

Housing Design: A Social Theory.
By Elizabeth Wood. New York:
Citizens' Housing and Planning
Council, 1961.

INTRODUCTION

Like all who have loved public housing for a long time, I have felt angry and frustrated at the sight of public housing projects that have the bleak, unloved look of army barracks and institutions.

Sometimes this inhuman look results from the meaningless geometry which governs the arrangements of buildings; sometimes it comes from the stupidity of the buildings themselves; sometimes it is due to meagre landscaping and to the absence of any indication of personal use and loving care of grounds.

I have seen these uglinesses in row house projects, and in high rise projects; in big projects and in little projects, and in big city projects and in little city projects.

Some friendly critics have adjured public housing architects to produce better architecture. Some local authorities have thought to improve the situation by throwing out the whole idea of "projects" and building single apartment buildings or scattered individual houses.

Neither of these suggestions goes to the core of the problem. Some projects that look the worst have well arranged buildings and good architecture. To abandon the large-scale planning that lies behind projects is to abandon one of the most important innovations in city development.

When the first housing architects and administrators built their first "projects" — using superblocks — they were expressing the hope that by designing houses or residential buildings in large-scale units they could bring to city people a richer and more fulfilling environment than was possible in ordinary city blocks. Such planning would bring to their doorsteps safe places for children to play, more kinds of play, pleasant sitting areas, all in a park-like setting. Our "projects" were to establish a new kind of urban residential neighborhood.

Private urban developers promptly adopted the concept. In most large cities there came into being large developments which were never called projects but were given names: "Parkchester", "Lake Meadows", "McLean Gardens".

Although the projects spread, the hope shrivelled, so far as public housing is concerned.

It shrivelled first because of the dictates of economy. The capital cost of grass is cheapest of all methods of grounds surfacing. Grass once

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planted must be protected. Protection of grass, not a richer and more fulfilling environment, became the goal.

For a long time, however, housing authorities ritualistically but mechanically followed the form of the hope. They planted grass and provided play equipment for children. They planted a few trees. But the spirit of the concept shrivelled. With the advocacy of scattered buildings and individual houses, it died.

Today, cities desperately need to aspire once more to the goal of design that will bring to city people a richer and more fulfilling environment, because we do not know yet how to design urban residential neighborhoods that compete with the suburbs for social desirability, especially for families with children.

Private, large-scale developments have done better in some ways than public housing. They have captured a more satisfactory aesthetic because they have more trees and shrubs. Their landscaping is rich and pleasant enough so that even though their buildings are actually not much better, architecturally, than those of public housing, they look better. But these private developments do not yet represent the kind of urban environment that can compete with suburbs. The social barrenness that one finds in public housing exists in much private highrise urban housing. The provision of recreation for children older than tots is skimpy. There is little or none for adults or teenagers.

For some people this doesn't matter; for some it does. I have talked to people living in the more expensive new private developments and found some of them frustrated by meagre and unimaginative design. There was the mother of energetic young children growing frantic (exactly like the mother in a public housing project) because she has to have them underfoot except when she can herself take them downstairs and outdoors. There was the young man wishing there were a place for exercise in his beautifully landscaped development — at least a wall against which he could, legally, throw a ball. And there were the lonely people, too, even as in public housing projects: a young mother-to-be carrying her first child, and an old couple.

Although this memorandum is written in terms of the design of high density, high-rise public housing projects, it is, in reality, an effort to come to terms with the problem of design of all high density, urban residential areas whether they come into being as projects, public or private, or through the redesign and conservation of older areas. It is an effort to broaden the two dominant preoccupations of housing administrators and architects; how to design to make the projects look and stay nice, and how to design to protect the privacy of the families —

(e.g., protect them from unwanted sights and sounds). It seeks to broaden these preoccupations by presenting a rationale as to why it is both good and safe to design buildings and neighborhoods so that they richly fulfill peoples' needs and desires. The principles of the memorandum have wide applicability. Differences in their use are quantitative rather than qualitative.

This memorandum is directed at high-rise public housing because it presents the most difficult design problem. Unlike row-house public housing projects it has very high densities; unlike private high-rise projects, it has very high density in terms of those notorious space users, children. Unlike high income families, low income families must satisfy their social and recreation needs close at home: the more income people have, the farther from home they can go to satisfy these needs.

Design cannot do everything for a population. As was pointed out in "Balanced Neighborhood"*, the creative neighborhood must have a population which includes the middle class families who, traditionally, are local leaders and servers. In the case of low income families, there must be management, enlightened and in some circumstances aided by professional social work staff. But design that with richness and imagination fulfills the needs of people, performs its own magic, a magic cities badly need at this time.

—ELIZABETH WOOD, *Consultant*
Citizens' Housing and Planning Council

MAY 1961

*Wood, Elizabeth, "A New Look at the Balanced Neighborhood: a study and recommendations." Citizens' Housing and Planning Council of New York, Inc. 1960.

I. A SOCIAL THEORY OF HOUSING DESIGN

There have been a number of studies of the design of public housing. The studies of the American Public Health Association, a number of years ago, fixed definitive requirements relating to health in the narrow sense of the word. The design of individual dwelling units — whether in row houses, walk-up or high-rise buildings — has been thoroughly explored. Precepts for their good design are clear and adequate.

What has been completely lacking is a study of design based on a theory of what kind of social structure is desirable in a project and how to use design to get it. Such a theory would be expressed almost exclusively in the design of the space outside the dwelling units. It would be expressed in the design of public spaces; corridors, lobbies, grounds and the non-dwelling facilities and buildings on the project. The design of these aspects of public housing projects expresses a social philosophy whether designers have one in mind or not.

Typical high rise projects, not only in New York City but in other cities, express what Richard A. Miller* calls "sophisticated family individualism".

Specifically, projects seem designed to minimize or to prevent accidental and casual communication between people and the informal gathering of people, and to provide minimum facilities for the formal gatherings of people. Present design prohibits these activities *within* residential buildings, except in the case of a handful of buildings with access or public balconies. Present design sharply limits the variety and

*"Public Housing . . . for People". *Architectural Forum*, April 1959, p. 135.

kind of activities outside the residential buildings both on project grounds, and in non-residential space.

The reasons that have sustained this kind of planning have been both economic and social.

To give an example:

Originally, architects were instructed to design corridors and lobbies so as to achieve maximum efficiency and minimum cost. This objective resulted in interior corridors and lobbies of minimum size. Managers soon found that informal gatherings or loiterings in these small spaces created a nuisance which was, in effect, an invasion of the privacy of the adjacent families. From this grew the belief that it was desirable to design to prevent informal gatherings or loiterings.

That theory of design asserts that it is possible to design out all opportunities for misbehavior and creating of nuisances. It proposes that surveillance by paid employees (including project policemen) together with fines and regulations constitute the inevitable methods of social control in public housing.

This report propounds the theory that the rich fulfillment of the needs of people, as individuals and groups, is in itself a suitable design objective. But we also propose that design to serve this objective serves also a larger purpose: it makes possible the development of a social structure by means of which people can create their own social controls, and do their own self-policing.

The negative theory has been pretty thoroughly tried out. Experience has shown that one may wall up "raping corners", make the lobby so small and unpleasant that there is no reason for pleasant loitering, and hang up "no loitering" signs, but what is created thereby are peopleless places, vacuums open to the public, where little boys can commit nuisances, where, at night, drunks can wander in, do the same thing and sleep their drunk off.

Managers long ago learned that they can never hire enough janitors, policemen, guards and groundsmen to pick up after, or stop the vandalism of, a hostile or an indifferent tenancy.

In the long run, there is no substitute for the contributions that the tenants themselves make to the welfare and economical management of a project. This report, therefore, suggests that design can facilitate the social fabric out of which a tenant organization grows, and by means of it can be effective.

The suggestions for such design are made in full recognition that even the ideal design can be made useless by management practices that grow out of failure to understand the design. I visited a high-rise building that had exterior corridors in a nearby city last spring. The corridors were being used exactly as intended. Babies in pens and buggies were out getting the sun. Mothers were hanging out baby clothes on small racks. Neighbors were passing the time of day. It was exactly the "sidewalk in the sky" or "backyard in the sky" that had been intended. The manager going with us was obviously disturbed by the clothes racks. We asked if they were against the rules. They were. We asked if they damaged the floor. They did not. We asked why they were against the rules. They spoiled the appearance of the project.

It is also true that different families will accommodate themselves to the design of buildings and grounds differently, and according to their capacities, social concerns and cultural backgrounds. Some families do not know how to use the best of designs. If they have come from cramped, abused and deteriorated buildings, they do not automatically make good use of their dwelling space or building grounds. They will need help and education. This help and education does not have to be forthcoming only from paid staff. In a good community the good neighbors, consciously or unconsciously, effect a good part of this education.

We believe that to seek to achieve tidiness and proper social behavior by frustrating or making impossible *any* social behavior will work no better with a community than with a small boy.

II. THE NEEDS OF PEOPLE

If one were to inventory the things that all people do because they must, to fulfill their real needs, one would find that everybody — except the bedridden and the hermit — has need to do some things outside of his dwelling. This is the simple truism on which a social theory of housing design begins.

Even if the functions related to jobs were excluded, many basic and essential needs can be satisfied only outside the dwelling. Rich and poor, urban apartment dweller and suburban home owner, child and great-grandfather, all live, in part, outside their dwellings.

People go outside their dwellings on a purposeful trek to mailbox, school or shop, to watch life go by, or to find someone to do something with. The difference between the poorer and the richer is that the richer can, if they want to, go farther away from their dwellings to satisfy their needs; the poorer must satisfy more of them at home. The difference between the urban apartment dweller and the suburban home owner is that the former must satisfy the largest proportion of his needs on publicly or corporately owned grounds, the latter on his own or other privately owned grounds.

Without making any pretense at an analytical inventory of the needs that must be served outside the dwelling, we suggest the following five categories:

There is the need for active exercise. This is a need felt by all children, most teenage and adult males, and maybe a few teenage and adult females. The more limited the space within the dwelling the more acute the need.

There is the need for sunshine and fresh air. This need is felt by children, all mothers and babies, all aged, and a lot of others including adults.

There is the need to get "out". This need is felt by all house-bound people, especially mothers with pre-school children, all other children and the old. This need is felt no less when getting "out" cannot mean getting "outdoors" because the weather is cold and stormy.

There is the need to go somewhere: to shops, to church, to movies, to buy soda pop — the list is endless. It is felt by every human over the age of three or thereabouts.

There is the need to do some sound household chores which are much better done outdoors, or which cannot be done indoors: washing the car, sunning the woolens, repairing the bike, drying the baby's clothes.

For many people, the serving of these needs is a private purpose, to be carried out as privately as the surroundings permit.

For many people, these activities are the mechanisms and the excuse for a social purpose: to see other people, to talk to other people, or do something with other people.

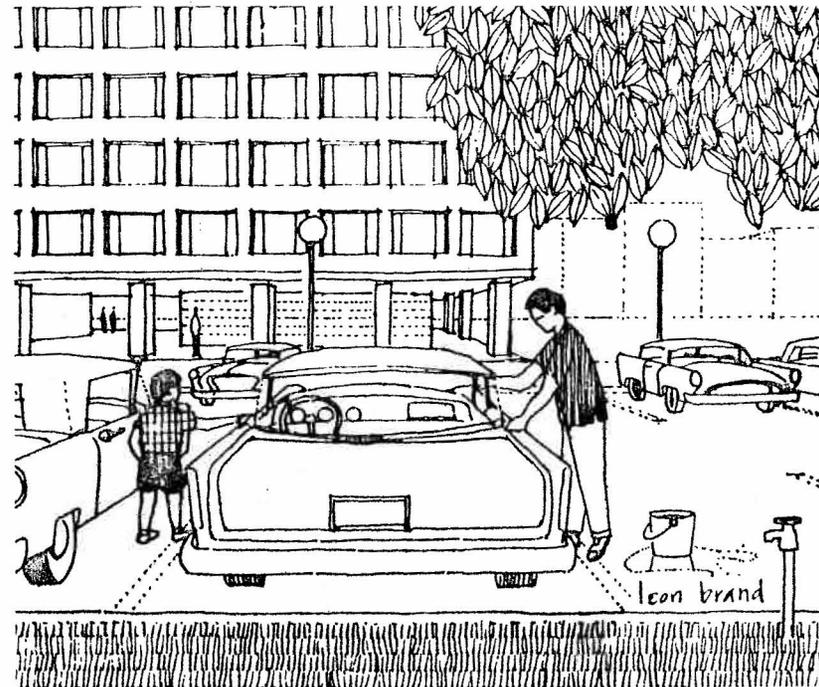
Project design must first satisfy these needs themselves with imagination and richness.

An examination of the kind and number of facilities for serving these needs within the average public housing project finds neither richness nor imagination.

Generally, there are facilities and equipment for active exercise only for children up to the age of ten, or perhaps twelve. There are seldom any facilities for active exercise for male or female teenagers, or male or female adults. Sometimes there are facilities for teenagers in a nearby school or public playground, but not always. It may be that urban adult females do not want active exercise, but there is a fair amount of evidence that urban males, teenagers as well as adults, and even some female teenagers need and like exercise.

Generally projects provide no place to go "out" but "outdoors". There are no places where one may go on stormy days except to another dwelling unit, or to the community center. You may go there only if you are a member of the Golden Age Club (if there is one) or if you fit into the organized and scheduled activities.

Generally, there are no places (inside the project) where adults may



CAR WASHING

go for free fun, except to the community center where, of necessity, fun is organized and scheduled. Commercial recreation is available only outside the project.

The absence of facilities for free fun or informal gatherings grows out of the distrust of any gathering of people unless there is supervision — which project management cannot afford.

The absence of commercial recreation is due to official policy about all commercial facilities. The official reasoning is dual:

First, housing administrators have adopted the policy that commercial and residential uses should be kept separate. This policy, it should be noted, derives from that of highgrade subdivisions and suburbs; it is not so strictly accepted in non-project urban areas, including expensive residential areas.

Second, housing administrators have rejected the inclusion within projects of any but minimum commercial facilities, because as profitable enterprises, these should, in their opinion, be left entirely to individual and free private enterprise. The policy has been that facilities should develop only as private enterprises see a need and a profit, and only outside the projects.

Pressure to modify present design policies comes also from the recognition that better provisions must be made in the places where people live to permit better use of the ever increasing amount of leisure

time. To quote Coleman Woodbury,* “More leisure time for more people means more opportunity and more energy for the activities and ways of living common to suburban and rural fringe areas. It makes more nearly intolerable for many people the limitations imposed by the cramped and congested areas so common in central cities and in some of the older suburbs. Furthermore, increased leisure seems likely to be an even more powerful force in the future than it is today, regardless of how the increase affects the length of the work day, week, year or lifetime of the various classes of those gainfully employed.”

The resources for leisure time activities of the adult male in public housing projects are more limited than in the slums. He cannot paint his apartment walls, or repair things about his house; he cannot garden; he has no place to make wine or to tinker with tools. There are no bocci courts, no horseshoe or volley ball courts, no place to play ball, no wall to throw a ball against. In short, little to do inside his dwelling unit but watch television, little to do outside his dwelling but sit on a bench sans beer. No wonder that settlement house workers, seriously concerned about buying habits of poor families in public housing, notice an irresistible trend to two television sets per family.

*Woodbury, C. A Framework for Urban Studies. A Report to the Committee on Urban Research. Highway Research Board. National Academy of Science. National Research Council. March 16, 1959.

III. DESIGN FOR SOCIAL FABRIC

The first goal of housing design, as discussed in the last chapter, is to satisfy "with richness and imagination" the needs of people for activities outside their dwelling units.

The second goal is to so design for people-in-the-aggregate that out of the fulfillment of these needs there can come into being this thing called social fabric.

People begin life in a housing project in an aggregation of strangers with diverse habits, culture and background. If design is based on the theory that they want privacy above everything else, they remain strangers. Then if nasty incidents occur, if one individual misbehaves (as may well happen where low income families live) the good people tend to think that everyone but themselves is bad. They are not able to tell how many or which families are bad, how many or which families are good like themselves. They distrust the community.

Design should help this aggregation of strangers become less strange, more familiar to each other. Out of this familiarity can come the informal communication, the informal groupings that constitute fabric.

This second goal has relevance for all kinds of people. As has been said, it has relevance to management, to general tenant morale, to tenant self direction. But it has particular relevance for families with children.

There are prevalent some pretty strong sentiments to the effect that

high-rise buildings are not fit places for families with children. The Philadelphia Housing Association has taken such an unequivocal stand. A report made for the Baltimore Redevelopment Agency came to the same conclusion.

It is difficult to imagine a time when the New York City Housing Authority or several of the other large cities in this country, will be in a position to abandon the construction of high-rise apartment buildings for families with children. It would be sad indeed if it were true that all the families with children housed in such buildings are housed in unfit dwellings! Although there is considerable evidence of the unsuitability of some kinds of high-rise apartment buildings for families with children, suitability under optimum conditions has not been evaluated. We must discover also whether it is possible to design high-rise housing for middle income families with children so that those who want to remain in the city may do so with benefit to their children.

The basic evil of high rise apartments for families is the distance they place between the mother and her children when they are playing outside the dwelling. She can keep them in the apartment with her except when she goes down with them to the playground; she can find paid supervision for them, or she can trust them to informal supervision by the people who are downstairs in the playground: janitors, grounds-men, other mothers, older children. To the degree she does this, the children will be raised by these other people. This is one of the things that critics view with alarm.

As a matter of fact, most mothers, even the most conscientious, trust their children to the supervision of others, including other parents they do not know personally. They trust the unknown when they have reasons such as "the neighborhood is very nice," "the school has a good reputation."

Design for social structure is for the purpose of making it possible for mothers to entrust their children to their community.

We suggest four principles to guide the architect in design for social structure.

First, the architect must design for visible identification of a family and its dwelling. This characteristic is to be found in every street of free standing houses and in row house developments. It is not found in high-rise buildings with interior corridors.

Second, the architect should design so as to make association and loitering easy not only on the building floor, but at points away from it; that is, in lobbies and on the grounds.

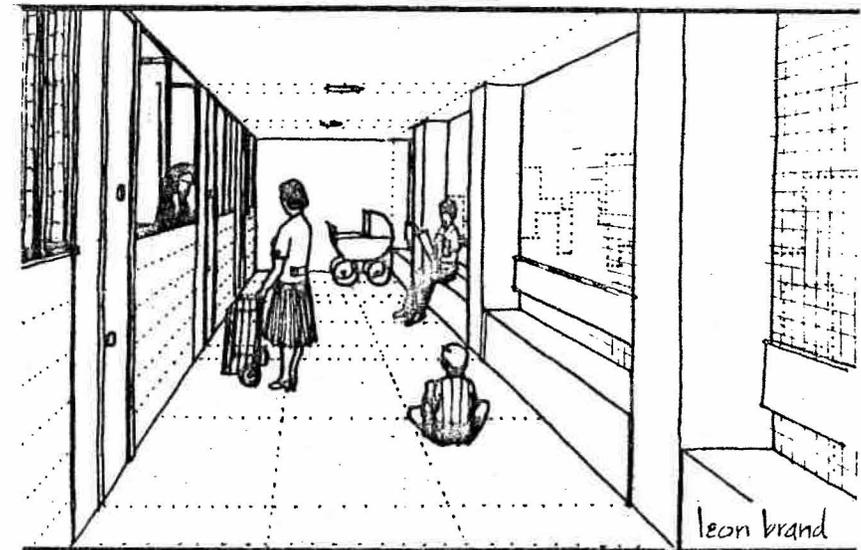
Third, the architect should design so as to make the formulation of informal groups easy. This is effectuated by facilities that call for group use and by purposeful arrangements of benches and grounds equipment.

Fourth, the architect should locate the facilities and equipment in such a way that they provide and are provided with social controls.

1. Design for Visibility

When people do things outside, but so close to their dwellings that they can be identified with them, they can both see and be seen by their immediate neighbors.

When one comes to have this sort of visual acquaintance, one's male neighbor is not an anonymity, an unknown male who might attack you if you met him late at night in the elevator. When you see your female neighbor doing household chores or watching her baby outside her door you get many clues as to the kind of person she is. Every row house project and every street of houses makes this kind of visual appraisal possible. From the day a family moves into the block, neighbors make visual acquaintances and visual appraisals.



DESIGN FOR VISIBILITY: Outdoors — upstairs

Housing authority apartment buildings with interior corridors, where loitering is forbidden, offer no opportunity for a good look at a new neighbor, or even an old one. No architectural device can offset the unacceptable behavior of an undesirable neighbor, but it can minimize the impact. If most of one's neighbors are visibly acceptable and have a nodding acquaintance with each other, the impact of one undesirable family is diminished. It is lack of knowledge about one's neighbors that makes the impact of an undesirable one so destructive.

It is, of course, incumbent upon management not to have concentrations of undesirable families, but it is incumbent upon architects to minimize the impact of the inevitable few undesirables.

Apartment buildings with exterior corridors offer the same opportunity for visual acquaintanceship with visual appraisals as row houses. Mothers put their babies out, sit out, hang out baby clothes, sit with their husbands in the evenings or with other ladies in the afternoons.

Design for visibility need not rob families of the privacy they should have. There are some excellent architectural solutions of this problem in public housing projects in this country.

2. Design for Loitering

Design for loitering is an essential for social design.

Even if everybody isn't lonesome, as the old sentiment would have it, a lot of people are, including, but not limited to, the old, the unemployed, the ailing and the housebound. And there are people, even urban people, who are aggressively gregarious, and must get out to be with other people.

A lot of the lonely people are emotionally unable to get the human contacts they need by knocking on the doors of their neighbors. They are dependent on the process of loitering where people pass for these contacts. A lot of not-lonely people do not want the intrusion of the lonely people. At present the only place the lonely people may loiter is outdoors, on benches. When loitering can take place in the lobby where all the people in a building are apt to pass, the opportunity for like to meet like is enlarged, and immediate neighbors are protected from too much intrusion by the lonesome.

Loitering where people pass is also good for the gregarious newcomer on the lookout for friends.

Teenagers make up the biggest group of loiterers. It seems to be an urban fact that boys and girls must loiter: girls with girls to see if they can see boys; boys with boys to see if they can see girls; boys with girls for general purposes. If they may not loiter in acceptable places under social controls, they will loiter in unacceptable places without social controls. The scrawlings on the walls, the debris, the smoke smudges on the fire stairwells are proof of what happens in unplanned loitering places. Design for loitering by teenagers so that it is not disturbing (as it is when it takes place in small lobbies and corridors) and so that it is under a degree of social control, is about the maximum objective. To design for teenage loitering is not to say it is a good form of recreation, merely that it seems to be a fact of teenage life, and design should make the best of it. Forbidding it is not a solution.

Translated into design terms, this means that both within the buildings, (in the lobbies) and in areas between buildings there must be a design for loitering. There must be design for different age groups, and for stormy as well as sunny weather.

3. Design Conducive to the Formation of Informal Adult Groups

The reason for encouraging, through design, the formation of informal groups of adults was stated by Dr. Robert K. Merton in a Citizens' Housing conference on Public Housing Design held in April, 1959. He said, "The question before the house it seems to me is: to what extent have architects been aware, first, of the importance of the intermediary group of three, four or five families who have been given the opportunity to form relationships, on their own initiative, and second, to what extent have they been aware that in every community the way you get a working social organization, working for collective purposes, is by binding up such small groups into larger entities. A community will be organized only if you have these intermediary groups."

Design conducive to the formation of informal adult groups uses equipment that requires group use: checker tables, volley ball courts, horseshoe, shuffleboard and bocci courts, and other equipment that permits group use.

The equipment that requires group use should be designed to serve onlookers as well as users. Checker tables in New York parks are always surrounded by kibitzers. Horseshoe and bocci courts need benches for onlookers. There are many good designs for these in Florida cities specializing in housing for old people.

Benches are a major grounds element in social design. There are almost literally miles of them in New York City Housing Authority projects. Most of them are found in straight lines along wide sidewalks, serving (with the shrubbery and chain link fence behind them) to

outline and protect grass areas.

This sidewalks-bench arrangement is precisely that of the slums of New York — the benches are the project substitute for stoops, the sidewalks serve as play areas as do the streets and sidewalks in slums. But the sidewalk — bench motif can be made to function much more effectively than stoop-sidewalk motif.

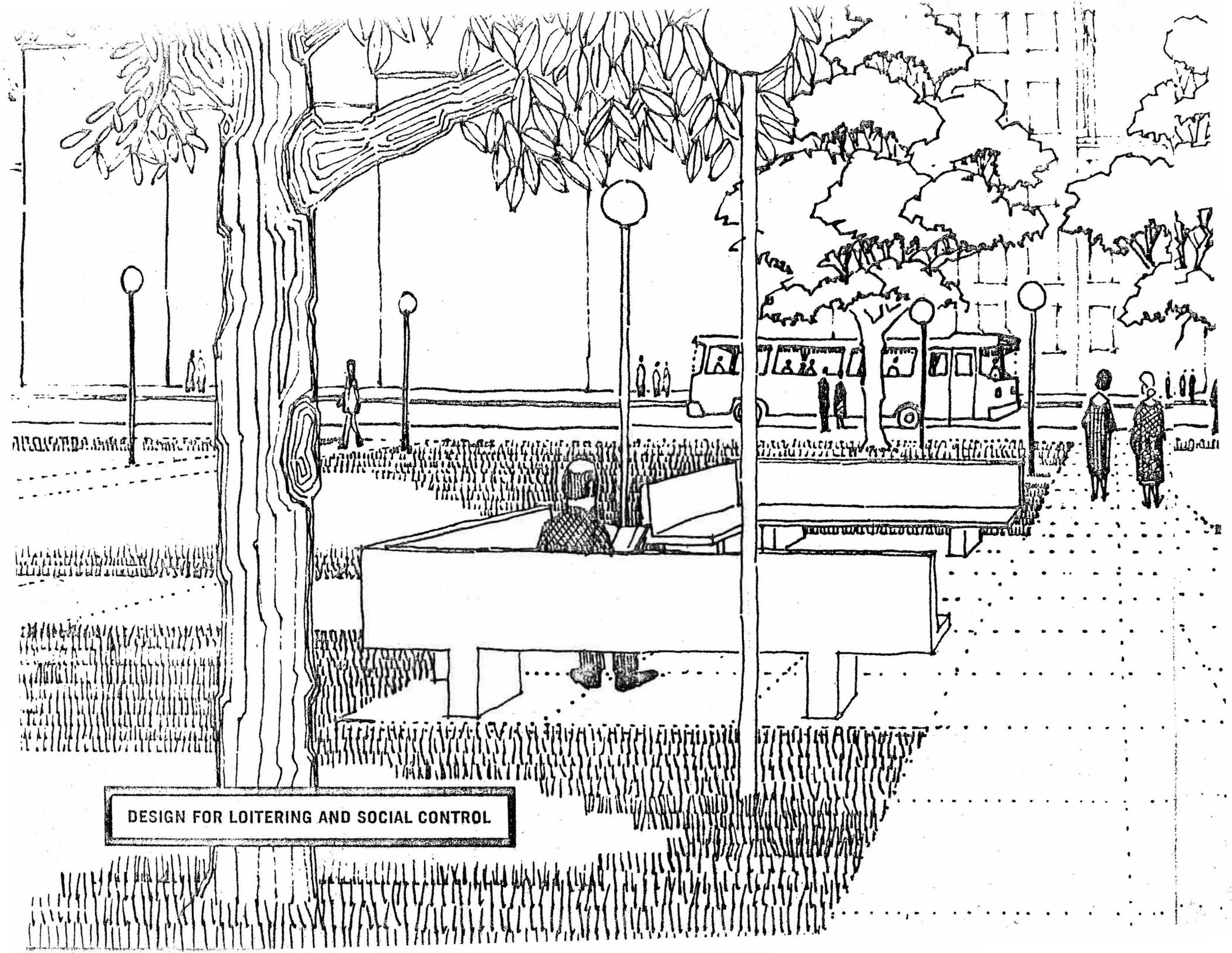
Benches are used for two different purposes.

Benches are used by the watchers, the people who are solitary, timid, tired, old or sick, who cannot put forth the effort to talk or be talked to. The watchers include the lonely, who want to sit where people pass, on the chance that someone will stop and say hello or ask them how they are. Arrangement of benches in straight rows along sidewalks is appropriate for this group.

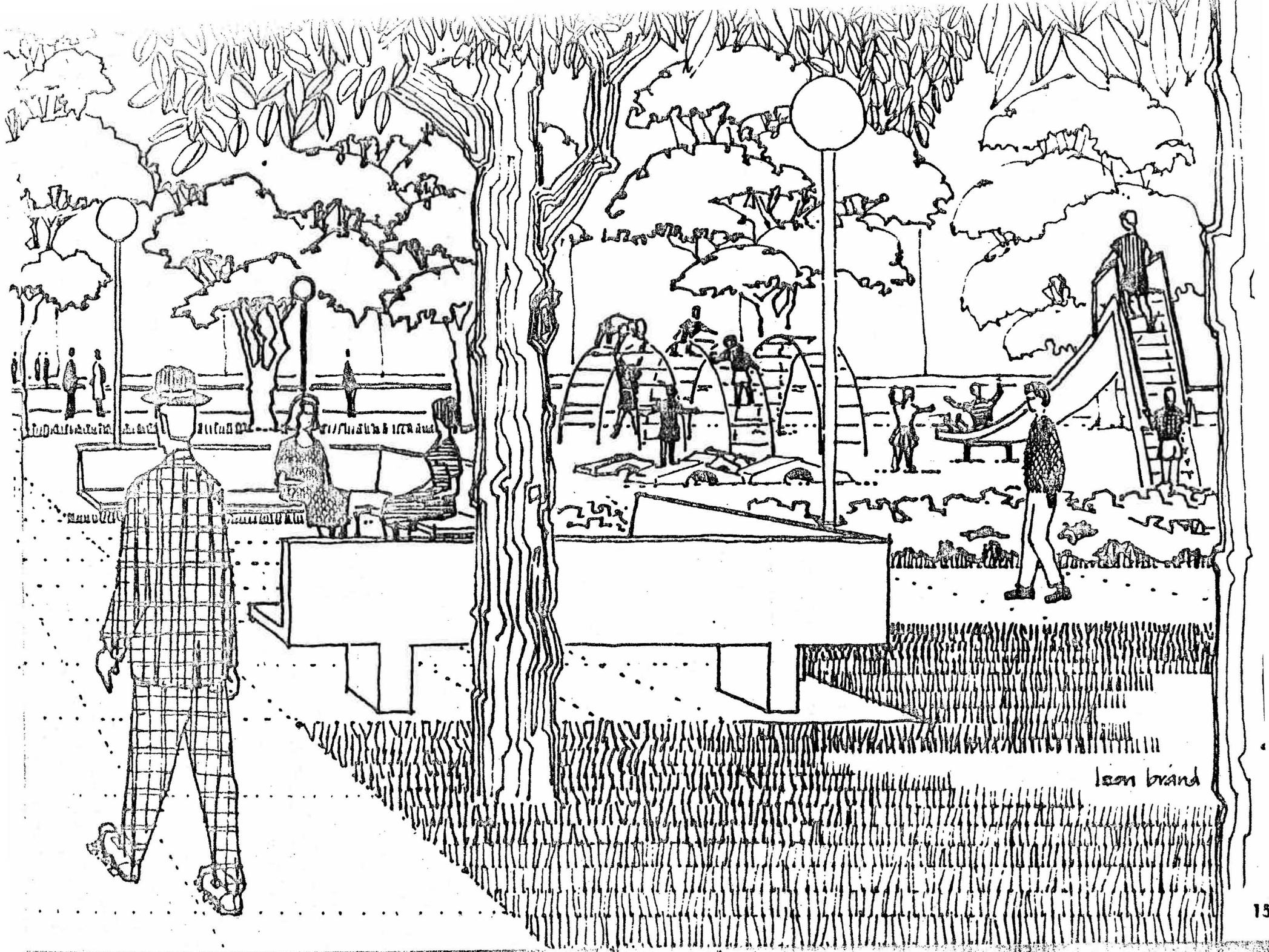
The architect must be sure to locate them so that there is activity to be watched and where pedestrian traffic is heavy, near stores or the community center. There is one outlying project in New York City, where benches are lined up to face nothing but a parking lot, unused during the day.

But benches are also gathering places. For this purpose, straight line arrangement is no more correct than straight line arrangement of furniture in a living room.

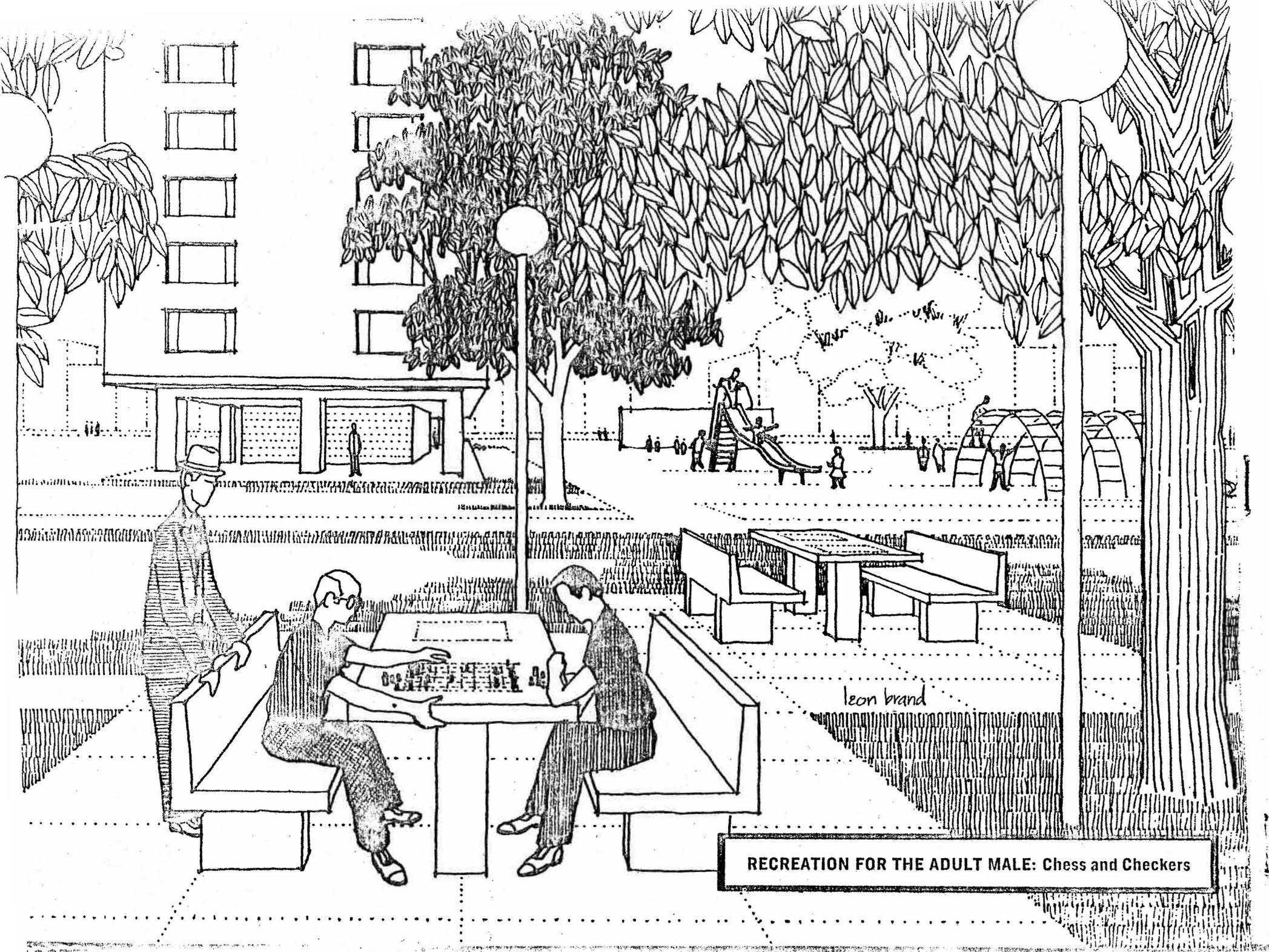
If you visit a project on a sunny spring afternoon, you will see clusterings of mothers, babies and buggies, and pre-school children. The mothers talk and keep an eye on the children. The children do what there is to do on sidewalks, in pedestrian traffic, where there is no equipment. They jump rope, ride kiddie cars and tricycles, swing on the chain fence or skin the cat on a rail fence; they scrape up the dirt under the fence with pop bottle tops (since that is the only digging place) and



DESIGN FOR LOITERING AND SOCIAL CONTROL



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RECREATION FOR THE ADULT MALE: Chess and Checkers



carry it carefully somewhere. When the school day ends, children coming home from school drop off, join the group for a moment and then go about their affairs, or stay and play with the younger children. When the work day ends, father joins the group.

The usual straight sidewalk-bench arrangement does not serve this kind of group activity. There simply is not room even on a very wide sidewalk for both traffic and group activity. An obvious correction is to make paved bays off the sidewalk, and arrange benches on the concave border, so that the curve of the benches makes conversation easier. It would be good to add one or two small pieces of equipment suited to the very small child: a very low set of steps, the right size for a two year old, a pair of cement blocks.

The essential thing to recognize is that the young mother group includes toddlers as well as babies in buggies, and the place of the informal gathering must be designed with this in mind.

4. Design for Social Controls

Richard A. Miller* makes the flat charge that public housing projects "exclude the constant informal social controls needed by every society".

This is not totally true, as anyone who has watched the clusterings described above can testify — but it is almost true.

The need for social controls is expressed in some of the serious complaints about public housing projects made by the tenants. Tenants complain that they are afraid to cross the deserted project grounds at night; they are afraid to enter the empty lobbies and the elevators. It is true that nasty incidents have taken place in these areas, both by day and night, although the general opinion as to their number may be greatly exaggerated.

Obviously, if the absence of people creates hazards, the solution lies in the planned presence of people.

Planning for the presence of people must capitalize on their needs and wants. People will not go or stay somewhere because you want them to. They will go only where they have to in pursuit of their daily business, or where there is something they want.

Social controls are exercised in many ways. The mere presence of "bodies" in places where their absence would create a vacuum for misbehavior, exercises some social control. But this is not a very positive role.

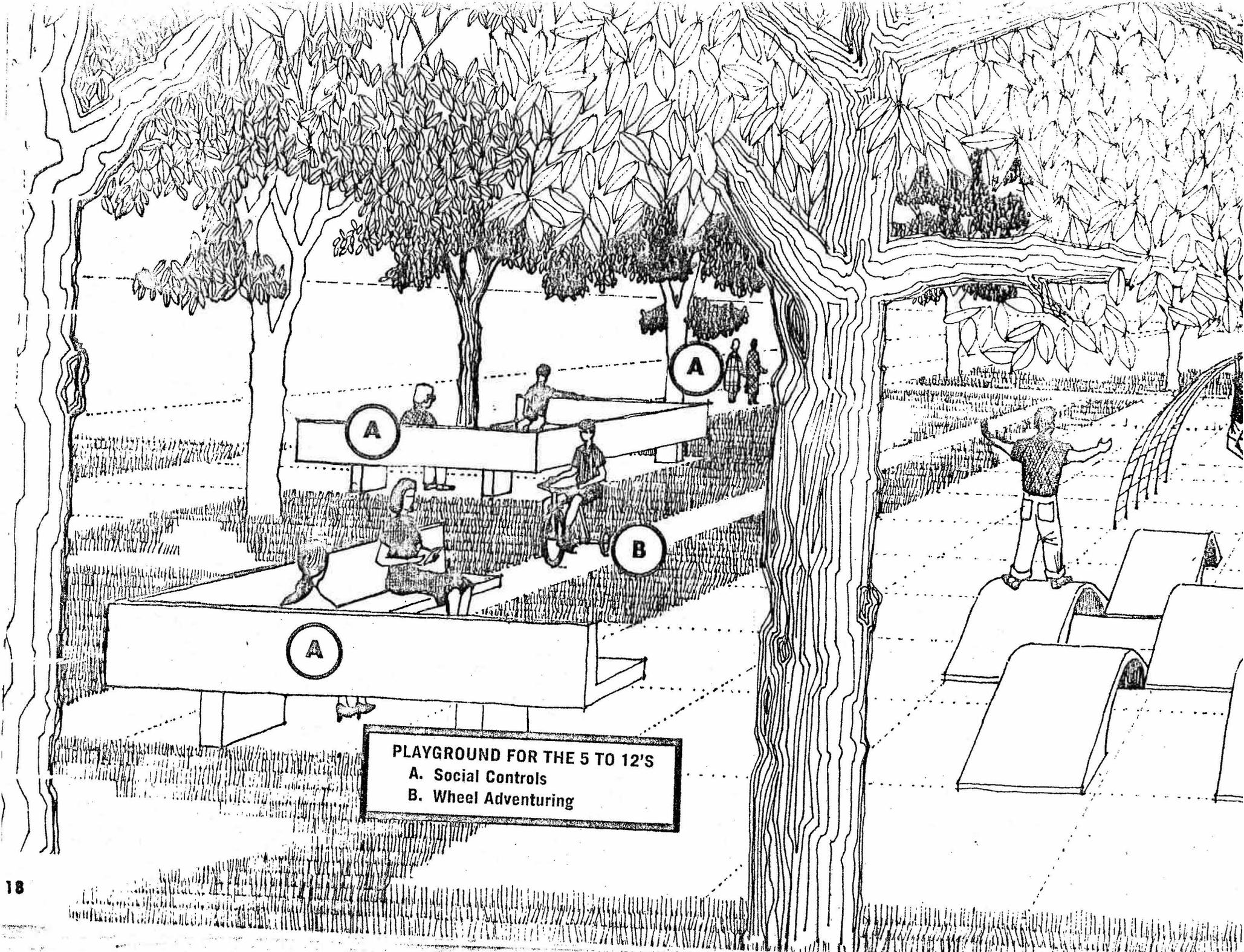
Positive social controls will grow, first, out of the physical opportunity. The location of the facilities and equipment for the different age groups must be such that there is the opportunity for the older to affect the behavior of the younger, the better behaved to affect the behavior of the badly behaved.

Physical opportunity is not, of course, enough.

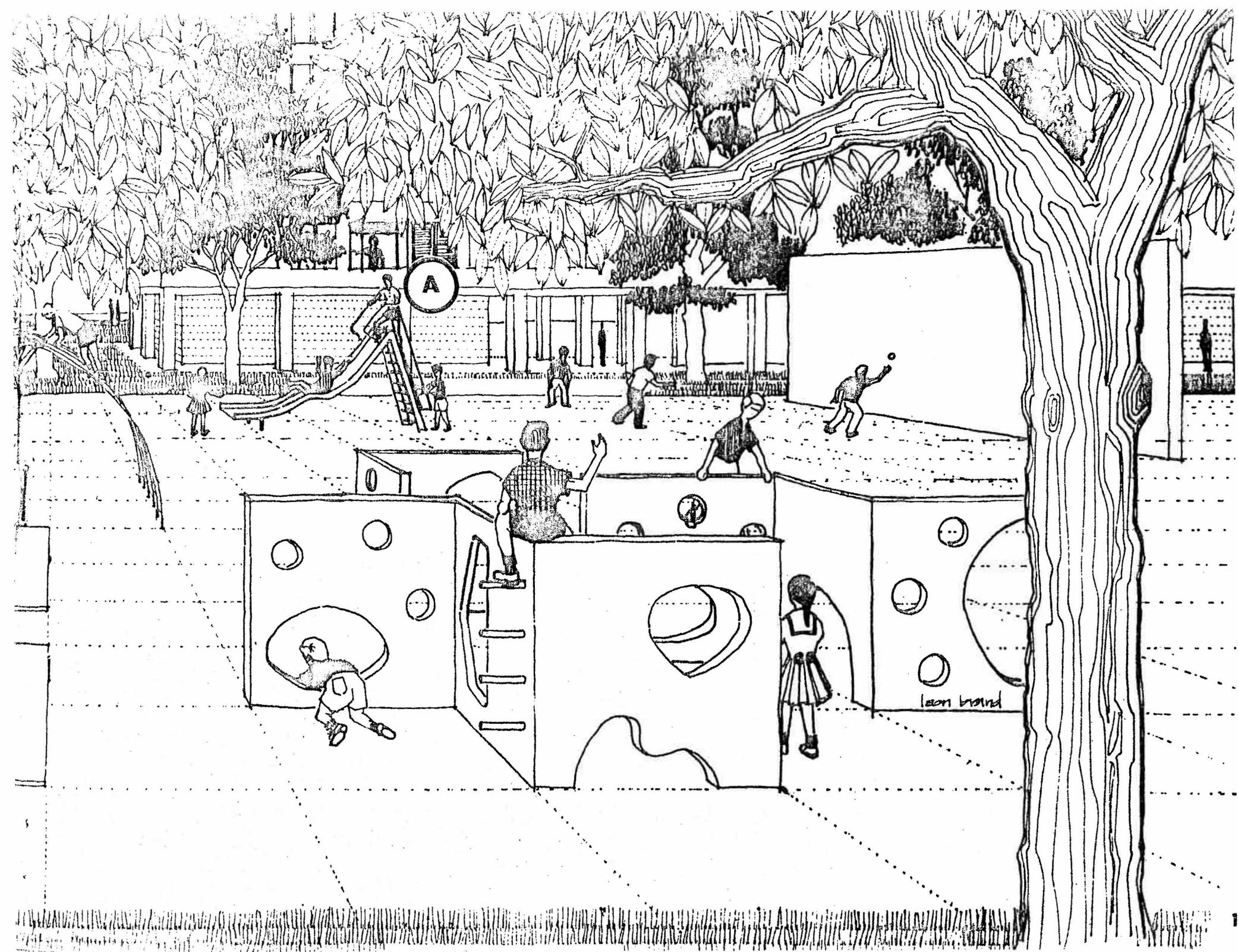
Every Manager knows how the appearance of his project is affected by the positive or negative reactions of a group of mothers sitting on a bench watching some mother's son digging in the shrubbery. When tenants hate or disrespect other tenants, when they hate or disrespect the project and its management, or when they think that everyone in the project is a stranger, they do not function as positive social controls — though they may by sheer presence prevent flagrant misbehaviour.

Positive social controls will result under the opposite conditions. The tenants must not hate the project and its management, there must be

*Public Housing... for People," *Architectural Forum*, April 1959, p. 135.



PLAYGROUND FOR THE 5 TO 12'S
A. Social Controls
B. Wheel Adventuring



widespread acquaintanceships, and a general recognition of a community of feeling about the project, not only as a physical entity but as a society.

The first three guides — design for visibility, for loitering, and for the formation of informal adult groups — are intended to create physical situations within which there is a maximum opportunity for people to fulfill their needs as social beings. This kind of design should make for wider nodding and speaking acquaintances on the part of those who want them, and for more informal groups. This does not mean that the solitary, the individualists will be swept up against their will into group activities, or that the persons who want to perform their outside-of-the dwelling activities in privacy or solitude may not do so to the extent they are able. It simply means that if the aspirations and needs of the socially minded are truly served, the stuff of the social fabric will be created.

IV. THE BUILDING FLOOR

It is at the building floor that the architect designs for visibility. He secures this visibility by designing corridors so that activities can and will take place in them.

The exterior corridor (balcony corridor) offers the best enticements and excuses for activities, with the greatest protection against noise inside the dwelling units. It gives the people upstairs a chance to get outdoors without going downstairs, a very desirable and fulfilling thing. I have seen women playing bridge out on these corridors; couples sitting out watching the sunset; mothers drying baby clothes and airing woolens; babies sleeping in the perambulators or playing in baby pens;

small children working off their energy riding kiddie cars, their mothers watching them through the kitchen window in traditional suburban style.

Exterior corridors which are not designed generously enough so that they can serve these social purposes have no excuse for existence. When so narrow that they can function only as corridors, they are less comfortable than interior corridors, and will be subject to the same nuisances as interior corridors.

Not only should they be generously sized, but the space abutting the corridor should be designed so that the windows (preferably kitchen windows) not only allow the mother to keep an eye on the children, but will serve as symbolic social controls.

Anyone who has seen Scandanavian housing remembers it chiefly for the color that appears on the balconies. This comes partly from the brilliantly colored canvas screens below the rails, and partly from the flower boxes overflowing with flowers. Although the buildings may be as plain as shoe boxes (and often are) they don't look it, so beautiful and lively is the effect of these two elements.

V. LOBBIES: NEW FUNCTIONS, NEW DESIGN

Almost universally, lobbies are trouble spots. They are apt to be grim and institutional looking by virtue of minimum size, ugly color, no windows, total lack of adornment. But they also look scarred and beat-up from heavy traffic and misuse.

Too often the entrance of the building and lobby walls are adorned

with chalk and lipstick scrawlings, or are grimed and grubby from past scrawlings. Too often there are the signs and smells of misuse of the lobby itself or the stairwells opening off the lobby. Too often women are afraid to come into the empty lobby alone at night. Teenagers tend to loiter there, because they have no other place to go.

As in the case of corridors, the architect must find a design that will generate good activities and assure the presence of people who will prevent vandalism and misuse.

Some of the needs which people would like to have served in the lobby are known. People on welfare need to wait for the mailman on the day their checks are due — because they need it so badly, or because it might be stolen. Mothers loaded with babies and shopping bundles would like to be able to sit down while they are waiting for the elevator. There are old or housebound people who need a place to go on stormy days.

But these are mostly daytime users; there is a need to generate evening users. Facilities could include such things as chess tables or space for dart boards.

If there are planned loiterers in a lobby, it should be possible to place toilets off the lobby for the use of children on the playgrounds. These should be locked at night, of course.

No one wants to loiter in an institutional-like place, but it is difficult to plead with public housing authorities for a little bit of beauty in the light of their experiences. The New York City Housing Authority — and others — have recently used brightly colored glazed tile at entrances and even in lobbies. This is better, but it can scarcely be called beauty.

For social as well as aesthetic reasons, this new kind of lobby — greatly enlarged — should have no enclosed areas; its walls should be

glass, and it should be brightly lighted at night. The entire area should be visible from any spot outside the front door and within the lobby itself.

Finally, there should be provision for future adornments, such as flower boxes. Housing authorities find it difficult to mobilize tenants, and maintain their interest when the objectives of mobilization are purely corrective: less litter in the elevators, less spilling of garbage in front of the incinerator, less wall scrawling, less midnight noise. Successful tenant mobilization needs objectives that fulfill more prestigious or social needs.

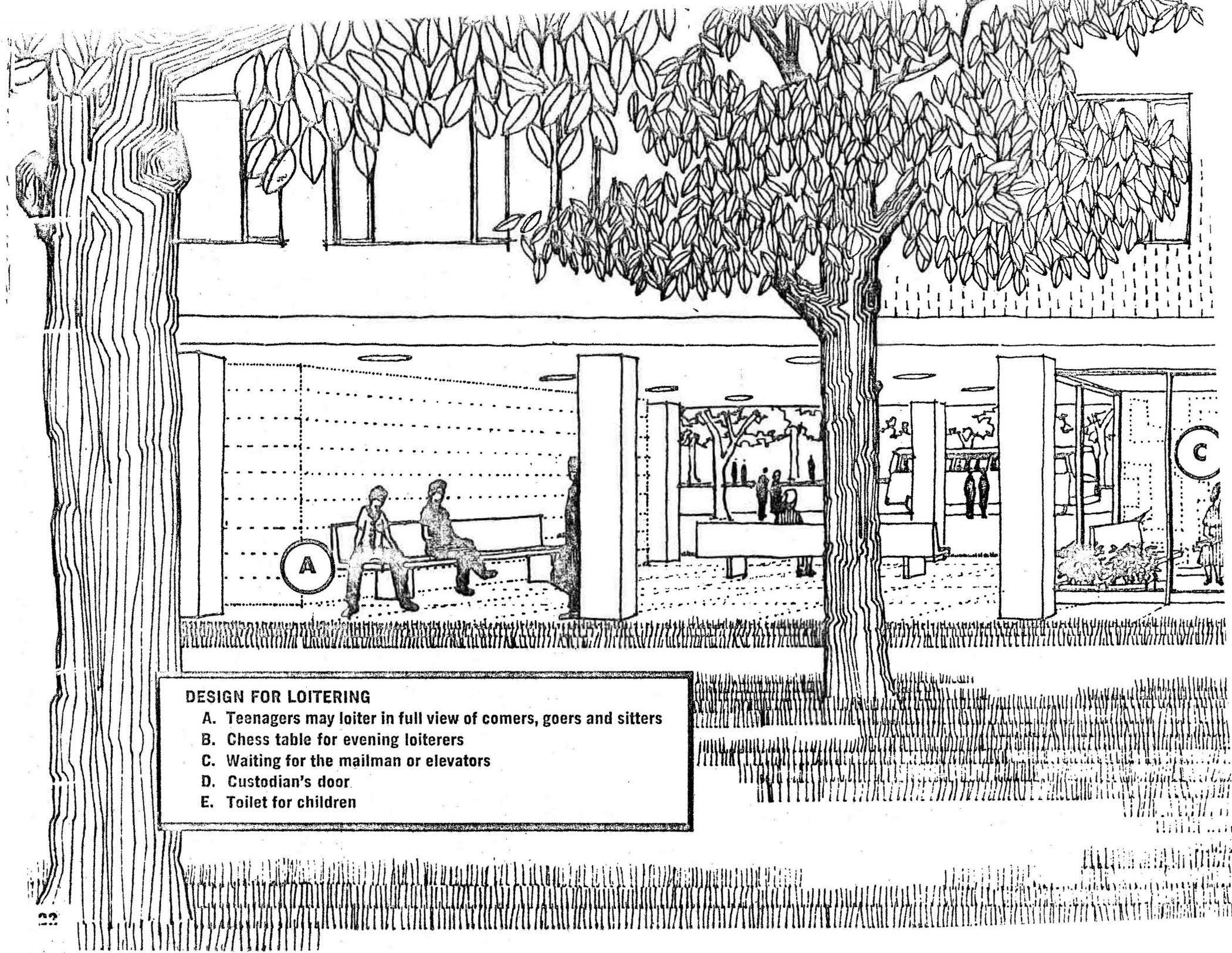
The Concierge in Public Housing

It would be a great advance in public housing management if a dwelling unit could be provided off the lobby for an employee who (in addition to other functions) would have a generalized responsibility for keeping an eye on the lobby.

The mere fact of his presence and immediate availability would be of major importance in the success of this new kind of lobby.

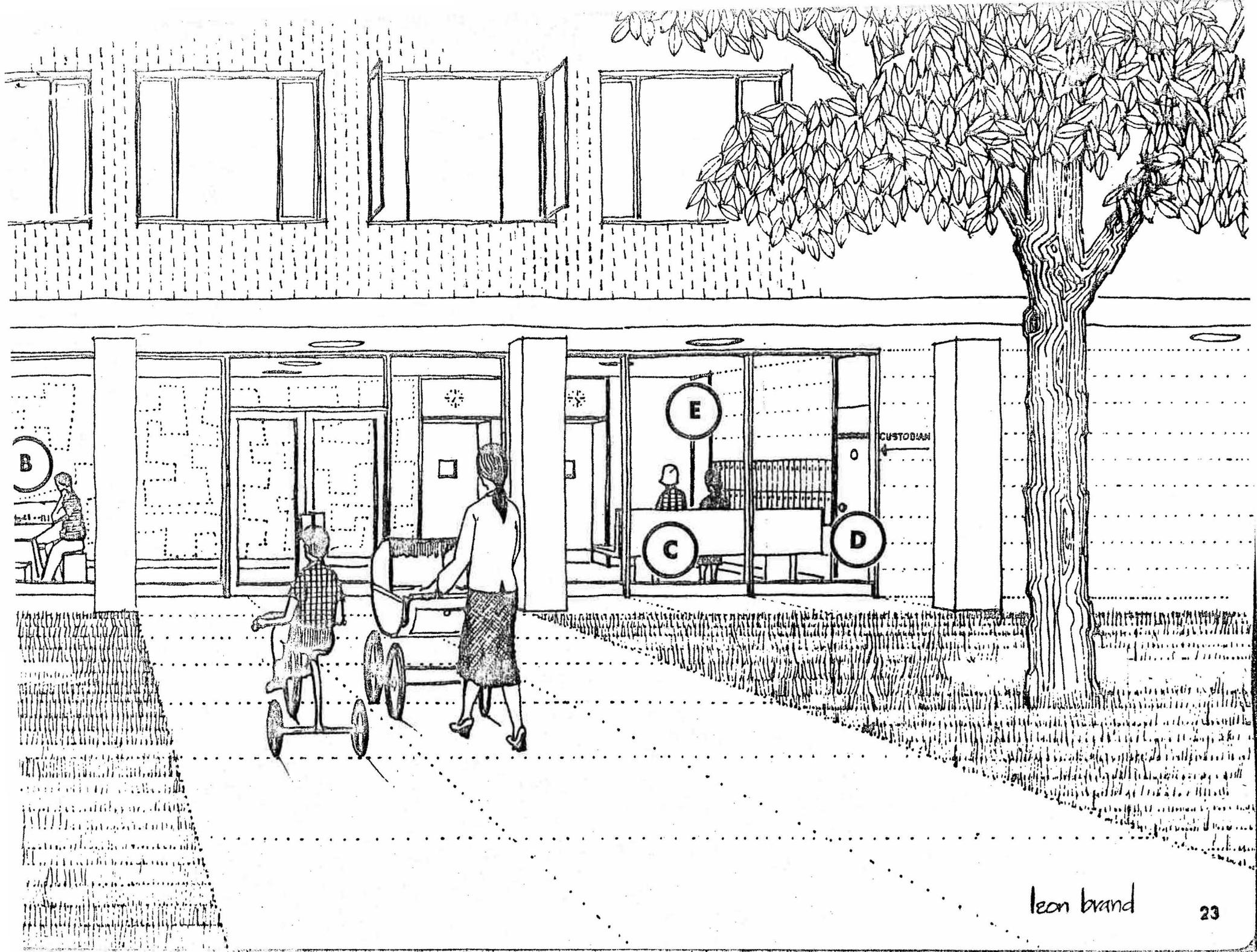
It was a prevailing rule with housing authorities in the early days of public housing to require a manager to live in his project. His residence was presumed to be in itself desirable, to provide a sort of social control and testimony that the project was a good place to live. He was also supposed to be available to handle social problems and queries of tenants. In many cities other socially oriented employes were encouraged to live in projects and become a part of the community.

But the life of these resident managers became too strenuous and resembled too closely the life of a resident in a settlement house. Real-estate-oriented managers found it unacceptable. Also, the federal administration began to look askance at the use by employes of any resi-



DESIGN FOR LOITERING

- A. Teenagers may loiter in full view of comers, goers and sitters
- B. Chess table for evening loiterers
- C. Waiting for the mailman or elevators
- D. Custodian's door
- E. Toilet for children



dential space unless their presence was needed for emergencies in equipment, or for lockouts.

But this early experience with resident employes produced much evidence of their special value when their function was not limited to handling physical emergencies, when they and their wives exhibited a lively interest in the tenants and their activities.

The job of this "conciierge" would of necessity include certain custodial or maintenance functions, but its distinguishing feature would be the availability and responsibility for keeping an eye on the lobby. He probably should be called "custodian."

VI. SITE DESIGN

The genius of good urban residential planning lies in the skill with which non-residential services are used to enrich the architectural quality of the surroundings, and the human quality of day-by-day life.

The usual non-residential services that are an intrinsic part of residential design include primary schools, churches, community centers, recreational facilities and shops. The arrangement of these should be planned so as to get maximum value as a social resource from each of the facilities and to make the pedestrian traffic that they generate useful in itself: as entertainment for the watchers, and as social controls.

There are two kinds of facilities that should be placed next to residential buildings: areas for mothers and small children, and playgrounds for the 5 to 12's, as described below.

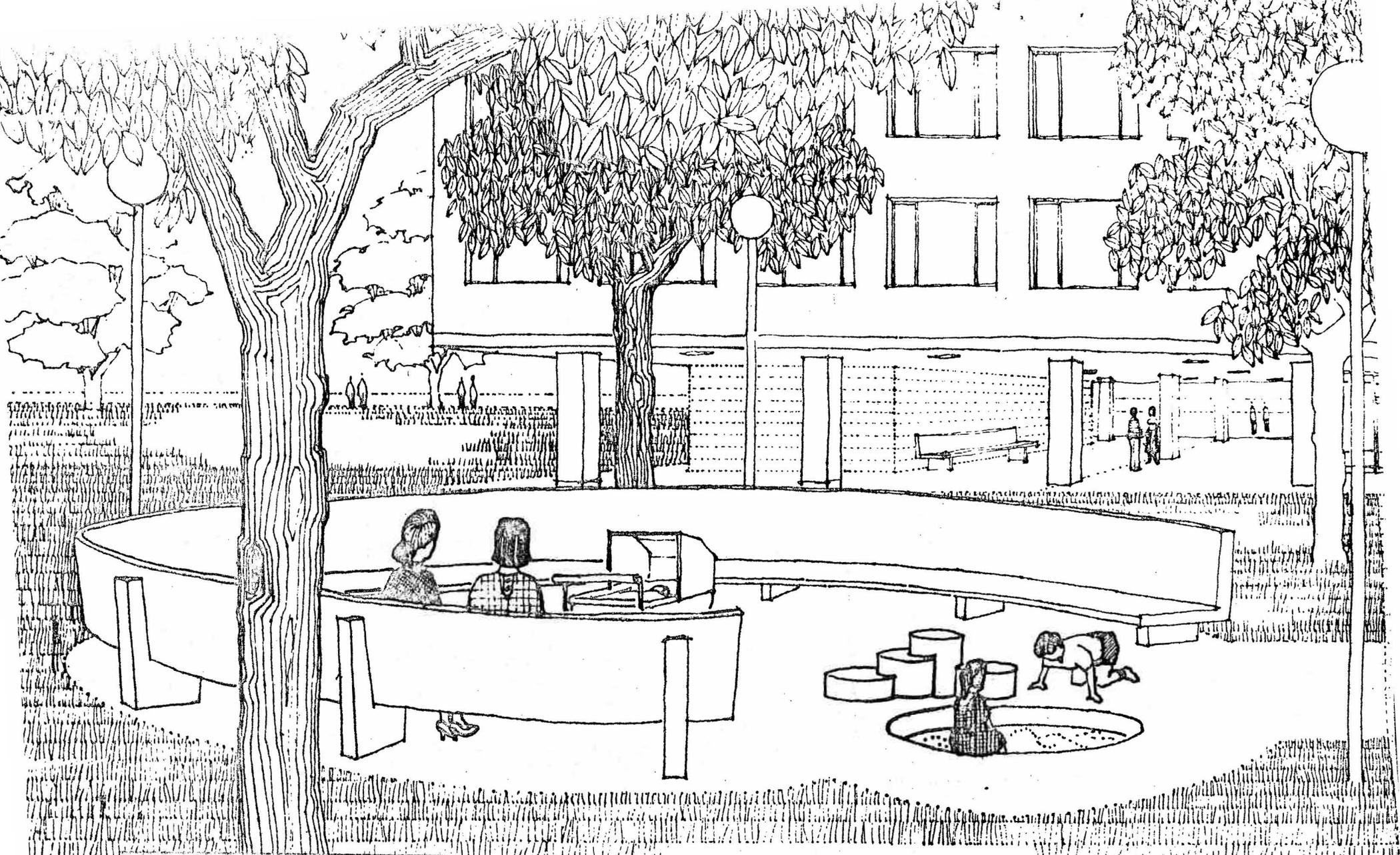
Certain other facilities gain greatly from grouping away from the residential buildings, but within the site plan. Teenagers and adults want to go where there is life and liveliness. Most of these facilities

and services cannot by themselves create either life or liveliness. Some churches and all shops want to be in the main-stream. Grouping these services makes them function better for their own purposes, and as a social facility.

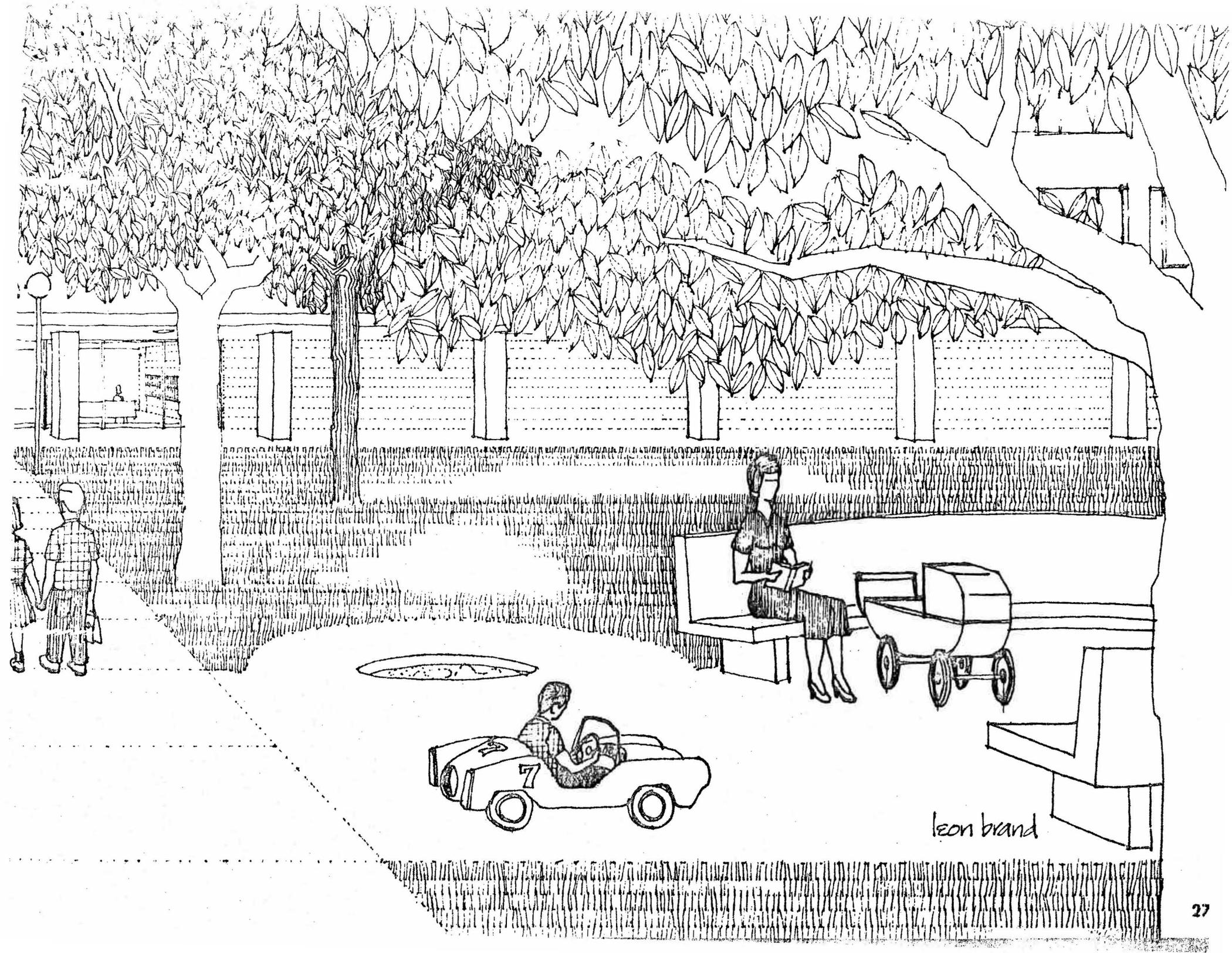
Some authorities have placed their community center in basement space, located behind an unidentifiable corner, with access by an all-but-invisible ramp. It is often placed on a peripheral street for the purpose of making it accessible to the families outside as well as inside the project. But a community center should be placed importantly. Since its traffic consists largely of children and young people, access should be along well travelled pedestrian ways, not by-ways. This is not only to give it symbolic status, but because parents need to know that when their children go to activities after dark, they will go along lighted and travelled sidewalks.

Commercial facilities in public housing projects (where they exist) consist, customarily, of a grocery store or supermart, a drug store, and, at most, a handful of shops. Their locations tend to be on peripheral streets. Their windows seldom make for good window shopping. They seldom have benches or other facilities for comfortable rest and gossip. They are not designed to serve the social function which is almost their most important function.

A great deal has been written about this social function. The role of the candy shop owner who knows more about the teen-agers than any one else, and who can influence them better than most, has often been described. The role of the owner of the grocery store who gives a family a little bit of credit over the weekend has also been described. These and other shopkeepers play a very important role in creating warmth and neighborliness in a community. They are particularly necessary as a part of the social fabric of low-income neighborhoods.



DESIGN FOR CONVERSATION: Mothers and small children



leon brand

It is not to be expected that children will play only where they are supposed to play. Little children will wander into the playground of the older children and there will be times when big boys and girls will want to use the teeters and swings. Design, can, however, offer certain protections. If the areas designed for very small children are small in size and the scale of the equipment is small, it will be uninteresting to older children. The areas for rough play and ball throwing should be fenced in.

Teenagers

If teenagers are interested in games (and sometimes teenagers in low income families are not) they are interested in competitive games. For these they are dependent on facilities in park and community center where supervision is provided.

Otherwise, teenagers are interested primarily in their own particular kind of loitering. Because this kind of recreation seems so pointless, if not actually bad, to adults, designers do not plan for it. But studies in London have shown that it is the one kind of recreation that the designer can count on their wanting. The problem is, to make it good.

Teenagers want to hang around where they can get soft drinks, and where there is no formal supervision. They like to be able to use a phonograph and play their records either for dancing or as a background to their talking.

Because teenage loitering and phonograph playing is noisy, it should be located away from residential buildings, but it should be located where there is a great deal of pedestrian traffic and activity.

One of the best locations for teenage loitering is the candy store at the shopping center, where they will loiter anyway. The chief concern of the project manager, when this is the plan, is to see that the candy store owner is the right kind of person.

Illustration on pages 30 and 31 shows a plan for teenage loitering in a shopping center. The benches outside the candy shop make it appropriate for loitering outside as well as inside if the weather permit. The area is paved so that there can be dancing there summer evenings.

If such an area is to be successful, there must be many inducements to bring people to it at night; it must be a lively place. The illustration shows a drugstore and delicatessen, both of which are traditionally open evenings. Adjacent to the shopping center, the illustration shows a teenage and adult game area, lighted for night use. This should not

only bring people to the area but into the shops at night. The plan supposes that the area will be very well lighted not only by standard lamps but by the shop windows.

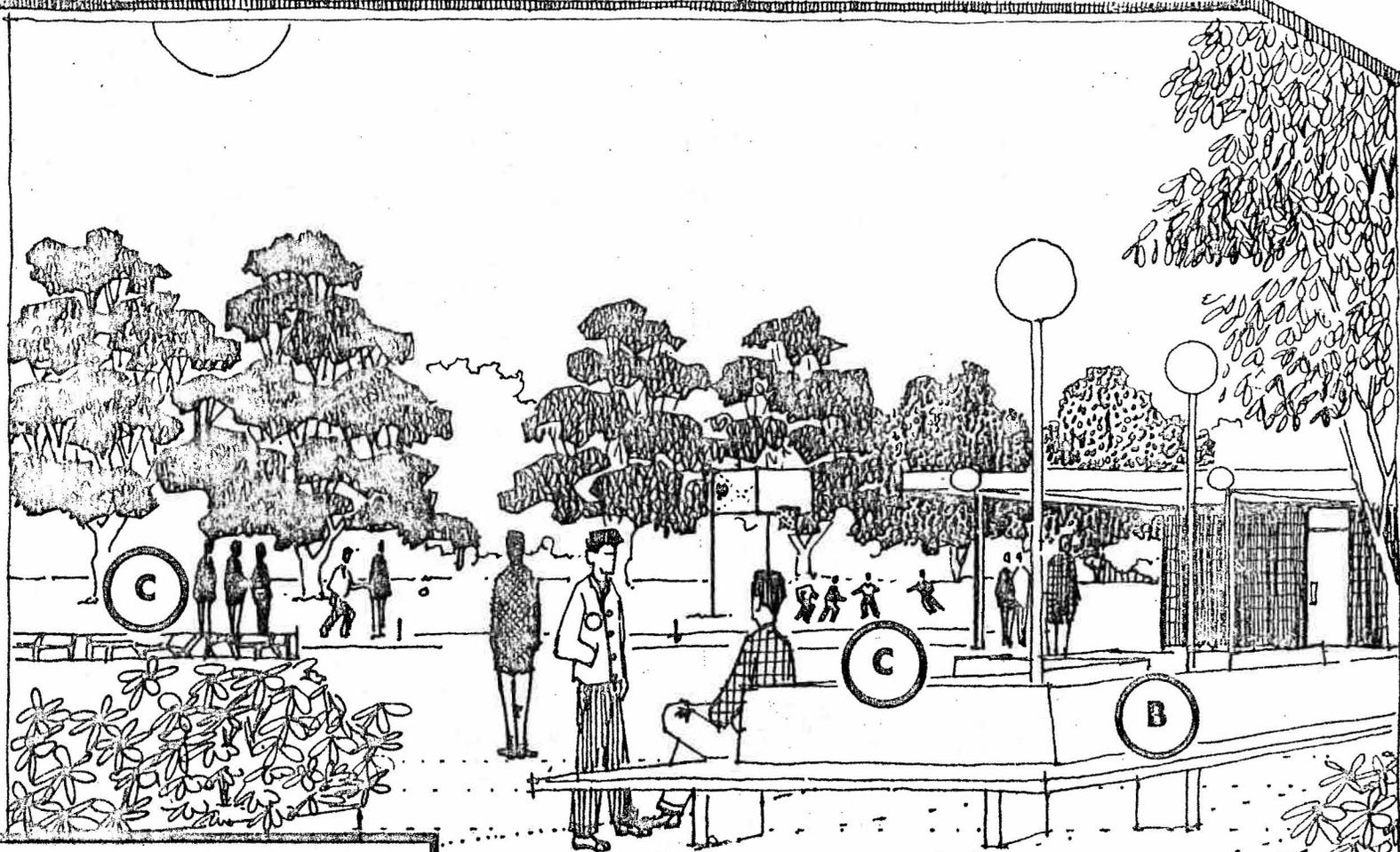
Adult Recreation

Recreation for the male adult may include games, but the designer may not always know what kinds of games a particular population would like. He can, however, allocate space — in the proper locations — for future game facilities such as bocci or shuffleboard courts or horseshoe pits. Management needs to have a reservoir of things to give to tenants when they are eager to do something for the project and themselves.

Adult males (and younger males, too) like to play chess and checkers, if one is to judge by the sights in small parks where new tables are provided. This facility constitutes one of the most useful vehicles for bringing “bodies” — social controls — to areas that need them at night. Their users will go a distance to have a chance to use them.

Drinking beer in company is recreation. Eventually public housing ethics and mores may recognize this fact, and we may be able to develop a native counterpart of the English pub, the first community facility to be provided in connection with any housing development in that country. High rent developments include a cocktail lounge without embarrassment, but the idea of including one in a public housing project is abhorrent to most administrators, and, perhaps to the critical public that likes its poor to be pure, or at least to be protected from temptation. There is reason to dislike the social by-products of this kind of commercial recreation as it functions in the slums, but realistically, some kind of acceptable substitute should be developed.

The job of the mother in the low-income family is confining and lasts long hours. Outside of the recreation she gets in the organized activities in the community center, school or church, her recreation consists mostly of sociable visiting with the shopkeepers, the friends she meets at the shops or wherever she can sit and rest on a bench. The designer's obligation is to locate the benches where she needs them as she goes about her many chores, doing the laundry, airing the baby, going shopping; or as she can seize a few minutes to get “out.”



TEENAGE AND ADULT RECREATION:
The shopping center that serves a social function

- A. Teenage loitering
- B. Benches for sociable resting
- C. Adult and teenage game area