FOUR HOUSING NARRATIVES TO ANCHOR AN ARTS DISTRICT

University of Arkansas Community Design Center

prepared for

The City of Fayetteville

NATIONAL ENDOWMENT FOR THE ARTS
A great nation deserves great art.

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Project Team

UACDC UNIVERSITY OF ARKANSAS COMMUNITY DESIGN CENTER

University of Arkansas Community Design Center
an outreach center of the Fay Jones School of Architecture
Stephen Luoni, Director
Jeffrey Huber, Assistant Director
Cory Amos, Project Designer
Meredith Hendricks, Project Designer
David Jimenez, Project Designer
Matthew Petty, Development and Research Associate
Zac Prange, Project Intern
Linda Komlos, Administrative Analyst

Fay Jones School of Architecture
Ethel Goodstein-Murphree, Interim Dean
Marlon Blackwell, Department of Architecture Head

Department of Architecture Students
Leon Esmaeel, Ethan Fowler, Joesph Hamm, Shannon Hawkins, Kristin Hughes, Tyler Jones, John Noonan, Jason Pieper, Melissa Roberson, Jared Skinner, Caleb Tyson

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To realize its goals for the downtown, the City must assume greater coordinating and oversight functions to catalyze the market.

The cultural arts district adopted in 2007 lacks identity! So we received two NEA* grants to address it.

*National Endowment for the Arts (NEA)

PHOTO COURTESY OF MODUS STUDIO + SPECIALIZED REAL ESTATE

PHOTO COURTESY OF MODUS STUDIO + SPECIALIZED REAL ESTATE

A $20 million dollar renovation and expansion of the Walton Arts Center is scheduled for completion in 2016.

PHOTO COURTESY OF BOORA ARCHITECTS

The new Spring Street Municipal Parking Deck is a $6 million investment and may have multi-family liner lofts developed along School Avenue.

PHOTO COURTESY OF AFHJ ARCHITECTS

Street improvements and design should accommodate festivals, the largest of which is Bikes, Blues, and BBQ.

If downtown is to serve as a cultural arts hub a surface parking lot is neither the highest nor best use of this land.
site

RAZORBACK TRANSIT

The City must assume a coordinating role in the real estate market to realize its goals for downtown.

recommended reading...

The Metropolitan Revolution: How Cities and Metros Are Fixing Our Broken Politics and Fragile Economy, Bruce Kratz and Jennifer Bradley
If Mayors Ruled the World: Dysfunctional Nations, Rising Cities, Benjamin Barber
The Hidden Potential of Sustainable Neighborhoods: Lessons from Low-Carbon Communities, Harrison Fraker
Thoughts on Building Strong Towns, Volume 1, Charles Marohn
Walkable City: How Downtown Can Save America, One Step at a Time, Jeff Speck
Reshaping Metropolitan America: Development Trends and Opportunities to 2030, Arthur Nelson

Executive Summary

Purpose: Housing that Regenerates Urban Context

University of Arkansas Community Design Center (UACDC), in collaboration with local cultural institutions, was awarded federal funding to develop an anchor for the emerging arts district in Downtown Fayetteville. The project lies at the center of the cultural hub for the 500,000-person region, but its physical environment is fragmented by publicly-owned surface parking lots and oversized streets. High traffic speeds inappropriate in a downtown setting dominate the patron experience. Infill development, particularly the supply of urban housing, has not kept pace with the demand for downtown living. The project's four-acre general focus area has been included in the city's designated cultural arts district since its creation four years ago, but development of the district has been characterized by ad hoc projects. No overarching vision guides the district.

To reorient downtown development interests towards an explicit cultural purpose, UACDC developed plans for a walkable mixed-use, mixed-income housing complex (which includes subsidized live-work units for artists). The proposed schemes include a planned retrofit of West Avenue as an arts-focused complete street adjoining Walton Arts Center (WAC). The goal is to create a district anchor to complement the forthcoming renovation of WAC, $20 million expansion of the Fayetteville Public Library, and $6+ million construction, as well as the construction of an adjacent mixed-use municipal parking structure. The challenge is to overcome the local development community's tendency to meet housing demand through the application of suburban solutions in the development of downtown. The study's objective is to establish an urban

annual tax yield per acre by land use Sarasota County, Florida Study

When factoring the cost of public safety services, mixed-use downtown development produces more than seven times the tax revenue of suburban real estate products per acre.

vision and pro forma development standards by which public property owners and their economic development team can conduct an effective developer selection process for the project site.

Program: Between Lean Urbanism and Capital-Intensive Urbanism

UACDC collectively prepared four housing formats with increasing levels of urban services and densities. In each approach, the 2.8-acre site, a surface parking lot presently serving WAC, and other downtown patrons is programed as multifamily housing at a minimum 15 units per acre with attendant art and retail functions. Maintaining the capacity of the site to host events is also considered, as the surface lot and adjoining West Avenue currently function as the secured stage grounds for Fayetteville's annual Bike, Blues & BBQ Motorcycle Rally, the nation's largest charity bike event, as well as various annual arts and community festivals (e.g., Artosphere, a six-week program of outdoor community art events) and parades. Two of the four housing solutions incorporate accommodations for the motorcycle rally's staged performances into their open space systems.

UACDC's approach is framed by consideration for the small town context and its population of 75,000 who are primarily familiar with suburban formats—even in downtown contexts. This approach and UACDC's advocacy for mixed-use urban solutions acknowledges current market challenges related to financing, return on investment in structured parking, vertical mixed-use configurations, elevator expenses, and non-incremental development templates. Three of the four options adhere to lean urbanism tenets, employing common-sense techniques that reduce regulatory hurdles and compliance challenges. These are accompanied by a capital-intensive high-density option that optimizes vertical mixed-use integration through sophisticated stacking and conveyance technologies. The study provides decision-makers with a full range of appropriate urban options responsive to various levels of funding and political wills.

Each format coordinates sequencing among public and private investments. Public investments include the retrofit of West Avenue and the adjacent pocket park, incorporation of the popular regional bike trail adjoining the west edge of site, preservation of the site's legacy groundwater springs and landscape, public parking, and WAC renovations. Private building programs include housing, an art gallery, and commercial/office functions. Development formats are componentized to accommodate

We have just begun to scratch the surface of downtown's infill potential.

phased participation by multiple participants, and various housing typologies to serve multiple markets. Housing is conceived as a catalyst for repairing Fayetteville's urban fabric and regeneration of the downtown context.

Four Housing Narratives

1. In the **Laminated Approach** alternate parallel bands of public space and housing rows ensure high-quality, socially active frontage for all housing units. The proposal features a block-long *allee* with courtyards, patios, and public recreation areas for residents. (see page 36)

2. In an attempt to reimagine the low-density development familiar to most people, the **Pixelated Approach** creates micro-scale housing pockets and open spaces. West Avenue is reformatted into a boulevard providing a stately setting for the arts district and new urban housing. (see page 46)

3. The **Anchor Approach** accommodates festivals with a central town plaza, projecting a strong civic identity around which mixed-use housing and commercial functions are arranged. The town plaza provides much needed public assembly space commensurate with the growing density of the downtown arts district. (see page 56)

4. The most ambitious scheme, the **Mountain Approach** stacks housing into dramatic terraced formations, providing the district and the region with a powerful new architectural icon that complements the Walton Arts Center's renovated campus. Terraced housing provides the city with an unrivaled supply of premium urban housing that capitalizes on its proximity to downtown amenities. (see page 66)

Shaping Public Policy that Leads to Urbanism

To realize its goals for the downtown, the City must assume greater coordinating and oversight functions to catalyze the market. Notwithstanding the site's location in the heart of downtown, its Walk Score is only 80; pointing to an underutilization of downtown's development potential due to ad hoc land use and automobile-dominant development. Since public agencies will control development of this site, the four approaches collectively shape public policy, incentives, and expectations for developing mixed-use urban housing in a community otherwise dominated by suburban residential products. Rated from easy to ambitious, each of the four frameworks integrates new public and semi-private open space, parking, streetscapes, and multi-family housing in tandem with renovations to the adjacent performing arts center.

60 units / acre

32 units / acre

20 units / acre

10 units / acre

24 units / acre

30 units / acre

17 units / acre

30 units / acre

1. Laminated Approach: A midblock *allee* connects townhouses on West Avenue with artists live-work units and surface parking is treated as a garden.

2. Pixelated Approach:
The *mews* walkway connects podium parking, walk-ups, and patio housing—all flanked by public art.

3. Anchor Approach:

A plaza can be designed to accommodate downtown events, such as the nation's largest charitable bike rally—Bikes, Blues, & BBQ.

4. Mountain Approach:

Terraced units atop a parking hall provide city views while a public Art Loop connects Walton Arts Center with the regional trail system.

1. Laminated Approach

Units: 51 **Parking Stalls:** 100 = 84 on-site + 16 on-street

- Surface parking only without the need for costly structured parking.
- Provides the greatest range of housing types within conventional construction systems and low-rise residential formats.
- This is the easiest and least costly scheme to implement since it involves only walk-up residential units (no elevators).
- Real estate products familiar to the local development community.
- Parking onsite only serves housing.

2. Pixelated Approach

Units: 68 **Parking Stalls:** 171 = 168 on-site + 3 on-street

- Creates micro-scale housing pockets and open spaces akin to low-density development familiar to most people.
- Provides highly networked public and semi-public open space system.
- Facilitates a village-like individuation of housing clusters.
- Structured parking is developed as a landscape with recreational amenities and social gathering spaces on top the roof level.
- Units above the parking garage are served by an elevator in addition to stairs.
- Provides some surplus parking onsite for arts district functions.

3. Anchor Approach

Units: 72 **Parking Stalls:** 200 = 194 on-site + 6 on-street

- Provides town plaza to accommodate large festivals, such as Bikes, Blues, and BBQ.
- The mid-rise development solution is a highly efficient use of valuable downtown land.
- Most units will be served by elevators in addition to stairs.
- Provides large amount of surplus parking onsite for arts district functions.

4. Mountain Approach

Units: 84 **Parking Stalls:** 291 = 275 on-site + 16 on-street

- Stacks housing into dramatic terraced formations.
- At 29 units per acre, the approach provides the highest residential density
- Higher construction costs involved with the terracing of building
- Most units will be served by elevators in addition to stairs.
- The Parking Hall provides the city with an exemplary parking structure that replaces the same amount of parking that currently exists onsite.
- Provides the most commercial space for retail, galleries, and restaurants of the four approaches.

site

University of Arkansas
Cultural Arts District Boundary Designation
Site
Walton Arts Center
Cultural Arts District Core
Downtown Square
Fayetteville Public Library
0
250'
500'

PHOTO COURTESY OF MODUS STUDIO + SPECIALIZED REAL ESTATE

Site Development Challenges

Challenge 1: **Festival Grounds** Will we maintain accommodations for Fayetteville's annual Bike, Blues & BBQ Motorcycle Rally—attendance now estimated to be 400,000?

Challenge 2: **Surface Parking** How might event parking be accommodated without surface lots—an obstacle to creating a livable urban environment?

Challenge 3: **Auto-Dominated Street** How might West Avenue serve an expanded arts and residential district as an arts-focused complete street design?

Challenge 4: **Springs** How do we incorporate the groundwater springs in the streetscape system?

Challenge 5: **Walton Arts Center Upgrades** How might we leverage the scheduled additions and improvements to the Walton Arts Center?

PHOTO COURTESY OF MODUS STUDIO + SPECIALIZED REAL ESTATE

Notwithstanding the site's location in the heart of downtown, its Walk Score is only 80 (great walkablity would have a score of 90 or higher); pointing to an underutilization of downtown's development potential due to poor land use and automobile-dominant development.

1 LAMINATED APPROACH

Units: 51 at 17 units/acre **Parking Stalls:** 100 = 84 **on-site** + 16 **on-street**

Laminated Approach alternates parallel bands of public space and housing rows to ensure high-quality urban landscape frontage for all housing units. The proposal features a block-long allee with courtyards, patios, and public recreation areas for residents.

The only approach of the four that relies solely on surface parking without the need for costly structured parking.

Provides the greatest range of housing types and residential environments within conventional construction systems and low-rise residential formats. The three-story townhouses on West Avenue provide an elegant backdrop to the Walton Arts Center.

This is the easiest and least costly scheme to implement since it involves only walk-up residential units (no elevators) and real estate products familiar to the local development community.

The open space system features an ***allee*** with courtyards, patios and recreational facilities that provide areas for public art and artists to work while still accommodating on-site parking.

Here's an example of a great urban *allee*.

West Avenue becomes a tree-lined street with an elegant backdrop of townhouses to complement the Walton Arts Center and accommodate smaller festival events.

West Avenue as a festival street.

1. townhouses
2. gallery, office, and retail
3. live-work housing
4. patio houses
5. parking *allee* and artist walk
6. courtyard housing
7. existing walton arts center
8. existing bike trail
9. existing pocket park
10. existing spring
11. entry court
12. courtyard playscape

0 50' 100'

West Avenue (East) Elevation

0 50' 100'

Patio and
live-work
housing fronting
the *allée*
extend
interior space
where artists
can rehearse,
produce, or sell.

2 PIXELATED APPROACH

Units: 68 at 23 units/acre **Parking Stalls:** 171 = 168 **on-site** + 3 **on-street**

Pixelated Approach creates micro-scale housing pockets and open spaces akin to low-density development familiar to most people. West Avenue is reformatted into a boulevard providing a stately setting for the arts district and new urban housing.

The approach proposes a highly networked public and semi-public open space system that amplifies connectivity among urban functions and land uses. The open space network's mosaic of outdoor rooms adds value to the housing, and attracts a greater level of pedestrian intensity to the arts district.

The approach facilitates a village-like individuation of housing clusters, avoiding the inclination to maximize real estate value by developing one large homogeneous structure on the site.

Structured parking is developed as a landscape with recreational amenities and social gathering spaces on top the roof level. Units above the parking garage are served by an elevator in addition to stairs.

Example of mews housing in Boston.

Look what they did in Denver!

The retail court provides intimate settings for art, dining, and walk-ups.

Courts provide transition between housing and a busy main street.

West Avenue is transformed into a boulevard artscape that provides amenities for festivals and housing.

West Avenue as a festival street.

1. west boulevard artscape
2. gallery/cafe
3. retail court
4. live-work housing
5. parking podium/art platform
6. distributed mews and courts
7. walk-ups and flats
8. existing walton arts center
9. existing bike trail
10. existing pocket park
11. existing spring

0 50' 100'

Mews

West Avenue Artscape Boulevard

West Avenue (East) Elevation

0 45' 90'

The connected mews courts link parking and housing—all flanked with public amenities.

3

ANCHOR APPROACH

Units: 67 at 23 units/acre **Parking Stalls:** 200 = 194 **on-site** + 6 **on-street**

Anchor Approach provides a central town plaza to accommodate festivals, projecting a strong civic identity around which mixed-use housing and commercial functions are arranged. The town plaza provides much needed public assembly space commensurate with the growing density of the downtown arts district.

The only approach of the four that maintains accommodation for the city's annual Bikes, Blues & BBQ Motorcycle Rally—the nation's second largest such festival—on site.

Provides the most structured parking for arts district functions of the four approaches in addition to spaces required for residences.

The mid-rise development solution is a highly efficient use of valuable downtown land while providing extensive public space that connects with the Walton Arts Center facilities across the street. Most units will be served by elevators in addition to stairs.

Here's an example of a great shared space in Eugene, Oregon!

West Avenue townhouses and town plaza mid-rises offer a variety of frontage conditions.

West Avenue as a festival street.

1. gallery at ground level
2. retail at ground level
3. cafe and parking deck
4. town plaza
5. courtyard housing
6. townhouses
7. midrise housing
8. existing Walton Arts Center
9. redirected bike trail
10. existing pocket park
11. existing spring

0 50' 100'

West Avenue (East) Elevation

0 45' 90'

Episodic interventions in the town plaza form an ambulatory around a larger plaza space.

4 MOUNTAIN APPROACH

Units: 84 at 29 units/acre **Parking Stalls:** 291 = 275 **on-site** + 16 **on-street**

Mountain Approach stacks housing into dramatic terraced formations, providing the downtown arts district and the region with a powerful new architectural icon that complements the Walton Arts Center. Terraced housing provides the city with an unrivaled supply of premium urban housing that capitalizes on its proximity to the Walton Arts Center.

At 29 units per acre, the approach provides the highest residential density, which is helpful in absorbing the higher construction costs involved with the terracing of building levels. Most units will be served by elevators in addition to stairs.

The scheme's unique Parking Hall provides the city with an exemplary parking structure that functions as an urban room connecting the bike trail with new retail shopping on Dickson Street and West Avenue.

The approach provides the most commercial space for retail, galleries, and restaurants of the four approaches. The West Avenue streetscape proposes the most intimate and detailed connections to the Walton Arts Center grounds and park across the street.

Terraced Housing Units provide a premium urban housing stock that capitalizes on its proximity to the Walton Arts Center.
The Mountain Approach provides mixed uses giving West Avenue the most **retail, gallery, and restaurant space.**
Artist Live-Work Studios front West Avenue at the ground level.
The Parking Hall provides the city with an exemplary parking structure that functions as an urban room.
1
2
3
An **Art Loop** connects the regional trail system, Parking Hall, Nadine Baum Art Studios, and Walton Arts Center through an arts focused public realm.

1

3

2
A new architectural icon complements the Walton Arts Center while completing the gateway to the arts district.

West Avenue is transformed into a series of rooms where housing completes and the public realm around the Walton Arts Center.

West Avenue as a festival street.

1. *Art Loop*
2. gallery and cafe at ground level
3. retail at ground level
4. live-work housing along West Ave.
5. terraced housing
6. event plaza
7. existing Walton Arts Center
8. existing bike trail
9. existing pocket park
10. existing spring

0 50' 100'

West Avenue (East) Elevation

0 45' 90'

The Art Loop provides galleries, retail, and restaurants along West Avenue for pre and post show gatherings at the Walton Arts Center.

Regional trail, parking hall, and Walton Arts Center are connected through an arts focused public realm.

These recommendations are intended to catalyze the maturation of an arts district anchored by Walton Arts Center and downtown housing constructed on city property.

Recommendations

While setting the six goals for the City Plan 2030 were important inflection points in Fayetteville's development, the private sector has been slow to apply these principles in the downtown area. Downtown development markets are complex, requiring greater coordination in planning, financing, and management than suburban markets. To realize its goals for the downtown, the City must assume greater coordinating and oversight functions to catalyze the market. Progressive yet business-savvy cities large and small are discovering the benefit of taking on limited developer functions to align private sector actors with long-term aspirations. In the spirit of triangulating the City's interests and real estate assets with nascent housing demand and developer activity, we make the following recommendations. In particular, these recommendations are intended to catalyze the maturation of an arts district anchored by Walton Arts Center and downtown housing constructed on city property.

1. Since the City has made appropriate infill and revitalization its highest priority, **we recommend that the City develop the surface parking lot on West Avenue for better and higher land uses like housing** once the new Spring Street Municipal Parking Deck becomes operational in 2015. Since the costs and returns on investments in urban infill are greater than those in suburban markets, urban infill must deliver niche qualities to succeed. **We also recommend the development of urban multifamily housing products with high-quality street frontage**

and shared public spaces to meet the unmet demand for downtown living beyond student housing. However, student housing projects certainly indicate a preference for walkable environments among forthcoming graduates. Studies now show that mixed-use development has between 10 and 100 times the fiscal return on investment than single-use land development—including big box development—when measuring annual tax yield per acre.

2. Since the City discourages suburban sprawl, **we recommend that urban housing be developed at a minimum of 15 units per acre (the threshold for rail transit feasibility) to attract development of accompanying support services within walkable neighborhood formats.** The city should incentivize urban housing as a tactic for economic development in downtown retail sectors, because retail is rationally triggered by population concentrations. As the saying goes, "retail follows rooftops."

3. As the City aims to "make traditional town form the standard", **we recommend mixed-use development with mixed-income housing and parking in neighborhood-oriented formats.** To dramatically increase cultural and economic activity on a block-by-block basis, parking spaces should favor on-street formats alongside nesting of parking within the block interior, and/or accommodation through structured facilities. Housing should be built to the street edge and contain unit variety to accommodate various incomes. Vertically integrated mixed uses should be part of the overall development of the West Avenue block, particularly on Dickson Street since it is a commercially-oriented public space at the ground level.

4. To grow a livable transportation network, **we recommend the transformation of West Ave into a signature street. The City should use traffic-calming strategies to create a sense of place that enhances non-traffic social functions.** The street should be retrofitted as a setting appropriate to mixed-use pedestrian-oriented environments and advance the identity of the cultural arts district. Traffic moves too fast on West Avenue because street design and geometry facilitate such behavior. Not only could West Avenue replace the municipal surface parking lot as the festival grounds for events like Bikes, Blues, and BBQ, but West Avenue should be designed to complement the substantial improvements scheduled for Walton Arts Center. We also recommend that the City uncouple its current on-site parking requirements from site development capacity, as it inhibits development of affordable urban housing density (also an overall deterrent to downtown development). Rather, let the market take care of parking demand and supply.

5. Since the City aims to assemble "an enduring green network", **we recommend preservation of the groundwater springs located on the site and enhancement of the trail as a signature pocket park with good building frontage, additional landscape features, and other passive uses beyond movement.** Recognition of the trail as a public frontage warranting design attention sets a precedent for subsequent trail-fronting development throughout the city.

6. To create opportunities for attainable housing, **we recommend development of mixed-income housing where premium market rate units could subsidize attainable units.** While state laws do not enable inclusionary zoning, the City's control of the property is an important opportunity to realize attainable housing.

To realize a successful outcome that satisfies multiple interests, particularly the arts community and the goal of enhancing the City's cultural infrastructure, it is imperative that the City select a development team whose business model reflects principles outlined in this report and City Plan 2030.

Appendix

WEST AVENUE CONFIGURATIONS

How does West Avenue's configuration affect the performance of a development scheme?

Unlike roads, streets are a platform for capturing value. A well-designed street provides non-traffic social functions related to gathering, assembly, recreation, and aesthetics. Streets, when designed in conjunction with new development, can reinforce architectural ideas.

Each housing approach is paired with a street section that provides distinct place-making characteristics. Traffic-calming measures like reducing lane widths or adding a median provides a safer pedestrian environment by forcing automobile traffic to reduce speed and pay attention to surroundings. Street trees provide structure, mitigate heat island effect, and provide a shaded environment that encourages pedestrians to shop, dine, or casually stroll. Building frontages are the "handshake" to the public street. In other words, they provide a valuable buffer between public, semi-public, and private space.

The Laminated and Pixelated approaches provide intimately-scaled streets for predominately residential use while the Anchor and Mountain approaches have wider sidewalks, which are conducive to great shopping streets.

Existing West Avenue

Laminated Approach
West Avenue as a Residential Skinny Street
parallel parking and low-scaled townhouses with stoops provide an intimate scale for a residential street

Pixelated Approach
West Avenue as a Residential Boulevard
a boulevard approach provides traffic calming by separating traffic by tree-lined median, courts privide interest and rhythm to the street edge

Anchor Approach
West Avenue as a Shopping Boulevard
the sidewalk on the west side is extended and shaded by a row of trees to provide ample space for walking, dining, and shopping

Mountain Approach
West Avenue as a Shopping Skinny Street
the sidewalk on the west side is extended, becoming a mat for art installations, street lighting, and recreation

1 LAMINATED APPROACH

Units: 51 **Parking Stalls:** 100 = 84 **on-site** + 16 **on-street**

EXAMPLES

Duncan Avenue Apartments
Fayetteville, AR
Townhouse

Courts at Whitham
Fayetteville, AR
Courtyard

The Charmer
San Diego, CA
Patio Units

Turtle Creek Bend
Dallas, TX
Mid-Block Parking Court

2 PIXELATED APPROACH

Units: 68 **Parking Stalls:** 171 = 168 **on-site** + 3 **on-street**

EXAMPLES

Pearl District
Portland, OR
Mews

Cotton District
Starkville, MS
Mews

Fillmore Park
San Fransisco, CA
Walk-Ups over Podium Parking

Worth Avenue
West Palm Beach, FL
Retail Court

3 ANCHOR APPROACH

Units: 67 **Parking Stalls:** 200 = 194 **on-site** + 6 **on-street**

EXAMPLES

The Dickson
Fayetteville, AR
Mid-Rise

BENJAMIN BENSCHNEIDER

Columbia City
Seattle, WA
Live-Work

Harbor Town
Memphis, TN
Townhouse

TOWER INVESTMENTS

The Piazza at Schidt's
Philadelphia, PA
Town Plaza

4 MOUNTAIN APPROACH

Units: 84 **Parking Stalls:** 291 = 275 **on-site** + 16 **on-street**

EXAMPLES

JDS ARCHITECTS

The Mountain Dwellings
Copenhagen, Denmark
Terraced Units

LERCH ARNTZEN

The Mountain Dwellings
Copenhagen, Denmark
Parking Hall

A+T PUBLISHERS

Jeanne Hachette Complex
Paris, France
Terraced Units

HERZOG & DE MEURON

56 Leonard Street
New York, NY
Stacked Retail

comments forthcoming