". Because this mews, or alley, is more like a private street, it leads one to question whether it was really the alley that Kentlands' designers wanted to create when laying out the community infrastructure. Instead, what we see in Midtown Mews is a

superimposition of the alley history onto the suburban language of the cul-de-sac or common drive, with designer's Duany Plater-Zyberk using Washington Mews and MacDougal Alley as the precedent for their transformation. In essence, what this shows is that the New Urbanist designers have mixed feelings about how to define the alley.

In Kentlands' residential service alley, Otis Mews, the designers chose another route in this pursuit to define the alley and here they have trouble deciding on how far to push it in determining the right balance of control (i.e. the pre-determined and/or closely reigned use and appearance of the alley), attention to detail (i.e. the level of ornamentation, decoration and/or consideration given to the spatial organization) and functionality. The primary function of Otis Mews is to provide a service connection to the rear of the residences; it can be compared to the residential alleys of Holyoke (see figures 17, 18, 50, 51, and 52). While Otis Mews does function as a residential service alley by servicing the surrounding residences and storing automobiles, utilities, and trash receptacles, its form and visual language distinguish it from the alleys of Holyoke. Looking at the building line of Otis Mews, it is a continuous, repetitive, and exact mass of garages. The breaks along the alley are regular, rhythmic, and organized, occurring approximately every seventh garage. Breaks in the building line are either narrow gated walks to the front street or are fenced yards and each fence or gate is in one of three or four general styles, which are selected from a catalogue of acceptable styles. The breaks in the garage line are barely noticeable because the garages essentially create a solid visual wall with their identical details such as their height, doors, roof pitch, electric lights, door numbers, window locations and their neutral colored horizontal siding.

By contrast, a Holyoke residential alley between Walnut and Elm Street is a linear alley mostly lined by yards and separated from the alley by a four-foot high chain-link fence (see figures 16, 17, and 18). The yards along the alley cause the visual line of the alley to expand and fluctuate to include the distance between the residences, putting the private residential spaces on display. Although the alley is lined with a typical catalogue fence, the visual permeability of the chainlink allows the fence line to dissipate. Intermittently, garages speckle the alley and parking lots interrupts the residential pattern.

Holyoke's alleys are not rigid in their form and detail, but are instead fluid. Instead of being concerned with details and finely tuned organization, its primary focus is providing a means of access and service to the interior of the block. With this function achieved, there is still room for the alley to take on different forms and visual qualities.

Why Control Matters

These comparisons raise several issues, one of them being the cultural and personal expression of the alley. First, the controlled planning of the alley landscape leaves little room for variation. This is important because variety creates interest and intrigue and allows for cultural expression in the alley. For example, in the jagged line of Northampton's Cracker Barrel Alley, slightly awkward and eccentric variations in building lines create exciting moments of intrigue and mystery. Second, the efforts to control all of the details of the rear landscape sanitize it and stifle cultural expressions. Otis Mews is an example of this over-emphasis on order and control, while Holyoke's residential alleys demonstrate how the alley does not have to sacrifice its casualness for function. Of great importance in the alleys of the New Urbanist communities is that the power to determine how space is personalized and to what extent it is put on view to the public is removed from the residents' control. In Kentlands, there are few opportunities for the personalization of public space, and these personalizations become object oriented with basketball hoops, alley plantings and fence and gate decorations, instead of spatially oriented with changes in building massing and organization.

While the control and regulation of a space has the potential to make it safe and secure, as in Harlem's gated alleys, this is not the case in Kentlands. In Kentlands the continuous and solid line of garages creates a less safe environment by forming a virtually solid barrier between the alley and the residence, which limits the visibility into the alley. What sightlines do exist into the alley are from upper-story windows, creating blind spots that allow for any number of activities to go undetected. Instead, in Kentlands, the stress is placed on the perceived safety of the alley, which is done by controlling and organizing the alley by creating an extremely well-maintained landscape that has a pre-determined appearance that has been decided upon by the developers

and designers rather than individual residents and homeowners. Therefore, safety appears to be used as an excuse for maintaining a firm grasp over all the details of the alley. However, what the designers actually achieved is limiting the potential for character within the alley and the community, in addition to creating potentially unsafe environments.

Historically, the alley is based on function and flexibility, as both Borchert and Beasley described. In the late-1800s and early-1900s, the emphasis was put on maintaining appearances on the front street and so the alley received less attention. Functionally, the alley serviced the front house and kept the disorderly items – including slaves, servants, stables, manure, and make shift housing – out of the public view. These functions were the primary focus of the alley space and, subsequently, in the alley, control, order and design continually brokedown. The result was that the alley became a place where function, survival, and economic efficiency fluidly fed into each other.

As Borchert detailed, the alley residents were flexible in their use of the alley, such as changing the stables to residences and using available yard space to store lumber, which was reclaimed in the alley and then used for heating fuel. Because space was limited in the homes, the alley was a place where the social lives of residents spilled into the alley and were visible to all. As discussed in the first chapter, this "uncontrolled" landscape was problematic in the eyes of the reformers. Consequently, they sought to control the alley, as Lawrence Veiller did by recommending that the city assume responsibility for their maintenance, paving, lighting, and policing. Ultimately, this fervor to rid the society of the evils of the alley resulted in a removal of the alley from the design language of community master plans.

Today, with the New Urbanists' adoption of the traditional neighborhood and its alleys, they have picked up on the Progressive Era's reform tactics. The reformers sought to clean up the alleys and streets; they did so with the intention of removing not only the dirt and grime, but the expressions of life and immigrant culture that were a part of the alley culture and landscape.

This clean up and organization effort is very much a part of today's New Urbanist alley, only it is reflective of the more contemporary values of the upper-middle class. That the New Urbanists consider the automobile to be dirty is apparent in the alley. However, the control

exerted over the landscape also expresses a desire to more closely define how the community residents express themselves. This is what differentiates the new alleys from the older alleys. And so the result of the New Urbanist alley-building efforts in Kentlands actually creates what the New Urbanists are reacting against – the prescribed, placelessness of the modern suburb. Instead of eliminating the placelessness of the suburb, they only shift it to building sides and to the rear alleys. Like the criticized automobile-centric, placeless suburbs, the alley is a placeless landscape where community members prioritize the functions of the automobile to the exclusion of other, more fluid and personal expressions of space.

Control, Class and Creating Community Identity

The lesson learned from Kentlands, and its traditional community counterparts, is larger than the sole issue of control. From seemingly simple observations of the physical landscape considered in light of historical and demographic information, many larger lessons about the social life of communities are obtainable. Here, the larger lesson is about control, cleanliness, order, and tidiness as an expression and reflection of class, community, social values, and moral rectitude. Kentlands' overemphasis on control and tidiness separates it from the traditional alley and community. With the clean and orderly alley, the New Urbanists imply that Kentlands is a morally virtuous community and by extension, so are its residents. This is in contrast to its historic predecessors in Galveston and Washington D.C. or its contemporary counterparts in Holyoke.

By organizing the alley and, in fact, bestowing a name upon it, the alley takes on a persona that is based on history and a romanticized working-class ethic. Furthermore, it is these organizing efforts that allow us to navigate the boundaries of class and community identity. At one end is Kentlands, where its residents and the alleys are clean, orderly, controlled, and implicitly virtuous. On the opposite end of the spectrum is Holyoke with its unnamed, messy alleys and its implicitly degenerate lower class, lower income ethnic residents. The older established communities like Amherst, Northampton, and New York walk the middle ground. These communities are either gentrified, as is the case in Amherst and Northampton, or, in New

York's case, they are based on markets, dollars and a zealous desire for control of money and land. Whichever the case may be, all of these older communities implicitly have a mixture of virtuous and reprobate citizens, which signals the community's efforts to negotiate their identity by struggling with their past, trying to reinvent their identities, and attempting to reinvigorate their economies. Through this process of identity and image change, they become what they want to be – more attractive, virtuous communities of progress, order and achievement.

Across this spectrum of control and order, the low-end alley community of Holyoke and the middle ground occupied by New York, Amherst and Northampton become all the more important when considering Kentlands and its alleys. This is because in these older communities, the debate about class and control is an on-going battle. Unlike Kentlands, where the class and morality of the people and the landscape was decided before it was completed, the other communities have a history, which they must acknowledge. They must also engage in a debate about their identity, while reinventing themselves. The alleys and their cultural meaning are a part of this debate and contribute to the complexity of the landscape.

In Holyoke, the community's mill-town identity and its alleys place it within a working-class framework, although it, too, is trying to reshape its image and economy. Amherst and Northampton have already undergone a transformation from agricultural and factory communities to college towns. In this transformation they have chosen to leave well enough alone and resisted the urge to control and organize every part of their landscape, as is evidenced by the Crafts Avenue alley in Northampton and the narrow alley in Amherst. New York's own torn struggle is evident in Jones and MacDougal Alleys. Both are part of New York's historic landscape, yet Jones Alley has retained its gritty, working-class roots while MacDougal Alley has been reformed into a progressive landscape of affluence.

Kentlands and its alleys are problematic because they have yet to engage or address issues of class and power. These issues are very much a part of every community and they are influenced by, and visible in, efforts to design and control environments. In Kentlands' case, the controlled alley landscape plays a role in attracting potential residents and creating a community identity, which relies upon society's ideals about the organized, tidy landscape and its associated

79

values. In the minds of the developers, planners and designers, the right landscape would create and attract right-minded people with right-minded values.

In the first chapter, the exploration of the alley history revealed that the dynamism of the alley was an integral part of the traditional alley landscape. Flexibility, adaptability, and change contributed to the use of the alley. Control was in the hands of the users, who fashioned the alley to suit their functional and survival needs. Beasley extensively catalogued these efforts in her examination of the turn of the century conditions of Galveston's alleys. Borchert's interpretation of the alleys of Washington D.C. also provides a sound example of how the control of the alley was left up to the residents who established homes, businesses and social communities in the back alley. Because the alley was not considered worthy of the same attention given to the front street, a laissez-faire attitude towards the alley developed. Later, the subject of historic preservation efforts, the alleys were under the control of the upper-middle class who determined the order and form of the alley. Nonetheless, this was a part of Washington D.C.'s struggle to both accept its history and re-configure its identity and this potential for change and reinvention is important to a community's identity.

Conclusion – Continuing the Struggle for Identity

This study provides a framework for placing the New Urbanist alleys within an historical and social context. From this research, it is clear that the New Urbanists are in the business of designing landscapes and, thereby, defining communities. By shaping each intimate detail of a community, as seen in the alley, the New Urbanist approach leaves little to chance. Through a seemingly simple observation of the physical landscape, the lesson learned is that the form, organization and control of the alley reflect a community and its ideals and values. In older traditional communities, what is reflected is the age and the evolving and negotiated identity of the community. In the New Urbanist community of Kentlands, the reflection is one of prediction and choice. The design of Kentlands and its alleys attracts a certain type of resident who *chooses* to make their home there. In this manner, the design then predicts who will live there, what their social and economic standing will be, and to what values they will subscribe. In the

80

older, traditional communities, the designs are not set. Instead, their continual evolution is one that reflects the changing status of the community and its residents. While we, as a society, may strive for social improvement and upward mobility, it is faulty to think that our communities have only one destiny and one identity, which is determined at the outset rather than over time and with the input of generations of residents.

In addition to these lessons regarding the current state of the traditional and New Urbanist communities and their alleys, this thesis also presents exciting, important questions and issues that are worthy of further investigation. These questions will prove fruitful to future discussions regarding the creation and development of communities with physically and socially diverse landscapes. Future studies undertaken by urban designers and landscape architects must include direct comparisons between the form, function and treatment of a community's front streets to its back alleys, which will bring additional clarity to the hierarchy of community landscapes and help determine the extent to which landscape architects and planners must specify and control the form and details of the alley. Additionally, to validate the argument that Kentlands alleys are controlled to a point of blurring the line between front street, back alley and private court, Kentlands' alleys must be studied in explicit relation to each other and their front streets.

The comparison of alleys in this study was predicated upon the difference between alleys in communities of varying ages. More precisely, it measured the new alleys of New Urbanist communities against communities established over a hundred years ago and which pre-date the suburban model of city planning. These traditional established communities and their alleys have time on their side, with over a hundred years in their favor. As a result, they have already struggled with their identities over time and have had time to develop a patina. Therefore, conducting further studies on Kentlands alleys will eliminate the bias of time, allowing Kentlands to be tested for its ability to change. In the more immediate future, these and other alley communities must be studied in terms of their original and/or early plans and ordinances. From this, direct comparisons between the plans, building massings, ordinances, and degrees of control of the traditional alleys can be made to the new alleys of the neo-traditional communities.

This will contribute to an understanding of how initial design intentions and efforts to guide community character actually play out in the reality of time.

Furthermore, these effects of time on community development and character can be explored by comparing Kentlands to Long Island's Levittown, a planned post-World War II community, which was built in an assembly-line fashion. The criticisms that plague New Urbanism, such as its sterile and scripted form, also plagued the mass produced landscape of Levittown. Looking at Levittown's changes since it was built in the 1940s will provide an indication of the issues that Kentlands faces in its future, including what policy changes are necessary to allow for diversity and flexibility, and how it might respond to those issues.

It must not be ignored that the alley is a culturally-loaded icon in our culture and is one that sends conflicting messages. Our culture both fears and is drawn to the alley because of both its potential for danger and for its ability to hide interesting, and perhaps, forbidden activities and items of interest. These conflicting issues are not only visible in the collective American culture, but are also visibly apparent in Kentlands' appreciation for the alley and it's controlling tendencies. Exploring how the alley is represented in our popular culture will reveal much about these issues. With these issues addressed and confronted, as they have been done here, professionals can better design and shape spaces that both allay our fears and allow for a certain amount of flexibility and design freedom, which will contribute to the creation of communities with a sense of place and a distinct identity.

Similarly, research into the cultural landscape of the alley must also make a connection between the use of the alley and our cultural values. While the alley repels some people and businesses, why do others choose to use the alleys as a pedestrian, commercial or play space? Furthermore, to truly make the alley a viable entity in the contemporary landscape, it serves the professional designers, planners, and landscape architects to understand the logistical and technical issues regarding the alley so that they can reconcile these with the cultural landscape. For example, how does the alley factor into the daily operations of the public works departments? What concerns or issues do the police have in patrolling the alley? Does the alley present a real or imagined threat of danger and how do alleys compare to streets in their incidents of crime?

It is of great interest and importance to scrutinize the policies that have an impact on these alleys, their creation, form, and function. For example, in the various communities, are there policies and/or ordinances in place to control the alley in its form and function? How do zoning and building codes affect the form of the alley and the buildings that shape its edges? What policies exist to promote the alley as a viable place for the location of a business? For example, in Northampton, the city planning department promotes the alley as secondary streetscape where viable businesses are, and may be located. Consequently, their downtown plan addresses how these businesses may promote themselves on the front street.

For better or worse, alleys are a part of our communities. With the New Urbanism encouraging the re-incorporation of the alley and the return of the traditional community, we must first understand how they work in all of their unflattering grit and gore. As the Kentlands alleys attest, it is not enough to extract these elements and reconfigure them for our modern times. It is of critical importance to the creation of diverse communities that we understand their intimate and complex nature. This is all the more necessary when professionals are forced to make conscious design choices regarding hierarchy, control, and order. Researchers, design professionals and communities must raise questions as to what the essential qualities and characteristics of spaces are before they are paved with asphalt, sided with aluminum clapboards, lined with fences, or vigorously cleansed to remove all evidence that a person belonging to a community once used them. In short, the desire to thoroughly clean, control and organize the landscape must be resisted. After all, is this not why people adore the alley – because its layers of dirt, grime and obscurities are also layers of history, telling us that someone has been there before us and, yes, they may still be waiting for us, lurking around the next bend.

COMMUNITY DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILES

Community Demographic Profiles

Community	Year Incorporated	Total Population	Median Age (in years)	White	Non-White	Hispanic or Latino (of any race)	Per Capita Income in 1990*	Owner-occupied Households	Renter-occupied Households
Amherst, MA	1775	34,874	21.8	27,665 (79%)	7,209 (21%)	2,159 (6%)	$8,165	4131 (45%)	5,043 (55%)
Holyoke, MA	1850	39,838	34	26,197 (66%)	13,641 (34%)	16,485 (41%)	$11,088	6,205 (42%)	8,762 (58%)
Northampton, MA	1883	28,978	37.3	26,083 (90%)	2,895 (10%)	1,518 (5%)	$14,623	6,356 (54%)	5,524 (46%)
New York, NY	1890	8,008,278	34.2	3,576,385 (45%)	4,431,893 (55%)	2,160,554 (27%)	$16,281	912,296 (30%)	2,109,292 (70%)
Kentlands, MD	1988**	8,799	35.5	6,806 (77%)	1993 (23%)	458 (5%)	Not Available	2,695 (77%)	809 (23%)

*Income figures from the U.S. Census Bureau's Census 2000 were not yet available at the time of this writing.
**Refers to the year Kentlands was designed by Duany, Plater-Zyberk.
Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Census 2000.
Table 1

APPENDIX B

ALLEY LOCATIONS AND NUMBER OF ALLEYS STUDIED

Alley Locations	Number of Alleys Surveyed
Amherst, MA	2
Holyoke, MA	10
Northampton, MA	4
New York, NY	18
Kentlands, Gaithersburg, MD	15
Total Number of Alleys Surveyed	**49**

APPENDIX C

ALLEY FORM AND CONDITIONS

Community / Alley	Use (P,V,S)	Ownership – Public or Private	Named	Width	Apparent Length	Directional Signage	Context (R,B,M)	Building Height	Overhead Structures	Porches, Windows, or Doors Visible	Fences	Gated	Continuous Building Line	Garages	Parking in Alley	Connect to Public Parking Lot	Openness (O,N,E)	Open Spaces on Alley	Concealed Spaces	Curve or Shift	Grade Change > 2%	Utilities	Lighting	Vegetation	Paved	Paving Condition	Maintenance and Care	Graffiti/Artwork	Personalized	Buildings or Residences Front	Key Element
Amherst																															
Boltwood Walk	P	Pb.	Y	12'	20'	Y	M	30'	Y	Y	N	N	N	N	N	Y	E	N	Y	Y	N	Y	Y	Y	Y	G	G	Y	Y	Y	Overhead structure
Unnamed	P	Pb.	N	18"	20'	Y	M	20'	Y	N	N	N	Y	N	N	Y	E	N	N	N	Y	N	N	N	Y	G	G	N	Y	N	Tight space
Holyoke																															
Unnamed	V/S	Pvt.	N	15'	blocks	N	R, B	10-40'	N	Y	Y	N	N	Y	Y	N	N	Y	Y	N	N	Y	N	Y	N	P	P	Y	N	N	Linear
Unnamed	V/S	Pvt.	N	15'	blocks	N	R, M	20-30'	N	Y	Y	N	N	Y	Y	Y	O	Y	Y	N	N	Y	N	Y	N	P	P	N	N	N	Linear, open
Unnamed	P/V/S	Pvt.	N	15-20'	blocks	N	M	10-40'	Y	Y	N	N	N	Y	Y	Y	E	N	Y	N	N	Y	N	Y	Y	G	G	N	Y	Y	Linear, enclosed, high ped. use
Northampton																															
Button Street	P/V	Pvt.	Y	25'-35'	60'	N	M	20-30'	N	Y	N	N	N	N	Y	Y	N	N	Y	N	N	Y	N	N	Y	G	G	N	Y	Y	Wide, businesses
Cracker Barrel Alley	P/V/S	Pb.	Y	20'	60'	Y	M	35'	N	Y	N	N	Y	N	Y	Y	E	N	Y	Y	Y	N	N	N	Y	G	G	Y	N	N	Mural, high ped. activity
Unnamed	P/V/S	Pb.	N	15-30'	120'	N	M	30-40'	N	Y	N	N	Y	N	Y	Y	E	N	Y	Y	Y	Y	N	N	Y	F	F	N	Y	Y	Curved, sloped
Kirkland Avenue	P/V	NA	Y	12.5-30'	120'	N	M	30-40'	Y	Y	N	N	N	Y	Y	Y	E	N	Y	N	N	Y	N	N	Y	G	F	Y	Y	Y	Overhead structure
New York City																															
Unnamed	S	Pvt.	N	10'	120'	N	R	60'	N	Y	N	Y	Y	N	N	N	E	N	Y	N	Y	Y	N	N	Y	G	F	N	N	N	Gated, below grade
MacDougal Alley	P/V	Pvt.	Y	40'	120'	Y	R	20'	N	Y	N	Y	N	N	N	N	E	N	Y	N	N	N	N	N	Y	G	G	N	Y	Y	Gated residences
Jones Alley	V/S	Pvt.	N	20'	100'	N	M	30-50'	N	Y	Y	N	Y	N	N	N	E	N	Y	Y	N	Y	N	N	Y	F	P	Y	Y	N	Gated storage area
Cortlandt Alley	P/V/S	Pb.	Y	40'	240'	Y	M	60'	Y	Y	N	N	Y	N	N	N	E	N	Y	N	N	Y	N	N	Y	G	P	Y	Y	N	Highly enclosed
Kentlands																															
Unnamed	P/V	Pb.	N	25'	40'	N	M	30'	N	Y	Y	N	Y	Y	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	Y	N	N	Y	G	G	N	N	Y	Linear, short
Midtown Mews	P/V/S	Pb.	Y	15'	100'	Y	R	20-30'	N	Y	Y	N	N	Y	N	N	O	Y	N	N	N	N	Y	Y	Y	G	G	N	Y	Y	Common Drive
Otis Mews	P/V/S	Pb.	Y	15'	120'+	Y	R	20-30'	N	Y	Y	N	Y	Y	Y	N	E	N	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	N	Y	G	G	N	Y	Y	Multiple turns

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