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A Master Plan and Prototype Condominium for Taos Ski Valley

John Michael Coyne

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A MASTER PLAN AND PROTOTYPE CONDOMINIUM FOR TAOS SKI VALLEY

By

John Michael Coyne

Bachelor's Thesis

Presented to the faculty of the Department of Architecture, University of New Mexico, in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Bachelor of Architecture.

The University of New Mexico

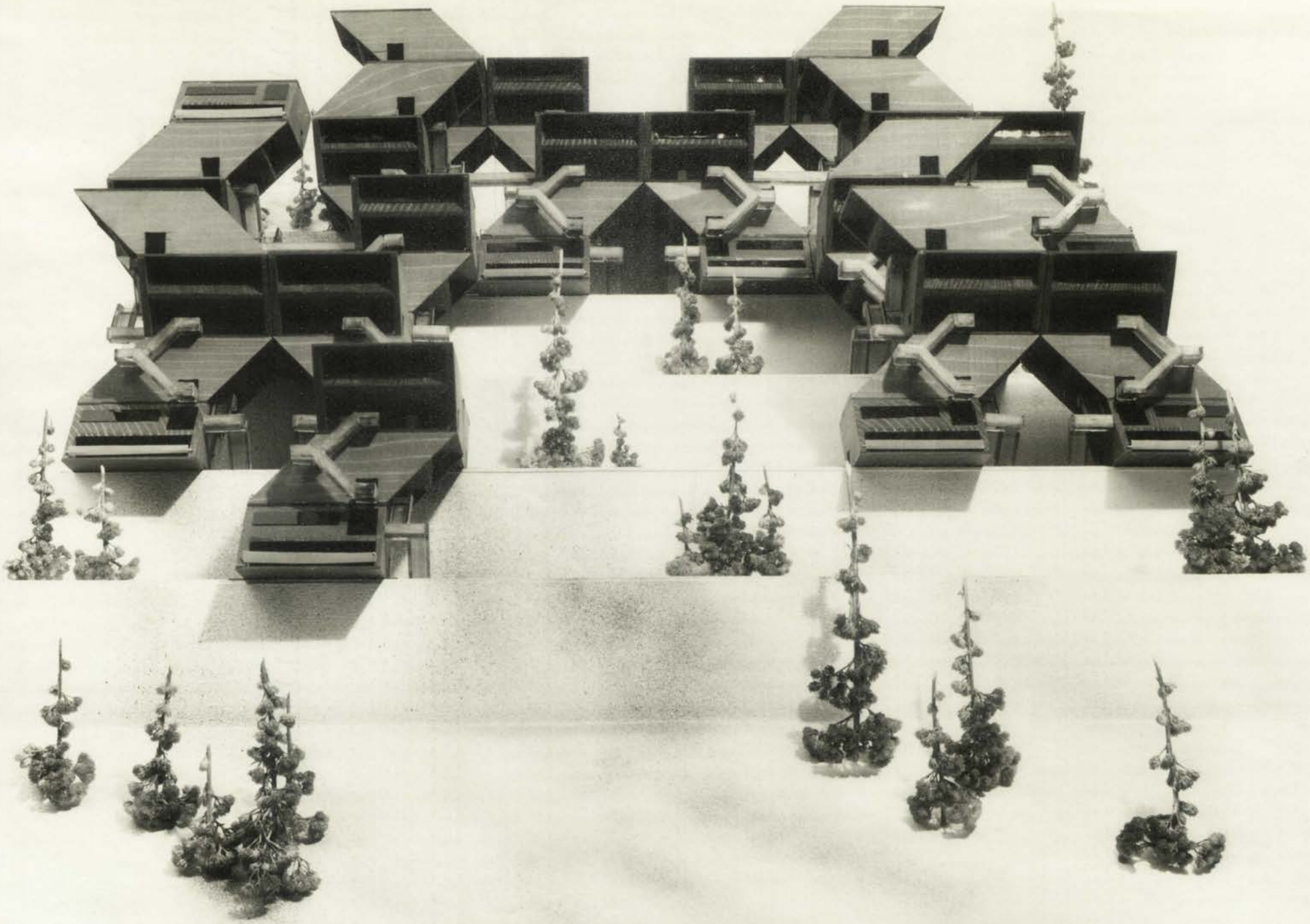
May 25, 1968

THESIS COMMITTEE:

Thomas R. Vreeland, Jr., Chairman
Department of Architecture

Geoffrey Holroyd, Visiting Lecturer
Departmenr of Architecture

Don P. Schlegal, Professor
Department of Architecture



TITLE : Nouveauté, A Prototype Condominium For Taos Ski Valley

INTRODUCTION:

PURPOSE OF THESIS

With the tremendous technological advances we have experienced in recent years, and shall continue to experience, one will find the working individual's week shortened to thirty, even twenty, hours. Machines will be responsible for a vast amount of labor currently conducted by men. Accompanying this decrease in working hours will be a high correlation of leisure time, much of which will be spent in recreation. At present, facilities in all areas of recreation are highly limited. In the future, a large portion of man's energy will be directed toward provision of adequate facilities in keeping with his role of leisure and toward directing his excess hours to a healthy outlet.

Moreover, one sport which can act as an outlet for man's leisure hours is that of skiing. Although well over one hundred years old, skiing is still in its infancy. It has progressed more in the last five years, in terms of popularity and commercial promotion than it has in the past one hundred years. One will find that one out of every ten families in the U.S. are avid ski enthusiasts today. It is now a

multimillion dollar business in the U.S. alone, and will be a multibillion dollar business in the near future.

Skiing is growing so rapidly that present facilities are completely overcrowded, both on the East and West coasts, more especially the former. Midwestern skiing experiences similar problems.

In terms of the ski resort, one will find that, with very few exceptions, it caters to the beginning and intermediate skiier. Ski technology has, moreover, resulted in more people learning how to ski better in a shorter span of time than ever before.

In previous years, nearly 90% of the skiers never went beyond the intermediate stages of skill. Today, it is not uncommon for a novice skier to be close to expert in two years. The foregoing produces the fact that now that we are able to create such accompliched skiers, we are not providing them with facilities and areas sufficiently challenging to test their abilities. We have left them high and dry. Slopes are overcrowded, too gentle, and lacking variety in terrain.

NEED:

When we consider the fact of multiplied leisure time to produce skills and allow for aesthetic enjoyment, we can see the need for a place where skiers can test their skills. Not only must we provide more challenging areas; accomodations

which are within easy access (walking distance when possible) are a must. In addition, adequate facilities can go a long way toward making leisure time spent in skiing activities a stimulus to growth and business.

With the above thoughts in mind, I have selected a Master Plan for one such ski area for future expansion; and, more especially, a prototype for the accommodation required by these people in their leisure hours known as the condominium (*see PROGRAM for further details).

The popularity of the condominium at a ski resort is not too hard to understand, for the following reasons:

(1) Cost - despite the fact that individual condominium apartments of the luxury class might cost up to $50,000, they are usually less expensive than a prlvate home of comparable size and with comparable facilities (i.e., Aspen).

(2) Security - these high density dwellings are communal units.

(3) Location - these can be built within easy reach of the ski area.

(4) Services - aside from costs, these are convenient by the fact of a complete maintenance service.

(5) Individualism - a condominium owner is legally only responsible for his own dwelling.

Therefore, a further look at this unique conception of resort living is in order for this paper.

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The popularity of the condominium as a mass resort is not

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(1) Cost - despite the fact that individual condominium

apartments of the luxury class might cost

up to $50,000, they are usually less expensive

than a private home of comparable size and

with comparable facilities (i.e., Japan).

(2) Security - where high density dwellings are commonplace

crime.

(3) Location - these can be built within easy reach of

the ski area.

(4) Services - aside from costs, these are convenient by

the fact of a complete maintenance service.

(5) Individualism - a condominium owner is legally only

responsible for his own dwelling.

Therefore, a further look at this unique concept of

resort living is in order for this paper.

LOCATION:

Taos Ski Valley is found at the base of Mount Wheeler (alt. 13,168), the highest mountain in New Mexico. It is located in Hondo Canyon, at the old site of the Twining Mining Camp which dates to the late 1800's, approximately 19 miles north of Taos, New Mexico.

SITE - MASTER PLAN:

The above site for the Master Plan was selected for the following reasons:

(1) Snow conditions - there is more snow at this site than surrounding areas, which is abundant from Thanksgiving to Easter. It is located in a valley with a bowl effect which protects it from the wind and provides proper exposure from the sun. There are other advantages apparent only to the skier, involving the fact that it is located in such a position that snow is shielded from direct sunlight by its north exposure on the slope. In many areas, however, this north exposure gives what is known as "flat light," in which the skier cannot distinguish terrain (moguls) due to the light condition late in the day. At Taos, this particular condition is virtually eliminated because directly across the valley there is another mountain slope which reflects sunlight onto the northern exposure, producing a secondary light source.

of inexpensive electricity.

SITE - CONDOMINIUM:

Selection of the site for the condominium was made on the following basis:

(1) Location - the structure will command a prominant position on axis with the main road to the area, so that it is one of the first man-made facilities that one sees. In addition, it commands views up and down the valley, as well as the slopes directly across. The slope on which the condominium rests is a uniform 35°.

(2) Exposure - buildings will have a southern exposure directly across from the chair lift. They will be placed in a desirable position in that the exposure to sunshine will eliminate snow problems like shoveling and clearing.

(3) Accessibility - the condominium will rest only 800 feet from the present chair lift at Taos Ski Valley. and shall provide easy access to the slopes.

DESIGN CONSIDERATIONS

My design produces a collection of residences arranged in spirals, and introduces into this collection social and communal elements.

The area which is of first demand is the living area which is both functionally outstanding and rich with a range of human contact.

By initially establishing the basic unit, I approached the concept of the condominium complex. For the purpose of connecting these living units into a condominium complex, I introduce a passageway that serves as an area for natural and customary human relations.

Moreover, to add three-dimensionality to the units, using the vertical passageway as a mediator, I arrange the units in a vertically directional spiral. One living unit occupies one quarter turn of the spiral, with four units completing the system.

It is possible to create two kinds of spiral bodies contingent on the direction of the spiral. Moreover, by joining these, and letting them develop to create forms, a variety of interior spaces can be made. Though functionally the spaces formed by the unifying of the residences and the passageways are natural passages for light, rain, wind and snow; beyond this, they also include important possibilities for a group of residential spaces. The next step is to develop a complex that will be an even larger social unit.

In the use of a grouping method of this nature, regardless of how greatly they increase in volume, I am always able to create something on a human scale, something with a personality linked to daily experience. Through connecting two spirals with a bridge, I can, in addition, introduce a plaza in the air, an area for social contacts. However, the total complex is, in a sense, overscaled -- so as not to be swallowed up

by its surroundings.

Therefore, when considering ski area development, this condominium complex, possessing at once great possibilities for growth change and the ability as a completed entity, is a most effective solution to high density, resort styled, residential living.

BACKGROUND STUDY

A condominium is a multiple-unit building in which an apartment is owned individually by an individual owner. The apartment owners, collectively, share responsibility for common areas like grounds, pool, or recreation rooms.

Although this type of set-up has been popular in Europe for centuries, fewer than one half of the stated within the United States have passed laws related to condominium ownership. Legally, they appeal to bankers and loan offices due to the fact that they are an unusual type of "home ownership." In addition, they are popular with skiers, a fact born out by the following figures:

(1) Within the last five years in Aspen, Colorado, 2,000 beds have been added to the community with the addition of fifteen condominium apartment buildings.

(2) In the winter of 1967-68, there were twelve new condominium buildings opened at Snowmass, Colorado.

(3) Both of the above are popular winter sports areas.

(4) The 124 studio apartments in the Willows at Snowmass

were sold out long before construction began.

(5) From the day Sun Valley opened for the 1966-67 season through the end of the past summer, all 128 of the studio apartment condominiums built for the summer of 1967 had been sold for $12,750 to $24,000 each.

Most condominiums are sold by the developer of the individual condominium. Since there is the normal profit motive involved, the brouchures are often rather overstated. For example, the display pictures are often highly exotic. Financing of the apartments has become easier. Currently, many purchases are arranged on a basis of thirty per cent down, and the balance carried at 7½% interest for fifteen years. In addition, there is also a possibility that certain corporations (i.e., Janss Corp.) will carry back a second mortgage for a period of five years, allowing the buyer to purchase a unit for as little as 15% down.

Buzz Bainbridge, marketing director for Aspen Skiing Corporation, notes, "After the initial one-third down, most well run condominiums can get their mortgage and maintenance costs out of their income."

In the current market, it is unlikely that the condominium will lose much of its market value. At Crystal Mountain, Washington, the average price of condominium units has almost doubled since the first were built five years ago. Apartments that originally sold for $9,000 are being resold for $17,000.

were sold out long before construction began.

(5) From the day Sun Valley opened for the 1936-37 season through the end of the past summer, all 120 of the studio apartment condominium units for the number of 1937 had been sold for $15,750 to $24,000 each.

Most condominiums are sold by the developer at the initial, condominium, since there is the second profit derive involved, the brochures are often rather overpriced. For example, the display pictures are often highly misleading. Furnishing of the apartments has become easier. Currently, many purchases are arranged on a basis of thirty per cent down, and the balance carried at 7½% interest for fifteen years. In addition, there is also a possibility that certain corporations (i.e., Janus Corp.) will carry back a second mortgage for a period of five years, allowing the buyer to purchase a unit for as little as 15% down.

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In the current market, it is unlikely that the condominium will lose much of its market value. At Deyoung Mountain, Washington, the average price of condominium units has almost doubled since the first were built five years ago. Apartments that originally sold for $2,500 are being resold for $17,500.

The $13,000 are selling for $24,000. Crystal Mountain's Silver Skis Chalet, a 61-unit condominium, opened five years ago as the first condominium to be built on U.S. Forest Service land.. In the next two years, thirty-six other apartments in three other buildings were opened at Crystal.

Moreover, smaller areas are also taking advantage of this relatively new concept in second living quarters. For example, the new Alpental ski area near Seattle includes a 34-unit apartment condominium in its first year plans. Other smaller areas which are utilizing this include: Mount Werner at Steamboat Springs, Colorado; White Pass, Washington; and Park City, Utah.

One comparison whixh can be made is that which indicates the costs of staying at a ski area, as opposed to the expense incurred in purchase of a condominium. The chart which follows will give an indication of the cost for room and board in major resorts around the U.S. and in Europe:

NORTH AMERICA

Resort	Room, board (per person, per day)	*Description (per week)
Aspen, Colorado	$11.50 to $24.50	6 nights, 7 breakfasts, 6 dinners
Squaw Valley, California	$10.50 to $24.00	5 nights, 5 breakfasts, 5 dinners
Stowe, Vermont	$ 9.25 to $40.00	No nights, no meals lifts only

The $43,000 was waiting for $24,000. Crystal Mountain's Silver Skis Chalet, a 51-unit condominium, opened five years ago as the first condominium to be built on U.S. Forest Service land. In the past ten years, thirty-six other apartments in three other buildings were opened at Crystal.

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NORTH AMERICA

Resort	Room, board (per person, per day)	Apartment (per week)
Aspen, Colorado	$11.50 to $24.50	6 nights, 7 breakfasts, 6 dinners
Squaw Valley, California	$10.50 to $24.00	5 nights, 5 breakfasts, 5 dinners
Stowe, Vermont	$ 9.50 to $40.50	3½ nights, no meals, kitchen only

Sun Valley, Idaho	$ 9.00 to $74.50	6 nights, no meals
Vail, Colorado	$ 8.75 to $27.25	6 nights, no meals
Lake Placid, New York	$ 8.25 to $27.25	5 nights, 5 breakfasts, 5 dinners

* Normally, resorts take reservations on the basis of a minimum of at least a week.

EUROPE

Resort	Room, board (per person, per day)	* Description (per week)
Chamonix, France	$ 4.00 to $22.00	6 nights, 19 meals
Davos, Switzerland	$ 4.00 to $24.00	6 nights, 19 meals
Kitzbuhel, Austria	$ 3.50 to $21.00	6 nights, 19 meals
St. Moritz, Switzerland	$ 5.00 to $60.00	6 nights, 19 meals, tips

When comparisons are made from the above figures, three things become apparent:

(1) Based on the large, well-known resorts above, it is somewhat less expensive to stay at a resort in Europe.

(2) European resorts seem to provide "more for your money."

(3) Resorts in the U.S. are considerably more expensive than one would expect.

As has already been stated above, there are numerous reasons for the above problem in America -- ranging from the

Sun Valley, Idaho $ 5.00 to $24.50 5 nights, as meals

Vail, Colorado $ 8.75 to $27.25 6 nights, as meals

Lake Placid, New York $ 6.75 to $27.25 5 nights, breakfasts, 3 dinners

* Generally, rates are reservations on the basis of a minimum of at least a week.

SPORTS

Resorts	Room, board (per person, per day)	* Lessons/Pulls (per week)
Chamonix, France	$ 4.00 to $22.00	6 nights, 12 meals
Davos, Switzerland	$ 4.00 to $24.00	6 nights, 12 meals
Kitzbuhel, Austria	$ 3.50 to $21.00	6 nights, 12 meals
St. Moritz, Switzerland	$ 5.00 to $30.00	6 nights, 12 meals, tips

When comparisons are made from the above figures, three things become apparent:

(1) Based on the large, well-known resorts above, it is somewhat less expensive to stay at a resort in Europe.

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It has already been stated above, there are numerous reasons for the above problem in America -- resulting from too

popularity of the sport of skiing to the lack of facilities. However, one interesting observation involves the fact of the popularity of the condominium in Europe, an area where expenses are relatively light. When one considers that the average American family is comprised of about four people, one can begin to realize the feasibility of the purchase of a condominium. Though the units designed for this thesis are somewhat in the upper monetary bracket (about $30,000 to $40,000), the demand for them indicates that there is a buyer's market. Furthermore, if we compare what a family of four avid and relatively expert skiers might spend during a winter vacation, we can understand what the comfort of real home living would bring. Ski resort owners are more than willing to admit that there are problems with plumbing and of other natures which can more than inconvenience the guest. When one looks at the chart, he can see that most of the expenses for a ski holiday go into a room itself. With all of the advantages of a complex that can provide recreation facilities, sauna, with <u>high density</u>, <u>resort styled</u>, <u>residential living</u>, it is not an unusual fact that the condominium is experiencing growing popularity.

Two final ideas which relate to the occupation of the condominium are of interest:

(1) Rental vs. Purchase of a condominium

(2) Studio vs. Bedroom developed condominiums

With regard to the former of these ideas, two propositions present themselves -- total ownership of a condominium

by an individual, or letting the dwelling out on a rental basis. A third possibility is that the owner may rent out his dwelling while he and his family are not occupying it. Some facts and figures concerning ownership have already been presented, and it has been noted that they are not as difficult to get financed as one might believe. If we use the example of Manor Vail class condominiums, we might understand how our third proposition is possible. These have three bedrooms, three baths, dining room and living room combination with fireplace, and, of course, a kitchen. The units are designed so that each apartment can be rented as three separate units, or, the owner may rent one or both bedrooms, yet maintain privacy in the remaining one. The key to economy, if one wishes it, is that the entire dwelling is rented at a specific price, regardless of the number of people staying in the apartment (up to a listed maximum). However, most of the condominiums seem to be purchased outright due to the relatively accessible financing, or utilizing shared rental with management.

As far as the question of studio vs. bedroom complexes is concerned, the people at Snowmass have noted problems with the studio-type dwelling -- (1) Though they can actually sleep six, many people are not compatible; (2) There is a definite lack of privacy. The desirability of the bedroom design can be seen in the individual's total ownership and economy rental to others, while still maintaining his own privacy.

Renting can become a problem. A Vail condominium owner complained that by the time she and her husvand finally got up for the weekend, the apartment had already been rented. It should be noted that this is, however, what the average apartment dweller will do with his ownership of a condominium. The Willows and Sun Valley apartments are studios and have had no problems renting. However, as has been noted, neither have those bedroom designed at Vail or Crystal Mountain. One must simply take his choice, keeping in mind the factors we have already discussed.

Ifone considers the current market value of the condominium and multiplies this by its increasing popularity at resorts like Snowmass and Aspen, he can see that the future of the condominium has an excellent prognosis for success.

MASTER PLAN BUILDINGS

Central Heating Plant

Sewage Plant and System

Electricity (Underground)

Water (Storage res.) and Purification Plant

2 Service Stations with Repair Garage

500 Car Parking lot (with attendant)

Bus and Taxi turn around

Drug Store

Laundromat

Ski Shop

Church

Bank

7 to 11

Post Office

Cinema

Night Clubs

Small complex: barber shop, beauty shop, massage and sauna

Nursery

Swimming Pool (outdoor, heated)

Skating Rink

Tennis Courts

Miscl. Shop space (for rent)

4 Hotels

4 Condominiums

CONDOMINIUM AREA REQUIREMENTS:

1st Floor

Kitchen	-	130 square feet
Utility Room	-	160 square feet
Dining Room	-	140 square feet
Living	-	250 square feet
Study and Listening Room	-	100 square feet
Entry	-	40 square feet

2nd Floor

Master Bedroom	-	380 square feet
Dressing Room	-	60 square feet
2 Bedrooms	-	200 square feet each (incl. storage and closet)
2 Baths	-	50 square feet each
Sauna	-	50 square feet

OUTSIDE

Sundeck	-	300 square feet

MISCL:

Cloak Room	-	20 square feet

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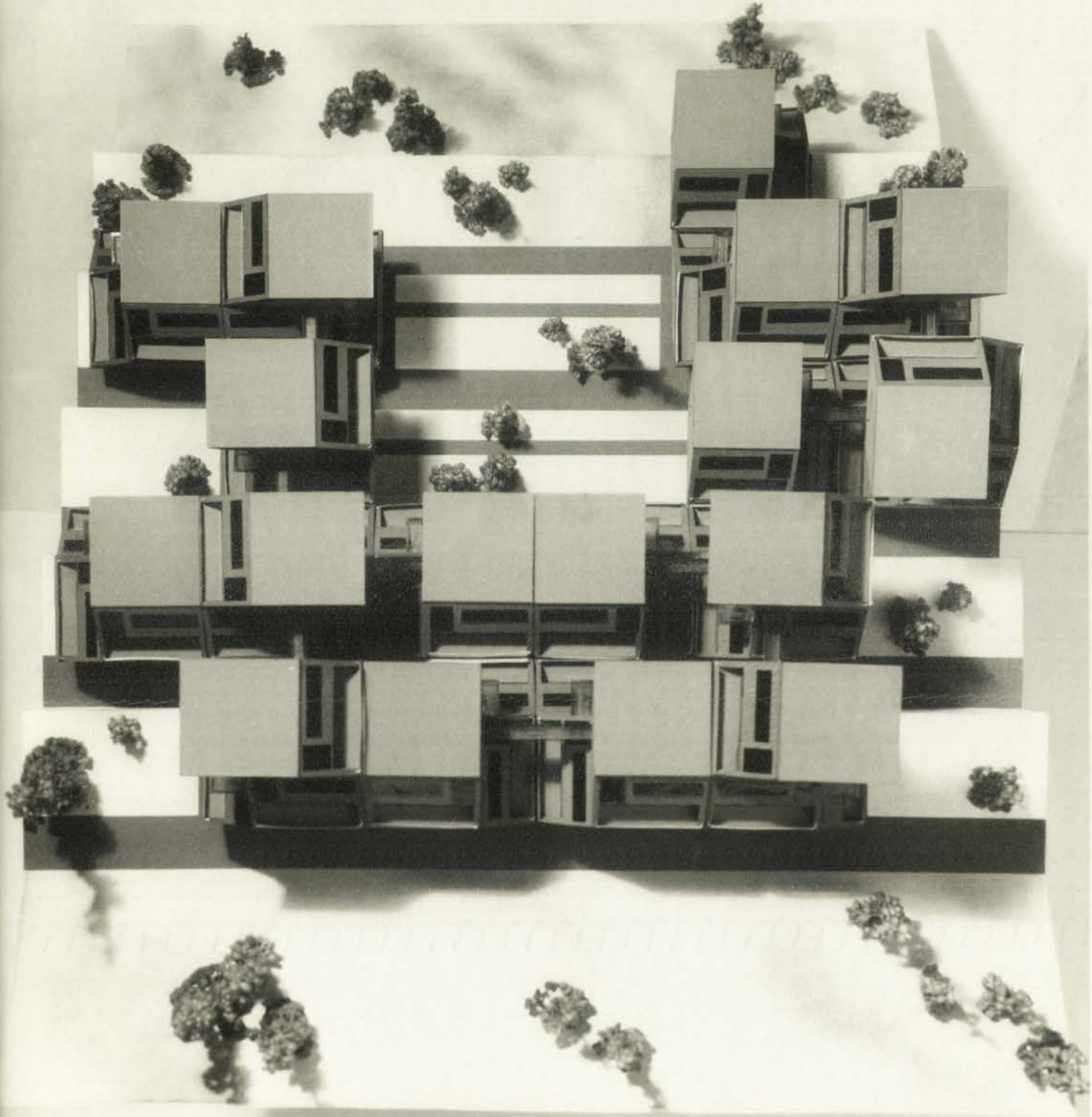
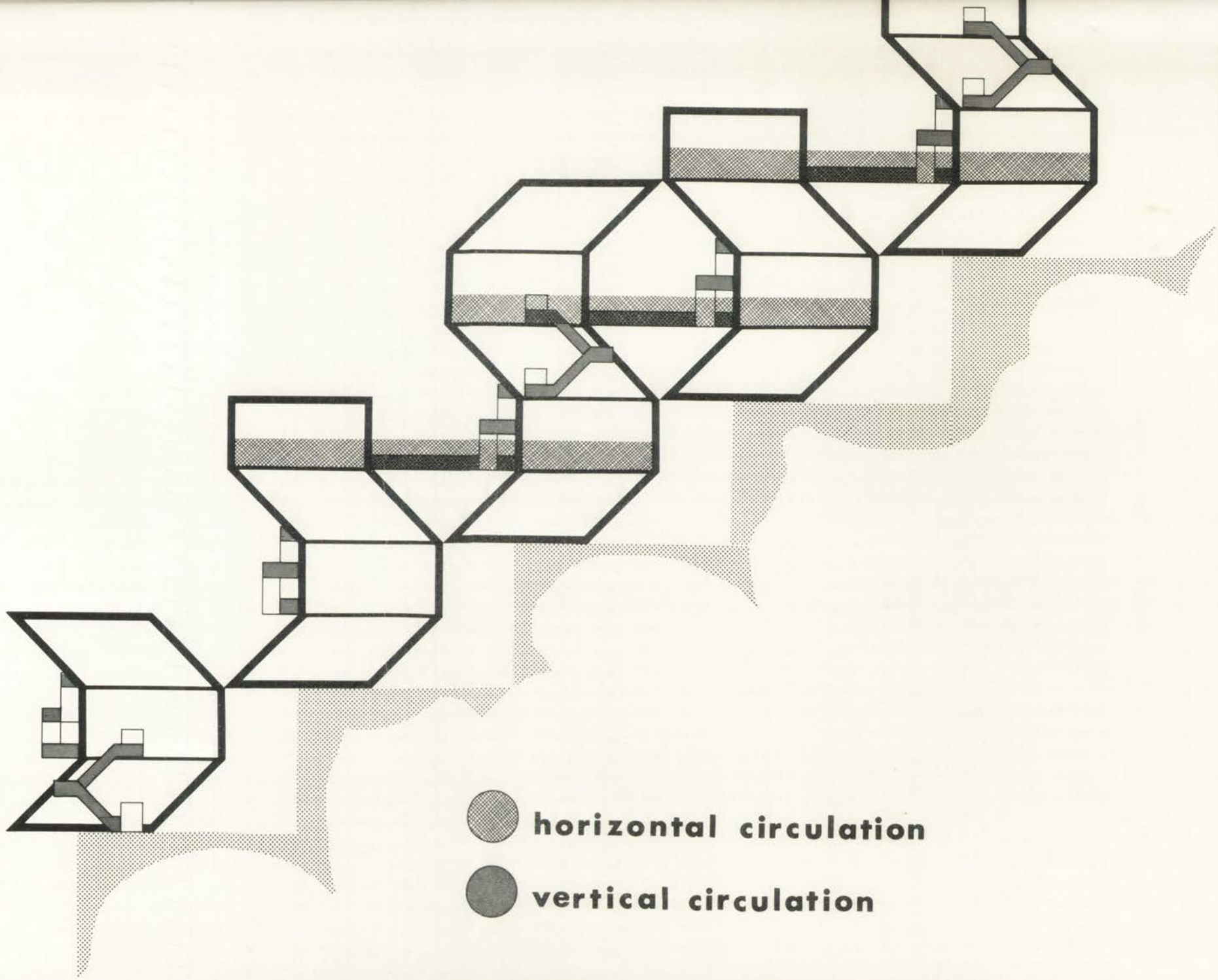
15. Engineers consulted - Roy Hanson
    Roy Johnson, C.E. Dept., U.N.M.
    William Gafford, C.E. Dept., U.N.M.

KEY - AIA - American Institute of Architects Journal
AA - Art and Architecture; PA - Progressive Architecture
HH - House and Home; AR - Architectural Record

*Though not in proper form, this bibliography is only intended to indicate where information may be obtained.

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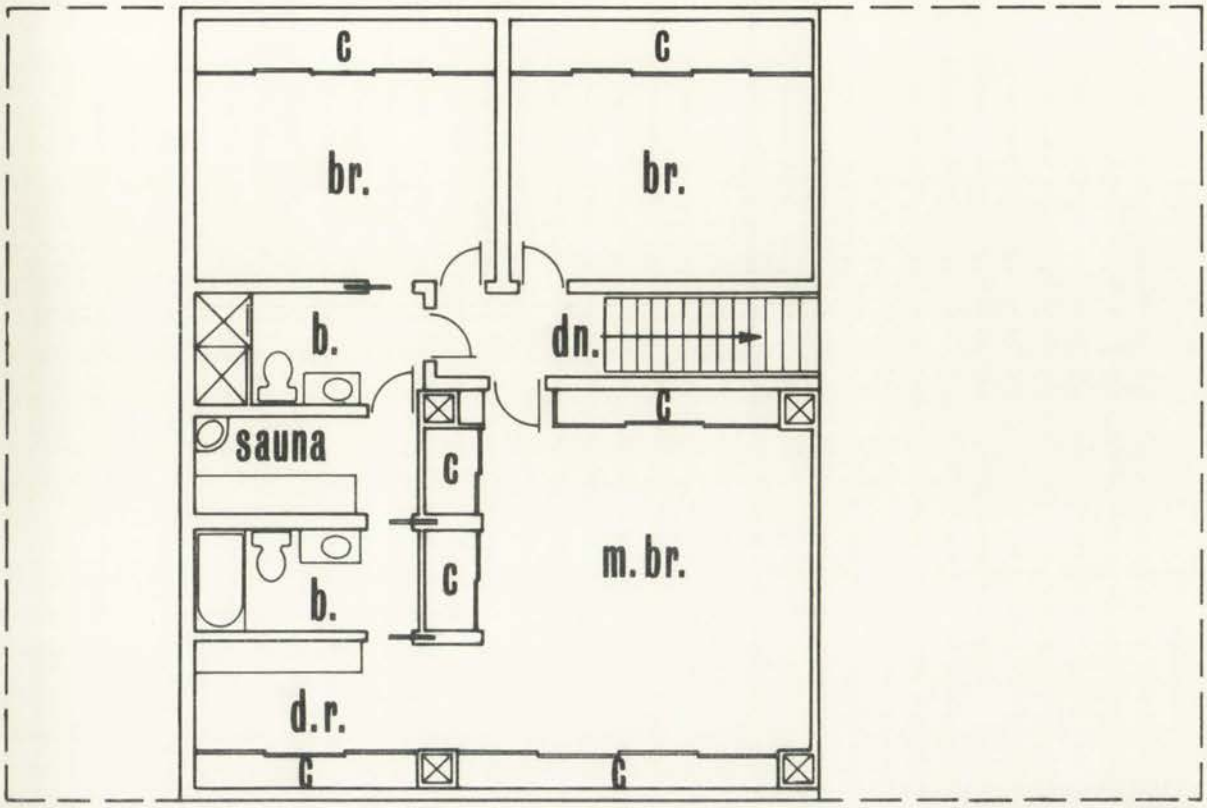

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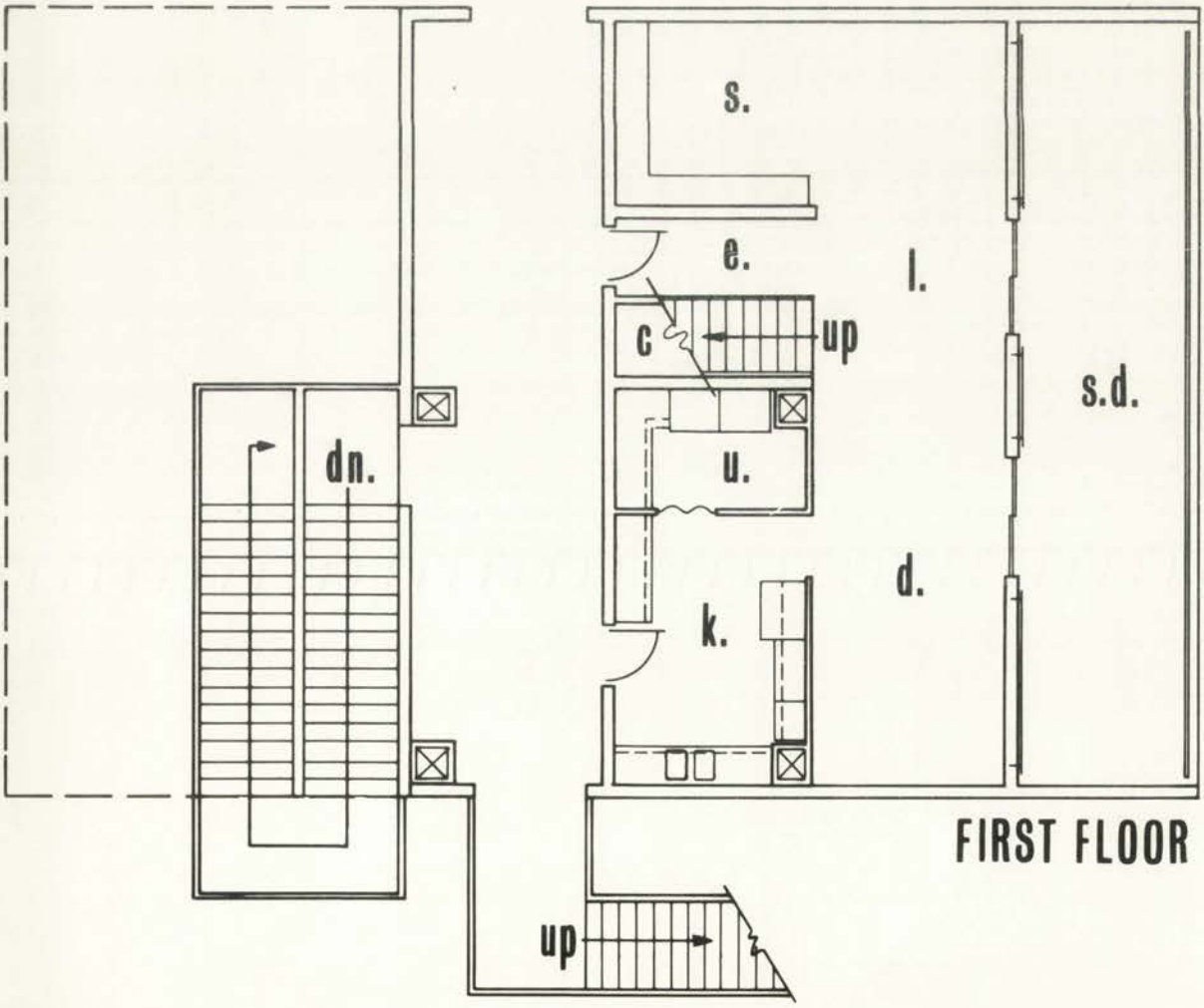

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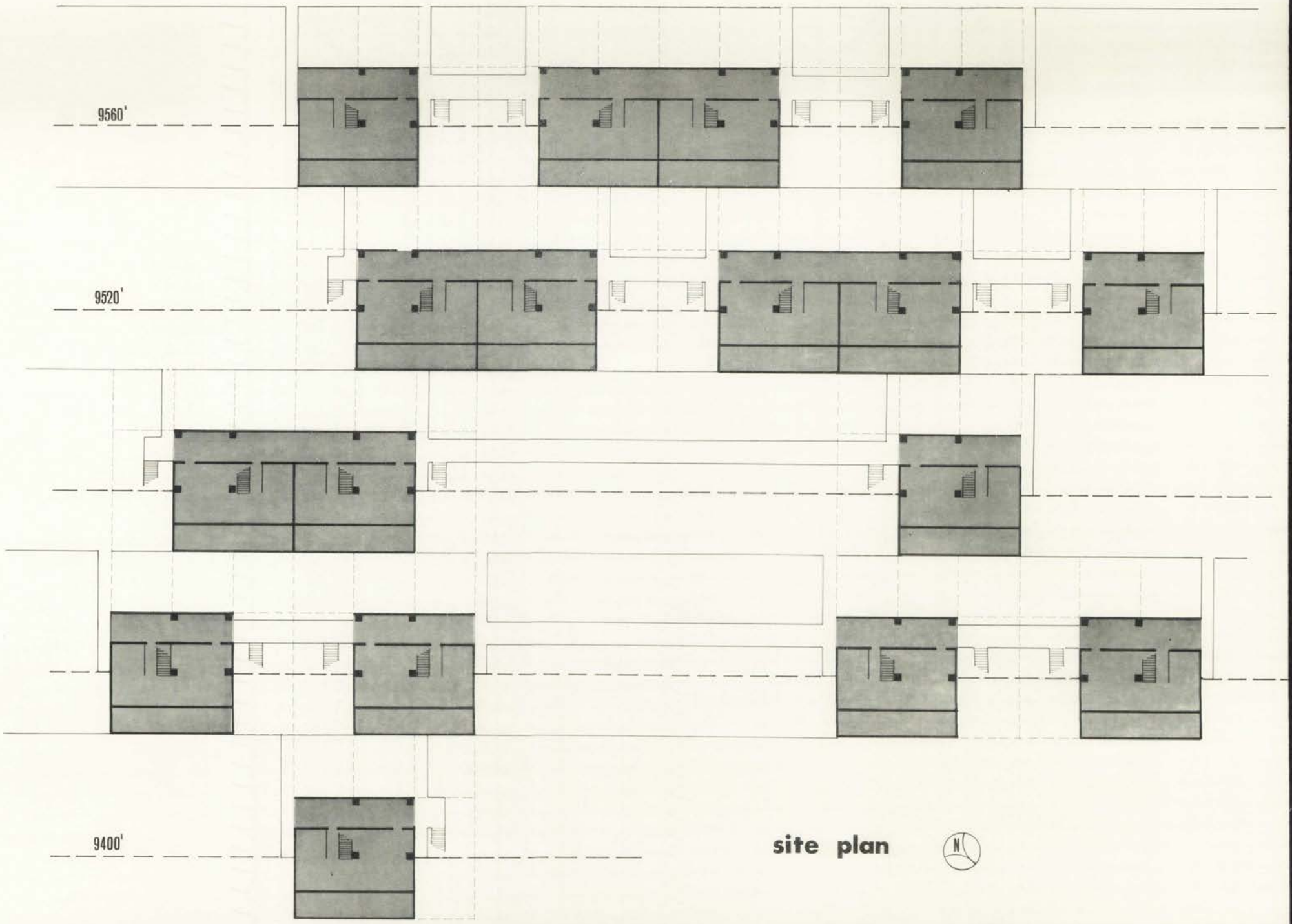
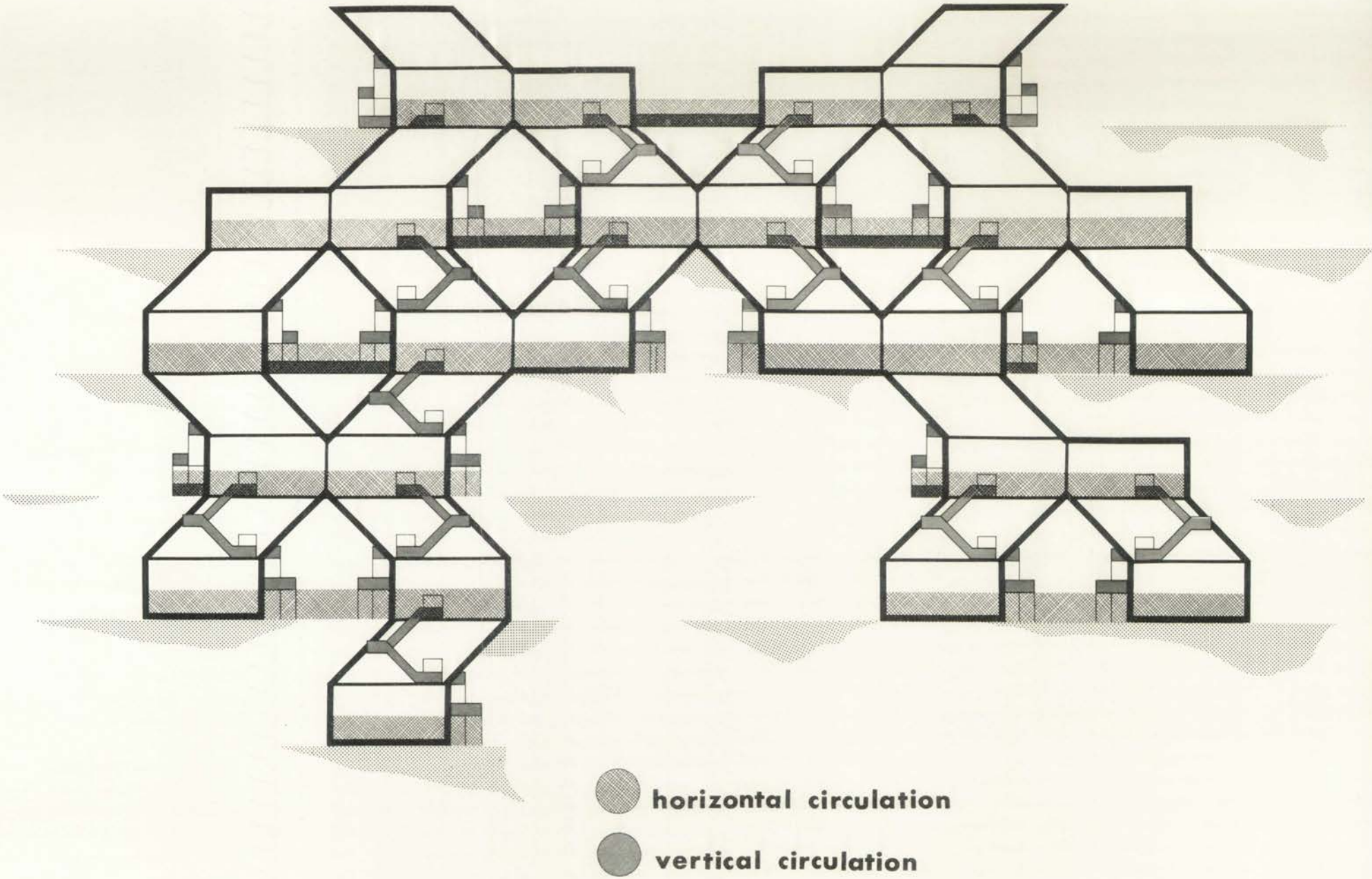


site plan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