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HUMAN INTERACTION IN RESIDENTIAL ENVIRONMENTS

by

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INTRODUCTION

The idea for this report was stimulated by two simultaneous activities: reading the book Vertical Ghetto,^{1*} and reviewing a student design which I had previously completed. The design was eventually to house between 250-300 low to moderate income families on approximately seven acres. The project was all hypothetical in nature. A parallel was developed between the book which dealt with the social ills² of a high-rise public housing project and the design project (see Appendix A). As a designer, I was trying to avoid promoting social ills portrayed in the book, reacting through the physical development of the design. Immediately I stereotyped high-rise public housing, as well as any other form of mass housing, as undesirable.

I am disturbed to realize now that as a designer, I had begun to suggest social dictates³ which I thought were best for the inhabitants of a newly designed environment!

*Denotes number of footnote located at end of each part.

Although I was only translating my thoughts on a hypothetical problem, into two-dimensional symbolization on paper, I wondered what would happen if this design were to become a reality. Would the spaces provided adequately fill the needs of the inhabitants? Upon what were my decisions based?

Since this was a student project, and therefore simply an exercise in my educational experience, I changed, by half, the density originally asked for in the program. I assumed that the density asked for on the particular site was inhumane. How could any architect allow people to be housed in such close proximity?

My design proposal (see Appendix A) included nine to ten single detached two story dwelling units per cluster, including private patio, laundry, mail at front door, and play and parking areas close to the unit. I hoped to be a 'humane' architect with the final design; that is, I had good intentions. My design decisions were shaped by emotions and my past life experience - being brought up in a white, middle-class society. This appears to be the same attitude, that is taken by many architects whose designs are based upon their private assumptions and standards.

The architect of today, as in the past, is the organizer of the elements found in our man-built environments both internal and external. He must be aware when designing a residential environment that it will be not only a complex