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place

SUMMER 1991



RETROFIT

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featuring several building owners, developers and architects. They'll tell you how they use the system and give their candid comments on its effectiveness.

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A b o u t t h e C o v e r

The urban fabric of downtown Birmingham is enhanced by the 48,000 square foot Benjamin K. Pierce Building. Located on a prominent site, it serves as a transition between the taller buildings in the central city and an historic residential area to the south.

Photography by Christopher Lark

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nline. Please address all letters and inquiries to the above
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Summer In The City

It's hot; it's humid; but I want to be outside. I want to sit in an outdoor cafe, stroll along and window shop, go to the ball park, take in an art fair. Inside means air conditioning, or worse, no air conditioning. Outside means warm breezes and the energy that comes from people on the street. The city takes on a special aura in the summer, one of hot days and warm, humid nights.

To architects, the city in summer represents the romance in a design challenge. The time when the streets come alive with people is the time that good design is put to the test. Most architects won't admit it, but we secretly design for the summer, when the pace slows and when pedestrians take over the cities, towns and villages. It is a time when people on foot soak up the sights, sounds and smells of the street, when textures and colors are vibrant,

and when light and shade are apparent everywhere.

In this issue of *Place*, we feature projects in three downtowns across Michigan: Birmingham, Ann Arbor and Grand Rapids. The tie that binds these areas together is the concern for the pedestrian experience—the attention to scale and detail which contribute to the total vitality of the city. Each featured project contributes in its own unique way to help create (or maintain) a lively and diverse city fabric.

One of the primary challenges of designing urban spaces or projects is to address the inherent conflict between vehicles and pedestrians. The vehicle that may have brought you to town can also inhibit your enjoyment of the same place. These three downtowns and others have taken this issue head-on. For example, Birmingham's ring road with parking decks located on the perimeter of downtown reduces in town traffic dramatically. Also, Ann Arbor's labyrinth of narrow one-way streets slows traffic to a crawl, and Grand Rapids' different levels separate vehicular and pedestrian traffic. All are realistic approaches to improving the quality of life in downtown.

Downtown design is a special challenge to architects. It calls for exercising sensitivities to issues of scale and context, traffic flow and use patterns. Projects must respond both to the needs of the client and to the larger context: the fabric of city life. And when the summer comes, and the streets come alive with people, downtown radiates its good design, both old and new. It becomes the place to come and enjoy, to see and be seen. So leave the mall for January and come on downtown and heat up a little. ▼

Tim Casai, AIA

Lofty Ideals

If the city is to be a viable place for all to enjoy, it must be more than just a place to work. To maintain lively levels of shopping, entertainment and activity, it is essential that a strong residential base be retained in the city. One of the ways to enrich that residential base is to capture existing vacant space as living area. How can this be done? By development of "loft" spaces in existing downtown buildings.

Q As I look around the downtown of my community, there seems to be a lot of vacant space on the second and even third floors of the older buildings. This looks like usable space, how much is there?

A In the southeast Michigan community of Ann Arbor, with a population of 110,000, there is approximately 100,000 square feet of underutilized or vacant space

in our older commercial buildings, and this seems to be a typical amount. This space could be translated into housing or commercial space benefiting the entire community.

Q What are the roadblocks which are keeping this existing space from being developed?

A There are four primary problems to be overcome:

1. Most downtown building owners are retailers or even absentee landowners; they are not experienced real estate developers.

2. Residential use of vacant space is only marginally profitable.

3. Onsite parking is often lacking.

4. Meeting building and fire codes seems prohibitive and requires cooperation between the owner and the city.

Q How can building owners overcome the lack of experience in development projects and take advantage of the opportunity?

A The most direct way to get information and assistance is to form a partnership with an experienced developer. Another route is to work with the city. If they have made a commitment to reusing vacant downtown space, they will more likely be able to assist the building owner.

Q What are some of the financing techniques to be considered in development?

A Development of vacant space as commercial use is, in general, more probable than residential. Some techniques for governmental funding assistance include federal tax credits for the rehabilitation of certified historic buildings, local housing programs for low income rental units and working with the city to defer taxes or participate in downtown development projects. Private funding includes traditional loans

through banks, creating limited partnerships, or selling the space as condominiums.

Q What are some alternative solutions to the parking problem?

A The availability of parking downtown is different for each community. In a crowded, dense downtown, there are several alternatives to consider, including:

1. Reduced parking fees.
2. Subsidies for construction of parking spaces.
3. Revised parking and loading zone requirements.
4. Day/night shared parking.
5. Priority parking allocation system.

Q What are the most common hurdles in the building and fire codes and how can they be addressed?

A Building codes are meant to protect life and safety. In older downtown buildings the most common code problems are:

1. Barrier-free access.
2. Fire separation between different use groups.
3. Open light wells.
4. Exiting from upper floors.
5. Structural loading capacity of the floors.

The building owner should work directly with the local building official to prepare designs which protect life and safety, yet are economically feasible and do not compromise the function and usability of the building. ▼

Lorri Sipes, AIA



In our spring '91 issue, *Place* featured the restoration of Orchestra Hall in Detroit. To our embarrassment, we inadvertently omitted the photography credit. The beautiful photographs used for that feature, including the one shown here, were the work of Robert J. Eovaldi of Taylor, Michigan. Bob has been providing architectural photography to the building industry for over a decade and his work, which includes landmarks across Michigan, has been widely published. We apologize for this oversight.

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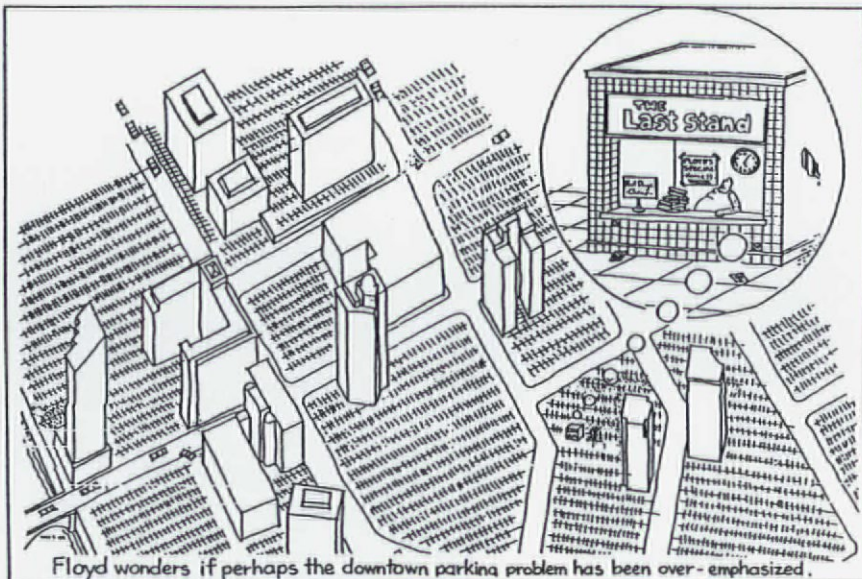


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Go Green

We are two and one-half decades from the sun-worshipping, earth-hugging 70s, and almost twenty years since the oil cartel hung "empty" signs on our gasoline pumps and pushed up windmills and solar collectors across the countryside. Since those first Earth Days, ecological and environmental awareness has crept off of the communes and campuses of the U.S. and into the public domain. The "greening" of America has expanded to encompass concern, not only for the natural environment, but for the built environment and for the local as well as global impact of what and how we build.



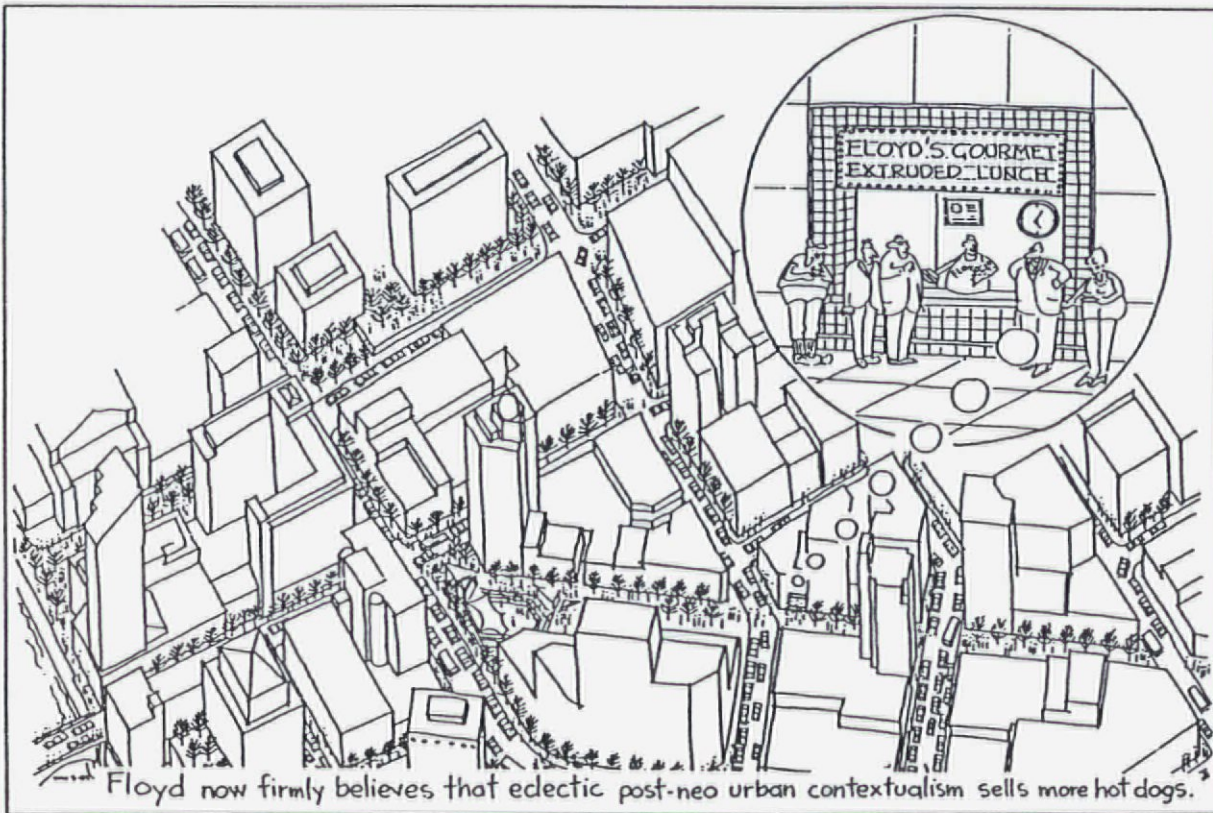
Architecture has always had an environmental vocabulary: "...the relationship of building to site...", "...contextual concerns...", "...environmental controls..." Now, however, "green" has jumped from the lexicon of the environmentalist into the jargon of architecture. We read of "green" architecture, "green" architects and, of course, "green" clients.

In increasing numbers, these "green" architects are incorporating ecologically sensitive approaches into the design process. Consideration of pollution, indoor air quality, resource depletion, solid waste disposal and embodied energy are integrated into the pursuit of Sir Henry's Vitruvian ideal of "commodity, firmness and delight." Despite the inherent collision between conservation and consumption, ecologically-minded architects of the 90s are making good architecture. The "contraptions" of the early energy crunch are being supplanted by superior technology, understanding of regionalism, sensitivity to ecological costs and, above all, attention to client and user needs.

The U.S. construction industry is a major factor in the environmental health of the country, and of the world. The building design and construction community has a responsibility to broaden the environmental vocabulary of architecture.

How green is your architecture? ▼

Jim Shane, AIA



Place Magazine

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STREET SMART

Because large parking areas are often located behind commercial building blocks, rear facades are seen more often than in the past. Today an attractive rear entry can be a second front door.

The melting pot overflows in Ann Arbor, Michigan. Home to the University of Michigan, over 35,000 students from across the nation and world gather each fall and disperse in the spring. The 80,000 permanent residents include relocated graduates as well as many generational families among their numbers. A diverse community.

The city is not only diverse in its population, but also in its physical character. One of the fastest growing communities in southeastern Michigan, Ann Arbor's downtown incorporates a mixture of new buildings among its two historic districts.

In order to preserve the unique qualities and strengthen the identity of Ann Arbor's historic downtown, the Ann Arbor Historic District Commission, the Downtown Development Authority and the city hired the architectural firm of Architects Four, Inc. to write and illustrate *Downtown Design Guidelines: A*

Handbook for Preservation, New Construction and Loft Re-Use. The handbook is a tool for property owners and encourages rehabilitation, maintenance and expansion of existing and new structures in the downtown area. These downtown guidelines explain the aesthetic, financial and historical benefits of preservation and new construction, while providing the reader with practical "how to" information.

The first goal of the handbook is to educate property owners about the architectural history of downtown Ann Arbor. In order to know what is appropriate for a building, the owner must first understand its architectural style and how it fits in with surrounding structures. Not only does this new information about the building and its surroundings help the owner make decisions on how it should be remodeled, it also gives a sense of meaning. Buildings are no longer "faceless," they have a history and unique qualities that can be seen as



Storefronts in a commercial district such as downtown Ann Arbor were built in rows adjoined to one another on a line edging the sidewalk. The effect of this was twofold: pedestrians found it easy to see displays in the store windows and, most importantly, a consistent line of facades was maintained along the length of the street so that the buildings looked as though they belonged together.

we walk by on the street. There is more to "remodeling" than originally thought; there is also a history.

Part Two of the handbook addresses preservation and lists historic districts and buildings along with providing maps and information on tax credits. Examples of appropriate and inappropriate uses of materials, windows, cornices, doors, painting and masonry work are all shown through helpful illustrations.

The third part of the handbook addresses new construction which presents special problems, such as how tall should a building be and how far should it be set back from the street? These issues are addressed through illustrations of appropriate and inappropriate design solutions. The background information provided the history and context for architectural design and has shown the importance of maintaining consistency of design. Facades must be balanced in proportion with the facades of other buildings on the block and materials used should relate to the surfaces

of adjacent buildings.

Loft space is the soul of the building; it lies inside, unseen and sometimes empty. Therefore the final section presents the re-use of loft space as a way of furthering the diversity and growth of downtown Ann Arbor through the development of commercial office space and residential uses. Downtown becomes a place where people work and live.

continues



When an owner has decided that a historic building is in need of an addition, care should be taken to assure that the addition does not alter the historic character of the original structure. Additions to the street facade are usually discouraged as too disruptive.

When creating an addition to a free-standing residential building, it is important to make decisions that do not compromise the historic character of the original.

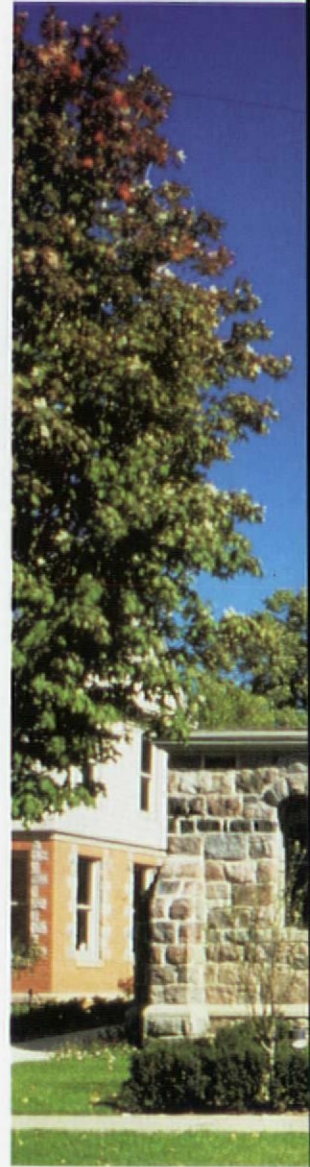


Yet there are obstacles to overcome in loft space rehabilitation. Since many older buildings were built before there were building codes and have remained empty for years, it is difficult and costly to renovate them. The handbook lists the "Top Six" most difficult codes with tips on how to best meet these requirements. (see "Solutions" on page 4) Lists of appropriate agencies and resources to assist the building owner through the renovation process are provided, greatly simplifying a complicated process. Case studies of completed loft renovations show the steps of rehabilitation, the time frames and what types of city and federal assistance were utilized.

Overall, the handbook is a valuable educational tool. Not only does it guide its readers through the process of rehabilitation, preservation and new construction, it also helps develop a sense of pride in the architectural surroundings. It "opens up the world" on each street in the entire community. The end result is a deeper understanding, a sense of connection and the desire to preserve and maintain a community's unique qualities.

The following are two Ann Arbor projects, the first a renovation and the second new construction, that are now an important part of the city's urban fabric.

Project: Downtown Design Guidelines
 Client: Ann Arbor Historical Foundation
 Architect: Architects Four, Inc. Ann Arbor, Michigan



Hobbs + Black Associates Corporate Headquarters

A new pedestrian entry provides access without disrupting the existing streetscape.

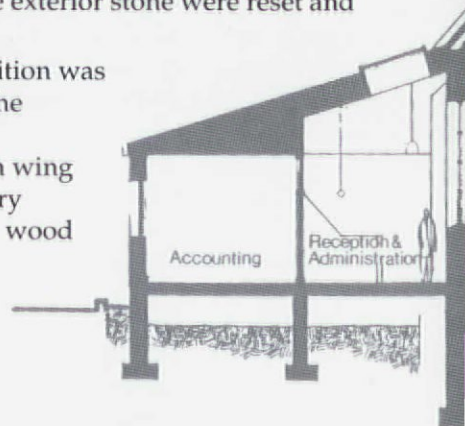
In 1985 Hobbs + Black purchased and began renovating an 1882 Richardsonian Romanesque church (Unitarian Universalist) in downtown Ann Arbor. The church, located in the Old Fourth Ward includes a parsonage and three adjacent houses which had been extremely dilapidated.

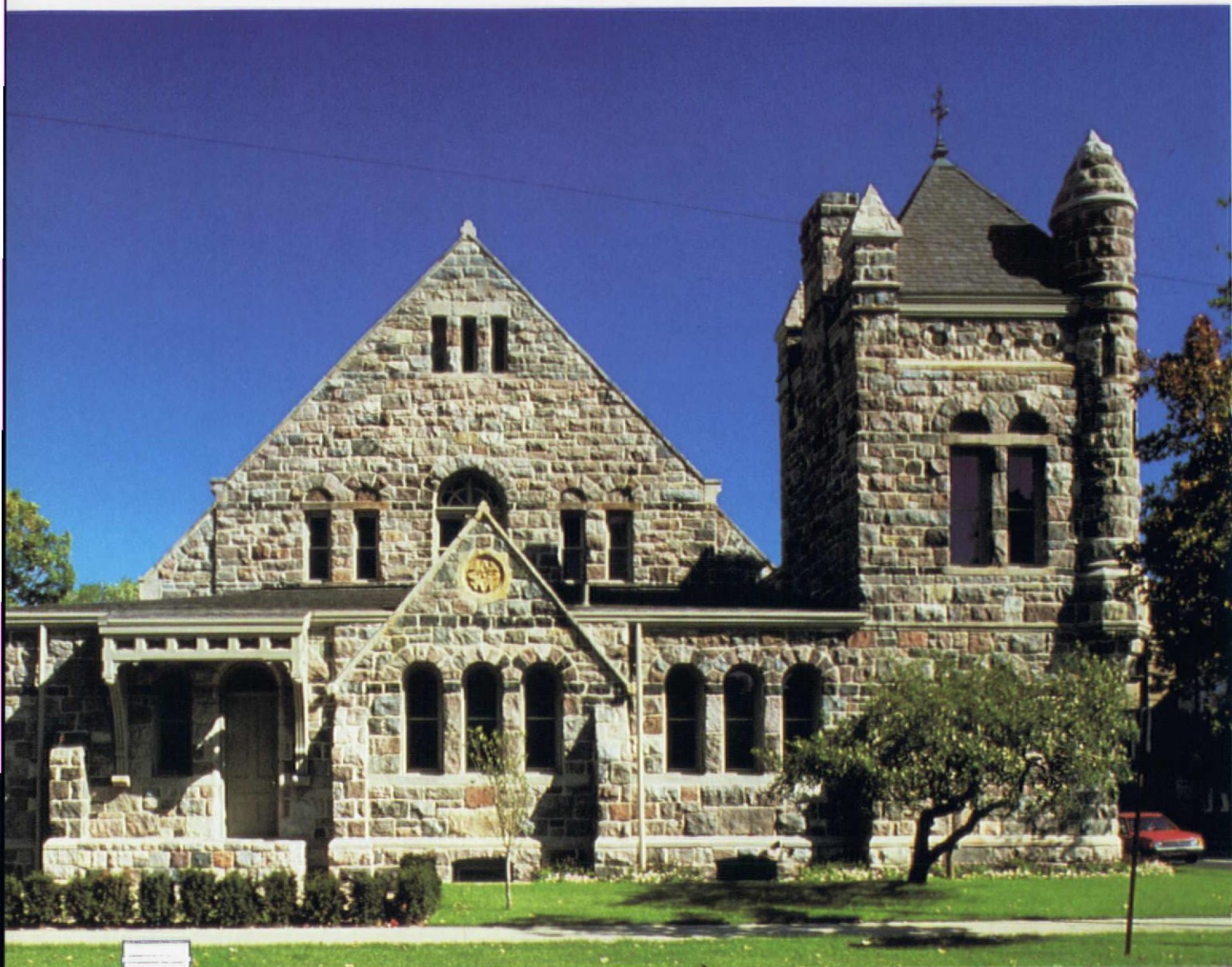
The church, listed on the National Register of Historic Places, had sat vacant for ten years at a prominent downtown intersection. The

challenge was to create a functionally effective and creative environment while preserving the historic integrity and character of the structure.

Renovation of the exterior structure corrected serious water damage and major portions of the exterior stone were reset and tuckpointed.

A 1916 addition was converted to the reception and administration wing and a new entry incorporates a wood and glass gabled portico. The focus of the reception





area is a relocated Tiffany window which was discovered in an original northern stone wall which was uncovered during renovation.

The sanctuary today is a trilevel atrium with architectural workstations designed to emulate the arched shapes prominent throughout the church. A new mezzanine level was added, and a dirt-floored cellar was finished as a third level of design stations. Throughout the building, strong emphasis was placed on contrasting the mass of the large, dark masonry with a light and open interior atmosphere.

A new 50-foot skylight spine was installed, and the ceiling was uncovered to expose the

The strength and grace of the Richardsonian Romanesque facade was carefully preserved in this renovation.

continues

Building Section

1 New columns incorporated into wall dividers at workstations to support added mezzanine

2 Existing support columns

The soaring sanctuary space became a light filled atrium surrounded by workstations



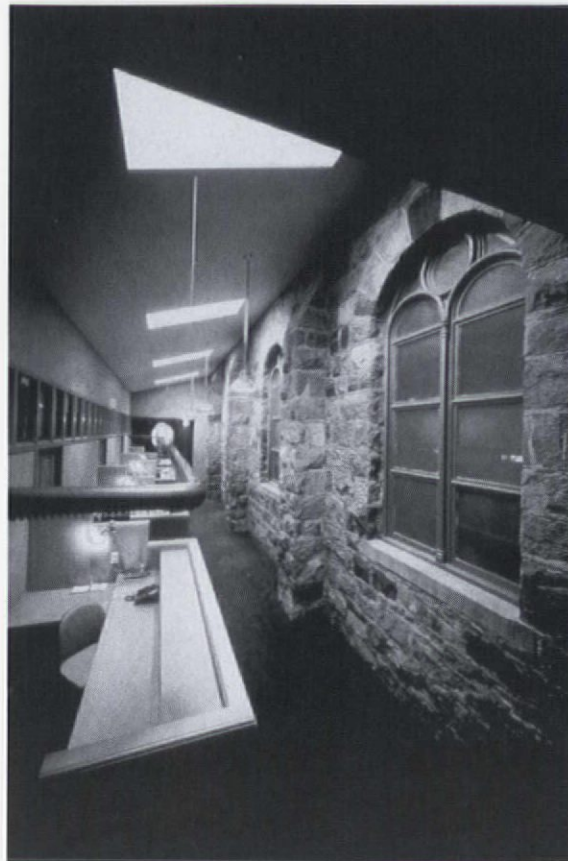
original rough-hewn trusses and a masonry gable within.

To provide more natural lighting, four new skylights were centered above the interior arched windows.

Energy efficiency and handicapped accessibility were also important design considerations. All windows were reglazed, and additional insulation was used. The new entry portico is barrier free, while the administration wing was raised from the original design to make it barrier free.

The new design utilizes and maintains the integrity of the original building design and satisfies the functional space needs of the firm. The development of this project is an important part of the urban fabric of Ann Arbor, woven sensitively and successfully into the pedestrian oriented neighborhood.

Project: Hobbs + Black Associates Corporate Headquarters
Architect & Engineer: Hobbs + Black Associates, Inc.
Ann Arbor, Michigan
Landscape Architect: Johnson, Johnson & Roy, Inc.
Contractor: State/Huron Construction
Photography: Steven Graham/Christopher Lark



Century old stone walls provide warmth and texture to the working environment.

The 110 Miller Building

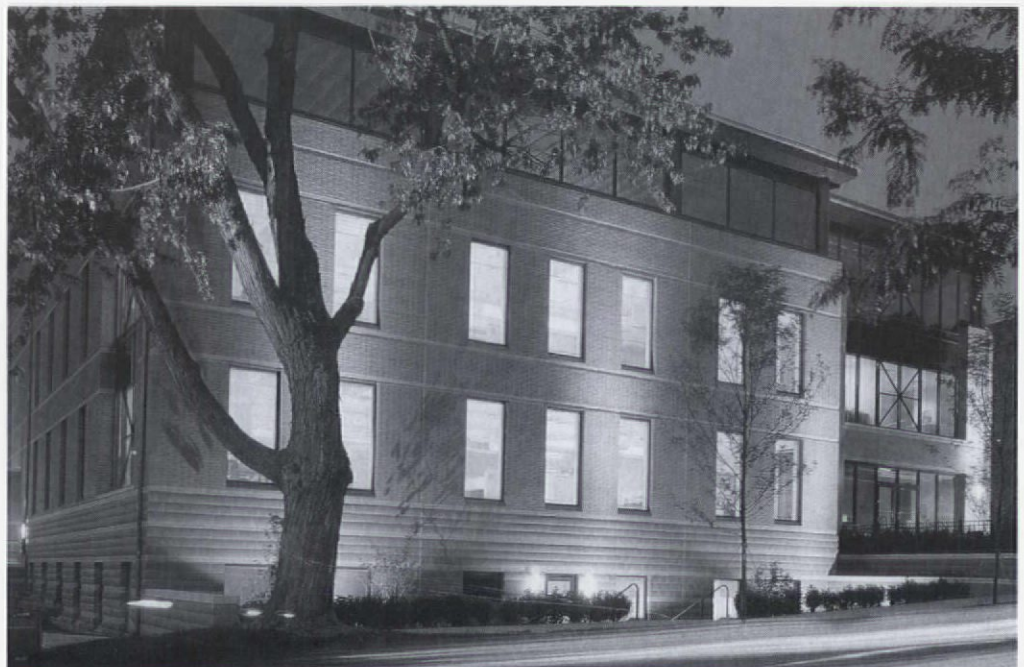
The 110 Miller Building was developed to provide a distinctive new home for the planning, landscape architecture and urban design firm of Johnson, Johnson & Roy/Inc. Due to continued growth, the company has expanded beyond its regional headquarters in an historic 19th century building. The new offices enabled JJR to bring its employees under one roof from four separate leased locations in Ann Arbor. Determined to remain in the north Ann Arbor neighborhood, JJR requested a building that blended within the scale and character of the area.

In planning the new building, SH&G, the design architects for the building, were asked to retain the charm of the old building while meeting all of the requirements of modern office space. To accomplish that goal, SH&G designed a four-

story, 45,000-square-foot building that includes a three-story atrium, large feature windows, a metal standing-seam roof and a terraced outdoor gathering area. The brick

continues

The entry elevation features a lower level courtyard and strong masonry banding to give the building a solid base.





Workstations surround the interior atrium space providing a working environment which is light and airy.

Careful attention to detailing is evident throughout the interior space.



The entry court is paved with brick. Street trees help soften the south facade.

patterns, color variation and detailing are reminiscent of prairie-style architecture and low pitched, copper-colored roofs with deep overhangs enhance the building's appearance. In addition, the gently sloping site incorporates an attractively landscaped parking lot for 35 cars.

JJR occupies the garden and first and second floors, leaving the top floor available for additional professional offices. However, in order to meet the needs of the developer, all floors were designed to adapt easily to multiple tenancy.

As a current example of inserting a new facility into the urban fabric of Ann Arbor, the building succeeds nicely. Respect for the Design Guidelines is evident and its design sets an example for projects to follow. ▼

Project: 110 Miller Building
 Client: Terra Investments, Inc.
 Architect & Engineer: Smith Hinchman & Grylls Associates, Inc.
 Landscape Architect: Johnson, Johnson & Roy, Inc.
 Contractor: O'Neil Construction
 Photography: Gary Quesada/Korab Ltd.

BIRMINGHAM ON FOOT



Pedestrian walkways between and behind buildings emphasize texture, greenery and a pleasant sense of scale. (Brown Street Centre Office Building.)



In 1964 a group of architects, an urban designer, a landscape architect and an architectural photographer formed the Birmingham Civic Design Committee (CDC) to study the central area of Birmingham, Michigan and stimulate interest in urban design. With the support and encouragement of a broad spectrum of community leaders, this endeavor developed an awareness for a greater design effort in public and private areas of the community. The Civic Design Committee was headed by Owen Luckenbach, AIA and included Carl Luckenbach, FAIA, Robert L. Ziegelman, FAIA, Harry Van Dine, FAIA, Gunnar Birkerts, FAIA, Robert Greager, FAIA, John Morgan, AIA, Kent Smith, ASLA and Balthazar Korab, photographer.

The CDC then developed an urban design model for

Birmingham which included a civic center plan, identified development zones, gave suggestions for architectural expressions, pedestrian paths, parking deck locations, street furniture, automobile circulation and the introduction of a Ring Road.

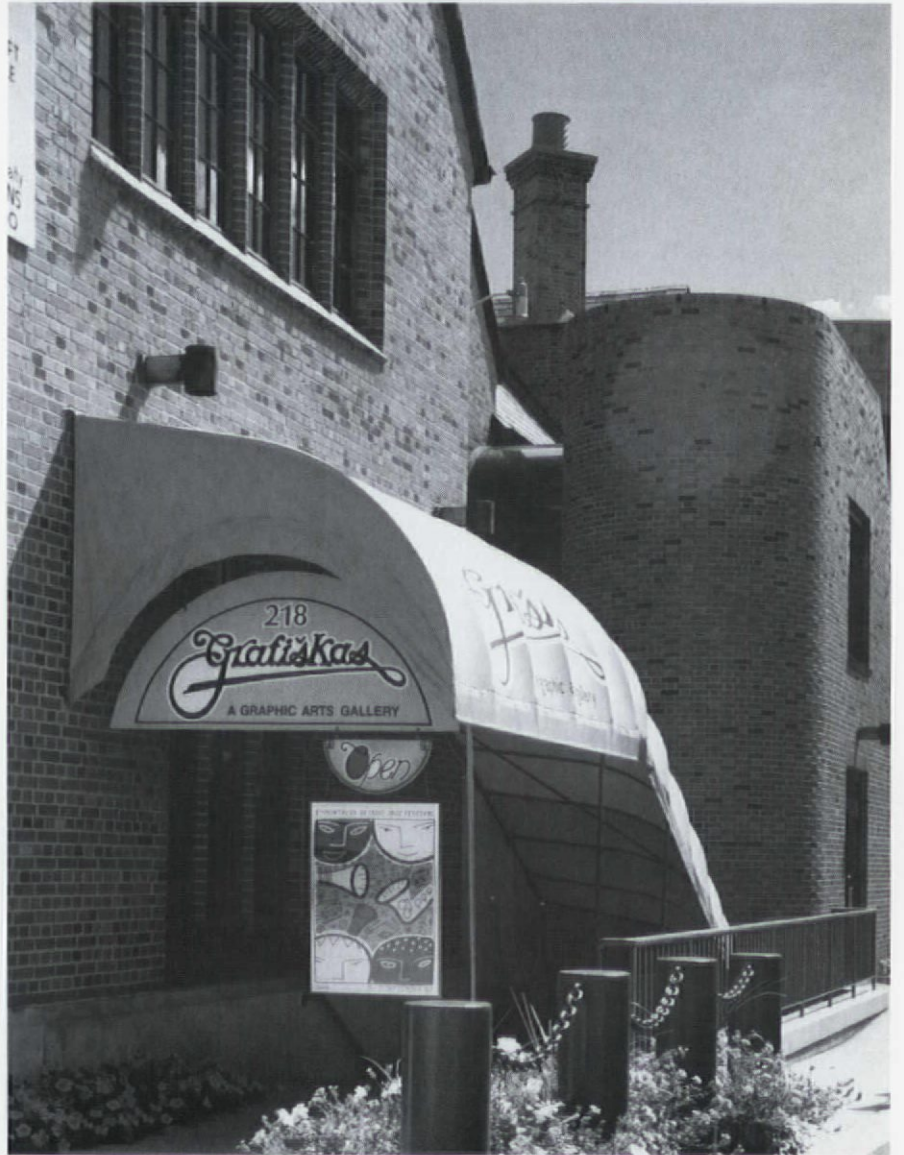
The Ring Road was fundamental to the plan to eliminate heavy traffic through the city and give the central business district back to the pedestrian.

The plan was presented to numerous civic groups in the community and resulted in a public acceptance that led to the hiring of the urban design firm of Johnson, Johnson & Roy/Inc. by the City of Birmingham. JJR incorporated many of the CDC proposals into a comprehensive design that created a framework for the development of Birmingham over the next 27 years.

During this entire period, Luckenbach and Ziegelman, first as individuals and then as Luckenbach | Ziegelman and Partners Inc. (LZP) designed 33 buildings or renovations within the

continues

An example of new housing which is modern but "neighborhood friendly." (Moore Townhouses)



Renovation of older structures emphasizes pedestrian scale. (220 Merrill Restaurant Office Renovation.)

central business district of Birmingham that implemented the urban design precepts that LZP had helped to develop. In addition, the ring road concept was implemented and a new street lighting, landscape and brick paving system was constructed throughout the central business district.

The Civic Plaza was completed along with the construction of four of the five parking decks recommended. Pedestrian paths were enhanced and developed as a result of the building of several structures designed or renovated by LZP. The success for the CDC plan has encouraged a tremendous increase in housing restorations just outside the central business district and stimulated extensive development within.

The emergence of a no growth attitude by certain segments within the community is reflected in the recent abandonment by the City of Birmingham of updating plans for future growth. The city has begun a systematic

program of down-zoning sites within and around the central business district. Although these actions are intended to limit future growth, the city is ignoring the likelihood that a no-growth philosophy applied indiscriminately could result in the deterioration of the high quality of life it desired and so carefully planned and nurtured 27 years ago.

The urban fabric, which has evolved over the past three decades, has brought a pedestrian-oriented lifestyle back to Birmingham, Michigan.

It is clear, however, that the urban fabric which has evolved over the past three decades has brought a pedestrian-oriented lifestyle back to Birmingham. The resulting concern for new architecture, as well as renovated and restored structures, has made a rich and interesting

continues

This restored house at left is artfully combined with new homes at right to develop the neighborhood fabric. (William Bell Townhouses.)



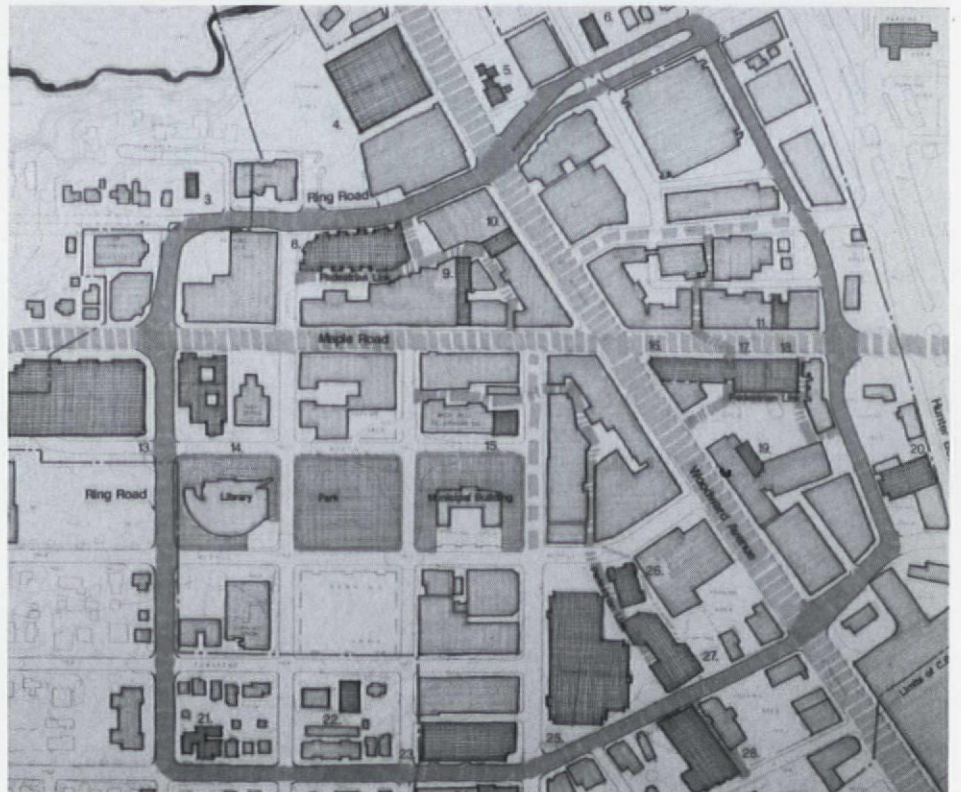
environment possible. Ultimately, it is the weaving together of commercial and residential occupancies that makes this town such a successful and desirable place to live, work and shop. ▼

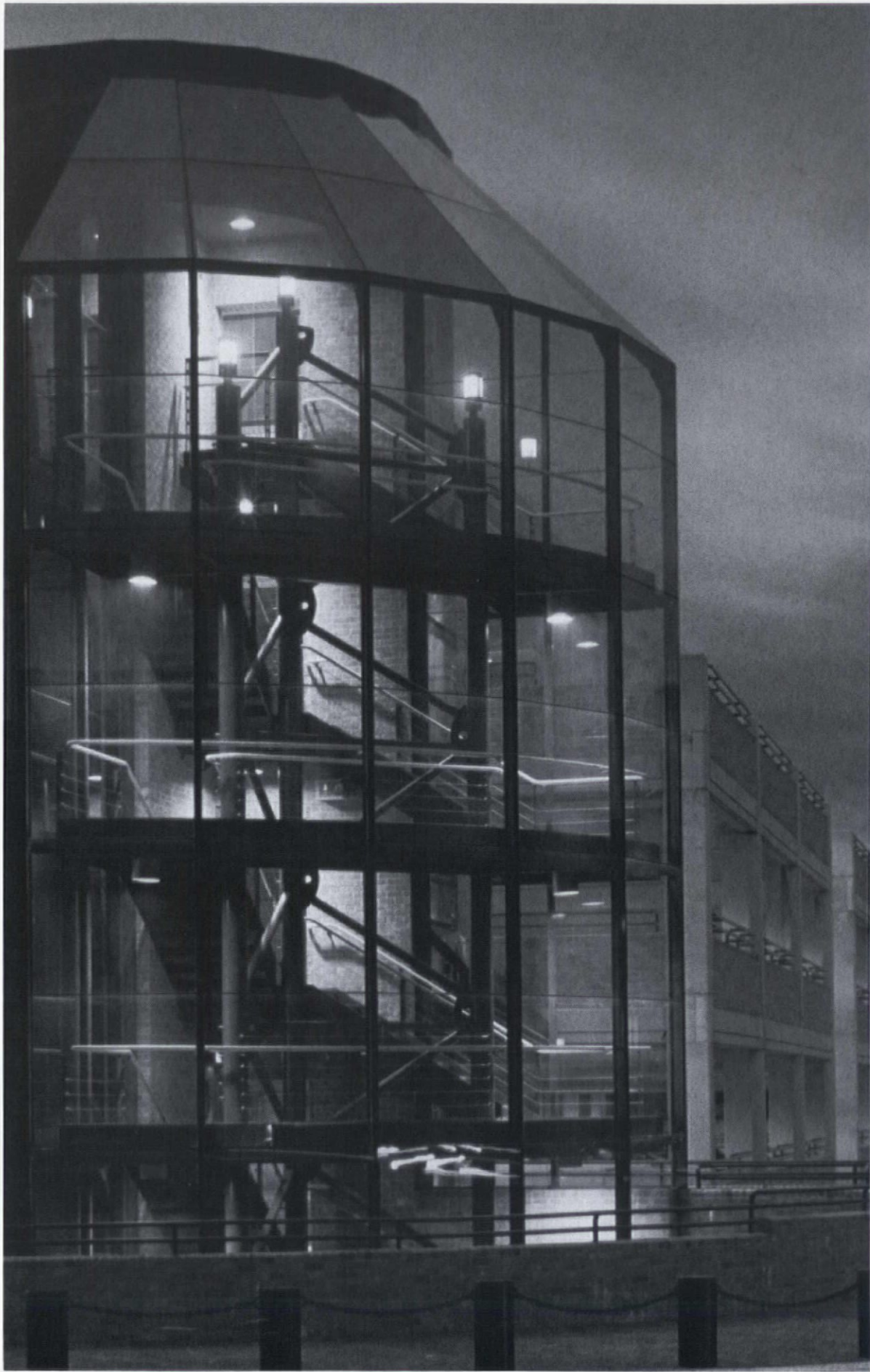
Project: Civic Design Plan
Birmingham, Michigan
Architects & Planners: Birmingham Civic Design Committee
Projects: Multiple Commercial and Residential Projects
Architects: Luckenbach | Ziegelman and Partners Inc.
Birmingham, Michigan
Photography: Christopher Lark, Daniel Bartush

New structures are designed with a consistency of scale, materials and texture which welcome them to the neighborhood. (260 Brown Street Office Building.)



The heart of the Civic Design Plan was implementation of the ring road to reduce vehicle traffic in the downtown district.





New parking decks are scaled to the existing environment. Materials and landscaping are sensitive to the streetscape. (Chester Street Parking Deck.)



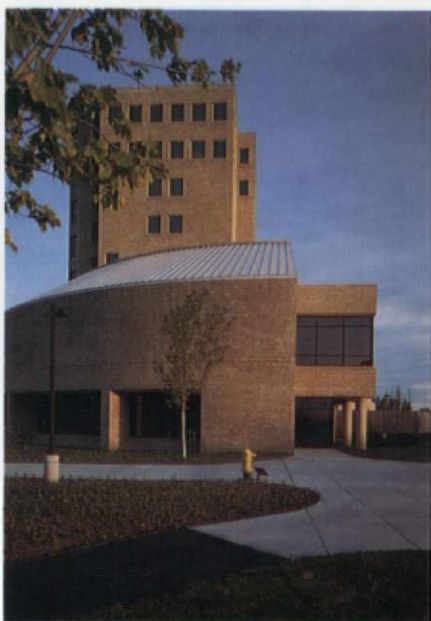
THE THREE R'S MOVE DOWNTOWN

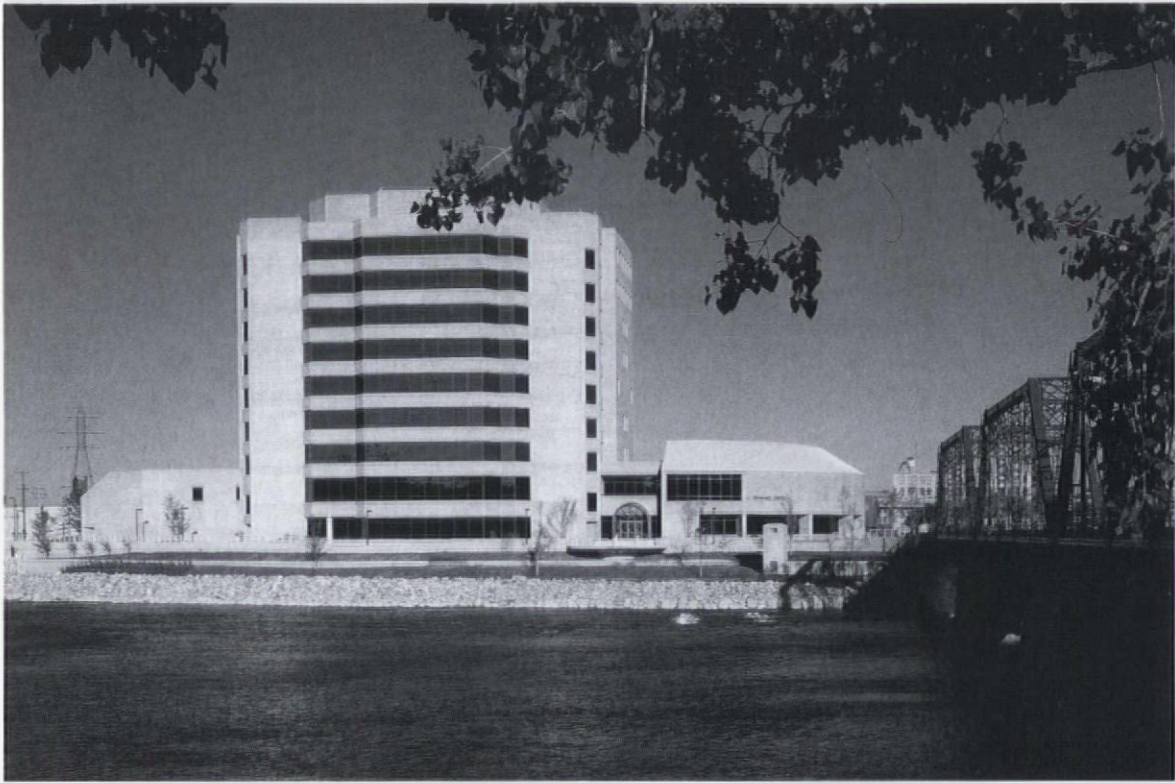
In response to a steadily growing demand for facilities and services easily accessible to working adults in the Grand Rapids area, Grand Valley State University culminated a 15-year effort with the design and construction of the L.V.Eberhard Center in the heart of this growing urban area. With its principal campus located 15 miles to the east of the city in Allendale, GVSU had long recognized the need to expand its focus to include graduate and continuing educational services which were readily available to the city. The 155,000-square-foot Eberhard Center provides nine structures of general and special purpose classrooms,

technology laboratories for graduate students in engineering and all necessary administrative and faculty office areas to serve this satellite urban campus facility. Other specialized areas programmed for the building include broadcast studios and offices for the operation of the university's public television and radio stations which were relocated from the Allendale Campus. Special-use seminar classrooms and a teleconference auditorium were also provided to accommodate an expanding program of professional development workshops offered year round.

Site concerns for this initial parcel included dealing with flood plain restrictions presented by the Grand River, and an existing eight-foot-diameter, underground sewer line which effectively bisected the four-acre site. Planning for the facility paid special attention to concentrating high-volume student classrooms on the lower levels and maximizing exposure of views toward the city to student and administrative common areas.

continues



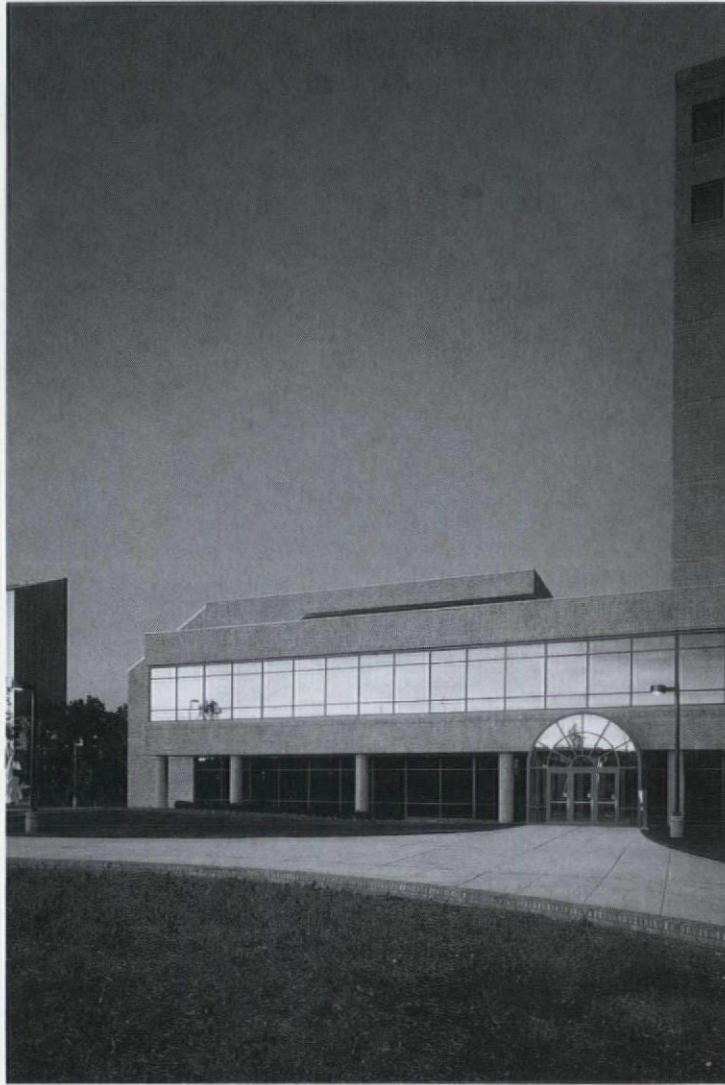


The Eberhard Center anchors the downtown campus along the banks of the Grand River.

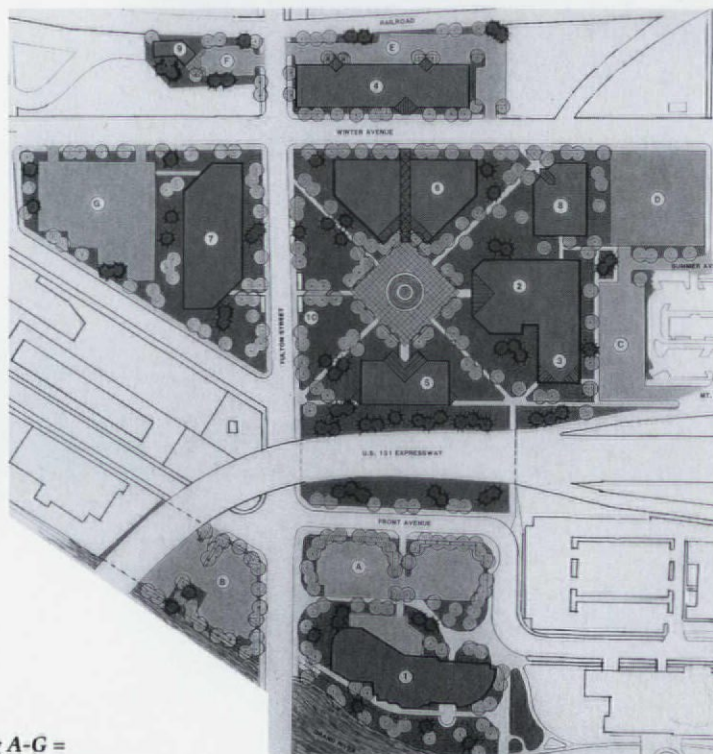
The urban campus environment flows comfortably inside the Eberhard Center.



Vistas over the Grand River enhance the campus' connection to downtown.



As the Eberhard Center was completed in 1988, it became almost immediately apparent that the demand for the facility would quickly fill it to capacity. At approximately the same time, Steelcase, Inc. donated an additional 10-acre parcel of land immediately to the west for the downtown campus. GVSU has also continued to pursue and acquire additional parcels in the area as they have become available. An overall master plan for future development of this urban campus was then commissioned. Several primary concerns regarding the site were given careful consideration, including the elevated expressway, potential use and renovation of existing buildings, vehicular and pedestrian traffic both on and surrounding the site, parking and security issues. The resulting master plan incorporates an internal network of walkways revolving around a central sculpture park and serving a variety of campus facilities positioned to allow for "vistas" into and out of the campus core. Parking and service functions are held at the perimeter to enhance the internal campus environment. Interconnecting the Steelcase



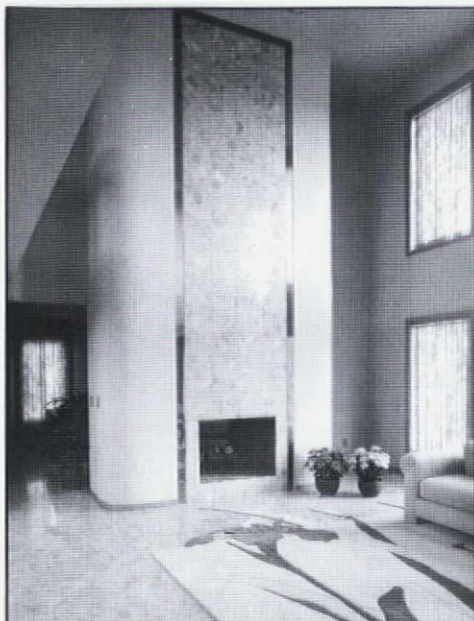
properties with the Eberhard Center site was conveniently accommodated through the use and development of an abandoned railroad line which included a passageway under the expressway and a renovated bridge over the Grand River which serves as a pedestrian link with the city's central business district. ▼

Legend

- 1 Eberhard Center
- 2 School of Business & Graduate Library
- 3 International Trade Center
- 4 Reserch & Tech. Institute, Offices, & Labs
- 5 Student Commons & Art Gallery
- 6 School of Engineering & Classrooms
- 7 Classrooms, Laboratories & Offices
- 8 Graduate & Faculty Housing
- 9 Staff Services/Day Care Center
- 10 Bus Shelter

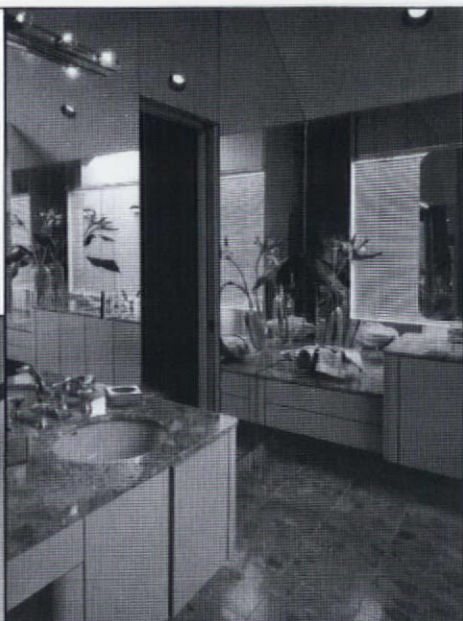
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Contractor: Granger Construction Co.
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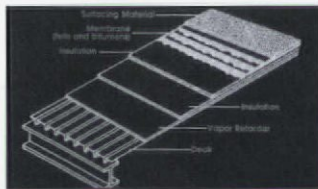
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l a n d m a r k s

By Balthazar Korab



Calumet, June 1976, 10:30 p.m.

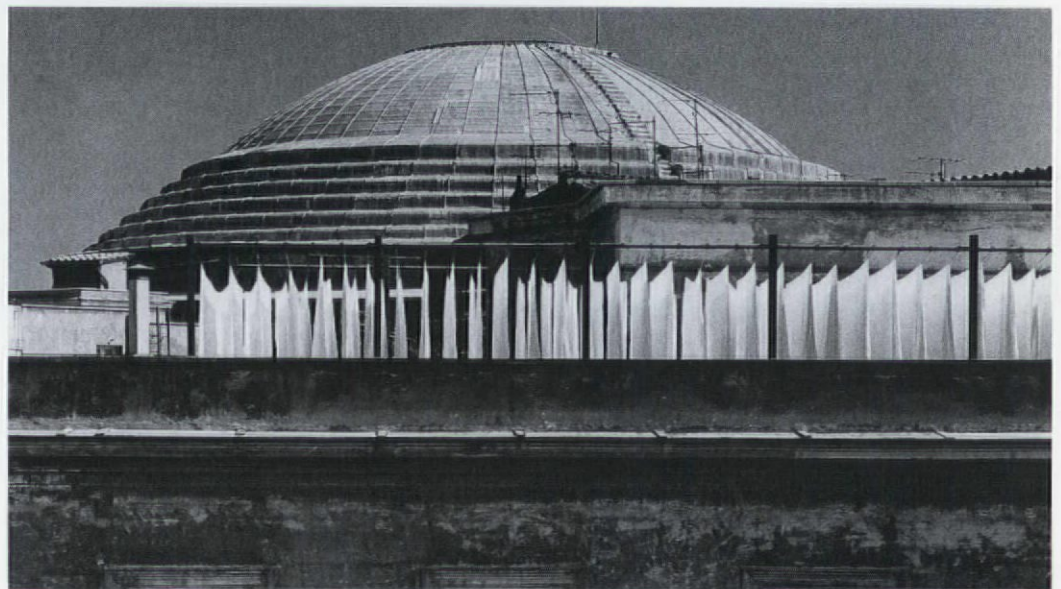
Resisting the obvious, commenting on Detroit, I chose a low key way to editorialize about the fragility of the life of our cities.

Calumet was a vital city about 100 years ago during the copper mining boom. At times it was served by 12 trains daily from Chicago alone, and its opera house booked performers of such caliber as Sarah Bernhardt.

Today, a shadow of its former urban self, this Upper Peninsula town is considered for a National Park status, to be visited as one does Pompeii.

For a somewhat loaded comparison I show an illustration of life as usual from the "Urbs Eterna," Rome, a city that survived scores of crises such as Calumet did, well deserving its title, "The Eternal City."

Korab's Last Word.



Rome, view of the Pantheon on laundry day.

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