

I R M I N G H A M

BAN DESIGN PLAN & OBJECTIVES

Members of the Birmingham City Commission
Members of the Birmingham Planning Board

Gentlemen:

Set forth in this report are guidelines for the development of the environment of the central business area and the entrance corridors that lead to the city of Birmingham. One of the conclusions reached in the study is that with proper development and maintenance of the public rights-of-way and the common open spaces, the environment of the total urban area will be enriched. An investment in the areas of public ownership will result in increased renewal and revitalization of the private land areas of the community. New approaches need to be explored for developing and maintaining the public rights-of-way and open spaces, for the quality of this common physical fabric will determine the ultimate character of the total environment.

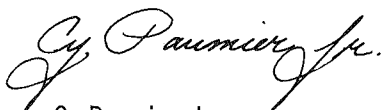
The report is presented in twelve separate brochures to permit interested parties to focus on specific areas of concern. The first brochure projects recommendations for the central area and the second and third focus attention on the Civic Center and related central area development zones. Brochures three through twelve identify the specific urban design issues that exist today and suggest recommendations for community action. This report does not cover the development zones outside of the central area as they are not influenced by the present growth and renewal pattern.

The urban design concept, plans and recommendations submitted in this report are considered to be realistic and practical solutions to the difficult environmental conditions facing the community. Many of these recommendations will be carried out as part of the normal administration of city programs, while others will require new legislation and capital investment in public areas.

Our environment is the result of the actions of many people in the community. It is our hope that this report will be a useful guide in the preservation and development of Birmingham's physical resources.

Respectfully submitted,

JOHNSON, JOHNSON & ROY, INC.

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "Cy Paumier, Jr.", written in dark ink.

Cy Paumier, Jr.

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We wish to express our appreciation to the members of the Birmingham city administration, the Planning Board and the Planning Director, Mr. William Brownfield, for their cooperation and contribution to the progress of this urban design report.

Credit is due the Birmingham architects associated with the Civic Design Committee (CDC) for their leadership in community education. Their study of the central area in 1964 stimulated interest in urban design, and from this developed an awareness of the need for greater design effort in the public and private areas of the community. The CDC architects were also involved in the review and analysis of this study and report during the past eighteen months.

The Central Business District has provided the direction for many capital improvement decisions related to traffic circulation and parking. Action has not been taken on the malls and street closings recommended in this report, but the concept of returning the shopping streets to the pedestrian is now being refined in context with Birmingham's long range plans prepared by the Central Business District Development Committee in 1961.

CREDITS

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URBAN DESIGN PLAN. The center of Birmingham is being disrupted by the great volume of traffic crossing from east to west through the city. Much of the available open space in the central area has been given over to automobile circulation. Because of resulting narrow pedestrian walks and spaces, there is often congestion among people walking within the business district. Fortunately, the completion of the ring road, will eliminate a large portion of the traffic not destined for the central business area, and thus will provide the opportunity for improvements and new development within the public rights-of-way.

The revitalization of present stores and the development of new retail facilities continues to provide a positive shopping climate. But because of competition from new shopping centers developing in areas adjacent to the city, emphasis should be placed on improving the environment that links the retail stores together in central Birmingham. The unifying elements that develop order and visual character in outstanding business centers are in need of constant improvement.

The existing and proposed parking structures will provide the community with the parking space required to satisfy the public buildings and the revitalized retail office center of Birmingham. The five parking structures planned are all located within the central area and have an ultimate capacity of approximately 3,000 cars.

On the fringe of the retail center, new offices and medium density residential structures are being developed as transition zones to the single family residential areas beyond. These zones lack order because of the scattered pattern of buildings and parking. Directing the growth of these areas is essential to developing the character of the total central business area.

The emphasis of this urban design study is placed on the land areas that are municipally controlled. The facilities and elements occurring on public land and the characteristics of related development are vital determinants that shape the environmental character of the city. Only after specific areas of concern are identified will it be possible to take action on current urban design decisions facing the public and private interests in Birmingham.

The effective use of the public right-of-way for automobiles and pedestrians is the primary goal of the urban design plan. When the ring road is completed, through traffic will bypass the major shopping streets and permit the development of a new circulation system designed to serve the Birmingham shopper and businessman. This system will provide auto access to all sections of the business area with through traffic on Maple and Woodward eliminated.

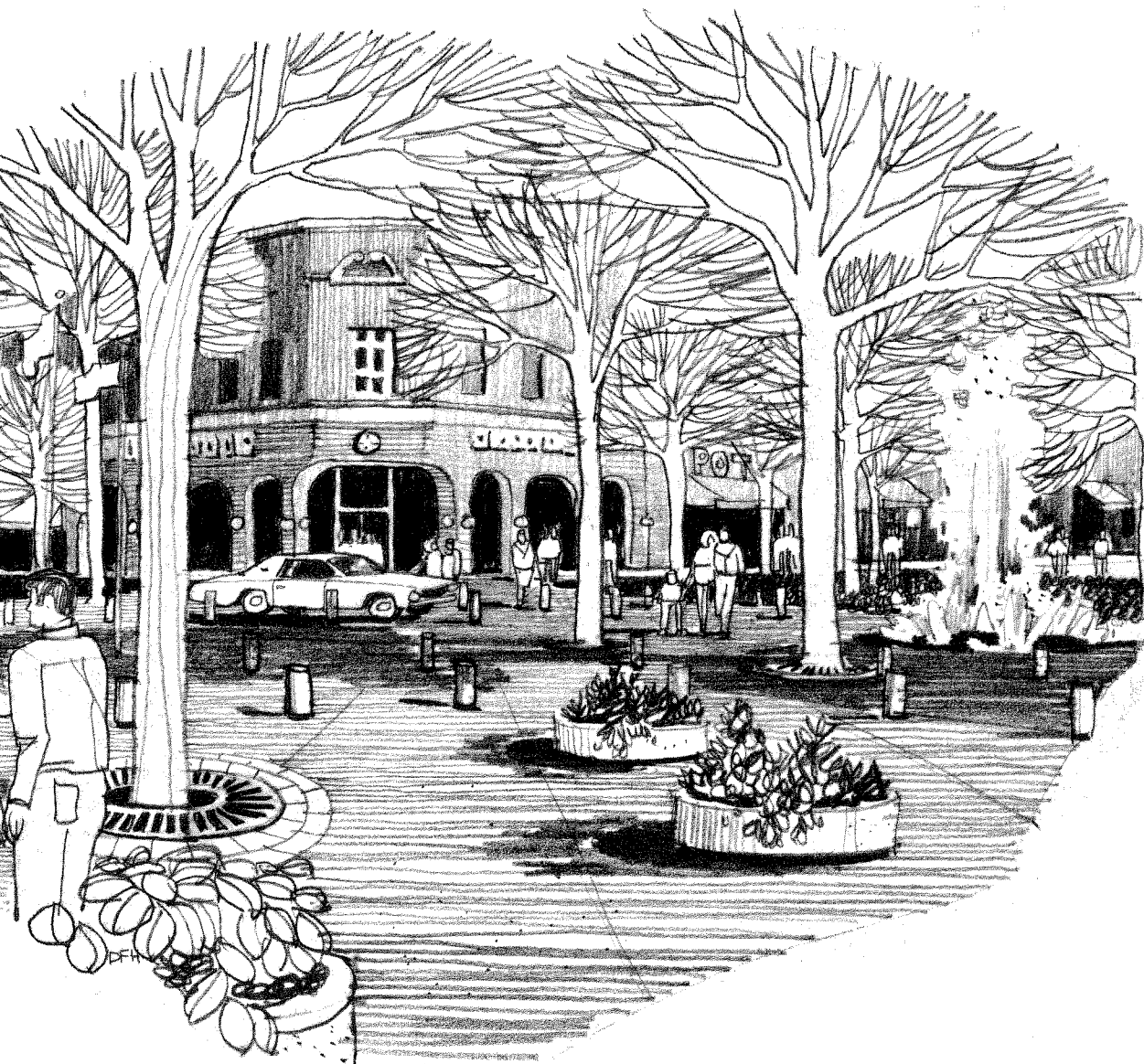
The local traffic on the streets within the ring road will move at slower speeds better related to the pedestrian movement along the walkways. Pedestrian crossings will be improved through the reduction of vehicular speed and the elimination of present through traffic. Many of the traffic control devices and overhead wires will be made unnecessary through the change in traffic patterns.

Parking along Maple and Woodward will be limited to short-term use and pedestrian loading. Placing a one-hour limit on parking will be encouraged along secondary streets and in the surface lots immediately related to the retail and business structures. Longer-term parking will be available in parking structures along the ring road.

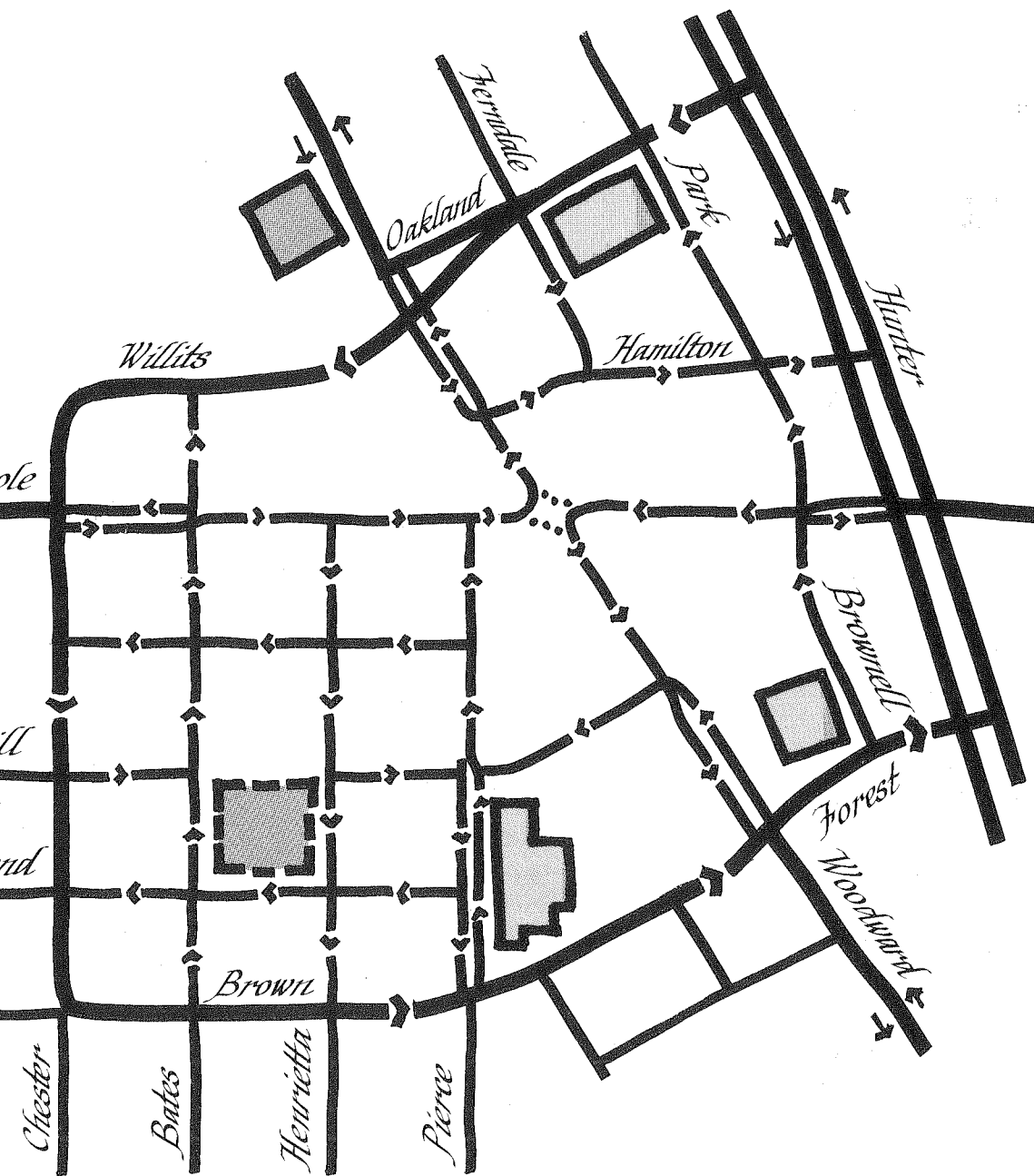
Once the shopping streets are returned to local traffic and the pedestrian, the sidewalk areas can be widened to provide ease of movement for shoppers. This is true also for Woodward, where the side walk area and planting zones can be increased due to the width of the public right-of-way. Tree bosks will be established to identify the four entrance plazas, to define the space along the street and to enclose the open space at the intersection of Woodward and Maple.

The central focus of the entire business district will be at the point where the pedestrian corridors meet. The removal of traditional curbs and the introduction of a single unifying pavement material, together with trees, planters and a water feature, will establish a new environment for the area.

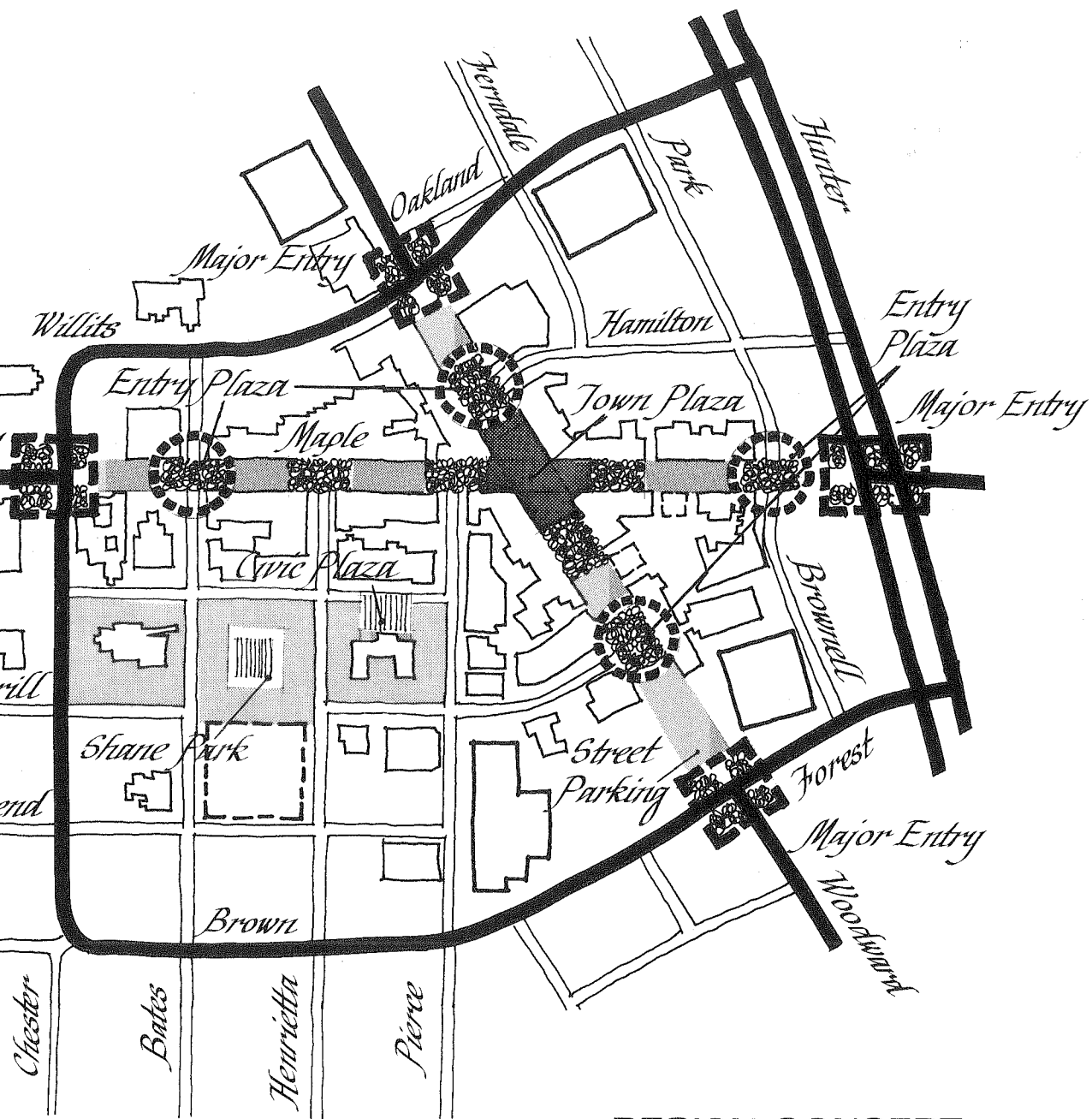
The new pedestrian plaza illustrated in the sketch and the improvements suggested for Woodward and Maple represent the most important development recommendations of this urban design study. The specific site design considerations are presented in the urban design plan fold-out section of this brochure. All design recommendations illustrated in this plan are based upon the design concept and traffic plan presented in this report.



TOWN PLAZA



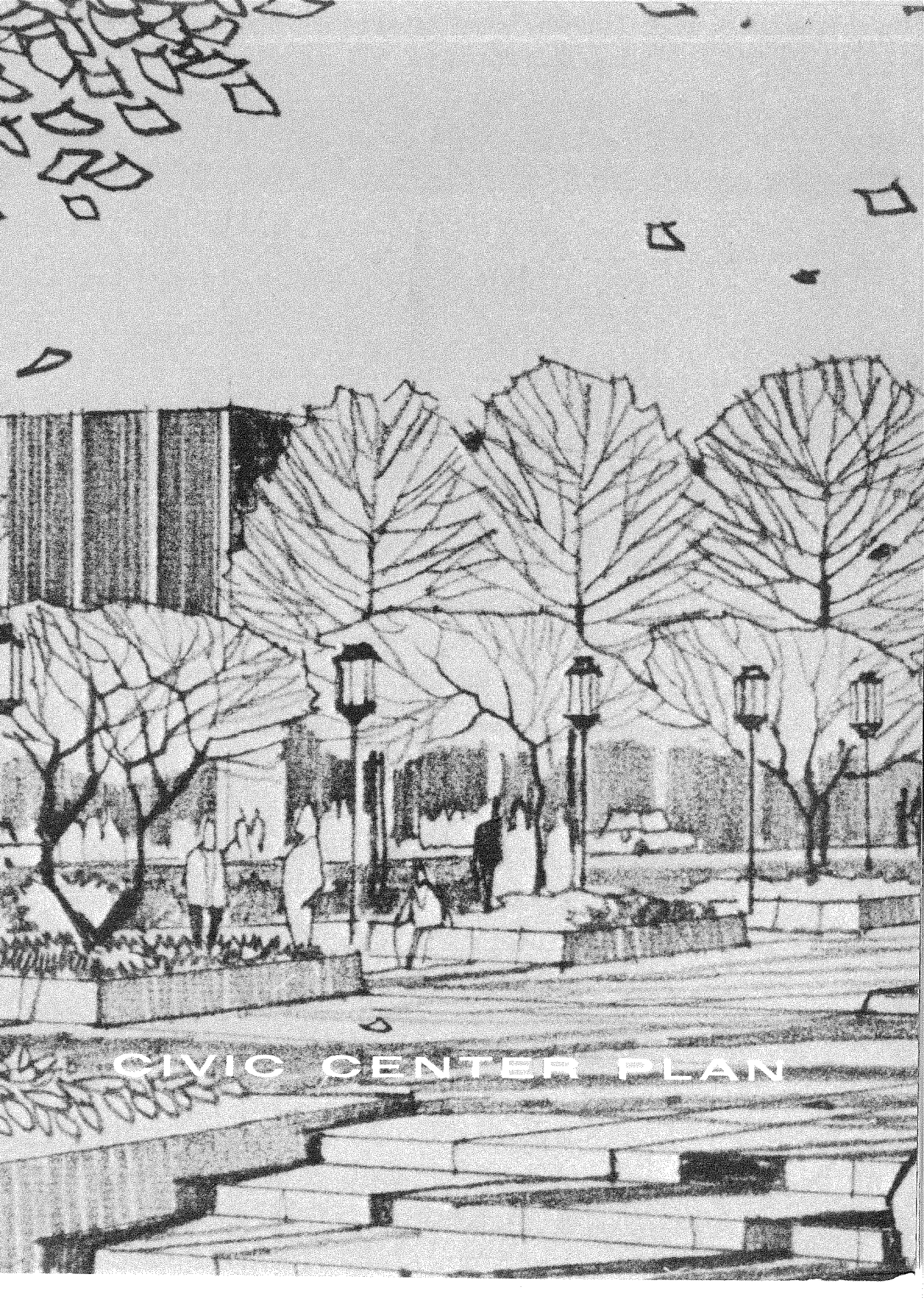
CIRCULATION PLAN



DESIGN CONCEPT

"The job of urban design is as complex as the city itself. It requires many skills, many professions, a tremendous range of knowledge and continuing study. All professionals involved in the task are equally essential—the architect, the engineer, the planner, the landscape architect, the sociologist, the highway engineer, the municipal official and others. All must acquire the humility and competence to work together creatively and effectively. Ultimately, of course, creative design is individual and personal. But so is teamwork which, in itself, can and should be viewed as a creative effort to produce creative solutions."

Carl Feiss, Past Chairman
AIA Urban Design Committee



CIVIC CENTER PLAN



CIVIC CENTER PLAN. The clustering of municipal services and the public-oriented facilities around Shain Park has developed into the Civic Center for the community of Birmingham. The heart of this complex is the three block area containing the Municipal Building and Library.

A number of other community facilities and services are grouped in the area. Southwest of Shain Park is the Community House and to the northwest is the Federal Post Office Building. West of the Library and Chester Avenue are located the Birmingham School Administration Building and an elementary school. The three major utility companies, Michigan Bell Telephone, Michigan Consolidated Gas and Detroit Edison, are also closely related to the Civic Center complex. Several fine churches add additional importance to this public area.

Two primary parking areas serve the facilities and activities in the Civic Center. A surface lot south of Shain Park provides space for 150 cars and the new Parking Deck #1 has a capacity of 700 cars. All of this parking is available to serve both the public and private needs in the area. Additional parking will be available when the surface lot south of the park is developed into a parking deck.

A number of traffic and planning studies completed over the years have suggested closing Merrill between Bates and Henrietta. This one block closing will permit a direct pedestrian link between the parking lot and Shain Park eliminating some of the east/west traffic in the Civic Center area. Other recommendations from previous planning studies are worthy of recording. The Civic Design Committee (CDC) Study, 1964, suggested that additions to existing public buildings should relate to Shain Park. These new buildings would face on the park with major pedestrian entrances designed to generate increased human activity in the park. The recommended structures would also improve the physical definition of the park land while providing valuable building area for future community services.

One of the other recommendations of CDC was for the development of a major civic plaza for special events where several hundred people could assemble. Today the park and surrounding open space is designed for passive use rather than community activities. New features, plazas and landscape are needed to establish the proper character befitting the community Civic Center.

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A plaza is proposed on the north side of the Municipal Building to meet the needs of the many public functions and activities held throughout the year. An audience of 2,000 people will be accommodated for major public assemblies. An overflow spectator area will be provided when Martin Street is closed to traffic for public events. Political speeches, Memorial Day ceremonies and summer concerts will be scheduled for this plaza, along with such other community activities as the Michigan Week festivities.

The plaza pavement pattern extends to the north edge of Martin Street to create a larger plaza. Traffic will continue to pass through the area on Martin Street except during periods of pedestrian activity on the plaza. Bollards will be introduced at the south edge of Martin Street to identify the pedestrian plaza and limit the penetration of automobiles into the area.

Two sides of the plaza are edged by a low seat wall. In front of the Municipal Building the seat wall and raised platform and steps combine to form a stage setting for all events. The brick surface pattern illustrated in the sketch will reduce the apparent scale of the total plaza and add character to this public space.

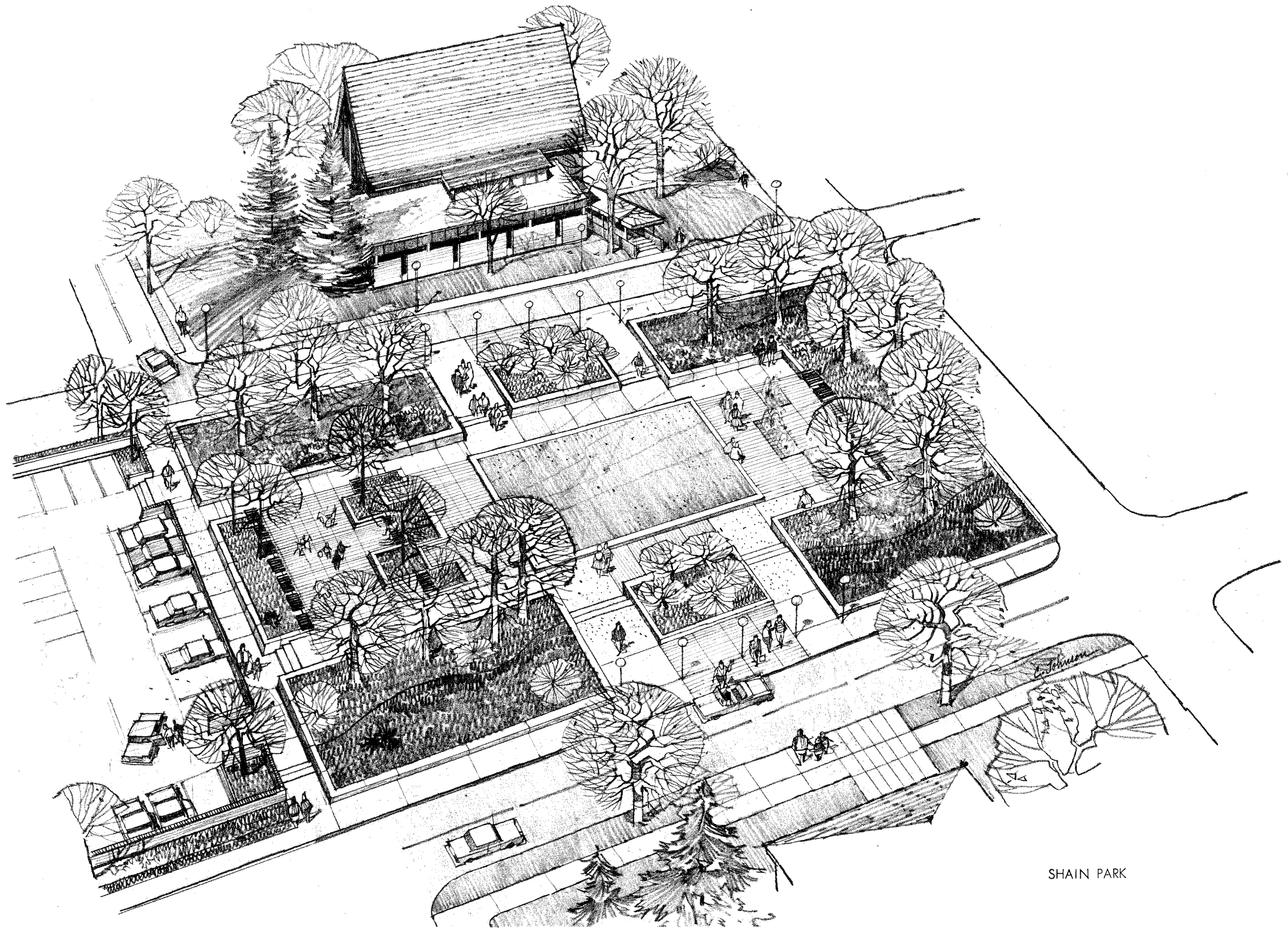
In addition to the many public functions that may be accommodated by this plaza, this space will place emphasis on the entrance to the most important public buildings in the city.

Shain Park is a valuable open space central to the entire Civic Center. The recommendation expressed in the aerial view suggests the development of a new central landscaped court with walkways and paved spaces for outdoor activities and passive recreation. The court area will be recessed below the surrounding streets to create a modest change in levels within the area. A series of small fountains will be introduced in the paving at the north end of the plaza. Benches and a seat wall will provide space for relaxation throughout the day and at the south end of the park, a children's play area will be established to entertain children who are living or visiting in the business and civic center area.

The improvement of this existing Civic Center space will permit broader use of the park for art shows, exhibits and pedestrian activities. New landscape materials and flowering trees will be added to the perimeter of the park to complement the large trees existing in the area.



CIVIC CENTER PLAZA



SHAIN PARK

"Fortunately, today our planners are making us conscious of the fact that an essential of good planning is to create open space, and to bring beauty, charm and grace to our cities. It is not enough for a city to be safe and sanitary. It must be embellished so that it is a joy to the eye and a delight to those who dwell here."

Richardson Dilworth
Mayor, Mayor of Philadelphia



DEVELOPMENT ZONES



DEVELOPMENT ZONES. The pedestrian oriented sections of the business district are being renewed and rebuilt for retail, office, financial, residential and service uses. Outside of this prime pedestrian zone larger sites are available for future development and renewal.

A number of future building sites exist east of the Woodward frontage, along East Maple, Brownell and Hamilton. This zone will be more attractive to investors when stronger pedestrian linkages are established with the business areas west of Woodward. Today the heavy traffic on Maple and Woodward limit the freedom of pedestrian movement to the east.

Four zones around the business district have been identified as areas undergoing considerable change. Assuming that the renewal of these areas can be directed through proper zoning and planning guidelines, the total area will be strengthened by future development.

The zone paralleling Woodward between Brown and Lincoln contains five automobile agencies that utilize six acres of prime central area land. Several of these agencies have indicated intentions to relocate in the next five years and it is reasonable to assume that all auto service and used car facilities may be removed from this zone by 1975. Since this area is physically linked to the retail core and within a short walking distance of it, its future development is critical to the vitality of the entire center.

South of Lincoln, the Woodward corridor is composed of many auto oriented land uses. This zone has many physical characteristics similar to those of the strip commercial developments that extend out from the city of Detroit.

On the north edge of central Birmingham the development zone bounded by Hunter Boulevard and Woodward is receiving new development but the existence of substantial residential housing has influenced the character of its commercial development.

The fourth zone of marked change is the development area along East Maple between Hunter Boulevard and Adams. This area serves as a supporting commercial and office district but is separated from the central area and from the pedestrian oriented area of central Birmingham by north/south traffic patterns.

New development within the pedestrian oriented business district will be limited in size primarily to parcels of one acre or less because of the existence of many new buildings and other sound structures. Restriction in size will encourage the development of additional specialty stores, services and offices and will limit the construction of larger individual retail generators.

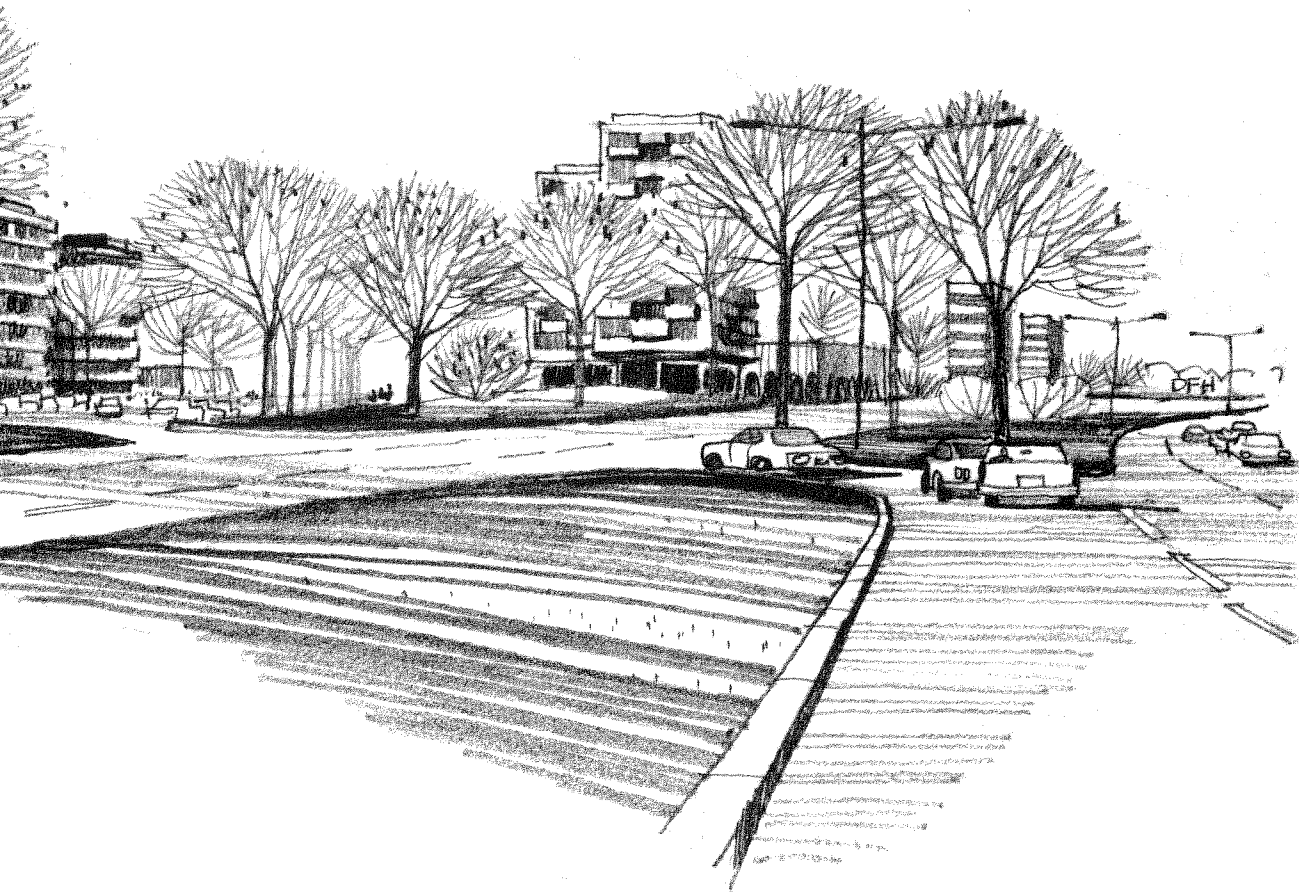
This pattern would appear to be appropriate for central Birmingham but other environmental advantages must be provided in its new development to attract the consumer who is now being offered many conveniences not available in older business areas. The freedom to walk and shop in comfort without the conflict of auto traffic will become more important to the consumer each year. A combination of enclosed and outdoor pedestrian walkways will be essential in the near future.

One of Birmingham's great advantages is the opportunity to attract new residential development immediately adjacent to the central core area. The large tracts of land that will be made available with the relocation of the auto agencies along Woodward will provide exciting development potential for private investors. Small shops, restaurants and offices should be encouraged in the first two levels of proposed structures with residential development above.

This positive residential pattern is important to the long range physical, visual and economic vitality of the central area and to the total Birmingham community. Without this type of development, many of the available sites will be rebuilt with structures that limit activity in the area to the eight-hour working day. The combination of residential and business development in the same area will create a more balanced environment and assure the development of more urban amenities in the central area.

Woodward south of Lincoln is one zone that should be developed without residential uses. The high volume of traffic in this corridor along Woodward will not be conducive to it. Office and auto oriented business are the most appropriate functions for this narrow zone of land.

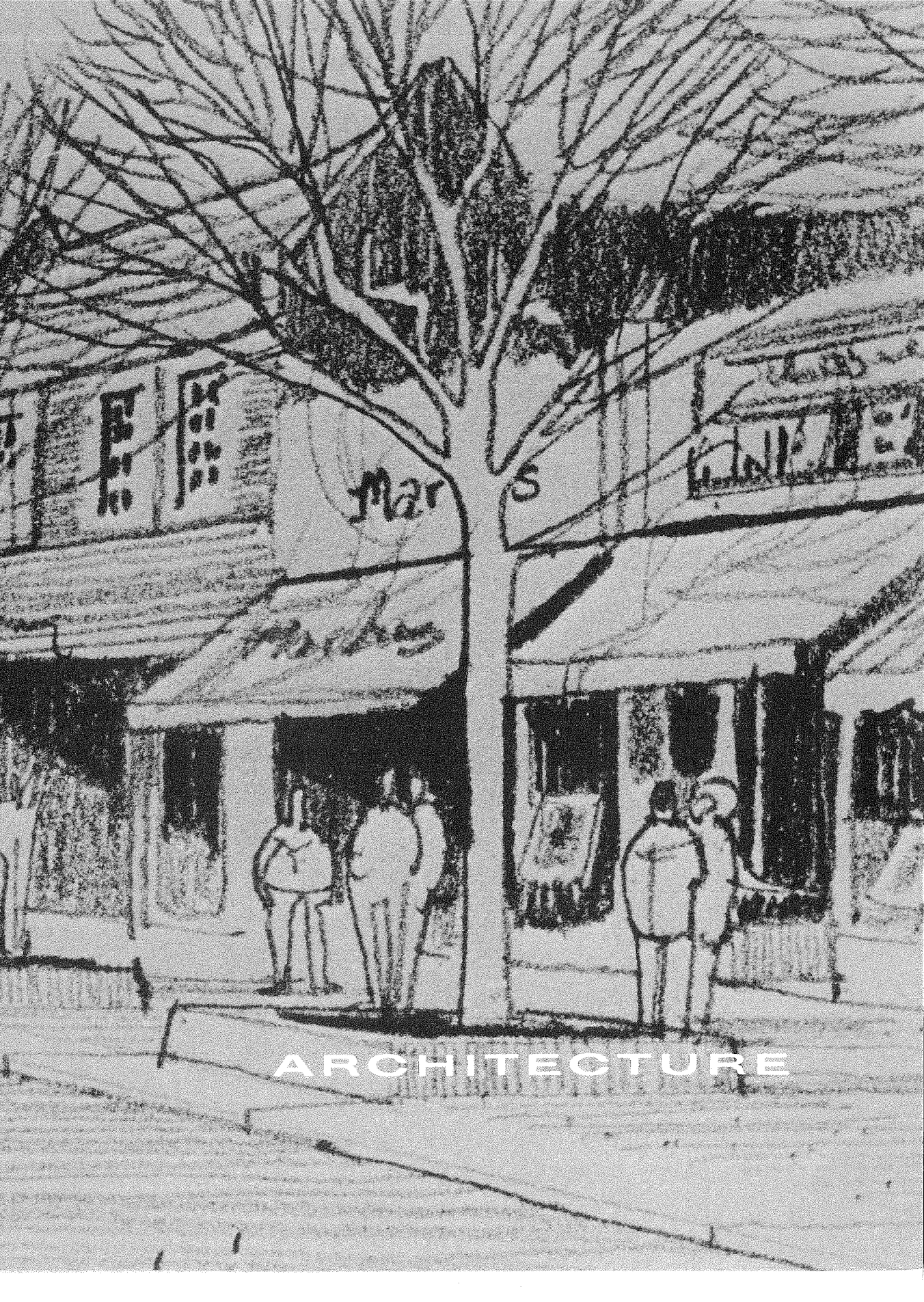
The three development zones that enclose the central area on the north, south and east should be considered areas for medium density housing. Limiting any of these areas to retail and office alone will limit the future potential of the area. With the increase in development density, multi-level enclosed parking will be essential to the proper development and to land conservation. Today office and retail functions spread their parking across land consuming the physical amenities that are important to the creation of an attractive urban environment.



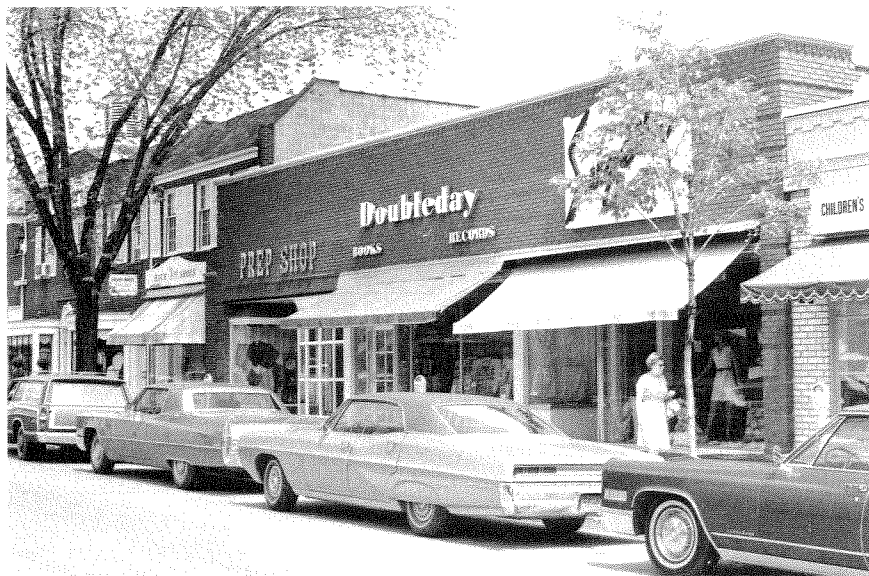
SOUTH WOODWARD DEVELOPMENT

"Let us turn our attention specifically to the downtown or commercial heart of our cities. It is of critical importance that a city's physical environment be developed and preserved because environment determines its basic business function and encourages its effective growth. Invariably downtown space is limited. We simply cannot afford to squander that space, nor let it be wasted. Unless our expanding businesses can find adequate space in a satisfactory physical environment they will look elsewhere."

David Rockefeller
The Problem of the Central City



ARCHITECTURE



ARCHITECTURE. The architectural character of Birmingham has been established over the years by the businessmen, government officials, civic leaders, local architects and the citizens who care about the quality of their physical environment. A sense of responsibility has been expressed through a concern for relating new buildings and new facades to neighboring buildings and to the architectural character of the area. This concern is most clearly visible on Pierce, West Maple and along sections of Woodward. An understanding and desire to respect the important characteristics that bring about a total environment must be continued if Birmingham is to build on the qualities established in the past.

When people begin to criticize the architectural character of the community, they are often reacting to unfortunate elements that have been placed on the walls of the buildings or the elements in the foreground that interfere with or conflict with architectural statements. Public and private signs, wires, traffic signals and utility poles do far more damage to the environment than does architecture of less than excellent quality.

One of the qualities of Birmingham is the blending of architecture of different periods. The design of new buildings should respect older structures in the immediate area but it is not necessary nor desirable for the new buildings to copy earlier architectural styles. A number of contemporary buildings developed in recent years successfully reflect the use of traditional wall materials used in earlier buildings.

A new building scale is emerging as the result of increased development densities, functional demands of exterior space and the economics of large building material components. This new scale may undermine many of the positive environmental characteristics of the central core area if the architects and prospective clients are not sensitive to the factors that influence the environment.

The use of large surface panels that lack texture and scale have caused many communities to lose their character. Old buildings need to be restored and renewed, not covered up with false facades. The use of improper wall materials has not been a major problem in Birmingham, but it is a serious threat in the future because of its lower cost.

The height and set-back of buildings, together with the amount of open space that is provided with greater development density is important to the future of Birmingham, but the proper use of materials and a concern for human scale are ever more essential to the maintenance of quality in future architecture.



ARCHITECTURAL CHARACTER

"Americans in hundreds of communities throughout the land, are becoming aware that they are living amid uneasy, unpleasant, and largely unnecessary ugliness. They are beginning to learn to see again. In some places, they are beginning to act. It is not a question of decision as to whether or not we will continue to build. We are building a whole new America, because we will have to duplicate every single structure in the nation by the end of this century in order to house our expanding population and replace outworn buildings and neighborhoods. The question, then, is not whether we will build, but how well. The answer to the question has to come, for the first time in man's history, from the ordinary citizen of the community."

American Institute of Architects



ENTRANCE CHARACTER



ENTRANCE CHARACTER. Auto entrances along the residential corridors leading to the central area are currently landscaped and well maintained while the commercial corridors are barren and lack proper maintenance. Visitors approaching Birmingham receive completely different impressions of the community depending upon the route of entrance. In the residential areas, great pride is taken in the area between the residence and the curb edge. Pressure is brought to bear on the City Commission and administration if the trees and park land along the entrance streets passing through residential areas are not properly maintained. Except for a few businesses that are truly concerned about their community image, the same maintenance is not evident in the commercial areas. Banks and some restaurants have well maintained parkways in front of their buildings and screened planting around their parking, but the effort of a few business leaders is lost within the total view of the entrance corridors. A unified treatment of the commercial corridor must be considered if it is to be an effective attraction.

The amount of parking required for the commercial corridor cannot be satisfied at the street curb. Parking lots will need to be developed at the rear of the stores to eliminate large asphalt and concrete zones in front of the buildings. Many cities have removed all parking from the street side and assisted the owners in acquiring lots in the rear. Changing the location of parking eliminates many accidents caused by motorists entering the street at a number of points. Portions of land in each block may be landscaped to provide a unifying visual element along the entrance way.

Recommendations to widen the entrance streets in residential areas should be discouraged because the increased traffic volumes in many instances will force a change in land use. Portions of East and West Maple may become streets undesirable for residential use if the traffic and noise continue to increase. Street widening also eliminates many of the large trees that give a sense of privacy to the residential areas.

One positive solution to the problem of increasing traffic is the modification of existing zoning to permit townhouses and apartments where single family use is no longer appropriate. The single family cluster housing developments on West Maple are good examples of the increased residential density along an entrance street resulting in the protection of abutting residential areas.

A realistic program for changing the character of the commercial corridor is illustrated in the sketch. By introducing large islands for trees and ground cover, the dull concrete parking areas and store front signs can be relieved. This improvement will require the addition of new parking lots in the rear to make space available for the landscaped areas. About thirty to forty per cent of the lineal dimension should be devoted to planting, with the remainder to be short term angle parking. Longer term parking and employee space should be located in the rear parking area.

The landscaped areas need to be a minimum of thirty feet in length to effectively soften the expanse of hard surface material. The planting areas within the four foot walk may be slightly raised to develop relief from the surrounding flat surfaces. Ground cover or sod may be considered depending upon the amount of maintenance to be provided. By increasing the planting area to about forty feet, two trees may be planted in the island adding more substance to the landscaped area.

A long range objective would be to develop the entire area in front of the businesses into a parkway. This final step will relate to the type of business and the amount of off-street parking available in the future. Some existing businesses have maintained their frontage as a parkway from the time the business was established and their customers are accustomed to the off-street parking areas.

The physical character of a community is determined along the route to the central area. All the major entrance streets into the city must be considered a responsibility of the total community. The entrance streets are used daily by a majority of city residents and the character of these streets and their related parkways are viewed by all of the people entering the city.

In the future, an annual maintenance fee may be considered to pay a portion of the expense of city staff employed to maintain the parkway areas. Sidewalks, curbs and utilities are paid for through annual assessments and the cost of maintenance determined on a front foot basis and assessed as a part of the annual property tax. City responsibility would be assumed only on the streets designated as entrance streets to the city, thus all property owners would be supporting the cost of maintenance through the general property tax.



ENTRANCE LANDSCAPE CHARACTER



PARKWAY CHARACTER



PARKWAY CHARACTER. The public land that lies between the private property line and the curb is considered to be the parkway. This lineal strip is generally from ten to twenty feet wide. It is the responsibility of both public and private parties under the present Birmingham ordinances.

The joint approach to responsibility for this land is leading to physical deterioration in many areas of Birmingham. The land in the parkway is owned by all the people in the city, yet the maintenance is left to the private property owner in most areas. Along the streets the city plants and maintains the trees, but the grass areas and any special paving are the responsibility of the abutting private property owner. A few individual businesses take great pride in the character of the parkway, but many businesses install asphalt and concrete in the "landscaped" portion of the parkway to eliminate maintenance tasks. This is understandable due to the difficulty encountered in the maintenance of a narrow strip of land paralleling the street. Because the individual property owner is not in a position to solve this problem on a lot by lot basis, a new approach must be found for the common maintenance of this public parkway area.

The run-down condition of the public parkway is the result of increased vehicular and pedestrian traffic in portions of the community. Along the major streets, moisture containing dirt and salt is splashed onto the grass and trees lining the curb. The buildup of several years of road dirt will destroy the grass back two or three feet from the curb. Many trees in the parkway are also being destroyed by the same condition.

On the secondary streets maximum use has been made of the curb zones for customer parking which has increased the pedestrian traffic on the parkway and has eliminated the grass areas that once existed. With little direction or control from the city, the private property owner installs concrete, blacktop or stone in the parkway area. Many trees are sacrificed in the process because the open area required for tree growth is not provided.

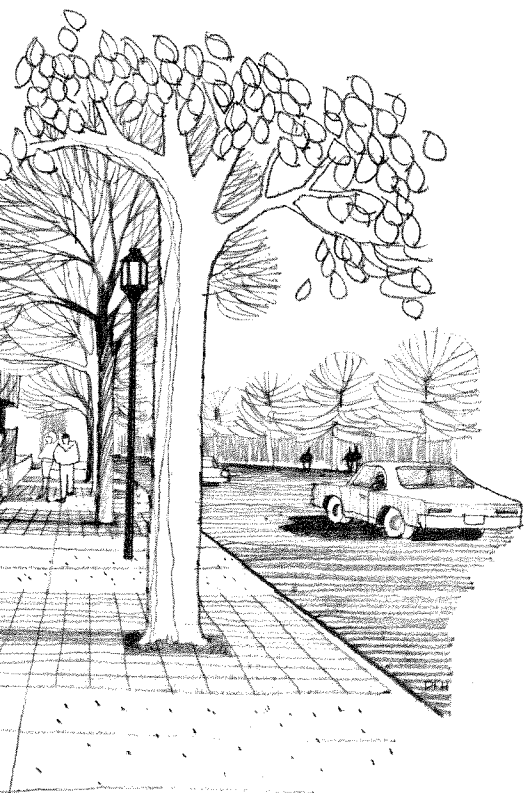
In the central shopping area many of the parkways have been completely paved to allow for increased pedestrian traffic. A small planting area has been maintained for street trees but is walked on when the sidewalk is crowded. Salt from the sidewalks and soil compaction shorten the life span of the trees, thus requiring frequent replacement and preventing maximum growth.

The public parkway area is the common structure that establishes visual order and unity in the city. Responsibility for the parkway maintenance program will need to be assumed by the city with appropriate funding from the property owners and citizens that benefit from this service. The recommendation is based upon an evaluation of changing conditions in Birmingham and knowledge of similar problems in other cities.

The parkway character is established primarily by the trees and surface materials within the public area between the property line and the curb. The character may change on different streets within the community, but any given street will express a single design concept. The use of selected tree species, common pavement material, and one type of light standard are important to the total unity and visual order of the street. Four types of streets and parkways are identified and reviewed in the report.

One form of parkway treatment is presented in the brochure on entrance character. Most of the major entrance routes to the community are maintained in grass where they relate to residential areas. The ring road parkway will be developed according to the sketches illustrated in the brochure on parking enclosure. The parkway dimension is limited to about ten feet with a sidewalk of five or six feet in width and a four to five foot area for landscape development. Because of the high traffic volume on the ring road, the parkway area should be paved with concrete except for tree wells. Trees are recommended on forty to sixty foot centers and grass panels extending ten to twelve feet in length are necessary for proper tree development.

The recommended treatment of two other parkway conditions in the central area are identified in the photos and illustrated in the two sketches in this brochure. Along the secondary vehicular streets, the paved walkway surfaces need to be extended to the curb to eliminate the existing maintenance problem. Brick paving on sand is suggested around the trees and in special areas it may be carried across the walk to the building facade as suggested in the sketch. On the major shopping streets a low curb wall is recommended to protect the trees from the heavy pedestrian traffic. This permanent planter will need to contain seventy-five to one hundred square feet of earth to develop outstanding street trees. Ground cover in color accents is suggested for underplanting.



KWAY DESIGN



dramatic
motion pictures

BUSINESS SIGNS



BUSINESS SIGNS. In the central area the business signs are designed primarily to identify the businesses for the pedestrian; in the fringe commercial businesses are being patronized by auto-oriented motorists. The net result is that businesses in the central area express restraint in the development of their signs while along roadways the strip commercial businesses use large signs as a means of attracting the attention of the motorist.

This condition exists in every city and community and can not be assumed to change when land use revisions occur. The Woodward Avenue corridor is an example of this condition in Birmingham and the East Maple development could follow the same pattern if positive action is not taken by the city.

Although the standard outdoor advertising billboards are not permitted in Birmingham, the effect of large rooftop signs in the fringe commercial areas has created a visual impression of sign competition. The end result of many large competing signs is that all become ineffective for advertising and identification.

Along the Woodward Avenue corridor a number of businesses have constructed false facades and brick pylons to accommodate large signs located well above the normal roof line of the building. The opportunity to locate wall signs above the height of fifteen feet or the first story is an invitation and incentive to the creation of false architectural statements with the use of signs.

Pole signs that are unrelated to the building they identify often destroy architectural character along a roadway. They form a wall or visual baffle in front of the businesses with parking areas placed between the signs and the stores. The larger the pole signs become the more they eliminate the signs and buildings on adjacent property. Instead of competition based upon quality and design, signs become judged by their size and height.

Design guidelines and principles for business signs are required to bring visual order to roadside commercial districts in Birmingham. Standards need to be established for size, setback and height of signs related to the auto-oriented business. In the central area, the business signs represent a positive element in the environment. Businessmen who have expressed good judgment in their signs are contributing to a pleasant environment which results in more business activity in the area.

The responsibility for proper signing in the central business area and in the fringe commercial strips belongs to the businessmen of the community. In the central area, the business leaders understand the importance of good signing and the city ordinances encourage the installation of attractive signs. The lack of standards and established guidelines in fringe commercial areas have led to the disorder that now exists. With the development of design standards and related ordinances, positive sign improvements similar to those suggested in the sketch may be accomplished over a period of years.

The first recommendations regarding the sign changes involve the elimination of all roof signs. A limited number of these signs occur in the central area; in the strip commercial area they are abundant. The architectural character of the strip commercial area will be substantially improved with wall signs and projecting signs held below the roof line. Maximum vertical dimension of the wall signs should be four feet and a total surface area allowable for any sign should be one hundred square feet. Three square feet of sign area should be permitted for each lineal foot of building frontage.

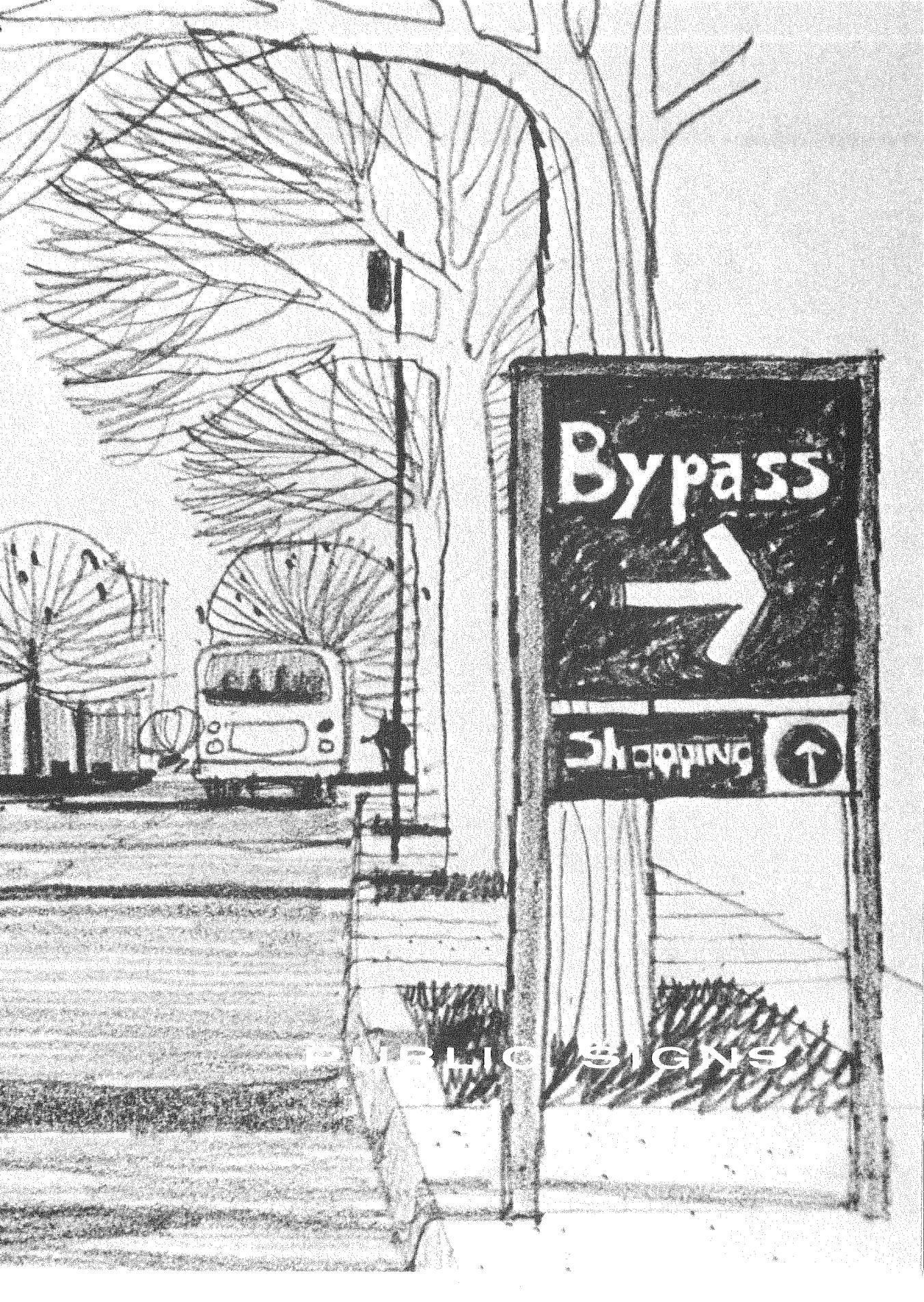
Projecting signs should be provided for in the strip commercial areas but a maximum of fifteen square feet per sign is recommended. Projections from the building should be no greater than three feet and the top edge of the sign should not exceed the height of the first story.

Few pole signs exist because of the parking areas in front of the buildings along Woodward and East Maple. Where they are to be introduced in the area of the building, or in the setback zone, a number of design standards are recommended. The height of the signs should be determined by the setback dimension from the property line. For every three feet of setback, one foot of height is suggested with a minimum of fifteen feet permitted. The surface area of the sign should also be determined by the setback with one square foot of sign permitted for every foot of setback from the property line. A maximum of one hundred square feet is suggested for pole signs.

The use of setback dimensions in determining height and size is consistent with many of the bonus concepts introduced in zoning ordinances in recent years. A five year program may be realistic for obtaining sign conformance with ten years a maximum period for modifying or removing all non-conforming signs.



ENT



PUBLIC SIGNS



PUBLIC SIGNS. The signs that occur within the public right-of-way are the responsibility of the City of Birmingham and, to a lesser extent, the State Highway Department. With the increase in auto registration, the problems of traffic circulation and control have grown. More signs are required to direct and control this traffic.

Added to the traffic control signs are the other public information signs designed to assist the visitor or shopper who is seeking the location of parking lots and structures or other community facilities.

Over the years many older signs that are physically obsolete or out of date remain in place to confuse the motorist and detract from the environment.

Along local streets, conflicts exist between the public and private signs that identify the public and private parking areas. Added to this sign confusion are the number of overhead wires that provide power to the lights illuminating the signs. The visual disorder that results in such instances is unfortunate and the approaching motorist is many times confused by the number and scattered location of the signs.

On many public signs the amount of lettering is excessive for the size of the sign. A simple statement on parking regulations may be observed and understood by the motorist if the message is limited and clearly stated. The "No Parking" sign is often placed at very close intervals when one or two signs per block would be adequate.

Detroit Edison light poles and other utility poles are used to mount many of the signs in the city. This method of mounting signs tends to add visual clutter to the streetscape. At intersections, the use of existing utility poles for signs may be necessary to eliminate the installation of an additional sign pole within fifteen to twenty feet.

Color is not used effectively in signs throughout the city and a color code is needed to identify certain types or groups of signs. Color coding of the signs can reduce the amount of wording required to communicate a message and provide advance notice and clarity for the motorist. Any color code that is considered should relate to the Interstate Highway System Code that has been universally employed in the United States over the past few years.

A sign system composed of the special signs not controlled by the uniform traffic manual will be identified in one of three sign groups in the system recommended for Birmingham. The first group is the most important because its signs communicate traffic control and relate closely to the signs in the uniform traffic manual. A second sign group will communicate information and direction pertaining to community facilities, and a third will deal with traffic direction for motorists traveling in and around Birmingham. Each of the three sign groups will be identified by a distinctive color to express traffic control, information or direction.

The traffic control sign group that relates to the traffic manual will have black letters on white background, while signs regulating street parking will have white letters on a red background. Because the present sign sizes and shapes make it difficult to cluster or group signs in an organized manner, the square proportion for the large signs is introduced. Maximum width is provided for lettering and an ample area is available for a bold directional arrow. On the smaller signs, the horizontal dimension is retained but the vertical height is held to one-fourth of the square sign. A two foot dimension is recommended for the large signs, with the smaller sign units to be two feet by one-half foot. A similar sequence is recommended for signs that provide information on and direction to community facilities, local streets and neighboring cities.

The information sign group will provide direction to the major parking structures and surface lots, the shopping area, civic center, police station, municipal building, library and other important facilities or areas that require identification. This entire sign group will have a dark blue background with white lettering and arrows.

The sign group providing directional information pertaining to the downtown by-pass route, local streets, and mileage to surrounding communities will be dark green with white lettering and arrows.

A square-tube frame is recommended for mounting the sign clusters. A maximum number of three small sign units will be placed below the larger square sign. The individual sign clusters will be placed along the right-of-way at a limited number of important locations.



ORGANIZATION



LIGHTING



LIGHTING. The lighting fixtures that are utilized in Birmingham today represent a variety of installations placed in the community over the last forty years. The most recent equipment installed is illustrated in the photo of the Ring Road. A 10,000 lumen incandescent lamp mounted on a twenty-eight foot pole has been provided along a number of secondary vehicular streets throughout the city. With the spacing of the fixtures at 180 to 200 feet, the light intensity is maintained at a low level to complement the residential areas. As certain streets within the downtown area develop greater traffic volumes, an increase in lighting intensities will be required for the safety of the pedestrian.

Along many of the shopping streets the older style light fixtures continue to be maintained as the prime source of light. These units are equipped with a 15,000 lumen lamp and are mounted at a height of approximately twenty feet. This obsolete unit, along with the traditional "Washington" light, represent the only fixtures in the central area that relate to the pedestrian scale of the street.

It is essential that the community understands that there should be two basic lighting solutions. One type of light standard and lamp must be designed to illuminate the primary and secondary streets, while the second standard and light should be designed to illuminate the pedestrian walkways in the shopping district, civic center and related housing areas. The recognition that the two different areas need to be served by light fixtures designed for specific functions is important in resolving the lighting solution for Birmingham.

In many cities across the country new light fixtures are being introduced to satisfy the specific needs and desires of the community. The character of the light fixture and the light intensity have considerable influence on the total environment that is created in the community. In Birmingham the leaders of the business community and members of the City Commission desire to maintain some of the traditional character that has been established over the years. The design of new light fixtures for the pedestrian areas and vehicular streets should reflect this community character.

As cities select light standards that reflect their community image, the utility companies responsible for maintenance will need to depend upon the individual community for supply of all replacement parts. Detroit Edison will not be in a position to supply the parts for special lights in Birmingham, although the annual expense and cost of installation should be provided for on the same basis that current lighting is programmed.

The sketches illustrate the recommended solutions to the lighting conditions identified in the introduction. The pedestrian light is to be used along the shopping streets and in the civic center and the street light on all primary and secondary streets within the city.

The recommended street light is designed for mounting on the existing twenty-eight foot pole that presently supports the six foot arm and luminaire. A short arm extending between one and two feet should be attached to the present pole to support the new luminaire. The components of the luminaire will be assembled in a vertical position within a round or octagonal aluminum housing. A 250 watt color corrected mercury vapor lamp is recommended for this fixture, but a 400 watt lamp may need to be introduced in the housing if mounted at thirty to thirty-two feet. The eighteen inch dimension of the aluminum housing will permit the use of light refractors presently being used in most mercury vapor street lights. The decision on foot candles will be made by the city after observation of the results of the 250 watt test installation. The primary entrance streets and the ring road may be designed to accommodate 400 watt units in the future to reach recommended light levels.

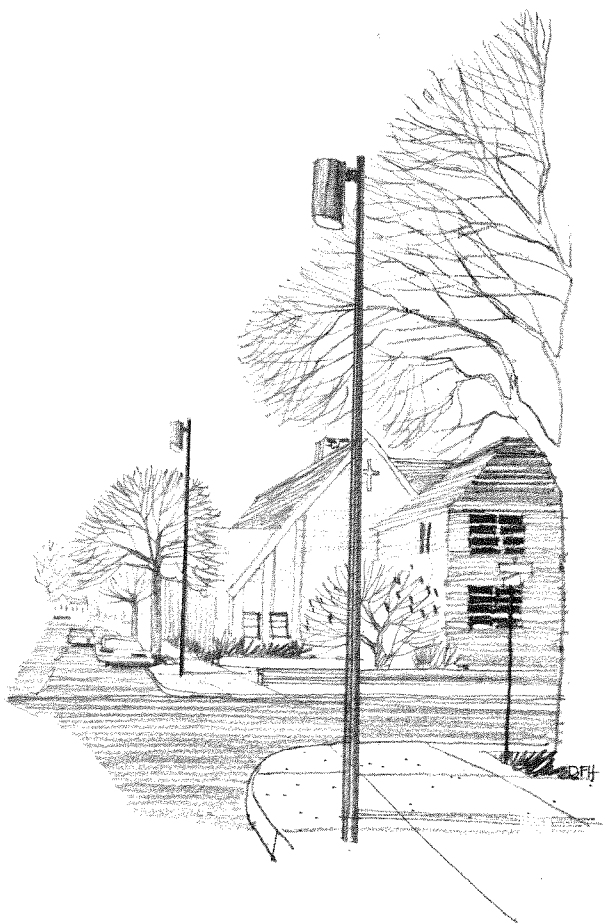
The only vehicular route along which the present lighting will be maintained is Hunter Boulevard. This north/south arterial is part of the metropolitan transportation network. The light fixtures and the intensities along it should relate to those of the total area rather than to the special illumination of Birmingham.

In the pedestrian areas a pole of nine to ten feet is recommended with the luminaire extending to a height of eleven to twelve feet. The luminaire selected is referred to as the Gothic Light. The luminaire reflects the traditional image of the community and provides the required light intensity along pedestrian walkways. A 175 watt color corrected lamp is recommended and a spacing of eighty to one hundred feet is suggested to achieve the desired light intensities.

All light poles and fixtures should be the same color. The existing poles and lights should be painted to match the anodized color selected for new aluminum fixtures. A dark brown color has been recommended, although a dark gray or a dark green would also be satisfactory. Once this determination is made, all traffic signal poles, traffic lights and walk and wait signals should be painted to match the color of the street and pedestrian lights.



PEDESTRIAN LIGHT

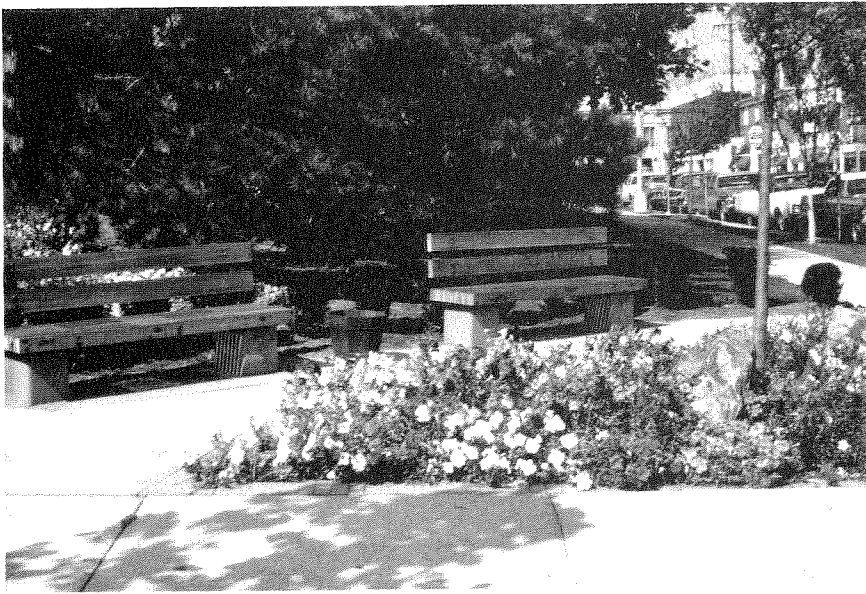


STREET LIGHT

$\frac{1}{2} \int_{\mathbb{R}^n} |\nabla u|^2 dx = \frac{1}{2} \int_{\mathbb{R}^n} |\nabla v|^2 dx + \frac{1}{2} \int_{\mathbb{R}^n} |\nabla w|^2 dx$

$\frac{1}{2} \int_{\mathbb{R}^n} |\nabla u|^2 dx = \frac{1}{2} \int_{\mathbb{R}^n} |\nabla v|^2 dx + \frac{1}{2} \int_{\mathbb{R}^n} |\nabla w|^2 dx$





FURNITURE AND PLANTERS. The central area of Birmingham has very few places designed for pedestrian relaxation. Two of the places that are used by people shopping or visiting downtown are shown in the photos. Shane Park has a number of benches available and the play equipment is fully utilized by children from adjoining residential areas as well as by young people visiting the central area with their families. The small rest area at the southeast corner of the Municipal Building is less successful because it appears unrelated to the major pedestrian pattern or activity areas of the community.

Street furniture and planters should be more important as elements in Birmingham's streetscape character than they presently are. The general environment in the central area is attractive today because of the sign standards and architectural character that have been achieved. The existing physical environment can be vastly improved with the introduction of new street furniture and planters. The design quality of the elements introduced into the environment is more important than the quantity; often streets are too busy with elements competing for attention.

In the central business area the recommendations on signs, lights, and parkway landscape contribute to the streetscape character. Other physical elements that need design attention are the telephone booths, canopies and bus shelters, display cases, advertising kiosks, flag displays, sculpture and fountains. Most of the elements are special features that will be designed over a period of years, but the benches and planters will be elements recurring in the streetscape at a number of locations.

The development and design of all street furniture should be considered in context with the urban scale and conditions of the city. Many times street furniture and equipment designed for residential areas is inappropriately placed in the urban environment producing a disparity of visual scale and a high cost of maintenance due to the use by more people for a longer period of time.

The charm of the city is basically due to the amenities which are introduced along the street. This is the first impression experienced by visitors and tourists. A well-planned street scene will have a lasting impression on a person visiting or living in the city. The citizens and business leaders of Birmingham should take great interest in developing and maintaining an attractive street character throughout their community.

The proposed sidewalk development along Maple and Woodward shopping streets will permit the introduction of street furniture and planters that will be enjoyed by the people while shopping and visiting in central Birmingham. Benches, planters and other related streetscape elements bring scale and interest to the public and private spaces of the city. A cluster of benches under the trees or protected by a canopy will be a common attractive element in the major pedestrian areas.

In the area of the Civic Center Plaza and Shane Park street furniture and planters will be introduced to serve the concentration of people using these outdoor spaces. Small spaces with benches may also be appropriate adjacent to the parking structures on the edge of the central retail area. The public walkways that link the major pedestrian activity areas will have less furniture and streetscape emphasis allowing the entry nodes, parks and plazas to be of prime visual importance.

All benches introduced in the central area should be constructed of one common material to gain design unity. A hardwood is recommended for the seat and backrest with a steel or aluminum frame for mounting the wood elements.

Four basic types of planters are suggested for use in the public areas of Birmingham. Although design control is not possible on private land, the city should encourage the use of similar planters on private property. The box and dish type planters are illustrated; the round unit and large box type unit for flowering trees are not illustrated in this report. The round unit has the same dimensions as the box unit and the large box planter for flowering trees is a minimum of three feet in height and is four feet square.

Fiberglass construction is recommended for minimum maintenance and long-term use in public spaces. Other materials are commonly used because of the lower initial cost, but result in higher maintenance and replacement costs. The surface color, texture, type of planting, location and size of all planters must be approved by the city prior to placement in the public right-of-way.

Telephone booths, canopies and bus shelters, display cases, advertising kiosks, flag displays, sculpture and fountains are important architectural elements that need to be designed in relationship to a more detailed plan for the total environment of the central area.





PARKING ENCLOSURE



PARKING ENCLOSURE. The visual impression received by motorists or pedestrians observing the outside edge of the business district from the Ring Road is that of an auto storage area. The foreground of the business area is made unattractive by a number of surface parking areas that have no enclosure or screening from the public right-of-way. Without proper treatment on the edge, these parking areas degrade the environment of the entire community and often influence the market value of properties facing parking lots.

A number of unattractive elements have been placed along the edge of the parking lots to control cars, including steel posts, concrete bumpers, steel guard rails, cement block walls, and cyclone fences. Because there are no established standards or requirements for parking enclosure, only concerned owners have invested in walls and landscaping to improve the environment.

Parking areas that lack proper edge treatment often encourage the development of related visual litter. Signs at the lot entrance providing direction and information on rates, the name of the company, and "Lot Full" signs are usually placed on a number of posts around the main entrance with no attempt at visual order.

Within parking lots or at their edges nearest the buildings, a number of utility poles are often visible to the pedestrian or motorist approaching the business center. Overhead wires are very apparent because of the open views across the parking areas. Responsibility for the utility poles and overhead wires does not rest with the parking lot owner, but the existence of these auto storage areas seems to encourage other blighting influences and make them more apparent.

The attractive businesses on Maple and Woodward are often viewed for the first time from parking lots at the rear. This approach to the stores will continue to be important with the renewal of the alleys and the improvement of rear facades, entrances and signs. New pedestrian walkways will be needed to connect the parking areas to the alleys and store entrances.

Retail merchants, businessmen, and property owners have a responsibility to the total community to improve the visual character of surface parking areas serving their businesses. These areas need to be considered a part of their building and their business merchandizing, thus more care and concern for the environment should be expressed.

Approaching the business district, the visual attention should be directed to the building and landscape that form the physical framework of the community. With proper enclosure the surface parking areas will become secondary elements in the environment and important physical features will be apparent to the motorist and pedestrian.

The use of vertical screens to break the horizontal plane of the street surface, sidewalk and parking pavements is essential. Pockets for landscape material are recommended to avoid the monotony of a continuous wall along the property line. A maximum dimension of fifty lineal feet of wall is suggested, with short sections of wall setback to provide areas for planting.

The height of the wall or screen should be approximately four feet above the curb and sidewalk. If the grade of the parking area is elevated above the street surface, the wall height will need to be increased to obtain the same degree of enclosure.

Brick is recommended for the walls because of its wide use in the buildings of the central area. A well-designed concrete wall may also be appropriate as an enclosing element, but wood and metal enclosures should not be considered for use around parking areas.

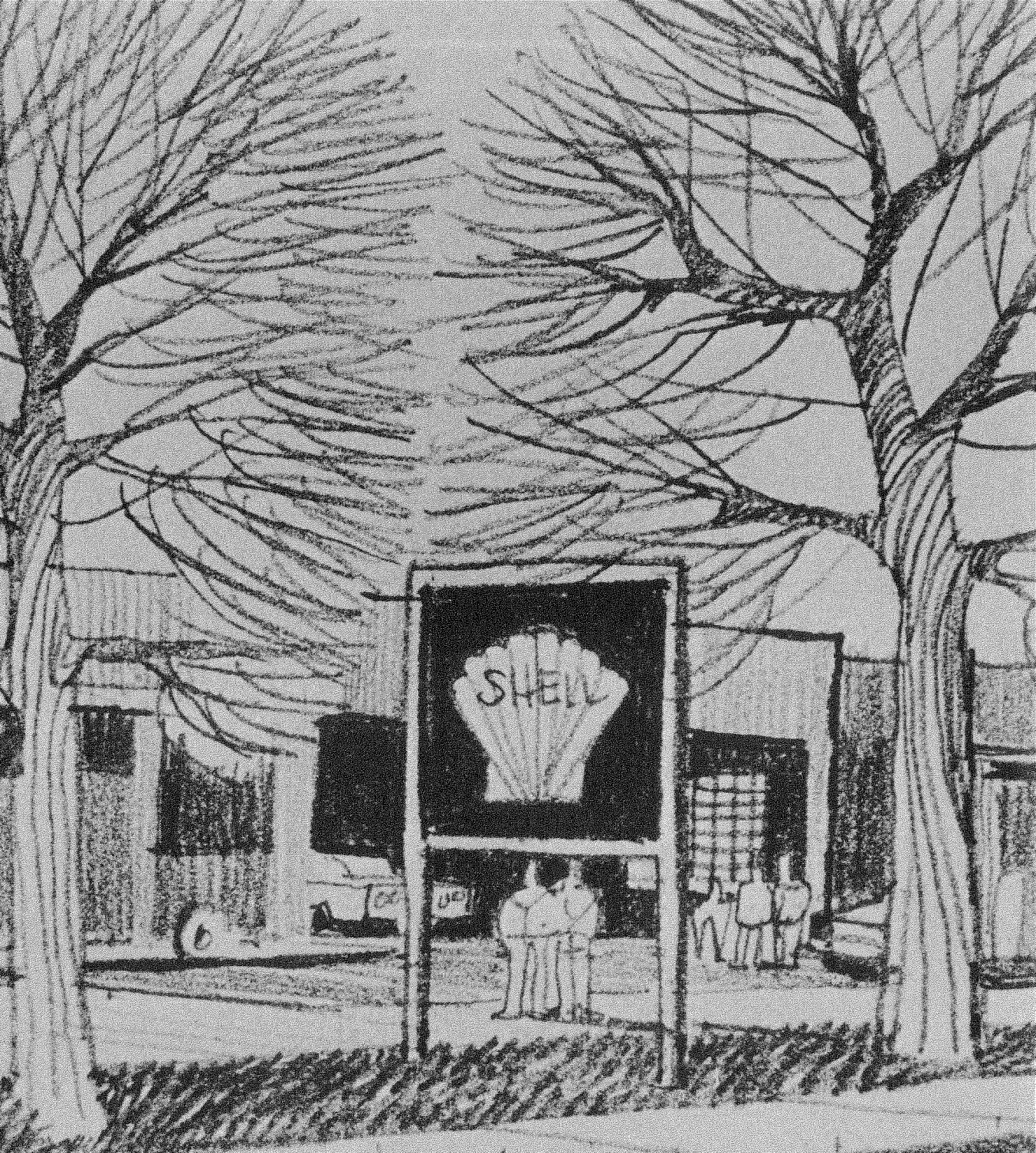
A planting screen may be considered when sufficient space is available between the property line and the parking lot edge. Four feet of width is required for a low hedge planting and most screen plantings require a dimension of ten to twenty feet to develop adequate visual restrictions.

The need for parking enclosure is very important to the implementation of the urban design recommendations. Communities around the U.S. are adopting ordinances requiring parking enclosures and this will be necessary in Birmingham to obtain the goals defined in this report. A period of two years following the passage of an ordinance is suggested for conformance.

Plans and details of enclosing elements proposed for individual parking lots should be submitted for site plan review by the City Plan Board. This review process will permit the city to guide the owners in developing their enclosing elements, and facilitate the coordination of the many parking enclosures within the central area. Entrance signs and lighting fixtures need to be reviewed at the time approvals are granted on the enclosures to assure the improvement of all elements related to surface parking areas.



PARKING AREA



SERVICE STATIONS



SERVICE STATIONS. The vast expanse of asphalt surface surrounding service stations combined with the sidewalks, entrance aprons, and street paving produce a massive pavement impression at many intersections in the community. It is often suggested that service stations need to be eliminated to improve community appearance, but the essential problem is the poor design of site development details and the excessive use and size of signs.

Fifty to seventy percent of the parkway frontage is normally devoted to concrete entrance aprons, limiting the area for parkway landscape to very small strips between auto entrance points. Four to six access and exit points are often permitted at corner locations, many times in conflict with the traffic circulation in the intersection. Traffic engineers recommend that curb cuts be kept back from corners to allow for traffic volumes at intersections.

Identification and advertising signs are usually excessive in number and out of scale with the surrounding businesses. Many service stations have two large pole signs and a number of identification signs on the building. Promotional signs and banners and movable A-frames are attached to the poles and light standards and tire displays are frequently placed on the unused portion of asphalt. A large roof sign projects above the facade of the service station in the photo with a negative effect upon the simple architectural expression of the building.

The exterior lighting provided for the paved service area frequently illuminates the surrounding area as well, causing distraction to the passing motorist and nuisance to abutting property owners. Light standards are often too high with luminaires directed toward the street and property lines producing considerable reflected light.

Some service stations in Birmingham have exhibited leadership in maintaining high standards of neatness and cleanliness both inside and outside the stations. Other stations in the area continue to display banners, pennants and related promotional devices that produce a negative influence on the community environment.

The service station leaders need to be rewarded with favorable publicity and community awards that express the appreciation of their community for their concern and pride. This positive action will encourage other station owners to improve the area surrounding their facilities.

Development of a landscaped median or edge between the sidewalk and service station pavement becomes realistic upon the removal of the corner entrance and exit points. In this proposal, two major points would be maintained at locations removed from the congestion of the intersection.

A minimum of five to six feet is required to develop the landscaped median. Street trees and low vegetation are recommended for the planting area. This landscape material will reduce the scale of the pavement at the intersection and provide an attractive green edge to the service station development. A low hedge or wall similar to the one proposed for enclosing the parking areas could be considered to eliminate the street-level view of the asphalt surface.

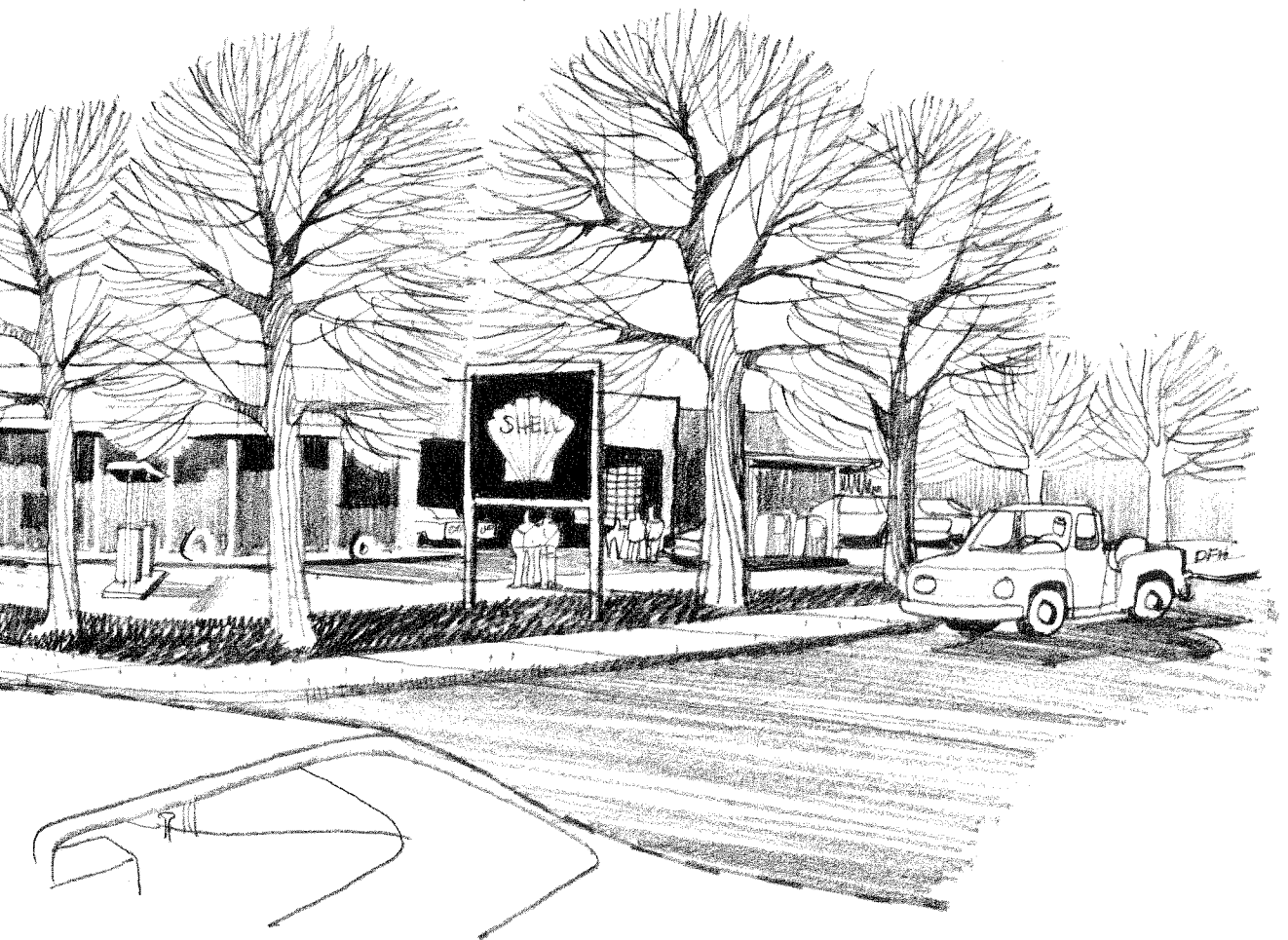
All or part of the median improvement will occur within the public right-of-way. The city should plan this improvement and seek the cooperation and support of service station owners. An additional few feet of land may be required to increase the median to a developable dimension.

Service station identification signs will be limited in height to fifteen feet. If located on the property line, a maximum of twenty-five square feet of surface area is permitted per sign face. For every foot of setback from the property line, an additional square foot of sign area is allowed. A maximum of one hundred square feet per sign face would be possible with a setback of seventy-five feet. Each service station should be permitted one pole sign located not less than twenty feet from the corner or side property line.

Two wall identification signs will be allowed per station, but all roof signs should be prohibited. Advertising signs and promotional material should be limited to the service station windows and gas pumps, thus eliminating all signs attached to poles or mounted on A-frames. Banners, tire displays and other promotional devices should be limited to the interior of the service station.

Light standards and luminaires should be limited to fifteen feet in height and the light source should be concealed from direct view. Motorists and abutting property owners should not be aware of reflected light from the service station.

With a minimum of public and private investment, all of the service stations in Birmingham could become positive physical features in the environment of the community.



CTION IMPROVEMENT



**MAPLE / WOODWARD PROMENADE
DESIGN PROPOSAL**

MAPLE-WOODWARD PROMENADE

The Maple and Woodward corridors and the adjacent streets are the center of retail activity in the Central Business District. Walking on these streets should be an inviting, pleasurable experience. The parking facilities must be convenient and the parking space must be adequate to satisfy existing stores and public buildings and to stimulate new retail activity.

Ideally, Birmingham should be a city that is easy to get into and easy to get out of, a city that has convenient short term parking and more importantly, has long term parking adjacent to those streets where pedestrians browse and do comparative shopping. As Maple has developed, pedestrians are being squeezed onto narrow sidewalks which are, in many instances, just five feet in width from tree well to store front. The volume of traffic on both Maple and Woodward is disrupting to the pedestrian. The congestion at the Maple-Woodward intersection is difficult and unpleasant for the shopper.

The Maple-Woodward Promenade calls for widening the sidewalks and clustering trees where streets intersect as indicated in the accompanying Design Plan. The tree wells in the middle of the blocks on West Maple would be removed to provide more space for the shoppers. At the terminus points of Hamilton, Merrill, Pierce, Henrietta and the service drive on East Maple, as well as at the intersections of Bates-Maple, Oakland-Woodward, Brown-Woodward, and Brownell-East Maple, there are areas designed with emphasis on pedestrian scale. The selected trees, plantings, benches and street furniture make up safe, attractive areas where shoppers can meet and enjoy the window displays, and where pedestrians can sit and watch or be watched. These areas replace the crowded corners where people huddle together waiting for traffic signals to change. The Henrietta streetscape and the Promenade will be blended, reflecting similar materials and landscaping.

Street parking will continue, though there will be a reduction of a total of seventeen spaces on the Maple-Woodward corridors. Traffic will be de-emphasized, since through traffic is encouraged to use the Ring Road where there is easy access to municipal parking facilities.

At this time the cost of the Maple-Woodward Promenade is estimated to be \$300,000 exclusive of lighting, or \$55-\$60 a front foot.

The Maple-Woodward Promenade is a plan which creates an atmosphere conducive to browsing and shopping and enjoying the downtown area of Birmingham.

