

The Missing Middle, Cottage Development, and why we love them.

Stathis G. Yeros
Janette Komoda Kim



Missing Middle: “A set of residential building types that exist in the middle of the continuum between detached single-family houses and large apartment buildings.”

Quote and images from AARP and Opticos Design, “Discovering and Developing Missing Middle Housing.” See [AARP.org/MisingMiddleHousing](https://www.aarp.org/MisingMiddleHousing)



Accessory Dwelling Units



Duplexes and Four-plexes



Courtyard



Townhouses



Live/Work

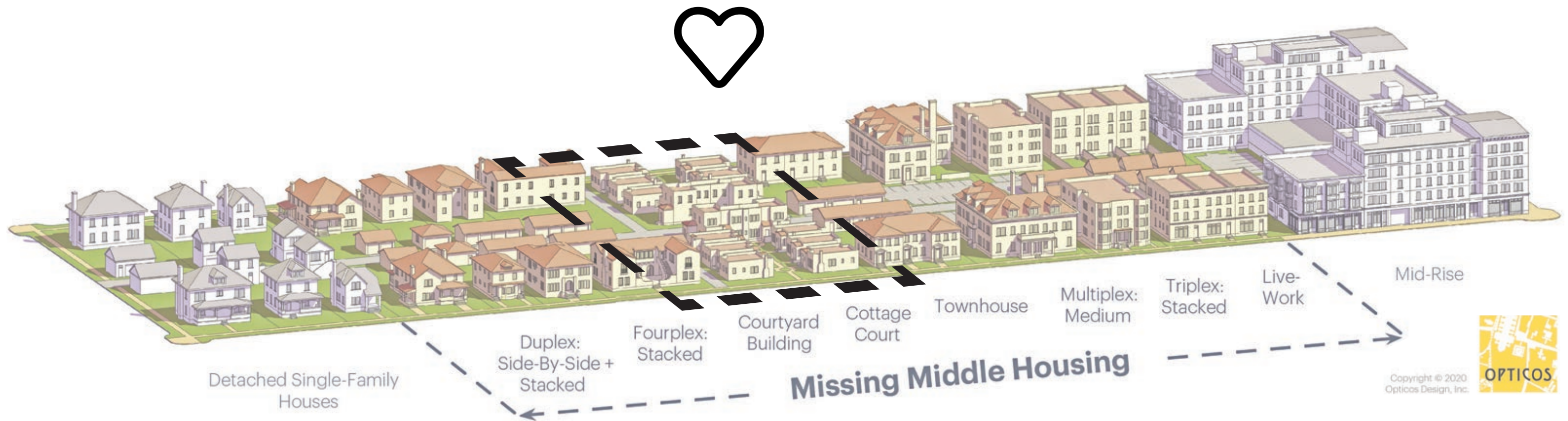
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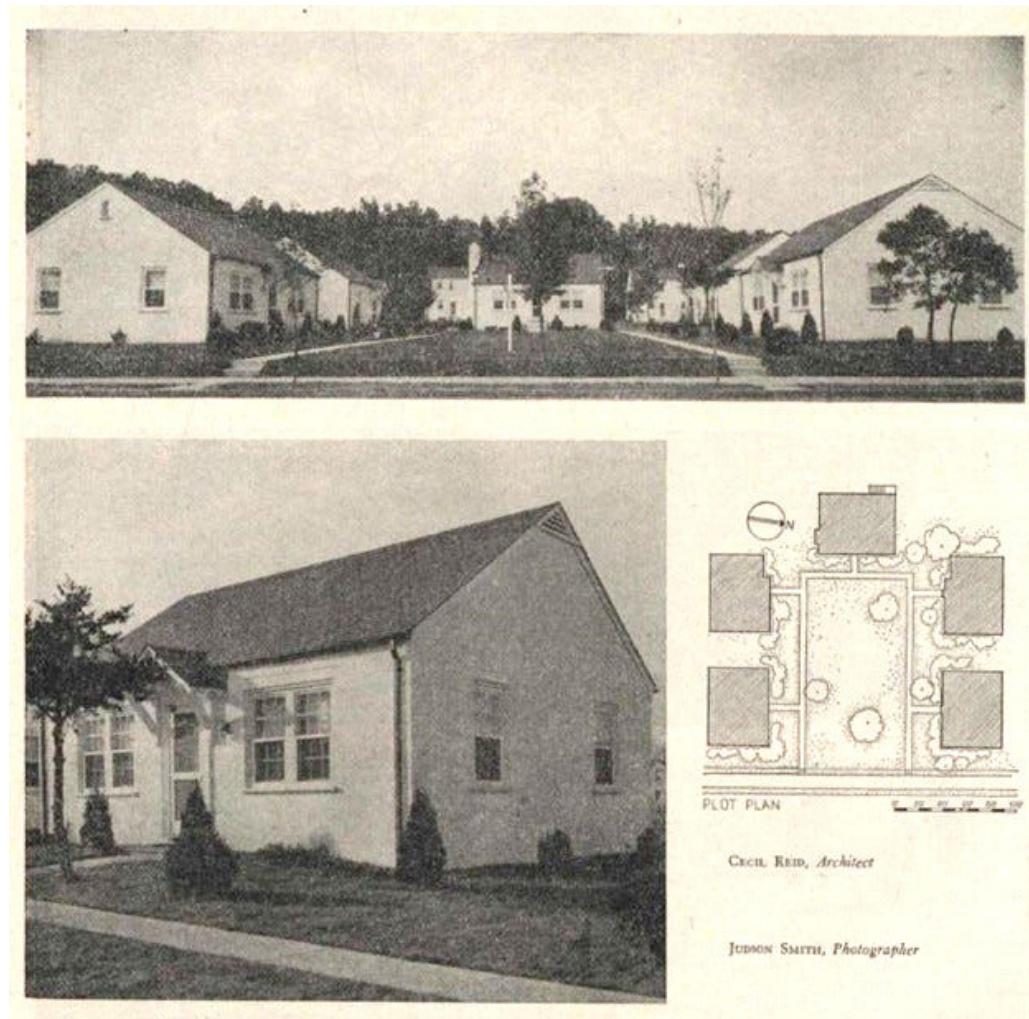
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Cottage development is a “development method where a group of smaller detached or attached single family homes are built together on one lot, often with shared open space.”

Quote: Alliance for Housing Affordability (AHA).
Image Reid’s Court in “Book of Houses” (1946)
and missingmiddlehousing.com/types/bungalow-court/#prettyPhoto.



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Quote: Alliance for Housing Affordability (AHA).
Images: Los Griegos Farm, Albuquerque, NM.





Contextual



Energy
+ Resources



Sustainable

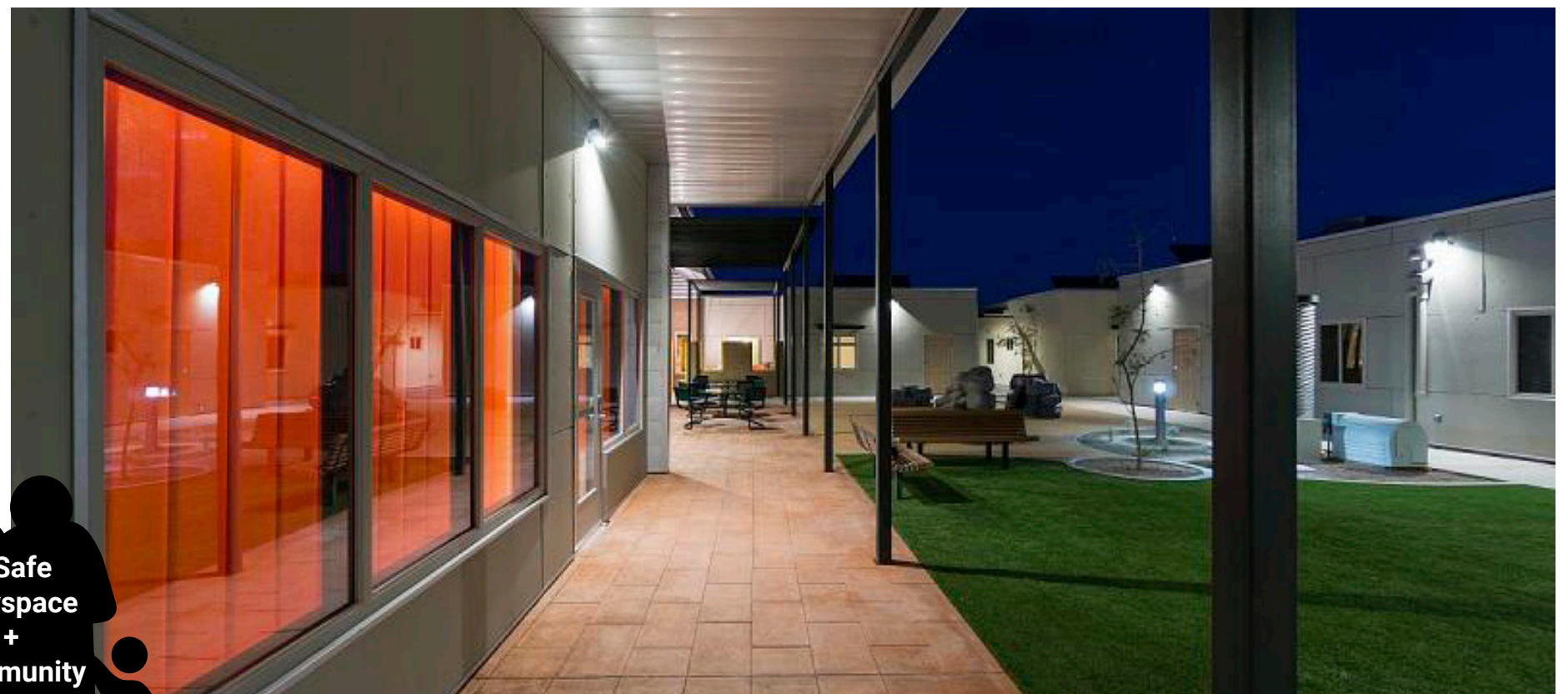


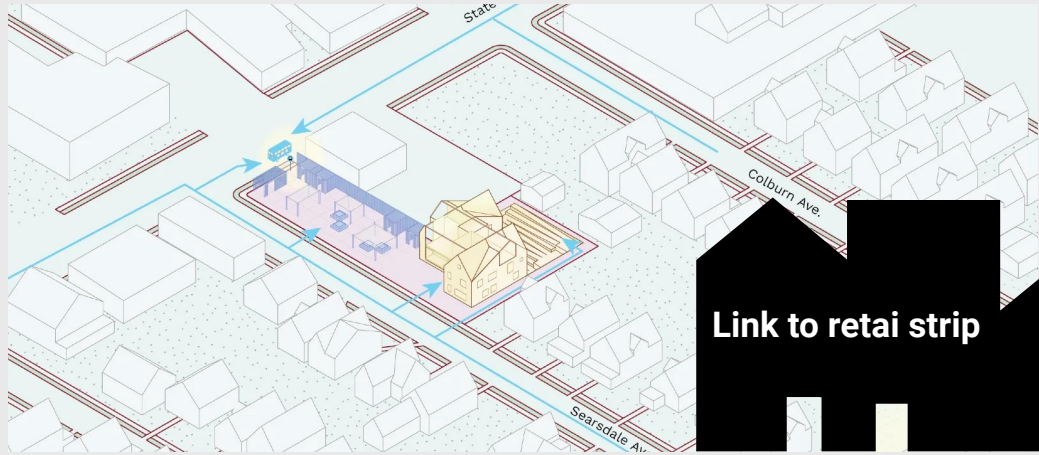
Age-Friendly

Craft Development
8 2-bR homes on 1.37 acre lot in Healdsburg, CA

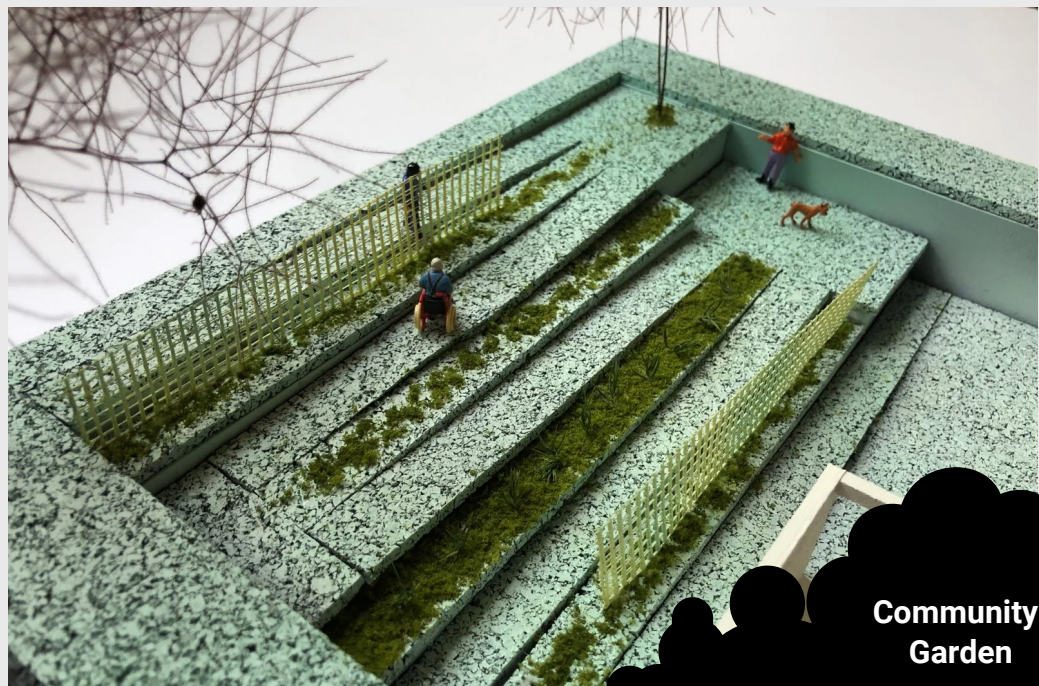
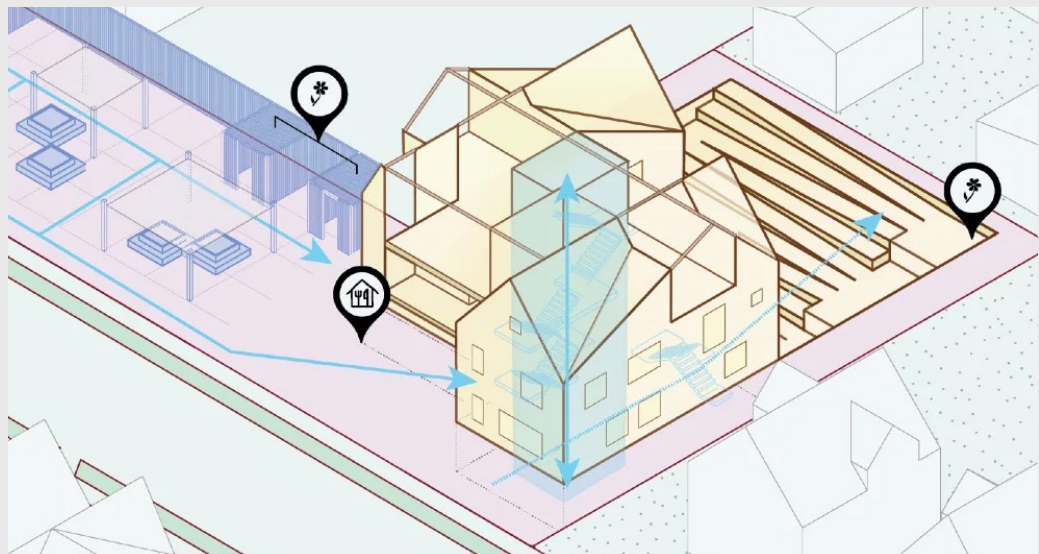


Poter Mirto MacDonald
Las Abuelitas Family Housing, Tucson, AZ.





Link to retail strip



Community Garden

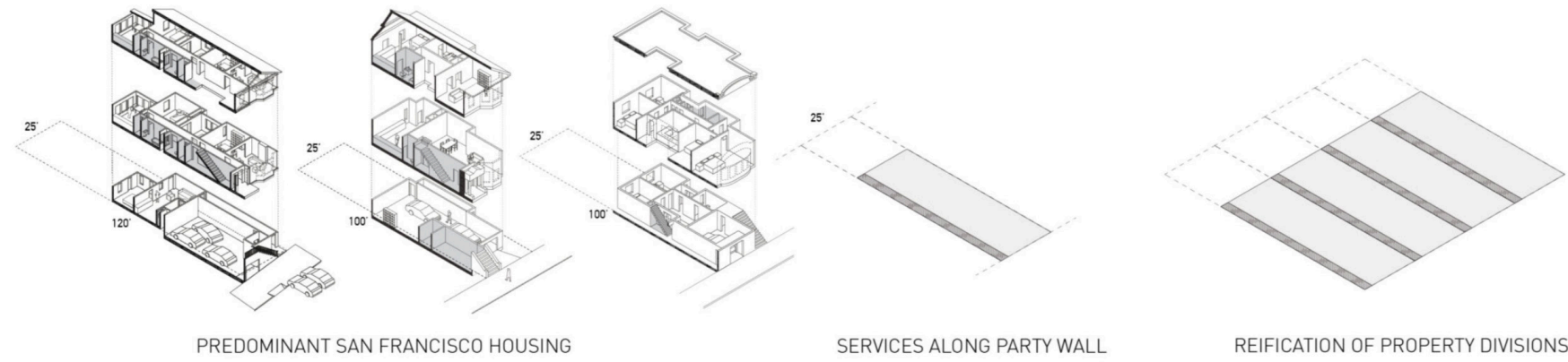
Mobility + Care

BRANDT : HAFERD

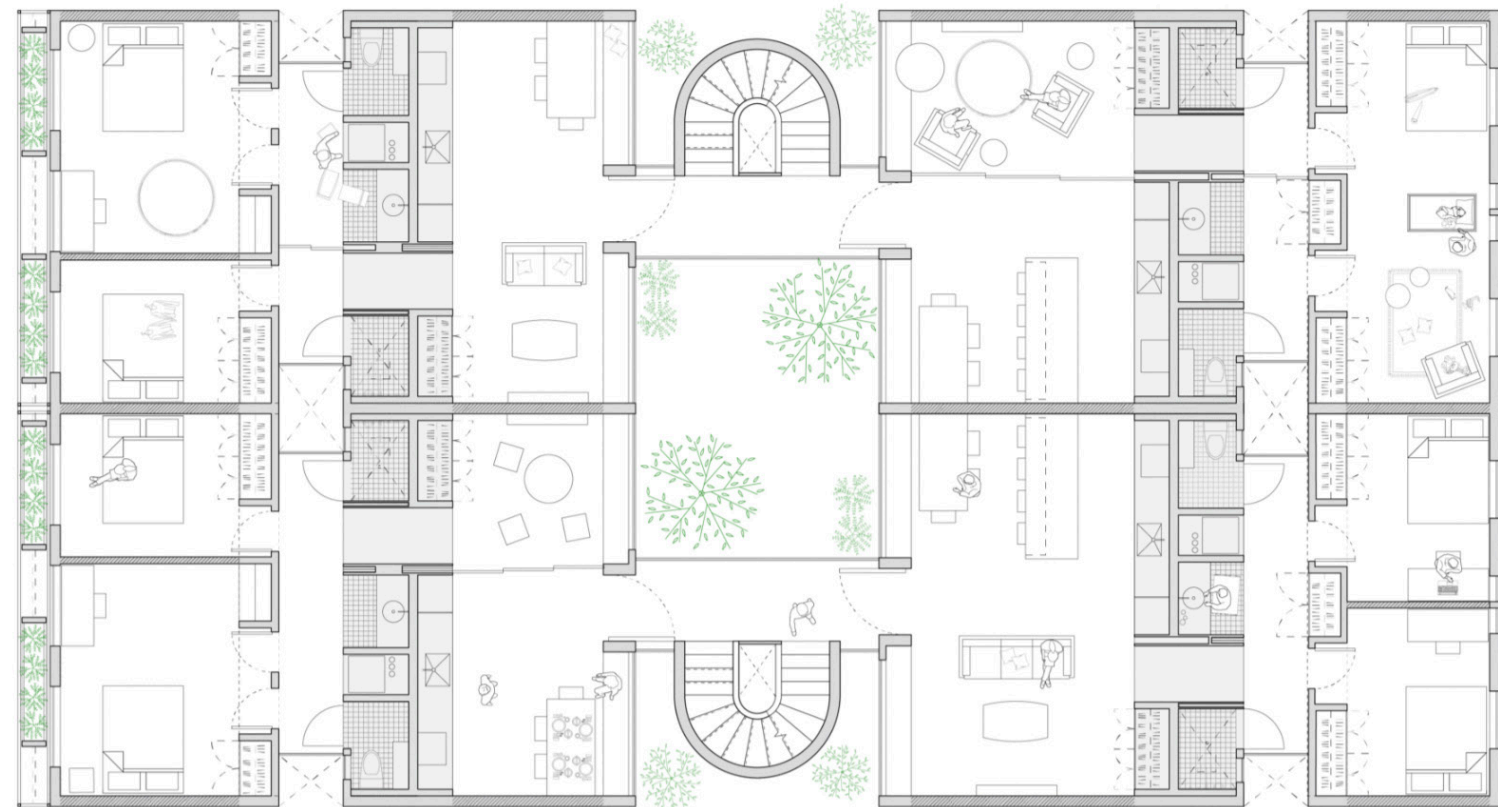
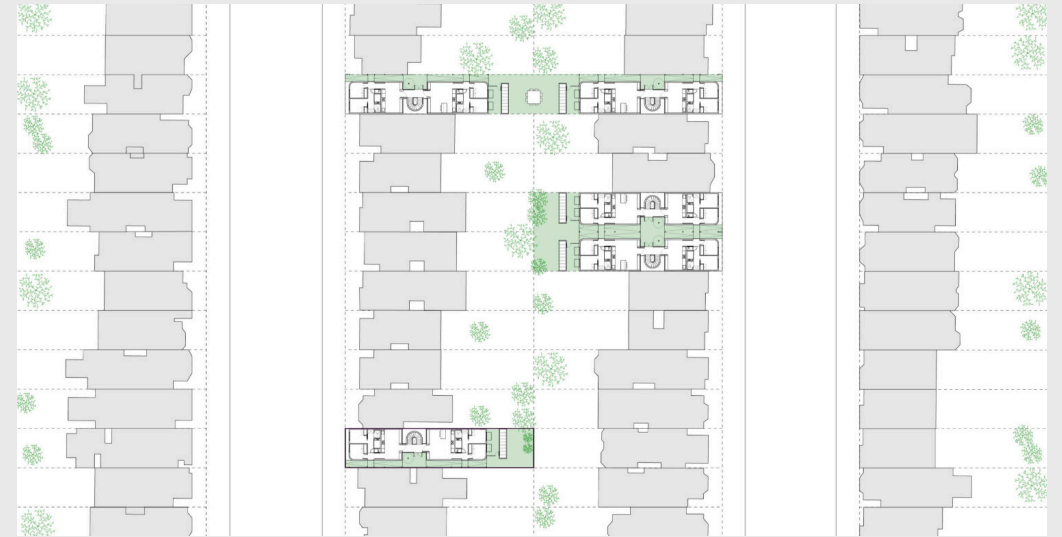
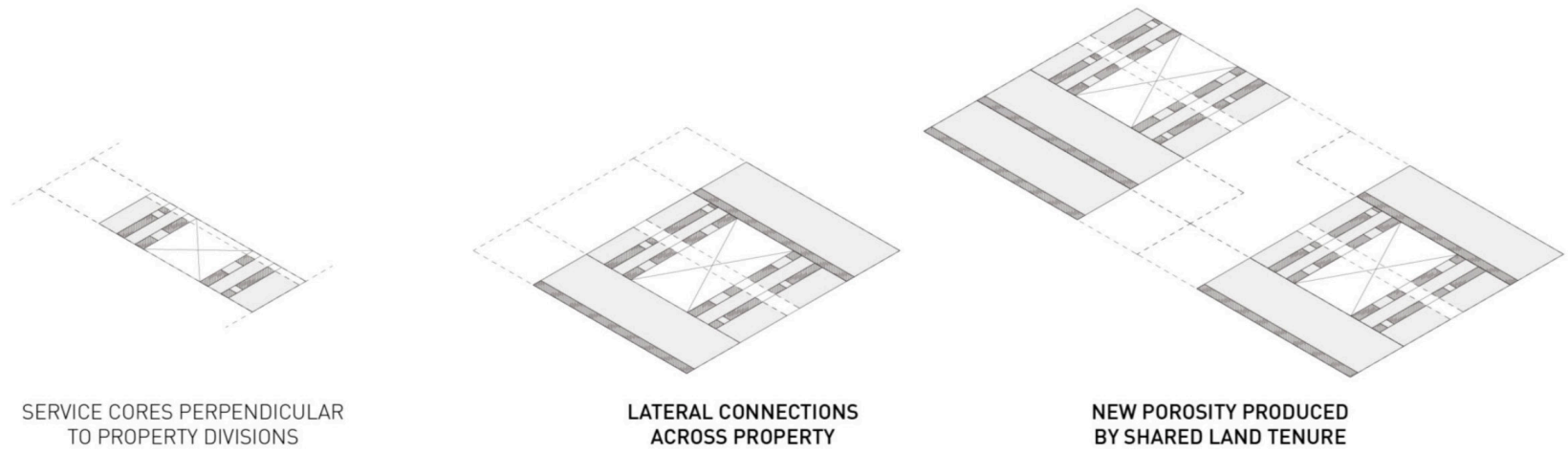
Side by Side, Zero Threshold Design Competition.



EXISTING

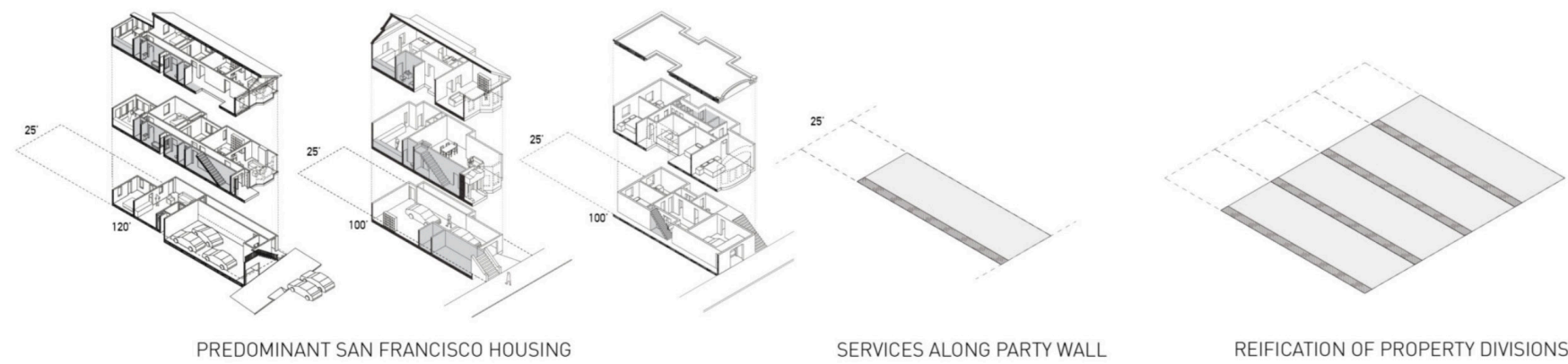


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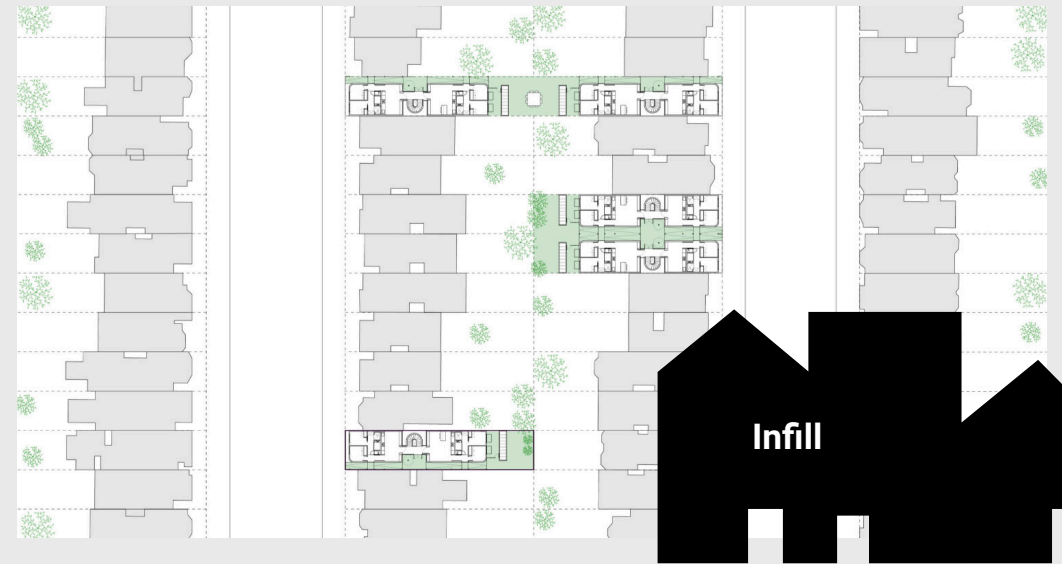
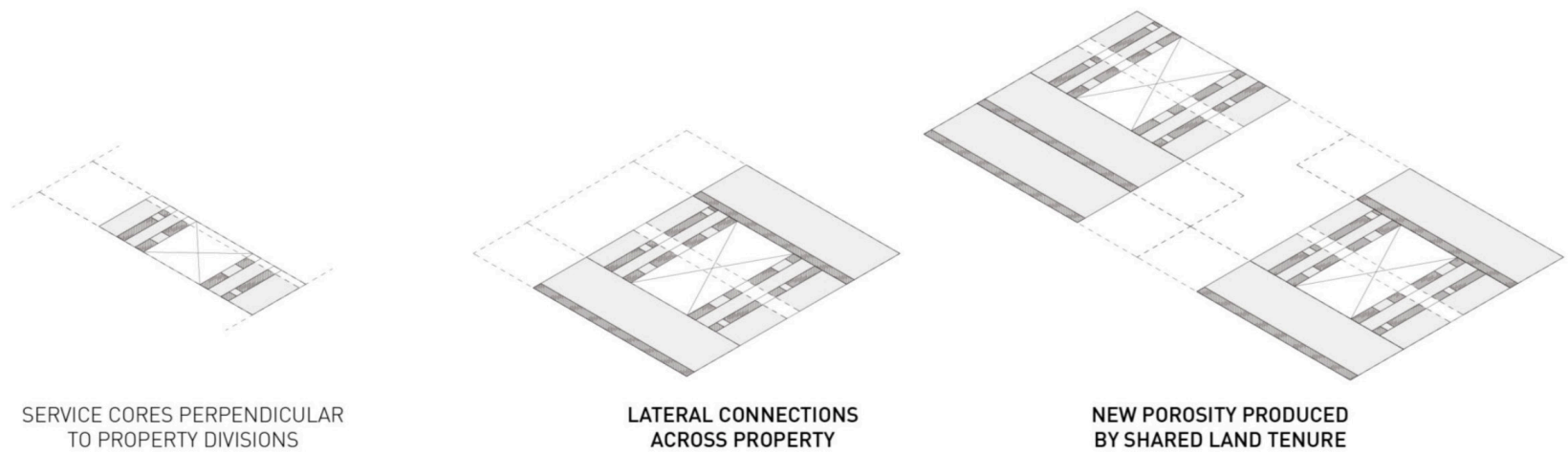


The Open Workshop & Spiegel Aihara Workshop
Lots Will Tear Us Apart, San Francisco

EXISTING



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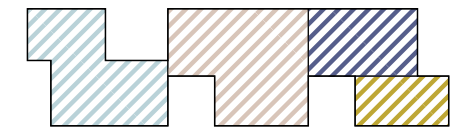


Shared Resources

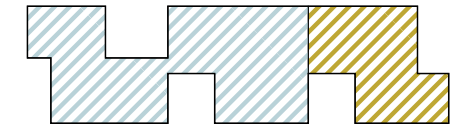
Flexibility



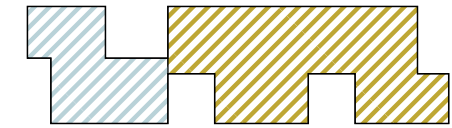
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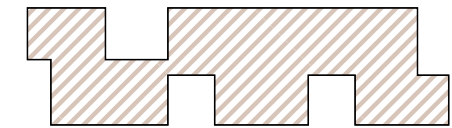
First prototype is launched with four units...



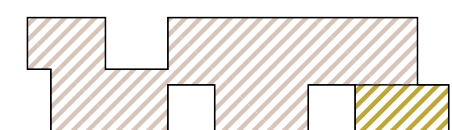
...two families grow...



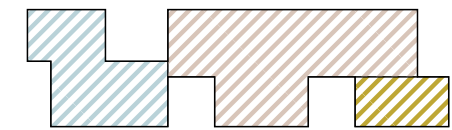
...children grow, elders move in another...



...communal life across multi generations...



...renting out a unit for additional income...

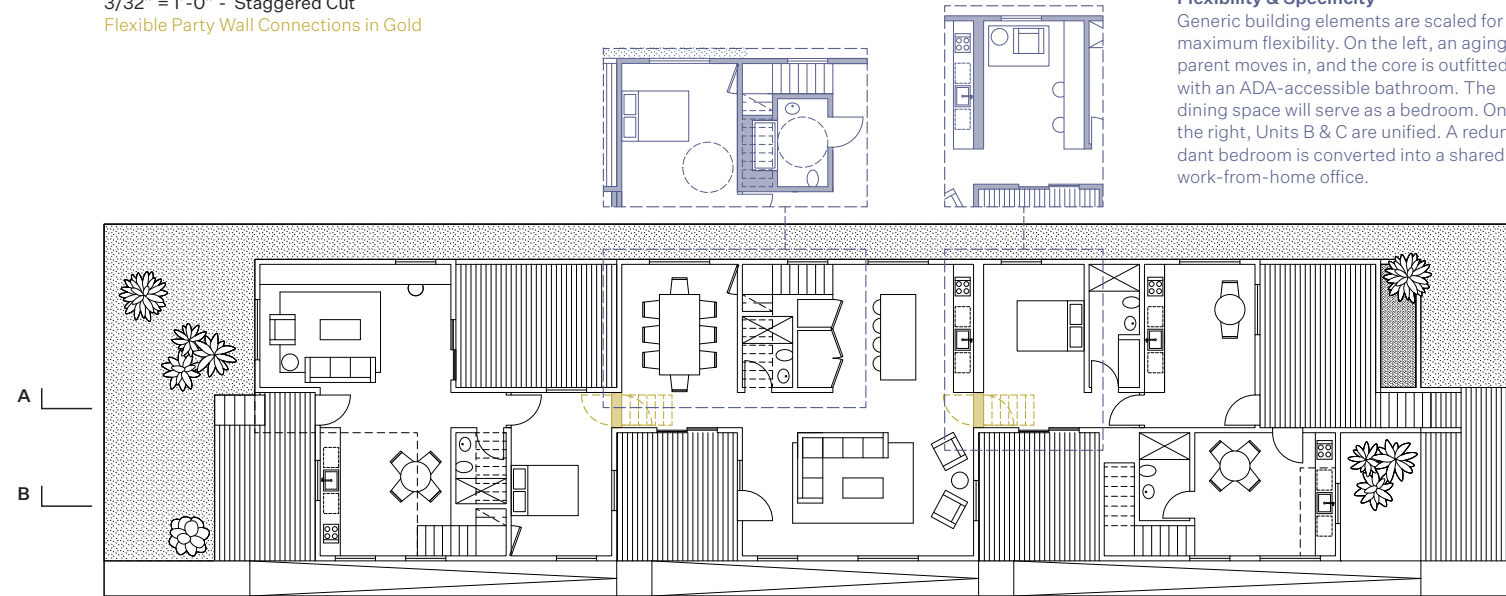


...new arrivals need private places...

Unit Adaptability Diagrams
Shifting ownership, shifting needs



Upper Level Plans
3/32" = 1'-0" - Staggered Cut
Flexible Party Wall Connections in Gold



Flexibility & Specificity
Generic building elements are scaled for maximum flexibility. On the left, an aging parent moves in, and the core is outfitted with an ADA-accessible bathroom. The dining space will serve as a bedroom. On the right, Units B & C are unified. A redundant bedroom is converted into a shared work-from-home office.

Ground Level Plans
3/32" = 1'-0" - Staggered Cut
Flexible Party Wall Connections in Gold



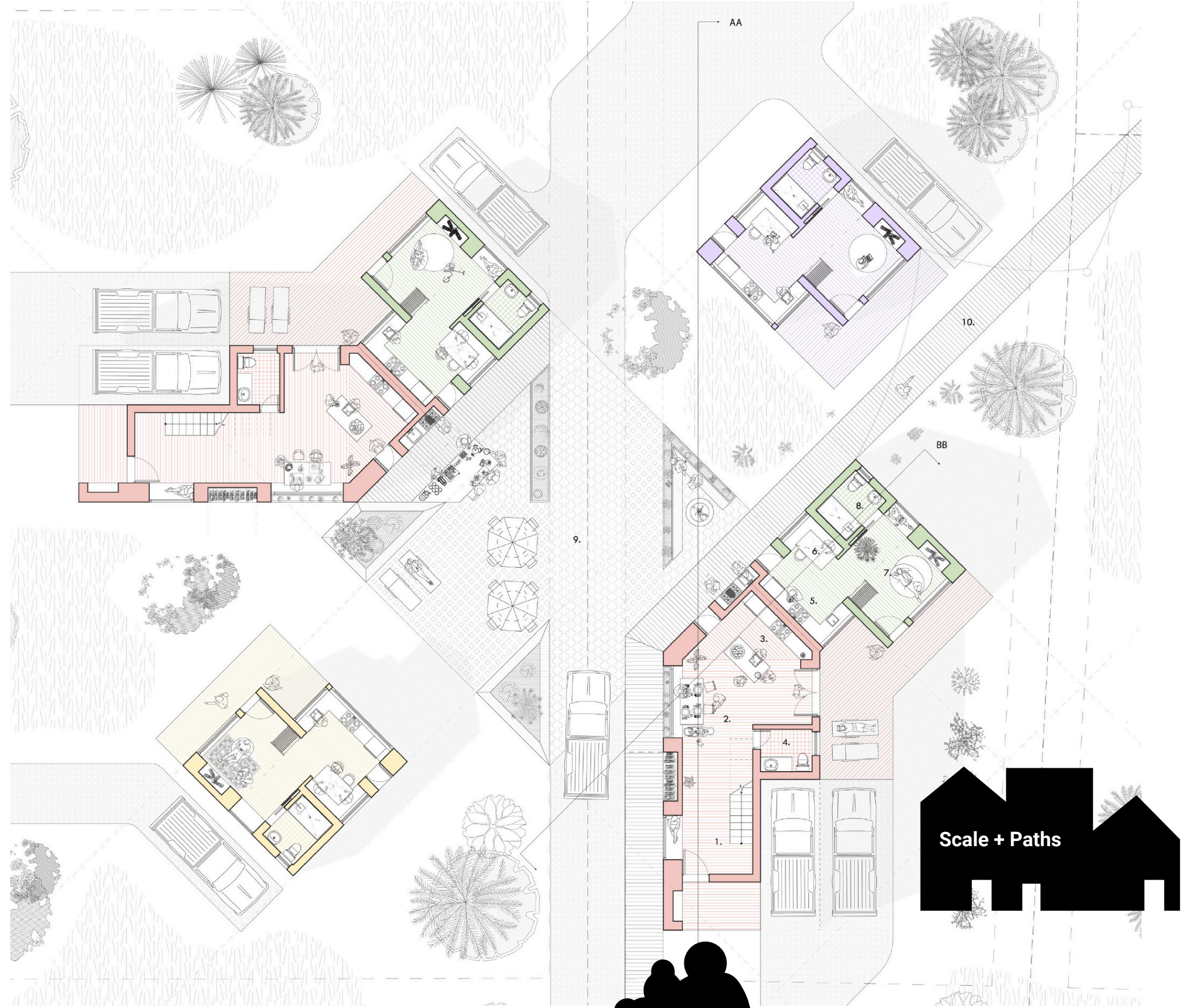
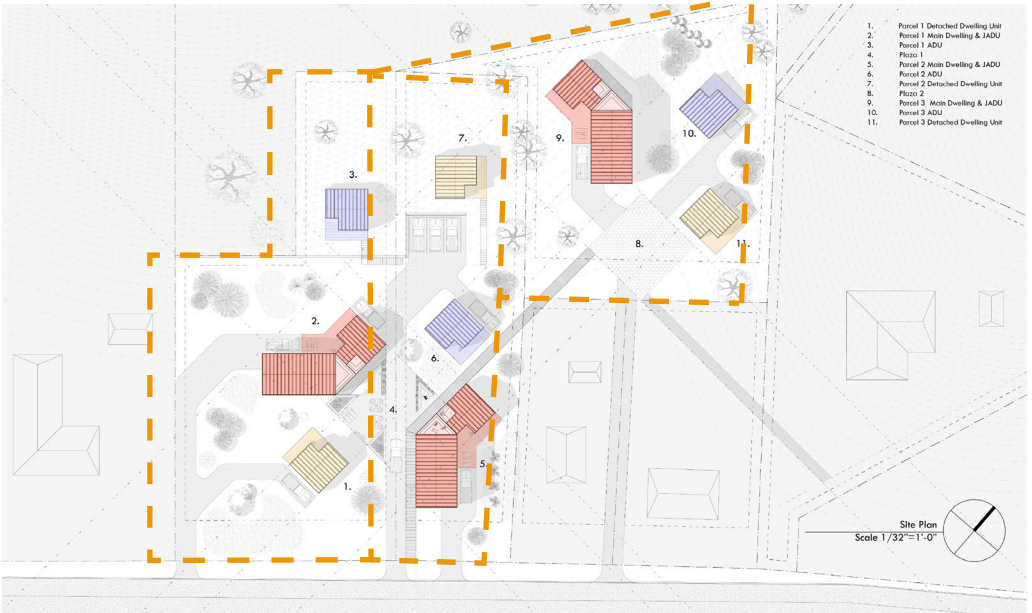
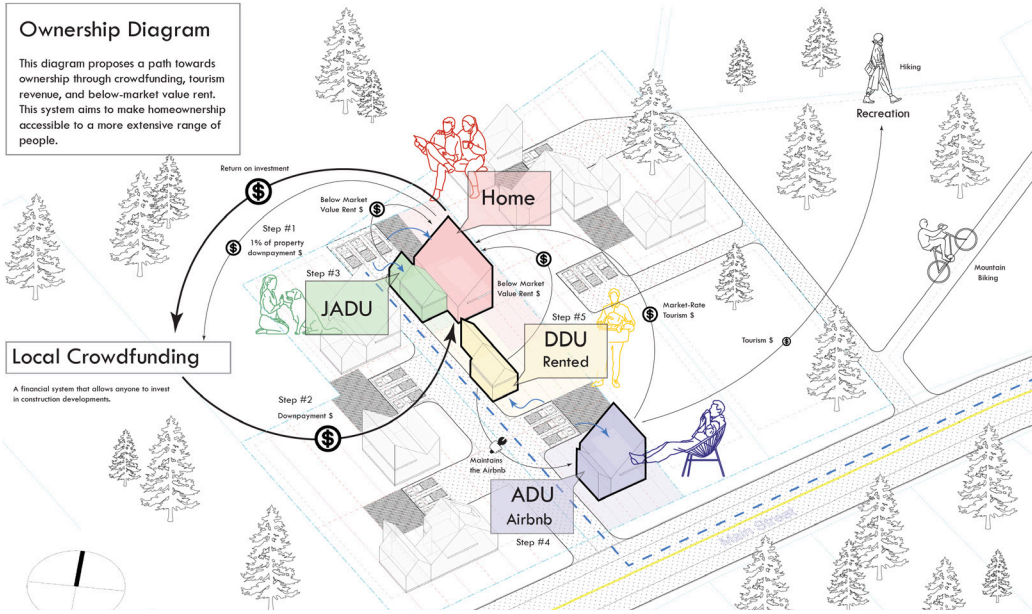
Growing Together
In this section, units can be connected or disconnected across party walls. On the left, Units A and B are unified to allow a young couple to support their aging-in-place parents. On the left, Units B and C are unified to help neighbors share child-care duties and turn the semi-private terrace into a shared space.

Section A-A
3/32" = 1'-0"
Flexible Party Wall Connections in Gold

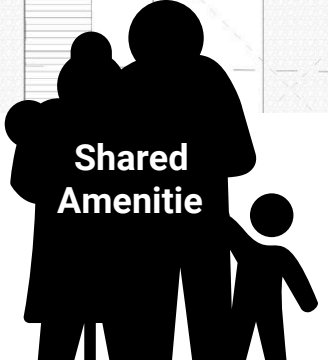


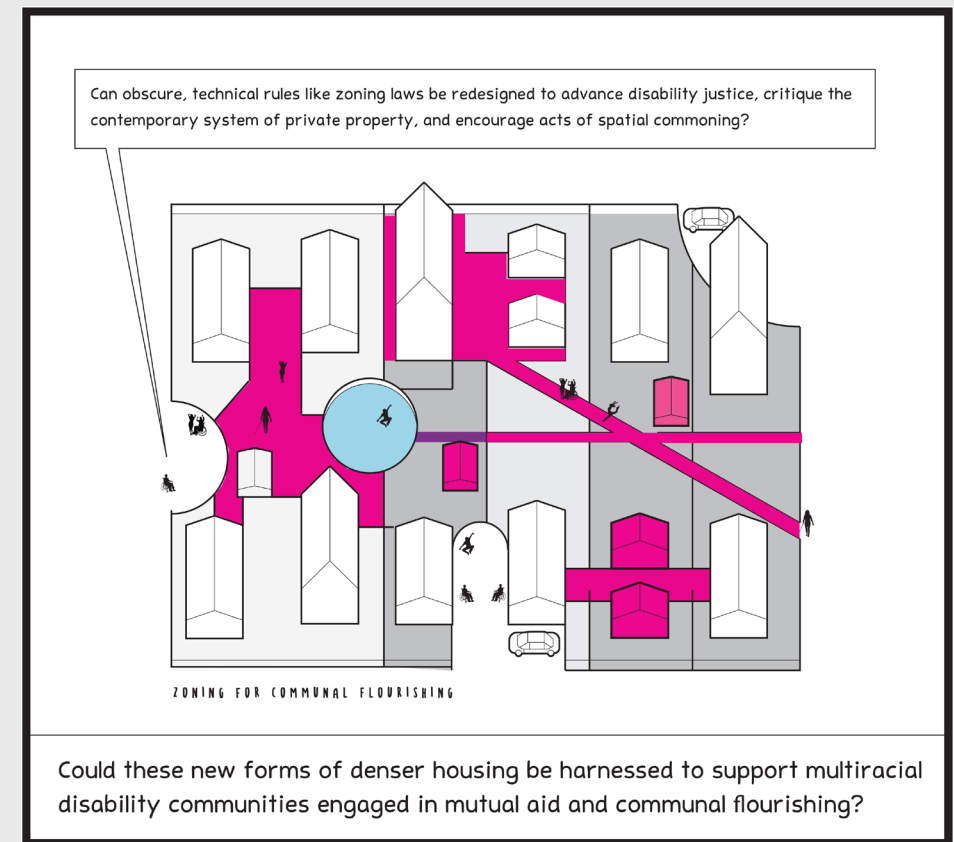
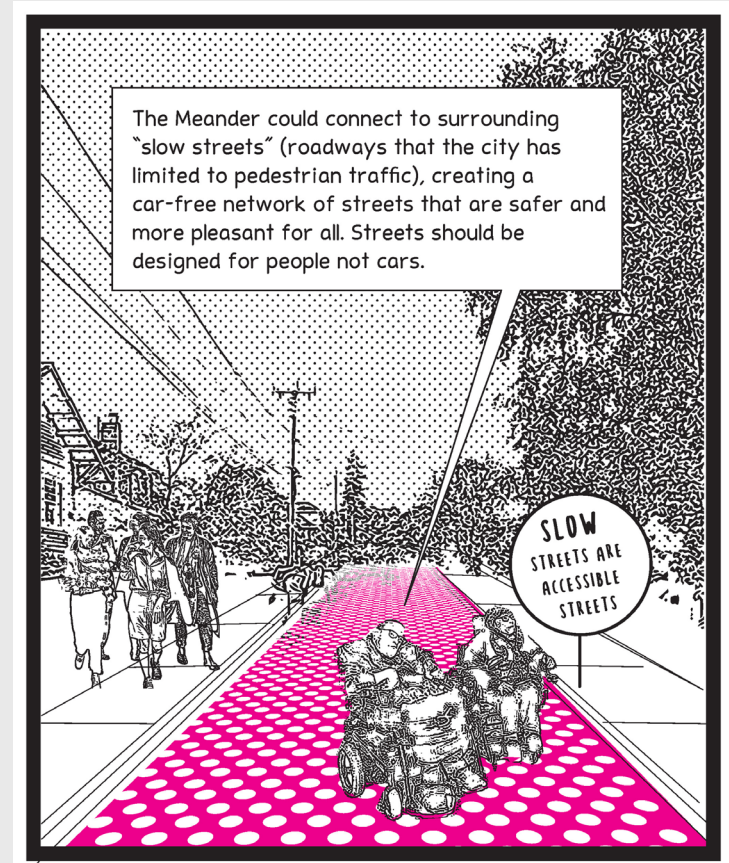
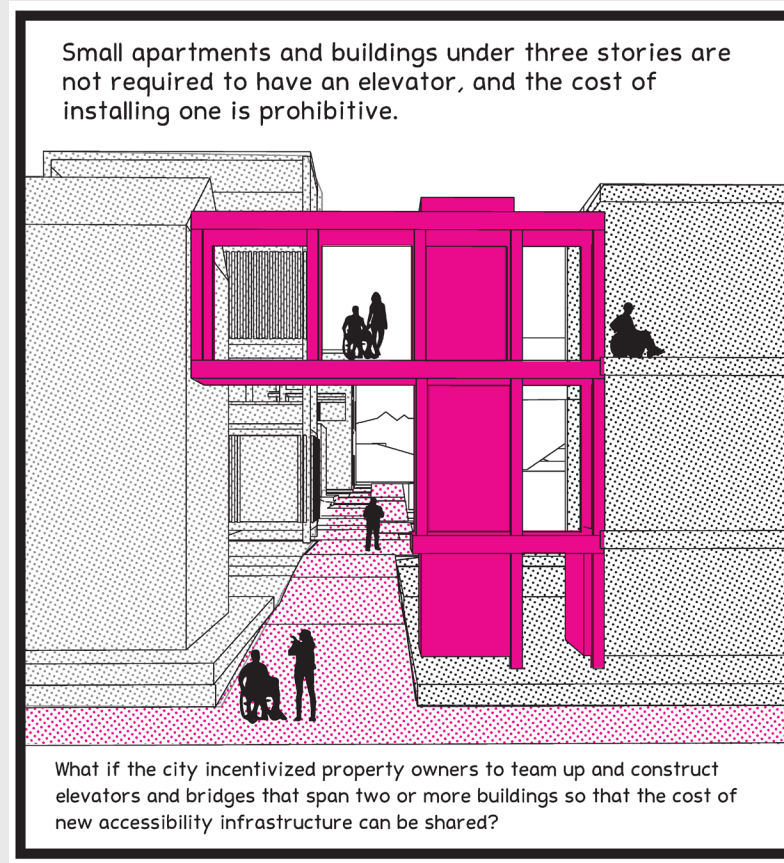
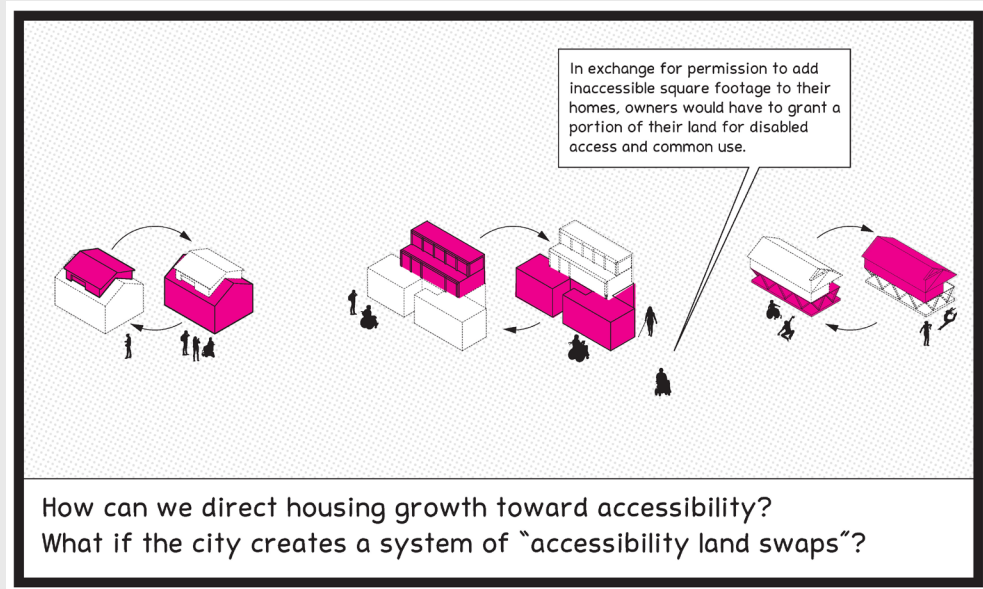
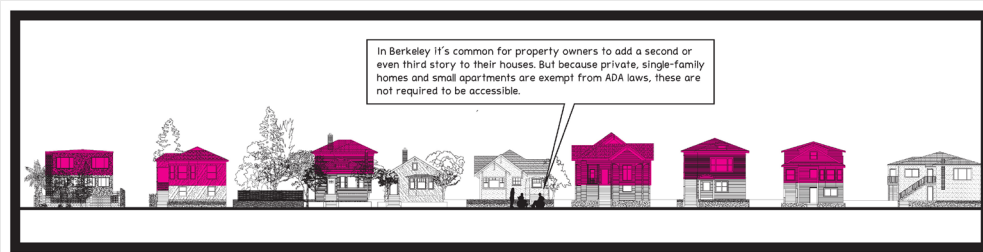
Outpost Office

Growing Together, Los Angeles, CA, Small Lots Big Impact competition

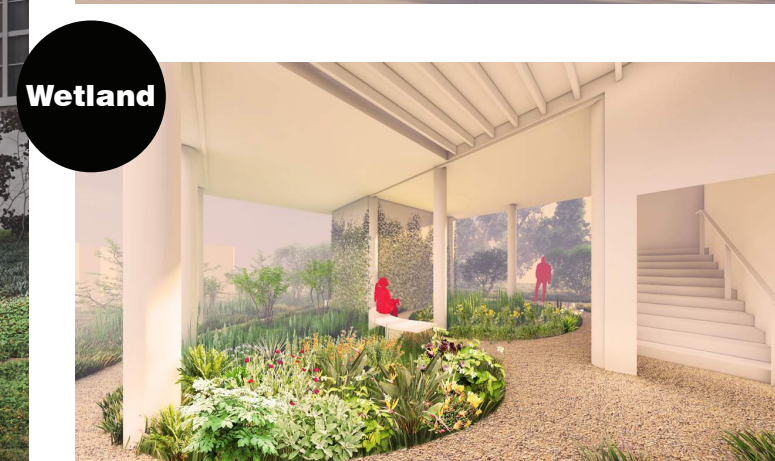
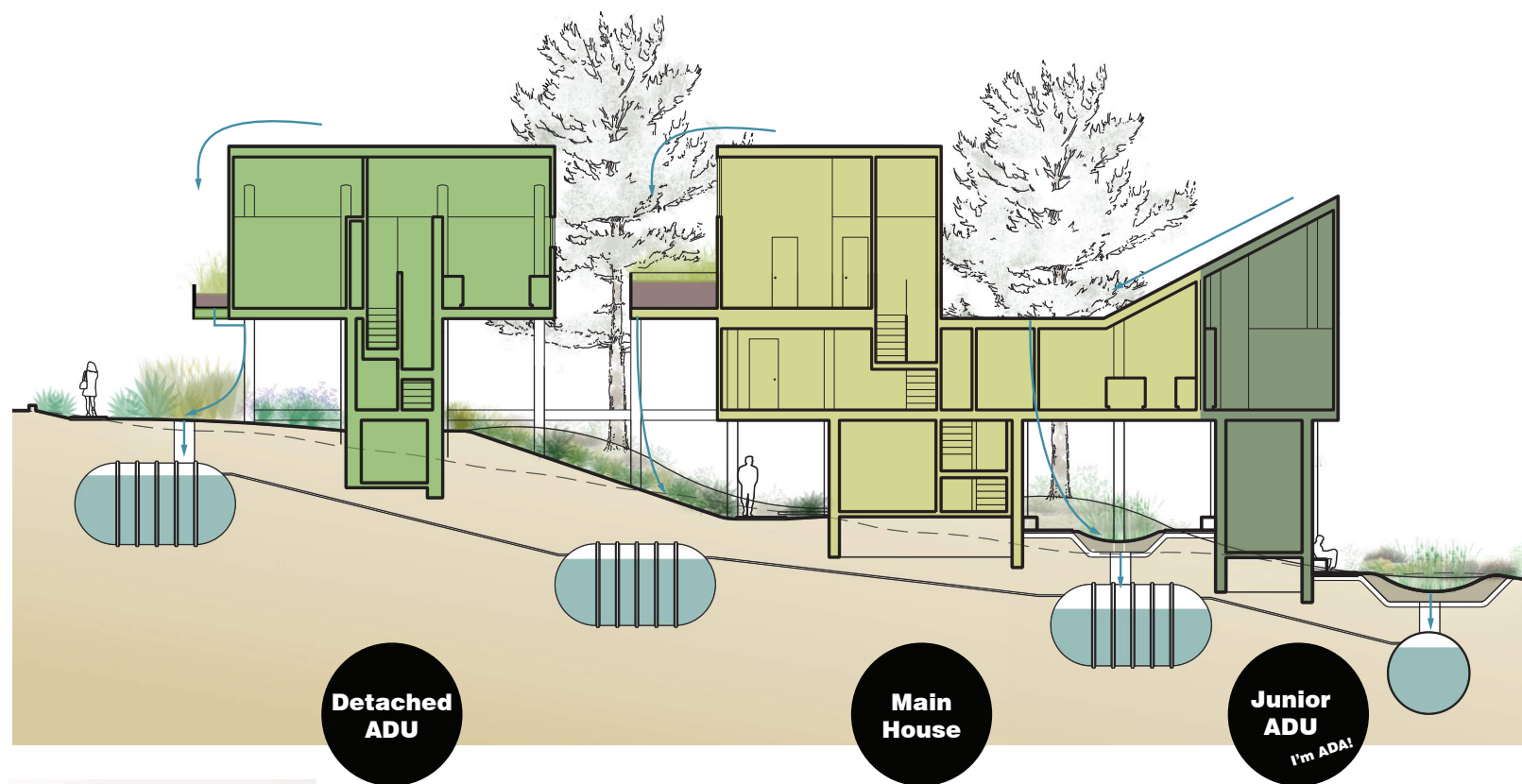


Melissa Gomes
Pocket Living, California College of the Arts, Janette K Kim, instructor

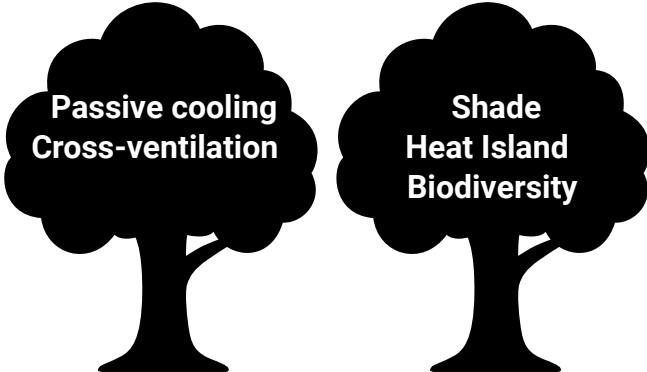
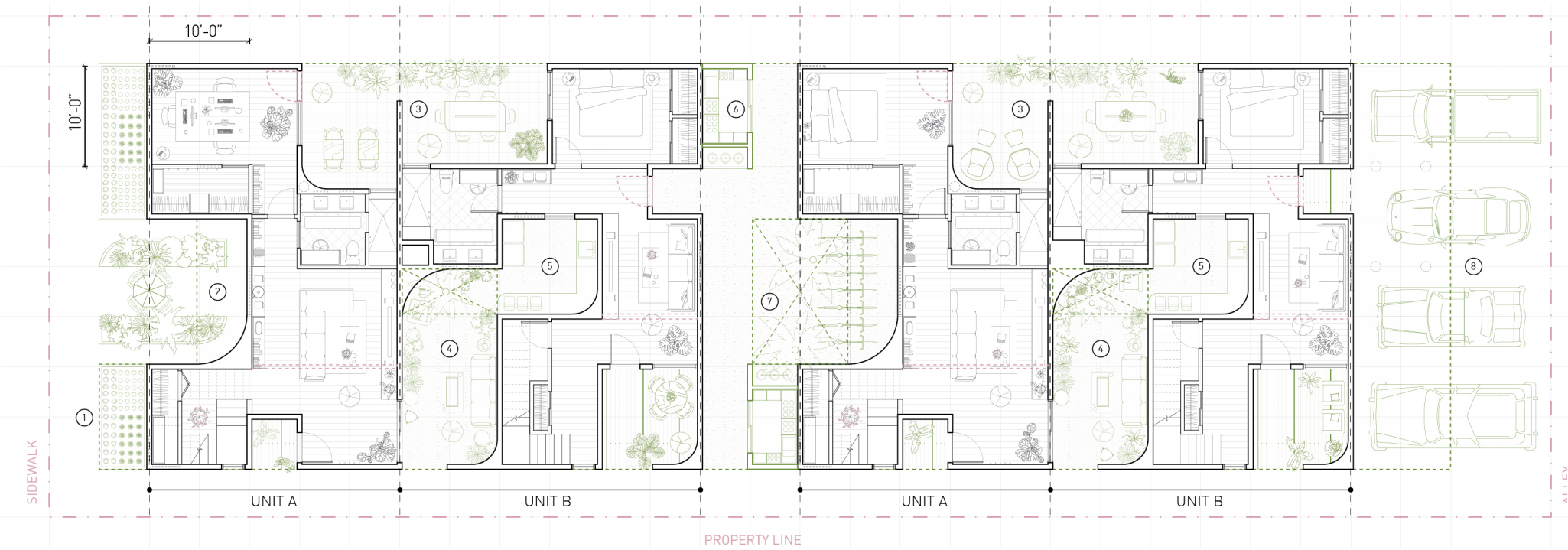


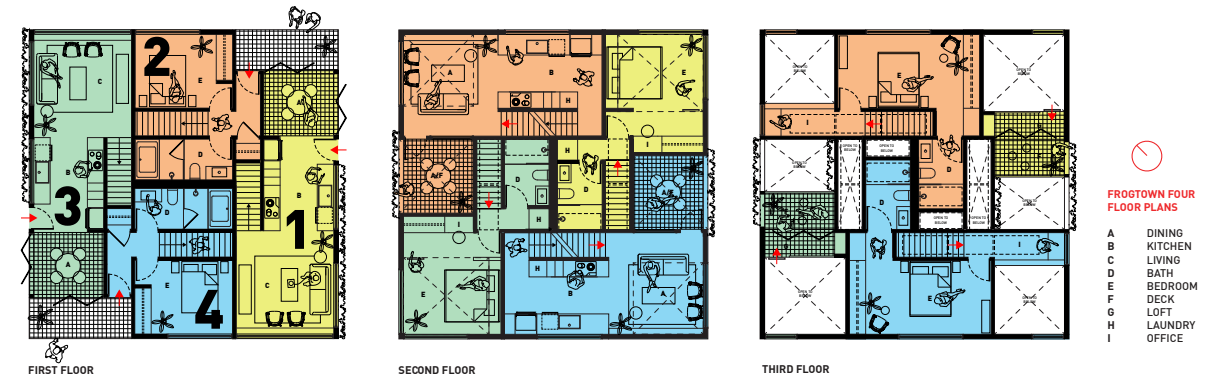
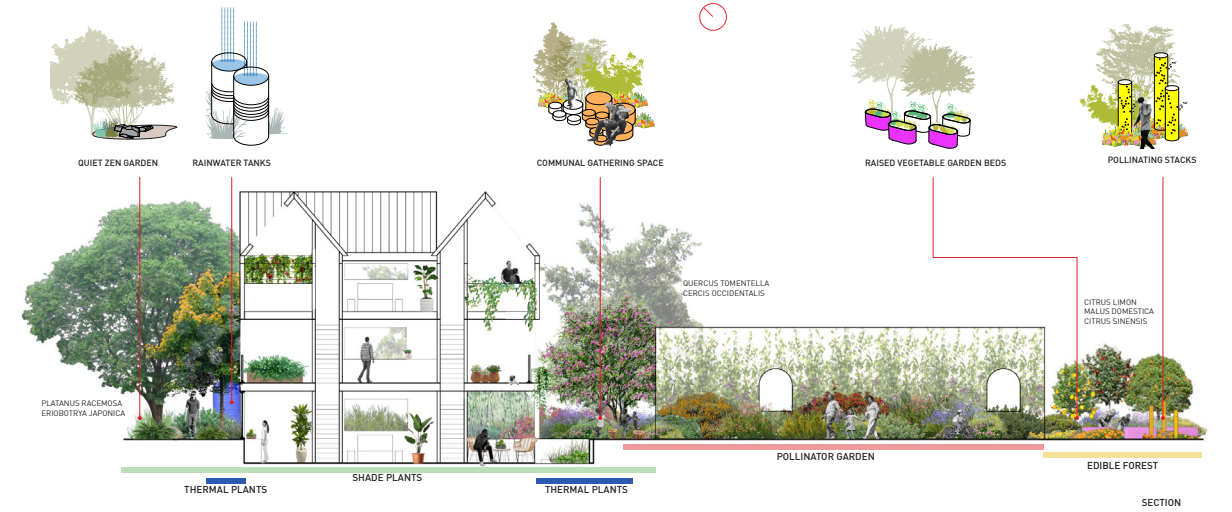
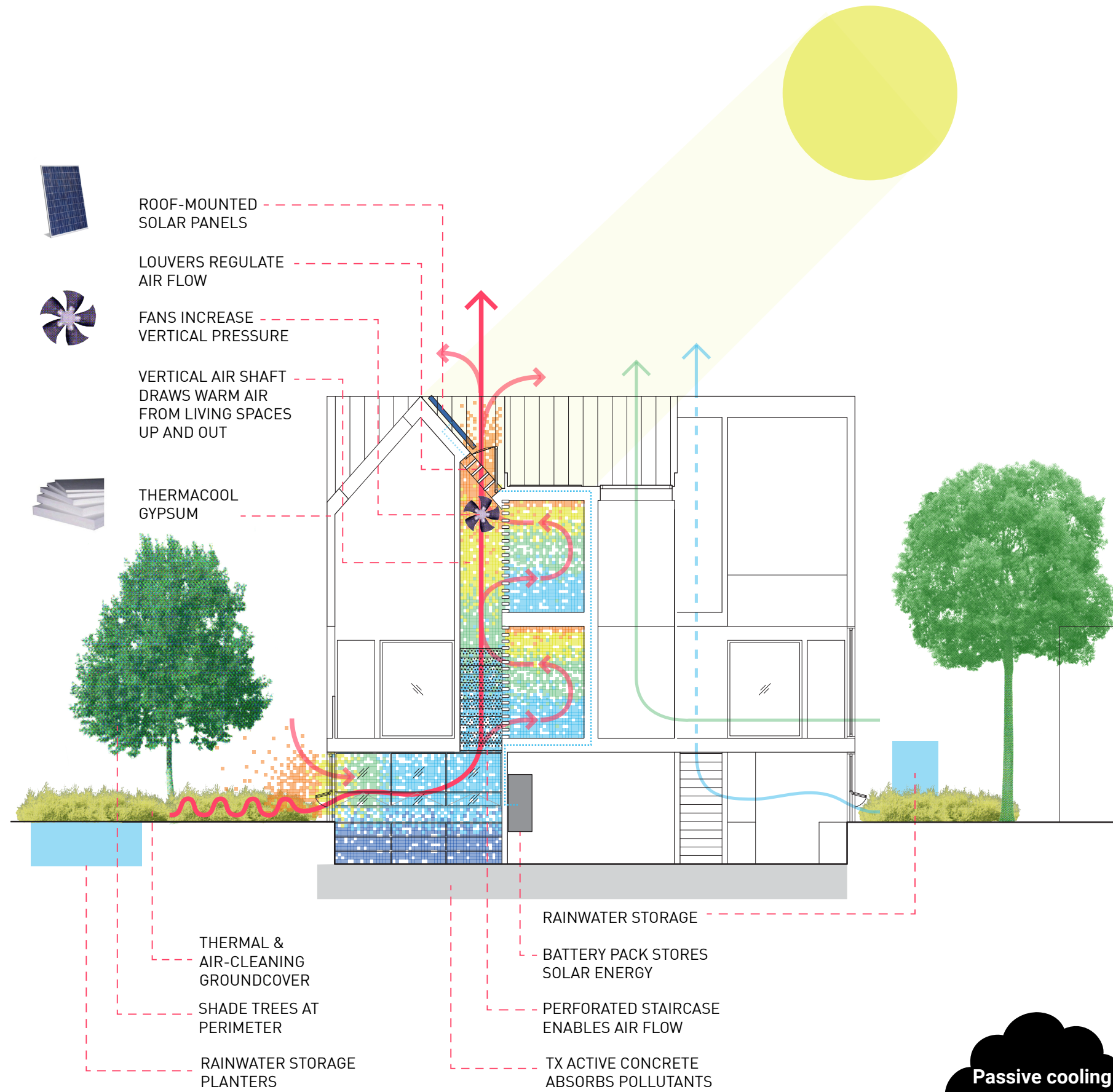


Cheng + Snyder, Javier Arbona, David Gissen, et al
Block Party (Berkeley, CA), for the Center for Architecture, NY



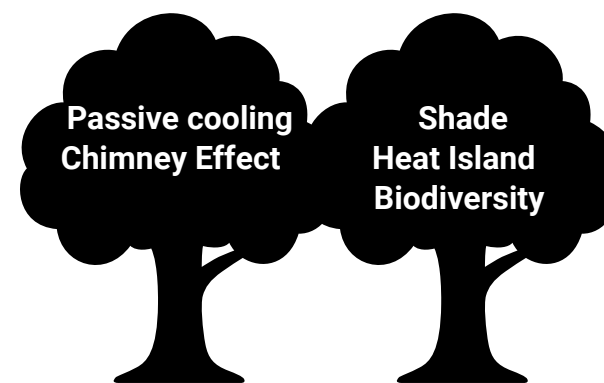
AMADOR
Thirsty City, Los Angeles, CA, Small Lots Big Impact competition

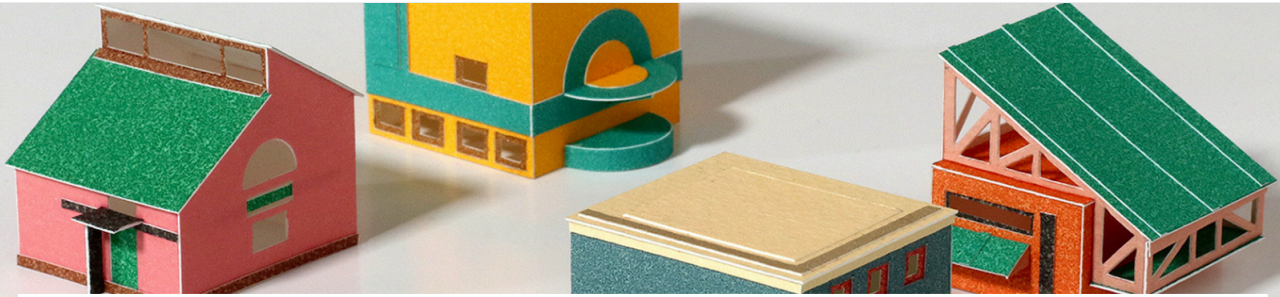




Bestor Architecture

Frogtown Four, Low Rise Housing Competition, Los Angeles, CA





The Low-Rise Design Lab

Laying the Groundwork for Missing Middle Housing

In 2020, the City of Los Angeles organized Low Rise: Housing Ideas for Los Angeles, a design challenge to explore sustainable, affordable, low-rise multi-family housing solutions in single-family zones. The design challenge helped foster creative design solutions, which marked the start of a multi-year effort to develop a program that will ultimately support greater housing opportunity, including ensuring that greater housing production is accompanied by high-quality design for households of all income levels.

Following the success of the Low-Rise Design Challenge, Los Angeles City Planning initiated the Low-Rise Design Lab, a program intended to promote new infill housing opportunities that expand access to both ownership and rental options, helping Angelenos find attainable paths to housing while reducing existing barriers. The Low-Rise Design Lab worked closely with urban design, architectural, and economic consultants to analyze physical and economic barriers to low-rise and missing middle housing, conduct massing studies of typical single-family conditions, and develop informational guidance documents to support the production of these housing types.

Within this context, "low-rise" refers to housing development at densities consistent with state law and housing typologies that complement single-family residential development within the City of Los Angeles, some of which also support development of "missing middle" housing.

The Low-Rise Design Lab was conceived to help the City analyze and improve development conditions for Low-Rise housing, and to help the City respond to changing State housing laws, like the The Housing Opportunity and More Efficiency (HOME) Act, also known as Senate Bills (SB 9) and SB 450). The passage of the Starter Home Revitalization Act (SB 1123 and SB 684) pushed the City to expand the program to include higher density developments in keeping with the legislation's accommodation of small lot subdivisions with up to ten units in single family zones. Since its inception in 2023, the Low-Rise Design Lab has resulted in several key milestones outlined below that have contributed toward and evolved into the current [Missing Middle LA Program](#).

WE ARE HERE



2020
Low-Rise Design
Challenge



2023
Low-Rise Design
Lab Established



2024
Advisory Panels
and Outreach



2026
Release of
Homeowner's



Current
[Missing Middle
LA Program](#)

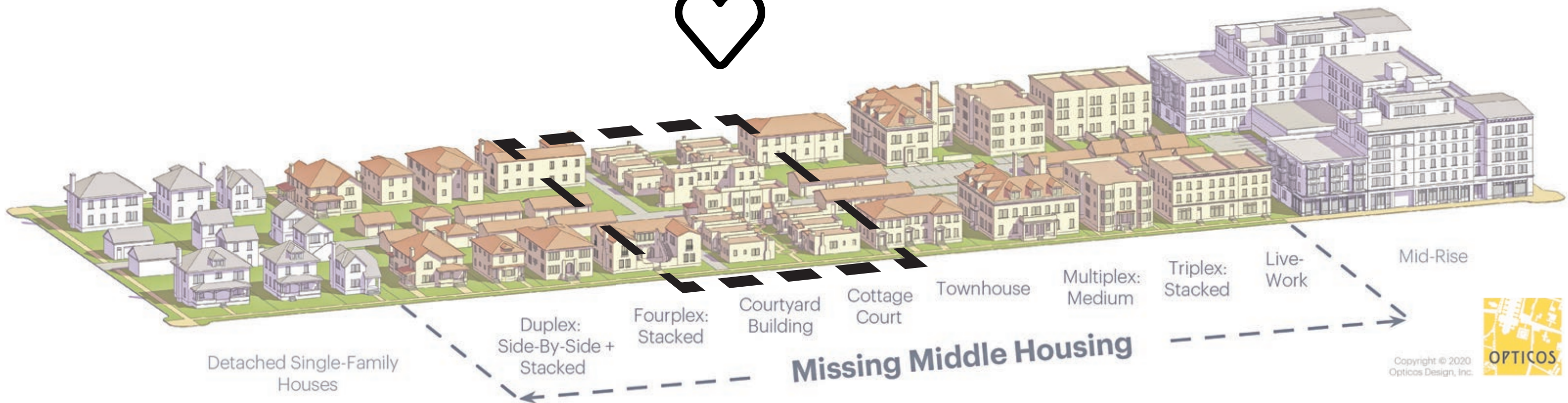
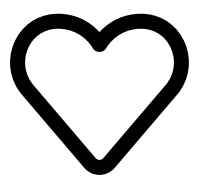
SMALL LOTS BIG IMPACTS

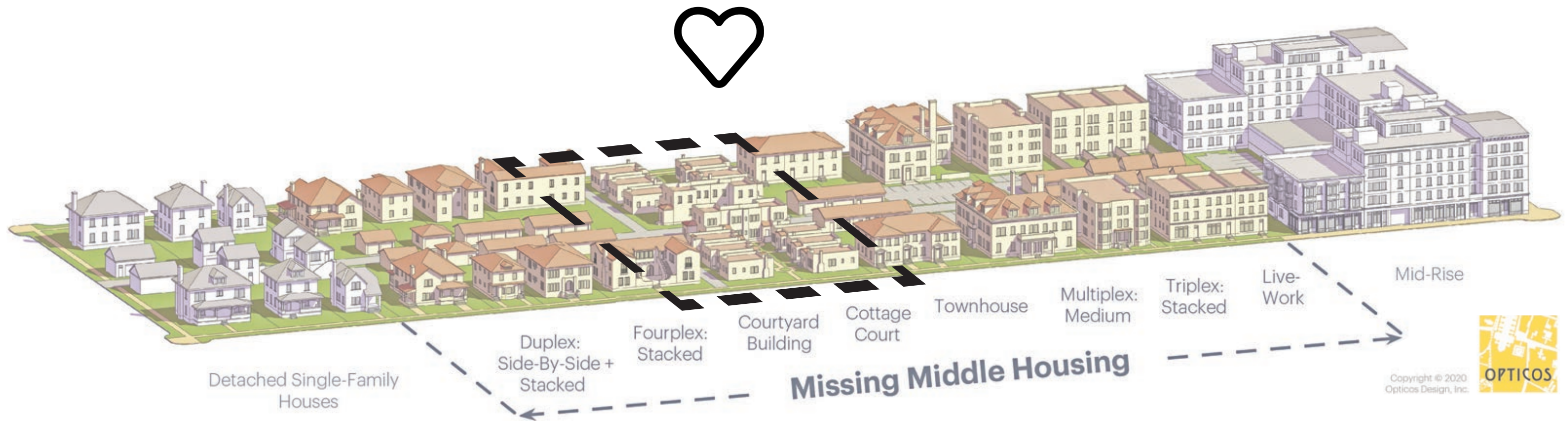


Paloma Dooley, *Radium Drive Lot Lines*, 2023. Courtesy of the Artist.

Submissions

The ***Small Lots, Big Impacts*** design competition generated a groundswell of interest and energy from all corners of the globe. We received **356** submissions from **36** different countries, with submissions coming from small, young firms and large





Why do we love cottage developments?

- Varied unit types and more compact homes can reflect the true **diversity** of households (such as elderly, single-parent, and chosen families).
- Shared gardens and amenities build **community** and combat loneliness while maintaining **independence** and privacy.
- Smaller homes, higher density, bundled infrastructure, and (some) greater economies of scale makes housing more **affordable**.
- Higher density enables **access** to stores, parks, schools.
- Variations within a lot or retrofits of existing buildings can create a **contextual** response to existing urban fabrics.
- Compact footprints and shared gardens can make homes more **sustainable**, energy efficient and biodiverse.