

City of Aurora

Community Development Department

Preferred Townhome Site Development Pattern Book

January 05, 2004



As residential development continues at a fast pace in our community, City of Aurora staff frequently review proposals for townhome projects. Though townhomes have historically been concentrated in the newest sections of the community, lately, these developments are being proposed for the more urbanized core of the city, particularly for large tracts of vacant land that are currently zoned or designated as non-residential. Townhome developments in Aurora have typically been designed as neighborhoods within single-family residential areas or as stand-alone projects.

Though outstanding townhome projects have been constructed in Aurora, the City Council and staff would like to encourage developers to "raise the bar," evaluating best management practices in Aurora and other communities, and ensuring that proposed townhome developments are distinctive and appealing. We are generally supportive of townhome projects since they provide a valuable and important housing choice. We wish to work closely with townhome developers to make certain that projects are given the same design attention and thoughtfulness that is applied to single-family sites.

Townhomes can fit well within the context of the built environment by incorporating principles of conservation design; open space; variation in architecture, floor plans, and unit placement; and creative street configurations. We do not want townhomes to be marginalized or isolated from the larger community. Instead, they should be planned so as to offer the public a worthy and well-designed housing option, a valid and genuine lifestyle choice. It is the city's objective to create neighborhoods within townhome developments that provide connectivity within the development, to adjacent commercial and residential projects, and to community amenities.

In this Pattern Book, we have outlined tools and techniques that can be used in townhome developments to help foster the principles described above. The Pattern Book is not intended to be used only in specific locations; it can be employed when any townhome development is being contemplated. In creating this Pattern Book, we endeavored to use single-family development techniques; in fact, most of the patterns were taken from traditional single-family neighborhood examples. We simply removed the single-family component and replaced it with a townhome product to illustrate the manner in which these design principles and objectives can be used for attached housing.

Our goal throughout has been to look at the design of the site first, and count units second. Our chief priority is site design; however, we fully believe that economically-feasible density requirements can be achieved using these creative site design principles.

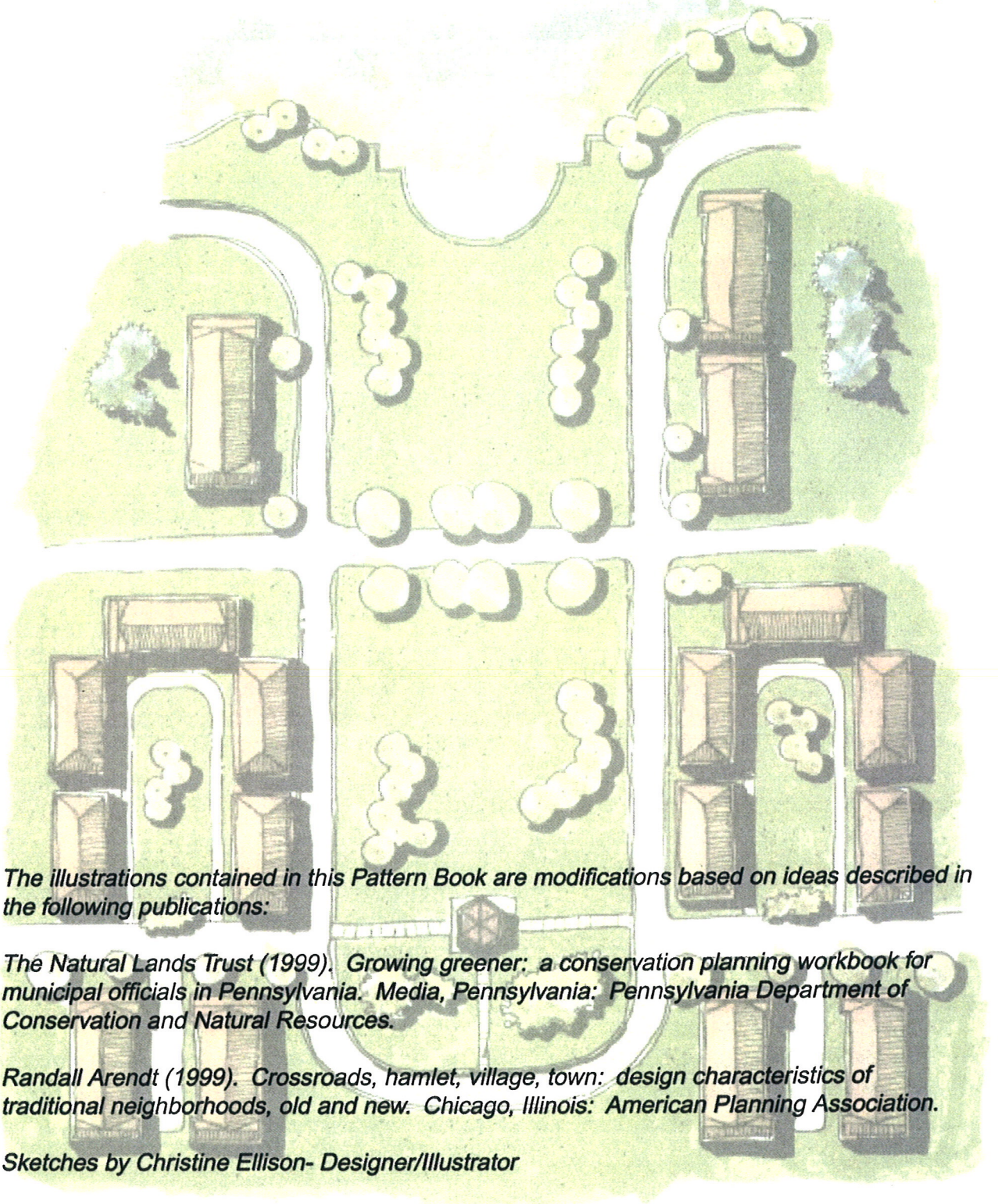
We hope that the development community approaches townhome site and unit design by first rejecting the "conventional wisdom"; i.e., offer limited options based on a pre-conceived notion about what buyers are seeking. When given a choice, townhome purchasers will respond positively to innovative site design and interesting, functional floorplans, as do single-family home purchasers.



TOOLS AND TECHNIQUES

- o Create attractive, visually-appealing, park-like entrances to the development and its neighborhoods.*
- o Reduce repetitive, redundant patterns of building placement on the site.*
- o Connect public and private spaces by creating entryways that front onto streets and open spaces, along with garages and parking areas that front onto public streets, alleys, and courtyards in an attractive manner.*
- o Create viewsheds through the proper placement of windows, porches and balconies where buildings are perpendicular to open spaces.*
- o Convey the perception of a streetscape along alleys or court settings through vertical landscaping and greater separation between buildings.*
- o Intersperse pocket parks (parklets) throughout the development.*
- o Use both curvilinear streets and grid patterns in designing the circulation within the development to provide variety and appeal.*
- o Consider variation in street widths to provide visual interest and foster a pedestrian-friendly environment, while acknowledging the need for sufficient right-of-way to allow utility installation and emergency vehicle access.*
- o Incorporate biking and walking trails to connect neighborhoods with each other and to adjacent development.*
- o Design open space that is carefully-manicured or naturally-landscaped as the site directs and takes multiple forms, such as:*
 - a. Large central parks*
 - b. Village greens and greenlets*
 - c. Neighborhood parks*
 - d. Pocket parks (parklets)*
 - e. Linear parks*
 - f. Landscaped courtyards*
 - g. Stormwater management areas*
- o Provide a wide range of unit designs and floorplans to accommodate lifestyles that vary in terms of residents' ages, family arrangements, home occupations and mobility/accessibility. Examples could include first-floor master bedroom suites, "stacked flats," loft spaces that can double as home offices, ground-level entrances, and ranch units.*
- o Avoid monotonous exterior appearances by using architectural tools such as ornamentation, articulated elevations, an assortment of color palettes, and diversified material selections.*





The illustrations contained in this Pattern Book are modifications based on ideas described in the following publications:

The Natural Lands Trust (1999). Growing greener: a conservation planning workbook for municipal officials in Pennsylvania. Media, Pennsylvania: Pennsylvania Department of Conservation and Natural Resources.

Randall Arendt (1999). Crossroads, hamlet, village, town: design characteristics of traditional neighborhoods, old and new. Chicago, Illinois: American Planning Association.

Sketches by Christine Ellison- Designer/Illustrator



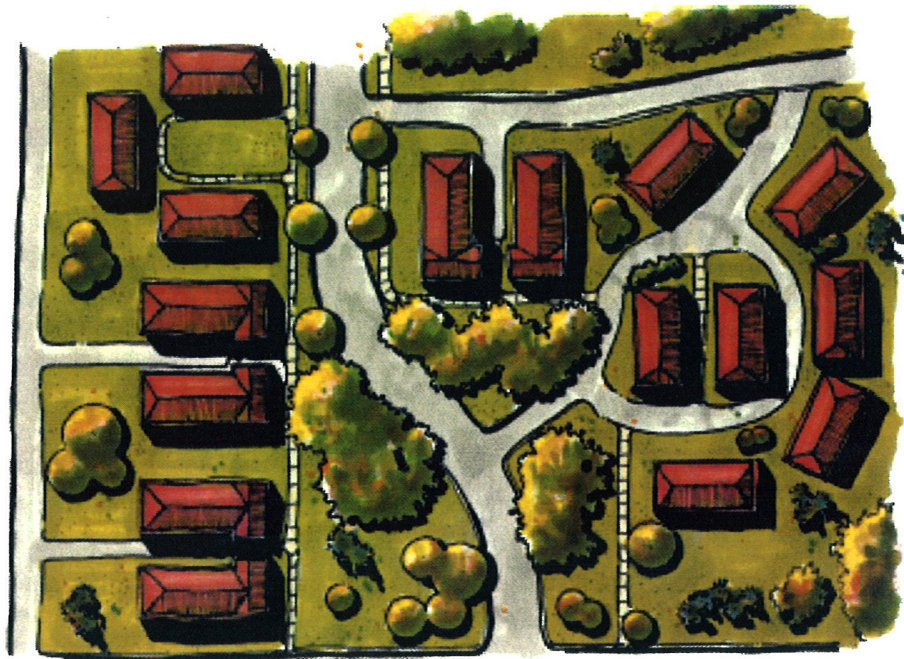


Illustration A

*Entrance into neighborhood featuring curving street through park setting.
Note interconnecting sidewalks.*

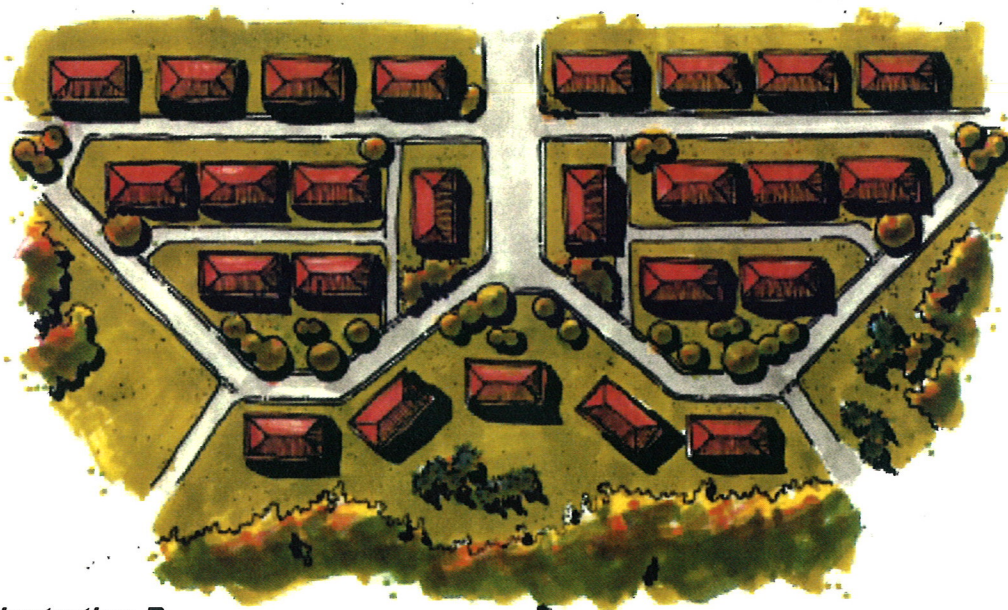


Illustration B

*Street design allows for the placement of smaller green areas providing both
added open space for townhome units plus a visual break at "T" intersections.*



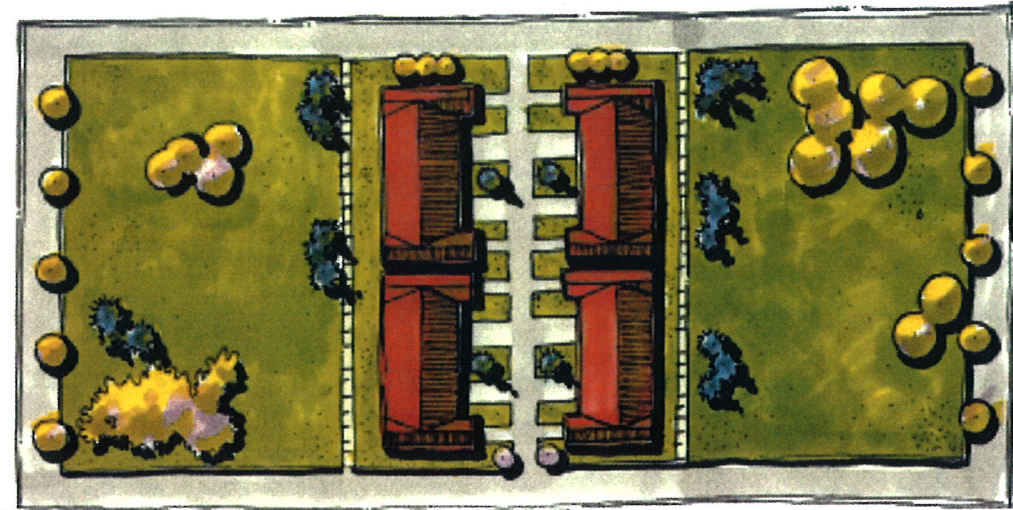


Illustration C
 Providing site design by alternating parks and townhome blocks ("quads") maximizes exposure to open spaces.

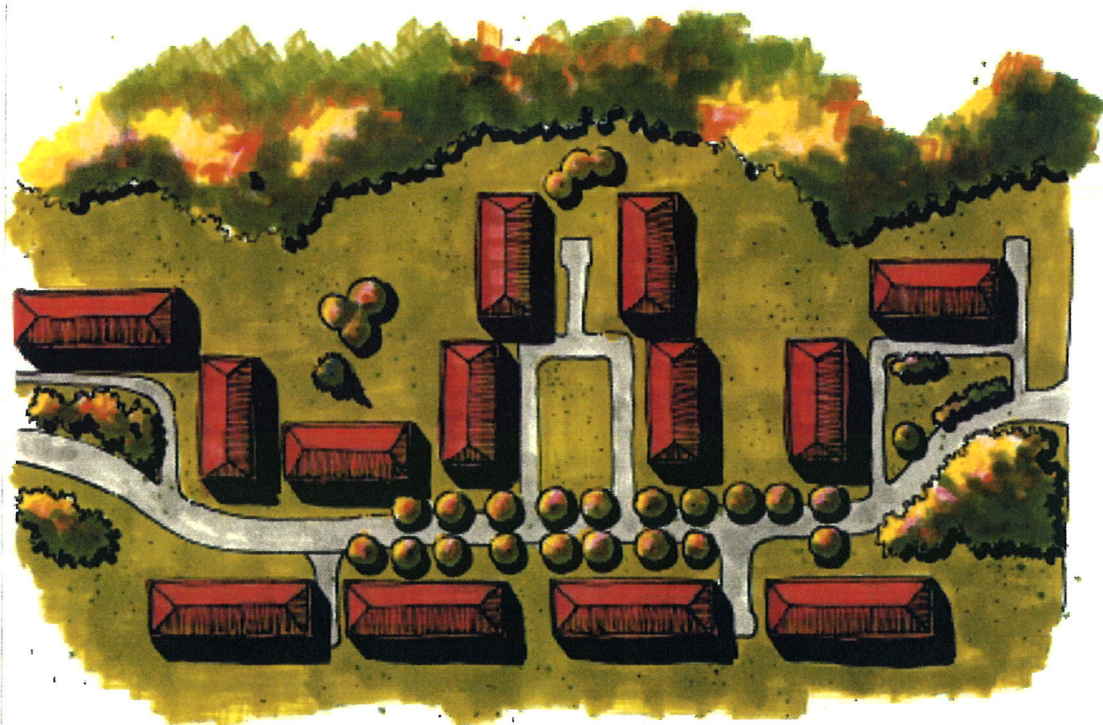


Illustration D
 Providing smaller open spaces through the use of loop lanes and at neighborhood entrances allows for a variety of townhome placements on the site.



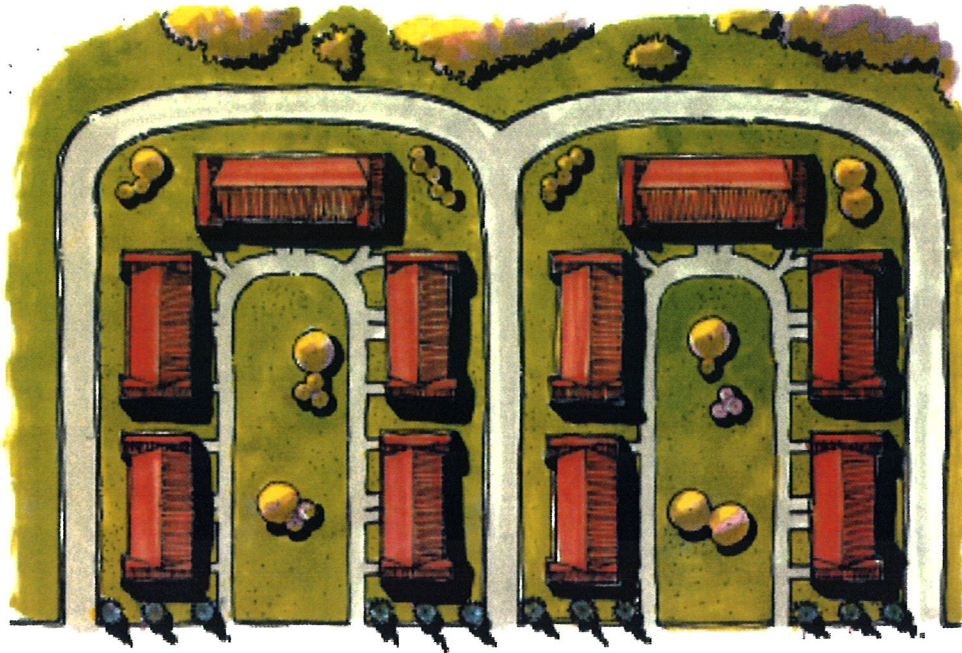


Illustration E
 To create visual interest along a streetscape, provide open space at street curves by increasing setbacks, creating a townhome grouping.

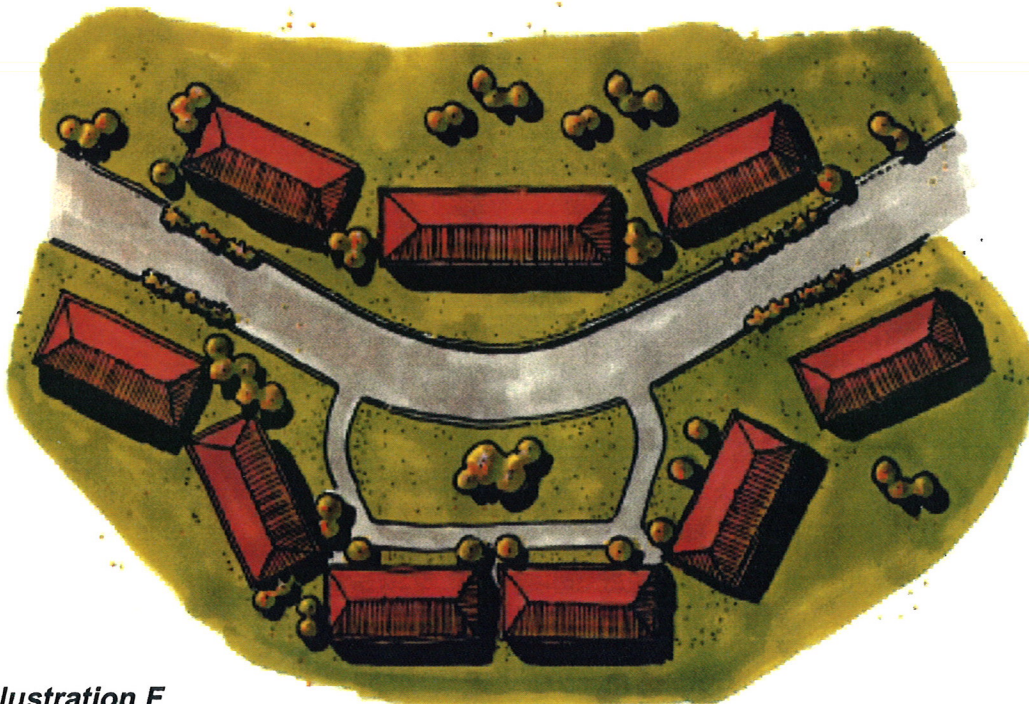


Illustration F
 A modification on Illustration E with garages fronting public street and no alleys.



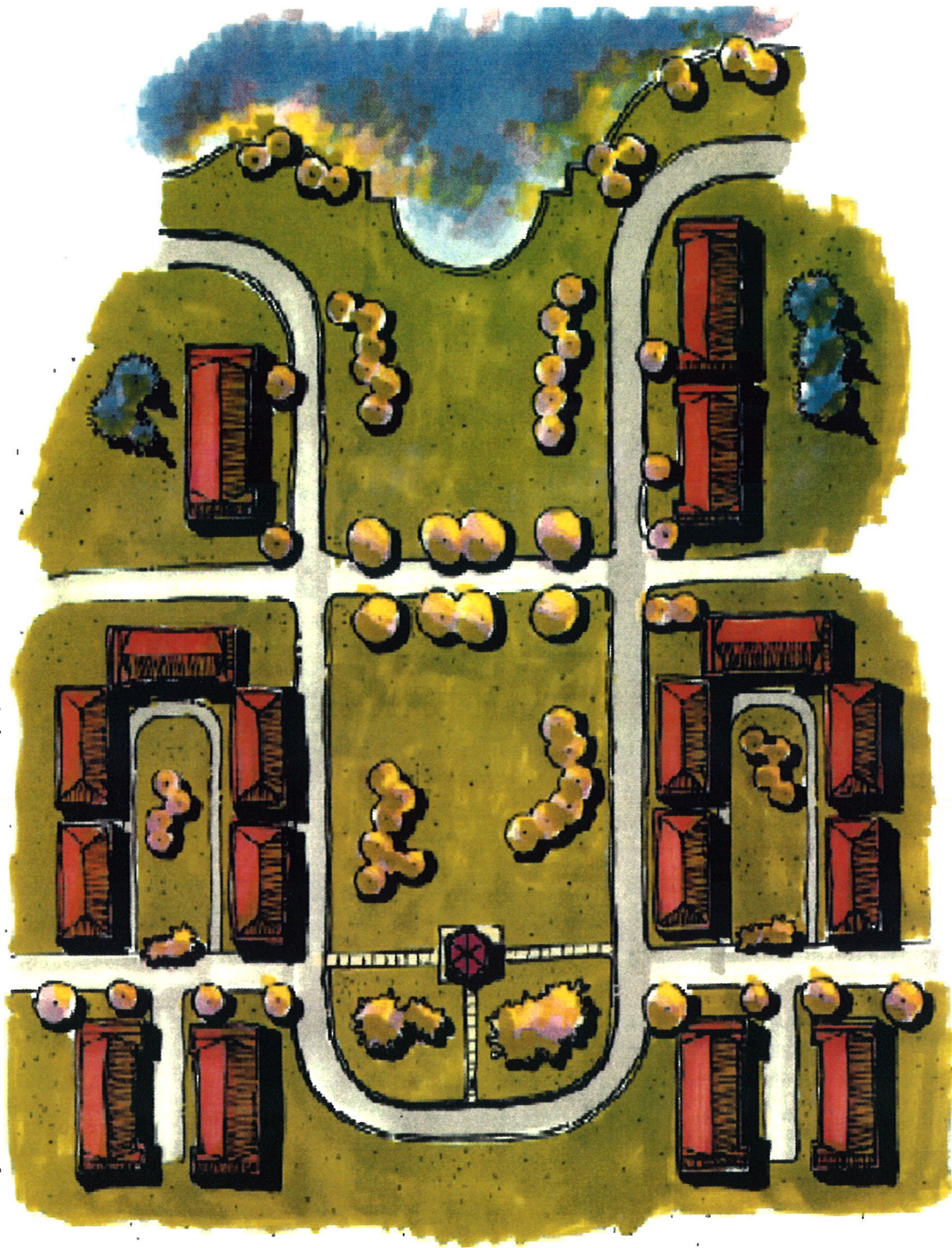


Illustration G

Every unit has views of a formal "Village Green" plus additional open space features.



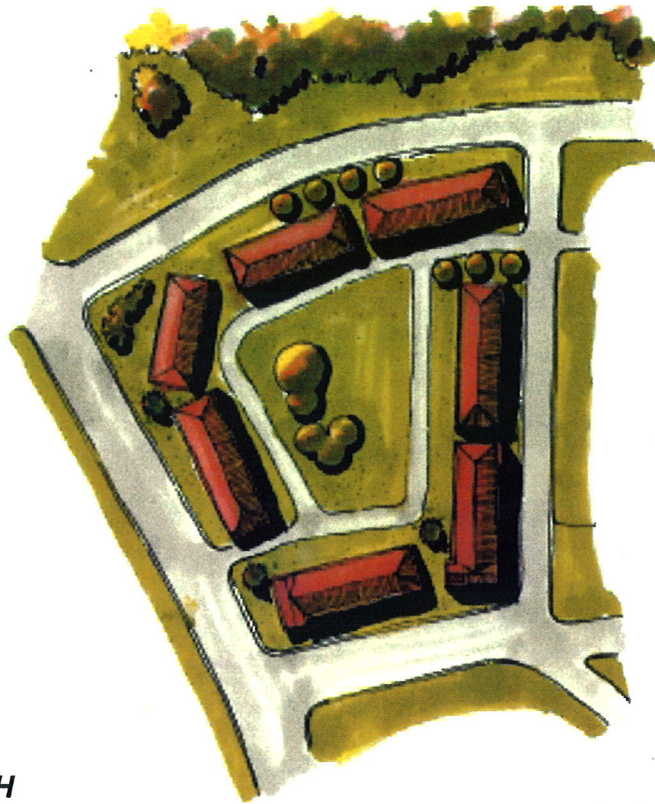


Illustration H

Another example of an interior common green area. In this design garages and balconies face this common area.

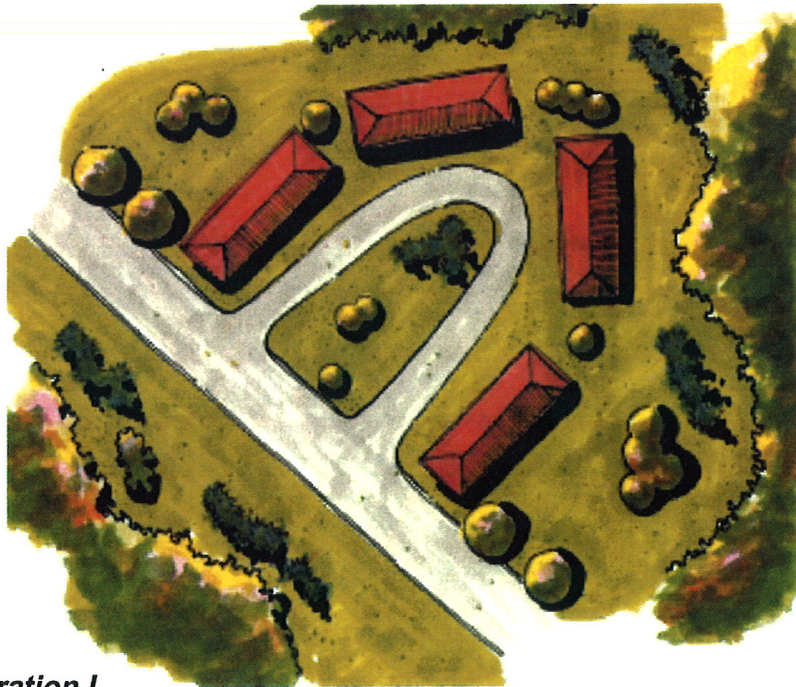


Illustration I

Another example of a landscaped loop lane.



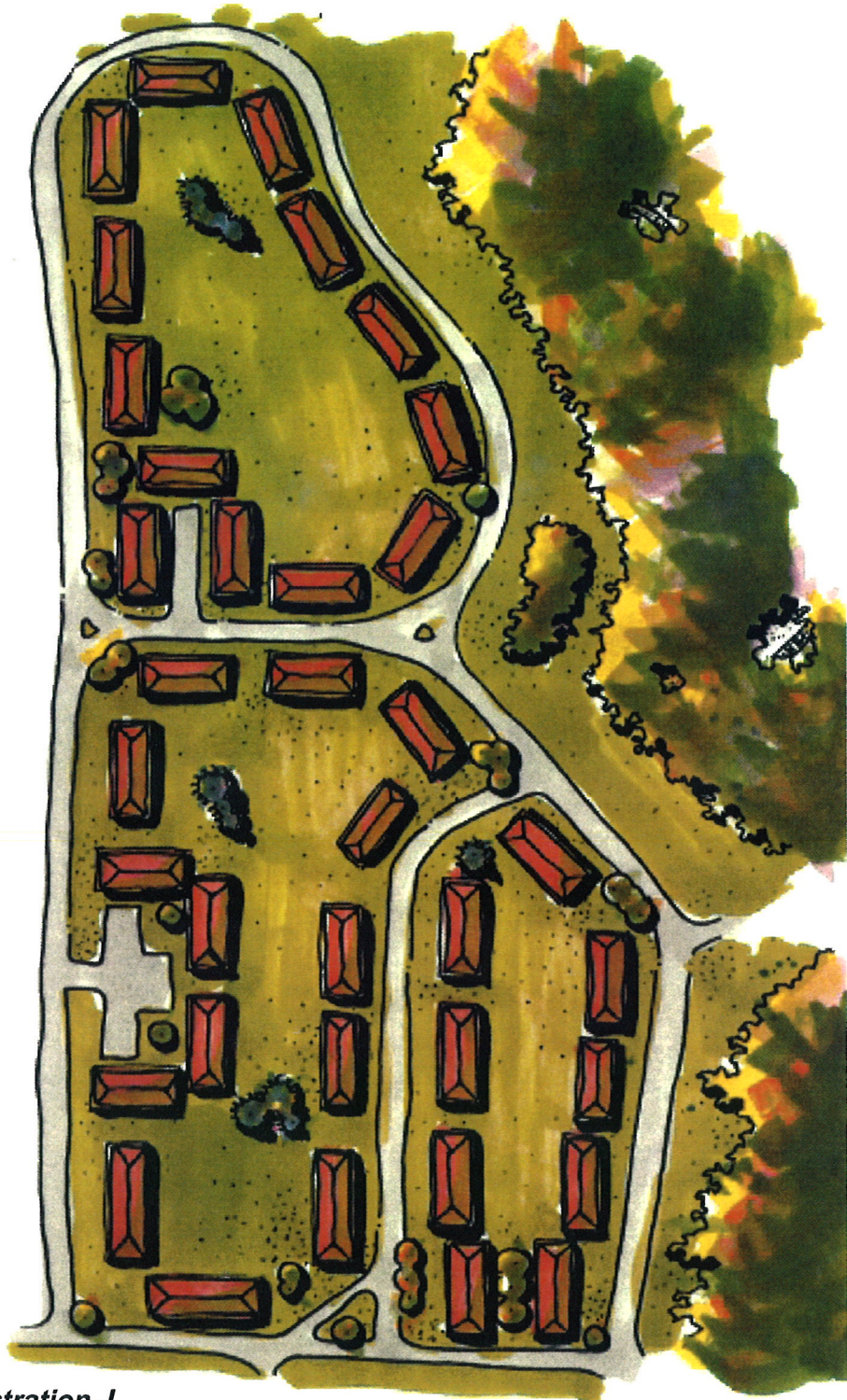


Illustration J

A clustered townhome development including both large open area and linear greens.



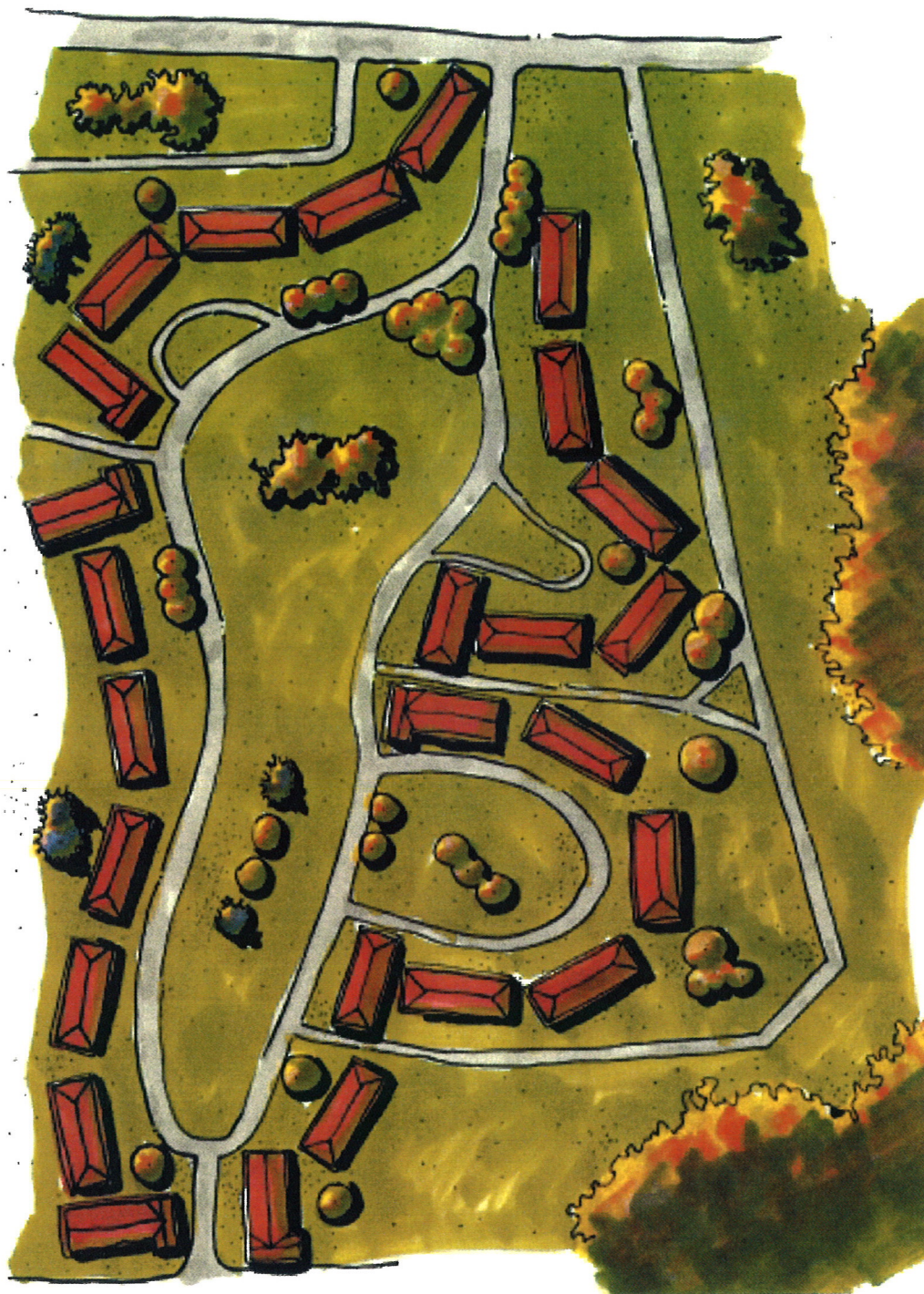


Illustration K

This design includes a "central park" area for townhomes to front directly onto open spaces.





Illustration L
This design transitions from a formal linear streetscape to townhomes clustered around a central park.

