

## RECONFIGURING THE INSTITUTION

### Culture and the Re-Inhabitation of First Ring Suburbs

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The design project proposes a digital architecture that provides value based information for the re-calibration of Americas First Ring Suburbs. With typical renovation efforts aimed only at the architecture of the home guided by cost, convenience or aesthetics, our project offers the thematic of culture (our changing and inclusive relationship to each other, to the earth and to technology) as the structuring logic for our works.

#### TECHNOLOGY CULTURE: APPLIANCE HOUSE



Storyboards outline the ideas and information architecture that will enable users (homeowners, housing providers, builders, developers and architects) to access information for the re-inhabitation of this important zone of suburban development.

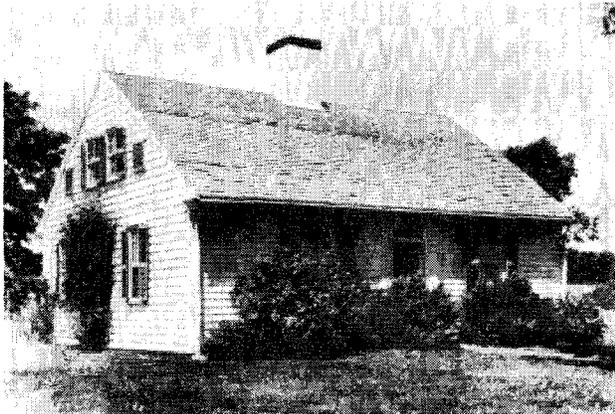
In the years following World War II the methods of mass production and logics of mobilization honed for wartime speed and efficiency were turned to domestic venues. Housing production was operating at full speed to accommodate returning GI's and their young families. Between 1945 and 1965 tens of thousands of living units were constructed in "First Ring" suburbs all across the country.

As an idea and a built reality, first ring suburbs have had a dramatic impact in shaping American culture. The popular media of magazines, movies, and television described the prototypical mid-century 'suburban' experience for later generations.

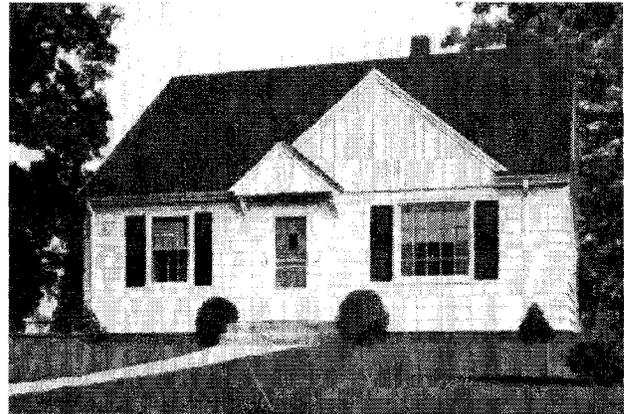
An adaptation of the Massachusetts Cape Cod Cottage, the Contractor Cape was one of the prototype housing models developed at mid-century for the Post War housing market. Utilizing the methods of design and construction based in mass production, developer builders set out to provide a simple, compact dwelling. The diminutive and affordable Contractor Cape was well suited for returning GI's and their young families. The planning of lots, blocks and neighborhoods were driven by the forces of development and the efficient parceling of land.

Developed for a mass market of young homebuyers the Contractor Cape was widely adapted and constructed in new suburbs from the eastern seaboard to the mid-west. While the plans vary slightly, the plan type typically encompassed a total of 1,100 square feet of interior living space.

Nearly sixty years later, the culture of the backyard bar-b-que, and stay-at-home mom has been supplemented with e-commerce, globalism, soccer moms, eco-awareness, sprawl, telecommuting, play dates and a search for quality time. The metropolitan region has been further impacted by significant changes in demographics; current forecasts show continued change including both increasing diversity and rapid growth. While metropolitan governments struggle with the impacts on the region, first ring neighborhoods – with their aging housing stock, antiquated zoning ordinances, and ecological challenges – have frequently been overlooked as viable sites for responding to these dynamic changes.



*Cape Cod Cottage, Yarmouth Massachusetts, 18th Century.*



*"The Clark," Mid-Century Contractor Cape*

This project proposes a framework for re-calibrating first ring suburbs that acknowledges the complexity of changing cultural conditions and expectations. The approach accepts the first ring suburb - not solely as we find it in 2001, nor strictly as it might have appeared in 1948 - but through an understanding of the cultural conditions that have shaped it.

To that end we have employed a design strategy that defines cultural thematic of Material, Technology, Nature, and Community. Each thematic is developed from conceptual lens, through re-inhabitation principles, and application options, resulting in two sample designs. The information will be available to homeowners, developers, and architects via an interactive web site.

This design strategy embraces the diversity and variety that accompany the dynamic demographic and lifestyle expectations of contemporary culture. The re-calibration of the Contractor Cape and

first ring suburb envisions their transformation into vital eco-neighborhoods and smart-homes within a thriving Metropolitan community. Culture means to begin with an appreciation of the complexity of how we - as modern citizens - live. It is to be attentive to the specifics of place, time, demographics, natural resources, built resources, and quality of life at the heart of dwelling and community.

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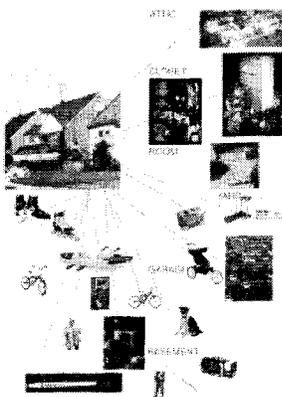
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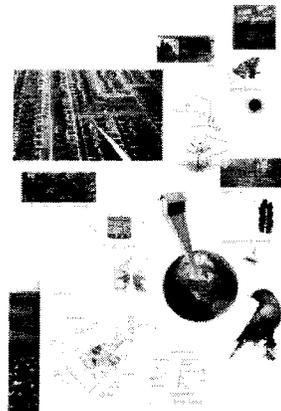
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MA TERIAL CULTURE: STORAGE HOUSE



NATURE CULTURE: GARDEN HOUSE



COMMUNITY CULTURE: NEIGHBORLY HOUSE

