This project has developed as a series of architectural vignettes. Set within a framework of honest materials and construction, they work together to create a more wonderful, living experience. Eero Saarinen, in 1960 said, “We should stop thinking of our individual buildings...always look at the next larger thing. When the problem is a building, we should look at the spaces and relationships that that building creates with others...In the process [the architect] will gradually formulate strong convictions about outdoor space- the beauty of the space between the buildings- and if he does, he will carry his conviction on to his most important challenge- how to build cities.”

This holistic approach would begin with constructing the street edge. Not simply an act of placing housing near the street, the street edge is as much a part of the individual unit as the sidewalk it abuts. This distinction is crucial in shaping the experiences of both the pedestrian and inhabitant.

Looking to the housing of the vernacular, one cannot ignore the quiet beauty of the front stoop. At once, they are playgrounds and meeting places, potted gardens and rest stops. In this project, no less consideration would be given to this link between public and private space. As with much of this project, the design encourages the accidents of architecture, rather than an overly induced theme of design. With this in mind, the front stoop both embraces, and guides the potential of chance.

The façade of each unit presents a legible and accessible face to the street. The window box pushes the exterior, allowing a subtle play of light against its protruded surface. Lengthening shadows and variations in sunshade positions give the façade an activity that echoes the moods and emotions of those who live there. From a similar language, came the development of the front porch. While the window box extends the interior volume of the unit, the front porch acts as an interstitial space between inside and out. The exterior wall, where once was structure, now becomes brick breises-soleil to modulate light and view. Still being read as a coherent part of the whole, the front porch carves a niche from the mass to create a unique and private space within the unit.

The roof terrace is an element that strays most from any Philadelphia precedent. While flat roofs are common, their use as a functional, architectural space has not been fully realized. Valued for its proximity and convenience to each tenant, the roof terrace provides a means to experience the city from a new perspective. High above the city, this private, open-aired/sheltered room invites lawn chairs, homegrown tomatoes, and impromptu barbecues. In order to regulate use and ensure safety, accessibility is offered exclusively to tenants of each housing unit. The roof terrace breathes life into an underutilized and worthy urban space.