Much investigation yielded the location of the row houses, which by their solidity, separate the private inner courtyard belonging only to the residents, from the most public part of the site: the city sidewalk. The lowest level of the row houses form the north and west boundaries of the parking garage.

Four elements puncture the plane of the plaza, connecting the elements from the courtyard above to below. Purposefully, no doors lead directly into the townhouses from the parking area. This prevents residents from “sneaking” into the townhouses, but rather ascend the stairs into the community plaza. This fostering interaction with other residents.

The alley houses and back rooms of some row houses are expressed in the language of the addition, commonly seen in the row house type. These are of a lighter construction, therefore sit on the plaza above, with the exception of supporting columns at key points. In the parking garage, these pillars define the rhythm of the parking spaces and the traffic flow.
A combination of row houses and alley houses encompass the site. The solidity and semi-solidity of the buildings at the perimeter define a courtyard in the center of the site.

Each row house has a private patio at the rear, providing an extra level of separation between the privacy of the inside and the semi-public courtyard. The alley houses are planted between the courtyard and the vehicular and pedestrian alleys, and have no personal patio at each threshold. This affects how the inhabitants of the courtyard feel in relation to their proximity to the different dwellings types. Because of the buffering patios and planters, one is more comfortable closer to the town houses. In response, the three large planters for trees are shifted towards the alley houses, leaving enough space only for transition. The trees subdivide the plaza.

The corners of the site were carefully studied with regards to their contribution to the streetscape, the courtyard, and transition from public to semi-public to inside. The continuous row of rowhouses is “snapped” in a time honored way at the northwest corner. This is both a physical break and a respite from the severe visual logic of the repetitive homes. What results is space for light, wind, and transition. The outside alley corner is defined by an L-shaped alley house. There are two inside corners. The L alley house makes a private courtyard in one, and the neighboring dwellings define the community courtyard in the other.
The courtyard is surrounded by the architectural language of the addition. When applied to the row houses, they are additions in a truer sense. As alley houses, they are placed between concrete party walls.

The structure of the additions is set on a 5'-0" grid, which is expressed almost entirely throughout the project. The east-west lines of the grid are expressed in the stone courtyard paving. These lines connect the longer sides of the courtyard and suggest three separate areas. Children might find meanings in these zones as they play make-believe or set up various races from lines to lines.

End units are special and use their location in several advantageous ways. The additional exterior wall is pulled out from the house, enlarging the sizes of all rooms on all levels. In elevation, glazing infills the area between the location where the wall may have stood and its shifted position. This transforms the room by acknowledging that it is special, not just larger. Also the extra windows allow for more light and air.
Outdoor living spaces for the row houses animate the courtyard. Each row house has a patio next to either the courtyard or a pathway to the courtyard. These patios are places for reading, small and larger gatherings, and potted plants. The additions on row houses next to the courtyard are only two stories tall. The top becomes a roof terrace for the third floor of the house. This terrace is another place for outdoor living and plants. The patios and terraces are carefully separated from the courtyard, but not surrounded by tall fences. These spaces bring the personalities and lives of the inhabitants into the courtyard.

Light and shadow inform the use of the courtyard. Limiting the additions and alley houses to two stories allows more sun to enter the courtyard, especially from the eastern and southern sides. While the sun is at these positions, the west and northern sides are filled with light, and the remainder is in shade. Also, how one feels next to the different houses is not always the same. The row house patios create a semiprivate/public buffer area.

The alleyhouses, though, have no such separation. One feels more comfortable closer to these buffer zones then directly next to an alley house. The west and east areas of the courtyard tend to be more public and open, while the areas closer to the alleyhouses are more suitable for quiet conversations or personal reflection. The planters respond to these conditions by shifting to the east, defining a larger space on the social side and a smaller, more contemplative space, on the other.