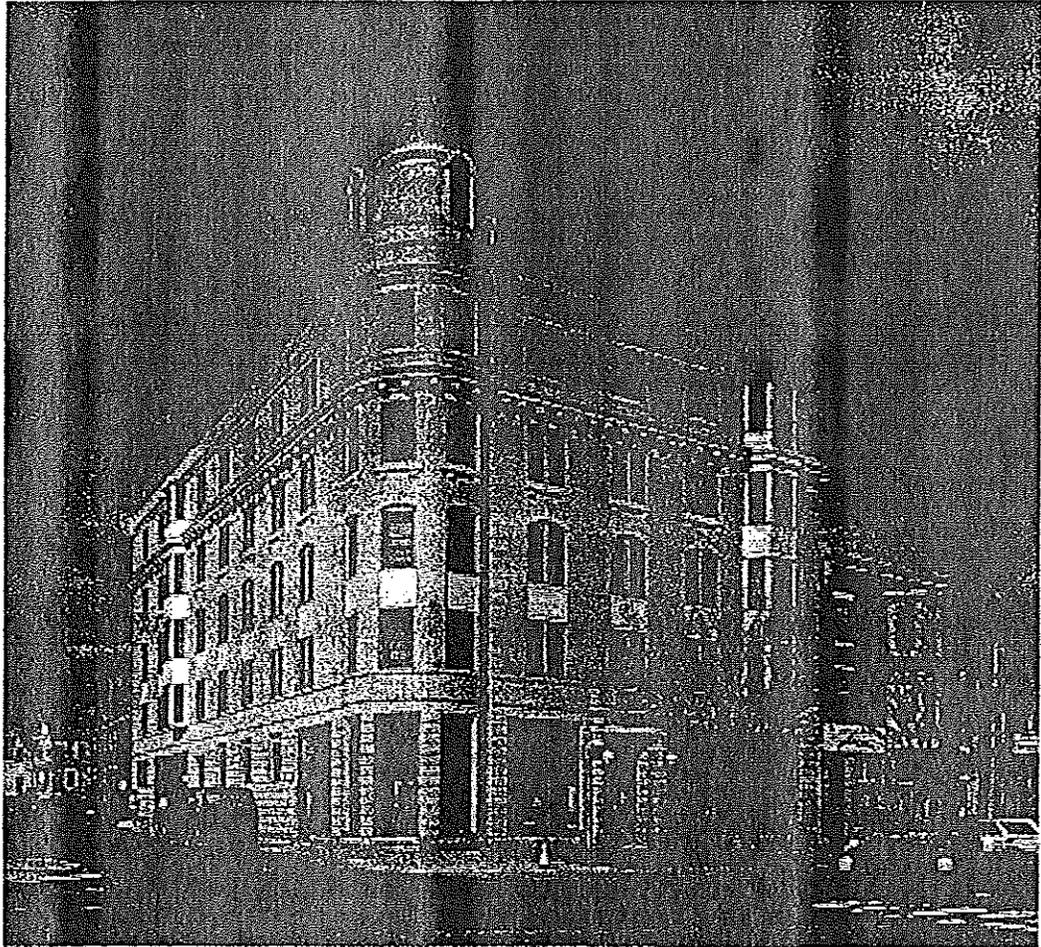


Reading The Landscape:  
Sources of Meaning  
&  
The Residential Hotel

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## I. The Significance of Studying Built Landscapes

I rode the bus back to school from Boston on a damp and dreary fall day. The scene was illustrated with gray skies and buildings, murky-colored trees lined the highway. I wanted to keep my eyes in the pages of my book or hidden behind closed eyelids. But instead I sat looking out on the world I was passing through and felt a familiar unease. Images from the film "Suburbia" I had just seen the night before mixed with the images outside of the bus: lifeless strip malls, depressed and depressing buildings in need of repair, row after row of identical houses separated from a commercial space, pavement as far as I could see, places lacking anything resembling community space or beauty. In "Suburbia" the destitute lives of the characters, mirroring the pavement covered landscapes in which they lived, seemed to be the only life which could grow from such a place. My intuition tells me that the way we have chosen to build on our land in this country has been and continues to be unimaginative and even illogical. Besides being visually painful, many American landscapes do not rise to the full potential of built space; they encourage and perpetuate lifestyles and communities that must struggle to survive. The health of ourselves, our communities, and our environment have all suffered. After being critical of landscapes for so long and then embarking on a project to study them, it became clear to me that there is a complex discourse between landscapes, the lives that are lived in and around them, and the cultural context from which they emerge.

My framework for conceptualizing the problem of our man made environment is one which tends to assume a hegemonic structure in which all of life's activities are played out. Thus, I believe that the social structure uncovered by a detailed observation of landscape is saturated with hegemony, within all relationships and at all levels. It follows that landscape, as a perpetuation of the social structure, is partially responsible for the social inequality and social problems. What is more interesting to me is the potential that molding our landscape could remedy social problems. LeCorbusier and Frank Lloyd Wright believed that simply building the ideal city would do just that. A more practical approach is the combination of rebuilding and new design of landscapes, along with changed behavior. Working with the landscape is one tool out of many to recreate social structures, codes, norms, and assumptions. To determine if it is possible for people to rebel against forms of oppression communicated and manifest

through space, by their own activities in that space, became one of my most important objectives. We as individuals can either accept the cultural prescriptions embedded in a landscape, or reject them and so attempt to bring new meaning to old forms as well as modify and create new landscapes more appropriate and conducive to alternate uses and ways of living. How, I wondered, does rebellion through the consumption of space compare to that done through the construction of space? Unfortunately creative and new styles are not attempted often enough. Many of the same designs and plans, or lack thereof, for homes, work spaces, recreation spaces, public spaces, cities, suburbs, and towns, are replicated without question or opposition. On the other hand there do exist landscapes which are creative, aesthetically pleasing, and appropriate to the lives lived within them. There has been a history of opposition to the mainstream lifestyle that is perpetuated through landscapes, but like most forms of deviation from the norm, they are less frequent, take additional energy to organize, and are not always successful.

For my purposes "landscape" will be defined as the built environment, not just in terms of its physical elements or how it appears, but in terms of "the spatial and cultural relationships between groups of people and their everyday surroundings."<sup>1</sup> Built landscapes are made up of a physical and metaphorical components which can be read like a text to uncover social norms and cultural phenomena, such as current perspectives on race, class, and gender, and even our concepts of community, family, individuality, and democracy. What we build lays out symbols of the kind of people we are, culture we have created, while guiding us to exist within those boundaries. D.W. Meinig understands "all landscapes as symbolic, as expressions of cultural values, social behavior, and individual actions worked upon particular localities over a span of time."<sup>2</sup> As a particularly vivid illustration of this point Michael Sorkin explains "the physical city has historically mapped social relations with profound clarity, imprinting in its shapes and places vast information about status and order," for example there is a "bar graph of real estate values visible in the Manhattan skyline."<sup>3</sup>

As we live our lives passing from one kind of landscape to another, although we may observe the physical scene around us, we seldom question what a landscape tells us about our society, or how our

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<sup>1</sup> Groth, Paul. Living Downtown (Berkeley:University of California Press, 1994), p.xi.

<sup>2</sup> D.W. Meinig, ed., The Interpretation of Ordinary Landscapes: Geographical Essays (New York:Oxford University Press, 1979), p. 6.

<sup>3</sup> Micheal Sorkin. Variations on a theme Park (New York: Hill and Wong, 1992), p. xii.

actions are guided by it. We are more apt to look to symbolic figures or events to understand our contemporary and historical situation. We should, however, be aware of the wealth of information waiting for discovery, ever present but overlooked, that is right in front of us, in the landscape common and extraordinary. Recently many academics have been advocating a heightened awareness of landscapes for their sociological significance. Geographer Yi-Fu Tuan explains that when we learn to pay attention to the landscape "we learn to see not only how complex and various are the ways of human living but also how difficult it is to achieve anywhere a habitat consonant with the full potential of our being."<sup>4</sup> In the essay "Reading Architecture," Magali Sarafatti Larson argues for attention to be paid to all of the elements involved in landscape production and consumption: "the intentions of the sponsors and the designers," "the translation of the intended meaning into a building," and lastly, "how [consumers of the space] read the building and decode its message."<sup>5</sup> Pierce Lewis believes that the first thing to recognize about landscapes is that it "provides strong evidence of the kind of people we are, and were, and are in the process of becoming."<sup>6</sup> With all this information on hand Tuan believes that to read the landscape is a tool more than an end in itself, one which asks to be used for a purpose beyond simply knowing.<sup>7</sup> He advocates that urban planners, historians and sociologists seek out information in this way and put it to use.

Encouraged to read a landscape myself, I have chosen the historic Arrigoni Hotel in the North End of Middletown, currently known as Liberty Commons, by researching its transition from a prestigious residential hotel, to a run sown SRO, and finally supportive housing. I am interested in what the building tells us about the local society in terms of social trends, attitudes and beliefs, as well as ideologies. I am interested in what the history tells us about how the producers and consumers of space interact amongst themselves and with the physical space to perpetuate or redefine social constructs. The Arrigoni building has existed in various forms of a hotel and most recently exists as subsidized supportive housing. As this essay passes back and forth between a national historical survey and local

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<sup>4</sup> Meinig. Chapter 4, Yi-Fu Tuan. "Thought and Landscape," p. 101.

<sup>5</sup> Elizabeth Long, ed., *From Sociology to Cultural Studies: New Perspectives*, (Malden: Blackwell Publishers, 1979), chapter 2, Magali Sarfatti Larson. "Reading Architecture in the Holocaust Memorial Museum," p. 64.

<sup>6</sup> Meinig. Chapter 1, Lewis F. Pierce. "Axioms for reading the Landscape," p. 15.

<sup>7</sup>Tuan, p. 101.

events, it becomes clear that the stages which the Arrigoni has gone through are representative of a national trend in the perception, creation, and use of residential housing over the past century. My argument will support those of Dolores Hayden and Paul Groth which recognize how conceptions of what a residency can and ought to be, have been limited and confined by physical spaces which represented particular beliefs about decency, privacy, class status and community. I will propose that evidenced in the increase in single family homes and decrease in residential hotels throughout this century many lifestyles have not been accommodated or allowed for as a result of the types of housing in America. However, I have also found that individuals and groups with little or no involvement in the design and construction process do play an important role in deciding how a space is used. Individuals over the years have always either upheld or rebelled from the prescribed ways of living in space, but it is only recently, and with the support of institutions, that alternate forms of residence are beginning to reemerge. I will begin by describing the theoretical spectrum which attempts to explain how space derives meaning, or who decides its uses. I then move into a dialogue between national and local trends in residential hotels since the beginning of this century. I will conclude with the significance of the present day use of the Arrigoni building.

## **II. Theory: From Where Does Meaning Come?**

Theoretical and empirically based beliefs about landscapes span a continuum of ideas about how to understand power and meaning in relation to landscapes. Rather than opposites, the variation in viewpoints should be seen as two sides of the same coin. On the one hand, there is a paradigm which focuses on landscapes as a reflection of social constructs and norms, which are perpetuated through the design and use of the space. On the other hand, there is the belief that meaning is brought to landscapes almost completely by the people who live and work within these spaces. In this case people can either choose to create traditional meaning or act in opposition to what is customary. In Redesigning the American Dream Dolores Hayden addresses the issue of residencies from a perspective which emphasizes the power of landscapes as manifestations of our cultural beliefs which shape our lives and reinforce norms. Foucault on the flipside understands the structure of a landscape as limited in its ability to guide behavior and reinforce cultural beliefs. What he finds essential is how people act within space,

regardless of its form or intentions. Various other theorists included in my study fall more within one paradigm or the other. Because I believe that meaning is established in both ways in varying degrees and even simultaneously, I consider Paul Groth to present the most practical analysis of landscapes. Falling into the middle of the theoretical spectrum, Groth conducts an historical account of residential hotels by focusing on changes in their cultural context, as well as their design and use. It becomes evident that individuals do have a role in defining and creating meaning for a space but the context from which they choose their behavior is the larger cultural context which has also had a role in the creation of the landscape. More important than choosing a side to agree with, is to situate an actual landscape within this spectrum as a way of understanding what occurs in that particular situation and how power is mediated.

### Meaning is Introduced to Landscape Form

Space as defined by theorist Michel Foucault, "is fundamental in any form of communal life; space is fundamental in any exercise of power."<sup>8</sup> He explains that a place can not functionally be a force of liberation or resistance by nature of its physical structure, but may become either with the activity carried on in that place. It is therefore up to individuals to chose how to act within a space to give it meaning. Such a perspective comes from Foucault's beliefs that space and power are intimately connected and that power emerges from many different points and interactions. Power exists in more forms than those which we are most likely to identify, or "the terminal forms power takes" such as dominant institutions and groups.<sup>9</sup> Within this paradigm the everyday life of the individual is considered to be as influential as the collective culture or organizations. Foucault allows for every individual to have power in creating the landscape, not just the planning and zoning board, the financial supporters, or the designers of he landscape. However, Foucault explains "it can and does produce positive effects when it

<sup>8</sup>Simon During, ed., The Cultural Studies Reader (New York: Routledge, 1993), "Space Power and Knowledge," Michel Foucault, p. 168.

<sup>9</sup> Charles Lemert, ed. Social Theory: The Multicultural and Classic Readings, (Boulder: Westview Press, 1993), "Power and Knowledge," Michel Foucault, p. 518.

the liberating intentions of the architect coincide with the real practice of people in the exercise of their freedom."<sup>10</sup>

It is important to the meaning of the space and to its social function that the same space could be used in different ways at different periods in history depending on the cultural and social climate.<sup>11</sup> The physical space does not by nature of its design and structural form result in the behavior, but because of the social attitudes and norms of the time, conventional behaviors are the end to which it is used. Thus in order to fully understand the meaning in space it is necessary to consider the built space in its cultural context; "it would be somewhat arbitrary to try to dissociate the effective practice of freedom by people, the practice of social relations, and the spatial distributions in which they find themselves."<sup>12</sup> Multiple elements must work in combination to define a space: the material element of a built space, the ideological beliefs about that space which are evident in the discourse surrounding it, and finally the practical use of the space.

With this understanding of power, I can study what involvement and influence the people living in a new style residential hotel such as Liberty Commons actualize and bring to their space both before and after renovations. It is an understanding which allows for people not involved in the planning and governance of space, or people without financial abilities to build and create, to take part in the formation of meaning in their community. While such a definition of power does not allow for complete victimization, and requires that we all partake in the exercise of power, neither does this understanding of power assert that all forms of power will be equal or will result in equal outcomes, or that it will be used to a constructive end. Rather we must ask what is the contemporary ideology in which we should contextualize this landscape, what are the social values from which landscapes are being built and also deriving meaning.

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<sup>10</sup>Foucault in During. p. 163.

<sup>11</sup>Ibid., p. 169.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid., p. 163.

## Landscape as Manifestation and Perpetuation of Social Constructs

Moving away from a Foucauldian analysis, the alternate theoretical perspective which considers the cultural context, and not the desires of the individual, as most significant in creation of meaning, necessarily emphasizes landscapes as a part and reflection of that context. Dolores Hayden proposes a useful explanation of the ways in which the design and construction of our residencies have had an enormous impact in guiding how we live. I use her analysis to set the stage for, and make sense of, the opposition towards residential hotels. Because her focus is on ideological and symbolic powers, not economic, I attempt to briefly explain why such an analysis is sufficient.

I find it appropriate and necessary to understand that the capitalist society in which we exist is ever present in its influence on built landscapes. Magali Larson considers the individual building, a microcosm of a full landscape, and claims that "arguably, the first meaning of a building is economic: independently of other connotations, a building connotes the complex political economy of construction that gives it birth."<sup>13</sup> David Harvey refers to this presence as a result of "urbanization," or the process of capital "as it unfolds through the production of physical and social landscapes and the production of consciousness."<sup>14</sup> It will become evident with a look at residential hotels "how capitalism creates a physical landscape of roads, houses factories, schools, shops, and so forth in its own image and what the contradictions are that arise out of such processes of producing space."<sup>15</sup> Class status is not only elemental in the financial ability to construct landscapes but it is also evident in the structural design. Harvey clearly reinforces what I believe to be so interesting about space; "hierarchical structures of authority or privilege can be communicated directly through forms of spatial organization and symbolism."<sup>16</sup>

Sharon Zukin also believes the primary point of meaning to be defined by economic structure but she incorporates some of a Foucauldian perspective which corresponds more closely to my own understanding of landscapes. "Landscape," Zukin explains, "represents the architecture of social class."

<sup>13</sup>Larson. p. 63.

<sup>14</sup>Harvey David. Consciousness and the Urban Experience (Maryland: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1985), p. xvii.

<sup>15</sup>Ibid., xvii.

<sup>16</sup>Ibid., p. 23.

gender, and race relations imposed by powerful institutions."<sup>17</sup> Yet, to advocate that individuals do have the ability to act autonomously, she proclaims "if [suburbia] was marked at all as a landscape of power it was surely the power of individuals in America to make their own destiny."<sup>18</sup> However this is not outside an economic context, for "the continued development of the suburbs testified to the presence of large-scale, bureaucratic and economic power."<sup>19</sup> Once it is established that economics must be considered we can then move on to what I find to be the more intriguing elements surrounding landscapes--symbolic and ideological constructions inscribed in physical forms.

### III. Models of Residency: Suburban Dream House or Residential Hotel

The Arrigoni building has been a residence in various forms throughout its history. As a residential hotel and later as supportive housing, such multi-unit dwellings are both uncommon and have endured stigmatization within the US context. By beginning with an analysis of the more common form of housing, the single family suburban home we can begin to understand how communal and private homes have come to symbolic and practical opposition. Dolores Hayden looks at American homes and neighborhoods as a landscape which reflects our collective consciousness in terms of race, class, and especially gender and how these ideas are reproduced and supported. The single family home was a representation of domesticity as opposed the residential hotel which represented deviancy. Hayden addresses the implications that the "dream house" ideal has had on many aspects of society and our individual lives, to the point that she identifies many of our social problems as stemming from, or intertwined with the way we build and arrange housing. She quotes the architectural critic, Ada Loiusé Huxtable, as saying "housing remains architecture's and society's chief unsolved problem."<sup>20</sup> By altering the private home landscape on a large scale, Hayden believes the varied lifestyle types in America today could be more productively and satisfactorily fulfilled.

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<sup>17</sup>Sharon Zukin, Landscapes of Power (Berkeley: University of California, 1991), p. 16.

<sup>18</sup> Zukin, p. 141

<sup>19</sup>Zukin, p. 141.

<sup>20</sup>Dolores Hayden, Redesigning the American Dream: The Future of Housing Work and Family Life (New York: W.W. Norton and Company, 1984), p. 101.

After the industrial revolution, a new trend evolved in America which "for the first time in history....has created a utopian ideal based on a house rather than on the city or the nation."<sup>21</sup> Although the city had been touted as the "spatial expression" of democracy, it lost its allure with steadily rising crime and chaos.<sup>22</sup> The suburban home tried to be as antithetical to the city as possible. The suburban home was "a haven for the family, a temple of refined culture," especially for women and children.<sup>23</sup> It represented comfort, calm, and luxury as opposed to the city -- a sphere of business. This post-industrial suburban ideal contrasted with that displayed by the towns and villages of early American settlers which idealized a balance between personal space and social space so that private property of the home was cherished as much as the town commons or green. Yet the new suburban home ideal which focuses more on domesticity, the individual, and immediate family has remained dominant until the present day.

The first suburban homes were built for the upper class who could afford to escape the city, but soon the middle and working classes were seen as potential markets and in 1910 industrial towns to house workers began to be built. Workers were beginning to be seen as consumers "who could buy a family home and fill it with possessions, who would want such a place to go to at the end of the day."<sup>24</sup> A second nationwide construction boom came with housing goals for the W.W.II veterans. It was now the suburban home which was the "spatial representation"<sup>25</sup> of American hopes for the good life. Less than ideal for women the dream house was highly gendered. The design of the home is specifically for a nuclear family consisting of at minimum a living room, kitchen, master bedroom, children's bedroom/s, and bathroom, all set on a plot of land enough for a front and back yard, possibly a garage. The individual homes promoted the assumption that someone stay home to cook, take care of the children, and do the housekeeping, while another participate in the workforce. The particular cultural at the time proclaimed that it was women who should stay home and men who work. In addition to gender role assumptions, because suburban communities werer strictly residential and often far from commercial and

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<sup>21</sup> Hayden, p. 18.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid.

<sup>23</sup> Gwendolyn Wright, Rebuilding the Dream (New York: Pantheon Books, 1981), p. 94.

<sup>24</sup> Hayden, p. 33.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid., p. 24.

business districts, the suburban home assumed a certain socioeconomic status which would allow residents access to cars and jobs nearby. The wave of construction after W.W.II kept the private home so in line with the established model that no consideration for local climate or uniqueness was reflected in the design. Row after row of homes with the customary large picture windows in the tree-less south west maintained homogeneity of national style but also created the need for high energy year round temperature controlling, as well as water resources beyond what was naturally present.

Surprisingly enough we have historically been very unaware of the impact of our housing forms on other elements in our life. Hayden explains that "together space, time and money intersect to establish the physical settings where all the events of life will be staged" yet we do not often enough look to the interaction of these elements as a source of discontent in our lives, and instead blame ourselves for not being able to juggle all three when they are coordinated in a biased way.<sup>26</sup> For example she explains, "American's often say, 'There aren't enough hours in the day,' rather than 'I am so frantic because the distance between my home and my work place is too great'."<sup>27</sup> Similarly Hayden points out that we complain about not having enough money to live in a nice neighborhood instead of being angry at the fact that only wealthy people have access to safe and beautiful neighborhoods.<sup>28</sup> In fact we should look at the way space is shaped, distributed and built to find the culprit.

The assumed naturalness of this the suburban home has emerged due to a lack of attractive alternatives as well as compliance with that void. But there is no reason why more types can not exist that are accommodating to a more liberating or consciences style of life can not exist. Hayden presents the probability that by the year 2000 we will need 20 million new units of housing, the majority of which will be for single parent families.<sup>29</sup> If suburban homes ever were appropriate for anyone is debatable, but Hayden argues that it is definitely "no longer appropriate today."<sup>30</sup> She does not suggest it is inappropriate because of revolutionary perspectives on the roles of women, as much as the practicality of living in such spaces considering the changes in lifestyles for men and women because of family and

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<sup>26</sup> Hayden, p. 39.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid., p.176.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid., p.40.

work arrangements. Issues of jobs, services, transportation, daycare, food preparation, recreation, socializing and aesthetics all need to be reconsidered for the varying types of families that actually exist. To attempt to house us all in suburban homes out of a lack of other alternatives, only results in oppressing varying lifestyles and fosters conformity when it may not be necessary or appropriate. Hayden acknowledges that Americans are not demanding communal housing which would limit the private lives we enjoy, but he argues that they do want community services and support which allow their private lives to exist on their own terms and in a healthy way.<sup>31</sup>

Change will come if and when we "reconstruct the social, economic, and spatial bases of our beliefs about individual happiness, solid family life, and decent neighborhoods."<sup>32</sup> Although the individual is not seen as the source of the oppression within the suburban home, while the societal context is, Hayden does recognize that the residents have chosen to act in accordance with that context. Whether behavior is due to their agreement with the roles or obliviousness to the impact of the landscape in which they live, it is necessary that the individuals take part in reconstruction. Change "must involve individuals, families, neighbors' groups, citizen's groups, local officials, national policy makers, and practitioners in the planning and design professions."<sup>33</sup> All actors combined must work for "economic [and]...architectural restructuring of neighborhood space,"<sup>34</sup> in order to "move beyond the conventions of gender imbedded in traditional housing design as well as in concepts of consuming."<sup>35</sup> An alternative which was in symbolic and literal competition with the single family home in the 19th and early 20th centuries was the residential hotel. In Living Downtown, Paul Groth argues that this type of housing was desired for it did not delineate roles but fostered independence and accommodated for the multiplicity of lifestyles that people lead. Groth's analysis displays how, in varying degrees, design and cultural prescriptions interact with individual practices to result in different lifestyles and uses of a space. A residential hotel is defined as a "multi-unit commercial housing, usually without a private kitchen."<sup>36</sup> Furniture and linens are provided and usually some amount of housekeeping as well. The entrance to

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<sup>31</sup> Hayden, p.179.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid., p. 59.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid., p. 15.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid., p.179.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid., p. 169.

<sup>36</sup> Groth, p.4.

each unit is through a public space or hallway and not through another persons residency. Rooms are rented out by the day, week or month and use of the room over a month legally makes the person a resident of that locality. Because the units do not have kitchens or other features of a private home the hotel residents depend on the neighborhood for food, laundry, and socializing. The existence of residential hotels determined the independent lifestyle of many people while even guiding their desire to this end. But the consumers of hotel services, regardless of class, were able to influence the structure of the hotels, and as an extension, social norms by acting in certain ways, or when a choice was available, patronizing the places that accommodated certain lifestyles. Meaning was both established and created in the residential hotel.

The hotel as a place of residence challenged and threatened lifestyle norms, especially the single family home as the accepted and model type. Groth proposes that "hotel life can be virtually untouched by the social contracts and tacit supervision of life found in a family house or apartment unit shared with a group."<sup>37</sup> Because of this, individuals were able to use the space as they pleased; hotels of all classes offered more personal freedom in general than any other form of housing. People with all kinds of irregular and unpredictable schedules could find in a hotel accommodations to fit their lifestyle. Women found residential hotels especially liberating from their expected role as a homemaker. By living in a hotel, and to the horror of some conservatives, they had the time to focus on a career or even just a social life. The upper to the lower classes desired the downtown location of the hotels for social and business purposes. Criminals desired the hotel life because of the generally unintrusive attitude of the desk workers could allow much to go on in a hotel before interfering. The unprecedented proximity of single males and females encouraged high levels of socializing with low levels of intrusion. In the early part of this century such intermixing was infrequent and scorned outside of hotels, yet both men and women advanced and established new lifestyles and sexual codes of conduct by enjoying and seeking out these mixed gender living environments. Yet even amongst the unconventional activities and beliefs, there remained an attempt to make hotel life as close to the domestic norm, as fireplaces, symbolic of domesticity, were continually made part of the hotel room even once sophisticated central heating

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<sup>37</sup> Groth, p.7.

systems were in place. Thus, the residential hotel, which allowed for considerable autonomous activity, was doubly a place that had specific intentions for its use based on symbolic significance.

The four types of residential hotels present a blueprint of social stratification in American society. The capitalist class has been responsible not only for building hotels, cities and their interdependence, but also for stimulating the emergence of a laboring class dependent on the cheapest form of lodging available. Hotels from palace to flop house thus emerged. Palace hotels were the most elaborate and opulent of the four hotel types which have historically existed in the United States. Their status came from a history in which until the 1890s, when office buildings took the title, hotels were the "city's most important landmarks," and "unlike city halls or office buildings, one could live in these landmarks."<sup>38</sup> Not only would palace hotels serve to structure the social groups of the elite and those aspiring, but to rank and maintain the lower classes as well. At its best a palace hotel was seen as the microcosm of a successfully segregated and stratified future city.<sup>39</sup> The palace hotel, explains Groth was a type of space "where urban elite from the 1820's to the 1890's experimented with the new organization of space" and for a particular end of class segregation.<sup>40</sup> Planners, developers, academics and city decision makers alike, all understood the ability of the palace hotels to work as "increasingly efficient machines for keeping people of different strata and classes in their place."<sup>41</sup>

The service and social benefits of living in the palace hotel were the result of class separation. The physical design of the hotels served to stratify the consumers of the hotel offerings amongst themselves, as well as in a class above the producers of the services. The dining rooms and balconies are examples of "hotel spaces [which] helped to shape the social consciousness derived from daily life and were spatial tools often consciously wielded by members (and would be members) of the elite."<sup>42</sup> There was a successful attempt made to keep the workings, or production, of the hotel virtually invisible and seemingly effortless, so as not to interfere with the lives of the residents, or consumers.<sup>43</sup> The separate elevators and designated employee passageways and rooms, allowed that all the services needed be

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<sup>38</sup> Groth, p.37.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid., p. 53.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid., p.54.

supplied upon request with the least possible notice of the workers. Palace hotels went so far as to include restaurants, newsstands, tailor shops and other retail operations within the hotel interior so that the average person on the street would not easily know about or have access to these areas.<sup>44</sup>

Groth explains, "An imposing hotel became an essential ingredient for any aspiring city in the battle to attract new capital investors and professionals."<sup>45</sup> The palace hotel in the late 1800s became a residency for the rich who were interested in a home located in the middle of the downtown, as well as continuous service provision, and increased socializing possibilities. To reside in a hotel allowed for a luxury life like those in a mansion or flat yet the upkeep responsibilities were completely removed. Hotel residents were not involved in management of servants, maintenance of the structure, or preparations for entertainment, yet they reaped the benefits of all these elements carried out by others. Groth identifies one of the main attractions of the hotel life over other private spaces was the "selectivity"<sup>46</sup> of privacy. Even while the first floor of the hotel was a public, yet exclusive, area, once above it complete privacy was possible. The downtown location and lounges, dining rooms, banquet rooms, restaurants and bars made the palace hotel a prime social center perfect for living gregarious lifestyles.<sup>47</sup> All of these spaces were architecturally impressive and generally only accessible to the elite. To make one's home in such an environment required a high level of personal maintenance and "conspicuous consumption as social competition strategies."<sup>48</sup> All of which horrified reformers and moralists.

Just as the elite wanted access to the benefits of downtown and hotel life, so did a considerable section of the middle class. In midpriced hotels, which copied palace hotels as much as financially possible, they found this option available. The residents were men and women, single and with families who made up the "mobile professional class" of the expanding urban economy.<sup>49</sup> Both the shortage of supply in single-family middle-class dwellings for the population who wanted them, and a significant number of people who wanted an urban existence for at least that part of their life, resulted in the demand

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<sup>44</sup> Groth, p.191.

<sup>45</sup> Ibid., p.39.

<sup>46</sup> Ibid., p.31.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid., p. 28.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid., p.45.

<sup>49</sup> Ibid.

for midpriced hotels.<sup>50</sup> Interestingly enough, the midpriced hotels served more to the "personal and practical" aspects of the residents lives, than to social lives as in the palace hotels.<sup>51</sup> For the middle-class hotel life meant freedom from domestic burdens so that they could have professions, careers or in some cases simply focus on a social life. For many men and women, the hotel life gave them more luxury than would be possible if they owned their own home or rented an apartment; the fancy furniture and services of the hotel were beyond their means for ownership. Because their incomes were substantially lower than that of men, women more often shared rooms in order to pay the rent. Residents who were on the tightest budgets often wanted to cook in their rooms and would do so even against the rules of the management. Eventually some hotels responded to the need and installed small kitchenettes. Because of the wide distribution of wealth in the middle class, midpriced hotels varied in size and quality. The number of rooms in a midpriced hotel ranged from 12 to 300, residents often occupied two rooms, and the hotels usually provided spaces for throwing dinner parties and entertaining guests.<sup>52</sup> By 1910 almost all midpriced hotels had at least a sink in each room, and by 1930 private baths.<sup>53</sup>

Existing simultaneously with the midpriced and palace hotels were those which served the less affluent members of society. It is in response to these in particular that the most opposition to hotel living emerged, and as a result of the opposition the status of most residential hotels diachronically declined. When the option of a boarding house diminished as proprietors stopped serving meals to their renters, the rooming house took its place.<sup>54</sup> Rooming houses were usually much smaller in overall size and in terms of individual quarters. Minimal furnishings were provided. Often such residencies were located on the second floor of a building above retail shops or businesses, and were rarely equipped with an elevator. Sometimes they were made out of buildings never intended for residential uses, or even specifically built so that they could be transformed easily into office space if the need arose.<sup>55</sup> Privacy was less in the rooming house than in their richer cousin facilities, both in terms of increased visibility as well as weak acoustic barriers.

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<sup>50</sup> Groth, p.88.

<sup>51</sup> Ibid., p.56.

<sup>52</sup> Ibid., p.70.

<sup>53</sup> Ibid.

<sup>54</sup> Ibid., p.93.

<sup>55</sup> Ibid., p.97.

For the fluctuating population and economy characteristic of the industrial city of the early 20th century, rooming houses served a particular need for the residents as well as the capitalist classes. rooming houses provided the lodgings for, and facilitated the lifestyle of, those working in temporary and mobile jobs. In effect they supported the reproduction of the worker, and by extension, the business of the capitalist class. Many residents were young and low paid but skilled white-collar and blue-collar workers. They were looking for a space that was close to businesses, or the factories, and especially entertainment. Despite the minimal quality the residents of rooming houses came to them for the same reasons which the wealthy decided to live in a hotel -- convenience, independence, and social benefits.

The lifestyle in rooming houses was more piecemeal than in the more luxurious hotels. The sparse accommodations made it necessary for the residents to use all parts of their neighborhood to serve as the different parts of their home, one place for sleeping, another for eating, another for laundry, and yet another for socializing.<sup>56</sup> The main social group for residents formed out of the saloons or bars where they ate. With increased demand, the rooming house eventually provided a parlor for socializing which also served to represent a higher level of respectability to be associated with the establishment.<sup>57</sup> Still this residency was criticized because "absent were the architectural arrangements so important to the maintenance of the nuclear family concept and family proscriptions of behavior."<sup>58</sup> Nevertheless, contrary to popular opinion, most residents were not lacking in family values or morals, but were living a contradiction as a result of their economic circumstances. They had "strong family values but were living outside of a home," "dressed well but owned little clothing, wanted material goods and comforts but did not have the means for it, and aspired for economic security but could rarely find such jobs".<sup>59</sup> Residents were continually trying to defy the structural limitations and subsequent pre-judgments of their character. Perceived as such by others as well as themselves, rooming house residents were considered to be on the line of respectability, continually aspiring for more.<sup>60</sup>

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<sup>56</sup> Groth, p.127.

<sup>57</sup> Ibid., p.101.

<sup>58</sup> Ibid.

<sup>59</sup> Ibid., p.103.

<sup>60</sup> Ibid., p.90.

Although many residents did not participate in such behavior, the structure of the rooming house allowed for alienation and anonymity to the drug addicted as well as those dependent on illegal forms of gaining income. Often a family outcast such as a drunk, gambler, or mentally ill person would be sent to live in a rooming house. In general the residents were living a rejection of or deviation from the traditional Victorian social codes even while aspiring to the material, and some degree, social culture of the mainstream.<sup>61</sup> Whether they were aspiring to a higher social class or far from that achievement, the lifestyle of the rooming house resident raised concern with the moral order.

The final element to the economic stratification present in the American hotels was the lowest form of residential hotel, the cheap hotel or flop house, and later to be known as Single Resident Occupancies or SROs. These residencies had no restaurants or lounges, often the entrance was through a bar which doubled as the front desk. Some of these type existed as large buildings, dormitory style, or filled with roofless cubicles but with individual door locks. Lodgings were paid for by the day and varied in price according to the degree of privacy. The particular neighborhood which housed and supplemented the flop house came to be known for its bad reputation and labeled "skid row." The occupants of the cheapest hotels were very much considered the outcasts of society. Few women used the flop house and the majority of consumers were temporary and transient workers. These workers lowest on the socioeconomic ladder were not respected for the role they played; "they were unwelcome in most of the city but nonetheless essential for the volatile urban and rural economy."<sup>62</sup> Due to financial constraints many occupants used the flop house as a temporary home while in the transition to a more stable environment, some would use it periodically, and some would stay there all their lives. Those who did not work were disabled and the chronically drunk. The racial and ethnic ghettos always had a higher percentage of the cheapest hotels for the populations there were on the average of lower economic stability than the Anglo Saxon population. Irrespective of the reality, the most common stereotypes of SRO occupants are that they are "deviant, transient, lazy, dependent, and isolated."<sup>63</sup>

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<sup>61</sup> Groth, p.107.

<sup>62</sup> Ibid., p.132.

<sup>63</sup> Charles Hoch, and Robert A. Slayton, New Homeless and Old: Community and the skid Row Hotel (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1989), p. 126.

For almost the first century of the existence of the flop house, the exterior of the building was entirely suggestive of what existed on the inside -- the lowest class of society. The buildings like the people occupying them were struggling to keep together. It was not until the turn of the century that managers as well as city developers desired that the flop house have a facade that matched the commercial downtown. In this way the differences that did exist between the lower and upper classes could be disguised to the casual observer; "The public could imagine that the people inside the new buildings were perhaps not so drastically different a subculture" from the mainstream.<sup>64</sup> The trend came to be the creation of "remarkably schizophrenic lodging houses,"<sup>65</sup> in which the interior was the correct indicator of the socio-economic standing of the residents, and the exterior a mere facade. While the exterior renovations were often taken up by the managers as a way to upgrade their own social image, they cared less about the interiors. As the nice facades impressed a notion of acceptability upon the passersby, the dilapidated interiors constantly reminded the residents of their marginal place in society.<sup>66</sup> Only with the pressure of reformers and political battles did any regulation come to exist for the conditions of the interiors.

Consumer demand for the lifestyle shared among inhabitants of all residential hotel types constituted the largest action on the part of the consumer of space to control their own lifestyle. The paying customer would search for a place that matched their means and desires, so producers and owners tried to meet the demand. Nevertheless, the residential hotel was under fire for the allowance of both class and lifestyle freedoms, perceived as deviance. Fear and a misunderstanding of mobile, unsupervised, extravagant or deviant lives being lived in residential hotels, along with the rising ideal of the single family home, worked against the maintenance of residential hotels. Residential Hotels were thought of as breeding grounds for disease and criminal tendencies. Women residents with and without jobs were highly criticized and labeled lazy and disrespectable for not performing the traditional domestic role. Concern surrounded what would become of the family structure if women could be independent, and chose to be. An architectural journal from 1903 blamed the "promiscuous exclusivity" of the high

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<sup>64</sup> Groth, p.164.

<sup>65</sup> Ibid.

<sup>66</sup> Ibid., p. 227.

class residential hotels as "the most dangerous enemy American domesticity has had to encounter."<sup>67</sup> The mobility of the residents was seen as detrimental to the neighborhood which was the "essential element in the definition of community."<sup>68</sup> Lawrence Veiller, an outspoken housing reformist at the turn of the century, constructed his views out of conservative middle and upper class attitudes about urban density and mixture.<sup>69</sup> Promoting environmental determinism, he was sure that the elements of communal housing would result in "the destruction of civic spirit and the responsibilities of citizenship."<sup>70</sup> Evident in the debate over residential hotel living were issues of "the proper type of household, who should cook the food, how close Americans should live to their neighbors, who (if anyone) should have surveillance over an individual's activities, how mixed the land uses adjacent to American homes should be, and how committed Americans should be to material possessions."<sup>71</sup> Hotel living came to be considered the enemy of community, family, neighborhood, and democracy.

The characteristic of being a hotel resident was wrongly being used to define all hotel dwellers as one type of deviant person regardless of opposing facts and circumstances. That people lived in the most dilapidated buildings by choice or lack of alternatives was translated into a false character assessment which claimed they had a "deviant tolerance" for substandard living arrangements.<sup>72</sup> Many varieties of lifestyles did exist in hotels, but the reformers had ideologically positioned themselves to view any in a bad light. Paul Groth sufficiently explains the contradictions in perceptions of hotel living: "hotel housing did not provide proper individuality and personal expression, yet it fostered selfish individualism; hotel housing was pathologically isolating, yet it was not sufficiently private, no one supposedly met anyone in hotels, yet lodging houses were meeting places of great danger."<sup>73</sup> Additionally contradictory is that fact that although all hotel life was criticized, in many cases what the rich could get away with, the lower classes were scolded for. The cheapest hotels had the worst

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<sup>67</sup> Wright, p.150.

<sup>68</sup> Groth, p.227.

<sup>69</sup> Ibid., p.201.

<sup>70</sup> Ibid.

<sup>71</sup> Ibid., p.2.

<sup>72</sup> Hoch, p.223.

<sup>73</sup> Ibid., p. 230.

reputations, least expendable capital for improvements, and the residents were feasible targets with little clout or organization.

#### **IV. Reading the Landscape: The Local Arrigoni Hotel within the National Context**

The trends in residential hotels described by Groth are evident in the history of the Arrigoni. Beginning as a midpriced hotel, the Arrigoni encountered competition from single family homes, and building regulations. Parallel to the national decline of residential hotels overall, the Arrigoni declined from its high status to a run down SRO. The only people satisfied with the building in its worst state were those criminal who benefited from the unsafe and otherwise unaccommodating situation, and the negligent landlord. People uncomfortable with this environment did their best to maintain their own kind of lifestyle, but it was continually infringed upon by bad management practices and bothersome neighbors. Rather than a struggle ensuing between the residents, those who wanted to initiate change looked to the management, and when the opportunity arose, the program design of the building, as a method of establishing new precedent for behavior. I present the history of the Arrigoni amongst the national trend corresponding to a particular time period so to provide a possible explanation for the events. I explain the effects of policy, followed by the initiative of the consumers, and finally the most recent situation, the common ground between the two actors.

In 1914, Middletown, Connecticut was a prosperous and expanding city characteristic of the "Main Street" type of American landscape as described by D.W. Meinig which set its symbolic focus on commerce, not on the church.<sup>74</sup> In keeping with this type Middletown centered around a street lined with 3 to 4 story brick commercial buildings, decorated with 19th century ornate fenestrations and cornices. The homes in the Main Street landscape are Italianate and Victorian in style and sit on large plots of land sprinkled with trees. The less fancy homes spread further from the center of town until the countryside is spotted with farms and barns.<sup>75</sup> Middletown resembled this picture. As Meinig presents it, the idealized version of the Main Street landscape is a place midway between the frontier and the seaport, a commercial center with local industry but surrounded by agriculture, a tight knight and

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<sup>74</sup> Meinig, p.167.

<sup>75</sup> Ibid.

medium sized community which is not small enough to be stifling nor large enough to have big class divisions.<sup>76</sup> It is at once, the best of the city and the village, a place which preserved the ideal "small town virtues" considered to be the "backbone of America," while expanding the possibilities for capitalist activity.<sup>77</sup> Although it was named for its central location between Hartford and Saybrook, Middletown is a fitting name for a place of the Main Street landscape type for the model and reality are considered the "middle in many connotations."<sup>78</sup> In 1914 The Arrigoni Hotel was constructed along Main Street and served this landscape type well. From its construction to its occupancy, it represented the capitalist realities and aspirations of the city.

Located in scenic Connecticut on the banks of the Connecticut river, Middletown was a tourist attraction, manufacturing center, and important transition and distribution point for water to land shipment of goods, especially coal and oil. In 1914 approximately five hotels provided lodging for those passing through and residing in Middletown. In that year, local entrepreneurs, Frank and Dionigi Arrigoni of Arrigoni and Brother Inc. added a high class hotel to those which already served the community. On the corner of Liberty and Main Street, a block already owned by the brothers, a furniture store was renovated and expanded upon to create a 5 story, 36 room hotel, supplied with five private dining rooms, an elevator, modern kitchen, and a cafe described as "the most luxurious in the city."<sup>79</sup> The new hotel was located not far from Union Railroad Station in the North End of town, an intersection of two rail lines serving the tourists and travelers who passed through. Although I am unaware of the outcome, the Arrigoni brothers were even considering buying more of the block to accommodate a garage for their guests.<sup>80</sup>

Frank and Dionigi had emigrated from Italy to Middletown in 1894 and 1895 respectively, and succeeded in living out the American Dream. After working as wood choppers and living in a shack for more than a year in order to save money, the brothers quickly moved up the socio-economic ladder to become road contractors, coal transports, theater corporation managers, and hotel owners. They were

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<sup>76</sup> Ibid.

<sup>77</sup> Ibid.

<sup>78</sup> Ibid.

<sup>79</sup> "Arrigoni Hotel Opening Night," Penny Press, March 22, 1915, p. 8, col. 1.

<sup>80</sup> "Arrigoni Hotel Opening Night," Penny Press, March 22, 1915, p. 8, col. 1-2.

locally applauded for being "fine examples of what can be done by persons who have stout hearts and business capacity."<sup>81</sup> The brothers increased their public presence by serving as political figures, legislators and selectmen. Being well known and influential public figures, the Arrigoni Brothers brought, with the creation of their new hotel, a higher level of prestige to Middletown and to their own public image.

In an attempt to make Middletown a small city with the highest level of class, the Arrigoni Hotel had to fit certain characteristics. As it was reported in the local paper "the interior of the building has been fitted up like a palace and nothing has been spared to make the Arrigoni one of the best small hostelry in the state."<sup>82</sup> The kitchen was equipped with all the most modern technology as well as a "first class hotel chef," and a cold storage room considered big enough to accommodate a hotel twice its size.<sup>83</sup> The new manager, J. Ascerboni, was highly regarded for having had 30 years of hotel experience up and down the East Coast. To supplement advertisements and press coverage, the Arrigoni Hotel made itself visibly known with "large electric signs [which] can be seen for miles around," as well as with an electric sign on the first floor presenting the cafe.

The building is rectangular in shape with the shorter side and at least one entrance facing Main Street. At a height of five stories and with a green iron dome topping of the semi-circular corner, it is one of the most imposing structures in the North End. Light yellow concrete, brick and cut stone were used on the outside and foundation; the interior structure is made of iron. The vertically strong windows on the rounded corner and sides of the building, extend from the bottom to the top floors and draw the eyes of the observer up the building to accentuate its vertical impressiveness. The outside walls of the building are relatively smooth until a lip at the sill of the fifth floor windows which sets apart and highlights the fifth floor. The higher quality of the rooms and views on this floor were thus designated and identified. The only additional feature which stands out on the exterior are the sets of three sided window boxes which rise upwards from the second floor. Originally, I imagine, that on any floor the rooms with these windows would have been more impressive and expensive.

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<sup>81</sup> "Arrigoni Brothers Dissolve Their Big Interest," Penny Press, January 19, 1923, p.1, col 1.

<sup>82</sup> "Arrigoni Hotel Opening Night," Penny Press, March 22, 1915, p. 8, col. 1.

<sup>83</sup> Ibid.

Soon after its construction the Arrigoni Hotel became a center for social and political events. The Brothers often entertained the highest class guests by holding banquets, as in 1916 for 231 of the Middlesex County Republicans; or for groups of the most important state politicians who were considered friends of the Arrigoni Brothers.<sup>84</sup> More than once the Hotel was the gathering point for massive crowds to watch the local Dare-Devil, Jack Reynolds, climb the side of the building with his fingers and toes. During the first decade or so of its existence the Arrigoni Hotel underwent modernizing renovations so as to not let Middletown fall behind the times, or to lose its reputation.

The Arrigoni brothers, as a continuation of their entrepreneurial activities, dissolved their partnership in 1923 so that Dionigi took full ownership of the Arrigoni Hotel while Frank continued the contracting company with the new addition of his son, and under the name Frank Arrigoni and Son. Not more than seven months later Frank Arrigoni and Son renovated Hotel Middletown almost directly across the street from the Arrigoni Hotel and created the Middlesex Hotel. This new lodging, with only 27 rooms, 4 floors, 2 dining rooms, 1 restaurant and banquet room, and simple white and blue finish, would be less elegant than the Arrigoni Hotel at least until 1933 when the dining room of the newer hotel underwent serious renovations.

In Middletown after the 1920s the number of hotels declined but it is not entirely clear that this is directly a result of the national campaign against them. The decline could have been linked to the depression or simply events specific to each case. While the endeavors of the Arrigoni brothers were prosperous, for some hotel owners business, became so bad they shut down. A well known hostelry which had been used by "men of prominence in city affairs,"<sup>85</sup> run by a city councilman, and owned in the family for 40 years, shut down in 1926. Also, in 1934 the 28 year old Park Hotel closed down its 26 room establishment because the owner found the hotel business to be "a losing venture in the last few years."<sup>86</sup> In the case of both hotel closings, the proprietors mentioned that a loss of business due to the closing of the local performance theaters had a significantly negative impact on their prosperity.<sup>87</sup> The

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<sup>84</sup> "Arrigoni Brothers To Give Big Dinner," Middletown Press, January, 20, 1921, p.1, col. 5.

<sup>85</sup> "Another Landmark to Dissappear," Middletown Press, December 18, 1926, p.1, col. 6.

<sup>86</sup> Ibid.

<sup>87</sup> Ibid.

decline thus had to do with a loss of the tourist and temporary patronage not necessarily a decline in the demand for residential space in hotels.

From 1928 to 1930, several formal inquiries were made into the demand for new hotels in Middletown, all of which claimed that there was enough potential local and tourist patronage for at least one more hotel provided it was in the right location and sufficiently accommodating. During the process of assessment, in addition to park restricted, restricted residence, general residence, and commercial/industrial, the Common Council of the City created a new restricted hotel zone. The restricted hotel zone required accordance with certain characteristics in order to maintain the residential appearance of the neighborhood, such as large front and back yards to match those of surrounding buildings. The presence of the lawns was used both as a buffer between public and private space and as an indicator of land ownership as in private residencies. There are, however, several elements of the new zone that do not correspond to the attempt at maintaining the neighborhood feel. The hotels were required to have a minimum of 50 rooms, and could be as tall or large as desired.<sup>88</sup> When this zone was proposed for the corner of Washington and High street, a neighbor to the proposed site raised serious concerns. He was wary about what a hotel structure next to his own home would do to his property value in conjunction with quality of life.<sup>89</sup> With the power of the assessments made and political leaders backing the new zone, it was implemented, and specifically for the location in dispute.

In 1933 the Middlesex Hotel owned by Frank Arrigoni, across the street from the Arrigoni Hotel, underwent renovations to add new dining facilities which would provide lavish accommodations to out of town guests and hotel residents while concurrently appealing to the non-guest local residents. Newspaper descriptions suggested that the new complex would prove to be more elegant than any others in town. The new features would be a restaurant to seat 75 people equipped with the only oyster bar in town, a grill room for 60, a lunch room for 25, as well as private dining rooms on the side. The main floor of the restaurant would have a dance floor, space for bands or an orchestra, and dining alcoves. Above the dance floor was a balcony from which the private dining rooms extended. The grill room was

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<sup>88</sup> "High Street Hotel Zone Petition Gains Approval," Middletown Press, February, 25, 1930, p. 1, col. 1.

<sup>89</sup> "Hubbard Goes To Court Over Inn Plan," Middletown Press, May 9, 1929, p. 1, col.3.

expected "certain to become a high place in Middletown's social life."<sup>90</sup> The hotels would bring in the latest high class trends, a space for gathering and a sign of the changing times. Whether or not the grill did become the center of the social scene, the potential for hotels to become that is understood.

### Sources Of Meaning: Policy and Design

Eventually the pressure against residential hotels developed from simple talk of their indecency to action in the form of governmental policy. In the 1920s began the sixty year decline in one of the most historically established forms of housing in the nation, and a simultaneous destruction of the accommodation for lifestyles that strayed from the nuclear family model. Although opposition theoretically pointed at all classes of hotels, the least expensive ones suffered the worst attack. It would not be until the late 1970's was there an attempt to investigate alternate forms of housing. Finally at this point people began to realize that "hotel living is not only viable but essential to urban economy and urban society,"<sup>91</sup> and attempt to bring back to life the nearly dead residential hotel or newer forms of it.

The first two decades of the 20th century were characterized by much talk and little significant action on the part of residential hotel critics. However, this was just a prelude to the onslaught of policy creation and implementation that would try its best to wipe out the existence of the lower class residential hotels. The result was the decline in residential hotels across the board, for while for the luxury hotels escaped harm from regulations the demand for them suffered. What the social reformers had come to find was that to attempt to modify the behavior of people, especially those in hotels, by regulating dancing, drinking, and gambling was generally ineffectual. The power of spatial manipulation is clear in that the reformers instead attempted to regulate the spaces in which these activities took place, for "building codes had more specific effects than moral codes."<sup>92</sup> In 1913 the federal Commission of Immigration and Housing was formed and would be the governmental body which created new regulations for hotels. Some of the issues this department addressed were related to the health and safety fostered in the buildings, the ratio of bathrooms to people, size of rooms, air and light wells, cooking

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<sup>90</sup> "Richard Grant Has A New Restaurant," Middletown Press, October 31, 1933, p.1, col. 6.

<sup>91</sup> Groth, p.4.

<sup>92</sup> *Ibid.*, p.245.

facilities, and emergency exits. The renovations required for meeting the new standards demanded that the hotels be larger all around. The smallest hotels with little capital were unable to make changes and had to close down, those which could adapt could do so only with a rent increase, changing the type of people able to use them. With these actions The Commission of Immigration and Housing basically did away with an entire section of American housing that was serving a particularly poor and vulnerable part of the population.<sup>93</sup> Some of the displaced may have found a way to pay more rent or move into the philanthropic but more regulated shelters, and some would only look forward to the streets for their next home.

The destruction of so many hotels may not have been problematic had they been replaced with better quality residencies which were within the price range of those displaced; yet this rarely happened. In the attempt to improve housing standards and conditions what was built on a large scale were higher priced private homes. Much of the New Deal housing reform programs were created specifically to stimulate construction of single family housing nationwide. The newly established Federal Housing Act of 1934 stimulated the consumption of these homes through mortgage and loan provision. Just such a program would advocate single family dwellings and indirectly if not directly shun hotels along with other forms of multiple-unit housing.<sup>94</sup>

The policy measures of the 1930's are anticipated by an earlier Department of Labor campaign called "Own Your Own Home" which not only supported the moral claims of the private home, but also planned to gain an economic advantage off of construction. The alternate models of residence are starkly juxtaposed in a Middletown paper from 1916 which displays side by side an article about the Arrigoni Hotel and a Department of Labor advertisement titled "Want Your Own Home Build It." A quaint two story home is shown surrounded by advertisements for the tools and businesses that can help you build it. The ad put out by a lumber company says "All Homes are Houses- But Not All Houses are Homes. A house is just the beginning of a home. If you live in a rented house your interest stops with the rent. If you live in a home your interest never dies. Your home includes the house and every inch of ground

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<sup>93</sup> Groth, p. 245.

<sup>94</sup> Groth, p. 276.

around it. You have interest in your street and town and others recognize your rights and interests."<sup>95</sup> The fear of diminishing values is evident in the assertion that an owned single family home on a plot is what creates an interest in the neighborhood, and community spirit. If the interest of the renter stops with the rent then it follows that the interest stops even shorter for the resident who pays by the day, and has no possessions but her clothing. The advertisement suggests that a house is not a home until various elements are in place, socially constructed definitions of life are established, and the correct material goods are owned. Ironically enough, the suburban ideal seems to manifest the same desires those who live in hotels are looking for -- both individuality and community -- only a different form. The suburban community is one of autonomous neighbors who all own their own plots, just as the hotel community is one of autonomous residents who live in their own rooms.

An additional assault on the residential hotel came out of a process of separation and specialization trends which had begun as early as the 1880's. Increased zoning standards for downtown and the suburbs limited the mixed uses of space so as to separate residential and commercial uses. Because the residential hotel straddled the line between a commercial operation and a residential building it was in a precarious position. Restrictive zoning took the best advantage of this ambiguity and tried to eliminate the residential hotel. In San Francisco for example, the Planning and Zoning board designated that hotels only exist in second residential areas, where no other commercial uses were allowed. Neither were hotels supposed to be in the downtown any longer. The very essential elements of hotel life which involved and depended on the nearby commercial enterprises, eating and socializing, laundry and entertainment, were left with no means for satisfaction. Nor was the residential hotel considered a true residency. Supreme Court Justice George Sutherland of Ohio in 1926 advanced separation by his ruling in a land use case for the "creation and maintenance of residential districts, from which business and trade of every sort, including hotels, and apartment houses, are excluded."<sup>96</sup>

That residential hotels were not considered to be true residencies increased to the point of formally ignoring them as such. Hotels as residencies were not included or considered in government, planning and reform reports. Reports done as a part of the New Deal urban renewal in 1939, and for the

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<sup>95</sup> "Want Your Own Home - Build It," Middletown Press, July 2, 1923, p.2.

<sup>96</sup> Groth, p.252.

Census of Housing in 1940 both ignored residential hotels as a type of residency as well.<sup>97</sup> When the hubbub of advocacy for the destruction of the residential hotel died down, all that remained was the continued propaganda for the suburban home and thereby the eventual disappearance of the residential hotel from the public eye. As a result, hotel life became a less viable alternative among an already slim set of living options. Groth explains that "promoters of the new city planned for hotel living to be a deliberate casualty of the transition between the old city and the new city."<sup>98</sup> The old city was characterized by mixed uses and cultural chaos, whereas the new city was more industrialized and intended to be segregated by uses, supposedly for a better social end.

Between the depression and the 1980s the number of residential hotels steadily dropped. "Virtually no one built a new residential hotel between 1930 and 1980,"<sup>99</sup> and simultaneously, in fact, they were being taken down. Many SRO's were unable to comply with the new safety and building code standards of the 1950s due to financial constraints, this therefore added to their bad reputation but more frequently resulted in their subsequent closing down. Often owners wanted to close down because the business was becoming too burdensome and regulated to the point of losing profits. A dwindling of desire to live in the residential hotels on the part of the middle and upper class occurred in response to propaganda advocating the suburban home, as well as from a relative increase in incomes after the 1940s enabling many to afford a city apartment which would have been impossible earlier. In the 1950s and 60s the nicest hotels began to convert to mainly tourist services.<sup>100</sup> The urban renewal projects of the 1960s, focused on increasing office and retail space in the downtown, threatened hotels in a competition for space. Because of their financial vulnerability and little support the inexpensive residential hotel was the first to go. Groth explained that extinction of the entire type of housing seemed near because "through the 1970s, the federal government funded or assisted virtually no hotel style public housing other than college dormitories and too few studio apartments that might have replaced midpriced hotel housing."<sup>101</sup> Those who really came out with a loss were the working poor who did not experience a

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<sup>97</sup> Groth, p.260.

<sup>98</sup> Ibid., p.17.

<sup>99</sup> Ibid., p.264.

<sup>100</sup> Ibid., p.267.

<sup>101</sup> Ibid., p.276.

raise in income and so watched their most practical housing option disappear. The opposition to SROs in effect has resulted in the decline of "a community that makes achievement of marginal economic and social independence a practical possibility."<sup>102</sup> Elimination of this housing option makes low income living nearly impossible without being homeless. The potential for landscapes, as a reflection of social norms and trends, to guide and reinforce the acceptable ways of living is evident from the late 1930s on in that institutions which represented conventional attitudes continued to make obstacles for the creation or maintenance of residential hotels.

For the period of time between 1939 and 1988 I had difficulty finding primary sources for the local area so my information is limited. What is evident is that during this period the Arrigoni Hotel transformed from a midpriced hotel with palace pretensions to a poorly maintained SRO establishment stigmatized as a social problem rather than a civic landmark. Its descent down the status hierarchy parallels national trends in residential hotels fueled by the political economy and policy which promoted and built the suburban and single family home. It is during this period that the actions and beliefs of the federal decision makers were not conducive to the kind of lifestyle which many SRO residents desired. Beginning in the 1960s the residents as well as local and national decision makers created an atmosphere in which drug dealing and unreliable renters could exist. That is not to say that some residents were not in opposition to the activities taking place, for many did not live this lifestyle or condone it. But their disagreement made only little difference if any at all in the sphere beyond their own lives. Once the national climate changed there was more support from those with resources to create a healthy and accommodating environment. When the SRO was neglected as a type of housing, the residents could fight for their concerns but it was nevertheless hard to establish a high quality of life. The contrast of this period with the next will make it apparent that, as Foucault believed, the climate or context of a particular period is important in how a building is used by its inhabitants. The two potential actors, producers or consumers, are active and successful to varying degrees as the climate changed.

The Arrigoni Hotel remained in the Arrigoni family, passed from Dionigi to his three sons, until 1963 when it was sold to the March Corporation which already owned a hotel across Main Street. The

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<sup>102</sup> Hoch, p.236.

The first part of the report deals with the general situation in the country and the progress of the work of the Commission. It is followed by a detailed account of the work done during the year, and a summary of the results. The report is divided into three main parts: the first part deals with the general situation in the country, the second part deals with the work of the Commission, and the third part deals with the results of the work.

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name of the hotel changed to The Arriwani Hotel, Arriwani being the name of a tributary to the Connecticut River. Besides possibly re-opening the dilapidated dining room, no changes were intended for the building structure or its use as a hotel. The Arriwani became a low-income rooming house/SRO and housed about 36 people. During its use as a SRO hotel for the next 30 years the building underwent a decline in physical structure as well as in quality of life experienced within. The positive attitude towards the building slowly disappeared. Several unsuccessful attempts were made by local government to either fix up or get rid of the structure. In this case the building code regulations played a big part in progressing the movement towards elimination of the building because the owner would not implement the necessary repairs. Beginning in the 1980s there came to be new support from the institutional level which helped to overcome the code regulations as a financial obstacle.

The next period of decline is the result of an unreliable and ill-intentioned manager who only aided in the dilapidation and increasingly bad reputation of the building. His lackadaisical and criminal behavior in regards to the management of the hotel supplemented a distrust for the type of housing to begin with. John Cotter became the owner in 1985 and despite his claims to fix up the hotel did no such thing. It became an eyesore and social problem for the entire town and specifically the North End. Many of the residents were drug addicted or mentally ill, prostitution and drug dealing went on in and around the building, violent crime was frequent too. A particularly graphic description of the conditions is as follows: "human excrement in the halls, screams day and night, graffiti on the walls."<sup>103</sup> A resident who became so fed up with the conditions called the housing inspectors and filed a complaint; within a month Cotter was warned that he need to do improvements. He then lost his license to run the hotel due to violating the safety codes. In keeping with what Groth explained to be common practice of residential hotel owners, Cotter decided not to implement the necessary changes and instead put the building up for sale. No attempts were made to find replacement housing for the residents in the case that the city decided to shut it down. But the housing code enforcement officer, Raymond Santostefano, defended the city by explaining that at least unlike in the past the potential to condemn the building is being made known publicly and in advance. However, social service agencies responded that they would still not be

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<sup>103</sup> "Hotel Job Spurs New Fixup Bid," Middletown Press, Feb 27, 1988, pp. 1, 6.

able to accommodate all the people it would displace.<sup>104</sup> The bad management had direct consequences on the ability of residents to live in that space.

In 1988 the Arriwani was given a second chance as institutions stepped up to help finance the project. Cotter's former partner, Anthony J. Galazan, in partnership with the Affordable Housing Fund for Connecticut, a consortium of three state banks, offered to renovate the hotel into a better SRO. As the building is "located in the Main Street Historic District and was certified as contributing to the significance of that district,"<sup>105</sup> to proceed with renovations Galazan had to obtain permission from the US Department of the Interior to ensure that the building would not be extensively altered. Galazan obtained approval with a proposal which did not stray from the original floor plan, finishes, distinguishing features, or exterior. Only one of the two dining rooms was to be altered, and the use of the building as a hotel would remain the same.

The total renovation cost was estimated by Galazan to be \$1.5 million and the majority would come from the \$1.4 million mortgage approved by the Connecticut Housing Finance Authority. Additional funds of \$100,000 were offered by the state as a Community Development Block Grant. The remainder would come from a \$20 monthly rent increase per occupant. The initiative of the banks to fund this project was more financial than humanitarian for they would receive benefits from a new federal tax credit to construct low income housing. The Middletown Press reported that this was "the first time in the country that a corporate interest will have invested in a single room occupancy building."<sup>106</sup> What may be the most significant element in this equation is evidence of the changed attitude on the part of the federal government who began giving tax credits as incentives to support such projects.

The renovations were planned to create 65 kitchen equipped rooms total, two bathrooms on each floor, as well as the addition of five one bedroom apartments which had their own bathrooms. A bed, table, and dresser were provided and linen each week from housekeeper. The residents were to be low income single males and females, many recently homeless. Ninety percent of the tenants were on public assistance which gave them \$315 a month, \$250 of which went to rent. Not much money was left for

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<sup>104</sup> "Code Violations Threaten Arriwani Hotel Rooming License," Middletown Press, Bennett Voyles, Oct 15, 1986.

<sup>105</sup> Letter to Anthony Galazan, from Allen Connally, Chief Appeals Officer of US Department of the Interior, Oct 5, 1988.

<sup>106</sup> "1.5 million Arriwani Renovation Job Begins," Middletown Press, April 16, 1988, pp. 1, 10.

food or other expenses. The Saint Vincent De Paul soup kitchen open since 1980 and right next door to the hotel and served the essential food need for the residents for the promised kitchens never materialized. The soup kitchen gave three meals a day and provided referral services for the drug alcohol and mentally ill. Like the saloon of the old days, the soup kitchen was an essential place in the hotel residents lives, for it served as a social place where residents could gather or volunteer. A year after the renovations both the tenants and community members agreed that the conditions in the building were much improved. Although it was known that prostitution and drug dealing still went on, it was thought to have decreased substantially while safety had increased. While police used to get calls daily from the Arriwani for "frequent breaches of the peace and minor assaults,"<sup>107</sup> tenants say they have not been beaten up and robbed as much as before. Much of the reason for improvement was related to the removal of the most violent residents.

Despite the positive reports an unfortunate scandal emerged around Galazan. The bad management of the SRO is not co-incidental to the bleak future for SROs but a part of it. Proven time and again, the SRO was a place that could be badly managed for some time without legal or political ramifications. Finally the law caught up with Galazan. The possibility that Galazan embezzled much of the funds he was given by the state surfaced when it was discovered that the renovations only totaled \$400,000, a figure much lower than the amount Galazan applied for and received. He obviously did try to cut costs at the expense of quality; tenants say that he had promised all new furniture and instead bought second-hand beds and tables. Neither did he ever install kitchens for each room. Galazan was arrested on fraud charges and blocked from doing anymore projects in the North End. The Connecticut Housing Finance Authority then foreclosed on the building and the Rockwell Management Corporation of New London took over ownership. The city tried to recapture its block grant loan as well. Meanwhile improvements which had been made began to deteriorate. A description of the building in a 1990 newspaper illustrates its social and physical decline since the old days; "the narrow walkways of what was once the city's most luxurious architectural gem are now lit with fluorescent lights that flash off the grain white painted walls."<sup>108</sup> The fifth floor which was touted as having the most extravagant views

<sup>107</sup> "Fraud Allegations Aside, Arriwani Much Improved," Middletown Press, July 28, 1989, pp. 1,6.

<sup>108</sup> "Desperation on Both Sides of the Door," Middletown Press, Oct 29 1992, p.1, 9.

of any hotel around, was now in such disrepair that it as well as the forth floor were unused and closed off. As a result of the combination of the factors which historically worked against the residential hotel, bad management and new building codes, the Arriwanni fell into disrepair once more.

Just when there seemed to be the least hope for residential hotels nationally, an advocacy movement for SRO living arrangements emerged. The national sentiment which until this point had opposed SROs and pushed for their removal, was undergoing a transformation which would begin to recreate and renew communal living space for single residents. The change of attitude on a large scale was essential, for, as Hayden and Groth display, the designers and decision makers who previously had held the traditional beliefs, do play an important role in guiding the uses of space. In the 1970s, public officials joined tenants in seeing the economic and social benefits of residential hotels. It was found that, for the same cost, one new Section 8 HUD studio Apartment could be built, or four to five hotel rooms in San Francisco, 12 to 15 in Portland, or 35 to 40 in the city owned hotels in New York.<sup>109</sup> In response to the damage done by ignoring that people living in certain types of space were actual residents, The Uniform Relocation Act of 1970 required by law that redevelopment agencies and other federally funded groups recognize those living in city hotels as residents of the city. In the past, official documents recorded that when SRO buildings were destroyed, "no one" was displaced and "no dwelling units lost."<sup>110</sup> This belief was commonly held when in actuality hundreds of thousands of SRO units were being done away with. The significance of the destruction is made tangible in the fact that in the 1970s and 80s in Chicago, 23,000 units of SRO units were lost, a quantity equivalent to 92 housing projects.

In contrast to the negative attitudes towards the effectiveness and use of SROs in the past HUD since the 1980s began to realize the need for SROs. As noted in a report to Congress from the US Department of Housing and Urban Development, SROs are now seen as the correct approach to "chronic housing problems of at least some of the single homeless."<sup>111</sup> HUD found that SROs seemed to be effective at providing a "vital housing alternative for the single homeless at affordable rents averaging at

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<sup>109</sup> Groth, p.294.

<sup>110</sup> Ibid., p.282.

<sup>111</sup> HUD, Report to Congress on SRO's for the Homeless Section 8 Moderate Rehabilitation Program, March 1990, p. iii.

close to \$300 a month."<sup>112</sup> Finally the attitudes of the government began to match that of the residents. A recipient of the financial assistance for the SRO program was quoted as saying "the SRO housing plan is great because it provides affordable housing and perhaps more importantly, a point of community for the single homeless and an efficient setting for the provision of needed social services."<sup>113</sup> Although they claim that "over the last decade the need for SROs has reoccurred,"<sup>114</sup> I would argue that the need has not reemerged as much as people are beginning to look at SROs as positive spaces, and therefore, agree with the statement that renovated SROs, YMCAs, and hotels "provide a practical adaptation of a housing form once thought obsolete."<sup>115</sup> Because residential hotels were so long ignored as a place of residency there appeared to be no need or use for them, but a better understanding of the role they play will increase their perceived usefulness.

Advocates for the SRO claim that this type of housing fills a need and allows the potentially homeless to gather their life together in a way that suits them. SRO advocate Charles Hoch argues that an SRO "provides an alternative for poor single people, making it possible for them to use their residential space both as means of recovering lost prosperity and social ties as well as creating a meaningful way of life in the midst of severe social disadvantages and economic uncertainty."<sup>116</sup> The SRO is not the source of social problems. It is a place in-between the middle-class residential standards and emergency shelters, the streets, or an overcrowded house.<sup>117</sup>

Residents appear to have a similar attitude towards the SRO and one which points out the intersection of both physical space and social elements in order to create a sense of place. A survey done in 1980 reported that 82% of SRO residents were "somewhat" and "very" satisfied with their living arrangements, while only 16% were "dissatisfied." Dissatisfaction came from physical deficiencies of the space like a small room, lack of privacy, faulty utilities, while satisfaction came from location, affordability, social ties within building, and good management and security.<sup>118</sup> If the physical could

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<sup>112</sup> HUD, p.1.

<sup>113</sup> Ibid., p.39.

<sup>114</sup> Ibid., p.1.

<sup>115</sup> Ibid., p.1.

<sup>116</sup> Hoch, p.161.

<sup>117</sup> Ibid.

<sup>118</sup> Hoch, p. 156.

have been at the same level of quality as the social, the entire life experience would have been much improved. Hoch goes beyond advocacy to idealize the potential of the SRO. He claims that the diverse and random occupants of the SRO are its biggest asset. The residents have not been selected by the "stratified homogeneity created by the housing market or by the policies of public housing authorities" and therefore they are not a homogeneous group in terms of needs and vulnerability which enables them to help each other. He contrasts SROs to housing projects where the people are too alike in terms of poverty and similar kinds of weaknesses; there is then a high demand for services and only a portion of the people receive what they need.

HUD put together a Section 8 SRO program in 1987 which would finance and organize the renovation of old buildings to accommodate this type of housing. The particular areas which implemented the program had to apply for help by showing their need. Some cities in which the program was to be implemented, like New York City, Portland, Seattle, San Francisco, and Minneapolis, had SRO preservation policies already in effect which gave the program a head start if they chose to use any of those buildings. The intent not to displace any current residents was facilitated by the high number of empty and inexpensive buildings in depressed and declining areas which could be developed into an SRO.

The physical and programmatic structuring of the living space attempted to meet the residents needs by providing more than any SROs in the past. All of the SROs in the Section 8 program had kitchens except if the occupants were thought, due to physical or mental abilities, to be incapable of using kitchens. Full furnishings were of course essential for the homeless who did not have many possessions. An assessment of the program found that the role of the manager is essential in the health of a SRO for maintaining guidelines for the building community and physical appearance. The selection of the residents was highly regulated. Potential residents were found using lists from the public housing authority and social service agencies, interviewing was extensive, and if the person was chosen and had any problems they had to be willing to go to treatment. The specific needs of each resident had to be known so that the SROs could be well organized according to the issues the residents were dealing with. Ironically, such a level of exclusivity approaches that of the palace hotels from the early part of the century. It would seem that such a place would become what Groth warned against, the condensing of

too many similar problems at the risk of running out of local resources. Possibly this obstacle has not yet emerged because of the still small numbers of such housing as well as an increase in available resources.

Currently the forms of housing considered acceptable are expanding. It has been said that "not since the 1890s have so many new types of units, mixtures of uses, and shared facilities been tried simultaneously in the United States."<sup>119</sup> The changes are evidence of the new beliefs about the pressing issues of morality and citizenship existent since the turn of the century. It is possible that there has been an awakening to the damage that was done in the past and the need to remedy these mistakes. The new and renovated hotel and SRO housing are being built with improved design that has been asked for by consumers since long ago. Possible features of the new facilities are more social spaces like lounges and shared kitchens, more baths and maybe a toilet in each room, a multi purpose sink and maybe counter space as well as a microwave. Another goal for the new residential hotels and SROs would be to maintain good management. All of the worst physical and social conditions tended to be found in those buildings with poor management in terms of lobby surveillance and control of problematic behavior from residents and guests.

In effect, making these types of housing which in the past were dilapidated as a result of lack of concern for the residents, into spaces more like the rooming houses or midpriced hotels, is testimony to the hard work of advocates for low income people, as well as general technological improvements, and growing desire to provide practical homes for all types of the population. However, it is noteworthy that the motivations behind the new support for the SRO in particular can be traced to the advocacy of one type of lifestyle in particular that is serviced by the residential hotel structure. If the SRO is appropriate for the those who want to live independent, downtown lives, as well as for those who are carrying out illegal or anti-social behavior, the new advocacy emerged from a sentiment of concern for the latter type. The desperate need for new housing options for the poor and drug addicted was finally recognized and as a result the residential hotel housing type has come back as a permissible type. But the interest on the part of the federal and state governments did not intend to create new options to house the middle class.

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<sup>119</sup> Groth, p.300.

Thus, recent development of the residential hotel for those other than the needy is not extensive; we do not see a reemergence of midpriced or palace hotels. The new communal housing options for the middle and upper classes stray further from the traditional residential hotel than the new SRO does. The variations being tried for the upper classes are live-work lofts, apartments co-owned by multiple families, co-housing in which households share cooking, recreation, open space, and childcare, and houses occupied by more than one family. With the practical changes in lifestyles over the years and the fact that the dream of the suburban family home still has its grip on us, even while new housing options are coming to be, we may never see the traditional residential hotel again.

Despite changes in the discourse surrounding the fate of the Arriwani Hotel, negative beliefs about SROs which have existed over the decades had not completely faded. Captain Knapp of the Middletown Police Department voiced a common misconception when he said a SRO "does generate problems. You have a very transient residency. People come and go, spending only a month or two at time-they have no real links to the community."<sup>120</sup> It is not clear to me that his opinion about transience is entirely true or even the correct root of the problems in hotel housing. The hotel users had very real links to the community necessitated by the fact that they depended on their immediate surroundings for the various elements of home which were not provided for in the hotel. In addition, it appears that more than transience, the management is a big factor in the quality of life within. It is true that incidents of strange occurrences and crime were frequent at the Arriwani, yet there were respectable residents who lived in the building for a long period of time and who formed social links inside and outside the building.<sup>121</sup>

Mayor Gionfriddo displayed the belief that to change the physical space would not change the social problems within for if it remained it would "only ensure that the tenants continue to live in a building that has long been riddled with social problems."<sup>122</sup> Yet his only alternative solution was to remove it. Actors on all sides of the debate have suggested this approach but some advocate that there needs to be more than just the physical change, such as more service provision, job search programs,

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<sup>120</sup> "Fraud Allegations Aside, Arriwani Much Improved," MiddleTown Press, July 28, 1989, p.1,6.

<sup>121</sup> Interview with Thadius, Security Guard at Liberty Commons, and anonymous resident, Nov 24, 97

<sup>122</sup> "New Proposed Use for Hotel," Middletown Press, Oct 15, 1992, p.1.12.

drug and alcohol programs, sufficient medical attention, and food supply. It is at this point where much of the difference of opinions lies -- will structure of a space coincide with meaning that the residents feel ownership of, or agree with.

Even in the HUD report which advocated the SRO, it is clear that the right to an autonomous life is not considered fit for everyone. The possibility that the mentally and physically handicapped did not have the self-sufficient capacity required to live in a residential hotel provoked apprehension. Because of the services and support facilities they would require, it was believed they should be in a more institutional setting. Even with the new beliefs about its utility, the residential hotel would obviously not be considered a viable option for all types of people. However, if approached from a different perspective which valued the independence given to the handicapped, complimented by the service agencies present in the area, then HUD's concern would be unfounded. In a positive light the SRO could be seen as a progressive kind of facility which combined living with resource provision and referrals that would allow stigmatized people to live integrated and independent lives. Progressive social service theory believes in the incorporation of the dependent people into the mainstream society, and opposes their isolation in facilities outside of communities and the downtown. Even though the perceptions of what is acceptable living arrangements have expanded, some lifestyle possibilities still remain excluded from the housing which exists.

The positive attitudes towards residential hotels was not enough to dissuade the City from attempts to get rid of the Arriwani. However, in the end their attempts failed. After a series of unsuccessful improvement endeavors the City began to get fed up with the Arriwani and all the problems associated with it. The North End Task Force, made up of local government officials, was a body created to assess the needs of the North End and as the first step in redeveloping the area they proposed the removal of the Arriwani Hotel. In 1992 an opportunity arose. The city proposed a \$2 million bond which would be used for the acquisition of several buildings in the North End, the Arriwani and neighboring St. Vincent De Paul soup kitchen included. The city had vague ideas of replacing these with facilities for business and civic organizations of housing for higher income residents. Although the plans were highly tentative, it was definite that the current residents and service recipients would all be relocated. The City planned to ask all of the current residents what facilities they would support as a

replacement of their homes, and the Common Council formed a committee where the views of the tenants could be voiced. In an attempt to cushion the effects of the relocation the redevelopment agency planned to investigate the individual needs of each tenant, as well as create an office specifically to deal with the relocation. Attorney Marvin Farbman was designated the advocate for the tenants who were upset and he was well used. However, many of the tenants who were concerned found the most prospects in their own community action group.

### **Sources of Meaning: Consumers of Space**

During the deliberation process over the bond Middletown residents, workers, and concerned citizens did what they thought best to improve the physical and social problems in the Arriwani. It is these people who Foucault believed are the most important in determining the meaning within a space. What his theory of power does not account for is the decline in residential hotel options while some consumers still desired this form of housing. Thus it becomes evident that it is a combination of factors which result in the outcome of a building's use and significance. The residents did do their part for more than 20 Arriwani residents took it upon themselves to form a tenants association to stand up for their concerns, including the maintained existence of the Arriwani Hotel on Main Street. Their agenda was to clean out the drugs and prostitution by removing the problematic tenants, as well as bring grievances to the management. Several tenants provide excellent examples of individuals who took initiative and used their power in creating a certain kind of living environment regardless of the physical and structural constraints. A three year tenant explained "we're not going to take it anymore. We have no control over what the city does, but people here are tired of dealing with these living conditions. We're just trying to do what we can."<sup>123</sup> Walter Bartel, a resident of the Arriwani and volunteer maintenance man, is representative of the people who are trying to live their lives in a positive way and hope that this will show in the community and effect the atmosphere in the hotel. Bartel tried to physically fix up the building as well as join the tenants association to advocate for more security at the door. Another tenant explained that she was doing her part by keeping a bible on her table so that when people enter her house

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<sup>123</sup> "Arriwani tenants unite for clean-up," Middletown Press, Oct 8, 1992, p.1,12.

they know immediately that there are no drugs in her home. This woman expressed her sadness that her family could only come and visit occasionally because the building was too dangerous.<sup>124</sup>

After the ownership changed hands, a new manager who was chosen for his experience with public housing, social work, and the state Housing Authority was aware of the complexities which have historically plagued the residential hotel issue. He said "this place has a lot of problems, as everyone knows. But what people also need to know is that there are a lot of good people here, too, families and old people who are doing their best. In a lot of ways this place gets a bum wrap."<sup>125</sup> The viewpoint of a resident reaffirmed the lack of a true understanding of hotel living in the fact that those who are the most vocal about the plans for redevelopment "have spent little or no time with us."<sup>126</sup> The residents, he continued, are the ones who get the bad reputation yet "it is not the tenants of those buildings who put up faulty roofs, use cheap materials, hire cheap labor and fail to maintain the buildings, it is the owners."<sup>127</sup> According to this statement it is possible for the residents to have only minimal control in how a space exists and is used. The manager was also trying to modify behavior as a method to clean up the hotel. He restricted use of the lobby for what he called loitering and took a harder line towards eviction with late rent payments. The results of his attempts were minimal.

Contrary to the popular belief that the business people of the town were all against the Arriwani existing on Main Street, there were several who were adamantly in support of it remaining in some form. These business people did not feel the Arriwani threatened their business and considered the redevelopment plan for the North End to be "disruptive to the neighborhood."<sup>128</sup> Businesswoman of the North End, Susan Allison, envisioned the Arriwani as being improved while the residents remain, and with the addition of artists, studio space, and volunteer service offices in the building. Allison shared a concern that many of the Arriwani supporters had, that the relocation of the residents would place them too far from the services and downtown. With the life of hotel residents depending so heavily on the services and businesses immediately surrounding them, a relocation could inhibit their ability to carry out

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<sup>124</sup> MTP, Oct 8, 1992, p.1,12.

<sup>125</sup> Ibid.

<sup>126</sup> "Before Destroying the Arriwani Hotel, Meet the Residents," Middletown Press, Oct 13, 1992, p.12.

<sup>127</sup> "Before Destroying the Arriwani Hotel, Meet the Residents," Middletown Press, Oct 13, 1992, p.12.

<sup>128</sup> "New Proposed Use for Hotel," Middletown Press, Oct 15, 1992, p.1,12.

their lives as they need to. Marvin Farbman called the relocation a "delayed boot out into the street"<sup>129</sup> for once the proposed subsidy for the next year ran out the people would have little other low rent option.

After much discussion and lobbying the citizens of Middletown voted against the 2 million dollar bond to move the Arrigoni and Soup kitchen. More than for the best interests of the hotel and soup kitchen beneficiaries, or out of a new tolerance for communal living, the bond was voted down because the city had no concrete plans for what to do with the buildings once they had been acquired. The plan seemed inappropriate and only partially thought through in that all it claimed to accomplish was the potentially harmful relocation of 38 tenants and a soup kitchen, with no definite replacements, and for the price of 2 million dollars. People were more turned off by the cost of the proposal, and the potential that the building would end up boarded up, than letting it remain as it was. At this point the Connecticut Housing Finance Authority was ready to wipe its hands of the Arriwani and put it up for sale at the price of one dollar.

### **Correspondence of Meaning Prescribed and Introduced**

The period of transition from the dilapidated Arriwani into its present form is an exemplifies what Foucault believed to be the best circumstance for positive use of the space, a shared objective on the part of consumers and producers. The longtime oppositional opinions of SRO residents and decision and policy makers in terms of the use and value of the SRO came to be replaced by a visible cooperation resulting in tangible and practical changes. Locally, a space was produced in which people could carry out their lives in a fashion that suited them for it struck a balance between independent and communal living, while being a type of place that was also more acceptable, if not supported by the mainstream, as well as by institutions. In Middletown the support came from both local and national agencies, both not-for-profit and the City.

A local social service agency, The Connection, took the opportunity and bought the Arriwani from the Connecticut Housing Finance Authority. The Connection became the lead development organization among several social service agencies to fix up the building. The Corporation for Supportive

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<sup>129</sup> "Critics Question the City's Plan to Relocate the Arriwani Residents," Middletown Press, Oct 27, 1992, p.14.

Housing, an agency with previous experience in this type of housing, would help to fund the project as part of their plan to establish 400 units throughout Connecticut. Testimony to the hard work on the part of community members and the willingness of the government to sponsor such programs even after several failed attempts, came with a \$1.68 million federal block grant from the Department of Housing to carry out the project. The National Equity Fund of Chicago helped with funding in order to benefit from tax credits. The money would go to renovations as well as ten years worth of subsidies for rent.

The new plan for the building came out of an attempt at combining the ideas of the consumers and producers from the initial stages of development. Ideas from a community group made up of city officials, social service agencies, and concerned citizens. The pilot committee hoped the building would be converted into efficiency apartments combined with social services provision for counseling, referrals, balancing budgets, planning for education, recreational opportunities, and more. Several buildings in New York City visited by the Mayor of Middletown, the developers, and architects were used as models for this plan. The Time Square apartments which were the main template had a predictably similar history of decline which plagued the Arrigoni. Competent management, a community advisory committee for the planning process, and common space were all elements which the Time Square managers stressed for success; "the lobby is the focal point of the building, creating an inviting area there prevents loitering outside."<sup>130</sup> What had also proven beneficial is the extensive interviewing process for residents, and active management in terms of security and counseling. The subsequent pride the residents of the Times Square apartments had in their building is something that the developers in Middletown would try to foster.

In 1993 a contract for design was created with the local architectural firm Bianco Giolitto.(see appendix) The firm had design autonomy within the regulations of the funding agencies. The goal was to fit 40 apartments into the given space and still leave room for community space, a laundry room, management and social service offices. Hopefully they would be able to strike the right balance between private and community space. As the architects quickly found the building was not structurally sound, for it seemed that the Arrigoni brothers had in the construction of the hotel used left over materials from

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<sup>130</sup> "Eyes Opened in the Big Apple," Middletown Press, July 1, 1993, pp.1, 12.

their local bridge building endeavor. In addition, the existing floor plan was considered by the architects to be completely inappropriate for the type of program they were trying to implement.<sup>131</sup> The building was unsafe with few fire exits, dead end halls, there were too many rooms all too small, and an unreliable elevator. In order to start from scratch in terms of the physical space and the social use, the entire building was gutted, leaving only the original floors and some brick walls to maintain the structure. The exterior was hardly altered at all. Giolitto remarked that it was not any easy construction process for anyone; the contractor even went bankrupt in the process.

A particular kind of community was desired by the management in which the tenants would form of an association to make many of the decisions about the building. The plan, unfulfilled in the end, was that the association would be in charge of screening applicants and physical maintenance. By giving the tenants a real part in the decision making it was hoped that they would create a strong community within the building, as well as give some of the unemployed residents something productive to do. As it turned out a sense of community and individual betterment was accomplished without the residents being involved in the screening process but by other means. During the buildings dedication ceremony one tenant spoke of the improvement in his life as a result of the new quality of the building; by having a place to live and receive counseling he was able to hold down a job and get reacquainted with his family.<sup>132</sup> The personal account reminded Giolitto of the importance of his work, while in a wider context it reinforces the practical and immediate impact built space has on daily life and potential activity. Tentative plans were made to buy more property behind the building for a possible relocation of the soup kitchen and expansion of its dining facility, as well as to build a community garden. Giolitto foresaw this as a "nice melding of services,"<sup>133</sup> but unfortunately, as a reminder of the socio-economic structure in which this building was attempting a reemergence, there was not enough funding. The design and goals of the building did suffer as a result of budget constraints.

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<sup>131</sup> Interview with Raymond Giolitto. Nov 11, 1997.

<sup>132</sup> Interview with Giolitto.

<sup>133</sup> Ibid.

Liberty Commons has been operating now since 1995 as a supportive housing apartment complex with 20 rooms for low income residents, the working poor or potentially homeless, and 20 rooms for the mentally and physically handicapped, or substance abusers. After being denied the use of the original Arrigoni name, the building being on the corner of Liberty and Main street, was named Liberty Commons. The name whether or not intended as such, is a description suggestive of the kind of people and lifestyles that are given a chance within this space. The name "Liberty Commons" indicates the two main benefits of the residential hotel, the individual freedoms in combination with, or surrounded by a sense of community. Seven of the residents remain from the previous building. The Connection Fund social service agency is the current sponsor and it is managed by Community Housing Management, Inc. The building is financed by one state and two federal agencies, as well as two national banks. Upon its completion Liberty Commons was the first supportive housing to be constructed in the state as part of an experimental program combining federal, state and private investments. Now it is one of 10 such programs in the state, some of which are in renovated buildings, others in new constructions.

Structural and program agendas correlate in the Liberty Commons building and expedite that the residents can act accordingly to reach the mutual goal of designers and users. Supplementing the independence offered by traditional hotel living, "supportive housing fosters self-sufficiency, peer support, and development of life skills, training and linkages to find and retain employment."<sup>134</sup> Ironically, admittance into Liberty Commons approaches the exclusivity of high-class hotels. It is preceded by an extensive background investigation and agreement to enter a treatment program for any substance abuse.<sup>135</sup> Each resident is given a case worker and counseling services, open to non-residents as well, are provided out of the first floor offices as well. On the bulletin boards next to the elevator are postings for St. Vincent De Paul Events along with the counseling services provided and schedules for Alcoholics and Narcotics Anonymous. The current program is obviously more structured and provides more assistance than the residential hotels of the past in part because of a new agenda for dealing with

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<sup>134</sup> Corporation for Supportive Housing Demonstration Program, Advertising Brochure, p. 4.

<sup>135</sup> I was unable to analyse the situation for the outcasts who can not even get into a supportive housing program. This topic deserves a paper of its own.

poverty and substance abuse. At the height of the SROs popularity the issue of poverty was neither, addressed nor combated through the building structure and management; it simply provided for the needs of a impoverished lifestyle. Today the building displays a increased involvement on the part of non-residents to do what is believed to be positive for the residents. Fortunately there is an understanding of what the people need and want, a balance between public and private spheres, services and autonomy, all in a safe building located downtown. The experiment has been a success as a resident from before and after the renovations explained, "if you are willing to better yourself, it can be done right here, where years ago [the management] could give a hoot."<sup>136</sup>

The living units, located on the second through fifth floor, currently include more features than their former counterparts so that they resemble apartments with a private kitchen and bath in each. Autonomy is thus increased in terms of privacy and decreased dependence on the surrounding neighborhood for services. The relationship of residential hotel residents and the neighborhood is more precarious as a result, yet other benefits please the residents. Having to share one bathroom between three or four people as before the renovations was called a "disaster" by a resident, whereas now "I can shower and shave I want."<sup>137</sup> A bed, table, dresser, and closet space are also provided. The rent set at 30% of a resident's income includes heat, air conditioning, water, and electricity. Telephone and cable are wired for already but must be paid for individually. Supplies from linens down to the toothpaste will be provided free of charge if needed. Each floor has 11 rooms except for the second floor which has only seven single occupancy apartment units, four of which are wheelchair accessible. The second floor also contains the laundry room open from 7 am to 10 pm. Besides cutting costs by having a communal laundry room, this space was intended by the designers to encourage interaction among residents.

In addition to living space, there are several structural elements of Liberty Commons that provide for or indicate the various program agendas. The space on the second floor not occupied by living units holds the community room which is inaccessible except during organized events. There is a full kitchen in the room making it accommodating for parties thrown by the management or residents. The North End Action Team community group holds its meetings there too. The visual center of the building's

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<sup>136</sup> Interview with resident.

<sup>137</sup> Interview with resident.

interior called the Atrium, is also accessible by the second floor. Blocked by fire regulations from its intended use as additional community gathering space, the Atrium's sole use is now that of the main source of light to the hallways on each floor. The Atrium was created out of the space between the original building and the renovated section. Two sides of the room are new and two are the old brick including existing window spaces. It is about 20 by 20 feet wide and spans the remaining height of the building up to fogged glass windows which let in an enormous amount of light. The hallways on each floor wrap around three sides of the room so that you can look into the atrium from the hall as plenty of natural light fills the halls. Amongst several plants set on the floor is a memorial shrine made up of personal belongings of several residents who have died since Liberty Commons existed. On the white back wall of the Atrium hangs a black iron sculpture depicting its title "The Eye of the Storm." A landscape is shown with a stormy sky, the sun peaking out of rain clouds and the gailing wind. Mountains are the backdrop to a body of water and the countryside which then moves into a town and animals in the fields. Set into the scene are the images of a man and woman facing each other. Contrasting the conflict and unrest in the whether, the kind of community portrayed is very traditional and idyllic. Although Liberty Commons is making headway towards gaining acceptance of progressive living environments, an irony is evident in the sculpture which acts as a central visual element does not reflect the actual lifestyles being carried out in Liberty Commons, for it depicts the deep rooted cultural ideal to which we are still supposed to aspire if not literally then symbolically. Short of revolution, the pattern of progression in social change is often one in which progressive or unconventional ideas are only that to a degree, for as much as they push at the edges of social boundaries and slowly force them to expand, they remain within those boundaries.

Various features make Liberty Commons a comfortable and accommodating space. There is a small library and TV room on the first floor in which residents will get together and watch a movie or show. The lounge, on the first floor, has a wheelchair ramp as well as several steps leading down to it. There are sofas and tables set around the room, a piano against the wall, as well as a ping-pong and pool table in the adjoining room. The lounge is well lit and painted white. Although most of the windows on the first floor span about seven feet in height, privacy in the lounge is maintained by the windows on the Liberty street side being much smaller and set higher in the wall; still allowing light they prevent people

from looking in. The windows on the Main Street side are of the larger size and all access The Buttonwood Tree bookstore and performance space which spans the entire front side of the first floor. The Buttonwood Tree serves as a great source of entertainment and socializing for the residents. Many go to see music or read book and play chess. It helps to keep people occupied and off the streets, as well as providing for those without transportation to leave the area. The soup kitchen next door occupies residents as well, while some volunteer others just go to eat and socialize. The local activities and events satisfy the needs and desires of residents. The resident I interviewed was very content with all the activities around; "You don't have to go look for it, there is enough going on right in this building."<sup>138</sup>

Not always do the structure and program, even with good intentions, fulfill their potential or goal; in this case because of the actions of the residents. The manager, Robert Forbes, commented that he wished the community rooms were used more frequently than they are.<sup>139</sup> A partial explanation is that many residents have their own televisions and so do not need the one provided, in combination with the fact that many of the residents work very hard and come home to rest more than socialize and play. It is just this type of resident which the current security guard believes are the best for the building, and he feels it is his responsibility to ensure the place they come home to is calm and well maintained.<sup>140</sup>

The security of the building is evident upon entering. Keys are required to pass through two sets of main doors, and immediately inside there is a security desk which is monitored around the clock. All visitors must call up to their host from a phone outside the building and the host must escort them in and out of the building. All guests must sign into a log book. There are video cameras in strategic places around the first floor and all the doors are alarmed. The high level of security is very well liked by most residents. The resident I interviewed found the security to be good because it was both proactive and reactive; "I really love it here because it is well secured;" in the past "people would be knocking at your door, you got a cigarette, you got a drink, you got a light" and there was no one to report complaints to. Today any disruptive behavior is written up and residents are held accountable, in extreme cases asked to leave.

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<sup>138</sup> Interview with resident.

<sup>139</sup> Interview with Robert Forbes, Manager of Liberty Commons, November 3, 1997.

<sup>140</sup> Interview with Thadius and resident.

Besides for the uncovered original walls in the atrium, within the management offices several sections of wall remain visible from the original structure as well. Another remnant of the interior of the old building which has survived all the renovations is a tile mosaic spelling out Arrigoni. The manager claims that this was part of the original floor of the entrance. Today it serves as the floor of the telephone room which has a large window to the street so that the mosaic can be seen from outside. The remaining and visible fragments of the original Arrigoni building are reminders of the historical significance of the building and the role this significance has played in keeping the building standing. Had the building not been so prominent in local history it may not have even remained standing to the point that its uses could have become questionable, or become an issue of solidarity among residents and concerned citizens. And it is more likely that a less prominent building would not have been given so many chances at improvement by federal, state, and local institutions.

Residents and management alike are pleased with the way the building has turned out. Independent living within a community, services and activities provided for locally, and high security make Liberty Commons a wonderful living environment. Forbes is impressed with it for being a successful project which came out of a "flop-house."<sup>141</sup> The resident explained that "there's no reason why, with a place like Liberty Commons around, anyone should be homeless," and even advocated that there be more similar housing options available in Middletown for others in need. As for those already living there, the security guard and resident both agreed that "people in this building just don't realize how they've got it made. Just don't take advantage of it."<sup>142</sup>

The new discourse surrounding single resident occupancy living arrangements has changed so drastically since the early part of the century that today programs such as Liberty Commons are now considered potential benefits to a neighborhood. Claims are made for economic and social gains of such programs. A brochure used to gain financial investments advocates these programs for a neighborhood that needs redevelopment; for "through renovation of blighted structures or improvement of vacant city lots, projects are having direct, positive impacts on neighborhood development efforts."<sup>143</sup> The title of

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<sup>141</sup> Interview with Forbes.

<sup>142</sup> Interview with Thadius and resident.

<sup>143</sup> Interview with Thadius and resident.

the brochure -- "A Public Private Partnership Addressing a Critical Need: Providing permanent, independent housing options in cities across Connecticut" -- highlights new conceptions of what consists of a critical housing need as well as how to address it. Single resident occupancy living has only so recently made a come back that in its absence, the contemporary response to housing shortages has been temporary and reactive responses in the form of emergency shelter and care which often perpetuates a cycle of dependency.<sup>144</sup> The supportive housing program is considered the newer and more appropriate solution because it "breaks this cycle by enabling people with disabilities to live stable, independent lives"<sup>145</sup> through the provision of a particular kind of built environment, consistent, supportive and safe. Supportive housing displays a return to the type of housing options which had suffered with the advocacy of the suburban home, something other than what provides for a nuclear family with a car and wife to stay home. Supportive Housing initiatives are evidence that our contemporary society is gradually accepting more lifestyles to the point that this kind of housing is federally and institutionally sponsored. Rarely having occurred before, in this case the cultural product, which prescribes certain behavior, concurs with the desired activity of the individual.

## V. Conclusion

It is through the organization and use of space that the potential for life activities are realized. In built landscape, rules, prescriptions, and possibilities are made into a physical form that literally guides us through our days. Yet we are unaccustomed to acknowledging the impact built space has on our lives. Through the study of one built landscape, I have attempted to discover the ramifications of its existence over time. My belief in socio-economic divisions which relate to imbalances in institutional power plays a large part in determining what kind of built landscape I am particularly interested in understanding. While I could have chosen to investigate a wealthy local community, I find it more satisfying to look at a type of space that has been used across class lines, and initiated struggles between actors possessing different kinds of power.

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<sup>144</sup> CSH., p. 4.

<sup>145</sup> Ibid.

The story of the Arrigoni Hotel, from aspiring midpriced hotel, to dilapidated SRO, and finally successful supportive housing, traces the history of residential hotel living as it has nationally existed over the past century. The residential hotel began with much popularity by both those who used it and those who did not. There was a demand for this kind of residency and it was provided. Over time the positive attitude towards the residential hotel gave way to disapproval and distrust for the residential hotel lifestyle and the spaces that allowed such lives to be lived. While there remained people who desired and would benefit from the existence of residential hotels, policy was created to push such housing out of existence. The consumer demand shifted towards the model suburban home. After a period of harmful neglect of the few residential hotels that remained, attitudes of decision makers began to change. The support for residential hotels which had continuously existed among some of their residents helped progress us into a period of advocacy for alternative housing, forms that are not the traditional residential hotel but a transformed, modern version. It is at this point that the desire for, and the availability of, housing forms that allow for healthy lifestyles converge.

Reading the landscape of the Arrigoni building is an entrance into understanding elements of our collective consciousness which are responsible for the transformation of the Arrigoni. It becomes evident that the story revolves around conceptions of home and family status, public versus private spheres, the appropriate balance between community and individuals, perceptions of deviance, and finally, what kinds of people are considered deserving of a high quality of life. As in this particular history, sometimes the ideological beliefs that came to be popular are inconsistent. The single family home was revered for its autonomy, yet autonomy derived through the residential hotel was unacceptable. Community and neighbors were considered important but only if on the other side of the fence, sectioned off by property ownership, not down the hall or within a building which residents did not own. Landscapes make sense of such ideologies and structures through a discourse between the producers and consumers -- the meaning prescribed by the cultural context, in relation to that which is introduced to the landscape on a daily basis through its use. The discourse may be harmonious if the two sources of meaning share ideologies, and discordant if they do not. Over time each built landscape locates, and relocates, itself along the continuum of power theories between the Dolores Hayden, who assumes the least power for the consumers, and Michel Foucault, who assumes the most. Thus, a more

realistic conception of power dynamics is presented by Paul Groth in his analysis of Residential Hotels for he describes the ways in which both actors bring meaning to space in varying degrees.

Essential to the achievement of comfortable and accommodating living spaces for those who in the past have been popularly considered only of minimal value and acceptability, was the slow change in attitude towards hotel living, its associations, and its potential. The cultural context began to accommodate the consumers of space who opposed the traditional, and the design of living spaces came to corresponded well with their individual desires. However, ideals of community in terms of safety, exclusivity, and private space have remained to a considerable extent. This is implicit in the fact that there is not a movement of the wealthy back into residencies like the Residential Hotel. Such types of new housing are geared for the lower classes. What has changed is the boundary of what is considered normal and acceptable; but it has simply expanded to keep out the new category of deviants. The lifestyles of the working poor and former substance abusers are supported as they have not been before, yet other types of people who do not conform to their policies are not provided for or allowed into the space. For example working poor who want to live with their spouses or children are not accommodated for by the physical design and program agenda of SROs. Other people who are considered unacceptable in the larger society, such as drug addicts who do not want reform, are not welcome either. For the aforementioned case I do not dispute the point at which society has determined the behavior as not conducive to communal living. I only mention it to exemplify that, as we have witnessed in the past, a decision is made as to the parameters of acceptability and through its manifestation in built space, can have real consequences for those left out. Our society has decided that it is not a natural right to provide housing for all people, but that individuals must prove they are worthy, hence the strict admission policies for places like Liberty Commons. Once those who are being asked to financially support these types of projects have been convinced of a positive economic effect, they must be assured that the ideal community will be maintained, that there will be no visual or social detriment as a result of bringing low income and disabled people into an area. They must believe that the residency can function like any other ideal mainstream residency. The supportive housing projects are thus described as having all the

characteristics of a good neighbor: "attractive, well-maintained, and safe for tenants and their neighbors."<sup>146</sup>

To read the built landscape is an intriguing and essential, often ignored, process in which to study the potential of bettering our lives within the modern hegemony. The transformation of the Arriwani into Liberty Commons proves that a landscape, in combination with program agenda and therefore behavior guidelines, can affect positive change against social problems like homelessness, poverty, and drug addiction. The change can not come simply out of changing the physical structure, for people will continue their unacceptable behavior. Nor can change come without the physical structure, for without Liberty Commons as it is today, many more Middletown residents would be living in temporary and precarious housing, others would not have a place to go for drug counseling. Although a contested issue, I believe the potential for the design and use of space to be a force of social change should not be dismissed too quickly. Space is one area out of many which should be considered in plans for social change. As with all attempts to better people and life situations, it will not work well if imposed from above -- neither Le Corbusier's ideal cities, nor public policy. Design and use must work in combination. There must be grassroots efforts and involvement beyond that brought to space in its daily use, for these individual acts are important and can be a form of rebellion, but are not as effective as more organized involvement. Those who are most directly affected by space must be involved in the design of it so that what exists meets their needs. Such a demand may seem impractical on a large scale, but it goes unquestioned that the rich develop and buy housing that suits their every desire. When we begin to talk about the poor and institutionally disempowered making the same kinds of decisions, it is seen as suspect.

The community room in Liberty Commons has over the past year come to serve as the meeting space for a community group involved in the very process of landscape design. A joint project involving the North End Action Team community group, the Yale Urban Design Workshop, and Wesleyan students, is underway to address the needs of the North End by rebuilding the physical elements of the area. As opposed to taking action by counseling, creating jobs, lobbying the city government on policy,

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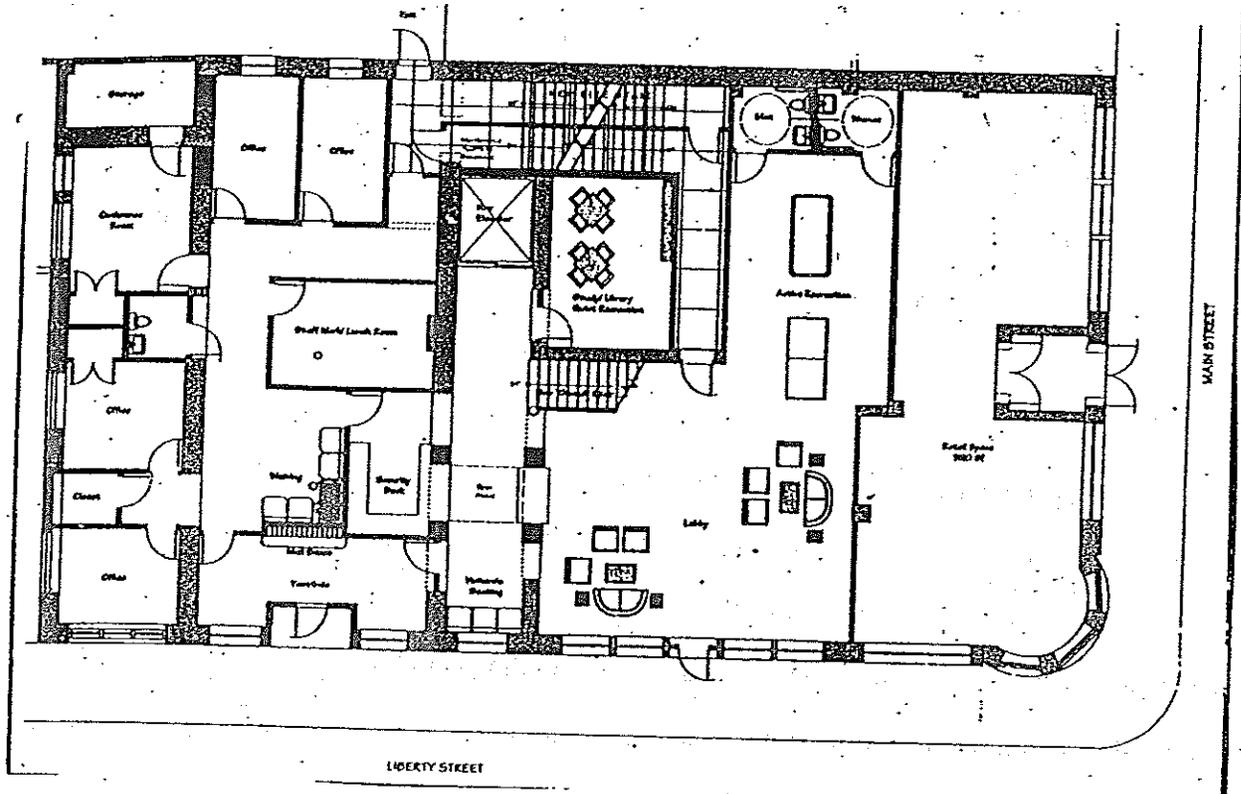
<sup>146</sup> Corporation for Supportive Housing.

or increasing police, for example, this action is in the form of physical betterment which will hopefully establish the base and needed structures for other improvements. In the past the renewal plans for the North End came from the city government or business elite, and did not include the desires of the neighborhood people. Because the meaning prescribed in the renovation of the landscape did not fit with desired meaning of the consumers of the space, the projects fell apart. The current attempt hopes to avoid the same mistakes by including the desires of the local residents from the beginning by involving NEAT and soliciting the input of as many residents as possible. Ideally, once the residents identify problems of the most concern, Yale will create the physical model of potential solutions to then be discussed and modified as the residents see fit. In this case the residents find themselves in the unfamiliar position of decision makers and advisors to the designers. While the residents are now able to manifest meaning through the structuring of the landscape as opposed to simply being the consumers, it is not definite that they will produce something which drastically deviates from the cultural norms for living and building, from that which has had a negative impact on the quality of their lives. Because the residents are fed up with what exists currently, a representation of class and race inequalities in the landscape, it would make sense that they would try to upset what is established. The potential for social change does not exist in the design ideas alone. As this project progresses it is continually made clear that much of the potential for improvement will emerge from the process of engagement: the community outreach by NEAT, the building and strengthening of resident relationships, the learning experience, and the increased feeling of empowerment. Built landscape is important in its design and use, and in that it is a provocative and consequential issue around which to organize. Unfortunately, to simply inject the input of consumers of a space into the process of design does not ensure that the financial providers will be as progressive as the designers or agree with the design. That obstacle will manifest itself once the models for the new neighborhood elements have been planned and NEAT looks to find financial support to begin the work. NEAT has already begun to discover constraints imposed on them by the City and banks who feel ownership of the project, despite their initial request that NEAT take charge.

That NEAT is in the position of partners in the design process, however precarious the reality of that position, is the culmination of the assent to an equal playing field, where the consumers and producers and of space have come together, where the consumers have assumed a new role. The current

Appendix

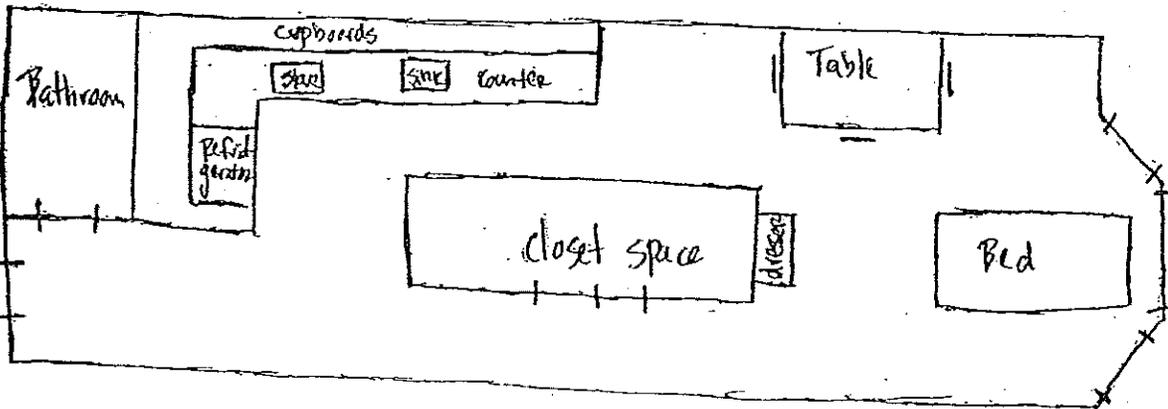
Diagram 2



Liberty Commons - plan of design for first floor renovations

1993

Diagram 3



Average living unit with window box

1997

opportunity marks a long process of change in ideas surrounding who should be involved in determining the look and feel of the spaces in which we live out all aspects of our lives. As opposed to years ago in the Ariwani when the only way to establish the kind of lifestyle you desired was to complain to the negligent landlord about the delapidated condition of the building and then retreat to your living unit to barcade yourself off from the crime and danger pervading the building, in the current situation the ability of the consumer to introduce meaning to a space is supplemented by their ability to assist in the production.

Being personally involved in the North End redesign project as one of the Wesleyan student researchers, I am pleased to have a part in the continuation of the history I have spent so much time researching. On the way out of the meeting in Liberty Commons, and as we reached the corner of Liberty and Main Street, right below the dome of the building with "ARRIGONI" still etched in the stone, Bill Warner, the director of Planning and Zoning for the City, said to me "I would have never thought I would be standing here on this corner. I mean you should have seen the place."<sup>147</sup> But there we stood.

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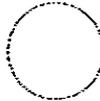
<sup>147</sup> Comments off-hand From Bill Warner, Director of Planning and Zoning, Middletown Connecticut, Nov, 19, 1997.

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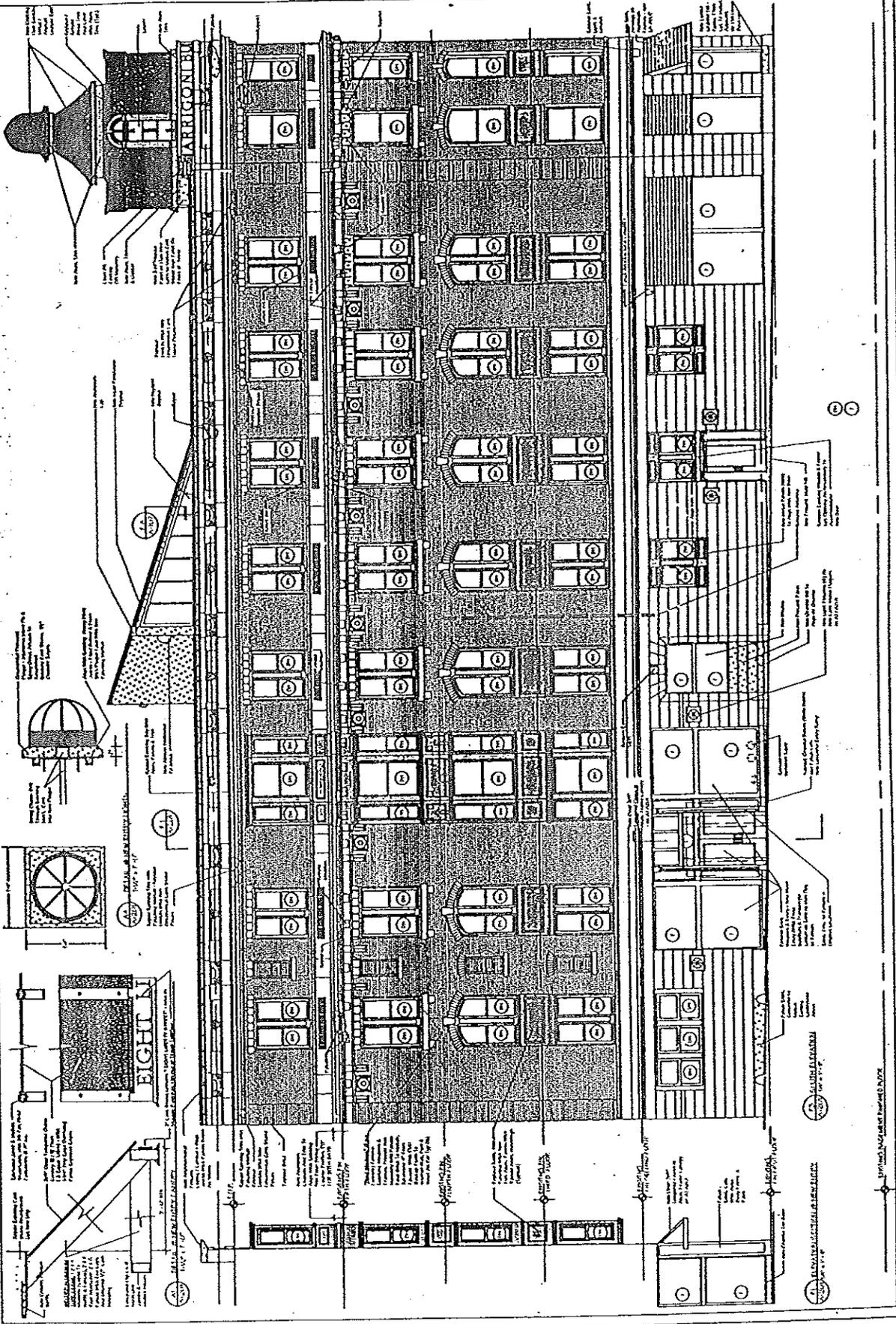


SCALE: AS SHOWN  
DATE: APRIL 1, 1988  
JOB: 82240

A-201

Sheet 1

Diagram 1



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Giolitto, Raymond. Partner in Giolitto Bianco Architects, Middletown, Connecticut. 11 November 1997.

Thadius. Security Guard at Liberty Commons, Middletown, Connecticut, 24 November 1997.

Anonymous Resident of both Arriwani Hotel and Liberty Commons, Middletown, Connecticut, 24 November 1997.

The first part of the document discusses the importance of maintaining accurate records of all transactions. It emphasizes that every entry should be supported by a valid receipt or invoice. This ensures transparency and allows for easy verification of the data.

In the second section, the author details the various methods used to collect and analyze the data. This includes both manual and automated processes, as well as the use of specialized software tools. The goal is to ensure that the data is both reliable and easy to interpret.

The final part of the document provides a summary of the findings and offers recommendations for future work. It suggests that further research is needed to explore the long-term effects of the current findings and to develop more effective strategies for data management.