Development

An early scheme (left) had street level plaza and driveway behind a single street-side building.

A later scheme (right) evolved into two sister buildings that share a plaza one level above the street. The proposed hi-rise building on the east of the site and the proposed low-rise commercial and attached townhouses on the west side of the site reinforce the focus of the north and south skins as the priority of the thesis.
Development

The project developed entirely in section due to the thesis of the building skin. An early site section (top) explores the master planning of the proposed hi-rise on Rte. 1 but also includes the residential plaza.

A more developed section (middle) was an important development where the raised plaza surrounded by two "sister" buildings came about. The different requirements of each skin is starting to become clear.

Finally, the unique characteristics of each skin and the program requirements are displayed as the section studies continue (bottom).
Development

A thesis that revolves around the building skin leaves a hole between those skins that must be filled. In this project, the upper floors are slated for residential apartments. In an effort to give all residents access and use of these skins, apartments that ran the length of the building became the standard. Every unit enters from within the north skin. Every unit does its’ living inside the south skin. Habitable rooms on the north side of the building are made possible by the unique weaving of the north skin which allows for operable windows within the skin that bring light and air to rooms along that side of the building.
South Skin Development

“Inhabiting the Skin” began with the south wall and pulling apart the layers that make up the thickness of a wall in order to allow gaps and airspaces to become usable, enjoyable space for the resident. Passive shading and ventilation devices, such as the operable louvered hinged doors, are key tools for the inhabitant to customize the space and the air and light that enter the interior living area. Some of the early research that developed into influences for the design of the south skin are: “found space”, “fabric as filter”, “screening”, and “layering”.
South Exterior Skin

The spaces between the layers of the South Skin allow the user to be within the wall and manipulate the materials that make up the exterior skin. Additionally, the angle of the roof slab on the south facade is the same as the winter sun angle to allow for maximum natural lighting in the winter months and it cantilevers off the facade for a specific length that will block the harsh direct summer heat gain from entering beyond the skin.
North Skin Development

A contradictory set of requirements on the North Side demanded enclosure from the exterior and yet penetrations for light and air to enter into the living spaces on the interior had to be devised. Some of the early themes that developed into influences for the design of the north skin are: “draping to hide, draping to reveal”, “found space”, “hung pockets”, “weaving and braiding”, “fabric as filter” and “pulling apart”.
North Exterior Skin

The contradicting requirements of open and closed were met at the North Skin with a woven Exterior Corian panel system wrapped around a fixed steel frame suspended between the roof slab and the plaza. The series of catwalks allows for total enclosure of the residents as a corridor but uses a weaving pattern to cut back in and up and allow for operable windows above the corridor to allow light and air into the apartments.
Site

The site is an existing open lot in Alexandria, Virginia. It sits in the Parker-Grey District, an area just to the north of Old Town, Alexandria. The neighborhood is mixed-use with low-rise, light industrial buildings adjacent to single family houses and townhouses with commercial spaces interspersed throughout the district. The Route One corridor is home to hi-rise and low-rise office buildings and first floor retail businesses.

It is for these reasons I elected to master plan the open lot and do so in such a fashion as is relevant and appropriate to the district. I propose to plan for a hi-rise building that runs the length of the lot on the Route One side and to maintain the opposite corner on Cameron and Fayette Streets for low-rise commercial with retail space on the first floor. It is also fitting to the neighborhood that single family townhouses line the lot on Fayette Street. The site is adjoined on the north side of the lot with a low-rise commercial business and across the street on the south side of Cameron Street, a hi-rise commercial building. The open lot area left between these proposals is the focus of my thesis. This further reinforces the importance of the north and south skins as the project is abutted on the east and west by other buildings.