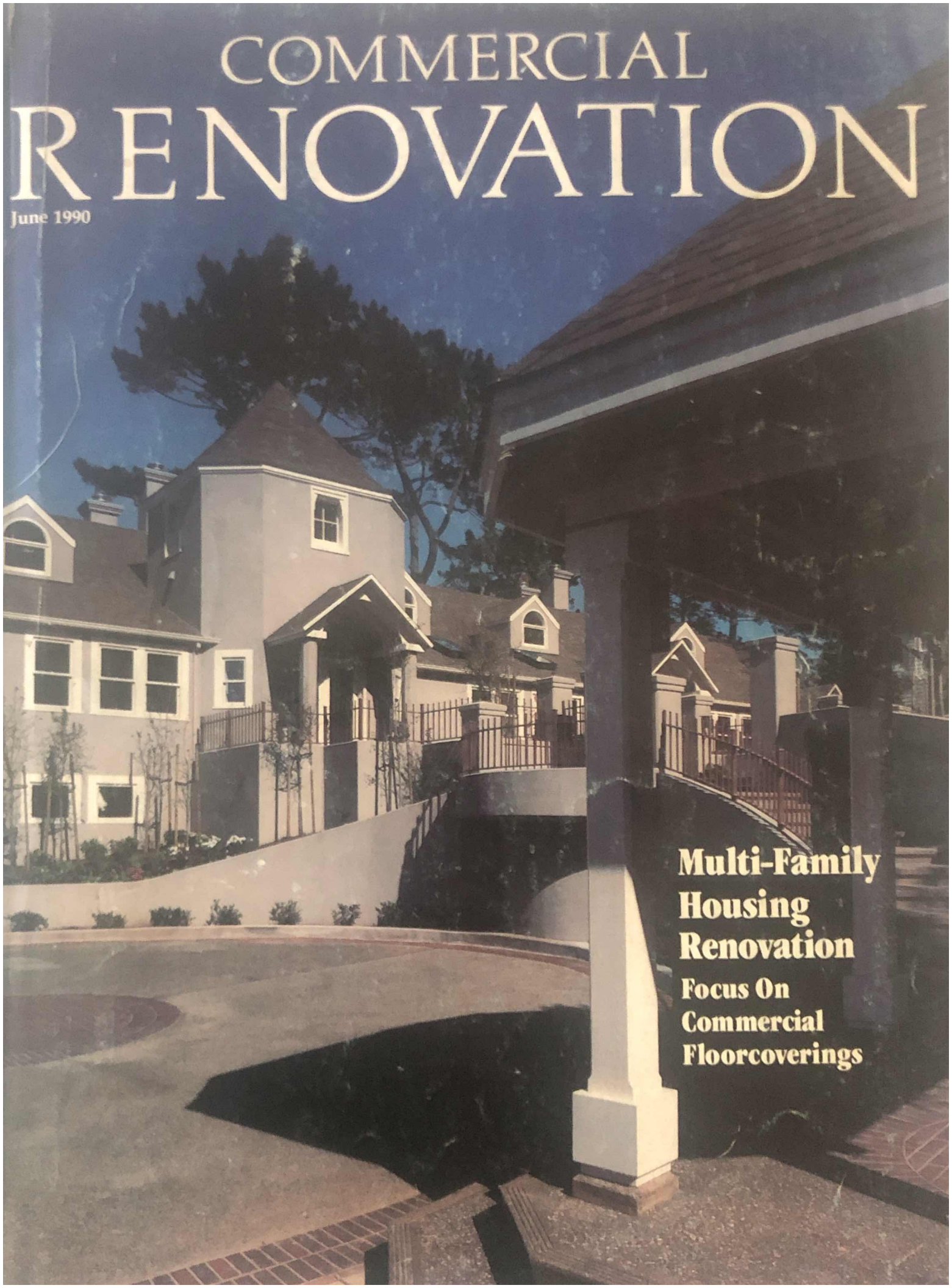


# COMMERCIAL RENOVATION

The background of the cover is a photograph of a multi-story residential building, likely an apartment complex, with a light-colored facade and multiple windows. A large, dark tree is visible behind the building. In the foreground, there is a curved concrete walkway and a covered area with a dark roof and white columns. The overall scene is set during the day with clear skies.

June 1990

**Multi-Family  
Housing  
Renovation**  
Focus On  
Commercial  
Floorcoverings



# Reading, Writing, and Renovation

*Adaptive re-use was  
the ideal approach to saving  
the community's cherished,  
50-year-old schoolhouse*

Once upon a time, everything was simpler. Children were taught only three things in school—reading, writing, and 'rithmetic. And, nearly everyone, from first grade on up, attended classes in the same building.

Today, however, our society and our education facilities are more complex. No longer bound by the basic "three R's", we now subject our children to algebra, chemistry, physics, and French. Consequently, this progression from the simple to the sophisticated has left many old-time schoolhouses without students and, in many cases, without function. Further, the structures can and do become separated from their real estate, being exceeded in value by the land on which they stand, thus placing them in danger of demolition.

In some instances, however, the structure and the land can provide equal opportunity for investment. A case in point: the Belvedere elementary school in Belvedere, California.

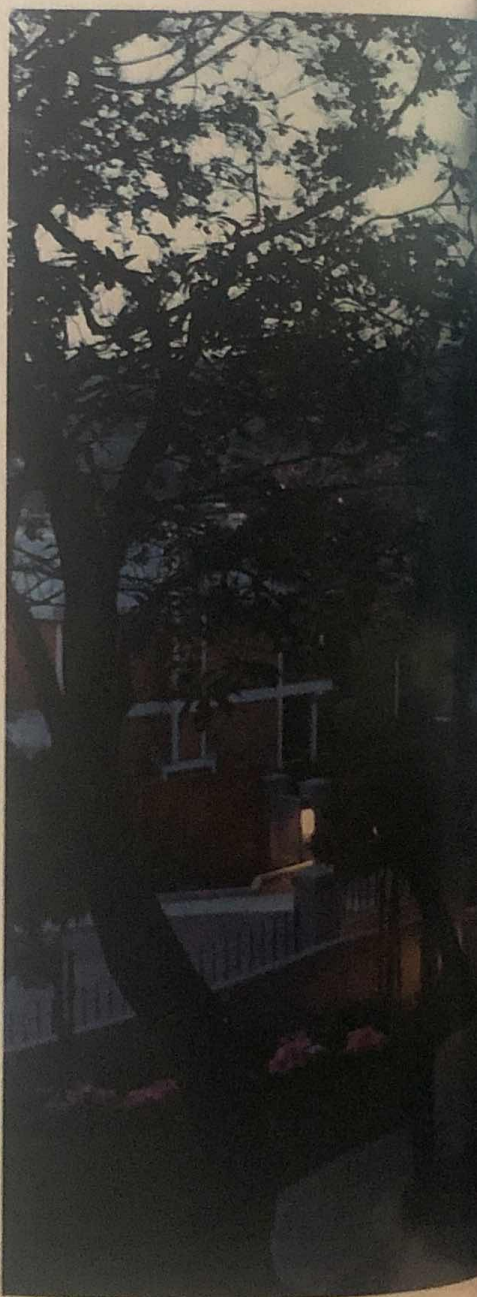
Built in 1939 by architect Henry H. Gutterson, the Tudor-style structure was designed to complement a Presbyterian church built on the same property in 1896. Having outlived its usefulness as a school, however, the building was abandoned in the 1970s and left to the disciplines of weather and decay.

During the late 1980s, the Belvedere Land Company, owned and operated by Howard and David Allen, purchased the school building from the school district with an eye towards adaptive re-use. The developer then approached architect Colleen Mahoney AIA, and her partner Joseph Newberry of Mahoney Architects to assist in the endeavor.

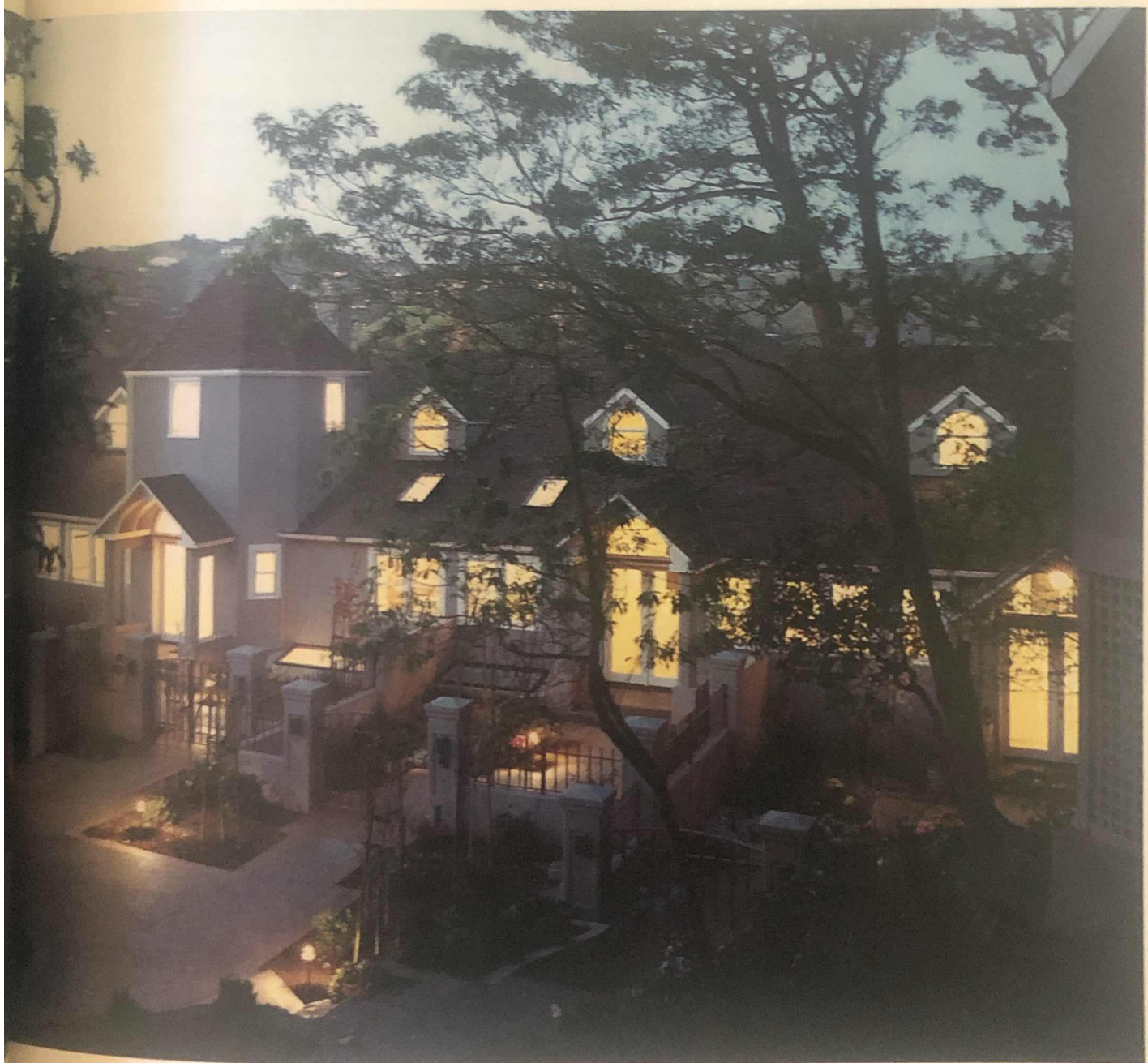
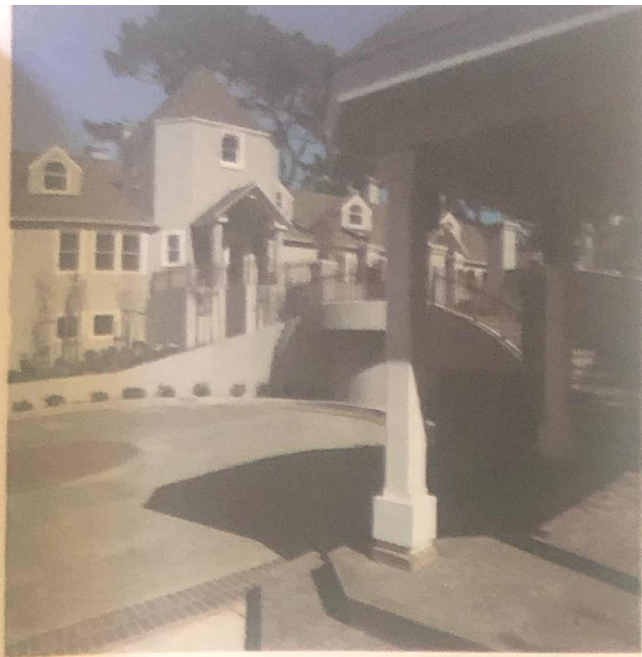
The Allens, said Mahoney, were determined to renovate the old building and were enthusiastic in commissioning Mahoney's firm to provide project proposals. "They were visionaries," she said. "They had this old school and they wanted to find a way to save it. They've been in this community for 35-40 years and they're a very strong part of it. They have a sincere interest in the history and the quality of this area. That sets them apart from the everyday developer."

Once Newberry had been brought

Before being vacated during the 1970s, the Belvedere elementary school was an important part of the community's heritage. Thanks to developers Elliot & Burman and architect Colleen Mahoney, AIA, the old school now enjoys a new life as a luxury townhome development (photos: Jane Lidz).











on board, however, the project was sold to developers Doug Elliot and Bruce Burman of Elliot & Burman in San Francisco.

"When we submitted the project for permit," explained Mahoney, "The Belvedere Land Company sold the project to another developer, Elliot & Burman. It was a young partnership and they acted as builder/developer. Belvedere didn't ever really intend to handle the actual construction. It's not their thing. So, we ended up working primarily for The Belvedere Land Company and then Elliot & Burman. As developer/builder, Elliot & Burman then hired Tom Ganley Construction to work as project supervisor."

With the complete renovation team assembled, the project was begun. Newberry, however, was tragically unable to complete the work. "Initially, the architect on this project was my partner, Joseph Newberry," said Mahoney. "While the project was underway, he was killed in a car accident. Our staff architect, Eric, saw the project through to completion, working closely with the developer."

### **Townhomes planned**

Using Newberry's ideas as a foundation, the architects executed a renovation plan to convert the former schoolhouse into four townhome units, priced from \$555,000 to \$685,000, and ranging in size from 1600 to 2350 square feet. Maximizing the building's best features, the architects worked within the constraints of existing window placement and old structural systems.

Overall, said Mahoney, "the team's objective was to sensitively restore the building and to create four dramatic, contemporary townhomes." Design elements, she added, were selected for compatibility with the building's original form and style.

Outside, new entry porches were developed in conjunction with the roof dormers. Although stylistically distinctive, the porches are sympathetic to the building's original decorative, arched wood detailing. To take advantage of under-utilized volume, the trussed roof framing was re-engineered and opened up to create lofts,



expansive views, and more dynamic spaces. Dormers were added on both sides of the building to fill the large, open volumes of space with light.

Throughout the project, Mahoney had the assistance of designer Sandra Chandler ASID, IBD, of Sandra Chandler Design Associates in San Francisco, who, in turn, was assisted by Sara Bourland of the same firm.

"It was a crazy project at first," said Chandler. "Initially, we were required to do all the interiors—the finishes, material selections, and color selection of all units. In the process of coming on board, the architect was killed, and we ended up becoming much more involved in the project. We also became involved in exterior coloration, lighting design, and roof material selection."

Such extended participation, however, is usual fare for Chandler. "We tend to work very closely with the architect and developer," she said. "In fact, we get involved with exterior de-

**The renovation team capitalized on the building's classic features both inside and out. Tenant amenities include separate, distinctive entries (opposite) and generous interior spaces (below).**





sign considerations on a lot of our projects. We currently are working on a number of projects where we are involved in these areas."

### Challenging design

While the proposed development was relatively small, it did pose design challenges for the renovation team. It can be difficult to design four individual and unique units within one given space, maintain construction quality, and still attract the upscale market. The traditional "look-alike" approach to townhomes, therefore, was unacceptable.

The design solution, albeit seemingly simple, "was to have each unit be different," said Chandler. "That way the buyers could come home and share a cocktail with their neighbors, yet not wind up walking into the exact same house."

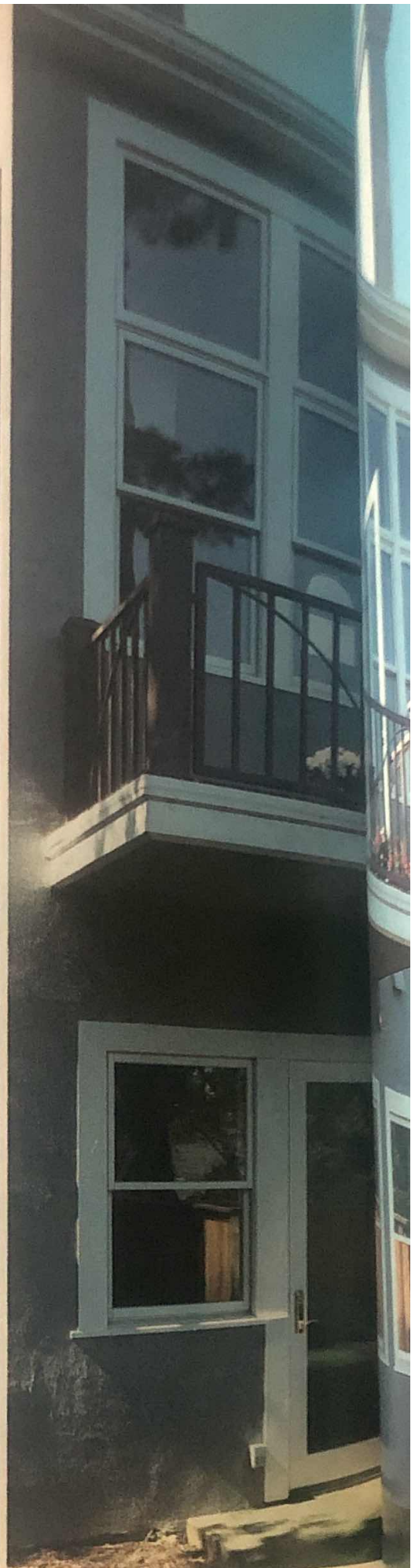
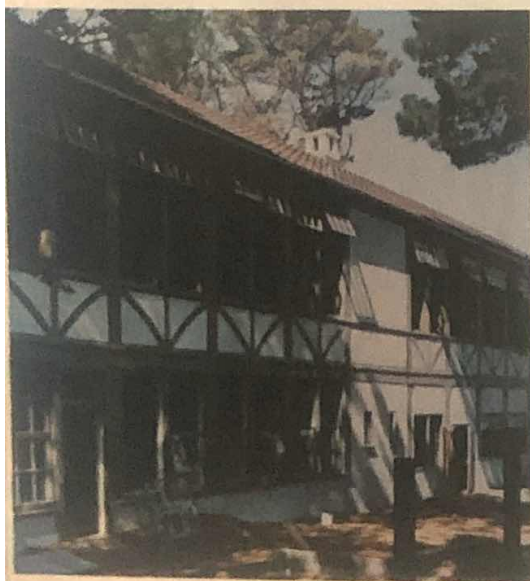
To differentiate between units, floor plans and finishes were diversified. "The kitchens, baths, carpeting, and paint are all different," said Chandler. "In doing this, we tried to give each space its own personality."

Such a design approach, noted Chandler, can be difficult "because you're coming up with different color schemes rather than a single color scheme applied across the board," but it does have its rewards. The approach not only personalizes each unit, but makes the development more marketable as well. "We're very market oriented on all our projects," added Chandler.

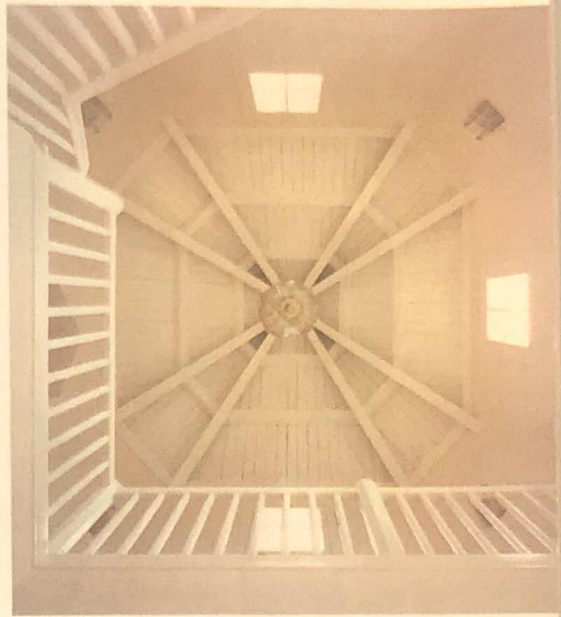
Although each unit differs in color scheme and floor plan, the renovation team did maintain a set of hard, fast rules. Each unit features a mezzanine or "loft" space for any number of uses and, said Chandler, "each wall color accents the unit and warms it up." In addition, she said, "we painted all the trim white to give it a crisp, sharp look and used light hardwood floors in all the kitchens and entry areas."

Special attention was paid to bathrooms and kitchens, a must for any upscale, residential project. The master baths feature clear-glass shower doors and 12" x 12" marble tile in the master baths "to enlarge the space and make it as gracious as possible,"

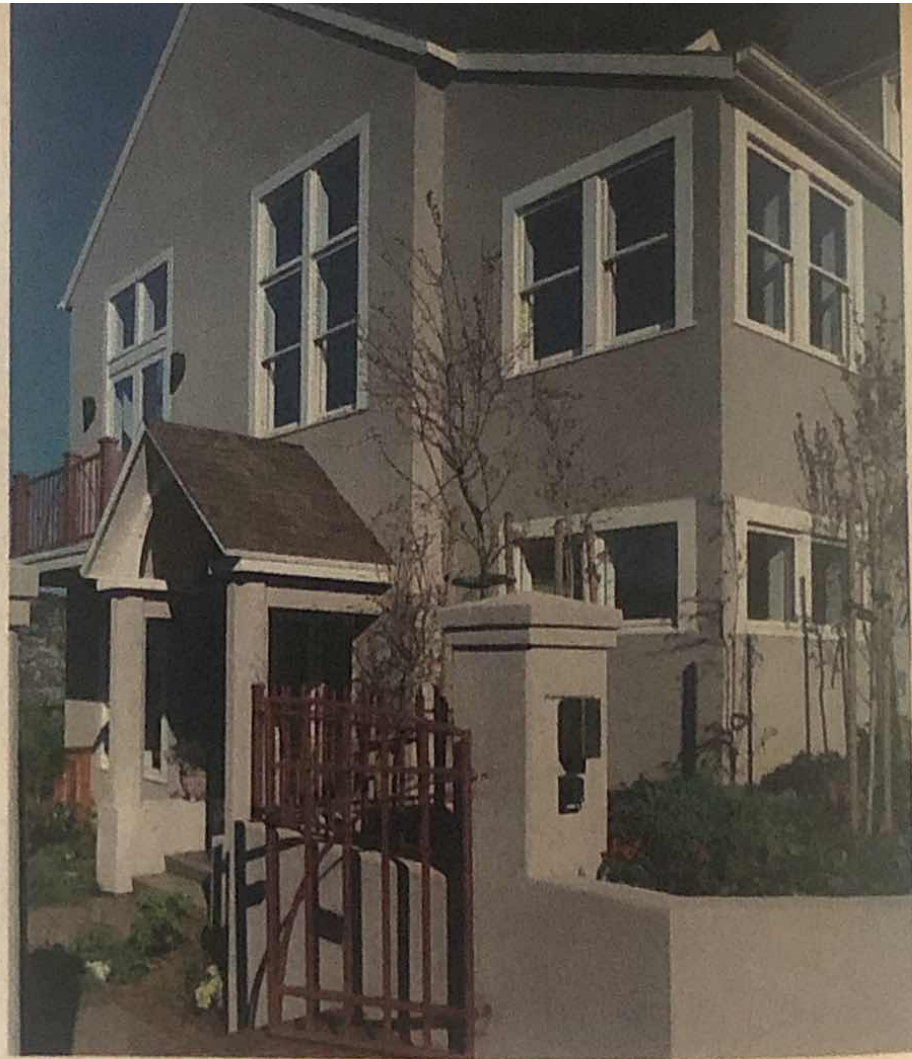
The building was originally constructed in a Tudor style (below). Developers Elliot & Burman added balconies, dormers, and decks (right). The development's uncontested showcase is the second unit, which features a two-story tower and winding staircase (far right).







Over the years, the school lost Thomas Church's original landscaping and gardens (right). Rather than attempt to replicate the work, landscape architects Karen Gray and George Girbin instead chose to design the new gardens with Church's style in mind (far right).





said the designer. "We also used counter-to-ceiling mirrors to open up the space."

Secondary baths also received special treatment. Using her own tastes as a reference, Chandler used a white racing stripe to give dimension to each room. "I basically duplicated my own bathroom throughout the secondary baths," she said.

Now that the project is complete, the development's uncontested showplace is the second unit, which features a two-story tower and winding interior staircase. "The unit with the cupola is fabulous," said Chandler. "It has a lot of personality, and it is, of course, the highlight."

"The integrity of the building and the grounds were really maximized throughout the entire project," said the designer. "Once the landscaping has matured, it's going to be a fabulous environment." □

### **Major products:**

Artistic Brass hardware  
Superior fireplaces  
Dryvit exterior siding  
Pozzi windows and doors  
Kohler plumbing fixtures  
KitchenAid appliances  
Genstar roofing  
NuTone security system  
Owens Corning insulation  
Frigidaire appliances