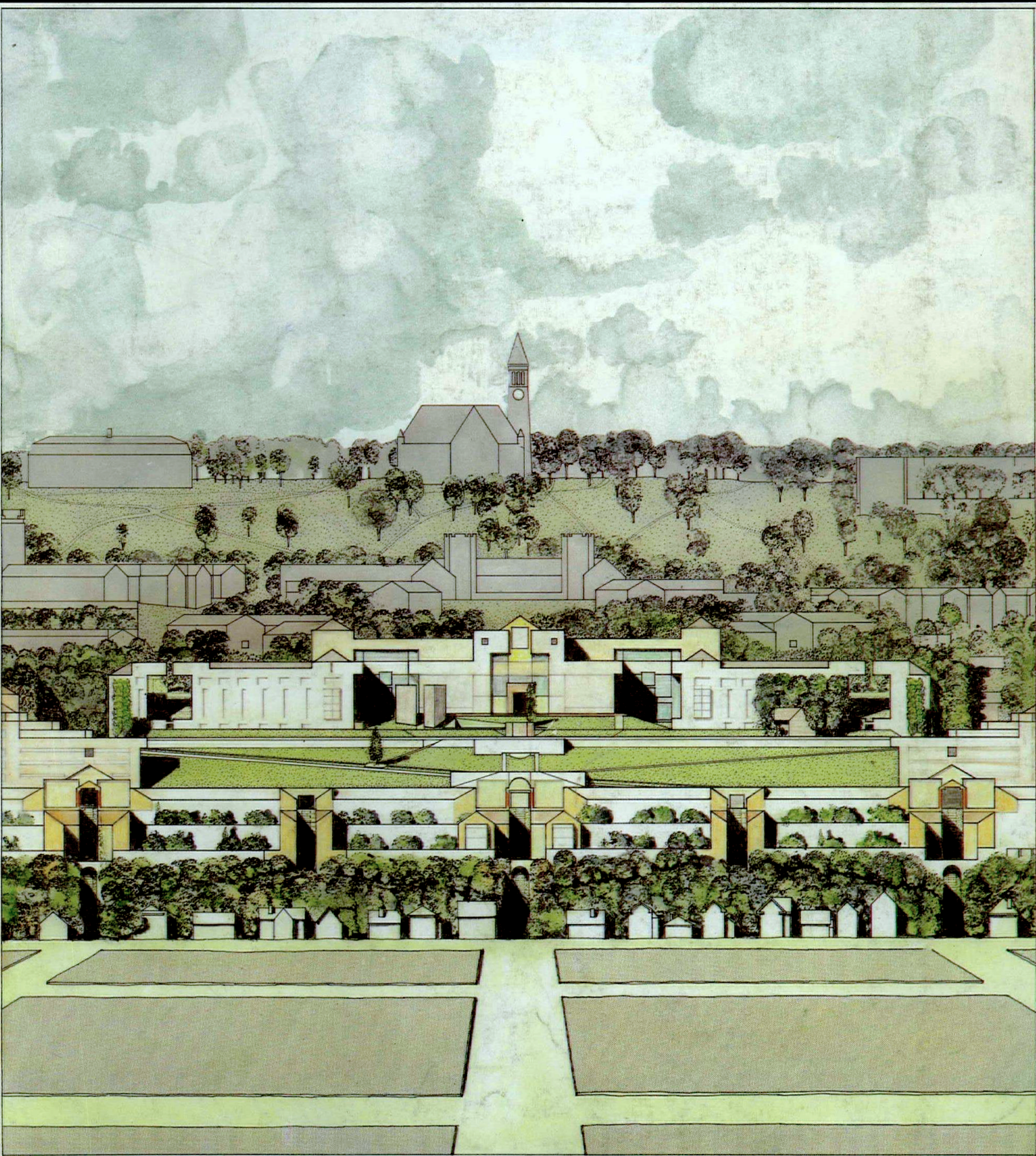


Progressive Architecture

January 1981



28th annual P/A Awards

A study for a hillside development connecting a university and the town is designed to relate to the planning frameworks of both while reinforcing the contour of the site.

Credits

Architect: Steven K. Peterson, New York; Barbara Lit-tenberg, Rob Busler.

Client: Schickel Design and Development Corporation, Ithaca City Planning Department, America The Beautiful, Inc.

Project: University Avenue Development, Ithaca, NY.

Program: Propose future development of hillside area which would include about 800 d.u.s., an 80,000-sq-ft theater, educational, conference, and meeting center with a 1500-seat auditorium, and a 150-room hotel with tennis courts, swimming facilities, and parking.

Site: A slope on the East Hill between the Cornell University campus at the top of the slope and the town of Ithaca, approximately 1 mile long, $\frac{1}{4}$ mile wide. A clearly defined rectangular zone, it is bounded by two major gorges in the area. While the area lies between two grids—the city grid and the more monumental formal composition of the university—it is relatively undeveloped.

Solution: The plan seeks to link the two already existing areas in a formal arrangement that establishes continuity of space. This overall design structure of the plan will organize and clarify the disparate conditions within the site itself, as well as relate to the organization of spaces around it.

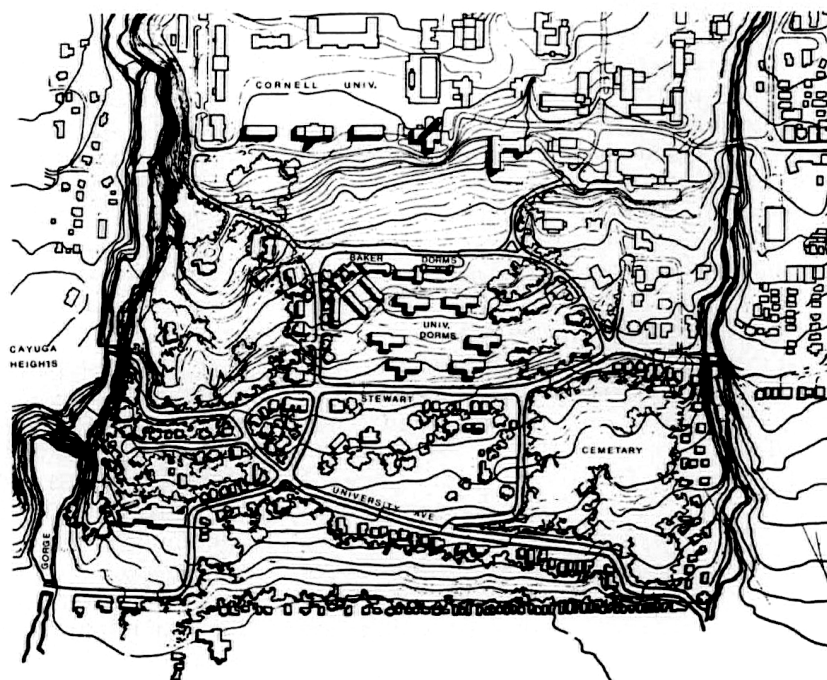
The study locates new housing below the existing University Avenue with access and parking provided by a new road. Three-story walk-up garden apartments will be built in a party-wall type of building stepping down the hill. Pedestrian walks and steps parallel the slope. Additional housing related to the university dormitories is proposed to be built

above, in a series of four- to six-story slabs. The open lawns of existing fraternity houses would be developed as an overlook park, with recreation serving the housing. The plan also calls for converting the Ithaca Gun Company property (when no longer viable as a factory) into a park and amphitheater. Three major parks are also suggested, with a continuous series of paths and open spaces connecting them and the gorges.

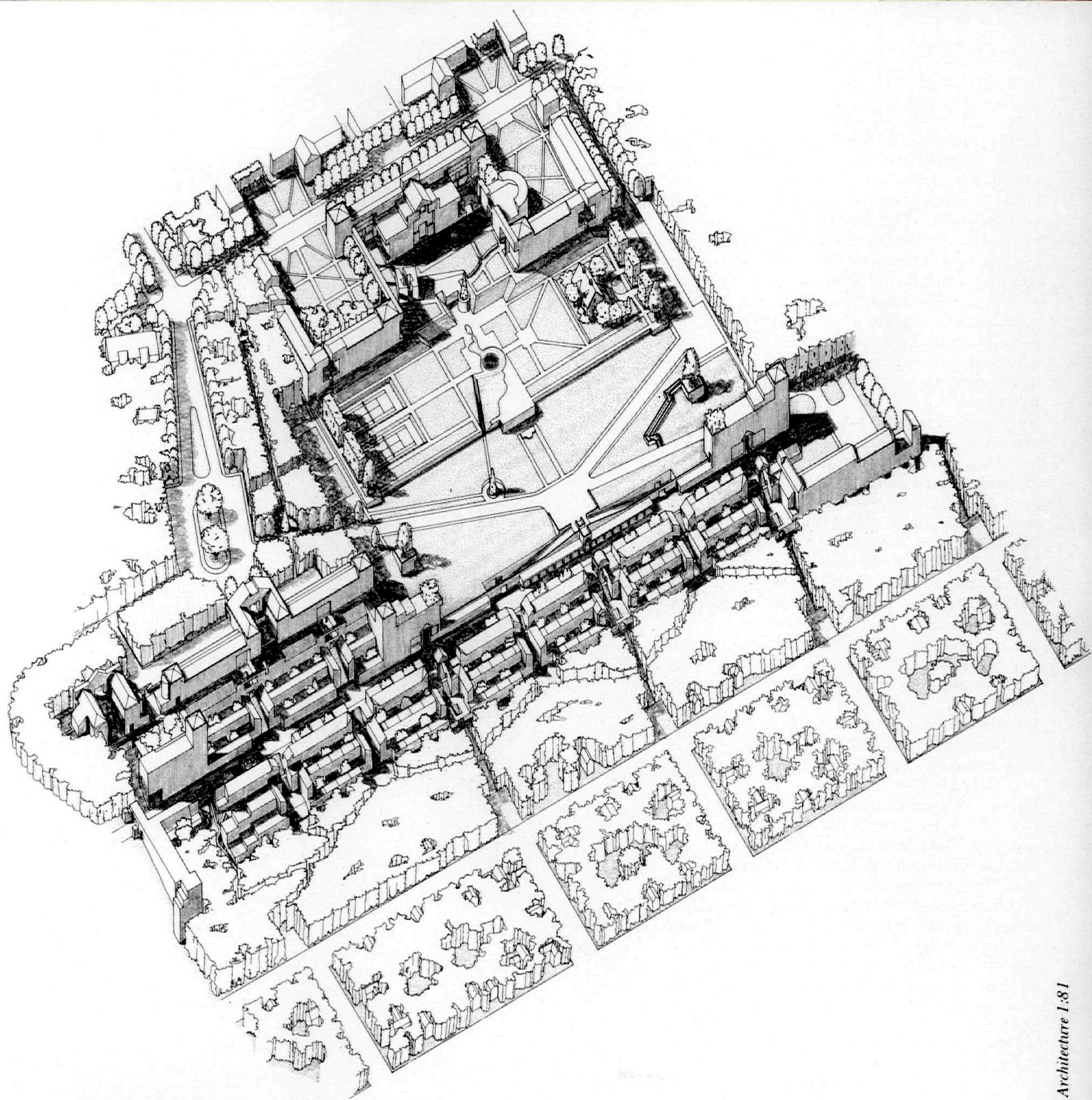
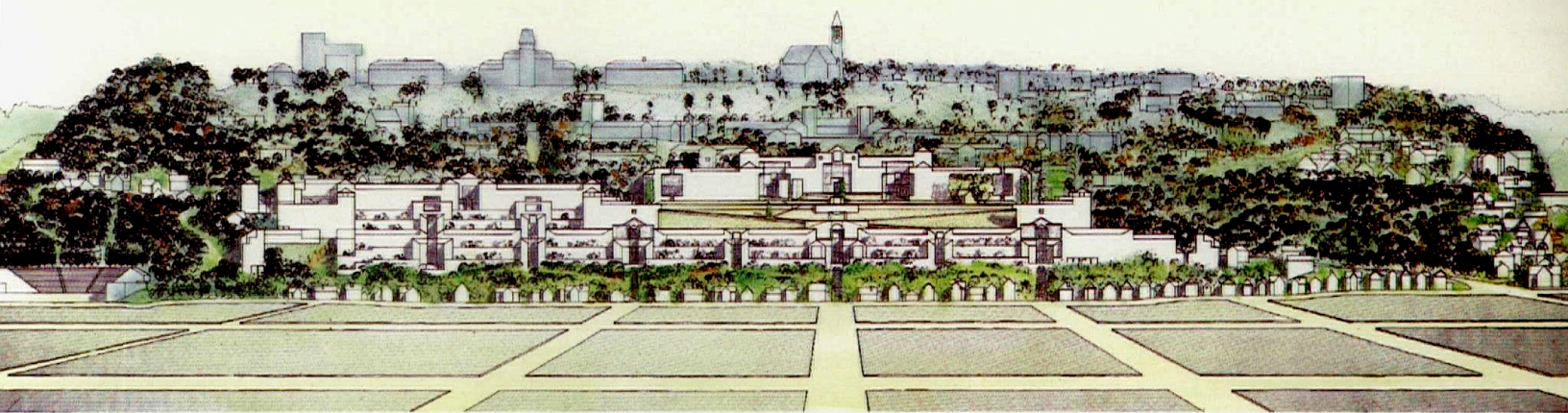
A series of horizontal reference planes and lines extend across the face of the hill to guide the plan conceptually. Building would be both perpendicular and parallel to the slope, producing a continuous, even development along the three major streets. A maximum cornice height of buildings would be established. This layered pattern, with constant skyline profiles of the aggregated buildings all arranged on the same orientation, will relate to a principal front edge horizontal plane of the overlook park. The park area is defined by a retaining wall and edge landscaping; the back edge of the park would be controlled by a hard line of new housing. Along the length of these various horizontal layers of building, axes of open space link the stepped layers.

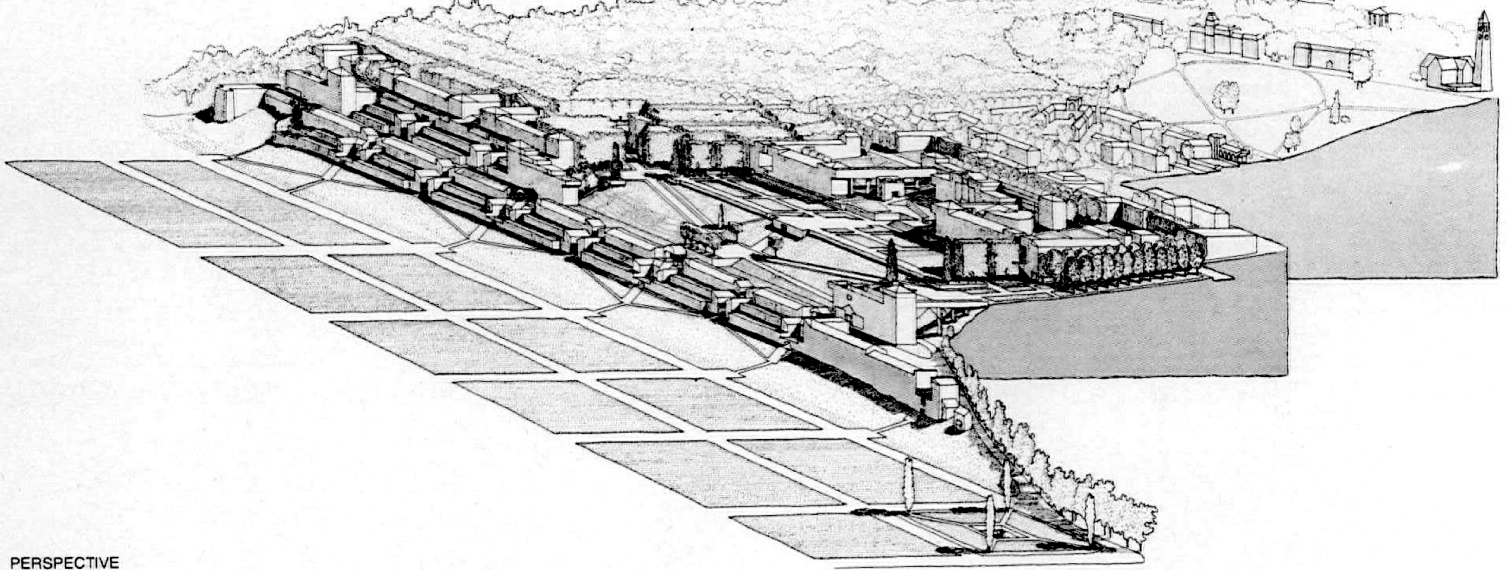
Jury comments

Bacon: I am astounded by the proposal. It is a very carefully conceived extension of history. Look at the way it seizes the tower of the uni-



TOWN OF ITHACA





PERSPECTIVE

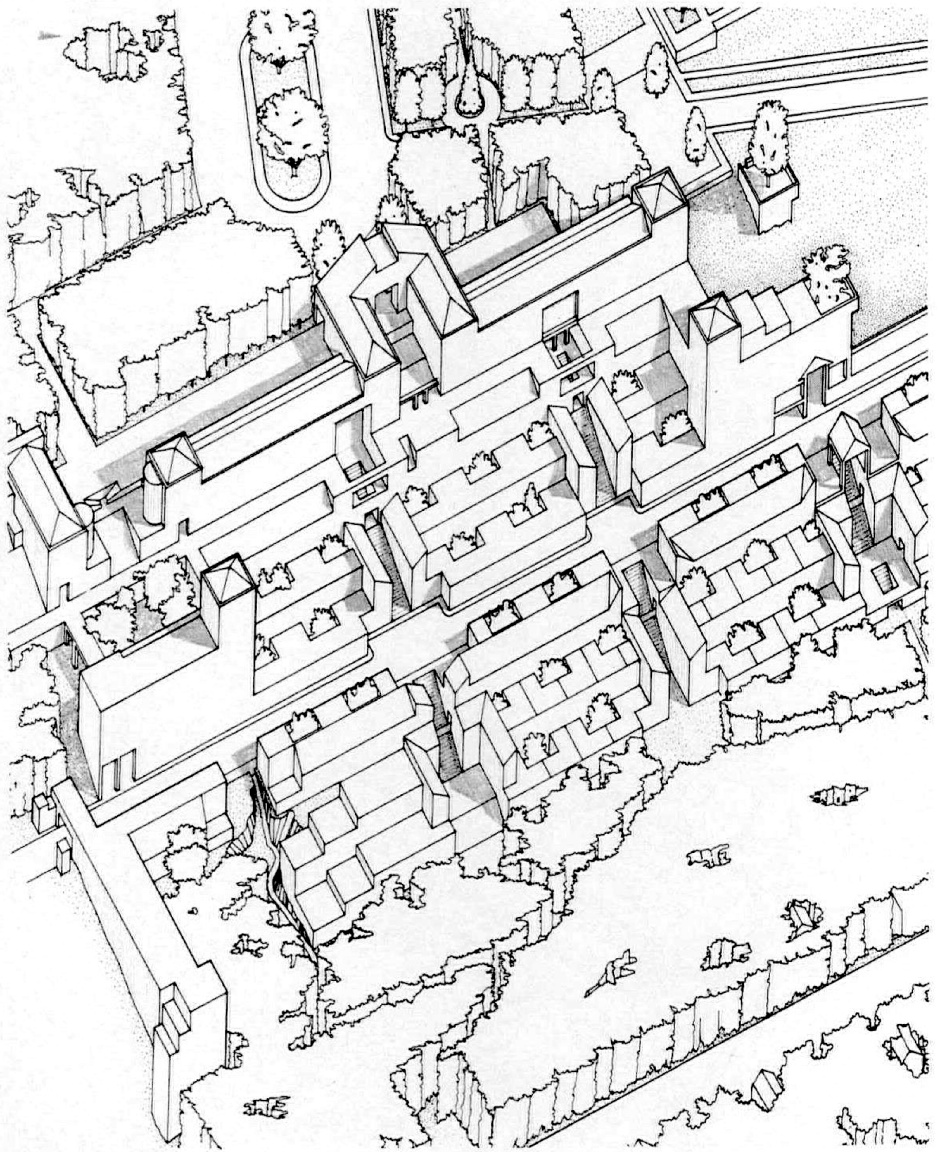
versity library as the focal landmark at the top of the hill and then carries the axial organization down to the town of Ithaca on the flat-lands through a series of buildings, terraces, and courts. It is very extraordinary. The long extension of housing along the edge of the town gives a strong base to the hill. The architect uses symmetry and terracing reminiscent of older towns yet indicating a new way of thinking about larger urban design problems. It successfully incorporates all parts into the whole while showing awareness of its position in the total setting of Cornell and Ithaca.

Brownson: The siting of the theater with its commanding view of the area is quite good. I originally questioned the large section of buildings extending across the rise of the ground immediately behind the residential area, but I think in this case it is fitted into the contours of the site well enough to form a backdrop to the area. I also like the use of the large open space for giving one a sense of orientation and connection to other spaces.

Bacon: You always know where you are in both space and time. You know where you are in relation to the library tower and the university, as well as the war memorial. You have a sense of positioning in both time and place.

Brownson: This foreground group of buildings should be built so that it will hold together; it is an important element visually and should really last.

Bacon: This development forms the conjunction of the town with the university, which has heretofore been somewhat disconnected because of the steep hill. The development binds the two in a very constructive way. The architect has deliberately put asymmetrical elements in the very heart of the scheme—on the formal axis. This can be done, but requires incredible skill. I'm not convinced he has really pulled it off. It would be safer and more traditional, if you have a strong axis, to continue the symmetry into such details as a traditional shape for the pool. Other than that I think the plan is excellent.



AXONOMETRIC DETAIL

