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## Places

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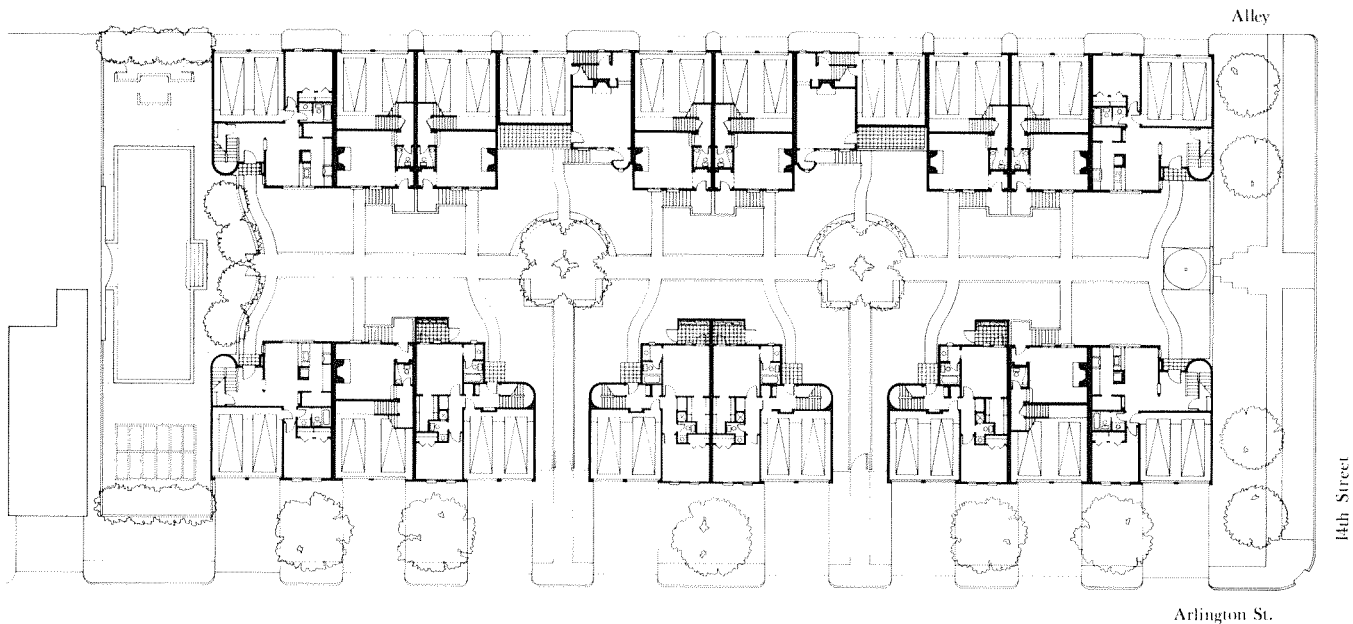
**Arlington Court**

In recent times, many suburban neighborhoods in close proximity to downtown Houston have been revitalized, becoming increasingly desirable for new housing. As the pressures on inner-city housing have increased with the cost of owning a home, multifamily housing in these neighborhoods has become a viable solution. Prior to the 1980s the pattern of housing in older suburban neighborhoods had been single-family homes and garden apartments. By the mid-1980s a number of infill townhouse projects were introduced to these neighborhoods. The designation “infill” refers to development that is literally filling in with housing of higher density between lots traditionally reserved for single-family dwellings. Usually between 1,500 and 2,200 square feet—one, two, or three bedrooms—the infill townhouse provides a less expensive alternative to the single-family house in the same neighborhood. The infill townhouse also provides an alternative to the trend of new suburban tract housing developments miles from the downtown.

It is a clear intent of the design to heighten the sense of space and individual character in what are essentially modest houses. The four different unit plans and the variety of interior spatial arrangements are direct responses to the differences in living patterns established by a community of single individuals, married couples, or retired “empty nester” couples. A sense of overall architectural cohesion is established



Photos by Paul Hester; plan by William F. Stern



by a uniform material palette of stucco, wood windows, and wood trim, along with the compositional repetition of architectural elements. Still the variety inherent in the different unit plans is expressed to both the adjoining streets and the park-like courtyard.

The site has been planned so that the individual townhouse unit is oriented toward a pedestrian courtyard which occupies 40 percent of the site. The automobile is accessed directly to each unit from Arlington Street on the east side and an alley to the west. Thus, the front door to Arlington Court is a gatehouse through which a visitor or resident enters, proceeding through the courtyard to the residences. The handling of 36 off-street parking spaces, while

reserving a sizable portion of the property as green space, was one of the considerable challenges of this project. The integration of parking into the unit makes the modern townhouse quite different from traditional eighteenth- and nineteenth-century townhouses.

Arlington Court expands the vocabulary of housing in established neighborhoods, increasing the density without disturbing the scale. It provides an affordable house for middle and upper-middle income groups close to the business and cultural centers of the city. The project was intended to set a pattern for future housing developments as the pressure for good urban housing increases.