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An architectural experiment in high-density housing, Habitat features private terraces and gardens for every unit.

Developers agree that the acid test for new habitats is whether they feel like separate houses; for if they do, they will be quickly occupied. In response to this market reality, many designers have turned their attention to creating the illusion of privacy where space is at a premium. The townhouse is a fine example. Architects of townhouses, like those of micro-circuits, have learned to exploit every opportunity of space in a design both functional and aesthetically pleasing.

In Kanata, Ontario, a rapidly expanding satellite city near Ottawa, an increasing demand for housing has led to a flurry of townhouse construction. Privacy and ease of maintenance are major design features.

Developers of the Pickford Court project have met the Canadian desire for seclusion by erecting buildings of pin-wheel design which feature entrances on all four sides of each building. All 112 two-storey units have separate entrances, access to both a children's recreation area and a swimming pool, and a host of conveniences from automatic dishwashers to *en suite* bathrooms. Construction costs were greater than those of traditional row houses but, even so, the units rent for about \$150 a month less than their downtown counterparts.

For those who can afford it — and 64 out of 100 Canadians can — the single detached house is still the most desirable habitat. While prices vary widely from city to city, a home buyer can typically afford a 150 m²

three-bedroom bungalow or split-level house with an informal living room (probably with fireplace), a dining room, two bathrooms, a laundry nook, and a functional kitchen with an eating area.

Even when they are built on small lots, the popularity of these single detached houses has put a strain on land near city centres. The result has been the rapid rise of suburban communities — huge villages of houses in proximity to major centres — often large and distinct enough to become towns or even cities in their own right.

With an objective of self-reliance and individual identity, these communities incorporate schools, hospitals, fire departments, recreational facilities and parks, and are supported by secondary industries of shopping complexes and services which themselves employ large numbers of community inhabitants. Each community is sufficiently self-contained, distinct, and small to engender an authentic sense of community identity. In cities of ever-increasing size, this is a valuable asset.

The Pacific Heights Housing Co-operative reclaimed a downtown street for family dwelling.



Photo: Kris Kann