

# Exploring the Potential of the Suburban Commercial Building: Nurturing Our Paths and Places

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## Exploring the Potential of the Suburban Commercial Building

Nurturing Our Paths and Places

by

Marnie Lanore Boomer

Submitted to the Department of Architecture on May 8, 1992

In partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Degree of  
Master of Science in Architecture Studies

### Abstract

In the advancement of commercial and economic interests, modern society continually litters the earth's landscapes with insensitive buildings. When I speak of the environment I mean not only the landscape in which the building sits, but also the environment of the people within the space. This lack of concern typically found in commercial habitation reflects an attitude of an individually oriented, commodity driven, society. With the changing values of society, we are obligated to review the needs of our "lesser" building types. Through a further evaluation of the potential behind commercial architecture, one might offer suggestions to create and habit these spaces in an educated manner.

This thesis explores the potential which lies beyond stereotypical expectations of the traditional suburban commercial building. The exploration dreams of a place for people rather than commodity. A marketplace which suggests human activity in relation to nature, culture and experience. Through the introduction of these issues in relation to the supermarket, I propose an alternative view to shopping in an effort to enhance the experience and identity of the individual.

Thesis Supervisor: Jan Wampler

Title: Associate Professor



## Acknowledgments

I would like to express my deep sense of gratitude and thanks to the following people:

Jan, for helping me create a better place to dance

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And especially Razberry, ambassador Sir, for giving me the strength to remain sane throughout the semester -- without you this document wouldn't exist

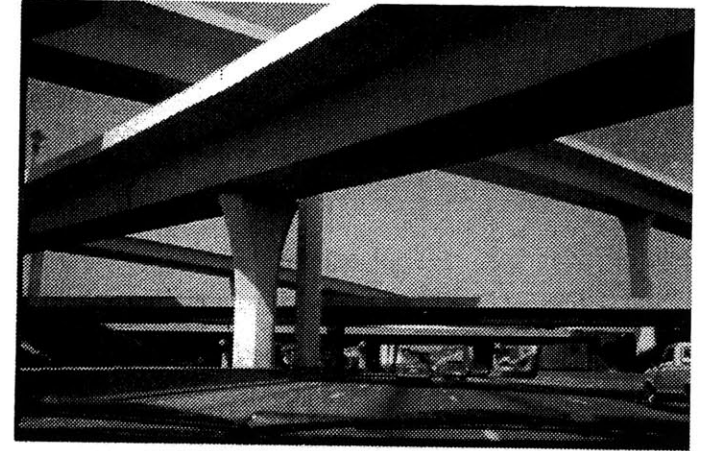


I dedicate this thesis to my grandparents, in honor of the days gone by and the precious moments we have shared which I shall always treasure



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*"Ever since World War I, the promoters and developers of suburban housing have described it as a return to country living. Some millions of units later that has become clearly a fallacy, except for a few isolated star performances. The dream of life in the country, with nature as either agriculture or wilderness, remains a dream for most Americans trapped in metropolitan suburban complexes. These real twentieth century places are expanded job markets, shopping centers, recreation facilities, educational and cultural systems, in which almost all connections are made by telephone, auto or public transit. ...Expedient politics governs the whole convoluted game." (Eckbo, pg. 49)*



## **Introduction**

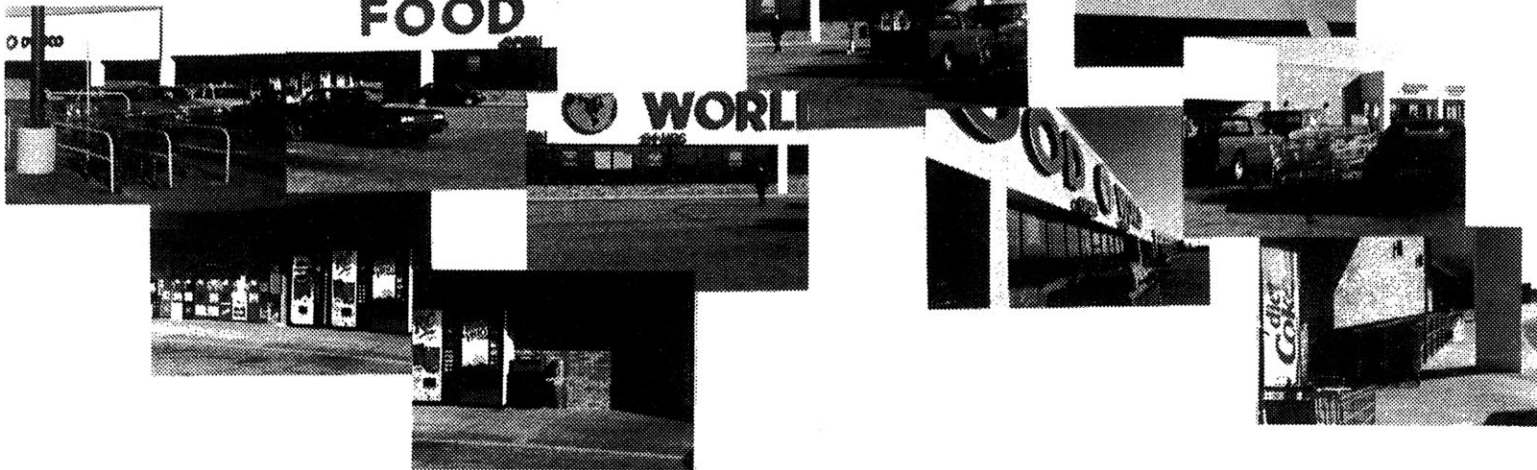
### Concerns for the Twenty-first Century

Imagine a wonderful piece of wooded land; the silence of the forest; the comforting arms of Mother Nature; a world appreciated by the child within each of us; a place to hide, a place to find, a place to change.... A place to change? Why do we confuse the value of a piece of land with the value of mankind? Is not mankind a relative of nature? We are dangerously close to a day when modern man will look for a piece of silent forest, a piece of his soul, and find that there is no silence left.

The American commercial strip has jeopardized the character of our communities. The modern strip is viewed "...not (as) a safe place but a monotonous blight. It betrays the textured history that should distinguish any place. When franchises line the local highway, your town becomes everywhere and nowhere: 'My God, there's a Burger King in Missoula; we might as well be back in Reading!'" (Horwitz, pg. 7) The point is well made, a person traveling to almost any town in the United States and most larger cities in Europe will most likely encounter a MacDonalds. These form of "architecture" cross all cultural boundaries. Elements which traditionally provide identity become lost in advertising.

With the approach of the twenty first century, there appears to be a shift in the character and needs of our society. The effects of mass production, the automobile, and the video age upon our environment have begun to sow doubt into society. Wide-spread enthusiasm is being directed towards a genuine concern for national and global issues. Our culture is rethinking the use of raw materials, the recycling of packaging, the conscious preservation of natural landscapes and a sensitive relationship between members of society. This attention toward the interest of mankind in preserving the environment suggests a need for a re-evaluation of the types and forms of architecture being built, a re-examination of our esthetic values, the acceptance of the ills and the willingness to search for a better solution.





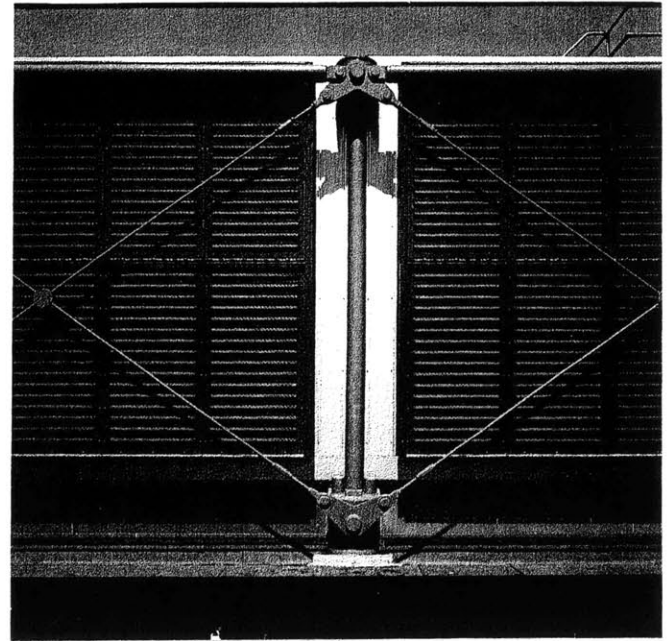
## **The Supermarket as a Building Type**

the American market

*"Let me remind you of what has happened to that very utilitarian, unsightly back yard. The horse has gone, the cow has gone, the chickens have gone thanks to the advent of the supermarket, thanks to zoning ordinances. The Laundromat did away with the clothesline, and the accumulation of trash and garbage has been replaced by the neat black plastic bag deposited at the curb." (Jackson, "The Popular Yard," pg. 27)*

Whether we like to admit it or not, these shopping strips have become an integral part of our culture. Suburban Americans identify with the supermarket. Whatever the name may be; A&P, Star Market, Purity Supreme or Piggly Wiggly -- they offer a similar manner of displaying goods and providing services. Similarities include large parking lots, wide aisles, a line of checkers at the front, a low windowless building, truck loading in the rear, etc.... The building type has remained consistent across the United States due to reasons of cost and efficiency. The supermarket is an afterthought in the community it serves -- neglected, yet fundamental as an element in the area's development and design.

It is time to reevaluate the importance of the supermarket in the lives of the modern age. "Americans visit the Supermarket an average of 2.3 times a week..... Most customers spend 24 minutes per trip, excluding checkout time." (Craig, pg. 111) It is one of the few buildings in the age of communication which continues to be essential to our existence. Yet, the programming and placement in the landscape limits the potential for community existence within its edges. Keeping in mind that the essential nature of these warehouses is to bring community together, this thesis proposes a critical analysis of the elements which might evolve to emit paths and places in the commercial realm.

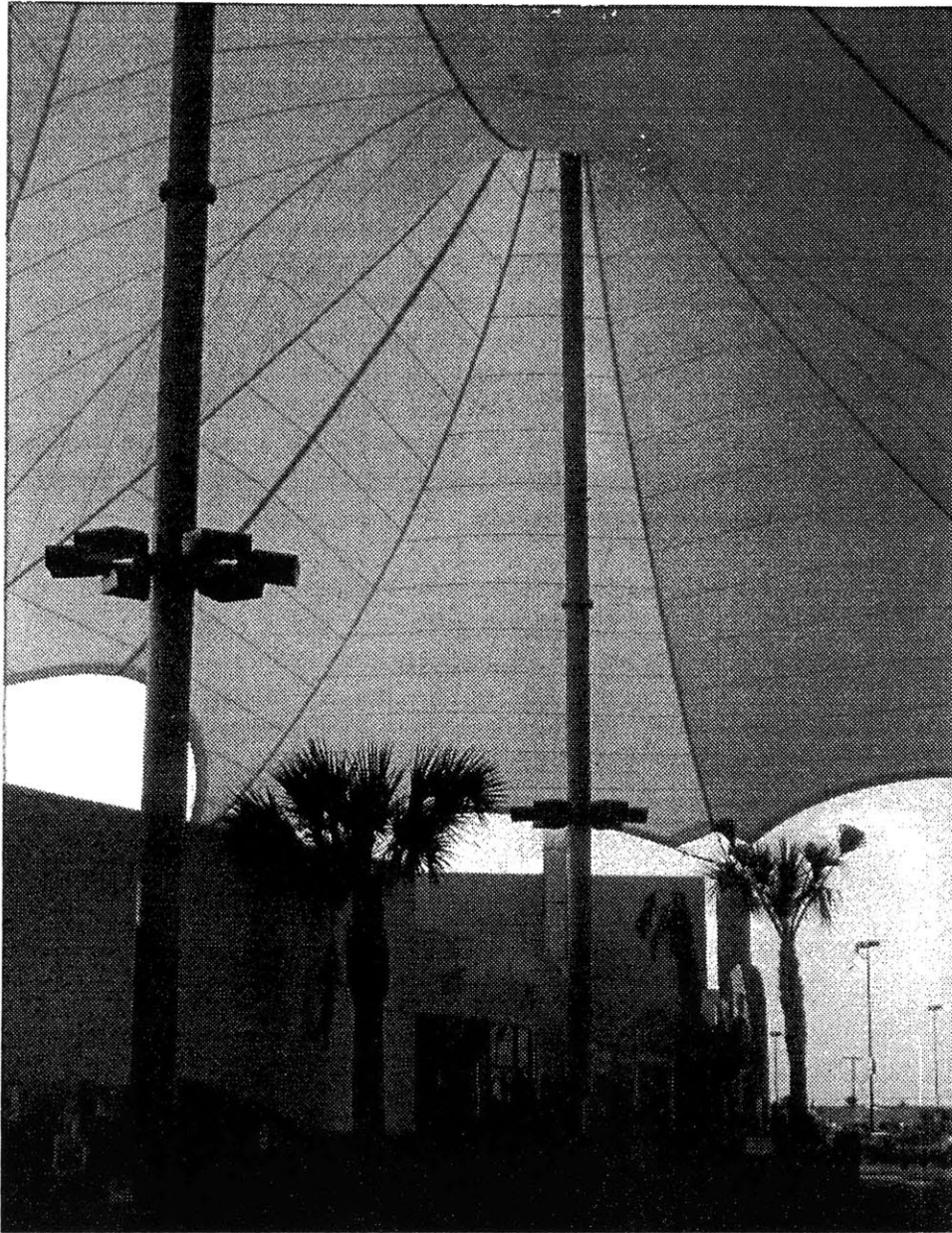




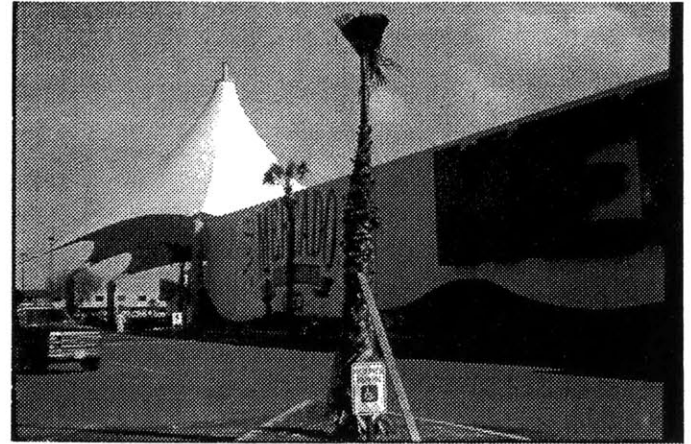
*"Unlike the earlier generation of linear shopping centers, the new ones are highly concentrated, one stop places. You don't have to drive here for this, there for that. You enter an enclosed pedestrian system that is, in effect, a gigantic customer-processing machine." (Wythe, pg. 93)*

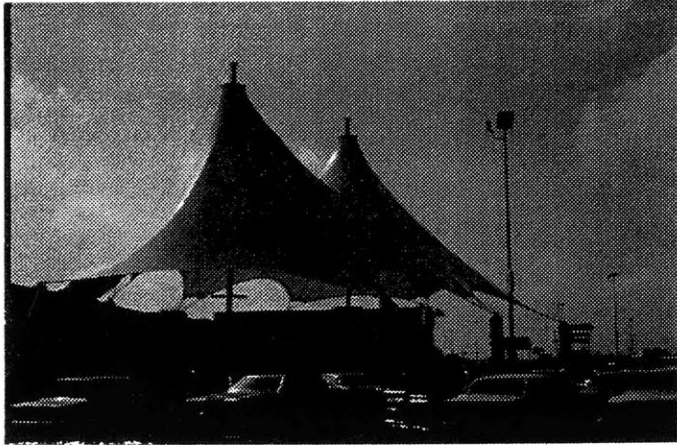
To better understand the supermarket, one must identify the needs of society and the role of the building types within those needs. Our social attitudes in the last fifty years have been largely affected by our automobile dependency. The car influences every aspect of life. For instance, the perception of various places is changed not only by our car arrival, but also by the presence of other cars. This phenomena affects the individual's perception of the world. The growth of a town is no longer limited to the immediate area. People move away from the center of cities towards rural "untamed" America. Thus, as the numbers grow away from the prime shopping areas of the city, a new market emerges. As a result, the suburban shopping strip has appeared littering the edges of our highways in the undefined zone between city and suburb.

Typically, the supermarket sits adjacent to a major thoroughfare, at the edge of a large sea of parking. The promenade to the structure exists as a bleak journey over a desert of asphalt intensified by the rhythm of cars, shopping carts and giant light posts. The destination in view is perceivable only as an amalgam of colorful signage and advertisements in the windows. The entrance of the building is recognizable by the glass opening in the masonry wall.. Behind it one will be greeted by rows of shopping carts and busy cashiers. At this point, the welcoming ritual begins. Each individual has a personal method of exploring the offerings of goods. The movement through the body of the store becomes an instinct guided not only by the memory of shopping the previous week, but also by the careful placement of the isles situated in a manner which best suits a shopping cart and the boards floating overhead that list the aisle contents.



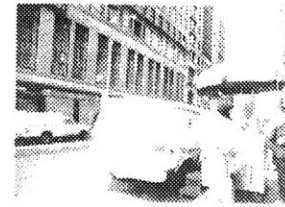
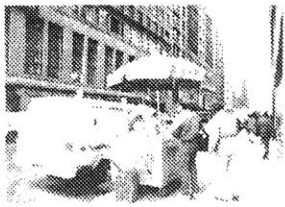
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The supermarket, designed for food retail, has become a true cultural library. The supermarket offers the shopper not only a variety of labels, range of prices, product options, but also a place to see other people, to socialize with friends or to find privacy in the company of others. The grocery store has become an oasis for individuals who have "retreated" to the suburbs. It has become an institution which offers a taste of the society in a microcosms. By offering a "practical" escape from the monotony of suburban life, the supermarket has evolved into a type of community center for many Americans. Yet, in our haste to build an efficient means of selling goods, the supermarket lacks sensitivity towards a spatial identity. The large scale and warehouse aspect of the supermarket demands an intervention. Smaller spatial elements can enhance the relationship of exchange between the building and the individual, and also between the building and the surrounding context. This re-definition of the market's edge would intensify the experience of the larger volumes and provide flexibility in the demands of efficiency.

In an attempt to better understand the significant issues as related to the grocery store, nine different types of market conditions were separated and analyzed. The goal is to better understand the advantages and disadvantages which can be associated with each type of merchant. Important in the analysis were issues of advertising, size, staff, transportation.



### **The Single Vendor:**

The single vendor is a remnant of the first market in existence. A single person with a mobile cart selling food along a major thoroughfare.

This type of market has several advantages. The merchant incorporates advertising directly into the selling vehicle. The bright lettering revealing the product for sale is easily enhanced by the inclusion of the vendor's clear voice announcing the special of the day and possibly a strong aroma of cooking food. The merchant's customers include regular visitors as well as hungry passerby. Of course, the vendor has the control over the selling location. The cart may be moved to locations with the largest market.

The vendors concern for storage, relates directly to the measure of the amount of merchandise which will fit and be re locatable on his cart. Therefore, the amount of business and range of products which the merchant can support is limited. The vehicle is serviced at a location separate from the marketing so there is no relationship to any kind of supply truck. This situation limits the vendor's ability to supply beyond a specific capacity.

The relationship between the customer and the merchant is in the purest state. The form of the selling area is typically only defined by the umbrella covering the merchant's cart. The goods purchased need only to fit into the palm of the hand. The store at this point depends upon an existence in harmony with it's landscape and the pleasure and convenience of the client.





### **The Farmers' Market**

The farmers' market represents the world between the single vendor and the public market. The market is typically a weekly event organized in a loose manner. The farmers drive in their vehicles, typically trucks, and sell their goods directly from their parked position.

The advantages of the farmers' market lies in the freshness of the products and the low cost available when the product is direct from the wholesaler. The flexibility of the individual stalls allows for larger or smaller crowds of buyers. The market can easily adapt to the size of the numbers of sellers.

The farmers typically bring more goods than they can sell, so supply is not an issue, but the variety of goods depends upon the point of the growing season and the amount of harvested goods. The market has no shelter for the customers, thus the success of the market is in the hands of the weather.

This is the most direct form of buying products. The vegetables, fruits and dairy products are fresh and unprocessed.

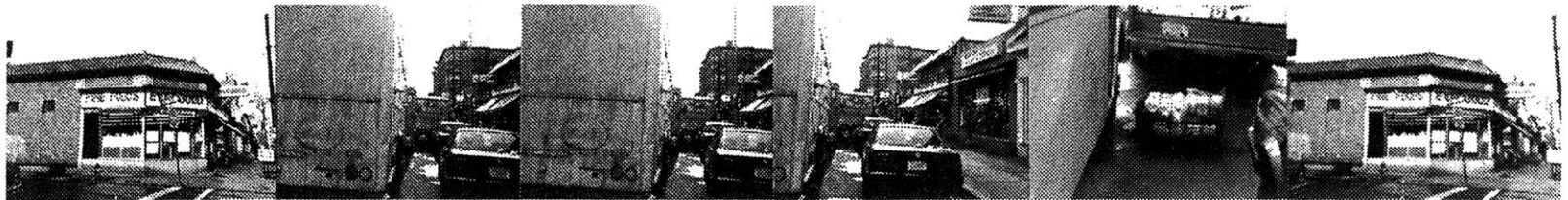
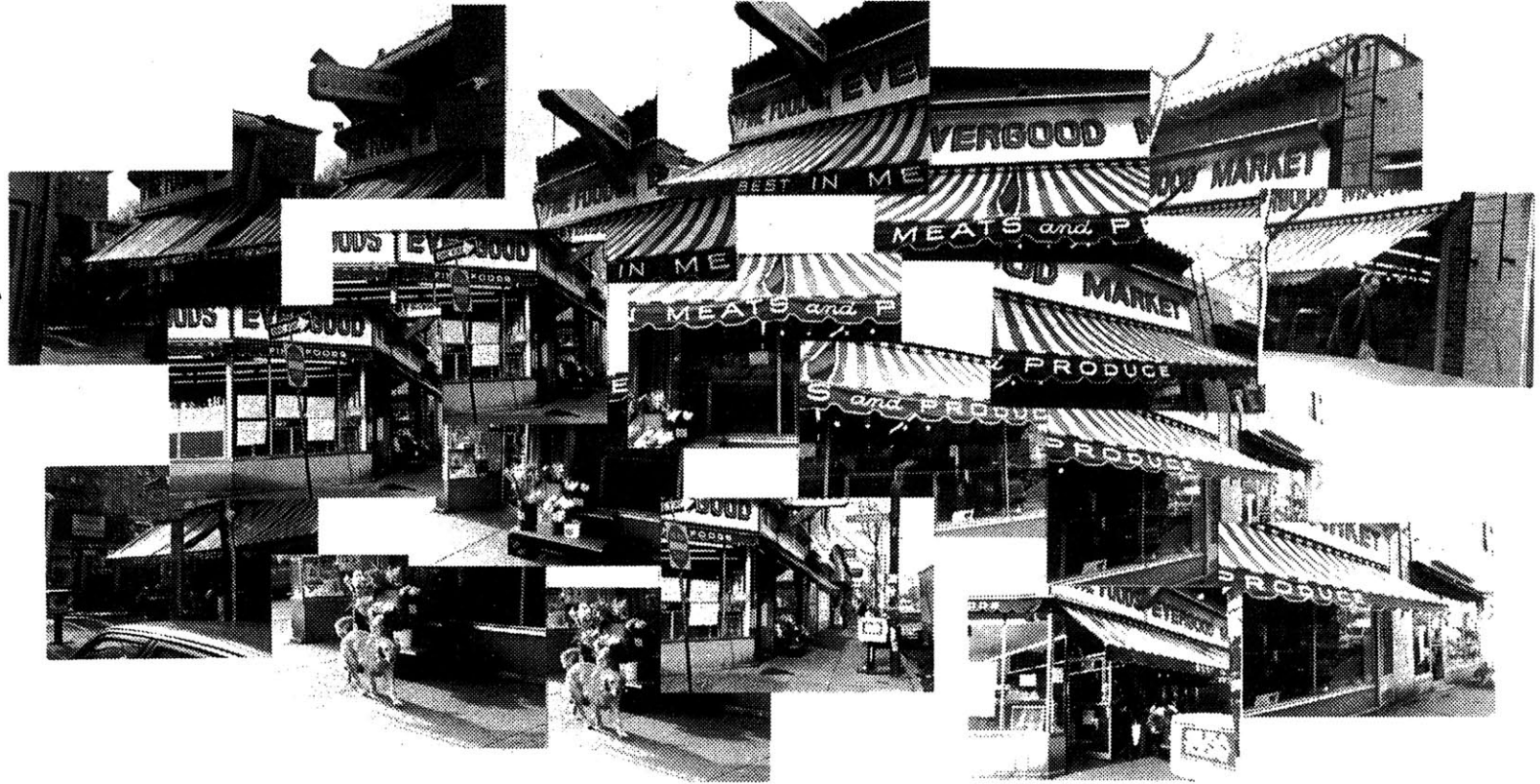
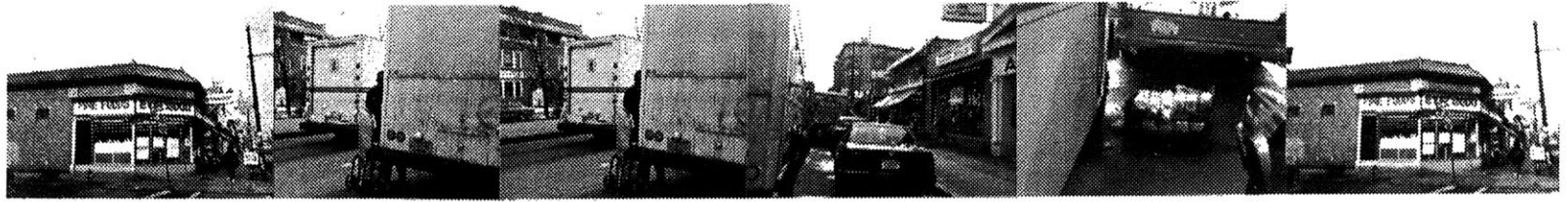


### **The Public/ Open Market**

The public market was the traditional means of selling goods before development and popularity of the supermarket. Similar to the Farmers Market, this type of market depends upon the regularity and predictability of its existence to bring in a regular clientele. This market type stems from a tradition of a planned layout of stalls and merchants. Each merchant is allotted a certain area in which to sell goods. The whole market is organized with some sort of clarity: similar products in the same area, a controlled distance between merchants spaces and defined zones between for the circulation, the merchandise, the merchant and the servicing of the vendor.

There are several advantages in this type of market. The competitive situation of the vendors, creates a low cost on products. The consumer is in close proximity to the goods and is able to judge the quality of the items. The advertising is minimal. Small signs, placed on the products and revealing their value, work in harmony with the ringing voices of the merchants. The market is alive with people, sounds and excitement and creates an atmosphere where products sell fast.

The disadvantages stem from the temporary qualities of the market. The energy needed for such a production limits the existence period. These markets are usually active only a few days a week. The framework in which they are built is usually temporary made, a simple flexible shell. Although the alignment of the stalls with each other typically creates an active defined path, the edges beyond become littered with services, trash and delivery trucks.

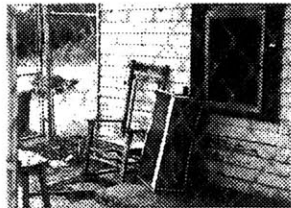
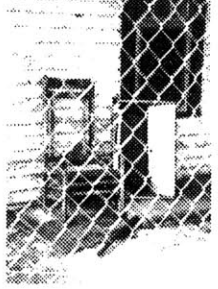
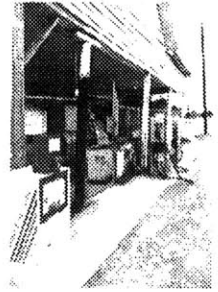
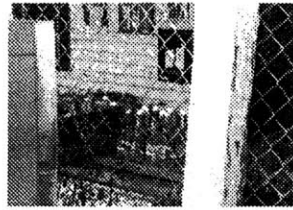


### **The Corner Market**

The Market has played a part on cities and neighborhoods throughout the life of the United States. This small store, stocked with a variety of items from candy to medicine and canned food to fresh bread, often serves as a dependable market for household needs in between the trip to the larger market.

This store type offers to the community convenience and personable size. The store is usually organized in a manner such that members of the community feel comfortable exchanging greetings and current news. The store owner, often, is a prime manager of the establishment. The relationship between the customer and the manager is often close. Due to the vital role of supply that the store plays within a community, the need of large obtrusive advertising is not significant. Small signs displaying the values of the week might appear in the window, but they are certainly not overbearing.

The disadvantages of such a small establishment stem from the limited product space. The selection of brands are often limited. In addition, the prices are typically higher than those of the larger stores. Although the closeness to the neighborhood allows the steady customers to walk, limiting the need for parking space, the lack of a delivery area often creates a situation where the supply trucks block the store front along the street.



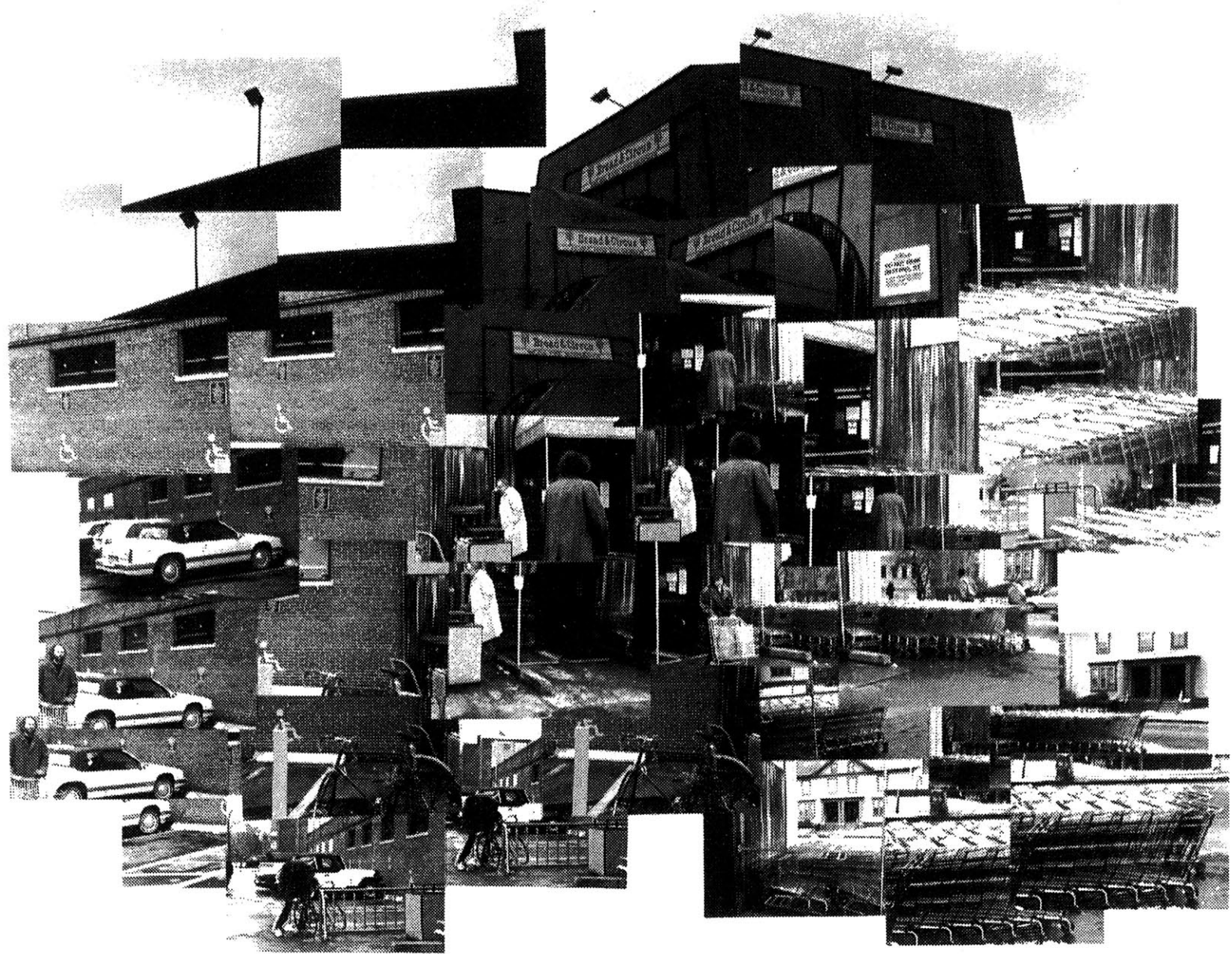
### **The Country Store**

This Country Store is very similar to the corner market in the city, yet the function, due to the rural context in which it is placed, plays an even greater role in the community which it supports. Because of the isolation of its customers, the Country Store is used to supplement supplies in between visits into town. These markets usually formed at the crossing of roads in a place which seemed most convenience to the largest range of customers.

The advantages of such a situation are the variety of items which the store stocks. The traditional country store would supply household items, food supplies, farming equipment, seed and feed, gasoline and conversation. The store often provides extra room amidst the shelves and along the front porch for socializing and community. As a result the store owner often became a key figure in the spreading of information and gossip.

The disadvantages of the country store begin with the remote location in which it is placed. The stocking of such a variety of goods in a fairly small building results in limited quantities of each item. The distance which the customers travel to reach the store often requires vehicular transportation, therefore, the space in front of the store often becomes littered with cars and trucks.



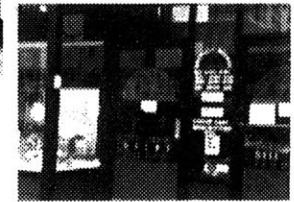
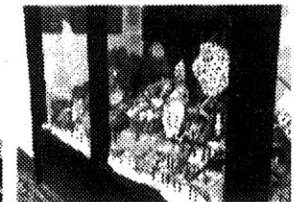
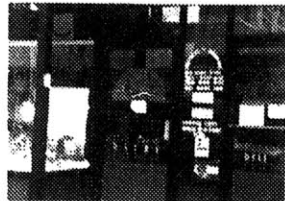


### **The Specialty Store**

The specialty store is found within the city. It is similar to that of the corner market in relation to the surrounding neighborhood, except the building size is usually larger and the clientele typically commutes from outside the community.

The advantages of this type of market lie in the commitment for providing a specialized service to customers who are willing to travel for the products. The products typically are well stocked. The variety products within the store's specialization are typically diverse. The managers of the stores are very sensitive to the wants and needs of the customers. An extra effort is generally made to maintain client/ store communications. The plan of the stores often includes amenities, such as carefully displayed items, clear signs advertising specials, and areas for gathering or meeting.

The disadvantages begin with the specialization of the store. The prices are often slightly higher for the consumers. The need for parking becomes an issue not found in the corner store. Due to the quantity of products delivered, the specialty shop requires a loading area for supply trucks. This type of market lies in the realm between the smaller market and the grocery store.



### **The City Grocery Store**

The city grocery store is often found in a prime location within the city. This market often serves people from outside as well as inside its immediate neighborhood. A limited amount of parking is as important as a proximity to public transit. The grocery is often the prime shopping source for its customers.

The city grocery store offers the advantages of large scale quantity, selection, and value which the corner store does not. This store, which supports a large clientele, is often a member of a larger chain of stores within the region. The large selection of reliable products usually sell very quickly, thus the products are fresh. The quantity of goods which the clientele purchase in this market requires the facility to provide shopping carts.

The typical plan of the city grocery store has a cash registers into flanking rows of identical shelves. There is no stopping room aside for the aisle space. The role of advertisement usually dominates any windows and view out of the building. There is little involvement between the store management and the clientele. The competition between the different stores of this size in the immediate area create a cool sense of efficiency functionalism and departure from the client.



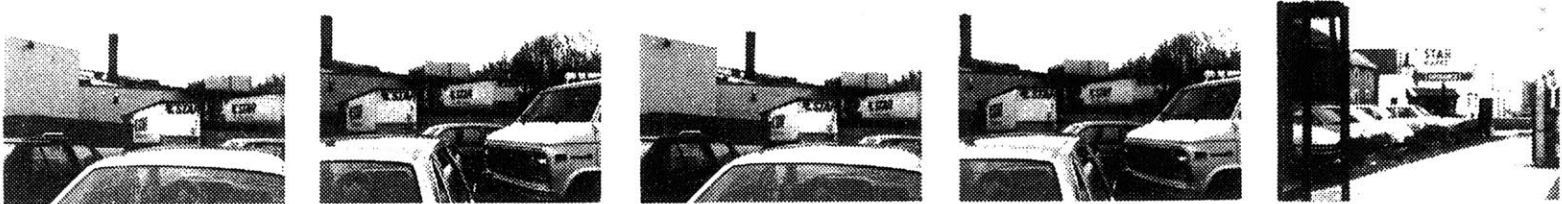
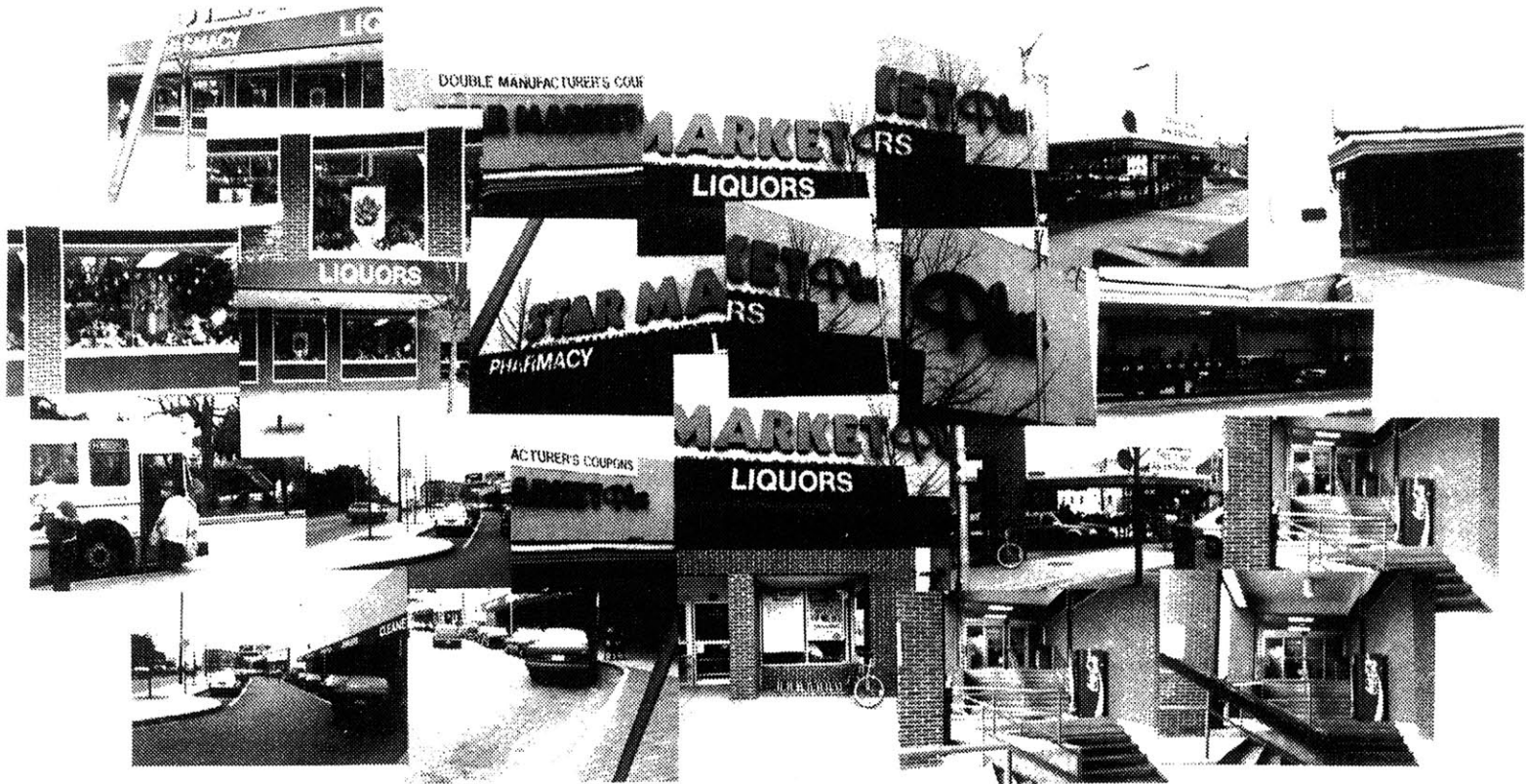
### **The Suburban Grocery Store: Super Market**

The Suburban Grocery store marks the transition of the grocery to the more remote areas around the city.

The advantages of this market lie with the efficient relationship of this building to its clientele. The building's spacious layout allows for a wide variety of products. The Suburban Market is the most common type of grocery store outside of the city. It is very convenient in relation to the homes of the suburbs and often supports the business of the nearest neighborhood.

The disadvantages of this market exist in its strife for economy and efficiency at the cost of spatial quality. The aisles are often very tight and extremely long. The periphery around the inner aisles is packed tightly with the counters for service and chilled items. There are very few variations within the building. The human quality of the space is sacrificed for commodity. The windows at the front of the building are typically littered with signs that announce the specials of the week.

The Suburban grocery store provides the means for shopping, but little else. It does not provide places for the consumers, nor does it acknowledge its context.



## **The Super Market Plus**

The Supermarket Plus is a direct attempt by the grocery store developers to improve upon some long term accepted methods of shopping.

This type of market attempts to formally respond to the criticism of the suburban supermarket's means of selling goods. It builds a great variety of goods by incorporating into its structure separate specialty stops such as a florist, a baker, a delicatessen, a pharmacy, or a banking center. The market places more importance upon the definition of the various sections within the grocery store. This differentiation is achieved through the manipulation of the display characteristics with in the different areas of the market. The market at the same time makes some gesture towards the re understanding of the building in its context. The stores make attempts to place the florist area in the proximity of exterior windows. In addition, the endless sea of parking is somewhat subdued with the introduction of a system for loading the groceries from a specific area in the parking lot.

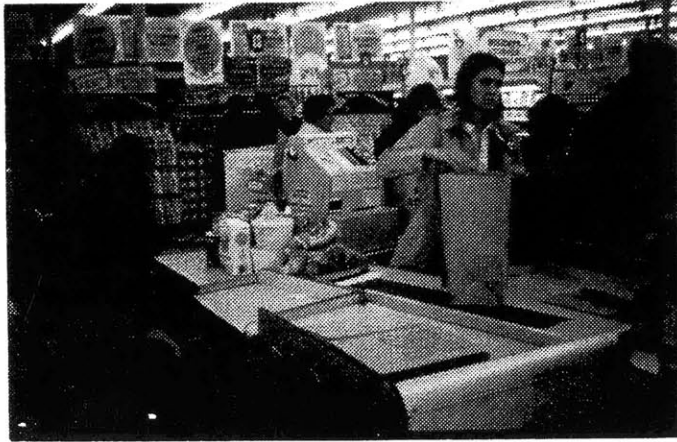
The disadvantages to this market type is it's inability to create spatial definition within the building, to build places for exchange or to alter the organization of the shelving in the center portion of the building.

The Supermarket plus attempts to step beyond the efforts of the Suburban market. It gestures towards the a sense of place through the inclusion of light, variety of displays and effort to redefine the role of the parking lot. The characteristics it enhances are important to making places within the market, yet these elements only begin reach the dimension of a community gesture.





*"When environmental planning is applied to the designing of new commercial facilities, many conditions must be analyzed, criteria weighed, requirements met, and problems solved. These all involve various ways and to varying degrees the needs and desires of the shopper. It is deeply significant that the term is 'shopping center,' not 'selling center.' This indicates clearly that the wishes and desires of the shopper take priority over those of the seller. (An earlier term, 'parking center,' failed to catch on.)" (Gruen, pg. 23)*



## **Intentions of the Thesis**

a place for people rather than products

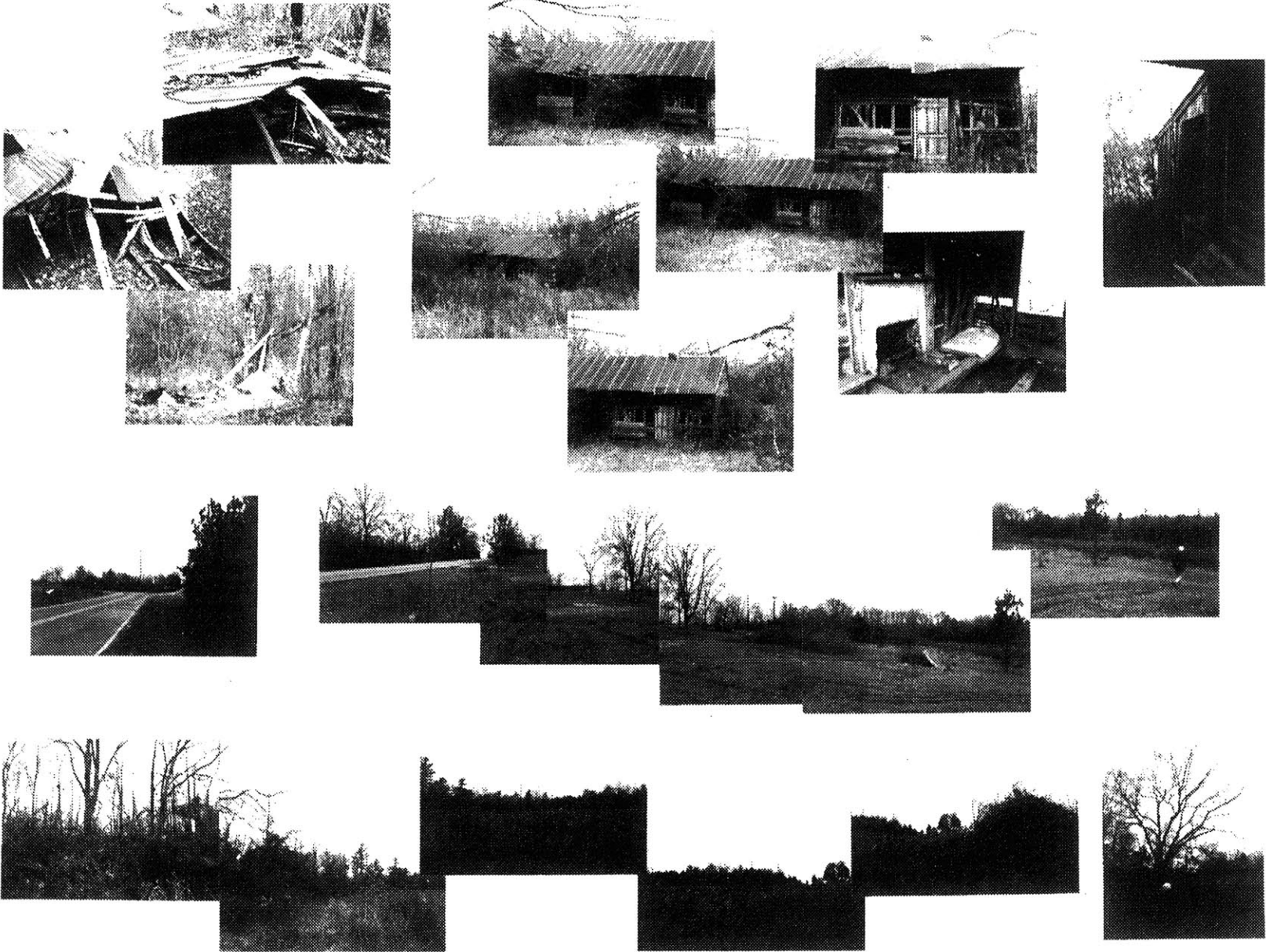
Problems addressed by this thesis were particularly devoted to understanding the positive and negative attributes of the various market types. The analysis attempted to find a new definition for the role of architecture as related to this commercial building type. The focus of the design problem was the creation of a framework for a commercial building, within the domain of the American Market, which would emphasize the paths and places within the market from the scale of the community to the size of an individual.

The design creates a new urban space for the modern culture. The alternative market would function as an urban place similar with the traditional church, courthouse, or drug store. In an effort to achieve this, the alternative market combines community service and recreational spaces within the realm of the community grocery, resulting in a settlement which engages the action of the public on a daily level.

The alternative market becomes an open settlement in the landscape of paths and places which serve as connections between the different programmatic elements, as well as suggesting an alternative way of dwelling in the landscape. The circulation system thus functions as a public gathering place, offering a framework for recreational space within the community.

Contrary to the present design of our public places, the alternative market does not command attention towards functional places within the building. It rather implies a sensitive gesture towards the landscape which the building gathers within its edges. The design builds places that create a human scale within the landscape.

In conclusion, the alternative market suggests a new way of dwelling in our society. A public place which gestures to the inhabitants and the landscape surrounding it.



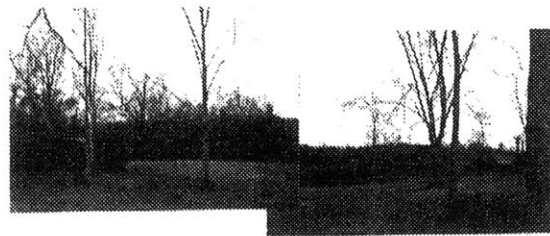
## Site

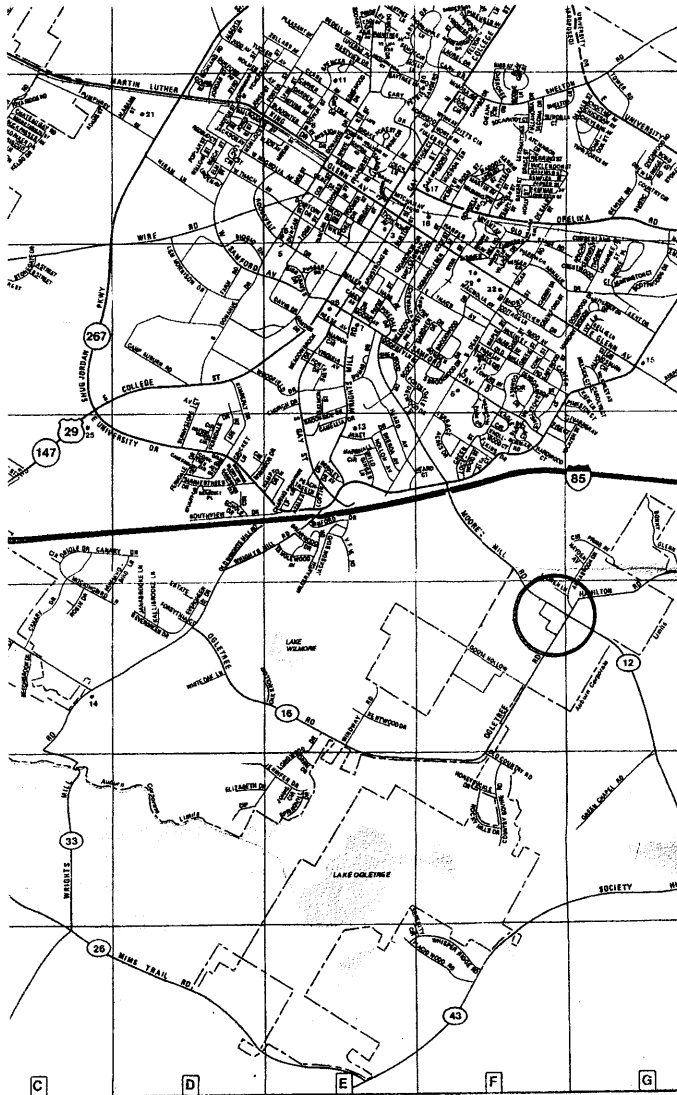
understanding the context

*"Inevitably, these winds of change are contouring a new Southern landscape and new relationship between the land and the people. On one hand, much of the urban sprawl and homogenization that characterize the rest of the country are afflicting the South in the so-called Americanization of Dixie....And yet the belated arrival of a New South provides opportunities for the people of the region to learn lessons and to fashion a more enlightened partnership with the physical environment."(Clay, pg. 6-7)*

The twelve acre site is located on a hilly, densely wooded one hundred and fifty acre piece of rural land three miles outside of Auburn, Alabama. The primary reason why I have chosen this site is because, the one hundred and fifty acres of land has been designated for development. Rather than reflect back upon the success or failures of the community, the thesis concentrates on a situation from which to look forward toward a better understanding of dwelling even at the commercial scale. In addition, the climate and character of the people in this region of the country create a context which would welcome the chance to evaluate this type of reprogramming of the land. The development of the larger site will include residential housing, an office complex, a commercial complex, a retired community center, and possibly a health care facility. The land is situated between two roads which service individuals living outside of the town in rural and suburban situations. The "crossroads" corner of the site is a prime location for commercial development of the general area. The thesis will focus specifically on this land.

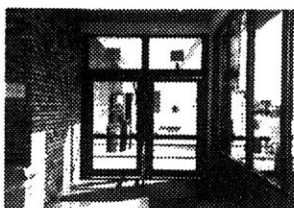
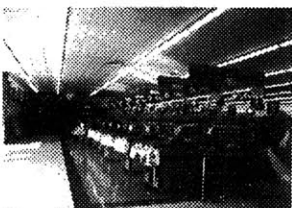
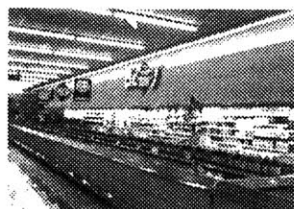
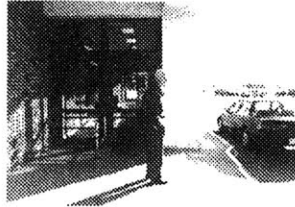
The fact that this land has been chosen for development is only one of the reasons why it is a good location for an exploration of the significance of a commercial complex towards a new development. It is important that the site is a very remote, wooded piece of land. This attribute is appealing because it is applicable to the dilemma of the haphazard development of our land in the modern society. "The Strip evolved on the fringe of town when independent entrepreneurs seized the opportunity of the moment." (Horwitz, pg. 44) The particularity of the site allows for the thesis to explore a fresh look at the placement of the commercial strip and the development of a relationship between the landscape and the proposed building in which landscape plays a vital role in activity of the building.





The context of the region maintains an effort to harmonize the buildings the landscape. The region has a rich heritage of buildings especially in housing types, which is sensitive to the demands of the climate, the relationship to the land, and the scale of the person. "A common thread throughout the story of the south is the affinity of the people for the land. It is an enduring closeness, this feel for the soil, the seasons, and the numerous settings....The long growing season, abundant rainfall, and food soils strengthened the agrarian culture. And the delayed development of major manufacturing and urban centers helped to maintain a rural landscape of farms and small villages and towns. the consequence is a strong sense of place, a smaller scale of things and a love of the land." (Clay, pg. 2) Fortunately, the architecture of Auburn still holds a presence amongst the growing assemblage of insensitive modern buildings belonging to the University. The project creates a framework for investigating the links between the small scale of old buildings and the larger scale of the modern society. The main attempt is to limit the threat of one type upon another and create buildings which are more sensitive to the individual.

Lastly, the heritage of the site offers a range of influences upon the design. The site functioned until the 1960's as cotton land. Remnants of this practice can be found in the pattern of vegetation growth and the remains of built contours for the cotton shelves. The older growth of trees and forest in areas mark paths into the fields and breaks the continuity of the farming land such as ponds, poor drainage areas or sites for support buildings along the road (a milk house, a barn, a few houses and a saw-mill ). There also still exists a stone fence built of field stones which were brought from the cotton fields by the farmers, to an area of land not suited to the farming of crops.



## **Programming and Reprogramming**

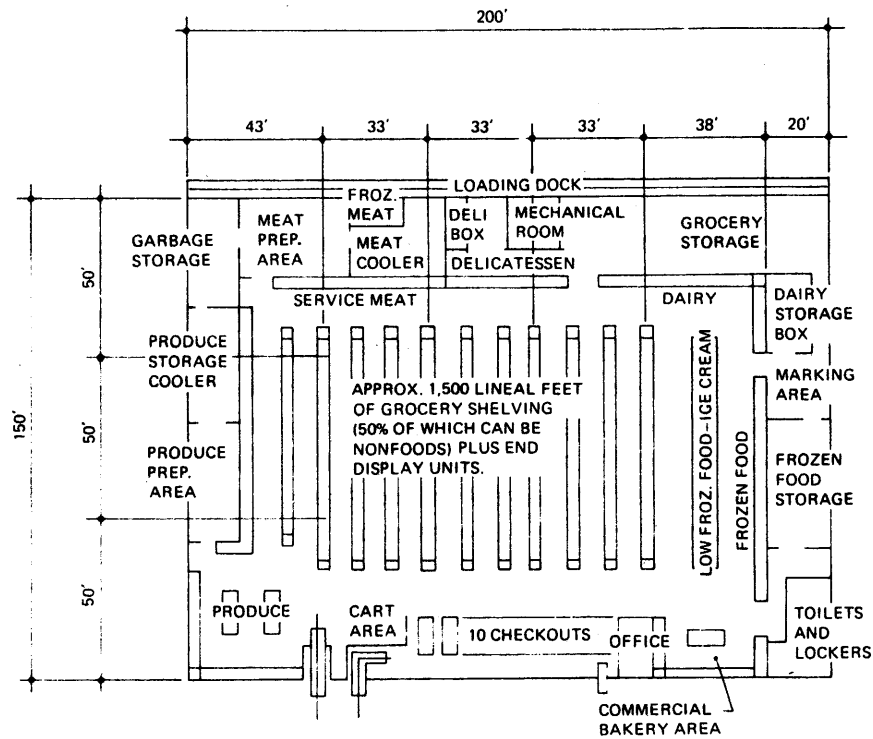
center for community and commercialism

*"This is not merely an esthetic problem, or even primarily an esthetic problem, because Suburbia, in its present form, is incapable of generating significant outdoor spaces and is so spread out that its few, symbolic buildings are lost among the forests of telephone poles; moreover, we find ourselves with 50 million suburbanites most of whom are totally disinterested in local government, refuse to participate in it, and frequently don't even know what community (if that is the appropriate word) they belong to." (Blake, pg. 21)*

The analysis of American market types suggests that the first step in designing an alternative market must begin beyond the information provided in the planning of the stereotypical market. The key to developing the market into an inhabitable space lies in the creation of an inhabitable program. The markets begin to improve only with the efforts to redefine the edges surrounding the context of the shelves. Separating the elements of the market offer the possibility to improve the character and activity of the space. In addition, the process of gathering the community in an urban space includes the responsible introduction of programmatic elements which will complement each other. In the case of a community center, which will depend upon a variety of functions, not only to attract people, but also to invite inhabitation, the program should include a balance of consumer products, consumer services and an active recreational area throughout the circulation and peripheral parks.

The supermarket provides a common element for all types of people and all ranges of ages. In this fact, lies the potential for this building type to develop with the idea of community in mind, a place for community to inhabit, communicate and evolve. Important points for making the building part of the community include issues of circulation spaces, gathering points, connection with the landscape, and programmatic elements designed to fulfill the needs across the range of the ages which exist in a suburban community





TOTAL STORE AREA	= 30,000 SQ. FT.
TOTAL SALES AREA	= 22,500 SQ. FT.
TOTAL SERVICE AREA	= 7,500 SQ. FT.
TOTAL PARKING AREA	= 108,000 SQ. FT. (RECOMENDED)

TOTAL ANTICIPATED WEEKLY SALES (@ \$3.75 PER SQ. FT. OF SALES AREA)	} = \$90,000.00
TOTAL CHECKOUTS (ONE FOR EACH \$19,000.00 OF SALES PLUS ONE FOR EXPANSION)	
	= 10

Fig. 1 Typical free-standing supermarket.

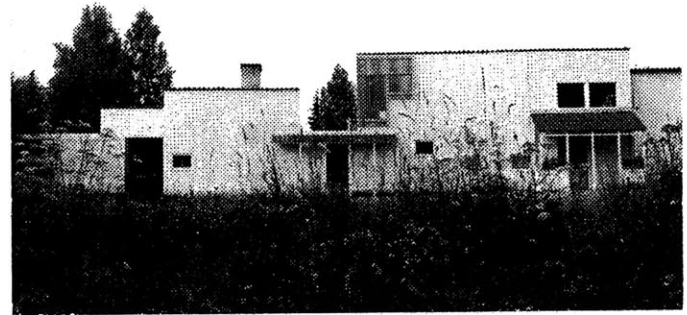
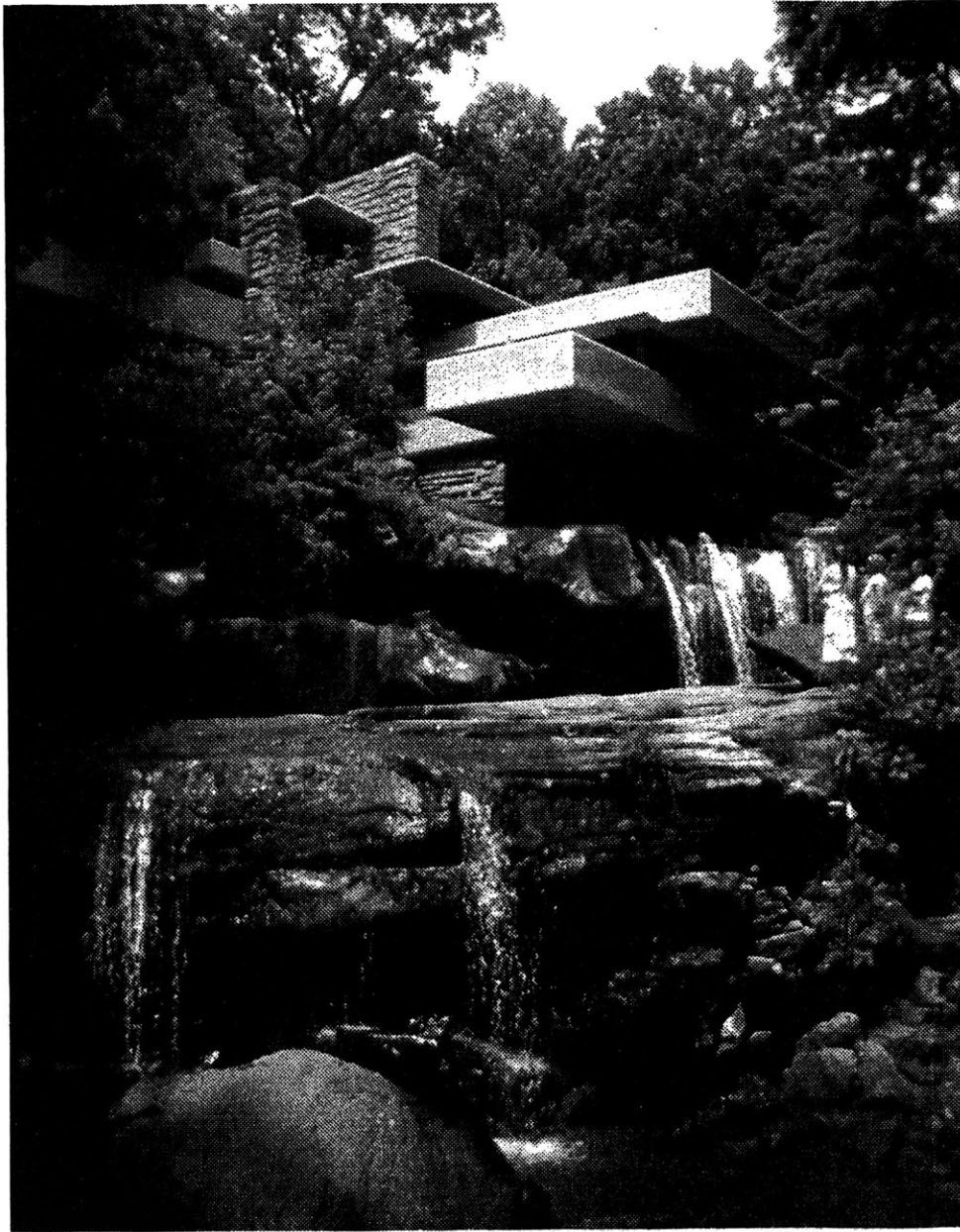
The core of the program consists of the required area for a typical suburban supermarket. The elements which are important to such function include a loading dock, storage and marketing space, a cashier's area, office space for the management, break room for the employees, the appropriate amount of display area for the selling products and of course the appropriate amount of parking. According to Time Saver Standards, the typical area required for a supermarket is 30,000 square feet, adjoined by another 100,000 square feet of parking. In addition to these general guidelines, the program also takes in account the sizes of spaces proposed for a 1987 *Architectural Review* competition.

In an effort to design a program which will support the activities of the community, the basic role of the traditional supermarket is redefined as a store which supplies the prepackaged processed foods. For example, the products which have a stable existence in our household cabinets such as canned soups, boxed cereals, paper products, frozen vegetables, etc. In addition, the functional spaces which traditionally inhabit the periphery of the supermarket stock room (i.e. the butcher, the baker, the dairy, the florist, the pharmacy, the seafood shop, the deli, and the card shop) have an identity of their own. These elements of the grocery are those items which are not permanent. The types of products which traditionally are needed before the staples in the pantry are running low. The practical benefit of redefining the relationship of these spaces to the grocery is twofold. First, the consumer can have easier access to the shops on a daily basis and second, the volume of the stock area in the supermarket is free of periphery elements, thus the connection between the interior and the exterior can be reestablished.



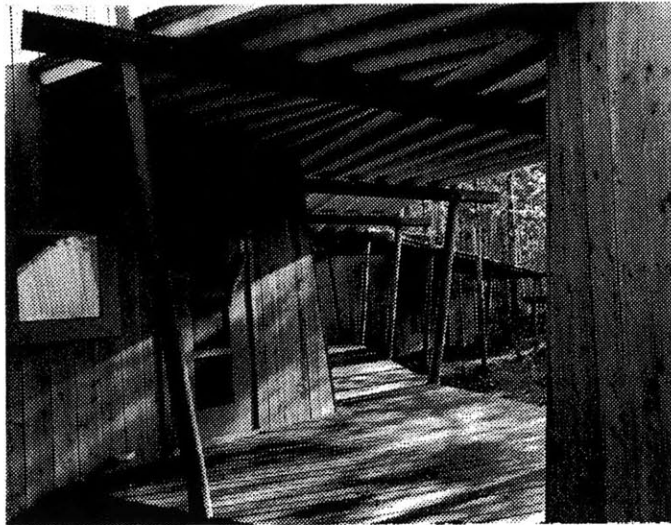
The program creates balance of community activities within the facility through the introduction of several important programmatic elements the program. These elements, rather than offering commodities, will offer services. The addition to service elements in the program will begin to create an active community space which does not depend upon the presence of grocery shoppers. The service spaces located at the lobby of the market will be a child care center which accommodates not only day care, but also service by the hour, and a small cafe which serves as a waiting or meeting point.. In addition the complex will have an aerobics center, a small financial center, an area for food and cooking classes and a restaurant.

In addition to the service and commodity shops the complex will offer recreational spaces in it's development of a generous circulation area and patios as well as the maintenance of an interior park space for a jogging trail and playing fields. The balance of the three types of programmatic elements, the commodity, the service, and the recreation is in an effort to create a lively place for the community and the framework for a facility which finds a harmony with the landscape and the inhabitants as well as the services it offers. The place will have elements of attraction for all ages. Places which elderly people might meet each other and where children might be involved in the function.



*"A work of architecture is therefore not abstract organization of space. It is a concrete figure, where the plan mirrors the admittance and the elevation the embodiment. Thus it brings the inhabited landscape close, and lets man dwell poetically, which is the ultimate aim of architecture. (Norberg-Schultz, pg. 117)"*

*"To express the idea existentially, land was the object men could best use in their search for identity....But it is doubtful if ever again in America will it have the same almost religious appeal. What has happened is that the land changed its status; it became a commodity, something which could be translated into money. We looked around for another usable object - and behold! the automobile appeared." (Johnson, pg. 150)*



## Dwelling in the Landscape

a settlement in the forest

*"By day or by night, summer or winter, beneath trees the heart feels nearer to that depth of life which the far sky means. The rest of spirit, found only in beauty, ideal and pure, comes there because the distance seems within touch of thought." - Richard Jefferies (Blake, pg. 132)*

In America, the purest form of the commercial building existed in the traditional farm buildings. The barns and silos which scattered across the countryside were able to achieve a high degree of efficiency. They often took advantage of a natural slope, continued the built definition beyond the building edge, and provided an important presence of mankind in harmony with the natural landscape. "There is a simple reason for grain elevators, as there is for everything, but the force behind the reason, is the land and the sky. There's too much sky out here, for one thing, too much horizontal, too many lines without stops, so that the exclamation, the perpendicular, had to come. Anyone who was born on the plains knows that the high false front on the Feed Store, and the white water tower, are not a question of vanity." (Horwitz, pg. 7)



Throughout the age of the machine and mass production, the traditional commercial building dominates rather than harmonizes with the site, ignoring the surrounding context. From the owner's point of view, this lack of concern is understandable -- money is an issue. These buildings, often large factories and warehouses, are more about machines than people. The machines dominate the interior circulation as well as the periphery conditions of loading docks and supply bays. Yet our society must remember that "(T)he brutal destruction of our landscape is much more than a blow against beauty. Every artist, scientist and philosopher in the history of mankind has pointed to the laws of nature as his greatest source of inspiration: without the presence of nature, undisturbed, there would have been no Leonardo, no Ruskin, no Nervi, no Frank Lloyd Wright. In destroying our landscape, we are destroying the future of civilization in America." (Blake, pg. 69)

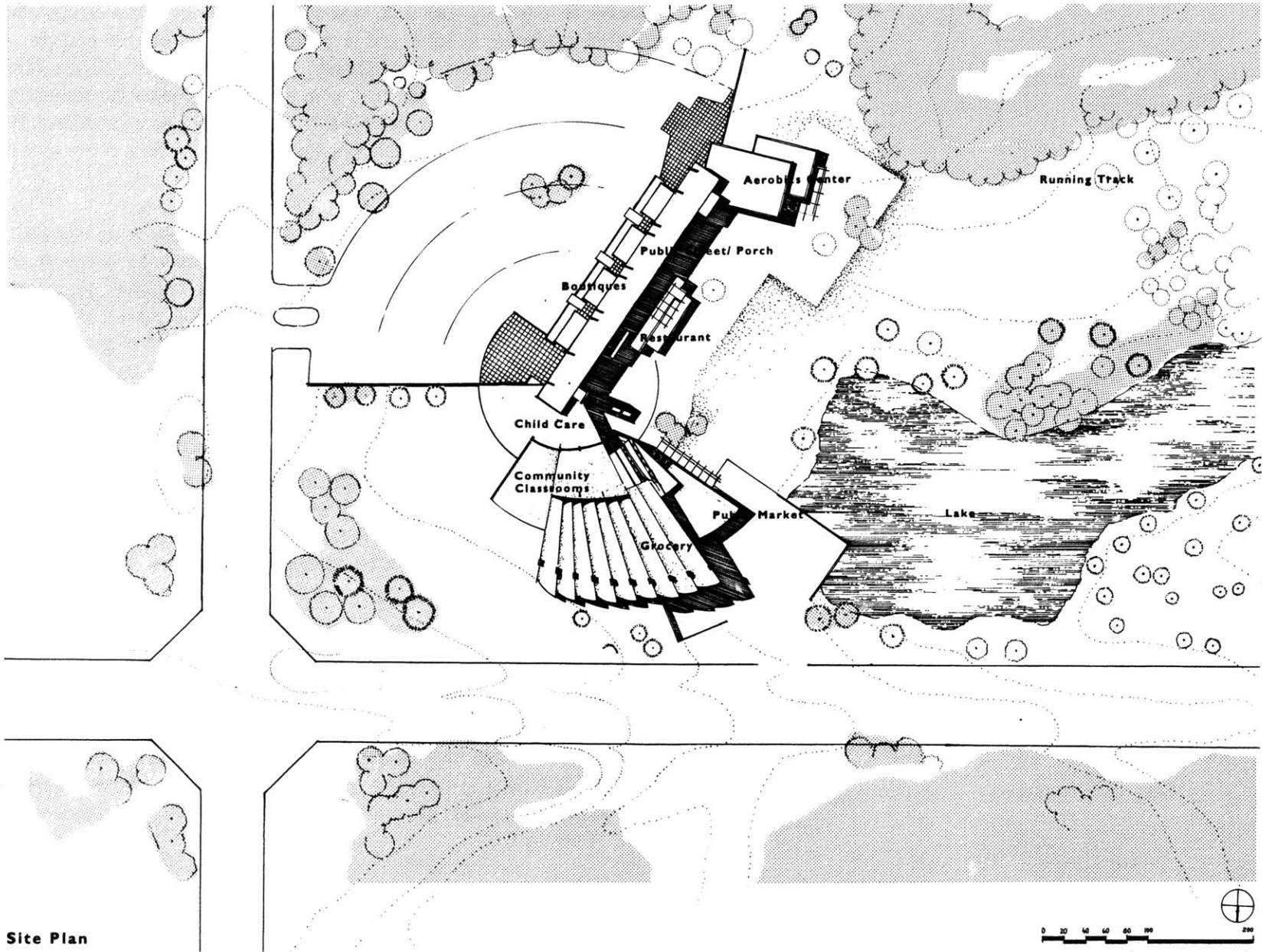


The Supermarket as a building type finds itself somewhere in the realm between the efficient industrial warehouse building and a public storage space, for example, a museum, a library or an archive. Traditionally, the supermarket developers have considered the building as a glorified warehouse. In an effort to appease the community, the resulting structures wear a veil of concern, yet they essentially ignore the exterior, the context, and the people dwelling inside, inhibiting the evolution of a place at the sake of efficiency.

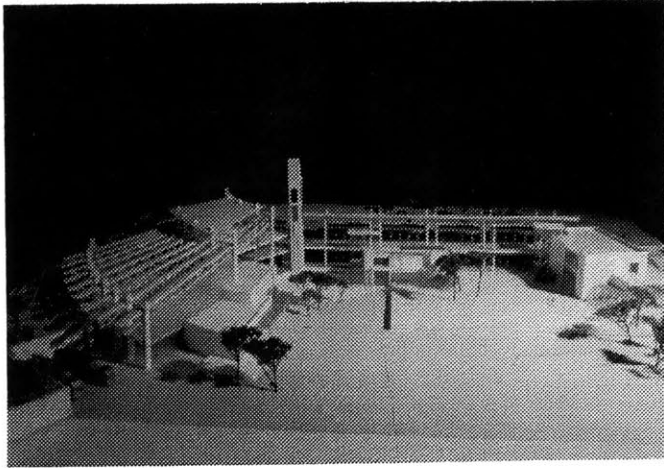
Developers must remember that "Buildings do not exist independently of the land under them or the environmental spaces around. They are linked inexorably with land and environment, by technical and functional connections that are unavoidable." (Eckbo, pg. 50) The nature of the market, has the potential for enhancing the connection between mankind and the landscape. "The world which is gathered by a work of architecture is hence an "inhabited landscape," that is, a landscape which has been understood as a particular case of the totality earth-sky, in relation to the four modes of dwelling." (Norberg-Schultz, pg. 19) Norberg-Schultz defines the four modes of dwelling as a settlement, an urban space, a public building, and a house. Dwelling in the market embodies the essence of the urban space of collective dwelling, the stage where human meetings take place....where human being come together in their diversities. When the supermarket design begins with the intentions of dwelling in the landscape for the purposes of defining a natural center "...architecture serves to reveal and emphasize the qualities that are already present." (Norberg-Schultz, pg. 31)

"Whether the pre-existing field is natural or contrived, construction must necessarily disturb that which has been. The term disturbance should not be regarded negatively, however, since in this broader sense disturbance can actually improve the existing state or provide an equally appropriate alternative.... Instead of adding more elements to the site, let us consider removing material from it and rearranging that material already present. Perhaps by looking at the more common process of addition, we can more readily accept an existing condition as worthy of continuance or build for an economically greater return." (Treib, pg. 8-9)





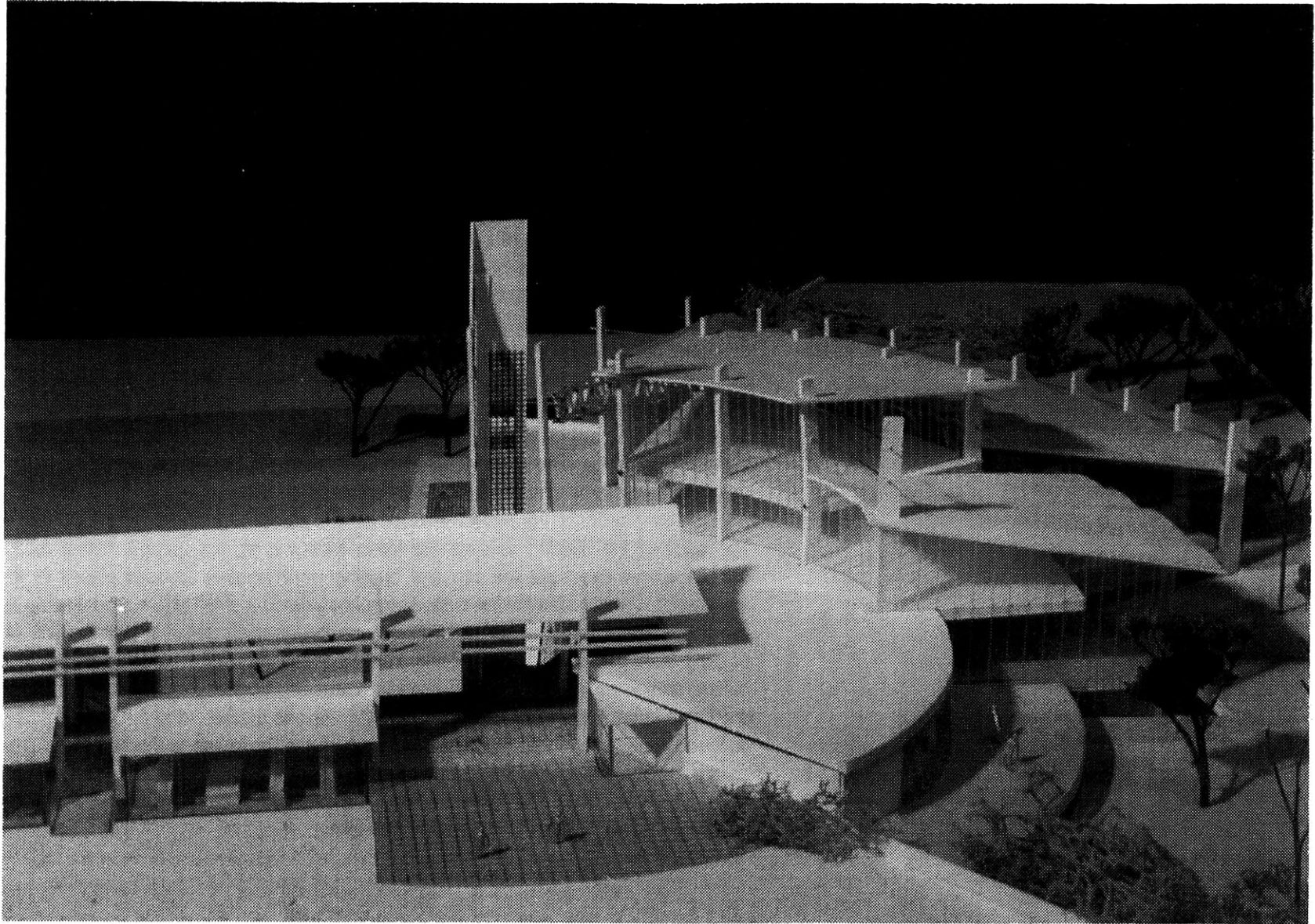
Site Plan

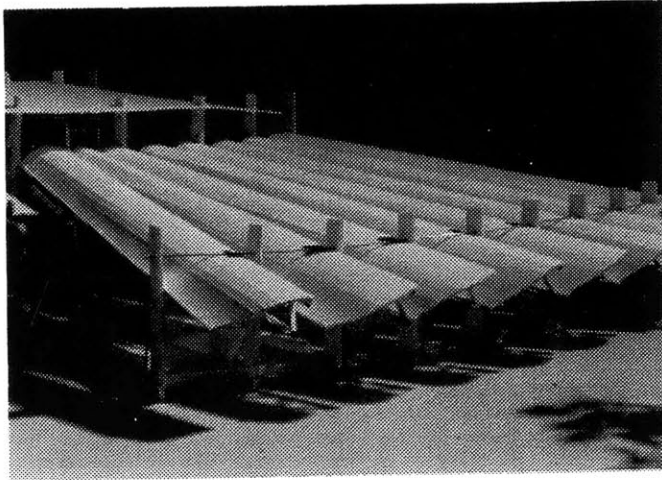


The design of the alternative market dwells in harmony with the landscape. It becomes a settlement on the site. The path of the design process began with a sensitivity and understanding of the character of the land. The site has many clues for building and harmonizing with the natural forms. The design reflects the examples given by the farmers who previously inhabited the land such as developing the definition of the natural contours in the earth, creating alleys amidst the forest, and capturing the waters of the earth in small lakes.

The building forms create a silhouette against the natural forms. The forms of the building dwell on the site in an image of the small lakes and outcropping of rocks scattered across the landscape. These natural forms build variety and settlement within the forest. The grocery stock area is perceived as a continuous, floating surface, in relation to the image of a small farm lakes often found in the area. The denser, more horizontal, moves in a series of small boutiques, their circulation and an aerobics center create the image of the rocks and the grouping of trees. At the union of the two the form rises as a tower forming a center and a point of identity. These pieces work with another in harmony with the surrounding context. The buildings hug the land creating a threshold between the edges, one towards the forest and one towards the crossroads. The tower marks the settlement.

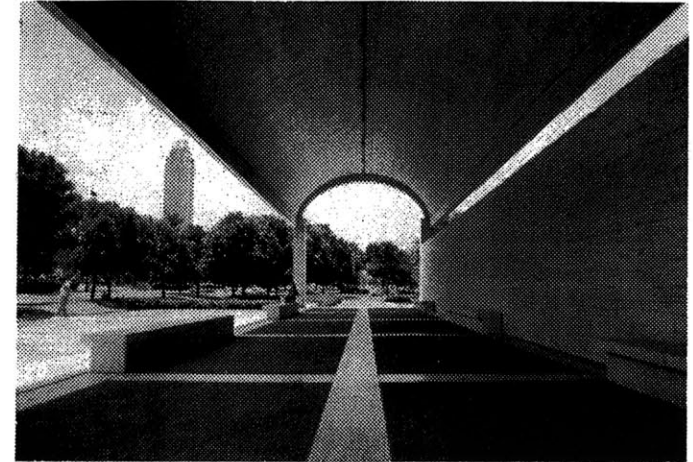
The edge of the building towards the forest most mirrors the natural rhythm of the landscape. At this point the site and building work together to build places in the landscape. The site size moves in the landscape include a small lake surrounded by an evergreen forest, large groupings of deciduous forest which define a path toward the building from the forest. The building, nestled in the protective contours of the land behind, completes the edges of the forest in a shielding gesture from flanking the roads, creating a large, protected park within it's arms. As one moves out of the forest into the built park, one experiences the true transition from the landscape to the built form. The complex meets the edge of the forest with trellises, patios and pieces of buildings which support functions such as a farmers' market, an exercise area and a playground which nurture and create smaller landscapes in their midst.





The relationship of the building edge to the road has a function of presenting the quality of the settlement to the passerby. In addition, the design invites and guides the visitors into the facility. Along the road coming from the town of Auburn, the building offers a view into the stack system of the grocery. Thus, display of goods and the movement of the customers advertise the quality of the store and the shopping experience. The edge of the store from this view does not display a large sea of parking, but rather a landscaped park which continues along to the crossroads' facade. This park area creates, from the road, a silhouette of the settlement amidst the landscape it inhabits. On the street perpendicular to it, the store offers the anticipated vehicular parking area. The parking lot, like the complex, exists both above and below the ground. Scattered with trees and plants, this large patio becomes a formal transition point between the natural and built world for the street entrance.

The settlement meets the parking lot with deliberate regularity. The design offers a grand porch screened at the car level with a series of transparent shops. The settlement does not move to inhabit the landscape. From the parking area, the building rather serves as a threshold to the landscape. The edge of between the shops and the parking further emphasizes this the separation. The edge of the site is not littered with cluttered signs. The view from the street depends upon the forms of roofs to identify and advertise the settlement. Thus, the contrast of the tower against the landscape and the buildings becomes a natural gesture to the community. The tower "...embodies a certain way of being between earth and sky, and it does this by defining a man made center.... The tower acts as a unifying link between inside and outside and expresses the basic quality of being in a certain place." (Norberg-Schultz, pg. 35)



*"Another feature of the public landscape is the public meeting place. It is hardly necessary to underscore the importance of this installation to the present generation of environmental planners. We must bear in mind that the public space, whether in the city of the village, can assume many different forms, some of them a great deal more productive than others." (Johnson, pg. 157)*

*"Suburbia's other 'symbolic' buildings are those of the shopping center, which is certainly symbolic of something - though perhaps not of anything we would particularly want to symbolize. (Some new shopping centers have tried to become 'community centers' in a broader sense, and perhaps there is some validity in this.) Then there are schools, police stations, fire houses and, indeed, somewhere, there may be even a town hall." (Blake, pg. 21).*



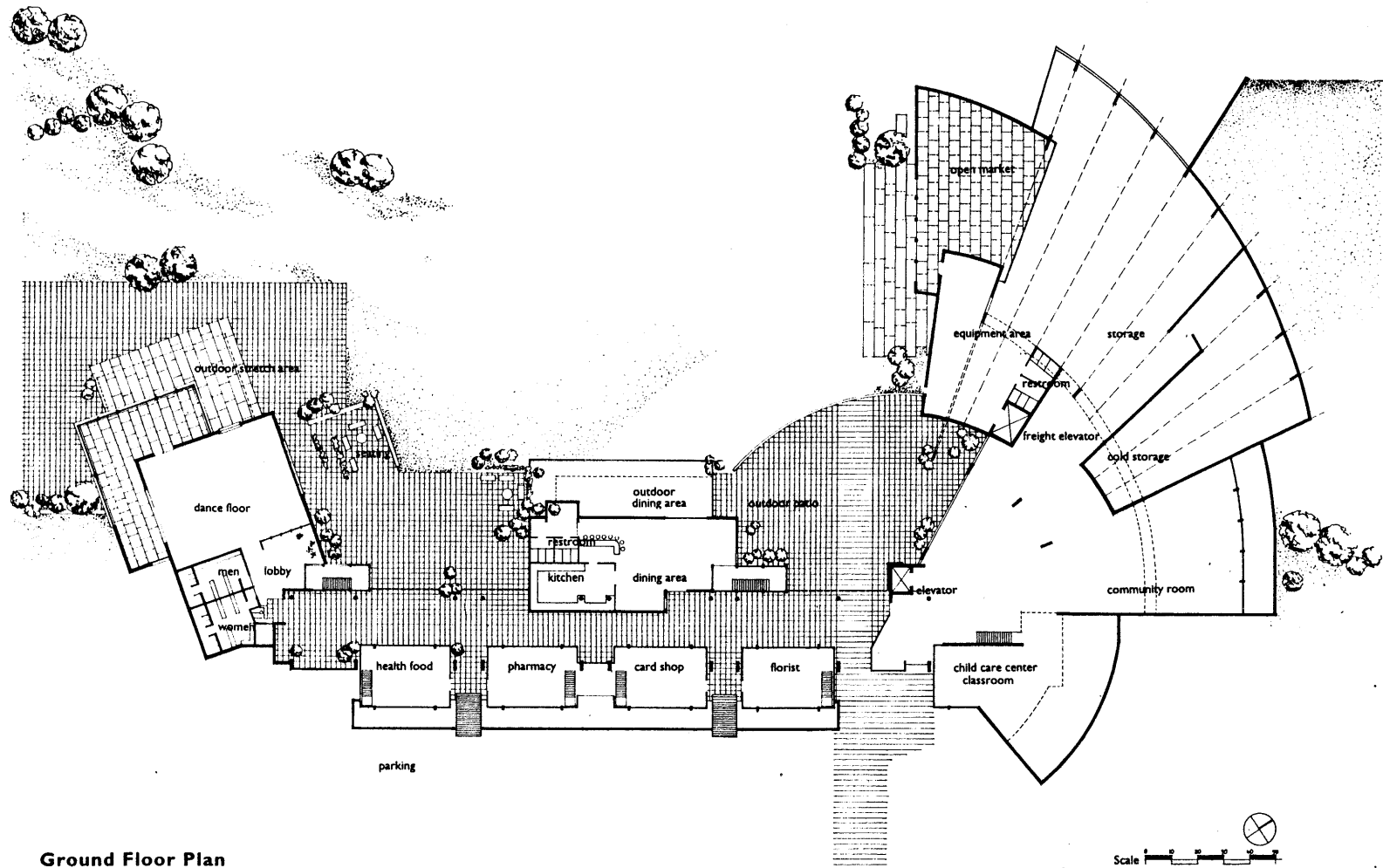
## Dwelling in a Building

creating community in a public building

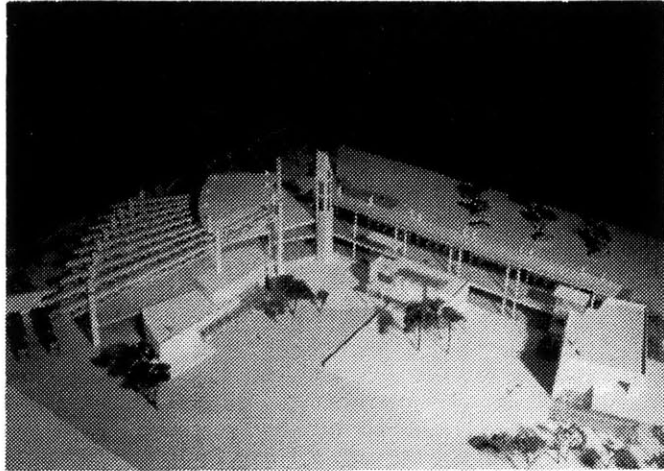
*"...The public building is not an abstract symbol, but partakes in daily life, which it relates to what is timeless and common. In the church a general understanding of world and life is made present, in the city hall the organization of society, in the theater loft as it is lived, in the museum the memories of mankind and in school our experience as knowledge and advice.(Norberg-Schultz, pg. 71)."*

If the public building is not an abstract symbol, but partakes in daily life....what constitutes a public building? Norberg-Shultz describes five building types as representations of the public space: the church, the city hall, the theater, the museum and the school. Traditionally, these building types were recognized as public spaces essential to community gathering, which took place inside their doors. These were the places from where news traveled and which community identified. In the modern age, the function of each of these spaces has drastically changed. The introduction of advanced communications and media has reduced the primal importance of these spaces as meeting , educational and recreational places in our society. These particular building types no longer provide an essential function within the community.

The definition of the public building has not changed. A public building should partake in daily life. It should include a scale which could support the exchange and communication of members of the community with large circulation spaces and generous sitting areas. Yet, the building types which contain the essential qualities of gathering the community on a regular basis have changed from community related to commodity related. The supermarket, is one such community attraction which has the potential of becoming a gathering place. It is a building which partakes in daily life, which gathers the community. Instead, the markets remain dedicated to the commodity which they support. The restricted circulation area, limited lobby space and lack of exterior definition of the building type tend to dissuade a presence of community.

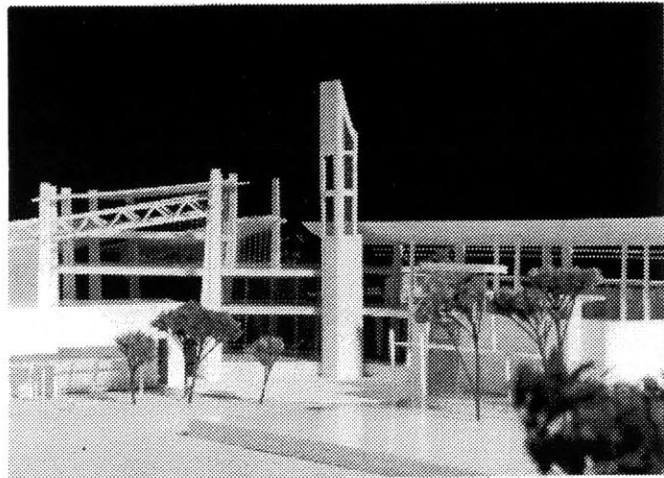


Ground Floor Plan

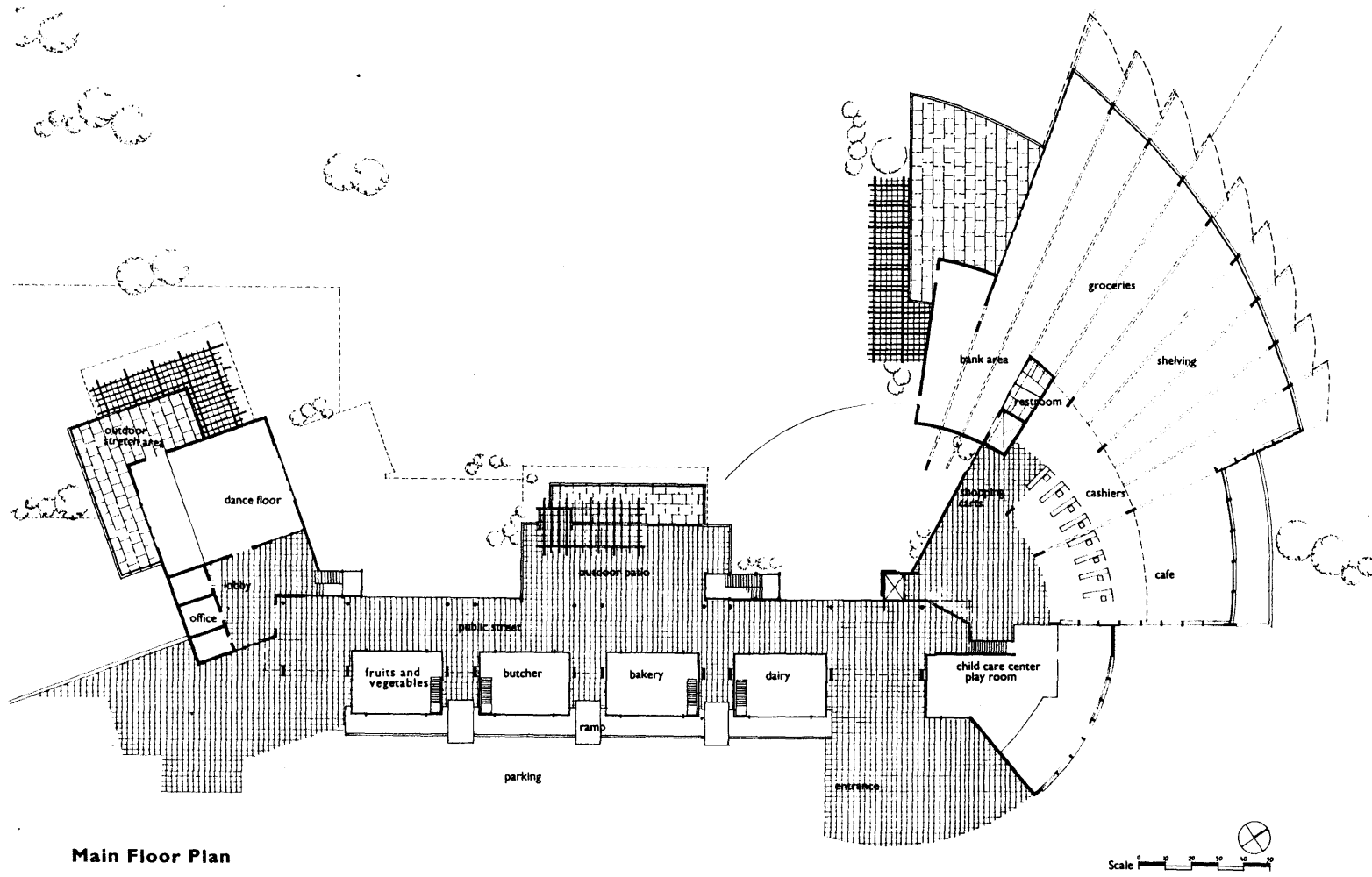


*" The figural quality of the settlement consists in two interrelated properties: a 'thing' - like built form and a space organized in terms of centers, paths and domains. The interrelation between the two aspects is obvious: the built form gives character to the spatial elements, at the same time as the latter are constituted by the former. Together, built form and organized space make up a place, on certain environmental level." (Norberg-Schultz, pg. 44-45)*

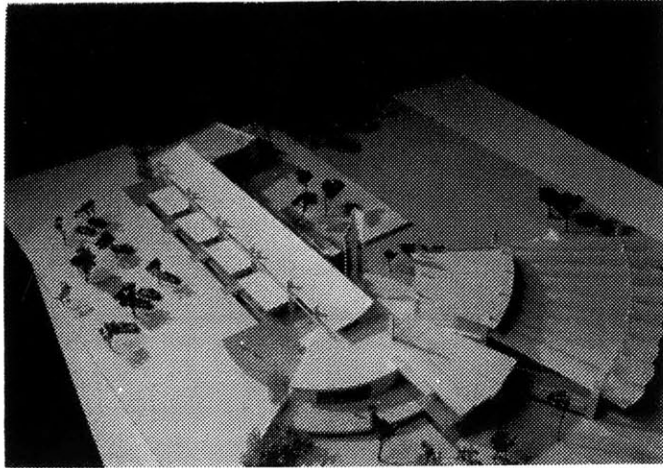
A generous, flexible, yet clearly defined circulation system which can support the size of the community, is essential for the development of a public building. The title of this chapter "dwelling in a building", in this instance, refers not to the inhabitation of the individual in a building, but rather to the inhabitation of the community, more specifically, the quality of centers, paths and domains of the settlement. The design of the alternative market begins with the notion of an active circulation zone, creating a place for people rather than commodity. This zone not only serves the community as a transitional path between the functional pieces of the building, but also reinforces the relationship of the community to the larger landscape; and most importantly, provides a space dedicated to the recreational activities and communication among the building's inhabitants.



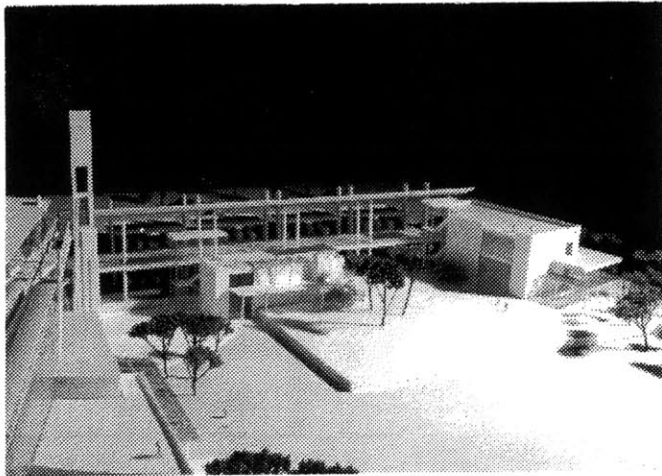


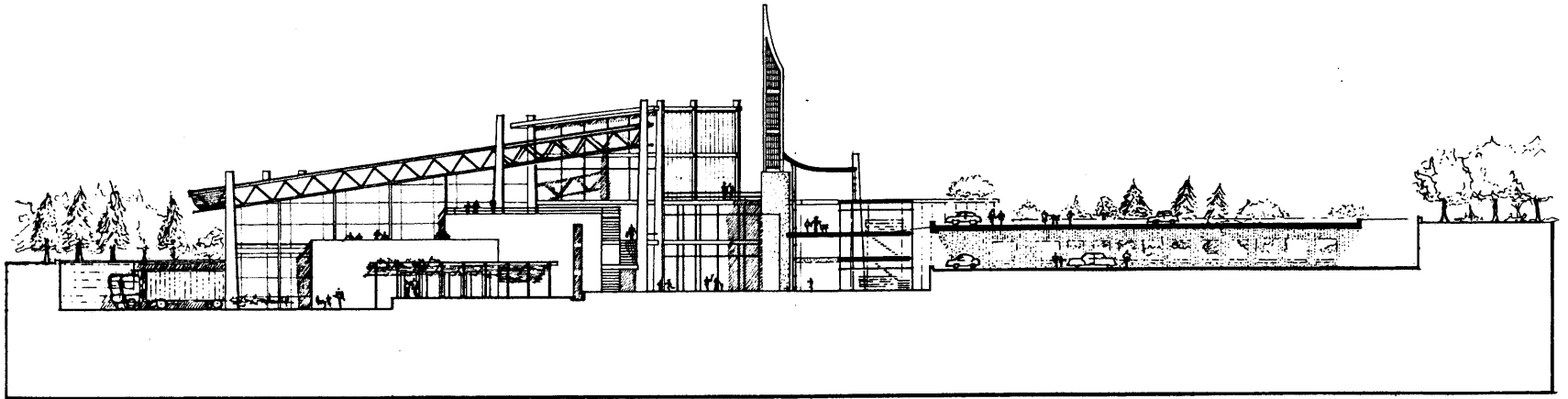


**Main Floor Plan**

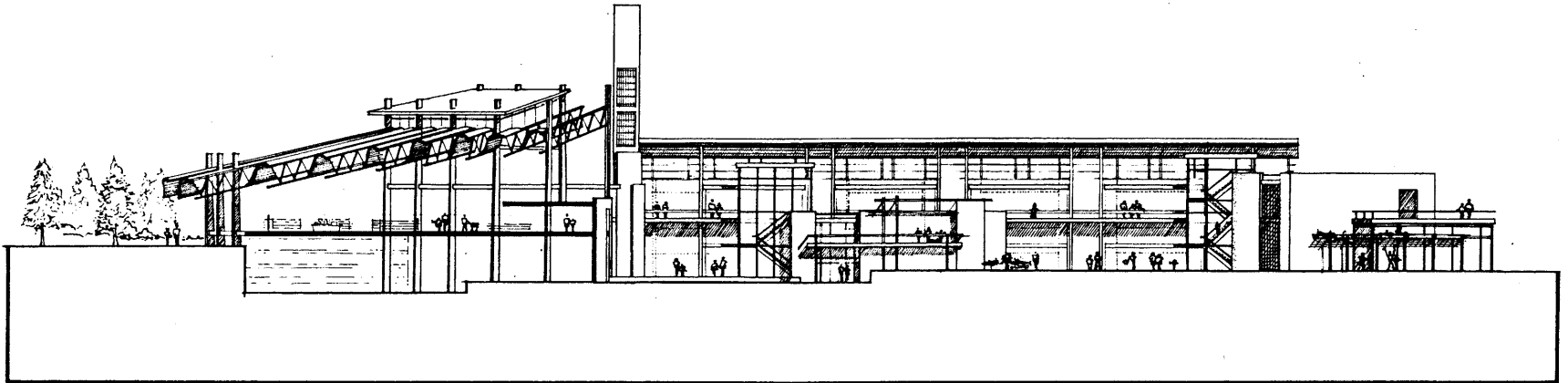


The design of the alternative market evolved into a settlement of building pieces rather than a complete enclosed structure. Each of the buildings comprising the settlement contain different points of community space and inhabitation within the settlement. The experiential connection between the functions in the settlement are provided by an open pedestrian street, the lobby areas between the pedestrian street and the building edges, the buildings providing community services and recreational spaces. The pedestrian street defines a zone of circulation as well as a place at a scale which the community inhabits. The alternative market defines the public street with the gesture of an open porch which offers not only a dimension for urban circulation, but also a dimension for inhabitation at the scale of the individual, with stopping points and seating areas. The public street creates a dimension of registration between the buildings. The porch provides a realm for the community to exist within the landscape, and the buildings within the settlement.

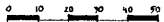


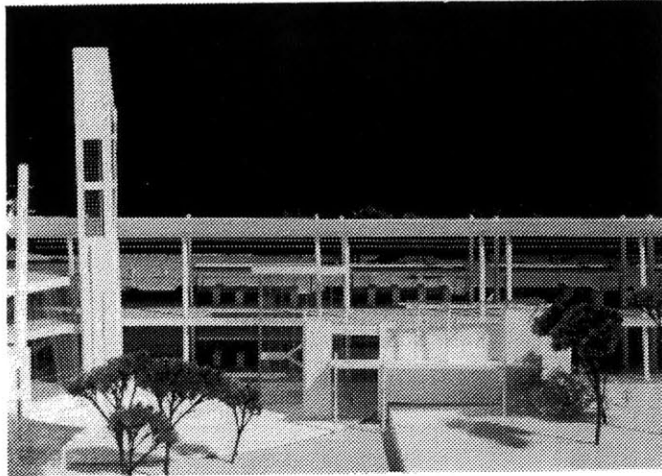


South Section Elevation



West Section Elevation

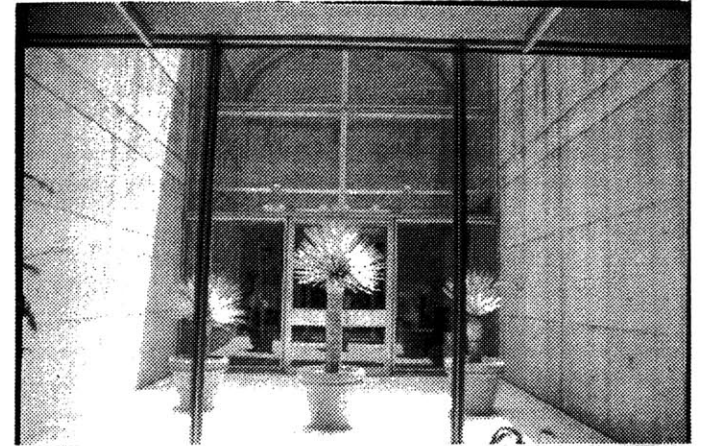




The transition from the landscape into the built form exists as the lobby spaces within the larger functions of the complex. The dimension of this public indoor space relates to the scale of inhabitation within the building. The lobbies of the aerobic center and restaurant are substantially smaller than that of the main grocery area. These lobbies contain generous public sitting space as well as rest rooms. The grocery lobby supports a larger community. In addition to the public sitting spaces and rest room, the lobby space provides services within itself. The daycare center, the cafe and the bank machine build an inhabitable dimension in this zone of transition into the grocery store. These spaces provide an interior public gathering for the community which inhabits the grocery. A dimension for a smaller gathering of shoppers within the volume is important. The space serves to make the transition from the gathering of the community at the scale of the public street to the focused attention of an individual or family amidst the small scale of the shelved products.



The service and recreational elements represent the furthest edge of dwelling within a building. These places accommodate activities dependent upon the participation of a large group within the community. Spaces such as the aerobics center, the restaurant, the public classrooms and the child care center, support the activity of the community. Within these functions, the individual is involved with the public aspects of the places. The quality of these spaces depends upon a public dwelling which consists of the relationship of people to each other in an effort to build the community. These elements are critical in the design of an alternative market. The service and recreational spaces create a framework for the dwelling of a community as a whole, within the edges of the settlement. These spaces build a place of exchange and involvement for the community members, creating paths and places within the dimension of the settlement and allowing the community to dwell within the size of the building.



*"It is wonderfully encouraging that places people like best of all, find least crowded, and most restful are small spaces marked by a high density of people and a very efficient use of space.(Wythe, pg. 101.)*

*"The penetrability is achieved there not by eliminating lines of demarcation between the domains (a logical impossibility, however seductive) but by heightening the awareness and pleasure of crossing the lines." (O'Brien, pg. 58)*

*"The Building, a kit of parts, must build the framework for the actions which will take place within. The forms of the structure must reflect the attitude of the actions. "The built form embodies the way something is between the earth and sky, where as organized space admits its actions." (Norberg-Schultz, pg. 71)*



## Dwelling in the Market

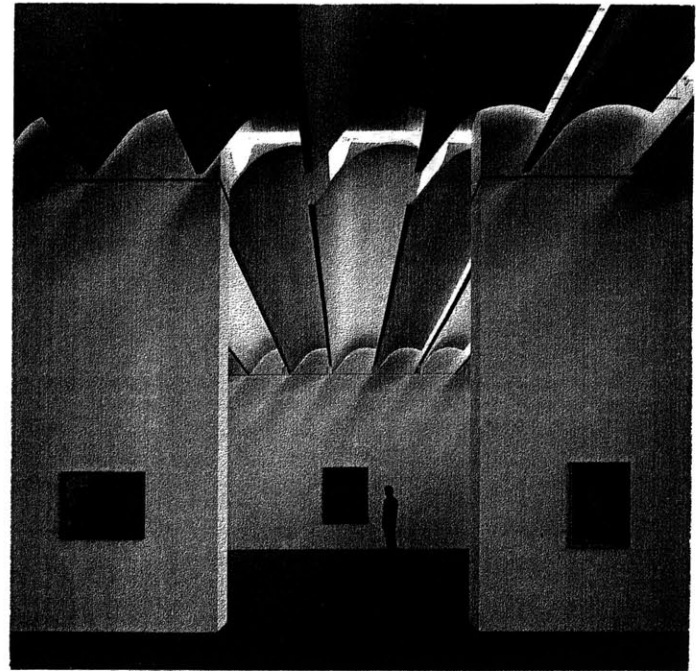
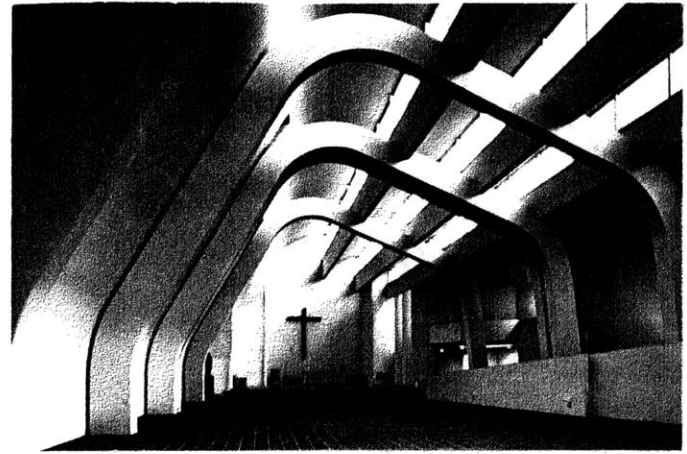
inhabiting the space between

*"Dwelling in a building depends upon creating a character of space beyond that of which can be offered by four walls. Any environment (architecture) embodies meanings at the same times as it admits certain actions to take place." (Norberg-Schultz, pg. 13)*

The character of the space defined by the four walls (or the elements within those walls) of the suburban market does not relate successfully to the individuals which inhabit the space. Rather, the supermarket is defined by the scale of the storage of the products offered by the store. Presently, the scale of the shelving units, which reach lengths of 80 to 100 feet, do not relate to the size of the individual. In an effort to define a space for the shopper rather than the commodity, the design must first reconsider the dimensions of the elements which the individual will dwell between within the four walls..

The market serves the customer effectively by defining a clear relationship between the community of customers, the storage of the commodity and the management. These relationships are unsuccessful within the traditional suburban market. The shelving of the bulk goods builds the dimensions of community rather than the individual. Even worse, the elements which successfully define the dimension of the individual, the specialized counters such as the deli, the butcher or the bakery, fill the periphery of the market. This placement not only stifles the public dimension of transition between shelving rows, but also packs the edges of the building limiting the potential of these edges to create community size views into the landscape.

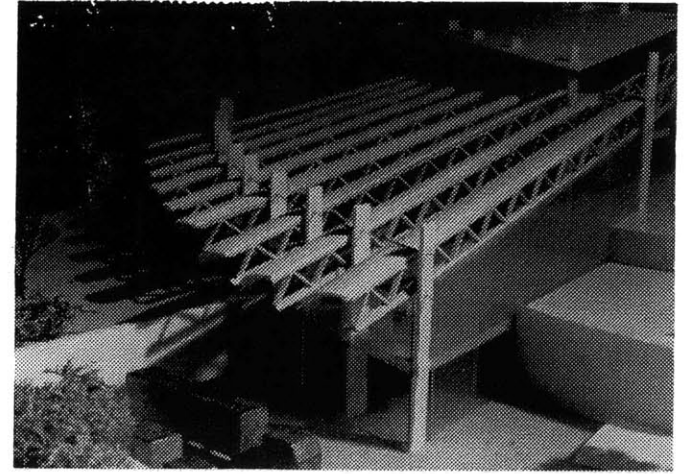
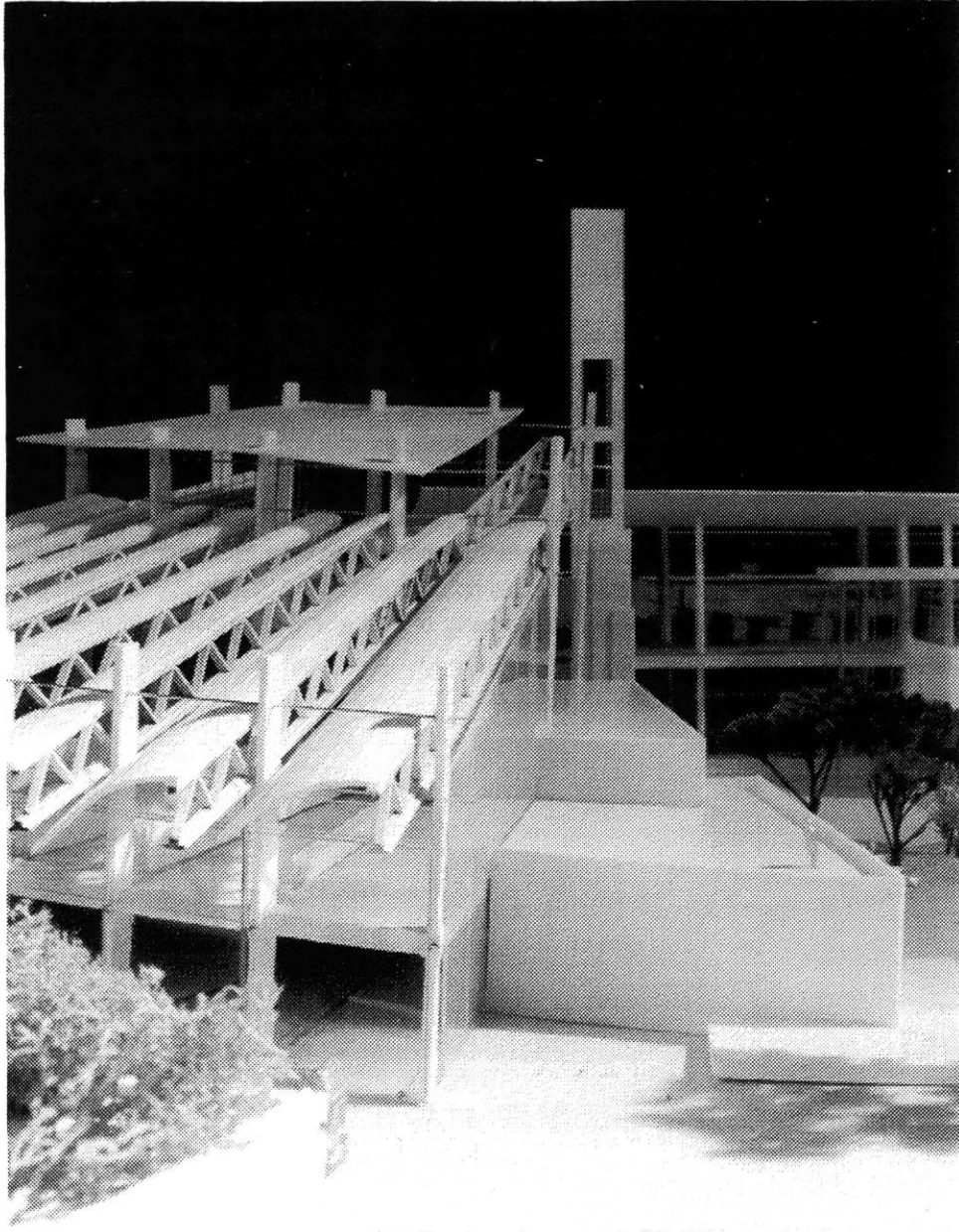
Each product display within in the supermarket relates uniquely to the individual, the community, and landscape. The alternative market places each of these elements within the framework of a settlement rather than a building allowing for the scale of each display type to be fully realized.

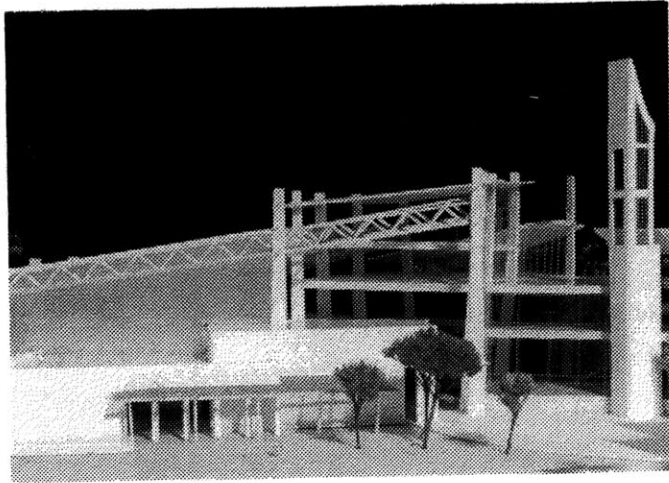


At this point, the information observed during the analysis of the American market types informs the type and relationship of the customer to the product display. The design has the goals of enhancing the relationships between the customers to merchant as well as customer to customer and customer to product. The settlement, separating the functions in the typical supermarket, allows for variation within the different types of market services. Therefore, the particular approach to service, of which the market types address the individual and the community, forms the character of each building of the settlement.

Dwelling in the market is about inhabiting the space between, inhabiting not simply the space between the four walls, but more so the inhabitation between the shelving of the products. Each marketing type within the settlement depends upon the manipulation of the building and interior elements to create a character of inhabitation. This manipulation varies in relation to the scale of the market's relationship to the landscape, the building, or the space between shelving units. Each unit intensifies the experience for the shopper. The common grounds for creating an intensification exist within the realm of the human senses. The means in which one perceives space between the different building pieces is important -- the sectional variation, the quality of light and the dimension of dwelling in relation to other human beings.

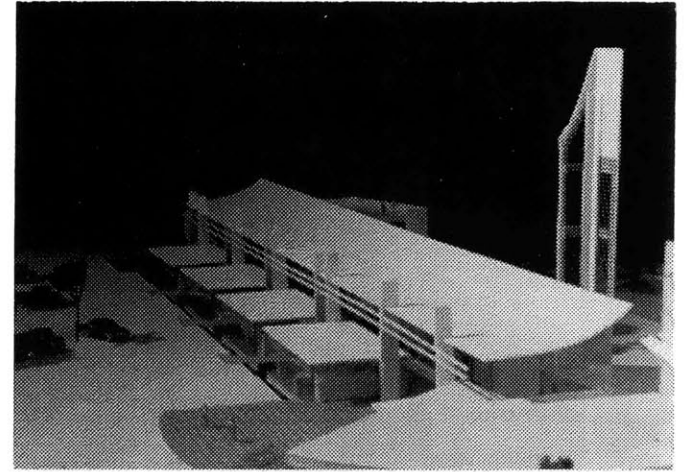
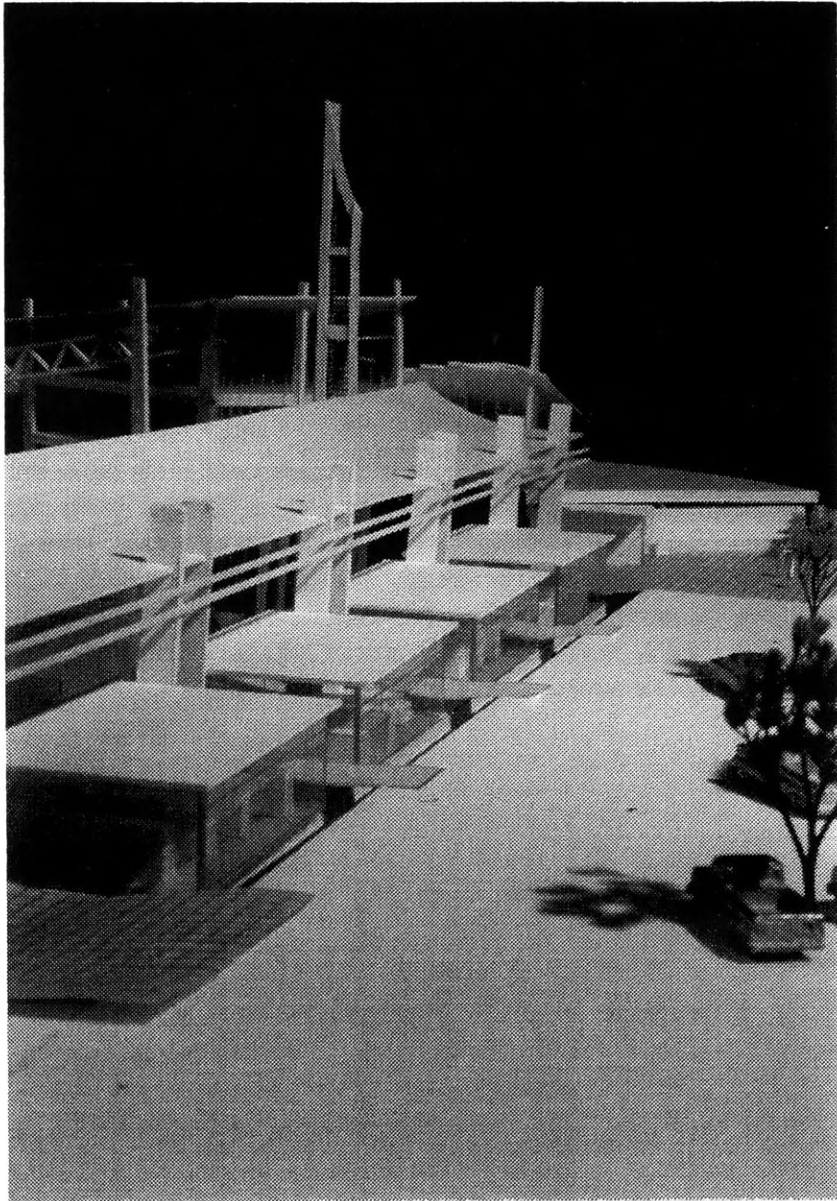


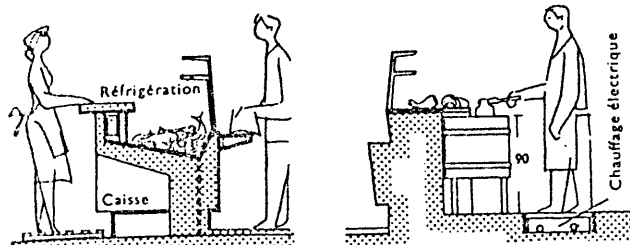




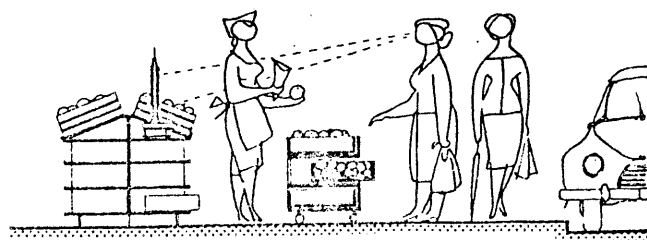
As described in previous chapters, the settlement or alternative market connects a variety of building types within a large zone of circulation in relation to the landscape. The placement of an open market at the edge of the settlement, builds a programmatic dimension in relation to the landscape. As a result, the open market provides a point for the community and the buildings to inhabit the landscape. The open market consists of a both a paved surface for the farmers to sell produce directly from their vehicles and a covered outdoor room which offers shelter, yet flexibility to the vendors with a separate product stall. The open market extends from the edge of the grocery. This placement allows for the scale of the grocery volume to break into smaller elements in relation to the dimensions of the context and creates a section in which the market is actually a piece of the landscape.

The single person vendors provide another scale to the community in the settlement. These merchants relate more to the community than to the landscape. Their mobile carts offer variety to the public street and public indoor spaces within the settlement. Although the size of the cart belonging to the vendor remains within the scale of the merchant by whom it is operated, the vendor inhabits the public circulation at the dimension of the community. The carts not only provide a dimension of color, but also a dimension of smell and sound to the volume of the community space.

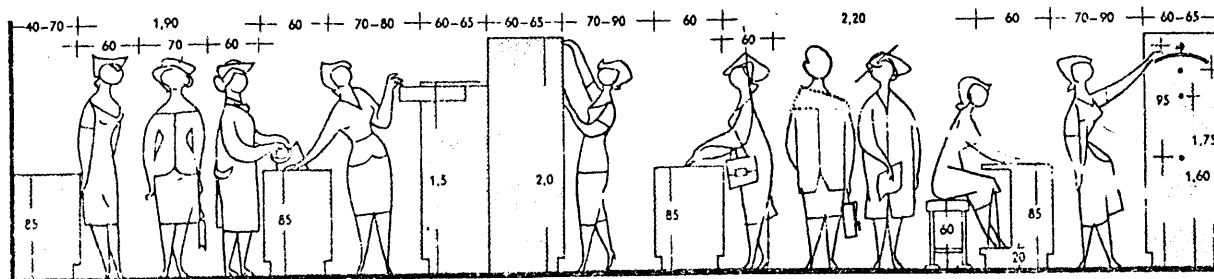




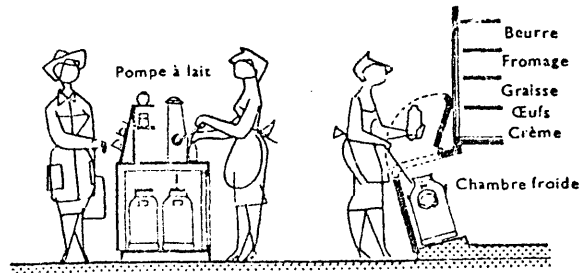
The specialty boutiques, offer to the market settlement a gesture of defined community. They function in a similar manner as the corner market to a city community or a country store to the rural context. They depend upon a close relationship of customers to the store employees and the other shoppers from the community. Each boutique specializes in a particular products which require freshness and service. The boutiques consist of a baker, a butcher, a dairy, a fruit and vegetable market, a pharmacy, a florist, a card shop and a health food store. These shops, which define the edge of the public street along the parking, offer a small dimension to the scale of the community. The scale and function of each shop begin to define a zone between the community and the individual. The individual maintains a freedom of choosing which boutiques to inhabit.



The character of these elements within the community is reflected in both the building closure and interior the shops. The glass walls of the boutiques allow them to appear as large show cases to the parking and public street. The service and office space supporting the shop is placed in level below (or above for the lower shops) to maintain the transparent quality of the volume. As well as being filled with light, the character of the shops is defined by the positioning of the shelving and displays in direction perpendicular to the landscape, thus orienting the customer in relation to the larger community. In an effort to maintain a close relationship between the merchant and the customer as well as the customers to the customers, the size of the shops are relatively small and the product display allow for the dimension of groups to gather and exchange.



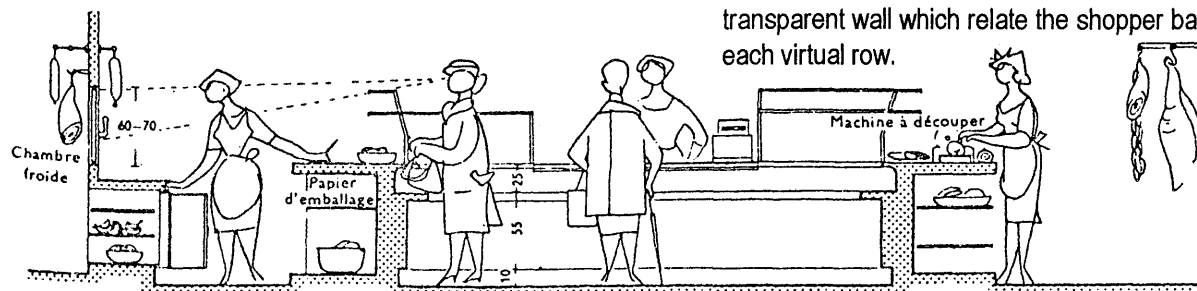




The character of the grocery store, on the other hand, separates the dimension of the individual from the dimension of the community and the merchant by allowing for particular definition of community and merchant sized dimensions within. Therefore, the lobby space, the cashier check area and the area at the end of the rows of shelving become important community sized pauses amidst the forest of shelves.

The mass marketed character of the commodity dwelling on the shelves of the modern grocery store, creates a library of community objects. As a result of the variety, options and clarity in these prepackaged products, the act of buying large quantities of these items becomes extremely individually oriented. The dimension of the individual is supported by the relationship of the different types of shelving within the volume of the grocery. These shelves are organized in virtual rows, but the definition within the length of the rows is smaller than the length. The shelving units do not form an unbroken line of products, rather they introduce variety. With the placement of seating, ulterior shelving types and open passageways between the isles, the rows become inhabitable spaces within themselves.

The path into the market consists of a movement down a slight ramp as if one were moving down a slope into the forest. Only at this moment the forest is a submersion into rows of shelves rather than rows of trees. The roof overhead offering a filtered reflected light and the journey of the paths wandering through the space framing a view of the landscape beyond. This outdoor character of the grocery is defined also by the sectional relationship of the volume to natural light. The roof plane above sweeps across the structure between a series of trusses which create a break to allow for the filtration of natural light into the shopping volume. The edges of the grocery also build the light with transparent wall which relate the shopper back to the scale of the landscape at the end of each virtual row.





## Conclusion

dwelling in a commodity driven society

*"A work of architecture is therefore not abstract organization of space. It is a concrete figure, where the plan mirrors the admittance and the elevation the embodiment. Thus it brings the inhabited landscape close, and lets man dwell poetically, which is the ultimate aim of architecture. (Norberg-Schultz, pg. 117)"*

The design of an alternative market has served explore the potential of the suburban commercial building as a community center. The design has supported the notion that the commercial aspects of an alternative market might contribute toward an architecture defined by paths and places for the community at the scale of the landscape, the building and the individual.

It is evident through the understanding of the typical suburban grocery that the developers of the building type seldom deviate from a commitment to create an efficient warehouse of goods, Places for people develop only when they coincide with the intention of dispersing the products to the community. In the absence of quality inhabitation, the buildings serve only as an empty public gesture and a timid participant in the modern community. The development of a system of alternative markets within suburbia could serve to recreate the bond and awareness between not only the members of the community towards each other, but also the landscape in which they dwell.

*"Today the balance has shifted decisively in the other direction. The activities of the Southern people are exerting a shaping influence on the Southern land. As never before, human activities are altering even transforming, the physical environment. For the first time, people may control the future of the environment. These facts bring Southerners face-to-face with a vital part of their heritage. For the interaction of people and the land has always been an essential aspect of the character of the South. Southerners have been known for the special, close bond they formed to their environment. The bond can endure, the relationship can continue if Southerners choose to make it so. But today and in the future, Southerners must act as custodians of their physical heritage. The people of the South have truly become responsible for the Land of the South (Clay, pg. 198)"*





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