

FIREHOUSE

The downstairs rental unit incorporates a sleeping loft within the double-height space.



Originally a trolley maintenance garage and subsequently a firehouse, the structure is given new life with a residential refit.

A glass-floored, clerestory observation deck is perched high over the owner's unit office space area.



THE NEW

DESIGNER	Plumbob, LLC
DATE	2007
LOCATION	625 N. 13th Street
SIZE	5,000 SF
CLIENT	Private
PROGRAM	Residential
BUDGET	
STATUS	Completed

THE OLD

DESIGNER	
DATE	1898
HISTORIC STATUS	
SIZE	5,000 SF
OWNER	Union Traction Company
PROGRAM	Trolley Maintenance Shed

THE BACKSTORY

This project is a conversion of a former trolley maintenance garage and subsequent firehouse into an owner-occupied residence and rental loft. The 5,000 square-foot renovation incorporates existing industrial design elements through the use of exposed structural and ornamental steel, acid-etched concrete floors, and the incorporation of on-site reclaimed lumber into the millwork. A new, custom stair serves as a centerpiece for the design. The former attic, under a high sloping roof, was opened up to add a mezzanine level and upper observation deck perched high over the living area.

The structural challenge was to open up the double-height living room space within a masonry structure bearing significant outward thrust of the gable roof. Wanting to minimize the visual impact of the necessary tension members, solid steel rods and turnbuckles were implemented to replace the former timber members of the attic floor. This move set the direction for the primary elements of the project. The exterior stair and balcony to the owner's second floor unit were suspended from through-bolted steel brackets using tie rods and clevises, and the sleeping loft in the first floor rental unit is hung from 2x2 tube-steel sections, eliminating the need for columns within the kitchen area below.

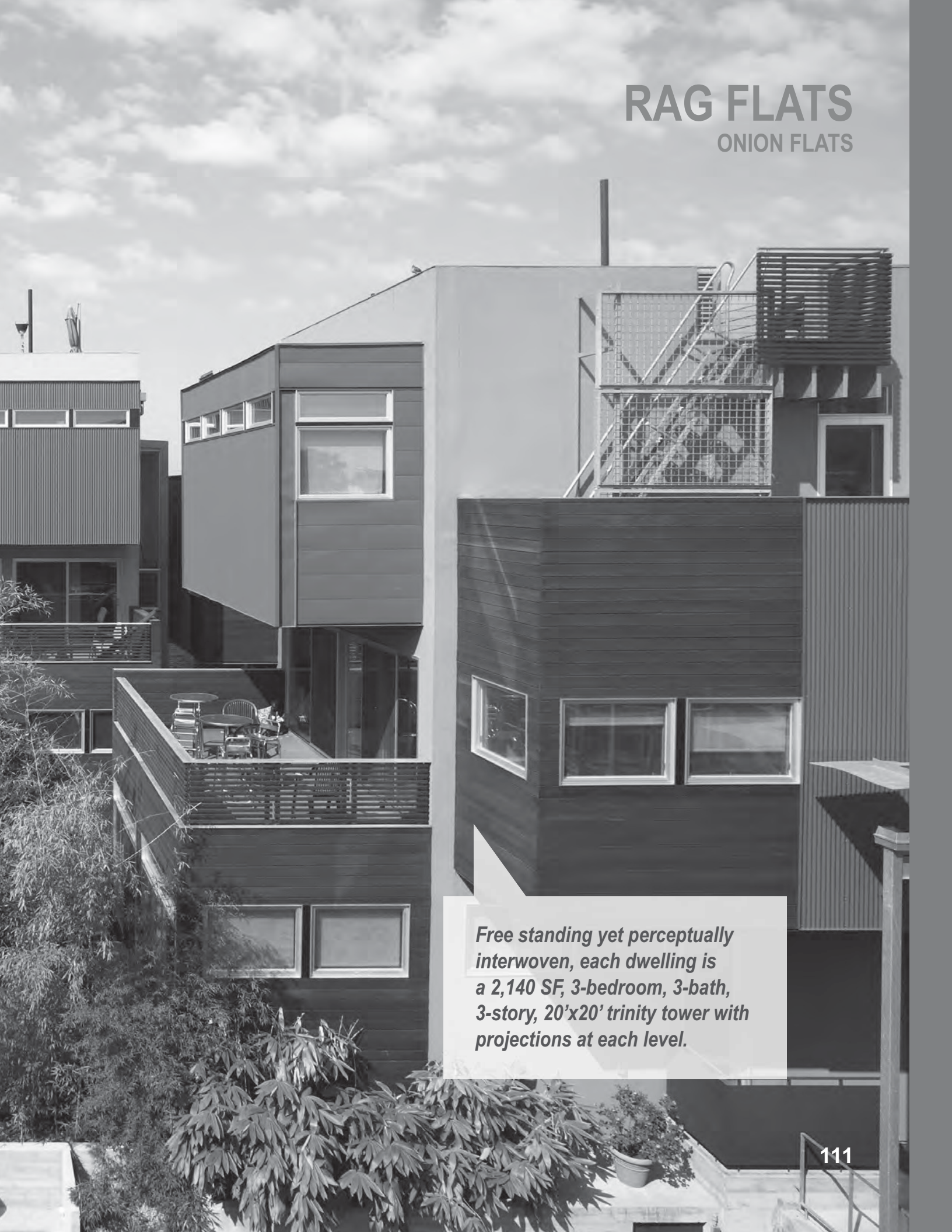


The site for Rag Flats, as we found it in 2002, was vacant except for a few trucks and a family of feral cats. The two-story factory structures facing Berks Street were on the verge of collapse. From the street, it presented an unobtrusive face to the residential community adjoining it, masking a secret space beyond. Inspired by one of the most fundamental urban building blocks of Philadelphia, we occupied this hidden courtyard with an updated trinity community.

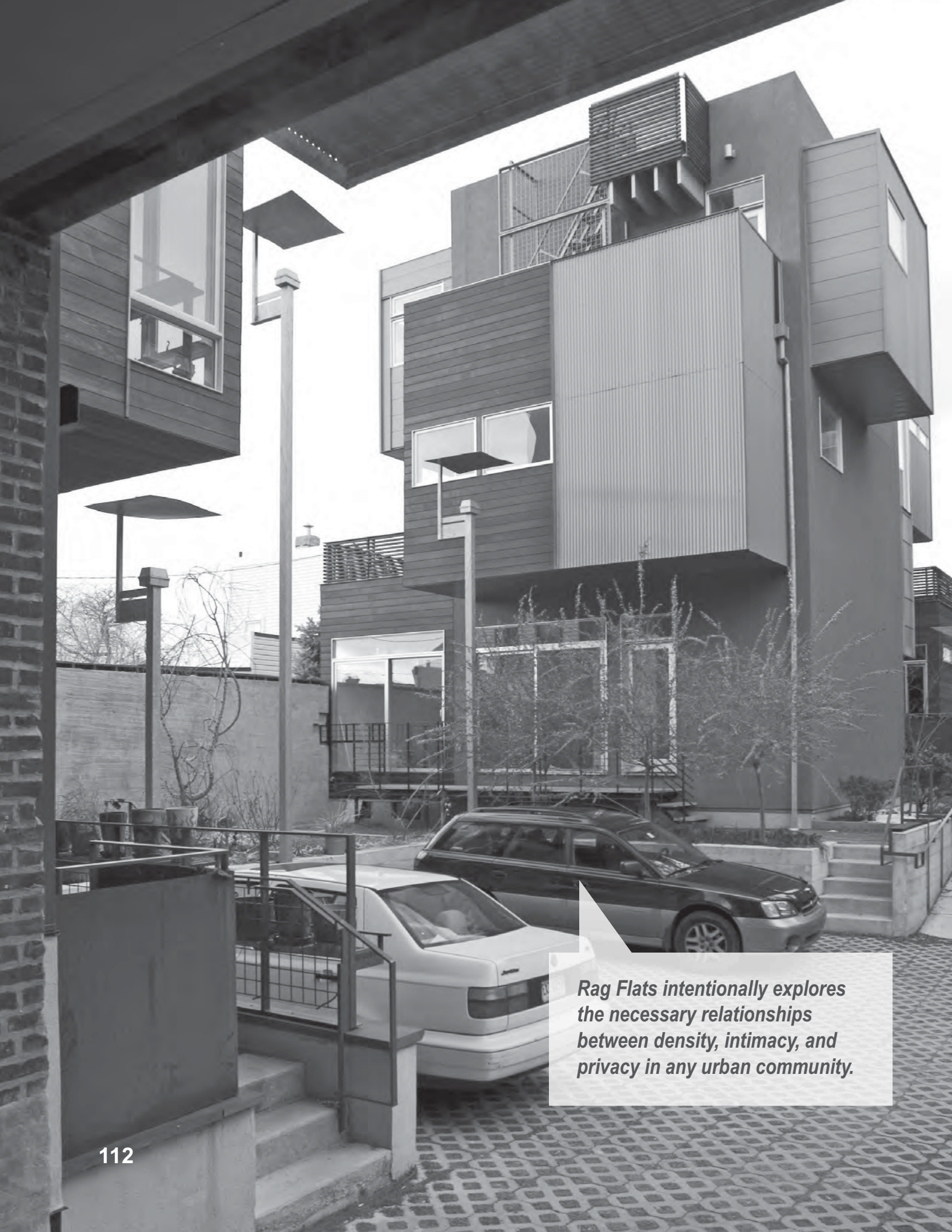
Although they have been common in Philadelphia for over 100 years, trinity communities get little press when issues of urban form and density are discussed because they are virtually invisible. Tucked into the interiors of neighborhood blocks, they are like Russian dolls, communities within communities, blocks within blocks. To enter a trinity community one passes through a narrow alley between two street-facing row homes. Such alleys appear to be private, however, they are actually miniature streets leading into the depth of the block and lined with trinities on both sides.

RAG FLATS

ONION FLATS



Free standing yet perceptually interwoven, each dwelling is a 2,140 SF, 3-bedroom, 3-bath, 3-story, 20'x20' trinity tower with projections at each level.



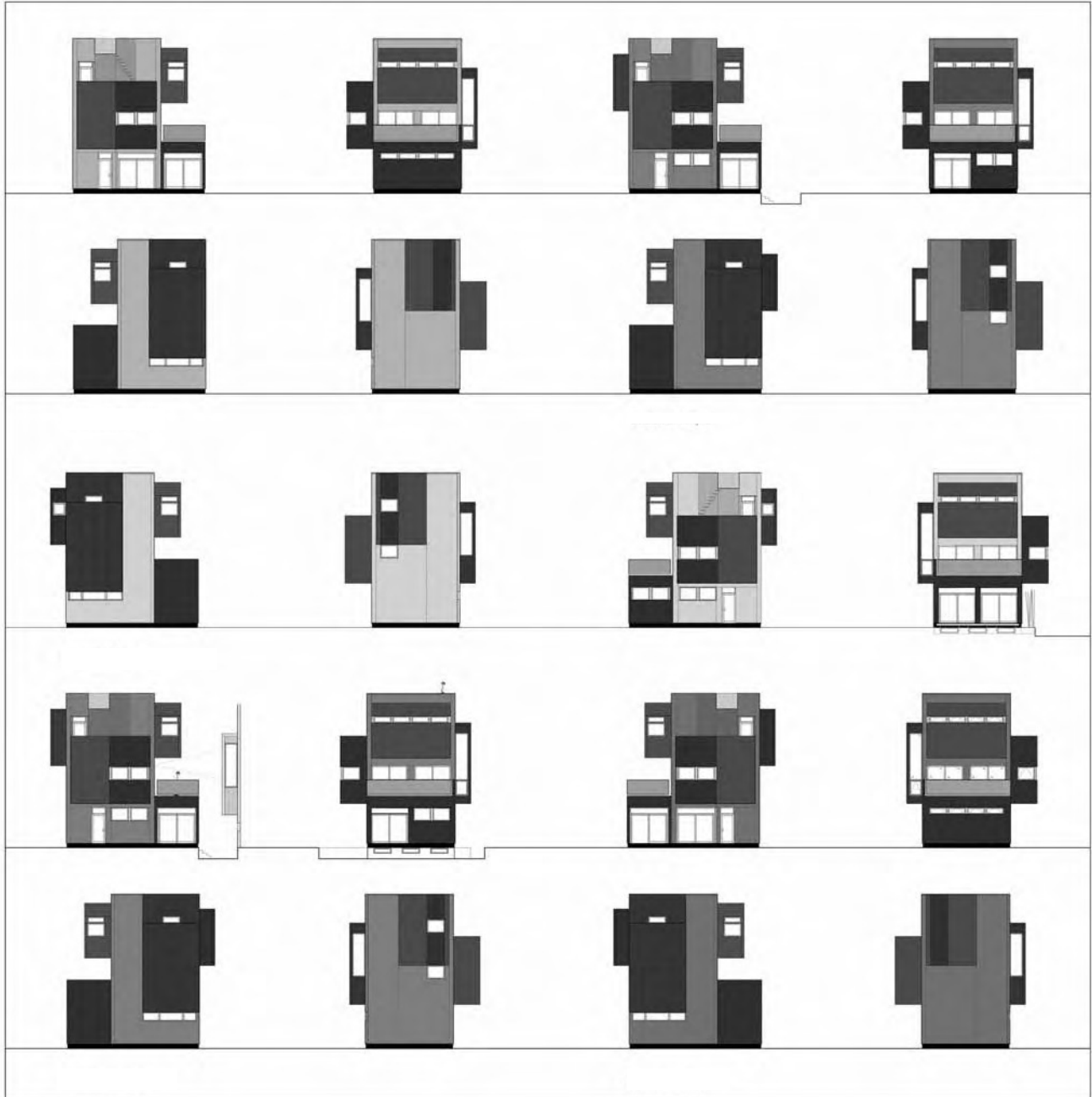
Rag Flats intentionally explores the necessary relationships between density, intimacy, and privacy in any urban community.

RAG FLATS

ONION FLATS

The former industrial rag factory has been re-conceptualized as a residential garden community created by prototypical forms of dwellings commonly found in Philadelphia: the rowhouse, the trinity, the loft, and the pavilion.





RAG FLATS

ONION FLATS

Outdoor garden spaces at the ground level for each dwelling are intimate and private yet interdependent.

