



Thomas Dolan Architecture : Building Issues

Open Space Requirements

One of the appeals of live/work development for many developers is the fact that -- particularly in existing buildings and sometimes in new construction -- normal residential requirements such as open space are not imposed. As the various types of live/work emerge and differentiate themselves, it becomes clear that some types are more alien to a form of housing and others, while they also house people, are really commercial space. Live/work as conceived 20 years ago, before the internet, at the peak of inner urban decline, post energy crisis economic woes and post cargo containerization vacation of an entire urban building type (the downtown warehouse loft structure) is quite different than what is emerging today, although there are still warehouses out there to be converted in most cities in the industrialized world. Much high density urban housing, even new construction, does not provide much open space: this will depend on a city's regulations. However, live/work is a mixed use type which has generated a new building type to meet different needs than housing or commercial use alone. Opportunities exist, primarily in the common spaces of multi-unit projects, to encourage a sense of community through the provision of interactive spaces. Located along the entry path of projects -- that is, along the way between the entrance to the project and the individual unit entries. Depending on the local climate, such spaces might best be located as exterior common open space or as interior common area, but in any event its minimum dimensions should exceed those of even a wide corridor. A good guideline would be that an interactive open space is:

located along the entry path of at least 1/2 of the units (there may need to be more than one)

At least four units open directly out onto each interactive open space,
Its minimum dimensions would be 15' in one direction and 20' in the

<http://www.live-work.com/revise/lwi/codes/openspace.shtml>



other, and

it be either open to the sky or a minimum of one typical floor-floor story height (not floor-mezzanine) for the building and skylit if at the roof.

Under the building code such interactive spaces would often qualify as exit courts.