

MILITANCY TODAY IS A POSITIVE, CONSTRUCTIVE AND INNOVATIVE ACTIVITY. THIS IS THE FORM IN WHICH WE AND ALL THOSE WHO REVOLT AGAINST THE RULE OF CAPITAL RECOGNIZE OURSELVES AS MILITANTS TODAY. MILITANTS RESIST IMPERIAL COMMAND IN A CREATIVE WAY. IN OTHER WORDS, RESISTANCE IS LINKED IMMEDIATELY WITH A CONSTITUTIVE INVESTMENT IN THE BIOPOLITICAL REALM AND TO THE FORMATION OF COOPERATIVE APPARATUSES OF PRODUCTION AND COMMUNITY.

-MICHAEL HARDT, *EMPIRE* (2000)

WITHOUT [A] MATERIAL RESISTANCE, THE ORGANIZATION OF A PROJECT INEVITABLY REMAINS A PRISONER OF PURE MARKET COMPETITION AND OF THE NARROW RANGE ALLOWED BY THE RELATIVE OSCILLATIONS OF COMMUNICATION, WHICH SEEM TO HAVE EVER MORE RIGIDLY FIXED BOUNDARIES.

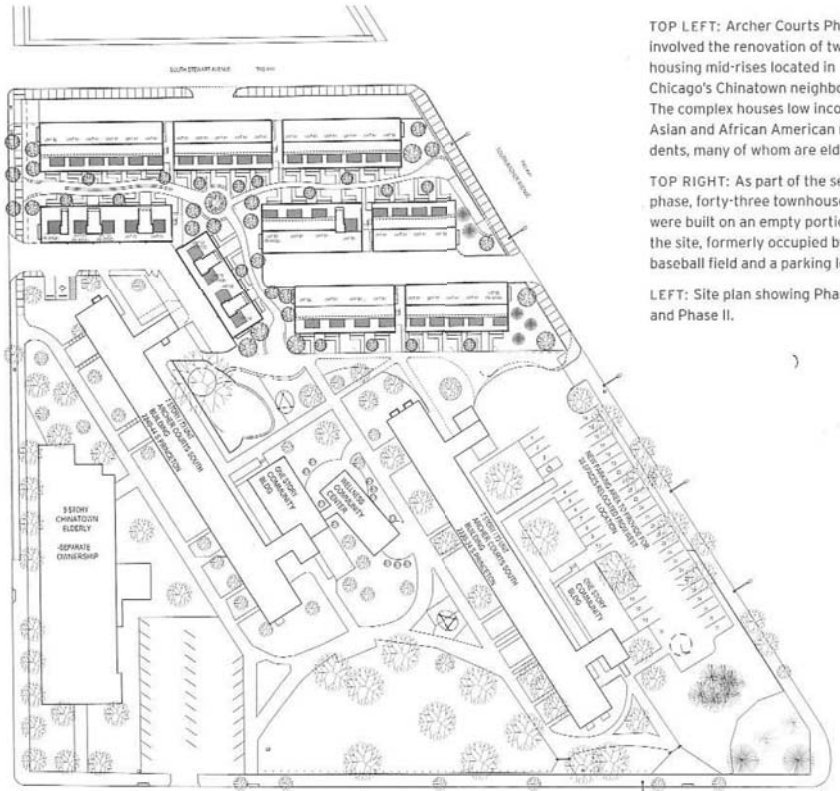
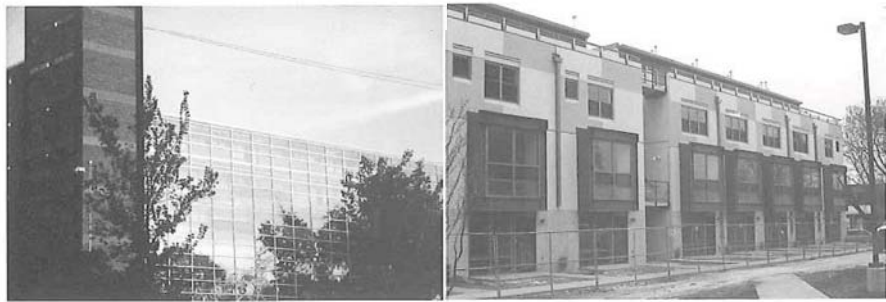
-VITTORIO GREGOTTI, *INSIDE ARCHITECTURE?* (1991)

ARCHITECTURE
SUBVERTING APPROPRIATING PURSUING REORGANIZING AFTERMATH
AFTER CAPITALISM

PRIVATE RENEWAL FOR PUBLIC HOUSING: ARCHER COURTS APARTMENTS, CHICAGO LONDON BONE BAKER ARCHITECTS

For the last decade the Chicago Housing Authority (CHA), one of the largest public housing agencies in the nation, has pursued a relentless policy of tearing down dilapidated public housing and replacing it with low-rise, mixed-income neighborhoods. In practice, the new developments have driven out poor tenants and replaced them with middle-income residents, exacerbating the already severe affordable housing shortage. Archer Courts, a public housing complex in Chicago's Chinatown district, sets itself apart from this recent CHA trend. In 2001, Archer Courts emerged from a comprehensive renovation of its existing buildings with its original tenants still in place. It is now in the second phase of a redevelopment plan that transformed not only the site but also its relationship to the neighborhood.

Archer Courts' reinvention was due to the initiative of a private developer, the Chicago Community Development Corporation (CCDC). In 1999, the CCDC bought Archer Courts from the CHA for \$650,000 and commissioned Chicago-based Landon Bone Baker Architects to undertake a complete renovation of the 147-unit complex. The \$6.5 million upgrade, financed through a combination of city bonds, tax exempt bonds, and tax credits, was estimated to be about half the cost of tearing down the existing buildings and erecting a new complex. After purchasing the buildings, the CCDC renewed the tenants' Section 8 contract, a federal rental assistance program that was due to expire, and pledged to maintain the affordable housing provision for a period of forty years. Housing preservation is not a new strategy for the CCDC. Founded in 1988, the for-profit organization has sought to save endangered affordable housing by buying privately owned apartments and extending their Section 8 contracts. To date, the CCDC has acquired nearly 2,000 units in the Chicago area.



TOP LEFT: Archer Courts Phase I involved the renovation of two housing mid-rises located in Chicago's Chinatown neighborhood. The complex houses low income Asian and African American residents, many of whom are elderly.

TOP RIGHT: As part of the second phase, forty-three townhouses were built on an empty portion of the site, formerly occupied by a baseball field and a parking lot.

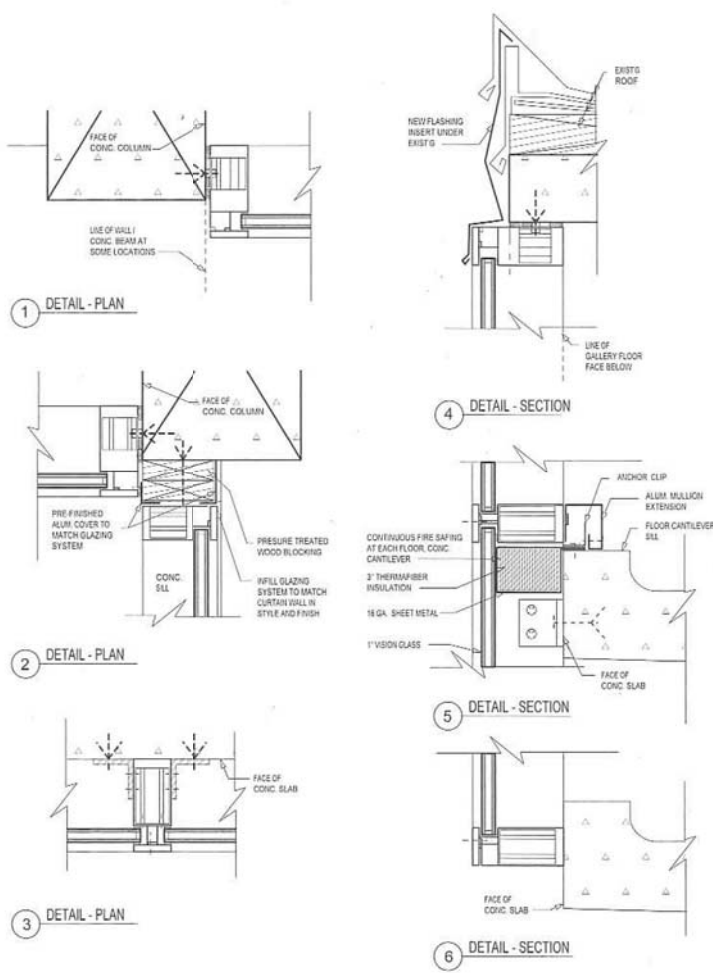
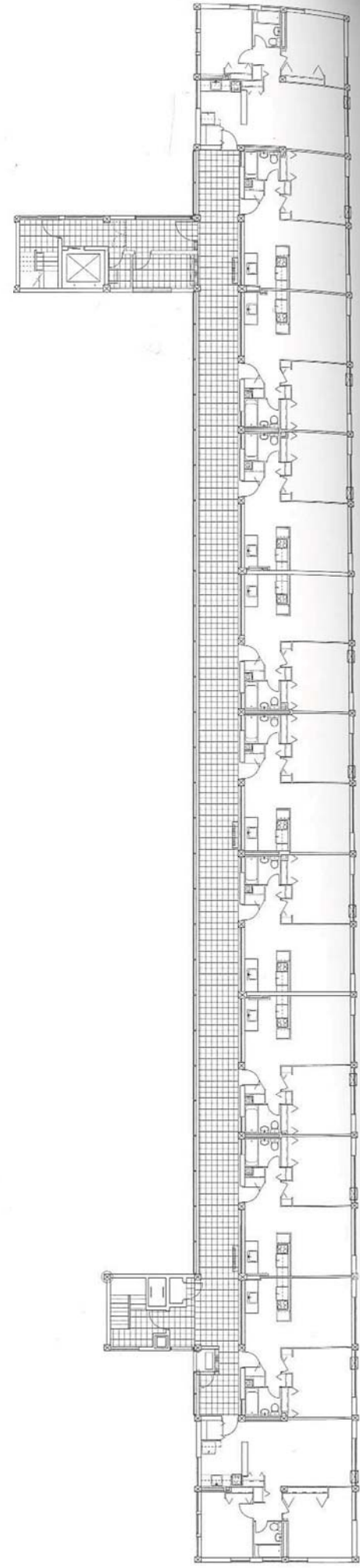
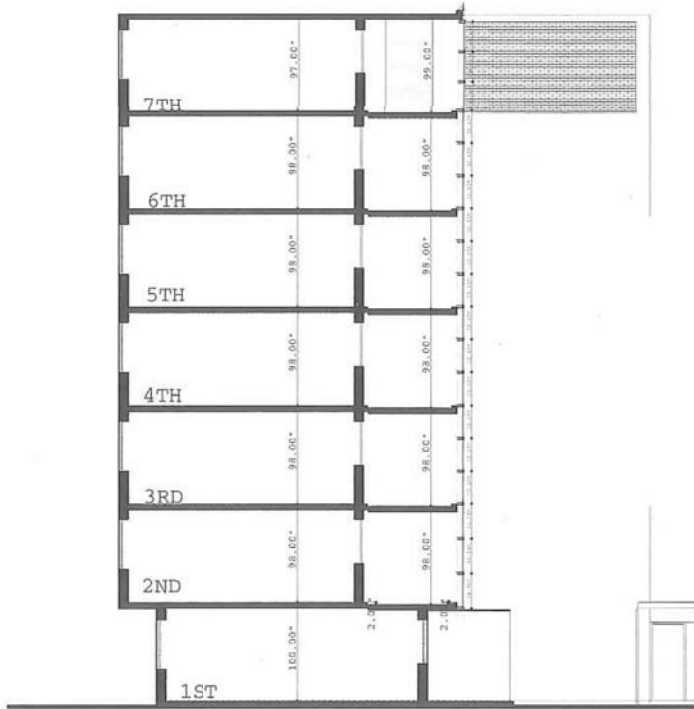
LEFT: Site plan showing Phase I and Phase II.

FACING PAGE TOP: As part of the renovation, the 225-foot long hallways received new flooring, new lighting, and a new heating and cooling system. In addition, the doors to the individual apartments were painted in primary colors. Yet the most impacting aspect of the renovation was the new curtain wall enclosure.

FACING PAGE BOTTOM: View of existing Archer Courts buildings (left), with a detail of the chain-link enclosures of the corridors. The new facade (right) has improved not only the residents' living conditions but also the image that the building projects to its neighbors.

RIGHT: Section of existing Archer Courts building (left) and typical floor plan (right). The seven-story building was originally planned for flexibility, as two adjacent one-bedroom units could become two one-room units with a shared kitchen and bath. At the base of the elevator and stair towers are shared laundry facilities.

BELOW: Details of the double glazed curtain wall.



1 DETAIL - PLAN

2 DETAIL - PLAN

3 DETAIL - PLAN

4 DETAIL - SECTION

5 DETAIL - SECTION

6 DETAIL - SECTION

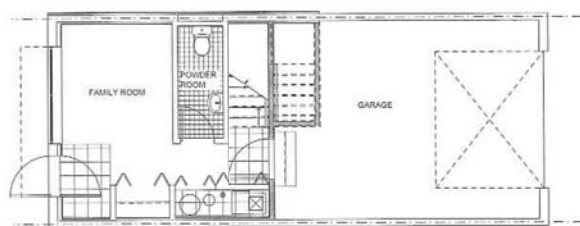
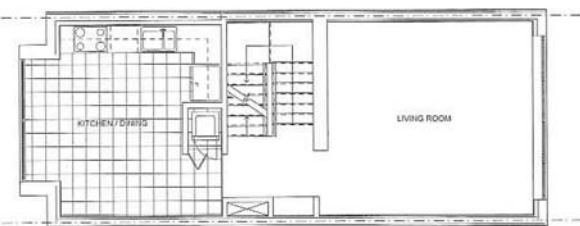
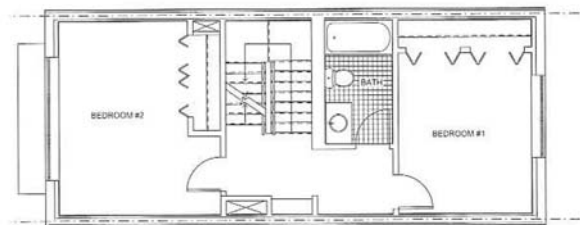
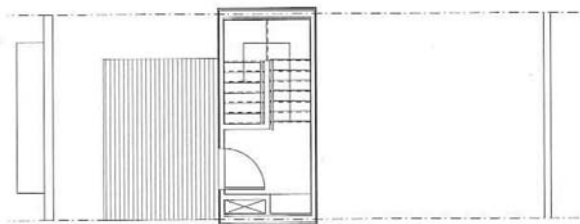




FACING PAGE: Time lapse photographs taken during the construction of the Archer Courts townhouses. The buildings consist of prefabricated panels that were assembled on site by crane. The precast concrete panels provide both structure and cladding. The use of prefabricated components was intended to facilitate the fast construction schedule of the units.

TOP: The older Archer Courts buildings are visible from the roof of the townhouses as visible the older Archer Courts buildings.

RIGHT: Typical floor plans of 15-foot-wide unit. Other unit types are 19-foot wide and 20-foot wide. In addition, there are accessible units of each type, as well as end unit types, which have an additional bay on the side of the second floor. Each three-story unit has a combined kitchen and dining space and two or three bedrooms, depending on the unit width.



Yet in the case of Archer Courts, the goal of the CCDC was not only the preservation but also the redevelopment of the property. After buying and renovating the existing buildings, the CCDC set out to build forty-three townhouses on an empty portion of the site previously occupied by a baseball field and a parking lot.

Built in 1951 by the Chicago Housing Authority to the design of local architect Everett Quinn, Archer Courts was part of a series of projects born out of the intersection of modern design principles and social policy. Characterized by superblocks that unified several city blocks, these projects contained high-rise housing slabs and in some cases mid to low-rise units set in open, green spaces. These configurations, which included open-air corridors called "sidewalks in the sky," sought to foster a new social and collective environment. However, over the years, due to the CHA's poor organization and maintenance, many of these projects deteriorated to unsafe and unhealthy conditions. When the CCDC bought Archer Courts in 1999, the extent of its physical and social neglect made it undesirable not only to inhabitants but also to the neighborhood.

Led by Peter Landon, principal of Landon Bone Baker Architects, the first phase of work focused on physical and infrastructural improvements to the existing Archer Courts buildings. The individual apartments received new windows, thru-wall air-conditioning units, kitchen cabinets, appliances, and closet doors. Large-scale building work included upgrades to the elevator system, security system, boilers, electrical service and domestic water risers. The exterior landscape and surrounding walkways were also renovated. Furthermore, a new 1500 sq ft center was added to the base of one of the slabs to house community events and services. The new building activates the existing open spaces and sets the tone for a planning strategy that will shape the second phase of development.

By far the most impacting component of the renovation was the replacement of the chain-link fencing of the corridors with a glazed curtain wall. By enclosing the hallways with an aluminum and glass skin, Landon radically altered both the exterior and the interior of the buildings. The curtain wall overlaps the edges of the floor slabs and unifies the façade with a taut reflective surface that expresses a new collective scale. On the interior, the composition of vision and translucent panels animates the 225-foot-long hallways. In Chicago's climate, the newly conditioned hallways are better suited to its residents' lingering and interacting than the original "sidewalks in the sky." The transformation of the public face of Archer Courts was not simply physical but went hand in hand with a series of organizational improvements. Working in

conjunction with the Archer Courts' Residents Organization, the CCDC set up a Resident Service Program to ensure the continued provision and maintenance of common facilities.

Scheduled for completion in the fall of 2003, the second phase of work involves the construction of 43 townhouses on the western portion of the site. When the CHA sold the two existing Archer Courts buildings, it retained ownership of the property. In the second phase of development, the CHA transferred the land occupied by the new apartments to the City of Chicago. In return, the Chicago Housing Authority received four units to rent as public housing. Coordinating the project on behalf of the new owner of the development (the City of Chicago), the CCDC plans to sell thirty-four townhouses at market rate, while reserving five for median income families. Marketed mainly to the Chinatown community, thirty-two units have been sold to date.

In the arrangement of units on the site, Landon emphasizes the creation of urban density and street-like spaces to complement the existing slab buildings and open spaces. Organized in four groups, the townhouses have a defined front and back, with the main entries facing shared pedestrian paths and the garage entrances along asphalted alleyways on the opposite side. The pedestrian areas tie into the exterior walkways of the older Archer Courts mid-rises.

The interior planning reflects a preoccupation with integrating the units with the site and the neighborhood. The large bay window of the dining/kitchen spaces and the glazed entryways to the family rooms on the ground level reinforce the relationship between the interior domestic space and the exterior common areas. The semi-private space of the continuous roof decks suggests a reworked version of the "sidewalk in the sky."

Archer Courts demonstrates that existing conditions can provide the foundation for the successful integration of public and market-rate housing. The renovation of Archer Courts has not only improved the living conditions of its original residents but has made possible the redevelopment of the property. At the same time, the presence of mixed income residents on the site has raised the quality and safety standards of the community as a whole. The project's uniqueness lies in the fact that privatization did not result in the loss of affordable housing—a fact that stands against the trend of large-scale housing demolition recently undertaken by the CHA in the name of revitalization. Archer Courts also serves as a provocative counterpoint to the recent Chicago Housing Competition, which took the removal of existing units as its premise. What can be hoped is that the CHA will understand that existing buildings represent an opportunity rather than an obstacle in the creation of mixed income developments. —IRINA VERONA



ARCHER COURTS PHASE I

PROJECT TEAM

Peter Landon FAIA, Jason Sachs, Steve Matz

CLIENT

Chicago Community Development Corporation

GENERAL CONTRACTOR

Burling Builders

ENGINEER

Gagarin, Farruggia, Gibisch, Reis, Inc. (Structural); Creative Systems & Associates (Mechanical); McKay Landscape Architects (Landscape)

DESIGN

June 1998-March 1999

CONSTRUCTION

October 1999-June 2001

AREA

127,596 sf

BUDGET

\$6.5 million

ARCHER COURTS PHASE II

PROJECT TEAM

Peter Landon FAIA, Catherine Baker AIA, Sasha Hopstock

CLIENT

Chicago Community Development Corporation with the City of Chicago

GENERAL CONTRACTOR

Burling Builders

ENGINEER

Gagarin, Farruggia, Gibisch, Reis, Inc. (Structural); HTH Mechanical Engineers (Mechanical); Spaceco, Inc. (Civil); McKay Landscape Architects (Landscape)

DESIGN

April 2000-August 2002

CONSTRUCTION

September 2002-August 2003

AREA

80,486 sf

BUDGET

\$8.6 million