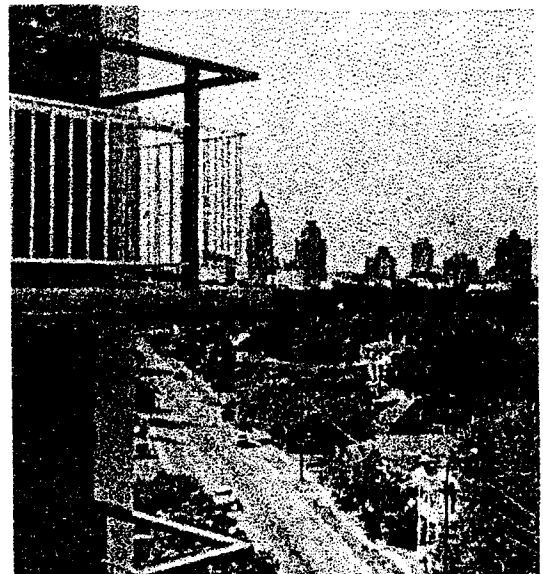


**Victoria Plaza:
Description of the Facility**



VICTORIA PLAZA: DESCRIPTION OF THE FACILITY

Habib Chaudhury

LOCATION Victoria Plaza is located at 411 Barrera Street, San Antonio, Texas on a 2.5 acre property, 0.7 mile from downtown San Antonio, Texas. When the project was built in 1959 and occupied in 1960, the surrounding area consisted of a few slums. Eventually, the adjacent areas were altered by urban renewal projects and a free-way system. Currently the neighborhood area has a grocery store, an elementary school, the Victoria Courts family development and a doctors office with a pharmacy.

THE BUILDING AND THE COMMUNAL AREAS

The structure was the first high-rise apartment building in the city. Nine stories high and shaped in the form of a modified T, the building has an open balcony, and a single loaded corridor oriented toward the prevailing southeast breeze, which provides excellent cross-ventilation. A roque court (hard surface croquet) that was originally provided was eliminated after a time, and an area was set aside for small gardens. A shuffleboard court, located on the side of the building, has also been added. A covered walkway enclosed on both sides leads from the lobby area to this patio, which is surrounded by an 8-foot thick brick wall to offer protection

This description of the facility is based on the following publications:

Carp, F. (1987). The impact of planned housing: A longitudinal study. In V. Regnier & J. Pynoos (Eds.), *Housing the aged: Design directives and policy considerations*. New York: Elsevier.

Victoria Plaza Apartments. San Antonio Housing Authority Publication. 1961.

from the street and the neighborhood. The patio has planted areas, benches, and several pieces of modern sculpture. A medical clinic at one rear corner has a separate entry from the street. The first floor contains offices for Housing Authority and Senior Center staff which is combined with the Board room of the Committee on Management. Adjoining these offices is a hobby room with equipment for various arts and crafts. The hobby room has been remodeled; an acoustical ceiling, adjoining lighting, and metal storage cabinets have been installed. There is a library and an eight-room public health clinic with a nurse's station and examining rooms for use by the Public Health Department. In the west wing there are a post office, counselling offices, restrooms, recreation area, storage space, and a three-bedroom apartment for the custodian.

THE SENIOR CENTER The Senior Center occupies most of the first floor. The senior center is entered through the main entrance and lobby, where the elevators are located. The lobby area has an open plan with comfortable furniture arranged in conversation groups, a billiard table and a television set. A small residential-scale kitchen for parties or meetings is located next to the lobby. Adjacent to the kitchen is a recreation room, which contains card tables, a piano, and a public-address system.

RESIDENTIAL FLOORS Eight identical residential floors provide a total of 184 apartments: 16 two-bedroom, 16 studio, and 152 one-bedroom apartments. There are electric ranges and central heating. Residents may add air conditioners and telephones. An apartment can be turned into

one big room or separated into areas through the use of movable closet units. The kitchens in the one-bedroom units are separated from the living room by a screen covered with light vinyl fabric for easy upkeep. The dining area is near a window that opens onto the gallery. Standard opaque drapes are provided on apartment windows to ensure a consistent external view of the building. There is a laundry room on each floor with coin operated washer and dryer, and tubs and line for hand washing. Galleries, which are also single-loaded corridors, have four-foot high railings to give an additional feeling of safety, and there are porcelain panels in colors of shrimp and beige to serve as windbreaks for the apartment entrances. This gallery provides access to other apartments on the same floor and to the two elevators.

***SPECIAL
DESIGN FEATURES***

The apartments include special design features intended to make them safe and convenient for elderly tenants. Shelves and light fixtures are mounted low. Kitchen stoves have controls at the back of the cooking surface. Refrigerators are set on 14-inch platforms to avoid the need to stoop or squat. Doors have lever handles instead of knobs for easier turning and are wide enough for wheelchairs to pass through. Bathrooms have showers rather than tubs. The showers have wooden seats and tempered doors rather than curtains to provide safety. An emergency button in the bathroom rings a bell mounted in the exterior corridor. Continuous handrails dimensioned for possible use of arthritic hands are provided throughout the building and grounds. There are no raised thresholds, for ease of movement for wheelchairs.

Acknowledgements:

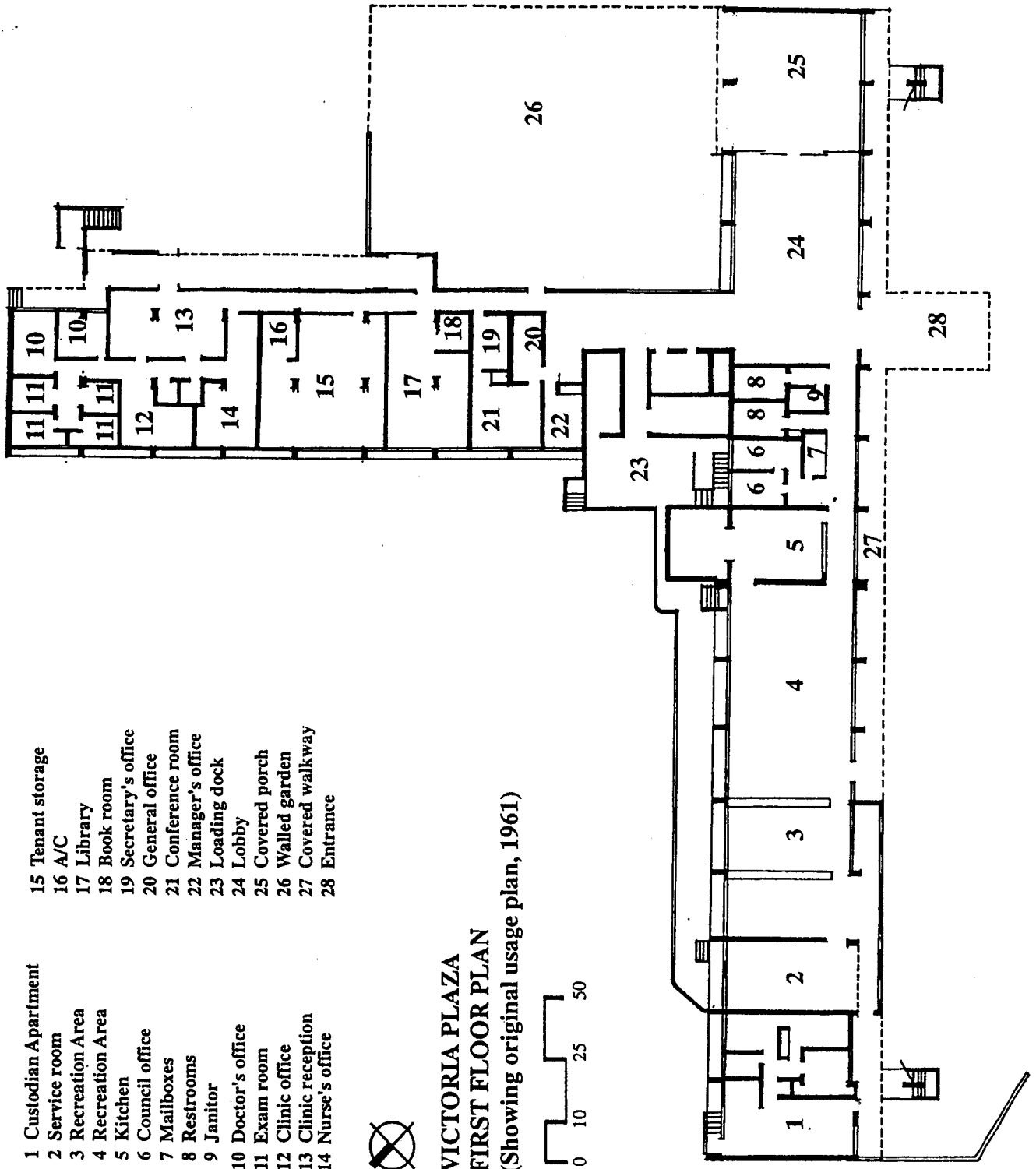
We wish to thank Architect Ramiro Maldonado of the San Antonio Housing Authority for graciously providing the plans of Victoria Plaza and some related publications. Also, we thank Ms. Sylvia Mendez at Victoria Plaza who kindly reviewed the floor plans for any changes from the original intentions of space usage.

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- 1 Custodian Apartment
- 2 Service room
- 3 Recreation Area
- 4 Recreation Area
- 5 Kitchen
- 6 Council office
- 7 Mailboxes
- 8 Restrooms
- 9 Janitor
- 10 Doctor's office
- 11 Exam room
- 12 Clinic office
- 13 Clinic reception
- 14 Nurse's office
- 15 Tenant storage
- 16 A/C
- 17 Library
- 18 Book room
- 19 Secretary's office
- 20 General office
- 21 Conference room
- 22 Manager's office
- 23 Loading dock
- 24 Lobby
- 25 Covered porch
- 26 Walled garden
- 27 Covered walkway
- 28 Entrance



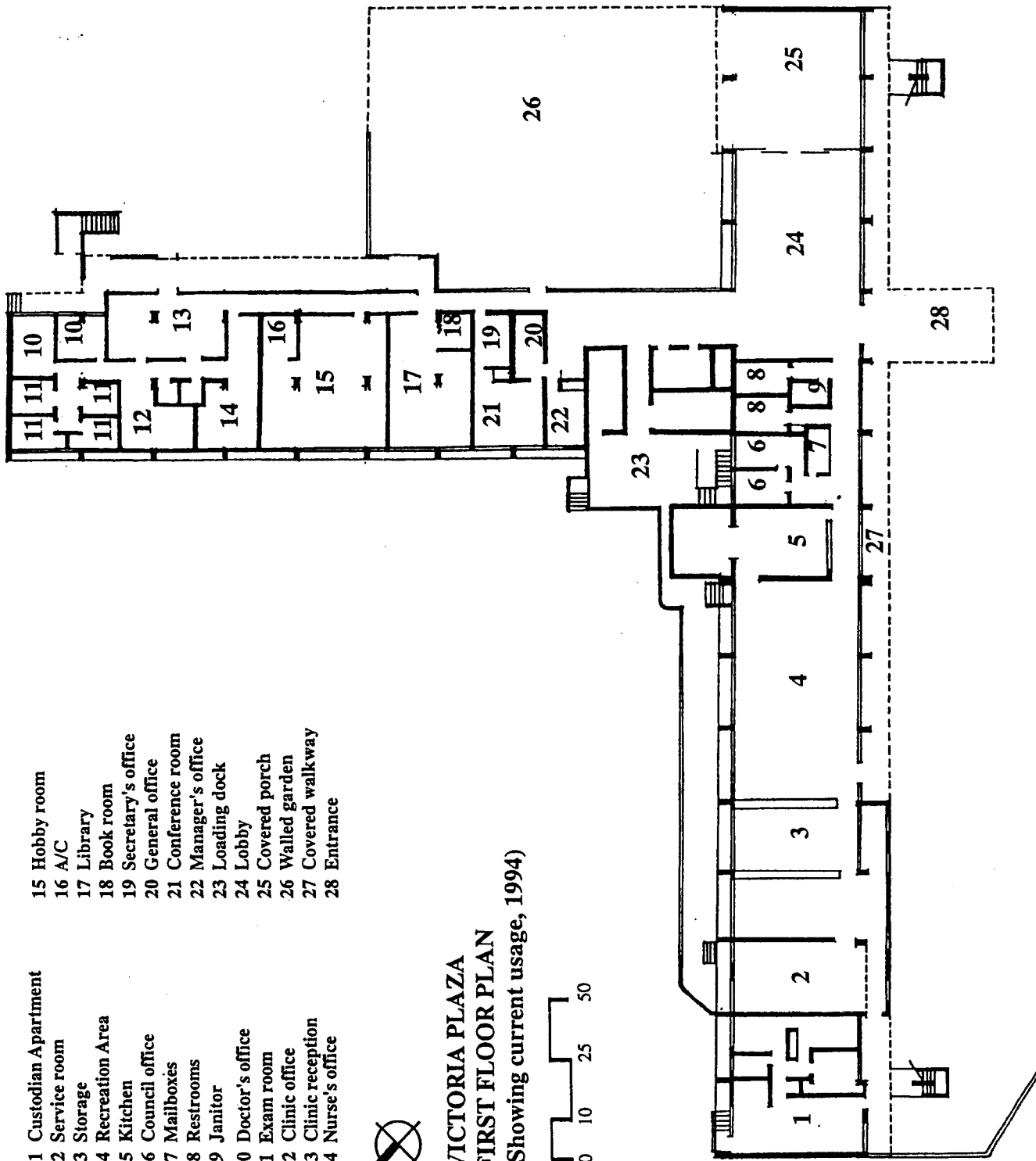
**VICTORIA PLAZA
FIRST FLOOR PLAN**
(Showing original usage plan, 1961)



- 1 Custodian Apartment
- 2 Service room
- 3 Storage
- 4 Recreation Area
- 5 Kitchen
- 6 Council office
- 7 Mailboxes
- 8 Restrooms
- 9 Janitor
- 10 Doctor's office
- 11 Exam room
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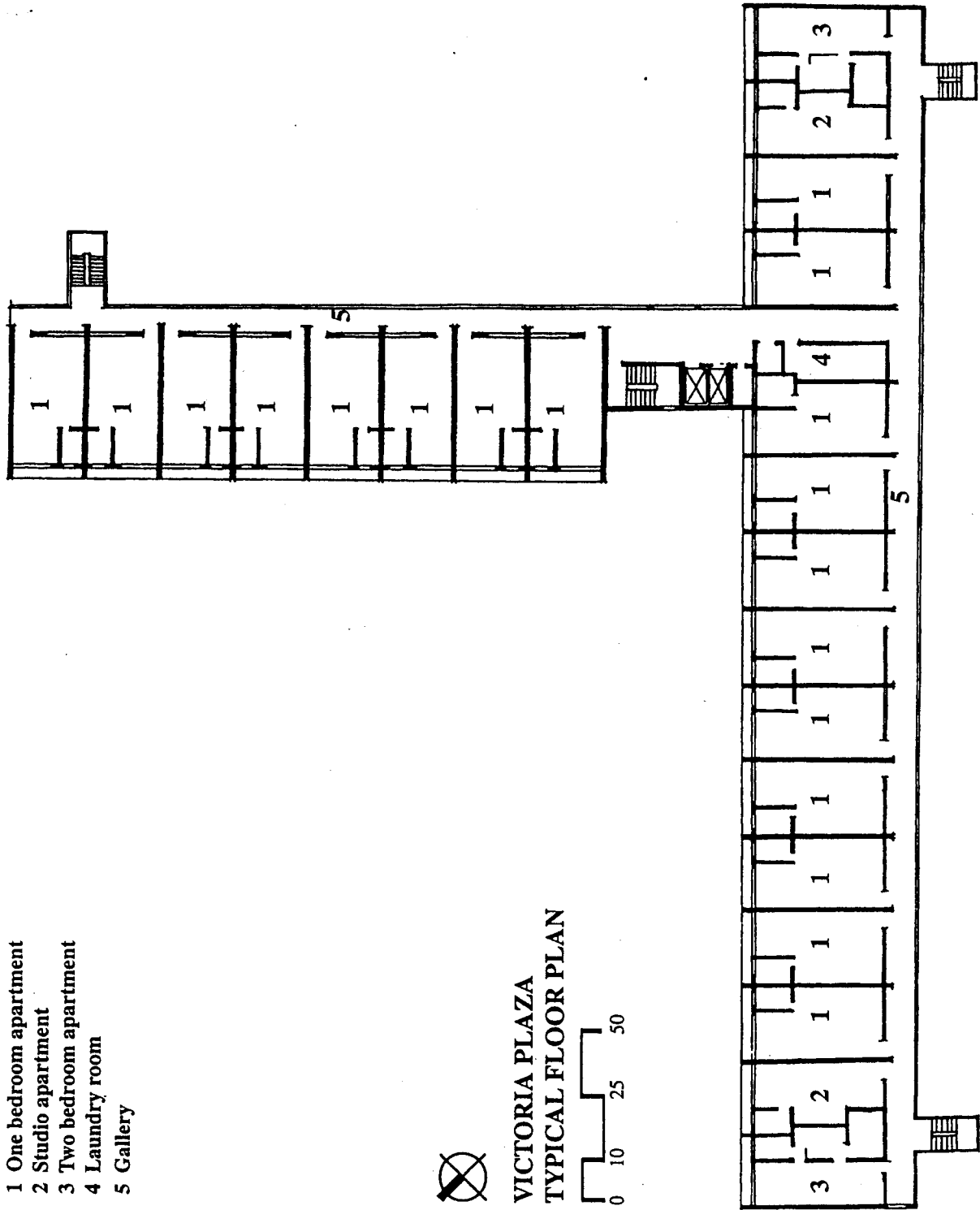
VICTORIA PLAZA
FIRST FLOOR PLAN
 (Showing current usage, 1994)



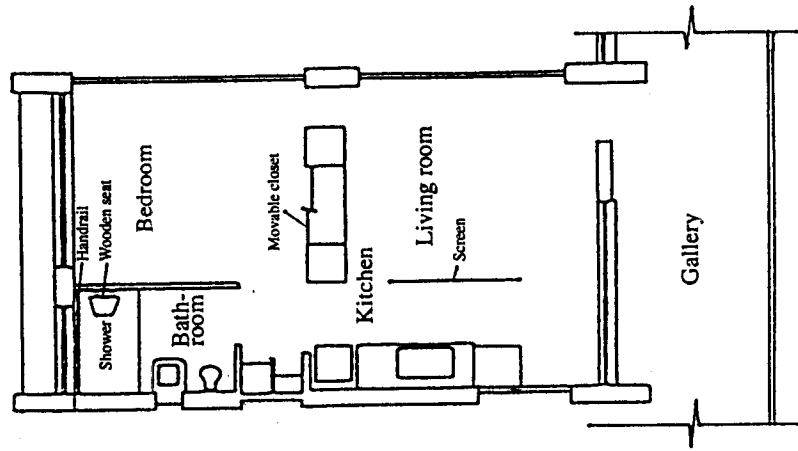
- 1 One bedroom apartment
- 2 Studio apartment
- 3 Two bedroom apartment
- 4 Laundry room
- 5 Gallery



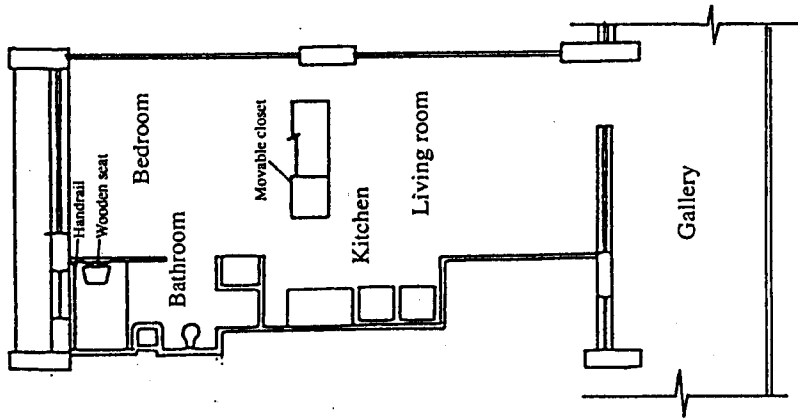
**VICTORIA PLAZA
TYPICAL FLOOR PLAN**



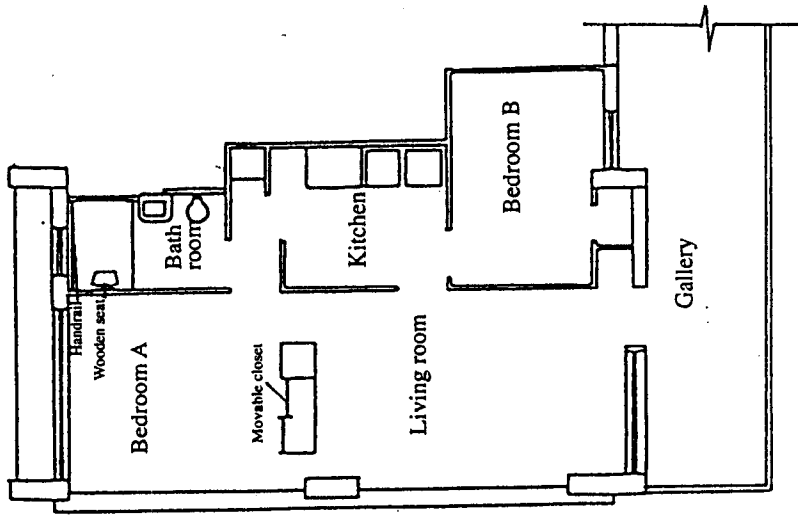
UNIT PLANS



ONE-BEDROOM APARTMENT



STUDIO APARTMENT



TWO-BEDROOM APARTMENT