

CHICAGO HOUSING COMPETITION

Under the National Endowment for the Arts’s new Public Works Grant Program, the Chicago Housing Authority (CHA) held a design competition to redevelop one block of the ABLA public housing complex, constructed between 1937 and 1962 on Chicago’s Near West Side. The competition’s aim was to bring progressive design thinking to a comprehensive public-private redevelopment plan. Initial public funding, including several recent Federal Hope VI grants, will be used to leverage private investment for replacement of unpopular public housing with low-rise, high-density, mixed-use and mixed-income apartments.

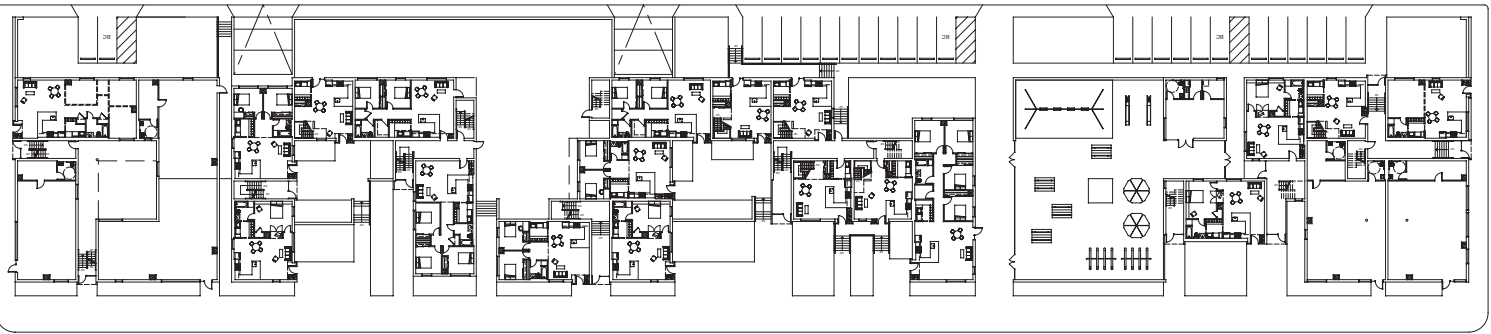
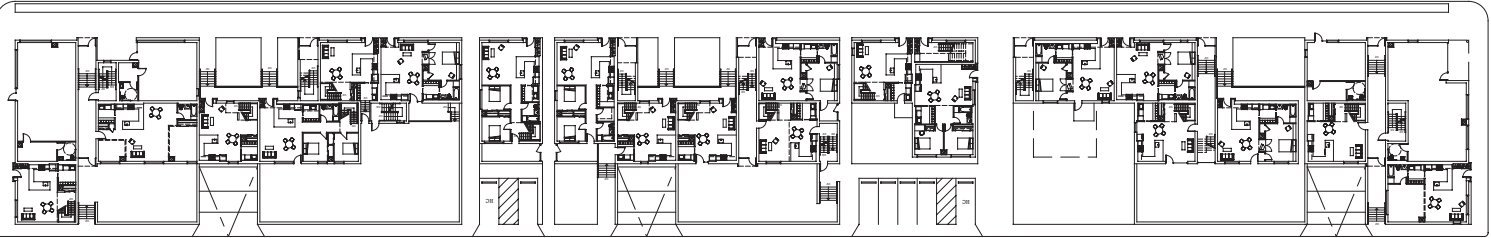
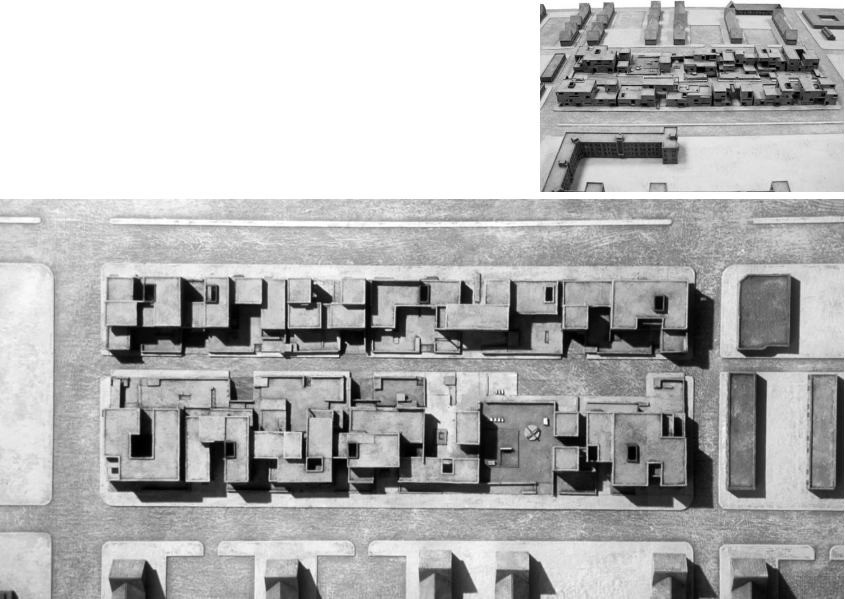
The CHA held the competition in two stages: an open round from which three semi-finalists were chosen on March 12, 2001, including Brian Healy Architects of Boston and the Chicago teams of 3D Design Studio and Javier Vendrell Studio / Wheeler-Kearns Architects / Roberta Feldman. Semi-finalists competed in a second round with four invited firms, including Stanley Saitowitz Architects, Shim-Sutcliffe Architects, Douglas Garofalo Architects, and Coleman Coker / Buildingstudio. On August 27, the jury selected Brian Healy Architects as the winner.

The three-acre site is located southwest of the Loop, near the University of Illinois at Chicago campus. The program specified between 84 and 114 new residential units (28 to 38 per acre) in a mix of one, two, three, and four-bedroom units. The design objectives explicitly specified a “pedestrian-scaled community engaging the surrounding context” with housing for a blend of income levels divided into equal thirds, low-income, affordable, and market rate. In addition, the competition guidelines suggested provisions for parking, private and public outdoor areas, and commercial space.

Due to the strict requirements of the brief, the seven finalists’ proposals contained some similar planning and massing strategies but differed in formal and material expression. Building heights were limited to four stories, and proposals typically formed a perimeter block with private parking, pedestrian walkways, and common landscaped spaces at the interior. All finalists generated a morphology of walk-up unit types with separate exterior entries and access to semi-private terraces or courts. Each scheme responded to the varied site edges—West Roosevelt Road’s heavy traffic to the north and West Washburn Avenue’s residential scale to the south—with changes in massing.

Despite planning similarities resulting from zoning requirements of the competition brief, the seven finalists’ specific architectural strategies reflected a range of different intentions. The proposals of 3D Design Studio and Vendrell / Wheeler-Kearns / Feldman focused on mending the traditional urban fabric whereas Douglas Garofalo and Coleman Coker’s schemes sought to reconcile divergent programmatic requirements through the interweaving of buildings and artificial landforms. Shim-Sutcliffe Architects generated an urban-ecological hybrid, providing both spatial and climactic regulation by wrapping a variation on the traditional block in landscaping. Stanley Saitowitz proposed live-work loft units as a “scaffold” to address shifting lifestyles and family-structures with unprogrammed flexibility. Brian Healy’s winning proposal synthesized opposing concerns for economy of construction with the need for a diverse range of unit types and public outdoor spaces. While his block organization took its cues from the traditional urban fabric, a plastic deployment of repeating units in varied orientations generated a continuous transformation across the site.

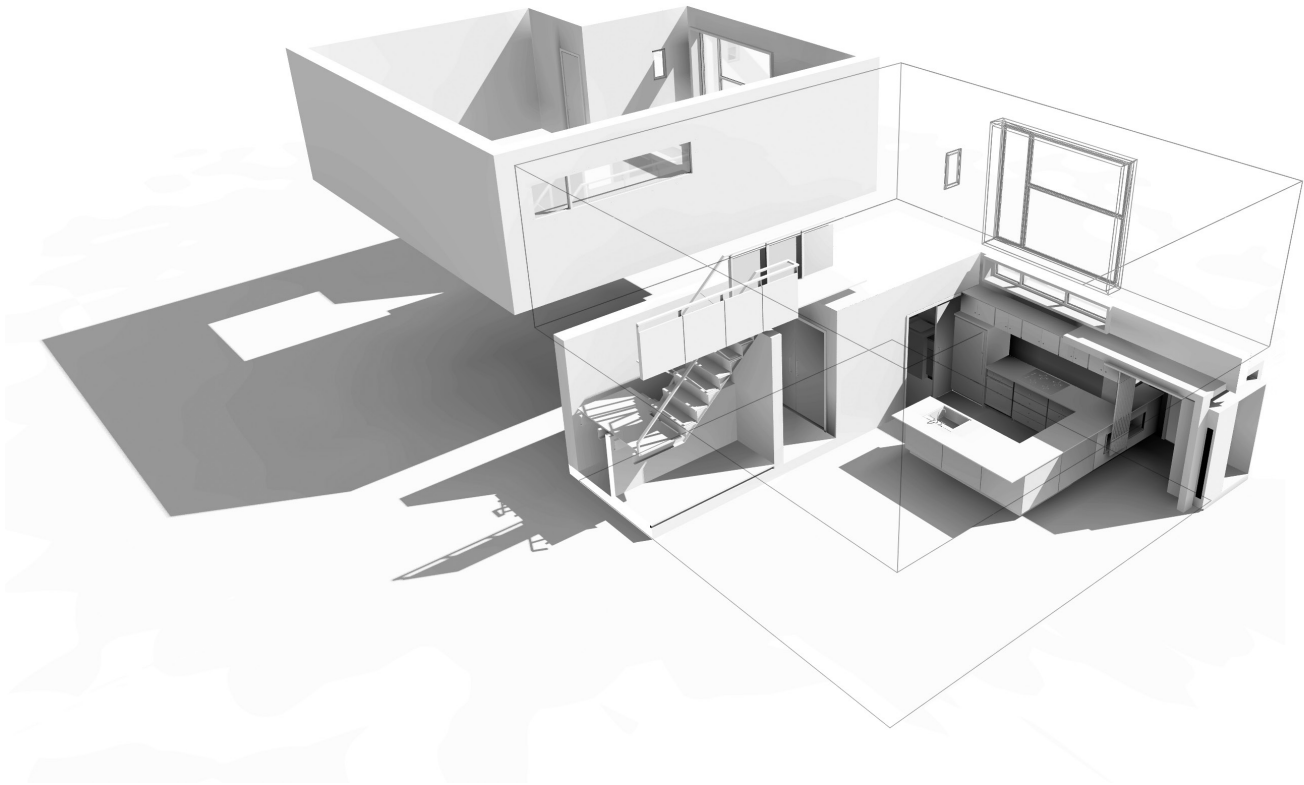
FACING PAGE: The existing housing stock surrounding the competition site is primarily low rise; in wind-swept expanses of vacant land, some traditional row houses remain in the midst of ABLA, which includes gabled and flat-roof public housing blocks.



BRIAN HEALY ARCHITECTS
FIRST PLACE

TOTAL NUMBER OF UNITS	114
SIZE OF AVERAGE UNIT	1,021 SQ FT
NO. DIFFERENT UNIT TYPES	8
COST PER UNIT	\$120,315

“This site for mixed income housing is a prime example of a protean landscape. This competition requires a re-imagination of both the city and the urban home. Accordingly, we approach the design as a synthesis between complimentary relationships. We choose diversity over strict repetition. We accept the interdependence of communal and personal space and we satisfy the desire for a tranquil interior landscape to balance an increasingly complex urban life. We conceive of the housing and city block as an open system rather than a closed composition. Our proposal anticipates transformations and permutations.”



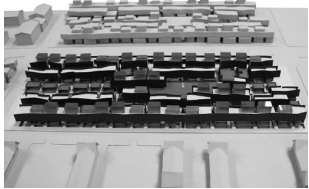
SITE MODELS: A traditional urban fabric of long, rectangular row house blocks divided lengthwise by carriage ways informed the initial site strategy of this proposal. Larger blocks and street grid shifts around the site reflect alterations to the original fabric during several eras of the construction of the ABLA public housing complex. West Roosevelt Road is the major divided artery bounding the site to the north.

SITE PLAN, GROUND FLOOR: Units in different orientations are grouped loosely into north and south bars, with a landscaped variation on the Chicago alley accessing the heart of the block. The clustering of units creates diverse exterior spaces ranging from semi-public to private.

PERSPECTIVE: Cut-away model of a typical two-bedroom unit shows an overlook into a double-height living room and kitchen.

DETAIL MODEL: A plastic compositional language evokes a sense of extensive variation within a loosely structured whole.

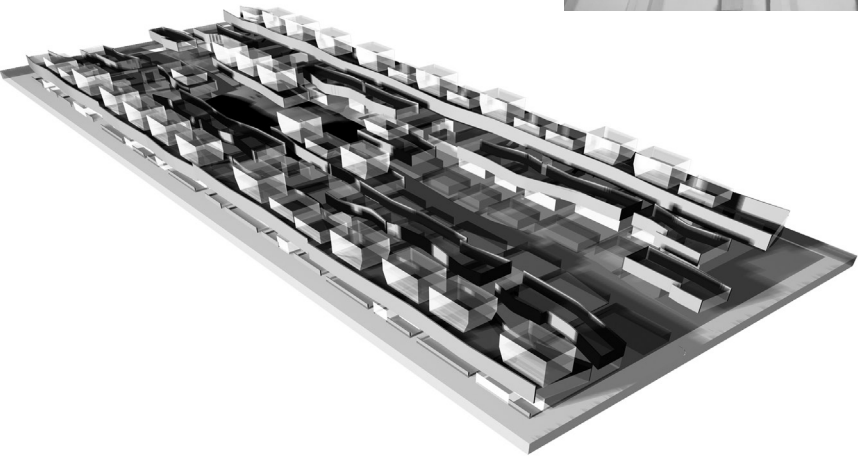
SITE ELEVATIONS, FACING PAGE, AND SECTION: North and south site elevations demonstrate an ‘open-ended’ aggregative massing architecturally unified by a free-form texture of punched openings. The site section reveals the network public and private outdoor spaces provided by



GAROFALO ARCHITECTS
SPECIAL RECOGNITION

TOTAL NUMBER OF UNITS	86
SIZE OF AVERAGE UNIT	1,133 SQ FT
NO. DIFFERENT UNIT TYPES	7
COST PER UNIT	\$152,207

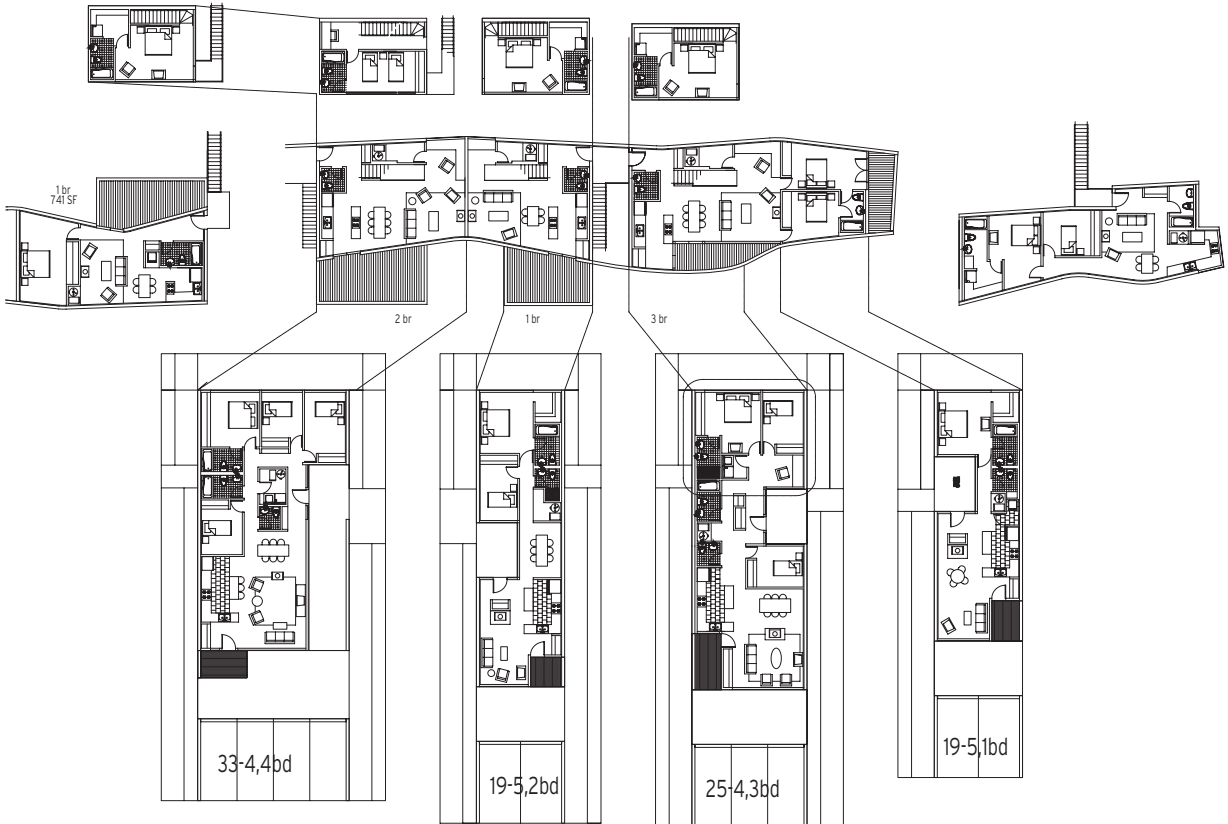
“The predicament of production housing sets the individual nature of domesticity at odds with standardized building practices. Instead of reducing residents to their perceived least common denominator, we propose a *weave* of housing that composes a diverse field from which individual lives may be played out. Within the site, a complex pattern of unit types ties together residents of varying family structures and income types. The palette of materials unify the scheme without making outward distinctions between residents. Concrete-panel units define strong north-south bars. Brick ribbon units above run counter grain. Stacked glass towers provide a vertical orientation, their transparency providing a counterpoint to the opacity of the brick and concrete. Backyards and private gardens merge into a centrally located, elevated community garden.”



Level 1

Level 2

Level 3



SITE MODEL, PERSPECTIVE, AND PLAN: On a field of public gardens and landscaped walks, north-to-south concrete panel clad bar units at the ground floor form a ‘weave’ with east-west ribbons of brick units at the upper floors, generating a fluid tapestry of distinct exterior and interior spaces. The lantern-like glazed rooms at the top story overlay this massing with a third rhythm. Undulating forms shape distinct, smaller scale spaces along continuous passages through the site.

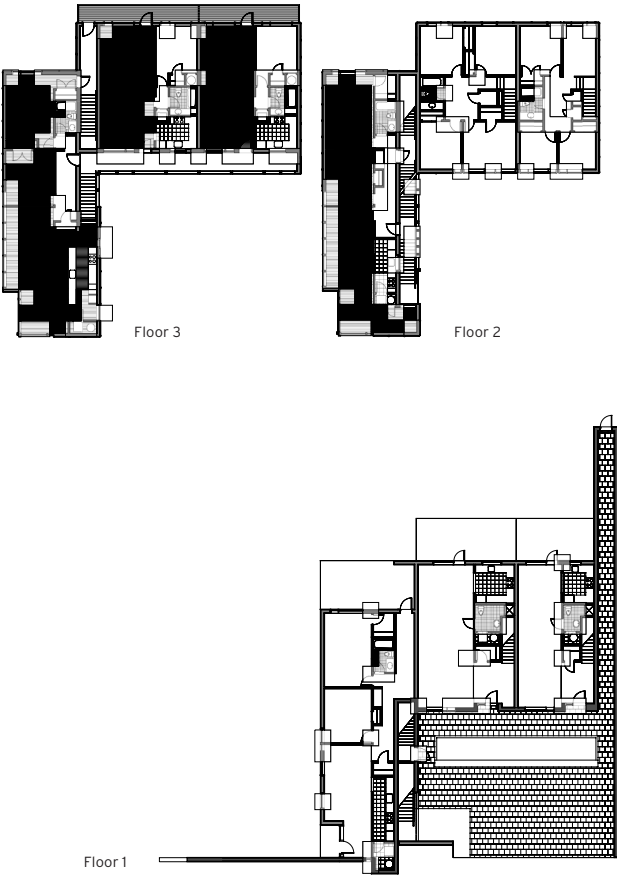
SITE SECTION: The building massing steps upward toward the north and south street addresses. A warped ground plane forms a public garden at the heart of the site, concealing parking with direct access to units is below.

UNIT PLANS: The orthogonal rhythm of independent concrete panel apartments and entry passages at the ground floor contrasts with the continuous monolithic expression of the brick second story apartments to express the ‘weave’ at the street. The lower unit roofs provide gardens for the upper units. The glass towers are third and fourth story walk-up bedrooms.

SHIM-SUTCLIFFE ARCHITECTS

TOTAL NUMBER OF UNITS	102
SIZE OF AVERAGE UNIT	1,064 SQ FT
NO. DIFFERENT UNIT TYPES	4
COST PER UNIT	\$136,724

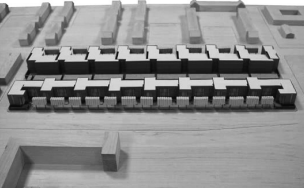
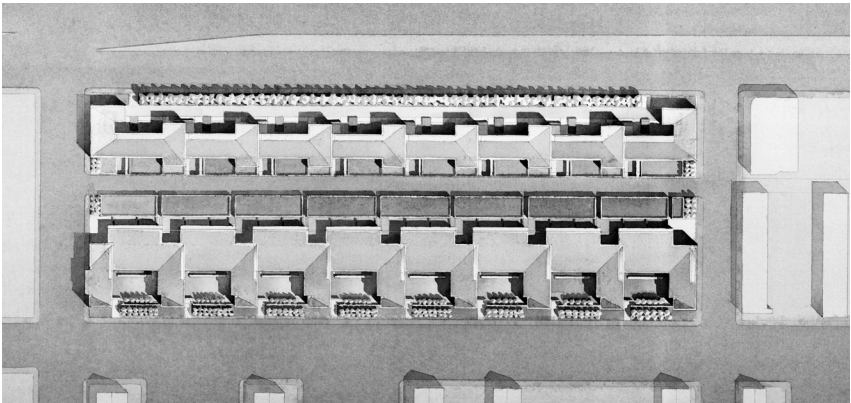
“Our project uses three story brick buildings wrapping sustainable landscaped courts to create a new scale of urban space. On the north side of the site, a linear promenade running east-west parallel to busy Roosevelt Road is created while on the south side of the site a series of garden courts define the Washburn Avenue streetscape. The role of landscape in this project is expanded and redefined making it an active participant in the storm water management of the site while also fulfilling its more traditional functions of microclimate modification, control of solar and wind access and its aesthetic role. The landscape in our proposal is an integral and interrelated part of the site both conceptually and literally.”



Floor 1

Floor 3

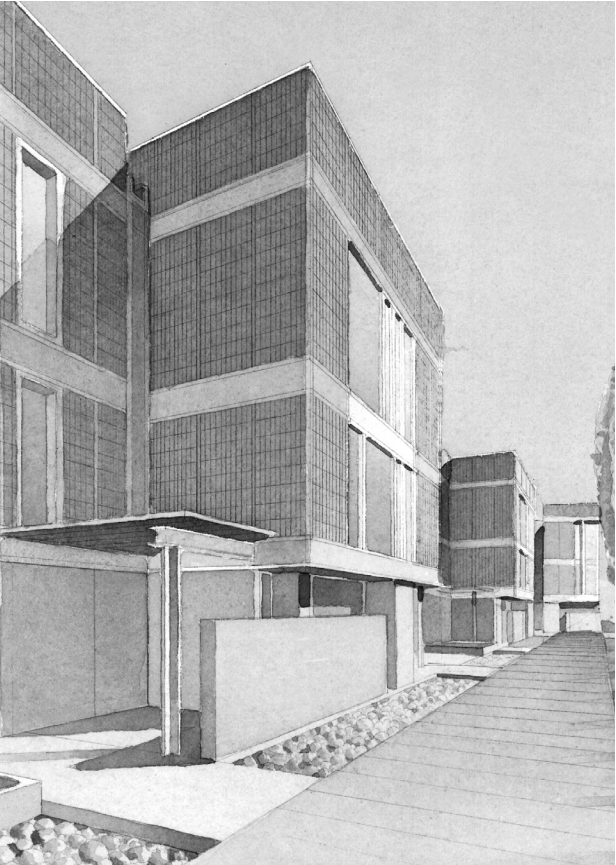
Floor 2



SITE MODEL AND PLAN: The site is divided by a green access way dividing north and south blocks of units. North units are defined by a common promenade, screened from Roosevelt Road by trees. To the south, the articulation at the street front forms a series of distinct entry courts, again defined spatially by landscaping.

PERSPECTIVE: An articulated frame infilled with full-height glazing and paneled brick forms the primary exterior expression. A tile base defines the ground floor level.

UNIT PLANS: Both the typical unit configurations, the barbell shape north and L-shape south shown here have two-story multi-bedroom units below with floor-through flats above.



STANLEY SAITOWITZ

TOTAL NUMBER OF UNITS	106
SIZE OF AVERAGE UNIT	1,028 SQ FT
NO. DIFFERENT UNIT TYPES	9
COST PER UNIT	\$123,360

“Programmed domestic space is replaced with openness, aimed at providing a scaffold in which inhabitants can establish their own environments. We have removed programmed content, and thought of the house as instrument rather than object, more like a telephone than a conversation. The premium on open space in cities has been countered by the use of double height volumetric interiors, which provide a feeling of generous openness. The realm of relief traditionally found in yards and gardens are augmented by interior volume. This abundance of space allows dimension, distance, separation, and connection not typical in flat multi-unit housing.”

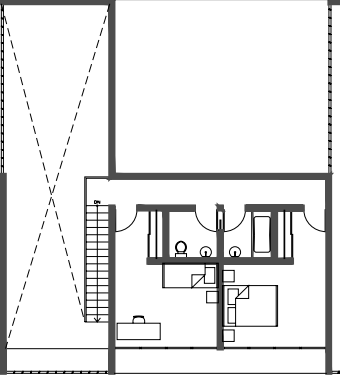


SITE MODEL AND PLAN: A grid of pedestrian streets carves the site with into nine residential micro-blocks. The massing steps down across the site, from West Roosevelt Road to West Washburn Avenue.

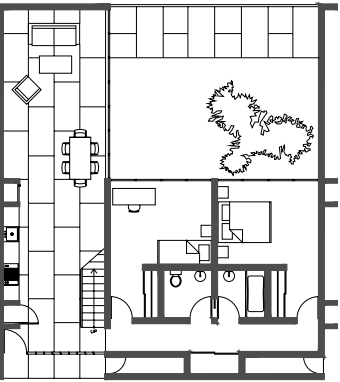
INTERIOR VIGNETTE: An unprogrammed double-height unit functions like a loft, permitting flexible live/work spaces. Panels of horizontal channel glass act as screens, enclosing private space while providing natural light.

PERSPECTIVE: A three-dimensional frame infilled with alternating modes of enclosure generates a complex of interlacing interior and exterior living spaces. An infill material palette of brick, channel glass, and clear glazing designates the range of residential spaces from private to semi-public.

UNIT PLANS: ‘Loft’ and ‘Garden’ types propose sparsely planned living spaces, minimizing spatial constraints on living arrangements and heightening the sense of connection to outdoor areas.



Floor 2

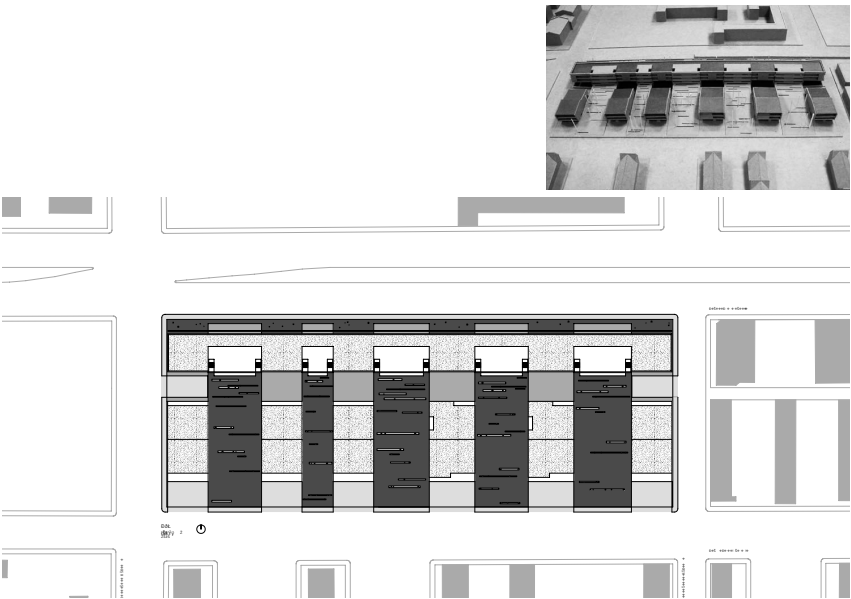


Floor 1

COLEMAN COKER / BUILDINGSTUDIO

TOTAL NUMBER OF UNITS	100
SIZE OF AVERAGE UNIT	1,125 SQ FT
NO. DIFFERENT UNIT TYPES	4
COST PER UNIT	\$151,800

“This project is developed with the surrounding urban eco-sys-tem in mind, as an efficient microclimate of the greater eco-sys-tem whole. To accomplish this the development incorporates greenD roofs and gardens to absorb heat gain. Also, porous ground surfaces on both the parking areas and garden spaces retain rainwater. Trees and planting along Roosevelt Avenue filter carbon monoxide and buffer noise pollution while the green space in the community area provides shade and absorbs heat gain. Maximized cross ventilation in each unit takes advan-tage of breezes and increases views out. Exterior walls are brick veneer and wood siding. The bar building screen is constructed of perforated recycled-aluminum planks of varying widths on a steel frame.”



SITE MODEL: A high density north bar addresses West Roosevelt Road while discrete buildings, like townhouses, relate in scale and rhythm to existing buildings along West Washburn Avenue. Arched landforms bridge the site, providing pedestrian access across it.

DETAIL MODEL, NORTH: A randomized aluminum screen defines and shelters continuous balconies along the West Roosevelt Road façade.

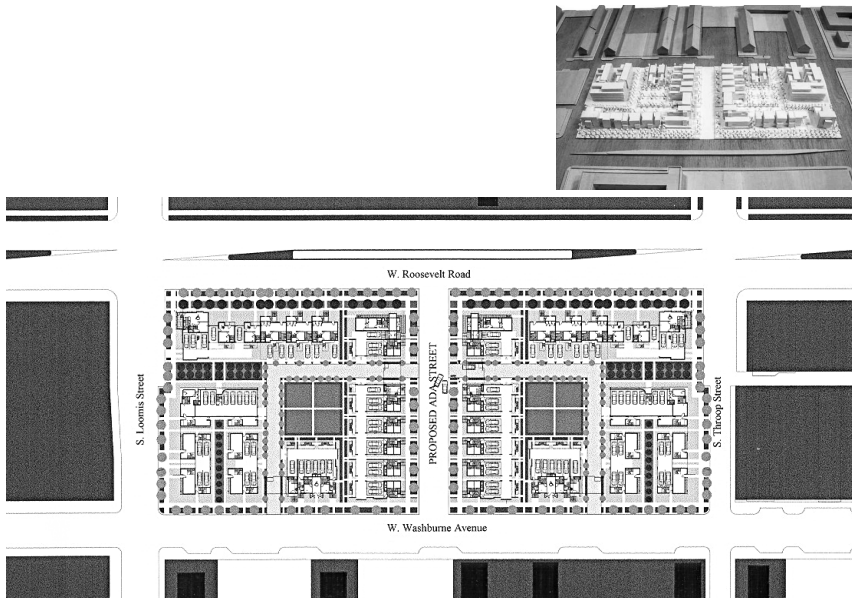
SITE SECTION AND PLAN: Parking below the const- ructed ground allows direct access to apartments with- out displacing green space. The high density of the north bar building justifies an orga- nization about passenger elevators.



3D DESIGN STUDIO

TOTAL NUMBER OF UNITS	92
SIZE OF AVERAGE UNIT	1,035 SQ FT
NO. DIFFERENT UNIT TYPES	22
COST PER UNIT	UNKNOWN

“Our solution seeks to disintegrate the “super block” to re-es- tablish the idea of neighborhood. The method of disintegration was achieved by the over-laying of the historic, current and proposed lot lines. The resulting graphic provided areas for massing, gateways, gangways, view ports and slippage which suggest movement and disintegration. This desire to disinte- grate the “super block” is accentuated through the addition of a new Ada Street, the creation of a service drive and the use of multiple building types. These buildings recall the typical Chicago neighborhood and consist of Single Family Homes, Town Homes with Related Living, Two-Flats and Courtyard structures. All units have been provided access to private or semi-private out-door space.”

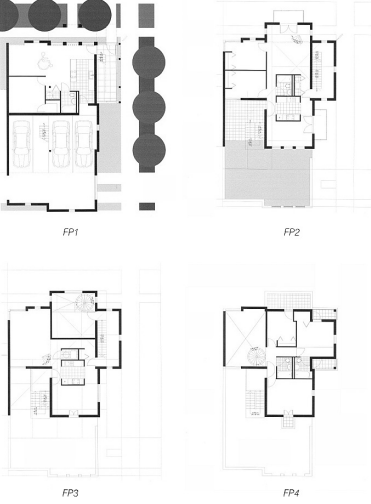


SITE MODEL AND PLAN: The block has been 'disinte- grated' by the introduction of Ada Street and a network of drives and pedestrian paths. Trees and landscaping reinforce subdivision of the block, providing implicit boundaries to increase the sense of individual privacy. All units have direct access to parking.

VIGNETTE: Units are all either detached, or articulated in massing to appear detached, and are vertically attenuated to provide generous propor- tioning at interior spaces.

ELEVATION, WEST: A large landscaped setback at the north (left side) provides a buffer to West Roosevelt Road. Plane and material shifts in the façade of a higher density apartment block at south corner of the site reduces its apparent scale.

UNIT PLANS: Planning for unit types is articulated to more closely resemble the single home than the apart- ment block.



JAVIER VENDRELL STUDIO / WHEEL-
ER-KEARNS ARCHITECTS / ROBERTA
FELDMAN

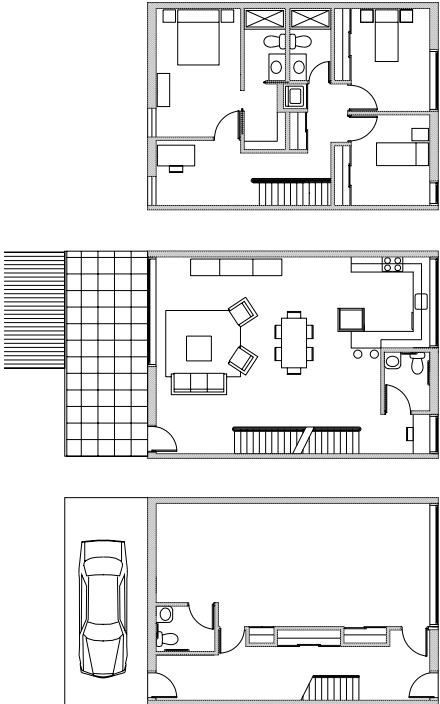
TOTAL NUMBER OF UNITS	102
SIZE OF AVERAGE UNIT	1,093 SQ FT
NO. DIFFERENT UNIT TYPES	7
COST PER UNIT	\$125,695

“Our proposal builds upon the functional underpinning of Chicago’s street and alley system while enclosing and transforming the block interior for both shared and private uses. Apartments and townhouses define the perimeter of the residential streets. Prominent ground floor live-work/commercial uses with residences above initiate a pedestrian corridor along Roosevelt Road. Two-level, fully accessible landscaped courtyards bridge the alley to connect the residents and cultivate community, physically and emotionally. Buildings’ heights and massing decrease from the north to the south of the site privileging access to sun, natural light, and views. The forms, colors, and scales of the buildings with their brick masonry exteriors complement the architectural character of Chicago’s historic low rise housing while giving it an expression of our time.”

SITE MODEL AND PLAN: The organizational strategy reinscribes the block with the original east-west alley, and creates a perimeter block. Like other finalists, the massing in this scheme steps down from the high traffic north edge to the quieter residential south edge. Housing blocks rise from a one-story podium containing commercial (exterior) and parking (interior) spaces. U-shaped south buildings make a series of public courtyards or plazas.

VIGNETTES: The planted plazas occur at a level above on-grade parking in the heart of the block. A network of pedestrian galleries and bridges connect each housing level to its respective plaza.

UNIT PLANS: In one typical configuration, a flexible-use commercial space lies below a two-story unit.



Floor 2

Floor 1

Ground Floor