

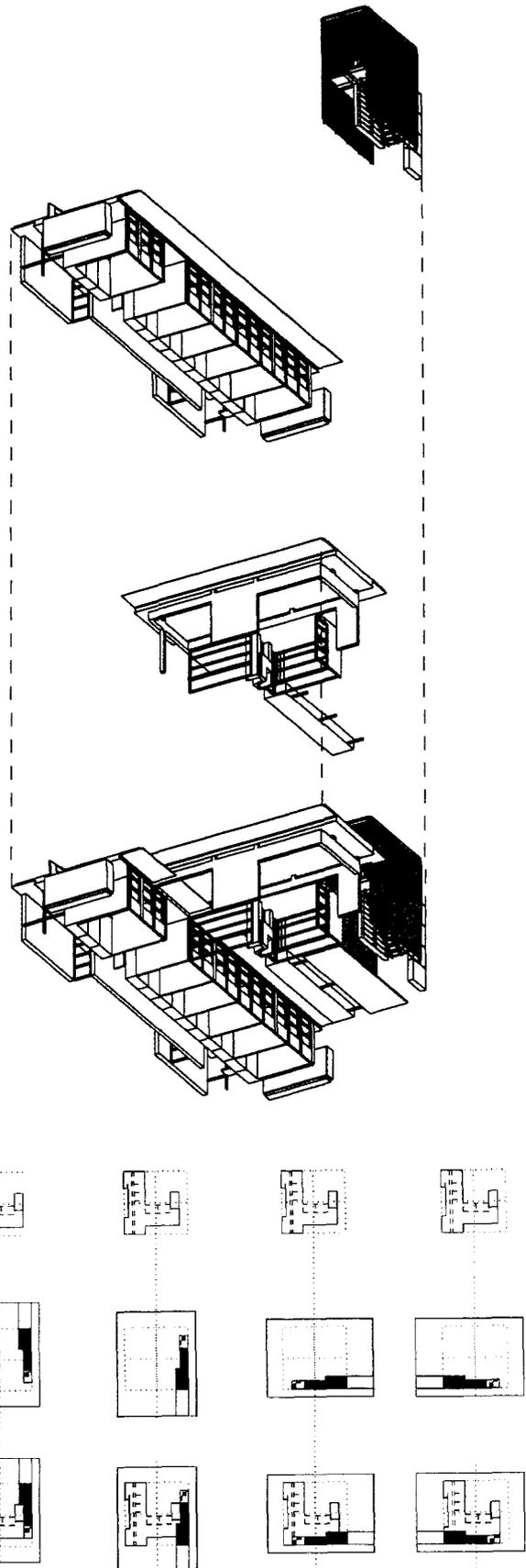
The Compass House

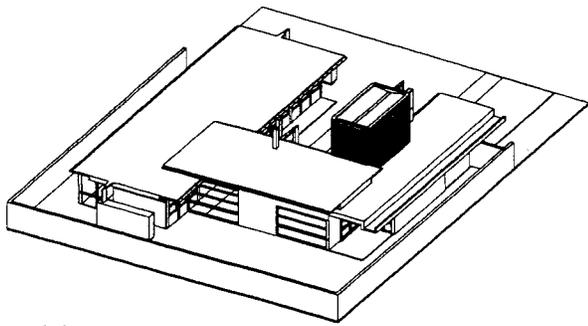
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Living in suburbia means, in a sense, to inhabit a diagram of economic, social, environmental, and political forces. The design of the Compass House(s) has been used as an opportunity to investigate the nature of forces shaping suburbia at the collective scale and at the scale of the individual. The project attempts to identify moments of opportunity among the nested relationships that exist between means of inhabitation and the form of individual units, and between the form of individual units and the form of collective structures. The project attempts to identify these "moments of opportunity" and to exploit them through specific architectural devices and strategies.

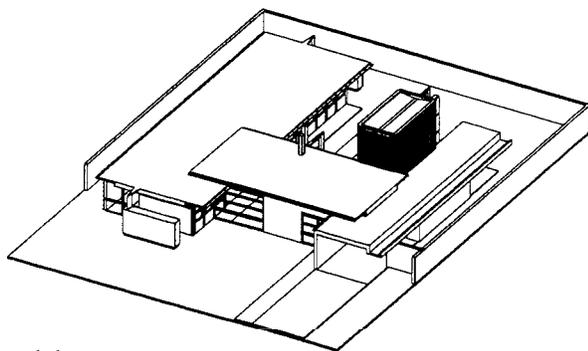
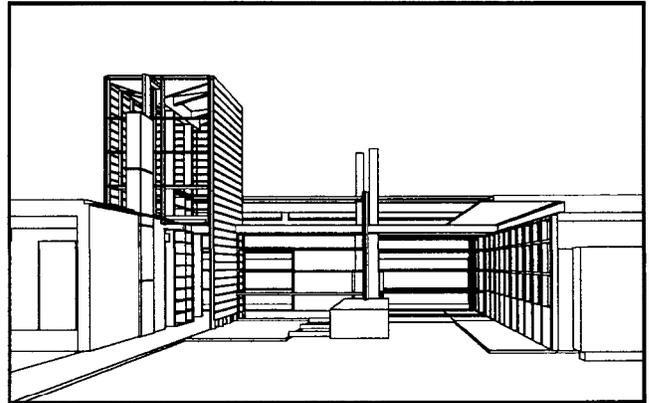
The site for the project is generic, but it is also very specific, being framed by precise zoning requirements as well as the strong climatic characteristics of the desert southwest. It was assumed that the house might occupy plots of land with access from any one of the four cardinal points of the compass. At the same time it was determined that many activities within the dwelling should maintain a favorable solar orientation, which would need to be established and maintained in the house despite the four possible site orientations. To resolve these contradictory demands, the house was broken down into four programmatic elements. Those that required a fixed relationship to the compass (or to the sun) were isolated from those that required a futed relationship to the city infrastructure. The four elements are: a public space, a cellular element, a solitary space, and a service element. The first three elements maintain a futed relationship to the compass, while the last element maintains a futed relationship to the street and to the site boundaries. The roof of each of the four elements collects rainwater, which is stored in cisterns and used to sustain a portion of the vegetation surrounding the house. The relationship between roof area and plant area materializes the mathematical relationship between water availability and need.

The "standard" elements are reconfigured on the four sites to produce the North, South, East, and West houses. The resulting four houses with their sites are seen as distinct landscapes...a set of topographic conditions that may be inhabited in a variety of ways. The process of assembly produces a combination of familiar situations as well as programmatically indeterminate or ambiguous situations. It is perhaps through this combination of the familiar and the unfamiliar that a questioning of the means of inhabitation might begin to take place.

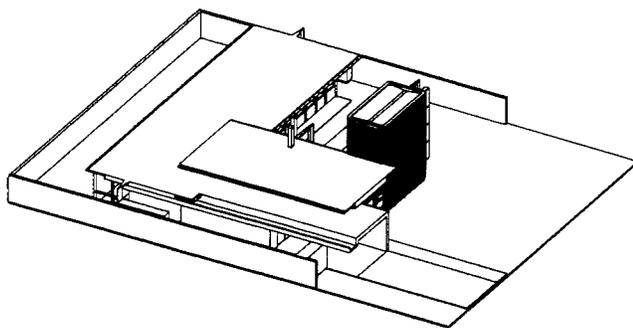
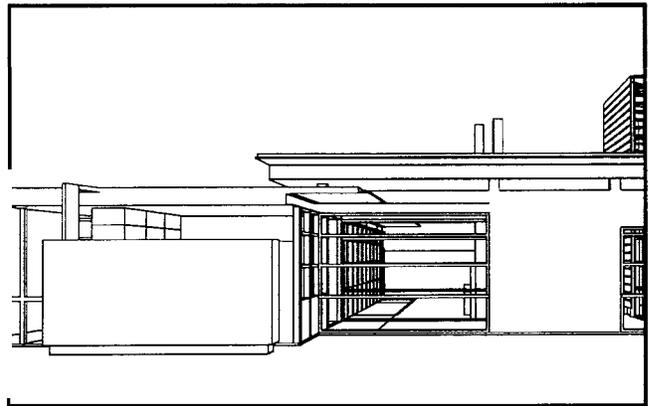




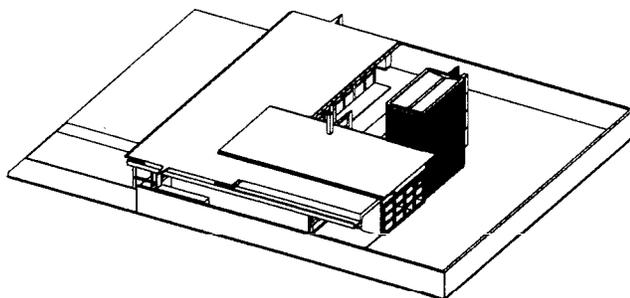
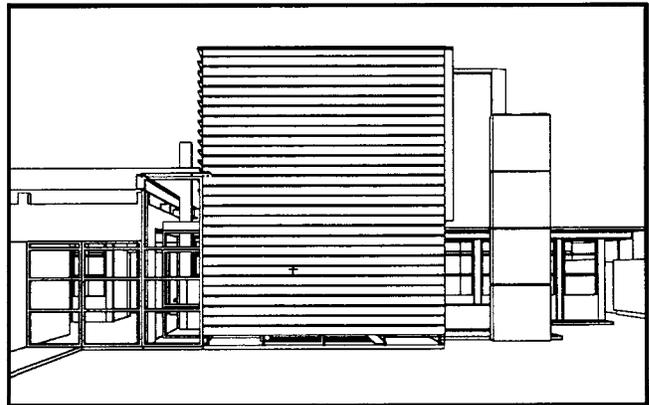
north house



south house



east house



west house

