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HOUSING: A GREEN PROPRIETOR IN MARABASTAD  
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Fig 1-1



PROLOGUE

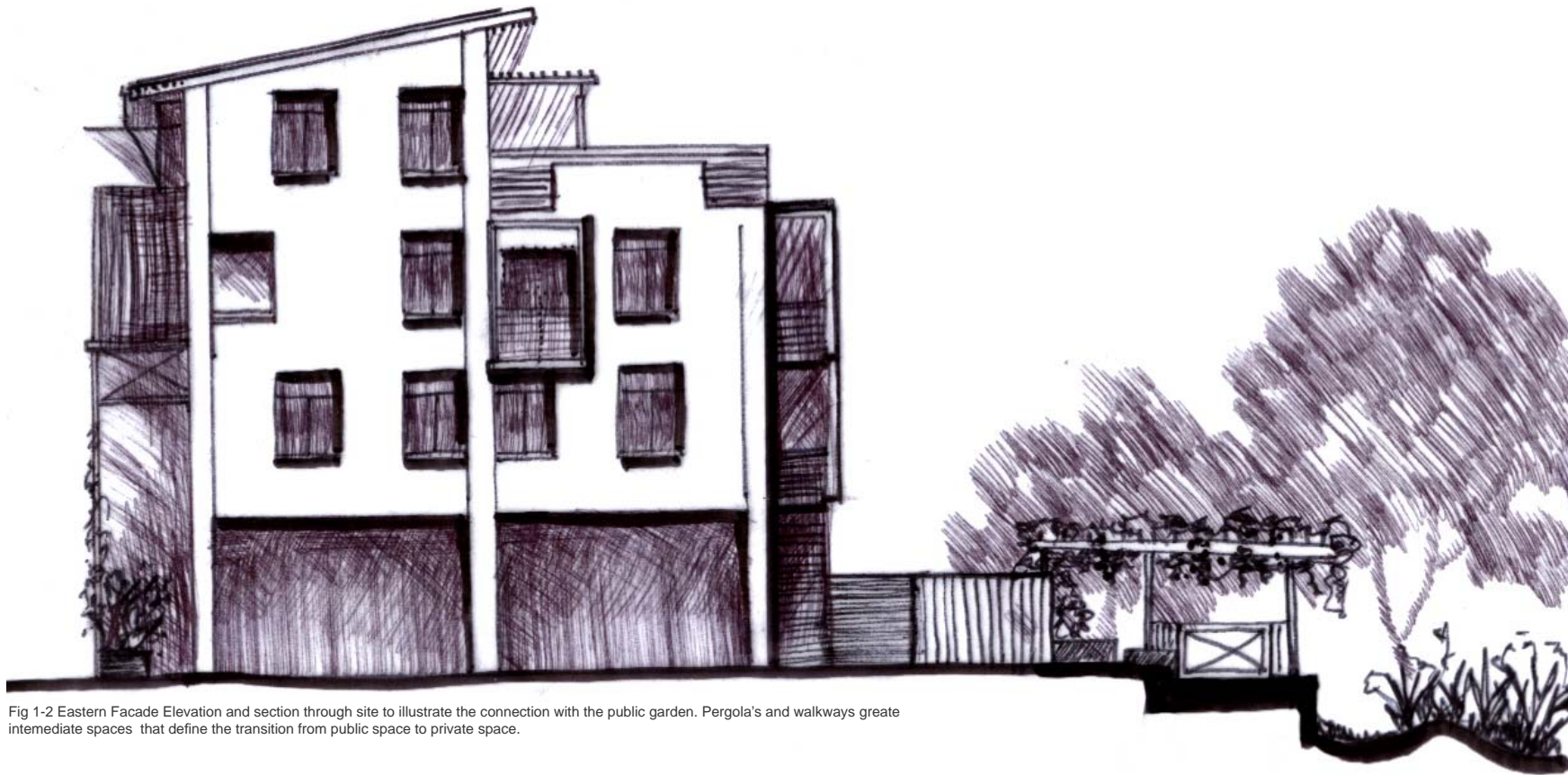


Fig 1-2 Eastern Facade Elevation and section through site to illustrate the connection with the public garden. Pergola's and walkways create intermediate spaces that define the transition from public space to private space.

## PROLOGUE

A healthy growing society will always have a housing problem. If I ever met a society that claimed to have solved all its housing problems, I would look at it with great suspicion and conclude that it must be in a worrying state of decline. (Koeningsberger, O. 1993 A guided tour through third world housing Policies since the 1950's. p 42)

It is the aim of this project to confront the immense challenges of providing the city of Tshwane with appropriate affordable inner city housing. The city's urban living environments require a more innovative form of developmental planning in the contemporary epoch of radical urban transformation. In search of a fresh alternative, this dissertation is an exploration of the relevance of and benefits regarding the design connection between housing and productive green spaces within the urban fabric.

In an article by Professor Lindsay Bremner, published in the *Urban Age* conference paper, July 2006, she comments on Johannesburg that "On the one hand, its nascent public life is taking shape around new official narratives, modes of associational life, meanings of money and everyday travail. On the other hand, its public space is viewed and experienced by many as out of control and dangerous. It is bounded by fences, palisades, walls, gates, private security guards, cameras and other defensive security technologies. Public life withdraws into the interiority of the private realm (homes, malls, gated enclaves etc.) and urban space is abandoned to featurelessness and neglect. Building more robust intersections between the two becomes a priority." (Bremner, 2006: 9) Although she refers to Johannesburg, her comments in context are just as relevant to Tshwane.

The question becomes clear: "In what way can a housing model contribute to Public Space and Urban Life?"

Open Spaces in Tshwane are under-funded, neglected, inaccessible, and lacking the necessary infrastructure and amenities. Only 31% of parks are fully developed. The only worthwhile, well developed public spaces are located within the inner city and old established areas. Outside of this zone, public open space is overgrown, undeveloped or privatised into shopping malls and private residential estates.

Norberg-Schultz believes that "a building means the solution of social and cultural problems, rather than the erection of houses of a certain number of square meters. The education, therefore must develop the faculties of integration, analysis and experience, and must also furnish the general cultural background necessary to give the intentions an adequate depth" (Norberg-Schultz, 1968:218-219).

An important starting point for addressing the current urban crises is to understand the value and function of the existing energies within the City of Tshwane. On the one hand the crisis in the post- apartheid South African city must be acknowledged and confronted; on the other, it must be recast as an enabling moment – seeing it as an opportunity to align and coordinate energies to provide employment and housing to the people. There is a need for a renewed sphere and public debate where alternative ideas for specific urban areas can flourish.

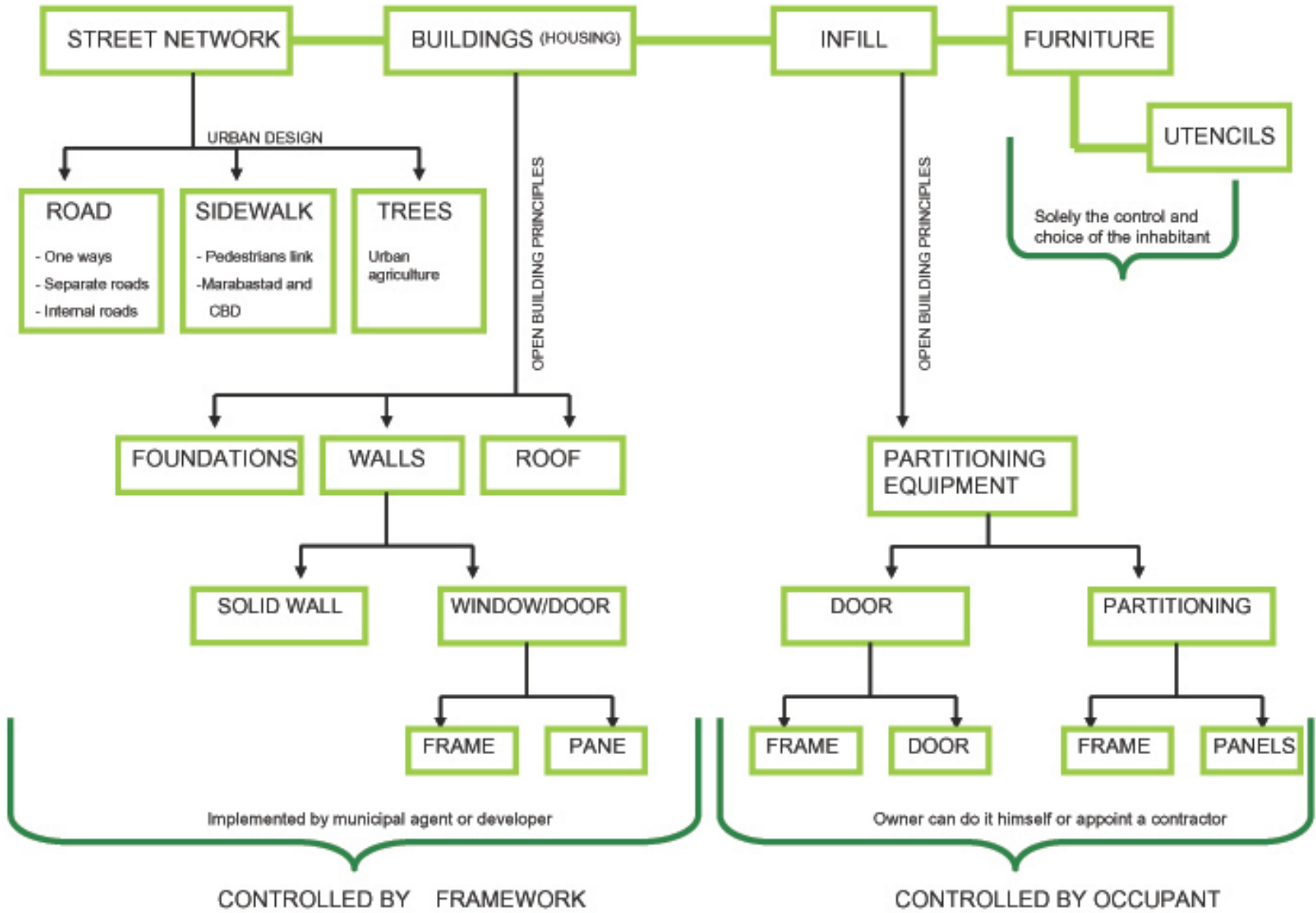


Fig 1-3 Diagram of levels defined for the initiation of the project.

From an urban design stance, the focus will fall on formulating an approach to the function of green space in the Marabastad milieu and context. The challenge lies in the integration between the private and semi-private housing spaces; and the public open park space. The present work is critical of the way open spaces are currently zoned and used within the city of Tshwane. In this project the writer intends to counter the need to gate these green parks, which often leads to them becoming neglected and dangerous places, like so many examples within the city of Tshwane and surrounding suburbs.

The intention of this project is to encourage the inhabitants of the housing scheme to become proprietors of the park; to accept stewardship and control, and to maintain the park with the possibility of reaping economic benefits. Defining a new small-scale form of urban agriculture, and finding mutualisms between productive urban green spaces and architecture, forms an important part of the investigation.

The issue of housing is further explored architecturally by adopting an “open-building” approach for the building design. This constitutes an experiment in the process of giving inhabitants a certain level of control to plan their internal space, by using new construction systems. The project will, in addition, allow the integration of less expensive social housing units within the overall project.

The theoretical approach relies on contemporary urban design and housing theory, and draws quite extensively on the principles of form and control in the built environment (Habrakens, *The Structure of the Ordinary*, 1998) and (Hamdi, Nabeel *Housing without houses – Participation, Flexibility, Enablement*. 1991). It has been remarked that:

Given our Apartheid history, one of the most challenging performance dimensions is integration. The integration of communities and activities to promote choice and flexibility through overlap as opposed to fragmentation and separation is viewed as a fundamental precondition for positive cities (Southworth 2003: *‘Urban design in action: the City of Cape Town’s Dignified Places Programme – implementation of new public spaces towards integration and urban regeneration in South Africa’*, Urban Design International 8.119).

The present project promotes integration on all levels, so that architecture can encourage and mobilise a community towards a better quality of life. In this way housing facilitates the inhabitants becoming green proprietors, which in turn provides an integrated live-and-work environment for the community.

Diagram of levels defined for the initiation of the project.

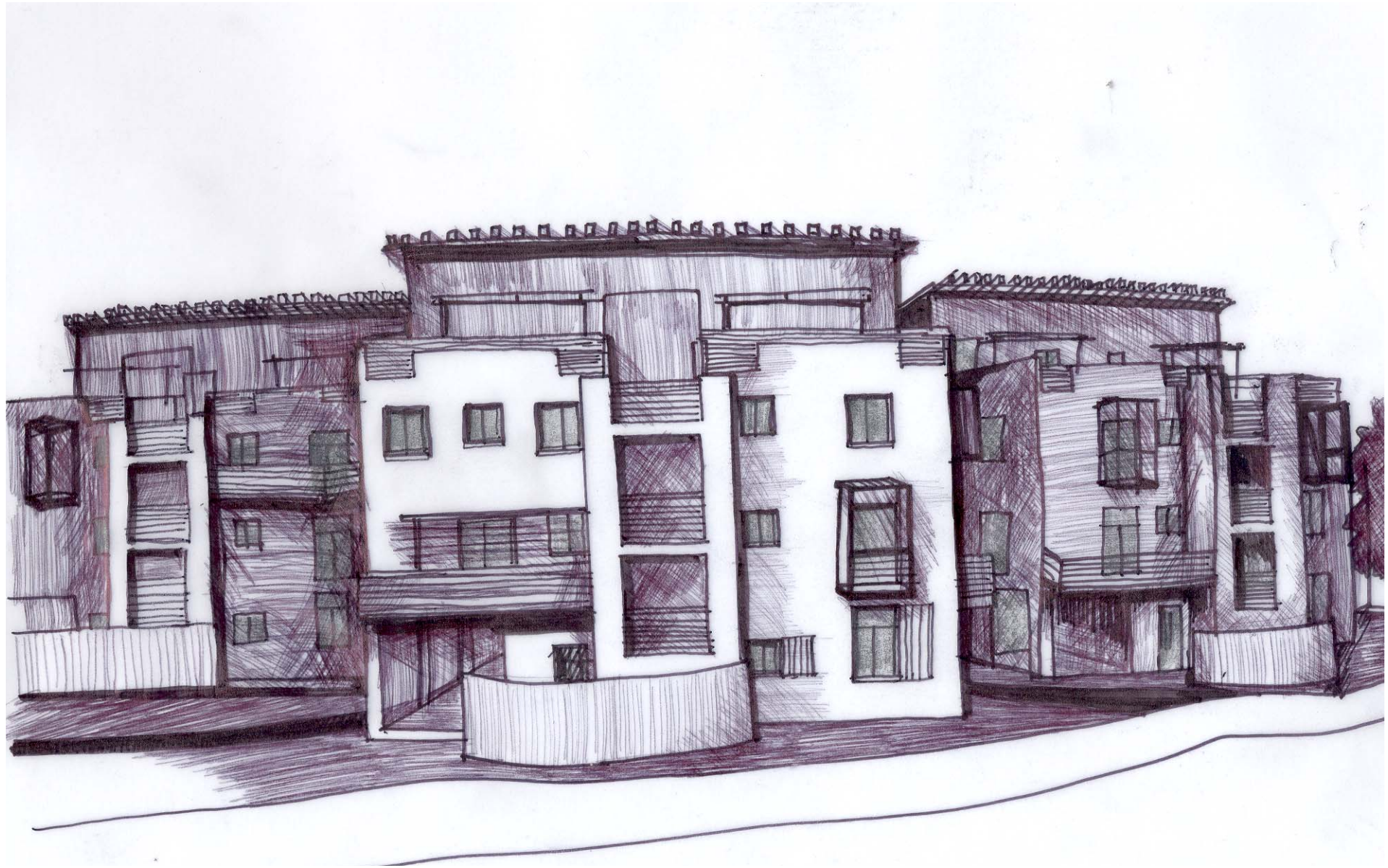


Fig 1-3 Eyes on the park. North eastern facade facing the Public park. The internal stairwell, balconies and roof garden gives the residents a open view over the park.



Fig 1-4 The entrance from the south west side. On arrival the resident is confronted by the western facade with balconies and shading devices, the innercourtyard becomes a protected environment for residents to meet and relax while children can safely play under the trees.

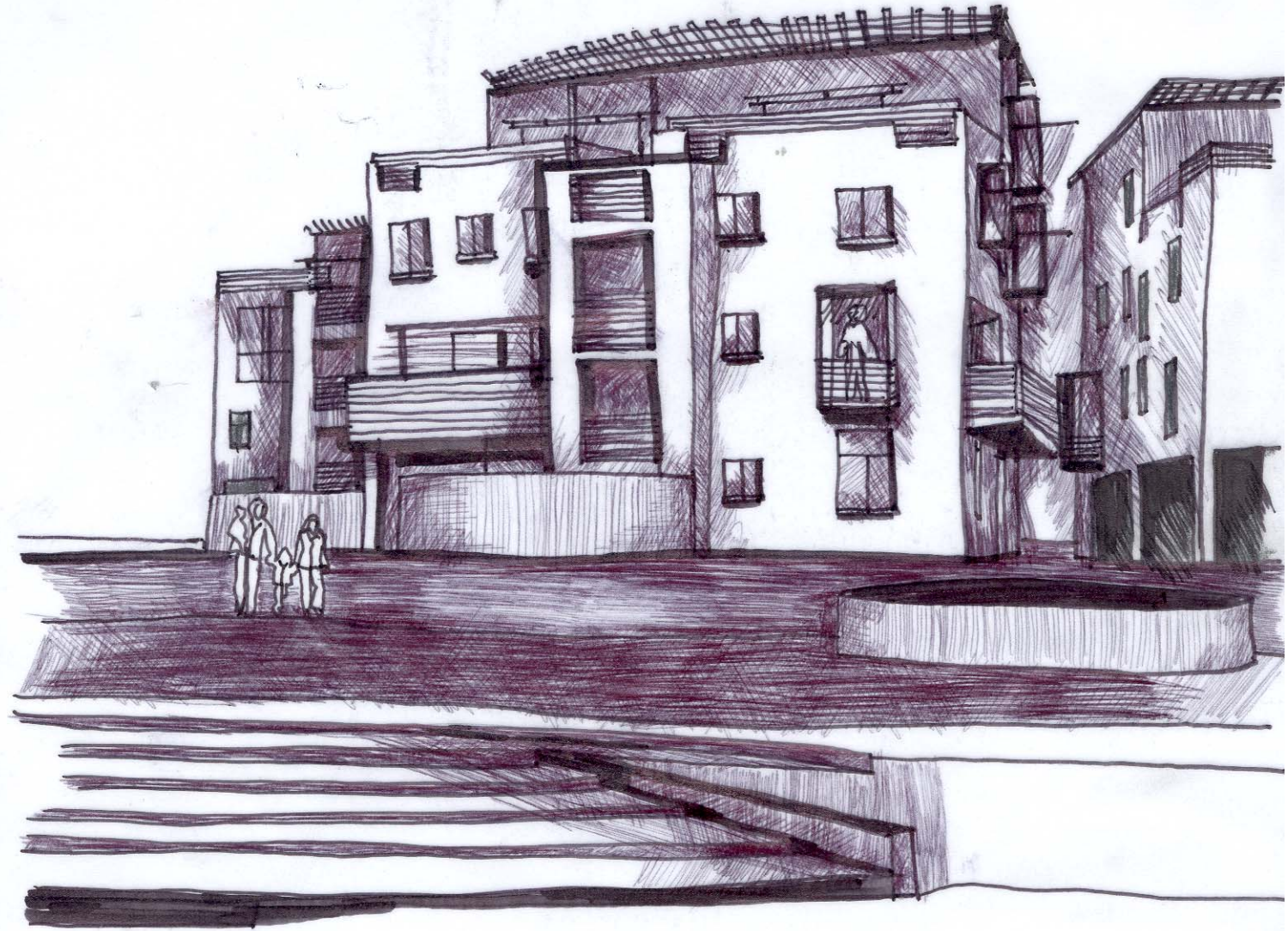


Fig 1-5 Residents have easy access to the park.