

Architecture Studio: 1st Year Spring

Spring 2012, CMU, Arch #48-105, M/W/F 1:30-4:20
Class Website: www.andrew.cmu.edu/course/48-105

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Off. Hr: M/W/F 12:30-1:00pm & by appt. in MM302

(4/2/12)

Project 4: COURTYARD HOUSE

CLIENT: Your client owns the Tillie Speyer house and an extensive property on Wightman Street in Squirrel Hill. The house was designed by famous modernist architect James Speyer (1913-1986). Speyer was born in Pittsburgh, received an architecture degree from Carnegie Tech in 1934, went on to study in Europe, and from 1938-9 was Mies van der Rohe's first graduate student at the Armour Institute of Technology (later IIT). He later set up his office in Chicago, but built several houses in Pittsburgh, including this one for his widowed mother Tillie in 1963. The present owner is proud to own this landmark, and is eager to maintain the general ambience of the modernist house, and the quiet, traditional upscale neighborhood.

SITE: Your client has decided to re-develop her rarely used tennis court into two adjacent courtyard houses, each designed by a separate architect. She has mandated that a unified 8ft high garden wall in the same brown brick, using the same "stacked" (not bonded) brick pattern as her own house, be built around the existing tennis court. It will result in two identical lots, each 60ft wide x 50ft deep inside the walls, and set back slightly from the sidewalk. The garden walls are not allowed to be punctured, interrupted, or overhung in any way, except for a front entry or door (this may include side-lights) and a two-car garage door on Wightman, and a modest back door to access the communal gardens. All other windows or openings will need to face onto internal courtyards and gardens. The garden wall will:

- 1) preserve the integrity of the client's overall property;
- 2) insure privacy and quiet for the residents of these modest lots on this busy street;
- 3) allow the rest of the property, in back of the courts and along Ayelsboro, to serve as communal garden space, or be developed in the future.

ASSIGNMENT 1d: - Due. Fri. Apr. 6, 1:30 (bring drafts on Wed. Apr. 4)

Each studio should collaborate to study the site and begin to understand the issues, forces, and atmospheres related to the site and the context, and what impact it will have on designing adjacent courtyard houses here. Although you should divide up the work, every student should develop a firm understanding of:

- 1) **Site Plan:** The entire 1st year studio should collaborate to create a single, accurate Autocad site plan of the entire property using the maps and plans provided. It should include footprints of neighboring buildings. All students will use the same base plan, to help insure that all students work with the same base dimensions.
- 2) **Street Elevation:** The entire 1st year should also collaborate to create a single Wightman street elevation between Aylesboro and Northumberland street. It should include the Tillie Speyer House, both of the project lots, the gardens and a light outline of the trees on Wightman (estimate the height & span of the trees).
- 2) **Sun/Shade:** Each separate studio should study the day-lighting issues on this site, working to understand where the trees and other context will cast shadows during different times of the day, and different seasons throughout the year. Each studio should create an 11x17 sheet documenting these results.
- 3) **Topography & Views:** Although the construction site is perfectly flat, and only inches above the street level, the garden to the south of the tennis court includes a slight elevation change, and overall the site is on a hill, very much the top of Sq.Hill. Study this topography and begin to speculate on the implications for your design. What kinds of views are available? What opportunities would (slight) level changes in the garden or house, or the existence of a 2nd floor, afford?
- 4) **Neighborhood Context & Traffic:** Walk the neighborhood, begin to understand the rhythms and patterns of the other houses and traffic. What factors might you be able to tap into, so that your courtyard house works well within the context of both the traditional houses across the street, and the owner's modernist house and landscape? How will traffic (pedestrian & cars) affect your house design?

