

# 21/7&8 NC Architect

July  
August 1974

Published by the  
North Carolina Chapter of  
The American Institute of Architects



**Urban Planning and Design Assistance for Small Communities**

**National AIA Regional/Urban Design Assistance Team at Wilson, North Carolina,  
May 2-6, 1974**





Fire Station 4  
Charlotte, N. C.

Architect:  
Benson - Hobson - Stevenson

Structural Engineer:  
Frank Hicks & Associates

General Contractor:  
Rogers Builders, Inc.

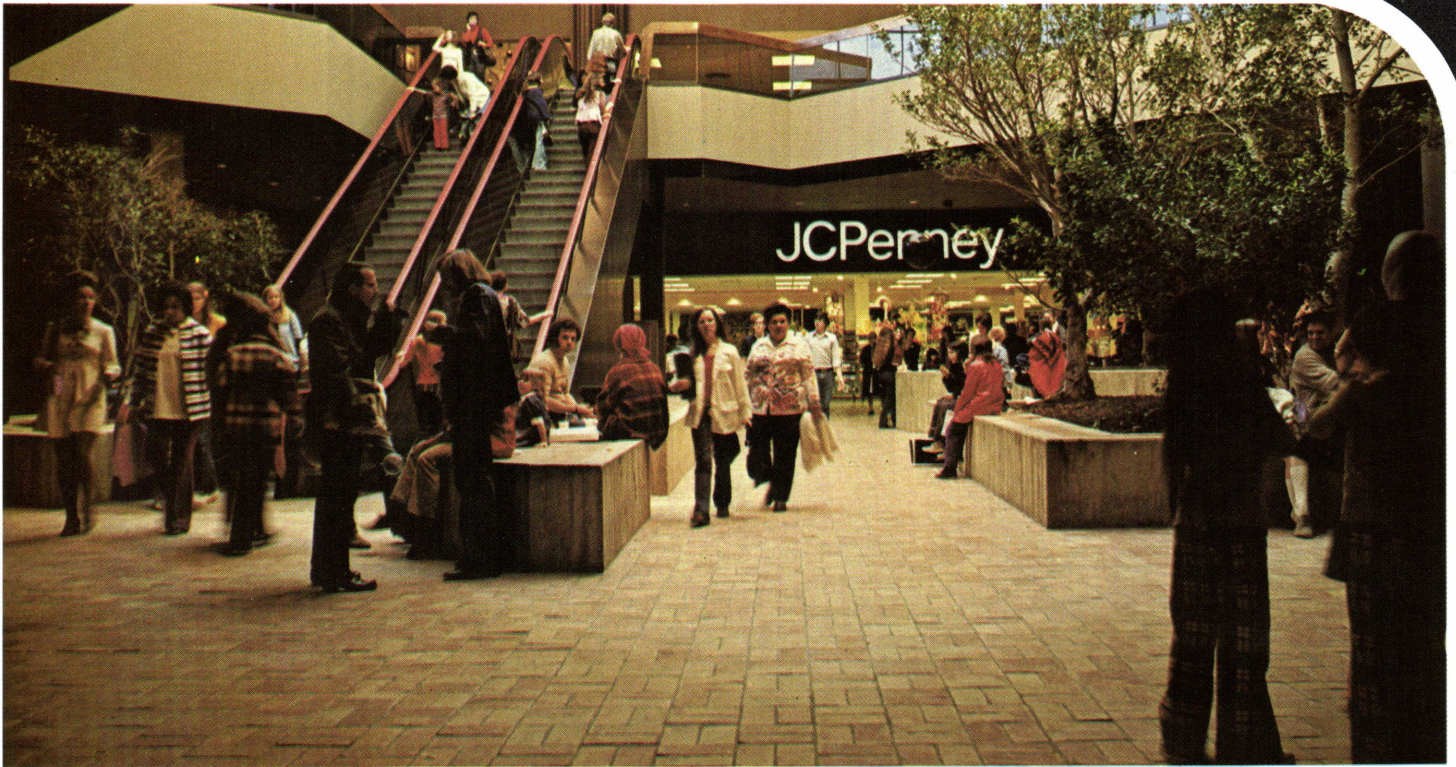
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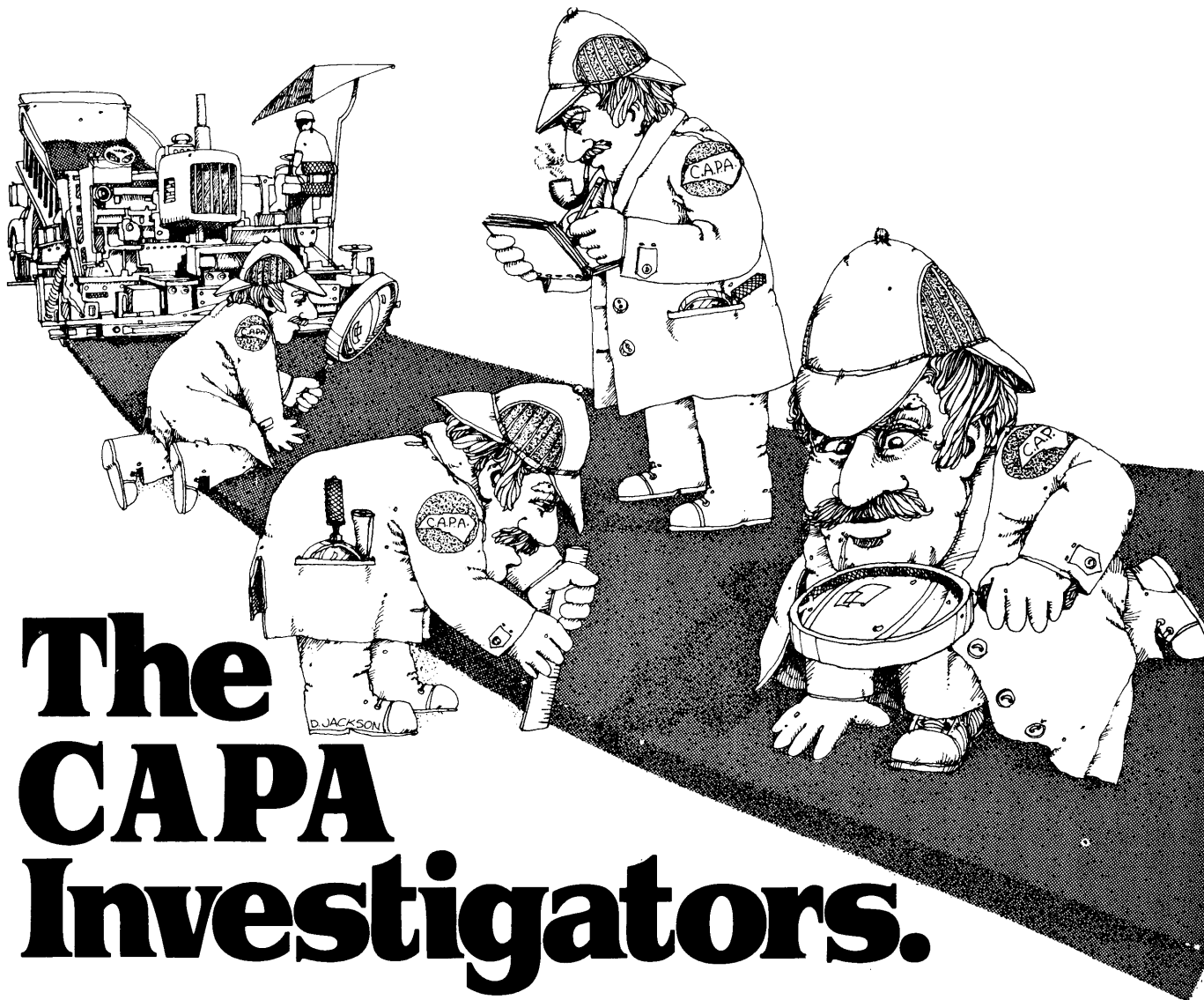
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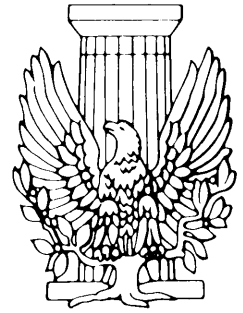
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## SAVANNAH BECKONS

Savannah—a beautiful and exciting city—will be the setting for the 1974 South Atlantic Regional Convention of the American Institute of Architects. Restoration of city-wide scope will be explored in depth and all facets of design, reconstruction, financing and current use will be revealed. Aside from the innermost workings of the process, the visual Savannah has much to offer in the charming old homes, the restored waterfront offices and warehouses, old cemeteries and especially the delightful open squares scattered throughout the town. Inviting boutiques, antique shops and restaurants par excellence may be found in abundance.

As a departure from the usual

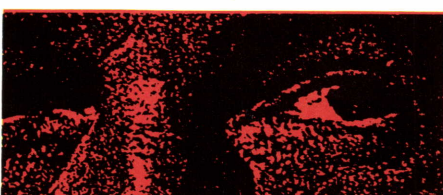
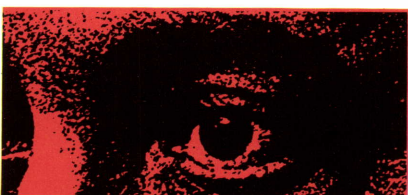
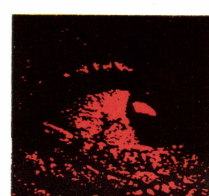
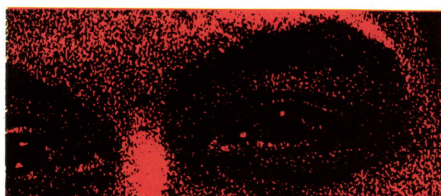
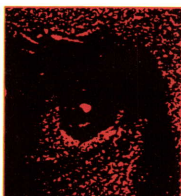
bridge games and teas planned as ladies' activities at conventions, "The Savannah Story" will be geared for everyone in attendance. James Biddle, President of the National Trust for Historic Preservation, will make a Keynote speech, followed by panel discussion and tours of the various restoration districts. During the Convention, Archibald Rogers, President of AIA, will present the American Institute of Architects Award for Community Architecture to the City of Savannah.

Architects and their families from North Carolina, South Carolina and Georgia will be on hand to sample southern hospitality at its best in Savannah, September 18 to 21.



# BRICK

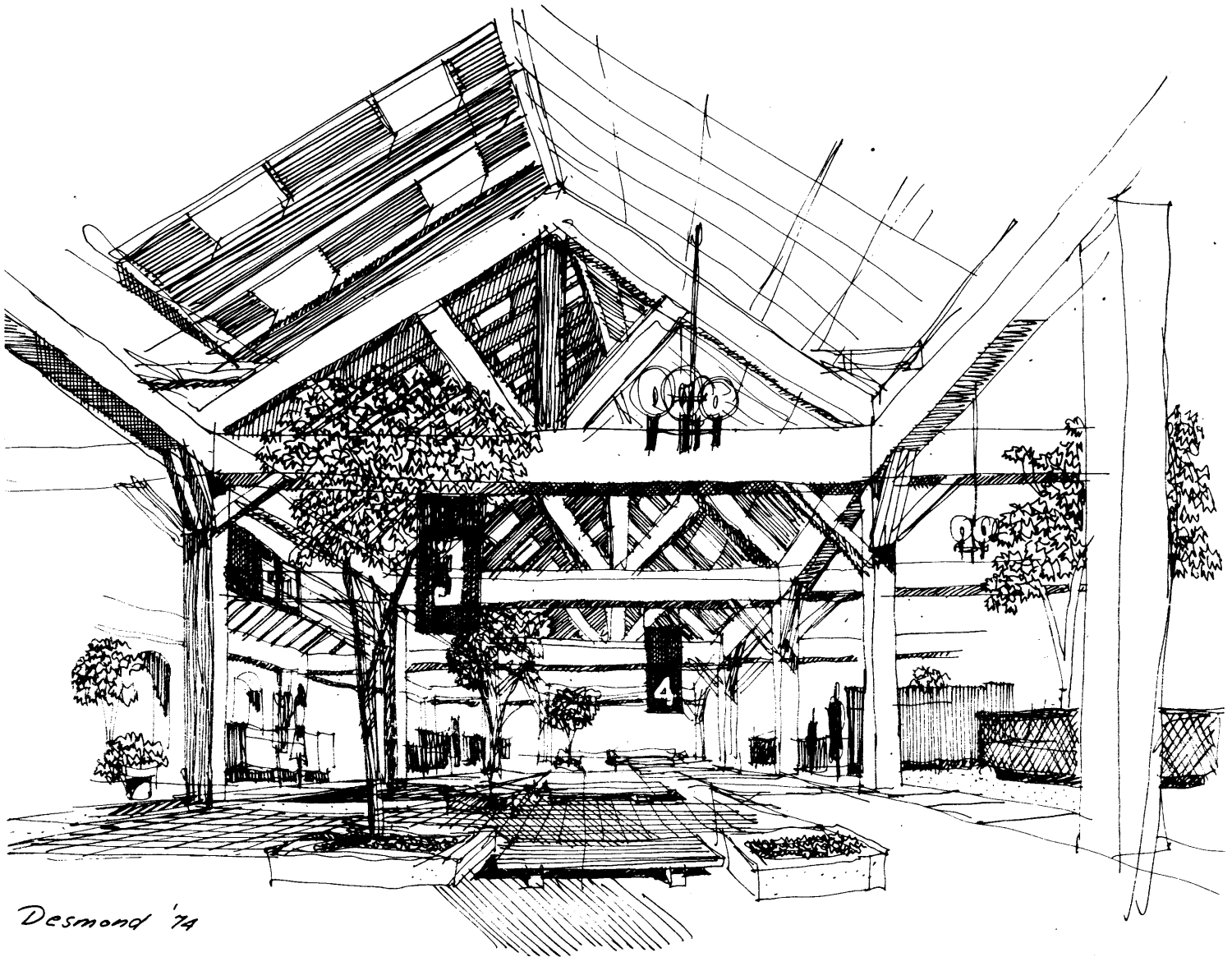
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# Urban Planning and Design Assistance for Small Communities

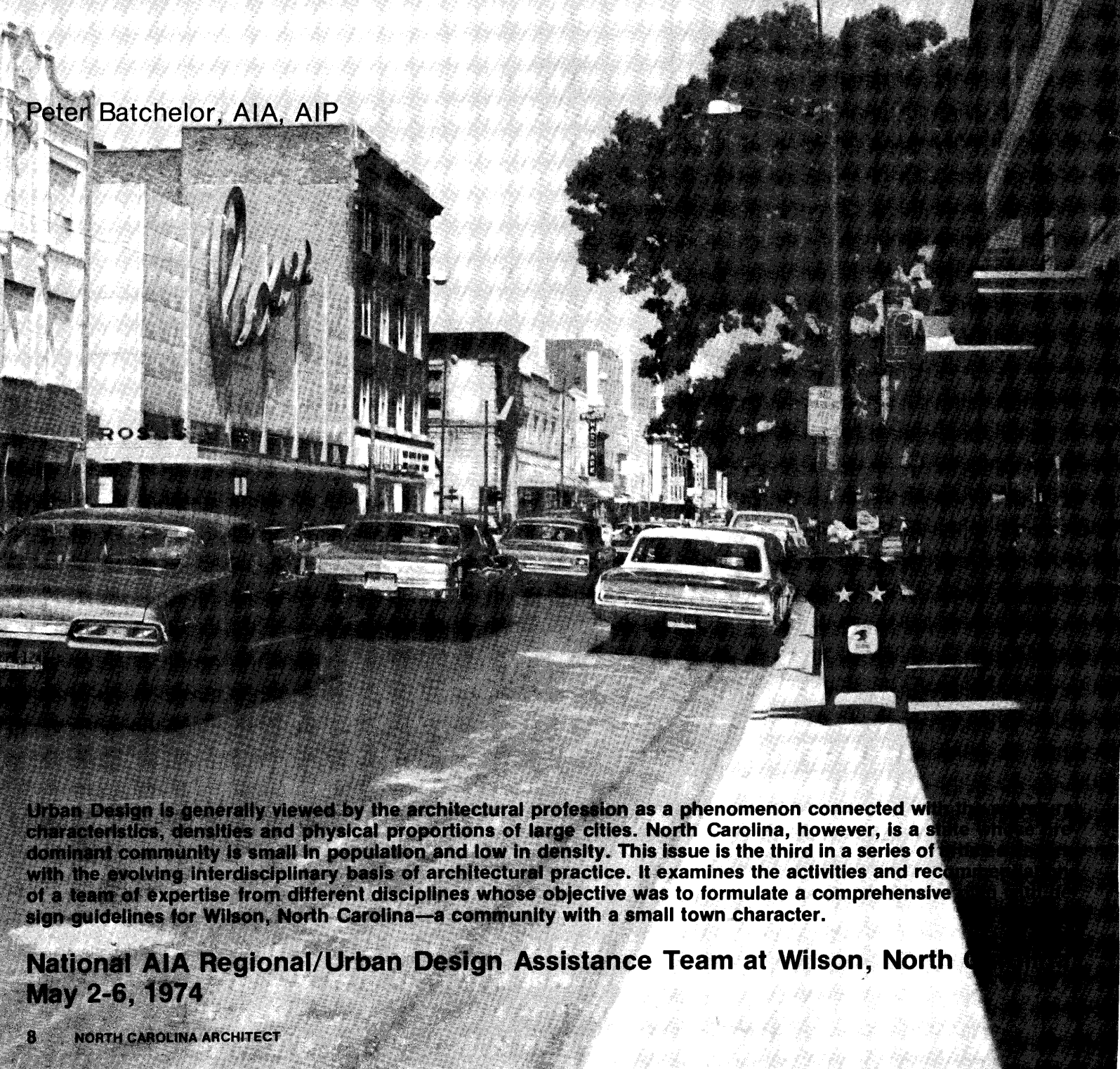


National AIA Regional/Urban Design Assistance Team at Wilson, North Carolina,  
May 2-6, 1974



# Urban Planning and Design Assistance for Small Communities

Peter Batchelor, AIA, AIP



Urban Design is generally viewed by the architectural profession as a phenomenon connected with the characteristics, densities and physical proportions of large cities. North Carolina, however, is a state where the dominant community is small in population and low in density. This issue is the third in a series of studies with the evolving interdisciplinary basis of architectural practice. It examines the activities and recommendations of a team of expertise from different disciplines whose objective was to formulate a comprehensive urban design guidelines for Wilson, North Carolina—a community with a small town character.

**National AIA Regional/Urban Design Assistance Team at Wilson, North Carolina  
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## The Small Community as a Viable Way of Life

Contemporary communications media has utilized all the graphic and auditory technology at its command to reinforce the concept of the "big city". Federal and State statistical bureaus underscore this conscious searching for the large dimension by monitoring growth and change in an accretive sense. We are now confronted with predictions of accidents, housing starts, tax revenues and an endless assortment of statistics which seem to suggest that we are a nation of large centralized populations with predictable behavior patterns.

At the same time that this drift towards the "big city" consciousness is happening, one can also observe a counterforce in the form of rural attitudes. Whether this is pure nostalgia or romanticism is beside the point: The fact is that television programs and real estate dealers have long capitalized on ruralized scenarios and place names, and countrified bric-a-brac such as wagon-wheel fences and barn-shaped residences. Indeed, observers of Urban America have concluded that at the root of the suburban sprawl movement is the conveyance of a frontier attitude towards the use of land and the creation of transportation technology to exploit a seemingly limitless horizon.

So much attention is given to either the problems of the big city or its suburban residents that it is doubtful if small-town U.S.A. is really getting its rightful share of the communications media's coverage. This issue focuses on a rural town with an agricultural basis for most of its historic and some of its contemporary vitality. While Wilson is not a large town by contemporary standards it is still considerably larger than the typical North Carolina rural market center.

### Prevalence of Small Communities in North Carolina

According to the 1970 census, 73.5% of the nation's population lives in an urban area, which by definition, is a community of 2500 persons or more. By contrast, only 45% of North Carolina's population lives in an urban area, and the growth rate for conversion from rural to urban residences has been smaller than the national average. Only West Virginia has a lower percentage of rural population, while Mississippi, North and South Dakota, and South Carolina are about the same as this state. North Carolina has only 138 urban places of 2,500 or more persons. Its largest city is Charlotte with a population of 241,000 and a rank of 72nd in terms of the nations' largest metropolitan areas.

No single city dominates the settlement pattern of the state, but three urbanized regions known as Metrolina, the Triad, and the Research Triangle form a large proportion of a densely settled area known as the Piedmont Crescent. These regions are composed of two or three towns, one of which is economically dominant. The State's largest towns occur in these three regions and range from 30,000 to 250,000 persons in size. However, as stated previously, the majority of the population lives in small communities oriented to a regional trading center. Wilson is typical of a coastal plains regional center with its agricultural and industrial economic base.

Some of the reasons advanced for the prevalence of the small community are as follows: Intensive farming on small tracts of land with high profit-yielding crops such as tobacco; absence of converging interstate highways; absence of converging major marine and rail facilities with interstate highways; growth of an industrial economy with small plant size characteristics and a labor-force which is semi-skilled and drawn from seasonal occupations; and a prefer-

ence for living in the country with kin-folk. It is in this context that the Regional Urban Design Assistance Team had to come to terms with the problems facing a community and it was quite a departure from the traditional professional orientation to urban design.





## Wilson: All American City

### Historic Development of Wilson

After the departure of the Tuscarora Indians in 1713, what is now Wilson County remained a forest until the first white settlers began to arrive about 1740. They came from the older settlements extending northeasterly to the James River and were predominantly English and Welsh. Royal grants were soon succeeded by Granville grants along the waters of Toisnot, Town and Contentnea Creeks, followed by the lesser streams and more remote areas.

There were few large plantations even by the time of the Civil War, and most of the people managed to live fairly well without handling a great deal of money. Some cotton and corn were marketed, but the production of turpentine and tar from the extensive pine forests was long the most important source of cash income. Industry began in the Town of Wilson in 1854 with the firm of Parker & Hackney who manufactured carts, wagons and buggies. The Wilson Cotton Mill was established in 1883 and a foundry and plow factory were already in operation.

Wilson County had meanwhile been formed in 1855 from nearly equal portions of Edgecombe and Nash Counties lying north of Contentnea Creek, and Wayne and Johnston Counties lying south of the Creek. The oldest Town was Statonsburg, chartered by the General Assembly in 1817. Its early importance derived from the shipping of goods up and down Contentnea Creek. The building of the Wilmington and Raleigh (soon changed to Wilmington and Weldon) Railroad in 1840 resulted in stations at Joyner's Depot (replaced in 1873 by the Town of Toisnot, known since 1913 as Elm City), Toisnot Depot (chartered as the Town of Wilson in 1849), and Black Creek Depot, from all of which commodities were shipped conveniently to the North and the South. The completion of the Greenville-Raleigh Plank Road as far as Wilson in 1851 greatly

facilitated the movement of goods between Wilson and the then-active Tar River-Pamlico Sound commerce.

Wilson was named the County Seat in 1855 because of its central location, but its gradual growth into a small city depended more upon its excellent railroad service and its fortunate location at the crossing of important North-South and East-West highways. The opening of the Wilson Tobacco Market in 1890 initiated the diversified agricultural prosperity that was to attract, during the intervening years, the many commercial and manufacturing enterprises that have contributed so greatly to its present wealth and social progress.

Despite the advancing suburban development, a population in excess of 30,000 and the destruction of so much of the flavorful architecture that existed a half-century ago in its business and residential districts, Wilson is still noted for its tree-lined streets and friendly atmosphere recalling an earlier era when the wealthier planters moved to town and established a leisurely way of life that they shared with an increasing number of successful businessmen.

### Character of the Urban Landscape

Wilson is a very handsome city. The northwestern approach on Route 264 from Raleigh brings visitors into a residential street arched with very old and large trees. This green canopy throws dappled patterns of light and shade over the street for about three or four city blocks, and one has the impression of passing under a green arcade. As a gateway to the city, this tree-lined road gives a character which is expressed in many of the residential areas throughout Wilson.

There are many stately homes in Wilson, especially in the northwestern and northern parts of the town. The homes have a variety of architectural styles ranging from antebellum colonial to nineteenth century gothic. One of the

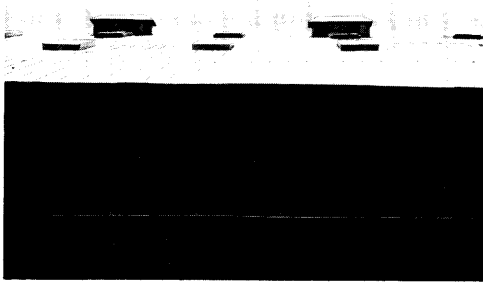
most frequent visual impressions is of a delicate white "Carpenter gothic" tracery set in among dense green foliage. Even in the poorer black sections of the town there appeared to be a similar spatial relationship between trees and buildings.

Approaching the central business district from the west one is aware of another dominant architectural element: The tobacco warehouse. These warehouses are made so that trucks can drive under covered loading bays and onto the floor. Skylights let into the roofing system throw shafts of light across trusses and onto rough plank floors thirty feet below. A typical warehouse covers an entire city block and is constructed so that vehicular movement flows in one direction from entrance to exits with direct access to streets at both ends. Great skill has been used in the brick facades of these warehouses. Flat, elliptical and semi-circular arches are very common, and a large variety of bonds can be seen. The most dramatic impression occurs under high sunlight and clear skies when sunshine strikes the metallic roofs. A brilliant glare is reflected down towards the street so that one is aware only of a dark band of wall capped by a silvery grey roofscape with rhythmic tonal variations created by roofplanes and skylights.

A Purina plant and a water tower provide the city with two focal elements outside the central business district. While they are not consciously placed forms they, nevertheless, exert a powerful visual impact on the urban landscape. The Purina plant consists of a compact block of storage silos capped with the traditional checkered symbol. On the side of the plant is a ribbed tower out of which circular ducts and fans climb towards a water tower. The water tower has been capped with a crowing cock weathervane which can be seen from great distances. Elsewhere the urban landscape is typical of southern communities of a



Some familiar scenes in Wilson: (1) Tobacco warehouse rooftop; (2) Warehouse and Water Tower; (3) Brick detailing on warehouse facade; (4) Purina plant and (5) detail of plant—a focal point on the landscape; (6) Water Tower from adjacent street; (7) Route 264 entrance to Wilson; (8) Gothic style architecture typical of areas surrounding CBD.



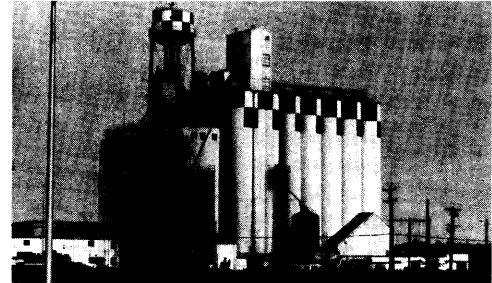
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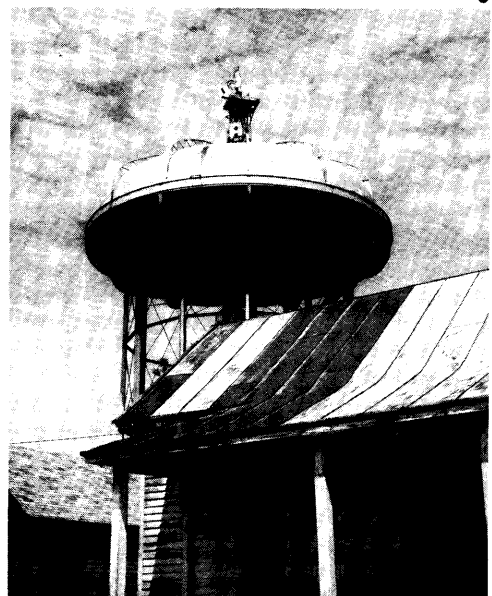
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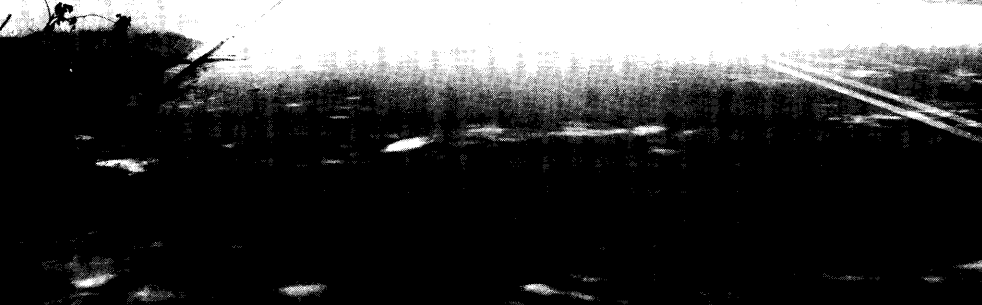
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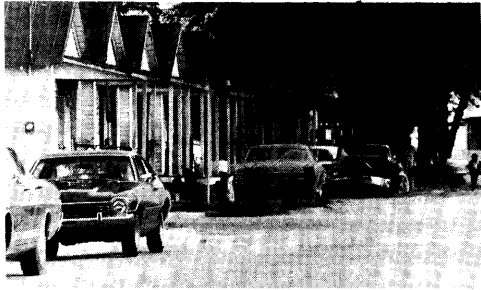
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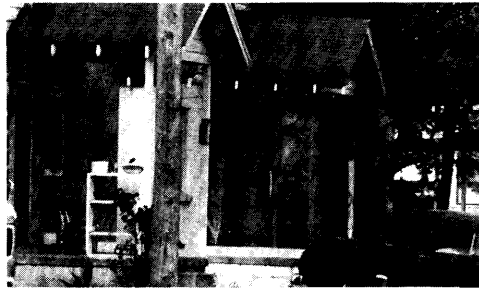
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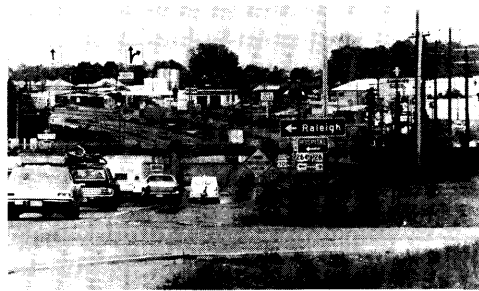
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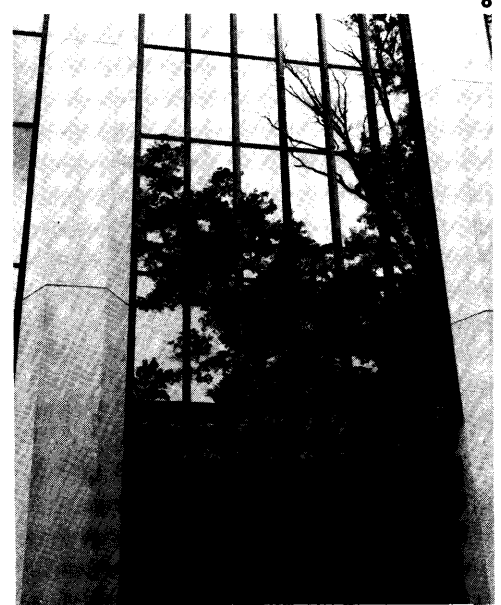
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similar size. An inner beltway with uncontrolled and bizarre mixture of shopping centers, fast food franchises, trucking firms and small industrial plants; flat and treeless suburban landscape; and a drab black residential section with unpaved streets and mean wooden boxcar residences very closely packed in a grid block system. Nevertheless, the visual impact of Wilson's elegant tree-lined streets in its older residential areas tends to dominate one's overall impression of the city.

### Heart of Wilson

Wilson's Central Business District, known as the Heart of Wilson, is an area of about fifteen city blocks, of which approximately eight contain retail commercial facilities. The western edge of the CBD is bounded by tobacco warehouses and between the warehouses and the shopping district lie all the suppliers and trade related to agriculture, tobacco processing and transportation. The southern edge of the CBD is bounded by the Seaboard Coast Line railroad track, on the other side of which lies a Black residential area. Both the northern and western edges of the CBD are bounded by older residential areas of the character previously described.

The Heart of Wilson has undoubtedly seen better days. There appear to be a fair number of shoppers downtown during weekdays, but it is quite deserted during evenings and weekends. Competition from new shopping centers along the inner ring road is giving smaller downtown businesses a difficult time. Moreover, the downtown businesses tend to compete among themselves rather than band together and create their own mechanisms for redevelopment. Nevertheless, the downtown area has a scale and character which seem to reflect the quality of the residential areas nearby. The Heart of Wilson is a small and fairly well-maintained CBD with sufficient

commercial activity to become an economic magnet in the region.

Nash Street is the major shopping street. The county courthouse sits back on the northeastern corner of the intersection of Nash and Goldsboro Streets, creating a small plaza. Nash and Goldsboro represent the prime location, and standing on a corner a visitor can sweep in at a glance the two and three story brick structures with retail stores on the lower level. A reflective glass seven story building visually anchors Nash Street to the North, while an eight story brick hotel and the courthouse provide focal points near the intersection of Goldsboro and Nash Streets. Another brick hotel anchors the southern end of Nash Street.

One more thing can be seen at Nash and Goldsboro Streets: A huge banner with the words "Welcome to Wilson, All America City".

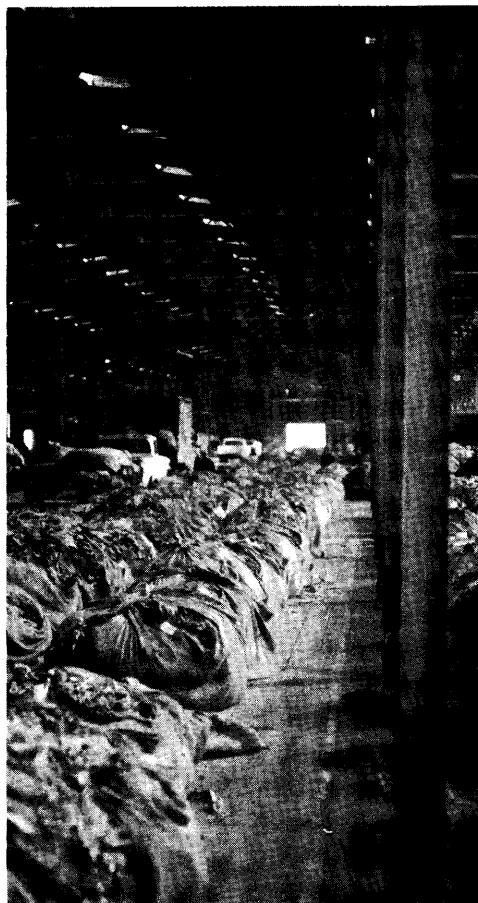
### The All American City

For several months during late 1972 and early 1973 Wilson and 20 other finalists were subjected to scrutiny by a committee of experts including Wilson Wyatt, William Scranton, and George Gallup to select a group of "All America Cities". An All America City, in the words of the All America Cities Committee is one in which its citizens "work and reason together in the endless struggle for constructive change, creating out of present diversiveness a strong, responsive, and more human nation." On April 25, 1973 Mayor H. B. Benton accepted the award on behalf of the citizens of Wilson from former Michigan Governor George Romney as a representative of the National League of Cities. North Carolina's Governor and Lt. Governor, Jim Holsouser and James Hunt, were on hand for the occasion.

The basis of the award came from a concentrated effort by the city to reduce substandard housing, provide sewer

(1, 2 and 3) Black residential area on the eastern edge of the CBD; (4, 5 and 6) Traffic scenes on Ward Blvd.—a major beltway around Wilson; (7) Downtown Wilson at Goldsboro and Nash Streets; (8) Typical street in CBD in wholesaling area; (9) Reflections in Branch Banking and Trust Building on Nash Street; (10) Tobacco auction in progress (*New East*, November/December 1973, Vol. 1, No. 5).

and water services to residential areas outside the city limits, provide mental health facilities, create a Human Relations Commission, expand hospital facilities, and provide a crisis center for citizens on a 24-hour basis, develop positive action programs for the hiring of minorities, build recreation facilities and sewage treatment facilities, and provide many other facilities and services. Wilson is proud of its award, and this sense of pride was felt by the RUDAT Team's contact with its citizens and government officials.





## The Regional Setting

### Economic Structure of the Region

Wilson, with Wilson County, is largely an agricultural service center. It can choose to remain so while at the same time expanding its function as an area marketing and transportation center and, as opportunity presents itself, an industrial center with associated commercial and service activities. In addition, Wilson's economy is affected by its position as a satellite of Raleigh and its competition with neighboring communities such as Rocky Mount, Goldsboro and others more distant.

Four aspects of industrial land use pose major challenges in the Wilson area: Valuable farm land may be lost to industrial uses; New plants or industrial parks may be located in remote sectors of the area and may call for unusual utility extensions and services; These by-passed areas may be pre-empted by undesirable, unplanned activities; and widespread, under-utilized or deteriorating industrial tracts or structures may blight adjacent areas.

Agriculture will remain important to Wilson, a fact to be reflected in all planning, and a maximum of the best farm land should be maintained. However, future agricultural change should be expected since mechanization changed farm labor patterns and farm sizes, and marketing changes eliminated many auction barns. More changes will come if market demand drops for tobacco and increases for soy beans, feed grains or other crops.

Agricultural processing might also provide many more jobs. Wilson has large tobacco processing and shipping operations. Extension of these activities may be possible in development of more domestic and foreign markets.

Industrialization is often seen as a substitute for farming and the active industrial recruiters will continue to bring new plants to Wilson. In the absence of large, immediately available tracts at desirable close-in locations, it is inevitable that recruiters will pro-

mote absorption of large tracts at suitable outlying locations.

Wilson's economic opportunities are varied. However, they are based on its continuing reliance on the traditional tobacco crops as well as new programs, its role as a dynamic community in the major north-south transportation corridor along the eastern seaboard, and its emerging industrial base.

### Regional Transportation Network

The regional network of roads and railroads is well-developed in Wilson and Wilson County. It forms not only the connection between existing activities, but also strongly influences new development. Looking into the future it is somewhat difficult to visualize the impact of a new highway. However, the past effect of US 301 on Downtown Wilson is an example of what may happen with unplanned highway-oriented development, all capitalizing on exposure to traffic on the highway. Almost irresistably, the drive-in sales and service activities gravitated to the readily accessible US 301. Build-up and endless curb cuts has led to congestion, widening, and now to a parallel, limited access Interstate highway where the congestions will probably be voided. However, US 301 will still remain a highly traveled route. The owners and operators of existing businesses can plan for change and revise the type of service to meet new markets, and maintain or even increase their economic health.

Interchanges and cross roads such as NC 42, US 264 and NC 58 may become new gateways to Wilson and may be the focal points of development which rival those on present US 301 or in the heart of Wilson. Potential interchange developments may call for unusual planning efforts, large-scale public expenditures for services and facilities, and visionary, long-range staging, each step of which should maximize the benefits to the community.

The current construction of a new Firestone plant, which will add at least 4,000

jobs to Wilson County's total, is an example of factors which generate population movements and create new problems and issues for local planning and public administration. Of course, not all the new jobs will be filled by present residents of Wilson County. Some will be filled by workers from outside—especially from Rocky Mount or from counties to the north—who will indirectly impose unexpected loads on Wilson County facilities. Other jobs may be filled by newcomers from far outside the region but who will reside in the county and who will require new housing as well as other services. The remaining jobs may be filled by some of Wilson's currently unemployed persons, by persons trained at local schools, or by persons already employed but who will shift to the new jobs. In addition, each new production job will create demands for other service employment and added movement of population.

### Impact of Industrialization of the Labor Force

The Firestone plant provides an example of a large plant at a distant location to which utilities are being extended. In turn, the plant and the utility lines will promote urbanization of the otherwise rural area, with consequent urban problems.

Of course, target industries must be offered generous, assembled tracts. Traditionally government agencies have aided this assembly by the use of zoning. Often the earmarking of industrial land appears to set aside too much land. However, effective planning should include an adequate long term supply in order to provide wide choices to industrial prospects and appraise all concerned of the probable location of future developments. In addition, close-in, out-moded industrial areas may be reclaimed or redeveloped, thus providing new employment centers in close proximity to older residential areas where available labor forces may be utilized and transportation requirements



Technical and market changes in the tobacco industry may also generate more population shifts. New farm crops replacing tobacco acreage and new export processing should result in accelerated movement of low-skilled farm workers into urbanized Wilson County, thus creating added demands for services and facilities.



## Regional Urban Design Assistance Team

### Professional Concept of Urban Design

Urban Design as a professional specialization is couched in high density megastructural imagery for the practicing architect. In Schools of Architecture urban design studies reveal the preoccupation of the designer with monumental scales of city building, mass systems of movement and complex structural interactions between the various urban functions. Urban design, often described as the "architecture of cities", therefore seems to be associated with the scales and densities of large cities. Rarely is the design of a small community the focus of an urban design project, and the Regional Urban Design Assistance Team (RUDAT) probably brought to Wilson a set of concepts about Urban Design that the profession as a whole adheres to.

This is not without some basis in reality. The nation's largest cities have urban design sections within their planning departments, thus recognizing the importance of physical design in city planning. Also, these urban design sections are often training grounds for students in academic programs in nearby Schools of Architecture, or for the practicing architect-planner who doubles as a faculty member in urban design. However, even if a small rural community is located near a major university the chances are that the city's planning department does not have the staff to permit specialization in urban design and that the likelihood of this function existing in local government is extremely remote.

European architects have recognized the importance of small town design for a long time, and urban design literature from there seems to deal with urban landscape in a more tactile and fine-scale sense—somewhat akin to our approach to urban landscape design. However, until very recently the American Institute of Architects gave greater recognition to the mon-

umental aspects of city design. Only in the last one or two years has AIA Urban Planning and Design Committee begun to take a serious look at a type of community which exists in great numbers throughout the country, and which can be said to typify the communities throughout North Carolina.

### Interdisciplinary Problem Solving in Design

Two previous issues of the **North Carolina Architect** have been devoted to an examination of the changing role of the architect in the realm of environmental design. The first issue "Comprehensive Design", (Volume 19, issues 5 and 6, May-June 1972) advanced the thesis that there is an identifiable design process consisting of seven steps: Step 1: **Problem Definition**, is the part of the process in which the clients' goals are understood and in which the contextual information surrounding the problem area is grasped. This enables the designer to identify relevant techniques and information resources for proper definition of the problem. A common failing in the traditional approach to design problems is to assume a solution before a program has been prepared. In effect, step 1 forces the designer to define the problem rather than accept someone else's solution for it. **Resource Identification**, Step 2, represents a significant amount of activity in terms of data collection. The major objective here is to explicitly define the problems and their potential for resolution. This makes step 3, **Program Development**, possible in terms of concrete objectives, which in turn may be utilized for evaluative purposes. Steps 4 and 5, **Proposal and Evaluation**, follow as a natural consequence of step 3, and allow for step 6, **Detailed Planning and Design** to occur on the basis of a rational analysis of available goals, objectives and resources. Finally, step 7, **Implementation**, provides for the actual realization in terms of construction and development.

These seven steps were claimed to form the major elements of a process, which consciously or otherwise, the architect pursued in the development of a complex design problem. It was further argued that the growing complexity of problems faced by the architect had created the necessity for **interdisciplinary team structures** and that such teams would be involved in **National methods of analysis, interdisciplinary management concepts, public and private decision-making mechanisms, and community involvement**. "Comprehensive Design" dealt with the various levels of involvement of architects within this speculative framework in terms of both traditional and emergent concepts of architectural practices. Finally, a case study based on the Urban Design Concept Team of Baltimore and its plan for a major interstate highway in an urban setting was used to illustrate the comprehensive design process.

One year later, a second article entitled, "Interdisciplinary Team Design and Planning for Coastal Development" (Volume 20, issues 5 and 6, May-June 1973) looked at a county planning project in North Carolina in terms of this framework. While the problem area examined did not come into the traditional domain of architectural practice, it provided further verification of the comprehensive design framework. It proved, in fact, that for the designer to become involved in the process of community building it is necessary to build a special project management structure within which expertise, public and private decision-makers and citizens can interact productively.

"Comprehensive Design" is a formalization of the base upon which the Regional Urban Design Assistance Team operates. The only difference is that the comprehensive design process is seen as a long term one in which many of the actors have a permanent interest in the community and the outcome of



the project. On the other hand, a RUDAT workshop is an intensive problem-solving session in which detailed design and implementation aspects are left to others and in which the members of the team do not have any personal commitment to the local actors or the environment. Therefore, the remainder of the article will treat the RUDAT Wilson workshop as a modification of the comprehensive design process and will evaluate its achievements accordingly.

#### **Concept of the Regional Urban Design Assistance Team (RUDAT)**

The Urban Planning and Design Committee of the American Institute of Architects has been sending Urban Design Assistance Teams to various American cities since 1967. Each Regional Urban Design Assistance Team is specially selected to include professionals from a variety of disciplines experienced in the particular problems of the area under study. Members are not compensated for their service and agree not to accept commissions for work resulting from their recommendations. The teams respond to the problems as described by the local AIA Chapters and their sponsors from the community leadership. Their general function is to acquaint themselves with the community and its people to present an analysis from a fresh perspective and to offer recommendations for planning and for specific actions.

The objectives of the RUDAT program are as follows: To improve the physical design of cities throughout the nation; to illustrate the importance of urban and regional planning; to stimulate public action; and to give National support to local AIA Chapters in their efforts to improve their own communities and become actively involved in urban design and planning issues.

An assistance team cannot provide de-

tailed analysis, solutions, or final plans to complex environmental problems during its typical four-day visit, but it can approach relevant local problems objectively, give impetus and new directions for community action, and make clear and comprehensive recommendations. The extent to which these recommendations are politically and economically feasible, as well as publically understandable is one measure of evaluation which can occur during the workshop process.

#### **Basic Charge to the RUDAT Team**

The request for a RUDAT Team was approved early in 1974, and on March 8-9, Ronald A. Straka, Team Chairman, made a reconnaissance visit to Wilson to observe and discuss the details of the team's visit. A team was organized and was sent extensive background material in advance for the study area of Wilson, Wilson County and Planning Region "L". On May 3-6 the team made its visit.

The charge of the RUDAT Team was twofold: To suggest the outlines for a comprehensive plan which addresses itself to the needs of all segments of the community and examines all sections of the city and region to determine a role for Wilson; To identify design potentials and suggest means of bringing them about; second, to suggest a "plan for planning" for the city of Wilson; To show how planning and design guidelines can improve the management capabilities of local units of government; and to suggest appropriate public policy and implementation methods.

After meeting with city, county, and state officials and planners, civic leaders and organizations, and other interested citizens' groups, the team surveyed the city by bus, air and on foot. With this information, the team engaged in intensive work sessions which culminated in a press conference and a public presentation on

6 May.

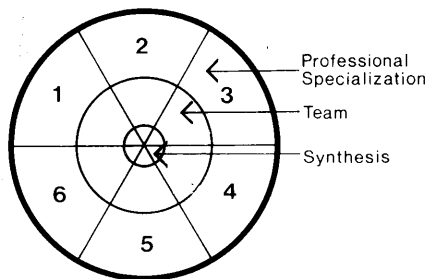
The Wilson Team was the 20th such team to be invited into a specific area to deal with environmental and urban problems ranging in scale from a region to a small town, and in functions from recreational areas to public policy and implementation methods. It consisted of two architects, three architect-planners, one of whom is also an engineer, a specialist in planning law, an urban sociologist, an economist, and a national AIA public relations representative. The team was supported in its effort by a local AIA representative and the Director of the School of Design's Urban Design Program with five students of architecture and urban design. Camera crews and members of the Wilson City Manager's staff were very much in evidence during the entire proceedings.

#### **The Wilson RUDAT Team:**

Members of The American Institute of Architects Regional Urban Design Assistance Team visiting Wilson, North Carolina, May 2-6, 1974.

**Ronald A. Straka, AIA, Team Chairman**  
**Alistair M. Black, AIA, AIP**  
**Charles A. Blessing, FAIA, AIP**  
**John J. Desmond, FAIA**  
**Carl H. Marshall and Harry W. Atkinson**  
**Richard L. Rosen, AIA, AIP**  
**Richard N. Tager**  
**William L. Yancey**

## Interdisciplinary Management



- 1 Design Disciplines
- 2 Applied Sciences
- 3 Social Sciences
- 4 Administrative Disciplines
- 5 Political and Economic Sciences
- 6 Physical Sciences

CONCEPT OF INTERDISCIPLINARY TEAM

(1) Concept of interdisciplinary design team which forms basis of comprehensive design theory and RUDAT organization; (2) RUDAT Team listening to briefing by its Chairman; (3) Student Team from School of Design at North Carolina State University.

## Wilson RUDAT Workshop

### General Structure of a RUDAT Workshop

RUDAT Workshops tend to follow a fairly well-defined format. The first day is usually given over to meeting representative community groups and in becoming familiar with the physical environment. On the second day, public hearings and reviews of available and recently gathered data tend to sharpen the team's perception of major issues. By the mid-point of this day preliminary problem statements and programs are defined and by the end of the day a strategy for approaching the problem is established. The third day is essentially an "in-house" problem-solving work session. Finally, during the evening of the third day, or on the following day recommendations are given to the community during a public presentation.

The problem-solving methodology of a RUDAT workshop is based on team discussion of concepts followed by joint or individual work groups assigned to specific segments of the program. The assignment process is not normally a formal one, but tends to be a voluntary act on the part of the team member with expertise and interest in a specific aspect of the program. After about two to four hours, the team is called together again and a new round of presentations is started. This recycling of concepts brings about a steady inflow of new ideas and a modification of previous ones as well as a prolific amount of drawing and writing. A superhuman effort is usually needed to bring all of the disparate material together, a coordinating task which normally falls to the team chairman. It is an exhausting process. The team often works around the clock to put the final document and public presentation together.

### Team Activities in Wilson

As the accompanying itinerary reveals, the team adhered to the general pattern of activities common to all RUDAT sessions. On the first morning a bus loaded with officials, team members





and students made a tour of the region followed by a drive through the town itself. This served to introduce the team to the regional problems of Wilson and to reveal the nature of the urban and rural landscape. The afternoon was a mixture of meetings with town officials, walking tours and photographic surveys of the environment. An evening presentation by the Secretary of North Carolina's Department of Natural and Economic Resources, James E. Harrington, gave the team an overview of the State's role in land development.

During the morning of the second day minority groups presented a picture of housing, employment and social conditions to the team. Public officials were requested to stay away from this meeting so that discussion could be relatively uninhibited. This meeting proved to be fairly exciting and prompted a special investigation of black residential areas.

The second and third days of the workshop produced a large variety of planning and design concepts. Drawing boards and work surfaces were set up in the Wilson Council Chambers, and debris comprised of paper plates, cups and crumpled paper began to amount up as the tempo increased. By the end of the third evening, the team had produced the major portion of the report and its accompanying design concepts. The production of a slide show for presentation to the public on the fourth evening and the printing of fifty copies of the report were the only task left by 4:00 AM on the final day.

### **Wilson RUDAT Program: Schedule of Activities, May 2 to 6, 1974**

#### **Thursday, May 2**

##### **Afternoon**

Team members arrived at Raleigh/Durham Airport

##### **6:00**

Team met at 1526 Glenwood Avenue, had dinner at Velvet Cloak in Raleigh.

##### **10:30**

Team arrived in Wilson.

##### **10:45**

Team briefing session, slide show — Roberson.

#### **Friday, May 3**

##### **8:00 - 10:00**

Breakfast at Heart of Wilson Motel. City, County, J. Wolverton, State persons, Region "L", community leaders, news media, etc., in attendance.

##### **10:00 - 12:00**

Bus tour of Wilson and surrounds.

##### **12:00 - 1:15**

Lunch at Holiday Inn. Community Leader input. Returned to Heart of Wilson.

##### **1:30 - 4:30**

Team went on aerial reconnaissance, city staff and State on walking tour.

##### **5:00**

Depart from Heart of Wilson Motel for Silver Lake Oyster Bar.

##### **5:30 - 9:00**

Dinner at Silver Lake Oyster Bar and presentation by James Harrington, Secretary, N. C. Department of Natural and Economic Resources.

##### **9:00 - Midnight**

Team discussion at motel.  
Film sent out for processing.

#### **Saturday, May 4**

##### **8:00 - 10:00**

Breakfast meeting with DNER and other State officials. Discussion of planning and management issues pertinent to city, state and regional officials.

##### **10:30 - 12:30**

AIA team met with special interest groups and resource persons; continued at Municipal Chamber.

##### **12:30**

Team lunch with Staff and Council.

##### **1:30 - 3:00**

Walk through Business District.

##### **3:00 - 6:00**

First Work Session.

##### **6:00 - 7:00**

Team Break.

##### **7:00 - 9:00**

Team Dinner.

##### **9:00**

Second Work Session.

##### **9:00**

Photos sent out for processing.

#### **Sunday, May 5**

##### **7:30**

Breakfast

##### **8:30**

Third Work Session.

##### **12:30**

Lunch in Municipal Chambers.

##### **1:30**

Fourth Work Session.

##### **7:00**

Break.

##### **9:00 - 4:00 AM**

Fifth Work Session. Work on final report initiated. Drawings and design concepts finalized. Slides taken of Art Work.

#### **Monday, May 6**

##### **7:30 AM**

Breakfast. Final mock-up of report.

##### **All Day**

Preparation of statements for news media. Slide show for press conference and news media.

##### **5:30 - 7:00**

Team Dinner.

##### **8:30 - 10:00**

Public Presentation.

##### **11:00**

Team members depart for home.



## Recommendations of the RUDAT Team

### Definition of the Planning Area

Any planning exercise must begin with a search for appropriate boundaries for the study. There are "outside" influences upon any area no matter what boundaries are selected. "Everything is connected to everything else", we are told by John Gardner. Thus, the selection of limits must be made carefully since important influences may be neglected.

The city of Wilson feels influences from outside its borders, and is involved with all other levels of government activity. Reconnaissance showed that there are unusual interconnections between the city of Wilson and Wilson County. Wilson has a number of problems which extend beyond the city limits, reaching out into county territory. Similarly, there are opportunities which could greatly benefit both city and county but which cannot be grasped without carefully coordinated action.

Therefore, the borders of Wilson County were delineated as the planning study area. The sharpest focus of the recommendations is upon the city of Wilson, but, in recognition of the network of interests and influences between county and city, the county-city combination is recognized as a valuable definition of the planning area.

### General Recommendations

The first recommendation is that the city and county give serious consideration to creating a combined planning program. Such a program would translate their good relationship into maximum benefit for all their citizens.

The one-mile extraterritorial limit beyond the city boundaries is not sufficient to effectively control the location, rate, and type of growth while the economic differential between development in the city (with full services) and in the rural areas (with lower land prices and no services) is too great.

Since taxation has been effectively

equalized throughout the county, including the city of Wilson, it is now practical to effect such strong cooperation between county and city agencies that developers will not be averse to locating where services can be efficiently brought to their developments. The result will be greater access for the residents in planned neighborhoods to the services and amenities that they require. Agricultural land may also be preserved more easily.

The basic information required for a joint plan is already at hand, in the many fine planning reports which have been produced for the city and the county. All that is required to draw from these is an action plan, embodying such elements of the RUDAT study as may be judged useful, with whatever additional provisions the joint planners may develop. Under this plan, Wilson can proceed with safe, orderly, rewarding growth.

### Preventing Leapfrog Development

In maintaining a high quality of life in the outlying areas without wasteful expenditures of funds, it is imperative that development be concentrated where it can best be served. Leapfrogging must be minimized, and if areas are bypassed, they must be brought under appropriate planning and controls. An urban services area should be designated and recognized by all.

In the planned extension of industrial development, for example, each aspect of capital expenditure should be considered a developmental feature. Streets, water, electrical, gas or sewer line extensions should be scheduled to meet development goals. In turn, officials or private developers should coordinate their efforts so that all services may be extended simultaneously and no single agency would act to impose unexpected expenditures on other agencies.

### Efficient Provision of Services

At the same time, the costs of public

services to support industrial development should be distributed so as to minimize high taxes on those who already enjoy public services in order to provide the services to those who do not have them.

Such broad coordination among public agencies and private developers will call for coordinated planning by city and county officials and for systems of processing and review to assure full knowledge of industrial development programs. Joint city-county planning board operation and common development directives could provide adequate reviews.

### Minimizing I-95 Impact on City Growth

Similar planning can minimize the impact of I-95 construction which bypasses Wilson and is expected to generate suburban Wilson development. Deliberate approval of staged development would provide desired facilities. At the same time the planned reservation of certain areas or the refusal to provide public services can serve to protect areas against undesirable development. Such reservation could protect watersheds, open spaces, desired park land, and farm land. Planned development should assure economical utilization of resources and minimize property taxes and capital expenditures.

Most important, unplanned I-95 development could be expected to cause transfer or abandonment of highway-oriented trade or service activities from US301 and the consequent decay of the eastern side of Wilson. Planned support of industrial activities of the 301 corridor, maintenance of the thoroughfare as a major but local service commercial area, and redevelopment or extension of residential sectors near 301 would maintain the economic well-being of the corridor.

### Performance Zoning

The new Wilson has available several important tools which can help it in its





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Prepared by Helen Snow  
Edited by B. Silver & L. Hall



ASB

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(1) Team members take a break during a design session; (2) Concept of Wilson and Environs in the future, as planned by the RUDAT Team.

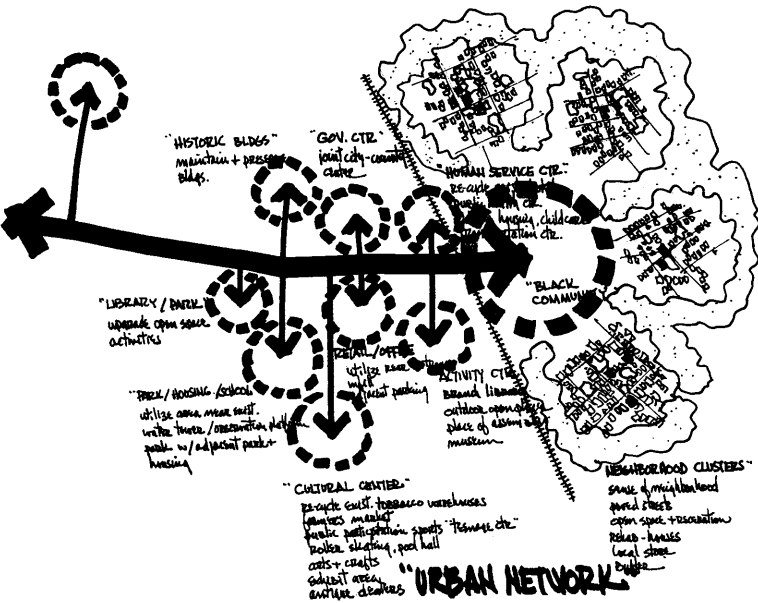


1



CIA B.

(1) Urban network concept designed to provide physical and socio-economic method for resolving problems of CBD and surrounding areas; (2) Concept for rehabilitation of substandard neighborhoods.





effort to direct growth. The most basic of these is the adoption of a zoning ordinance, applying equally in city and county. The regulations presently in force in the city of Wilson could simply be extended to include the entire county. However, region-wide zoning should add a series of provisions not presently in the city ordinance. These additions are titled "Performance" Zoning in some areas and "Impact" Zoning in others.

Performance zoning is based on the concept of "carrying capacity" — that is, since one piece of land may be capable of supporting more intensive development than another, the land itself provides a guide to development. Similarly, utilities are constantly being constructed, but those areas which are without such services cannot all receive them at once. To proceed one more step, while all development results in an increase in the tax digest, some developments cost more in services than they return in taxes. Just as there is an upper limit for the development which the land can support, there is an upper limit which the utilities and public services can support, and there is a limit to the amount of tax deficit a development may cause. Taken together, these limits form the carrying capacity.

Since there are factors which vary from one area to another, or sometimes from one building lot to another, the carrying capacity varies in the same way. This capacity, however, results from elements which can be measured, or which have already been measured, so that the carrying capacity can be established as a matter of public record. Under Performance Zoning, a developer must demonstrate that his proposal remains within the established carrying capacity before he can gain approval.

In this way, Wilson can prevent overloading of its natural environment, its municipal services, or its economic resources since all of these must be

respected by new development. The amount of growth, its location and its scheduling are all matters of public concern. Under Performance Zoning, they are under public control.

### **Population Movement**

Census records show that Wilson County and four of its adjacent counties in the region lost population over the 1960's, yet these net changes do not accurately reflect the migration or transfer of residents nor the very real growth of Wilson. True, some residents, particularly young school graduates, left to take jobs in other areas pointing up the present shortage of employment opportunities. However, the outflow of residents is partly balanced by an inflow of new ones which has resulted in continuing need for new housing and greater requirements for public services and expanding markets.

Actually, the City of Wilson registered a net population increase of about 600 persons over the 1960's and population has continued to increase over the last four years as more of the once-rural residents as well as newcomers move into the urban area. Within the city alone more than 2,100 new housing units were added in the 1960's, and building permits indicate new housing has been coming on the market since 1970 at the rate of more than 300 units each year.

Coupled with these housing gains in the city, at least 1,400 units have been lost since 1960 — about 100 per year. These losses, resulting from conversions to other uses as well as from demolitions, point up further the internal transfer of residents of Wilson and the continuing need for replacement housing for even the present residents.

### **Conservation of Sound Neighborhoods**

Wilson's older grid neighborhoods west of the Atlantic Coastline Railroad are gracious, well treed and attractive. They serve a diverse group of wage earners of moderate and

middle income families, providing affordable standard housing which could not be duplicated in new construction. The very low turnover in these neighborhoods underscores this fact. To conserve the aesthetic and functional qualities of these neighborhoods the City should consider the following policies: Require that additions to buildings be architecturally compatible with the basic structure; Provide a continuous program of sidewalk, curb, gutter, drainage and paving improvements; and where older trees die or must be removed, implementation of a program of replacement. With respect to the latter recommendation, the City could develop a nursery, plant seedlings, and thereby be assured of a ready supply of street trees over a period of ten to fifteen years. It should also be noted that a program of tree propagation may provide educational and vocational training for lower-income, minority residents of Wilson who can enter this expanding and environmentally-oriented profession.

### **Rehabilitation of Substandard Neighborhoods**

The low-income black neighborhoods east of the Seaboard Coastline Railroad are characterized by seriously deteriorated housing located on unpaved streets at a very high density and with insufficient open space. Serious overcrowding of people in these obsolescent and small structures might suggest to some that they should be replaced. However, such a goal is most likely unrealistic given current national housing subsidy policies and priorities. Thus, the neighborhood should be made as habitable as possible on a long-term basis. An asset worth capitalizing on in this effort is the proximity to the central business district and proposed activity centers there.

An effort to upgrade the condition of housing in these neighborhoods has been impeded by the fact that almost

all of the substandard housing is occupied by low-income tenants who have been unable to support rental increases necessary to induce their landlords to make improvements. It is likely that some, and perhaps a substantial number, of tenants will begin to enjoy greater and more dependable incomes from steady employment in the growing industrial sector. Assuming this to be the case, certain measures could be explored by both private and public interests to assist tenants in upgrading the condition of their housing. Included among these measures are: Creation of a credit union by a coalition of black churches to make available to tenants the funds required to purchase materials for making basic improvements. An agreement from the landlords to refrain from increasing rents during the term of the repayment period would be necessary, and perhaps, not difficult to obtain since the landlords' property will be upgraded at no cost to them. This could, in turn, constitute the first step in the acquisition of these properties by the tenants (assuming a willing seller).

It is, however, unlikely that tenants will want to make financial commitments to improve (or purchase) their housing units unless the City of Wilson makes a commitment to providing much needed public improvements in the neighborhoods such as "forced" street pavings, storm drainage, and recreational facilities. Notwithstanding the fact that the City is faced with difficult choices in allocating its scarce resources, the pace of these types of improvements to date does not suggest a sufficient public commitment.

Additionally, steps can be taken by the residents jointly and by the City to upgrade the physical character of these neighborhoods. For example, the City could persuade owners of vacant lots to make them available for recre-

ational uses. In connection with this the City could offer training to neighborhood residents in recreation supervision.

### **Shade Trees**

The RUDAT team found the contrast between the character of older neighborhoods with tree-lined streets and new subdivisions built upon agricultural land so marked that a requirement to plant shade trees in all new construction is strongly recommended. If the City initiates a tree nursery from seedlings, a ready supply of trees of appropriate species and size will be assured for use a decade hence. The Public Works Department could manage cultivation, pest control and root pruning. The contractor or homeowner can be required to transplant and maintain new plantings, or, alternately, to purchase shade trees privately.

In order to assure that the long term objective of energy conservation is respected, new construction should require one, two or three shade trees planted in order to provide shade for southern exposure of houses, and, in addition, a standard for trees placed within the first 10' of the lot to provide street shade should be established. This will generally require one or two trees per house depending upon lot width. Until such time as a ready supply of City-grown trees is available, the cost of planting a minimum size tree (perhaps ¾" caliper measured at a point 3½ above the root) properly staked and wrapped, should be included in the performance bond required of subdividers. This will be returned to the homeowner—not the builder—one year from issuance of the certificate of occupancy. This will encourage the homeowner to properly irrigate and cultivate his trees.

### **New Residential Construction**

The private single family residential development that has occurred in

recent years has been in the form of subdivisions or planned unit developments in scattered isolated tracts along highways, on very large lots, with a few recent apartment and townhouse developments, and serviced by suburban shopping plazas. This leapfrog pattern, if allowed to continue, will likely promote diseconomies and inefficiencies in the provision of public services and facilities.

To assure that this pattern is not perpetuated, the City should consider planning, programming and budgeting the development of its capital facilities such as utilities, parks and schools so as to guide private sector decisions with respect to the location of new housing rather than providing such facilities in response to private decision makers. In this context, no private development would be permitted until such facilities were made available, either by the municipality or by the developer himself. To compensate the developer or land owner for postponing the use of his land in those cases where it is economically feasible for the private developer to provide the facilities and where they are not provided by the City, the private developer should be compensated by providing that taxes on such property will not exceed that of land in the community that is least heavily taxed.

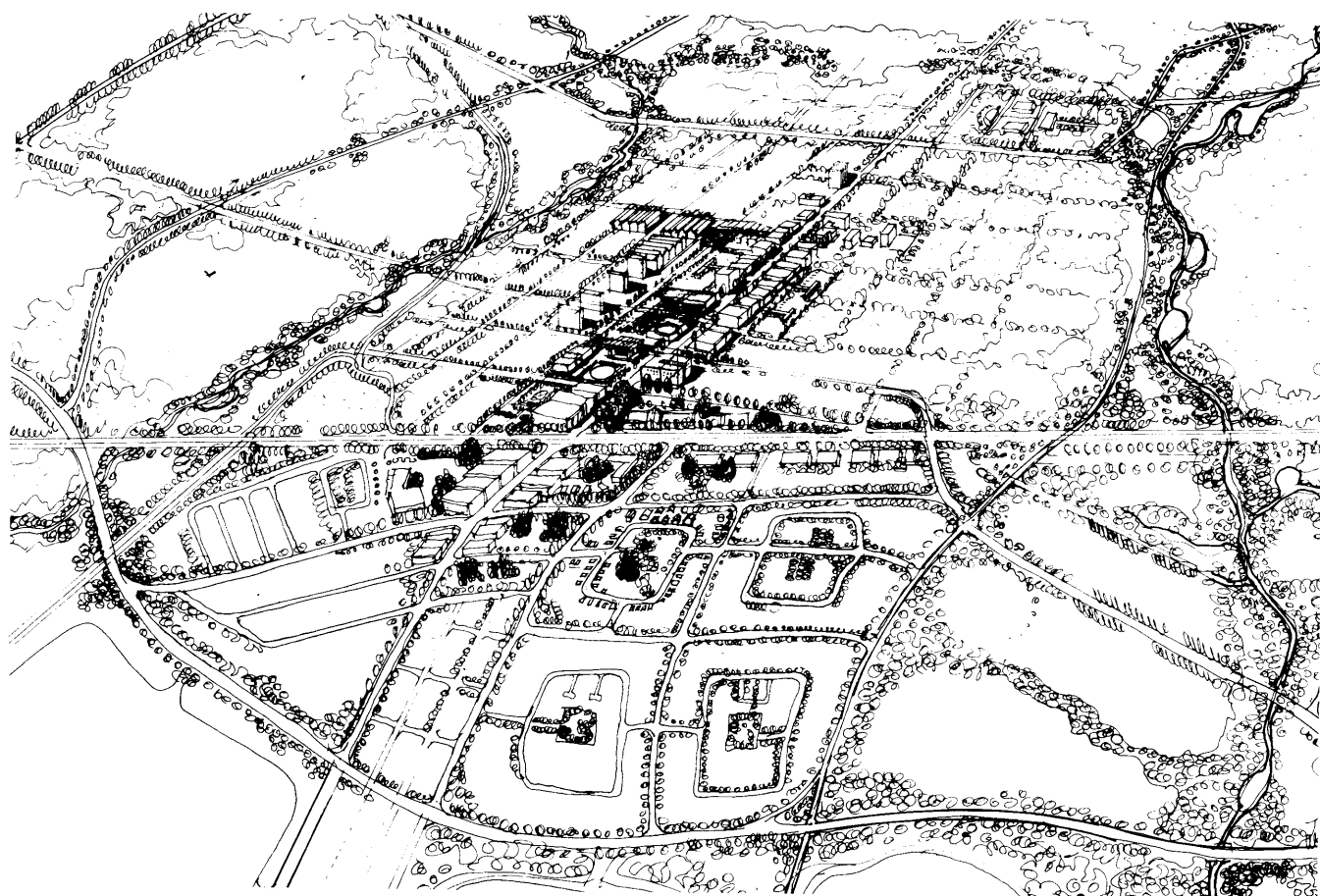
Finally, to encourage the most efficient utilization of serviced land, the city should assure that its zoning regulations provide a sufficiently strong incentive to cluster new housing development in planned neighborhoods organized around schools, satellite shopping and office cores.

### **Land Available for Subdivision East of the Railroad**

For as long as a policy of racial separation on either side of the Seaboard Coastline Railroad persists, the only new housing opportunities for blacks within Wilson lie east of Route 301 in the newly annexed area.



(1) Hearing in progress dealing with problems of minorities; (2) View of new Wilson as planned by RUDAT Team.



In order to provide Blacks with a choice among a variety of housing types, a more flexible tool is needed than the designation of nearly the entire area between the Norfolk and Southern Railroad and Route 264 as R-1. This large tract is under several ownerships, and therefore PUD zoning might not apply. However, by working with individual developers and landowners, a plan for a series of diverse housing clusters, incorporating group houses, garden apartments, duplexes and single family houses on lots of several different sizes should be agreed upon. The existing stream courses through the area can become the basis of an open space network which would connect the schools, parks, and a proposed neighborhood shopping area on Route 264. This is considered a high-priority planning task in the light of the recent approval of two subdivisions for Black developers in this area. No further subdivisions should be approved until they can be made compatible with a plan. An illustration of this neighborhood, incorporating these features is opposite.

Institutions present in local communities should be maintained and, where demand is present, new ones should be developed. In the case of the Black community there is now a series of small convenience stores, which provide important services to the community. The present zoning regulations consider these stores non-conforming, thus inhibiting their improvement and threatening their existence following a fire. A new zoning category should be created for areas where automobile ownership is low and off-street parking requirements and aesthetic considerations are inappropriate and out of character with the neighborhoods they serve. Old Mercy Hospital is a significant structure. The cost of rehabilitating it for use as multiple dwellings or community use may be prohibitive.

### Wilson Central Business District

Although the central business district remains the commercial, retail and institutional heart of the city, there is evidence of the beginnings of the movement of some of these functions to other developing parts of the city. It is therefore timely to undertake measures which will serve to maintain the economic viability of the Central Business District.

In this regard, the city should first establish clear physical limits for the central core of retail, commercial and governmental activities. The zoning ordinance should be revised, to the extent necessary, to reflect the changes proposed for the CBD, and a development plan of action should become a matter of public policy so that locational and capital improvement decisions by the public (state, county) and private sectors can be made in the CBD.

In addition to a clearly defined business district, a **network of interrelated activity centers** which complement existing commercial, retail, and institutional functions should be developed within the heart of Wilson. Community cultural centers should be developed in and around the CBD. The green space surrounding the Wilson County Public Library should be upgraded providing facilities which promote educational activities associated with this library. Numerous structures within the central business district can be recycled and used for a variety of activity centers. In particular, the old Cherry-Hotel provides the location for facilities such as a residence for the elderly; a child care center; a public health facility. Medical and nursing staff available in such a health facility would be available to both the elderly and child care center. Tobacco warehouses—empty most of the year, and in less demand of late as a result of recent technological developments in the industry, could provide facilities for the following

uses: sports, arts and crafts, teen-centers, roller-rinks, cultural centers and museums. The present downtown water tower could serve as an observation tower with an associated recreational facility. The present Railroad Passenger Depot could serve as a more general Transport Center for a shuttle bus to Firestone and other outlying industrial locations.

As a means to accomplish renovation of the central area a Downtown Development Corporation might be formed under joint public-private sponsorship. The Corporation could: (1) Form a land bank with participants to "trade in" their land for shares in the Corporation. Shares would be on a deferred interest and principal basis with distribution of development proceeds passed through to shareholders as development occurs. (2) In exchange for land banking, shareholders should be entitled to deferred property taxation — the tax abatement to be covered by the city's general fund. After redevelopment the increased tax yields should more than offset temporary tax losses and reimburse the general funds. (3) A sale-lease back formula involving public and private sectors to achieve redevelopment objectives would operate as follows: Properties would be transferred by the Downtown Development Corporation to the city as collateral for subordinated financing. In exchange, the city would secure long-term low-interest revenue bond financing for building improvements or parking and industrial development financing alternatives. The city would then lease back or sell the improvements so financed to the Corporation or its agent, retaining the ground lease. Equitable payments-in-lieu-of-taxes can be built into the ground leases.

There are outstanding examples of Victorian residences on the border of the central district. In past years some of these houses have been demolished to permit the construction of new one-

story business buildings on the edge of the business district. This intermixture of style and scale is not an effective urban design pattern. A cohesive streetscape of Victorian housing should be maintained.

Where practical, new activities should be fitted into these valuable existing buildings. New construction should apply compatible design standards in order to maintain the unusual and irreplaceable atmosphere of these streets.

(1) Sam Ashford, local AIA coordinator of the RUDAT workshop, assisting in photographing of drawings; (2) Ron Straka, RUDAT Chairman, briefs two students on final report; (3) Concept of land subdivision on eastern side of Wilson.



1

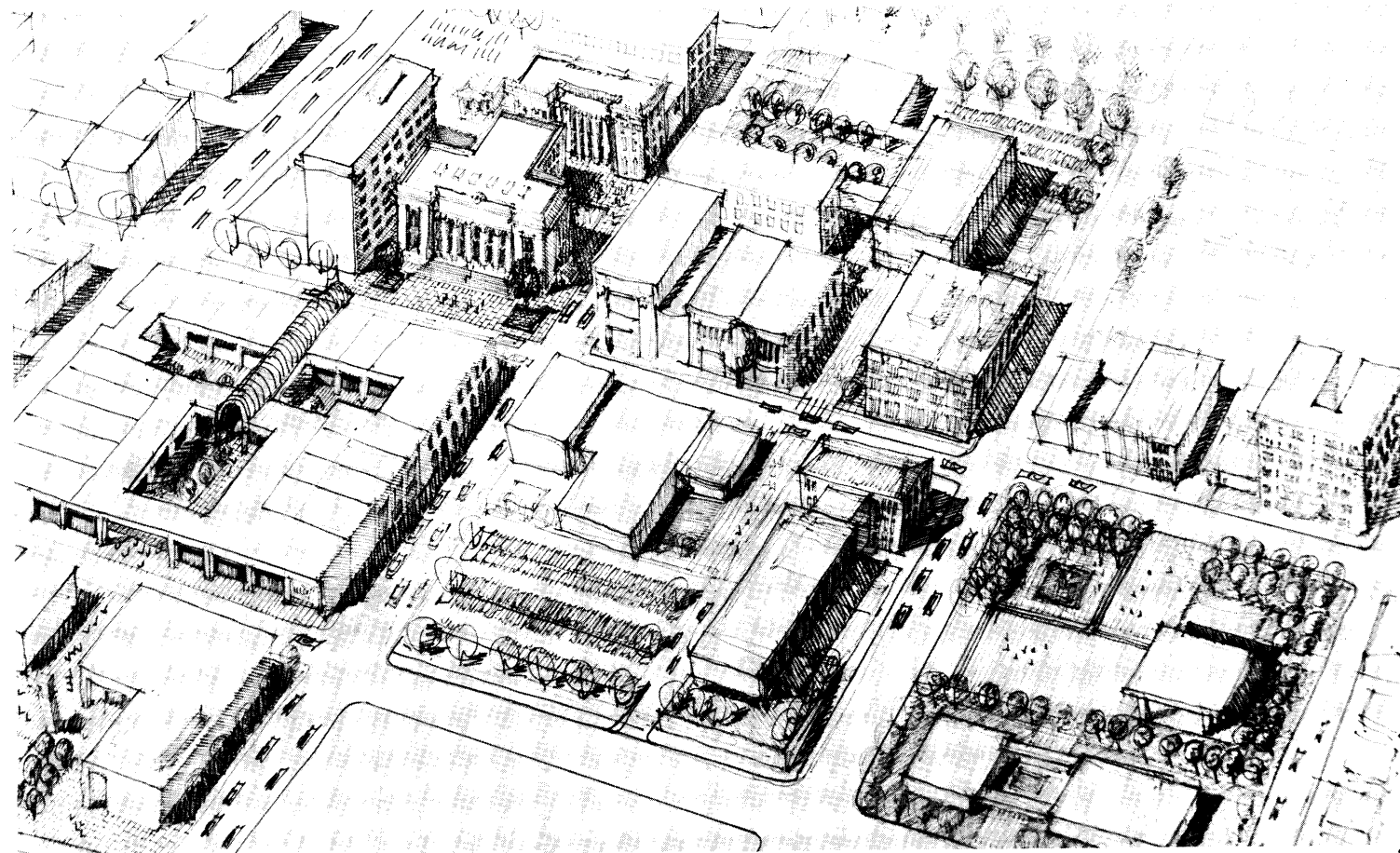
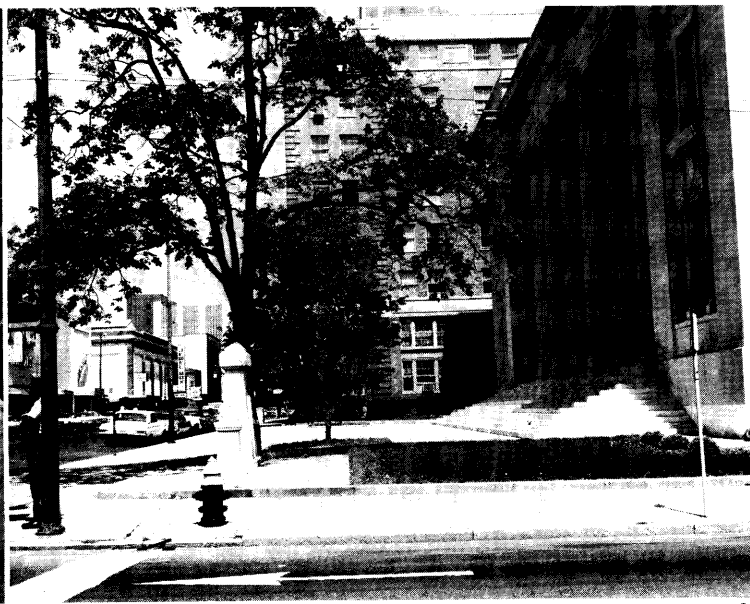


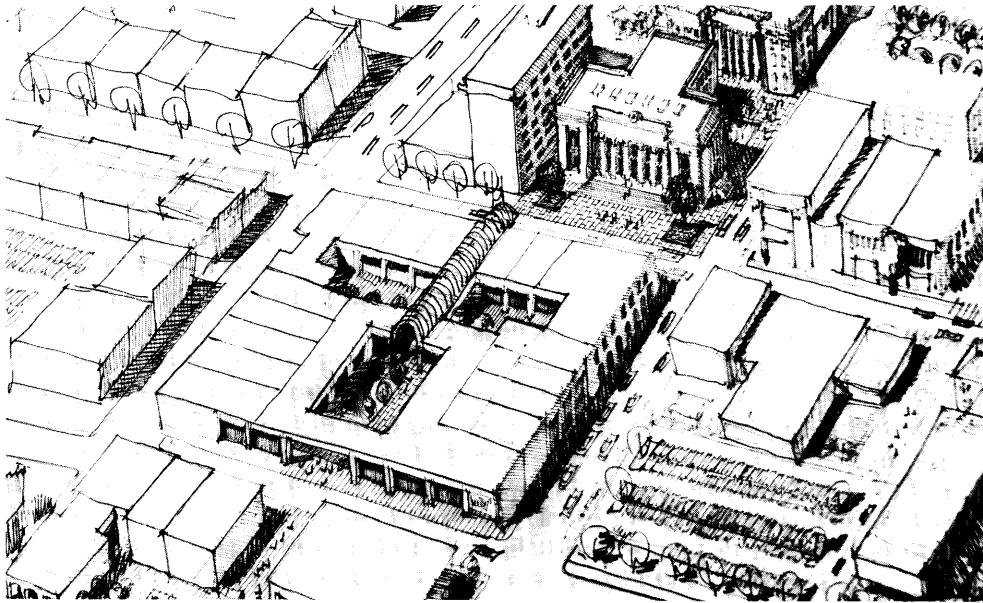
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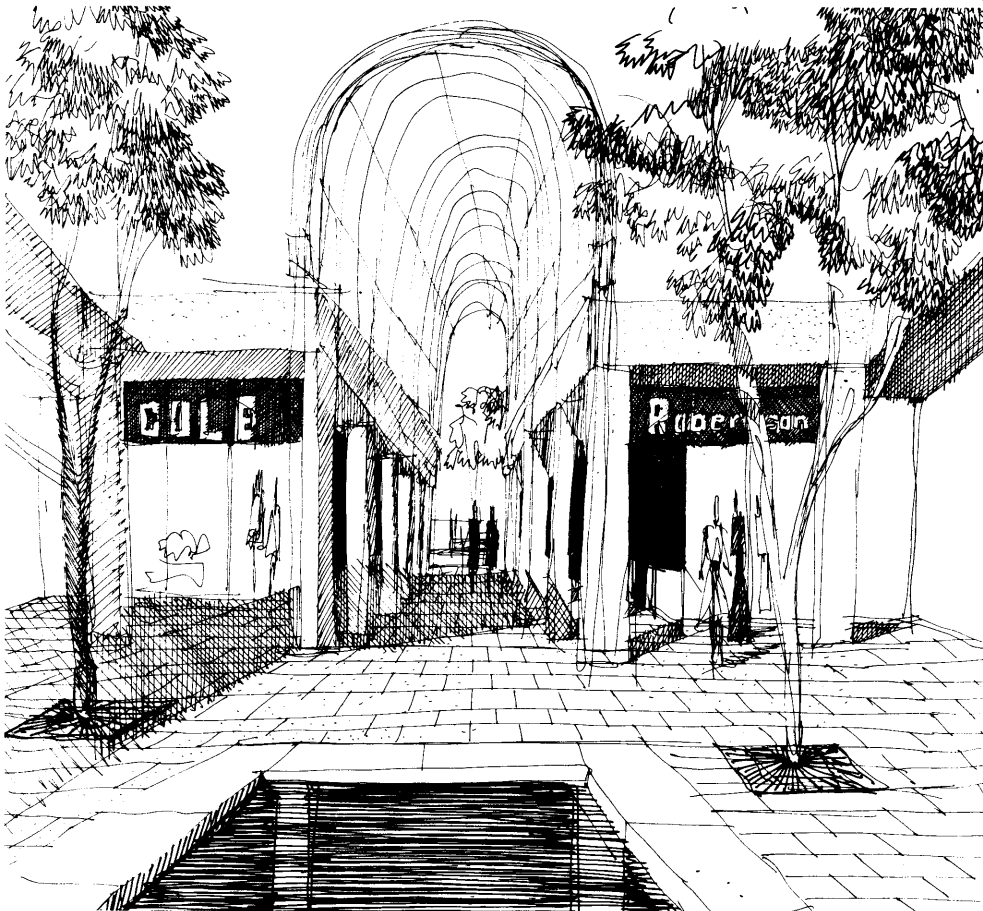
3







Proposals for Downtown Redevelopment: (1 and 2) views of Nash Street at the present time; (3) proposal for CBD; (4) Close-up view of arcade connecting municipal building, court house and block to the west; (5) ground level view of arcade one half block north of Nash Street.



5



## Evaluation of Wilson RUDAT Workshop

### Coming to Terms with the Small Community

Architects have been — and still are — trained to deal with small elements of communities, individual buildings, or complexes of buildings. Ordinarily, this is the largest focus that a designer has, although details within the project are more liable to engage his attention for longer periods of time than the whole building itself. Nevertheless, a few architects have broken from this mold in an attempt to understand the interrelationships which exist between the social, economic and political environment, and the physical environment. If this new understanding results in programs and concepts for the redesign of the physical and non-physical environments, we tend to call this an act of “urban design”.

One observation that might be made about the RUDAT Team is that the older and possibly more traditionally trained architects grasped the scale of the urban landscape very rapidly. As a consequence, they were able to examine its parts and to make recommendations about specific areas on buildings. This rapid translation of programmatic information into design concepts often occurs at the expense of economic feasibility and mechanisms for implementation. The more avant-garde designs, however, had a tendency to become embroiled in open-ended programmatic concepts for which a large number of solutions are possible.

On the whole, the team responded very well to the unique physical attributes of Wilson — its tree-lined streets, stately Victorian houses, tobacco warehouses, and low-density, low-height central area. The recommendations for substandard housing redevelopment of the central shopping area, and the renovation of tobacco warehouses are particularly noteworthy. However, problems of new growth and development are

discussed rather than illustrated, except in a rather coarse scale of design. Some sense of how to handle strip commercial development along Wilson's beltway, as well as small industrial development, might have been helpful. Unfortunately, aerial reconnaissance as a survey mechanism has a tendency to reinforce the urban designer's appetite for large-scale built forms while ground-level walking tours have the opposite effect. Future RUDAT Workshops in small communities would do well to de-emphasize the former survey technique.

One final comment about the responsiveness of the team to small community design is in order: Most of the recommendations for Wilson — aside from references to tobacco warehouses—might also apply to other small communities in North Carolina. Therefore, the RUDAT Team was successful in determining the universal aspects of small community design.

### Critique of the RUDAT Problem - Solving Methodology

Judged by the prodigious volume of information generated in four days of activity, the RUDAT Workshop would seem to be an unqualified success. Nevertheless, the basic approach has many weaknesses as well as strengths, some of which are noted below.

RUDAT Team Members come to a typical workshop session comparatively uninformed about the location. There is a definite need to get summaries of the locales' physical and non-physical environmental systems into the hands of a team member before he or she arrives. The team at Wilson seemed to be operating with partial sets of data, and some time was lost in attempting to gather this in an uncoordinated fashion. Very clearly, a considerable interval is necessary between the identification of a host community and the operation of a workshop.

Intense problem-solving sessions can

be very exhausting, no matter how stimulating the context may be. This was apparent on the final evening before the public presentation. A very fatigued group of persons trying to compose an intelligible document wasted many hours in false starts, misplaced documents, and lack of concentration. Some of this must be traced back to the premise behind the “Charette” concept of design: crash programs of activity to meet deadlines help to focus creative energies. It might work for an individual but for persons from different disciplines possessing varying approaches to creativity it is far from satisfactory.

These criticisms revolve around the structuring of time, or lack of it, and prior preparation for the workshop. For example, graphic formats and introductory sections of the final document dealing with historical and socioeconomic overviews can be prepared ahead of time. So can complete inventories of information and even an audio-visual display of the community. This would eliminate the need for individual information gathering, except as a supplement to existing data. It would also help to overcome dependency on weather for ideal photographic conditions, as well as overcome poor exposure, rushed processing and a host of attendant variables beyond the control of the team. Another idea is to require that some finished product be produced each day—preliminary problem statement on the first day, planning program on the second, and design concepts on the third day. The major benefit in structuring some of the workshop functions would be to allow more time for creativity and consume less time in purely mechanical activities.

### RUDAT Workshop Related to Comprehensive Design Process

In terms of the seven steps of the comprehensive design process, a RUDAT workshop is concerned with

the first four. Step one, "Problem Definition", and step two "Resource Identification" occur primarily on the first day during the familiarization process that the team undergoes. Step three, "Program Development", and step four, "Proposals", occur more or less simultaneously as the programming is rapidly translated into concept formation. Normally the team is subject to far too much pressure to generate and evaluate alternative concepts, so the planning and design solutions presented to the community will be untested against any design criteria. Again, this might be viewed as another practice to inject into the RUDAT concept: The structuring and evaluating of alternative solutions.

The team functions in a modified interdisciplinary sense with leadership roles either assigned as in the case of the Chairman, or emergent within the proceedings, or established prior to the workshop by virtue of recognized professional stature. It is encouraging to note the considerable freedom that non-designers were allowed to exercise in the Wilson workshop.

## Recommendations for Future RUDAT Workshops

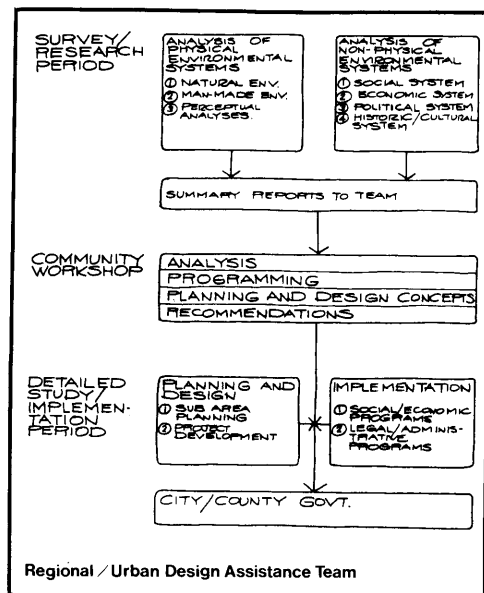
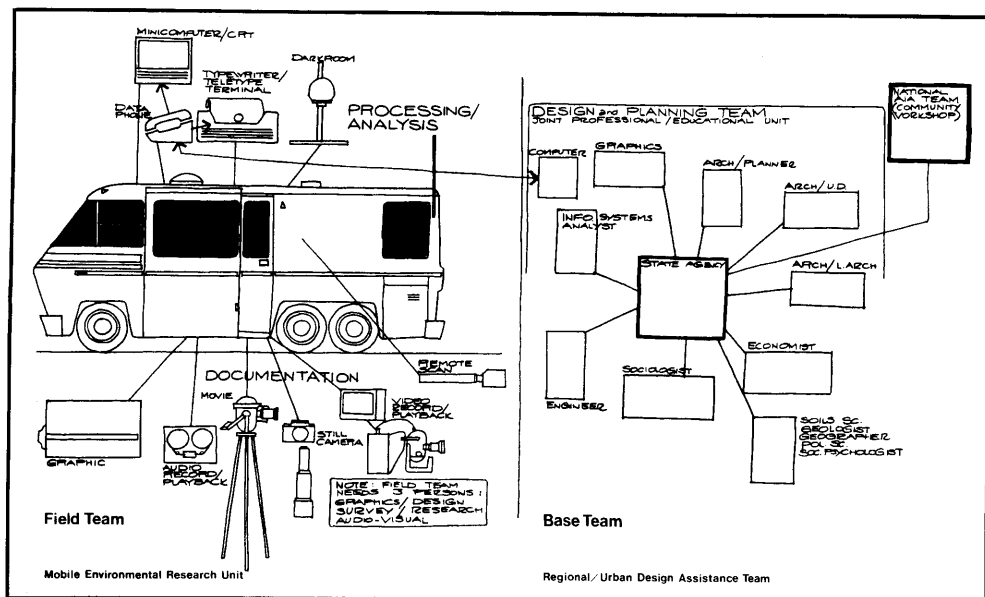
In the light of previous comments made by the author, two new concepts might be studied by the AIA Urban Planning and Design Committee and the relevant State agencies in setting up RUDAT workshops.

The first concept involves establishing a three-part process which links a local architectural school and a governmental unit into both the preparation of background information and the development of detailed concepts and implementation strategies. This is intended to give continuity to an otherwise "one-step" operation, to provide educational benefit to students, to build the RUDAT functions into a permanent service concept of the AIA to State and local governments, and to extend the scope of architectural practice.

An accompanying diagram shows how this might work. A pre-workshop period of several months or one academic semester would be utilized as part of a joint design studio—community activity to build inventories of information and prepare summaries of

environmental systems. As a second phase of activity the team would step into an information-rich atmosphere in which some form of community participation had already taken place. Finally, a post-workshop period would enable a design team of students counselled by local professionals to prepare more detailed area concepts and special projects. At the same time, relevant government agencies could be setting up the machinery for the implementation of the plan. This is seen as a continuous function operated by a state government as a form of technical assistance to communities.

The scale of activity that this suggests would require the building of a program in the architectural school on a long-term basis. This program could operate by providing students with field training and internships as well as academic experience in the design studio. A very important piece of hardware in such a system of technical assistance would be a mobile environmental design research laboratory manned by about three persons. This mobile facility would aid in the rapid documentation of community resources and would work with an oper-





ations base in the school and government agency.

RUDAT as a service from the profession to the community is one of the most important ideas that the AIA has yet produced. These suggestions are intended to build linkages between the profession, architectural educational programs, public agencies, citizens groups and to strengthen the architect's role in environmental design.



(1) Community hearing; (2) Final presentation to citizens of Wilson.



### **Acknowledgements**

The RUDAT visit was coordinated by Sam Ashford, AIA, Chairman of the Housing and Urban Design Committee of the North Carolina Council of the American Institute of Architects.

Members of the team were assisted by John Mr. Larry Austin, Frank De Raquies, AIA, Stephen Pratt and Mike Reese, graduate students in the School of Design at North Carolina State University. Their participation was coordinated by Peter Borschelt, AIA, Director of the Urban Design Program at NCSU.

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John W. Wingo, Jr.  
Department of Natural and Economic Resources

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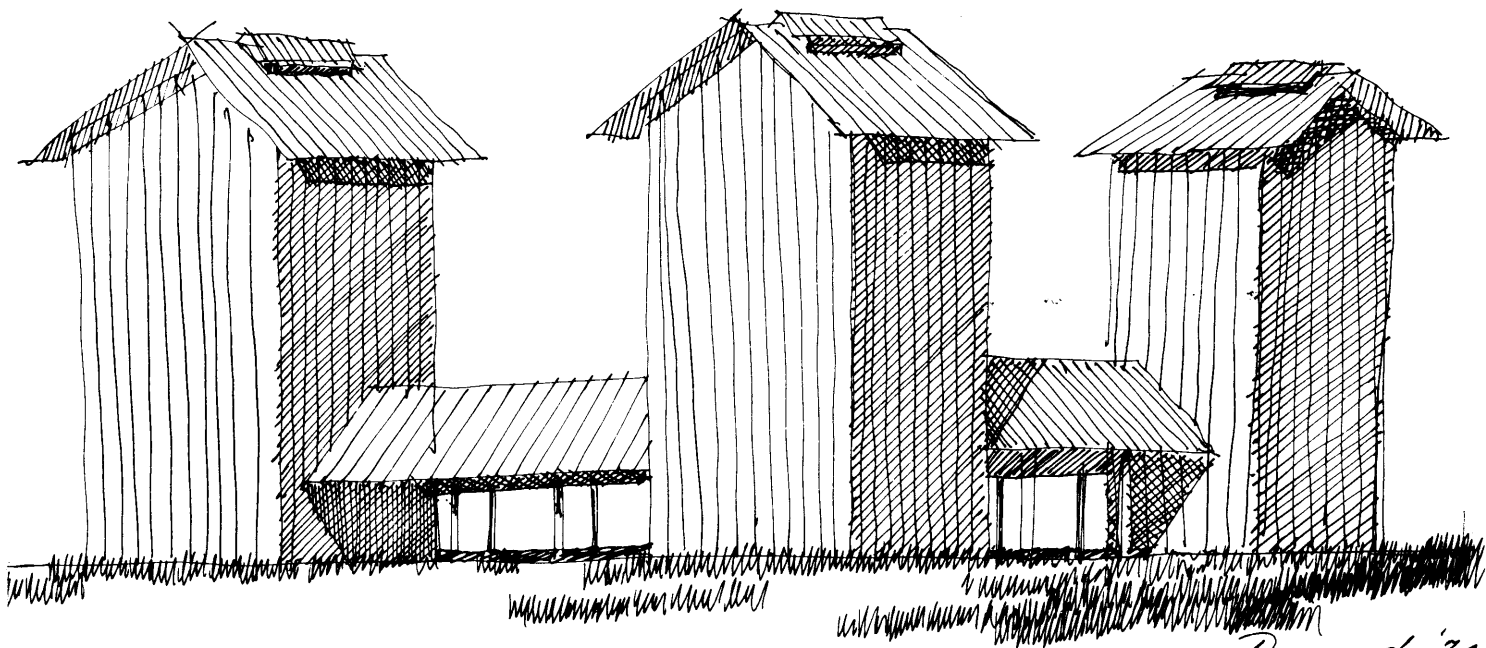
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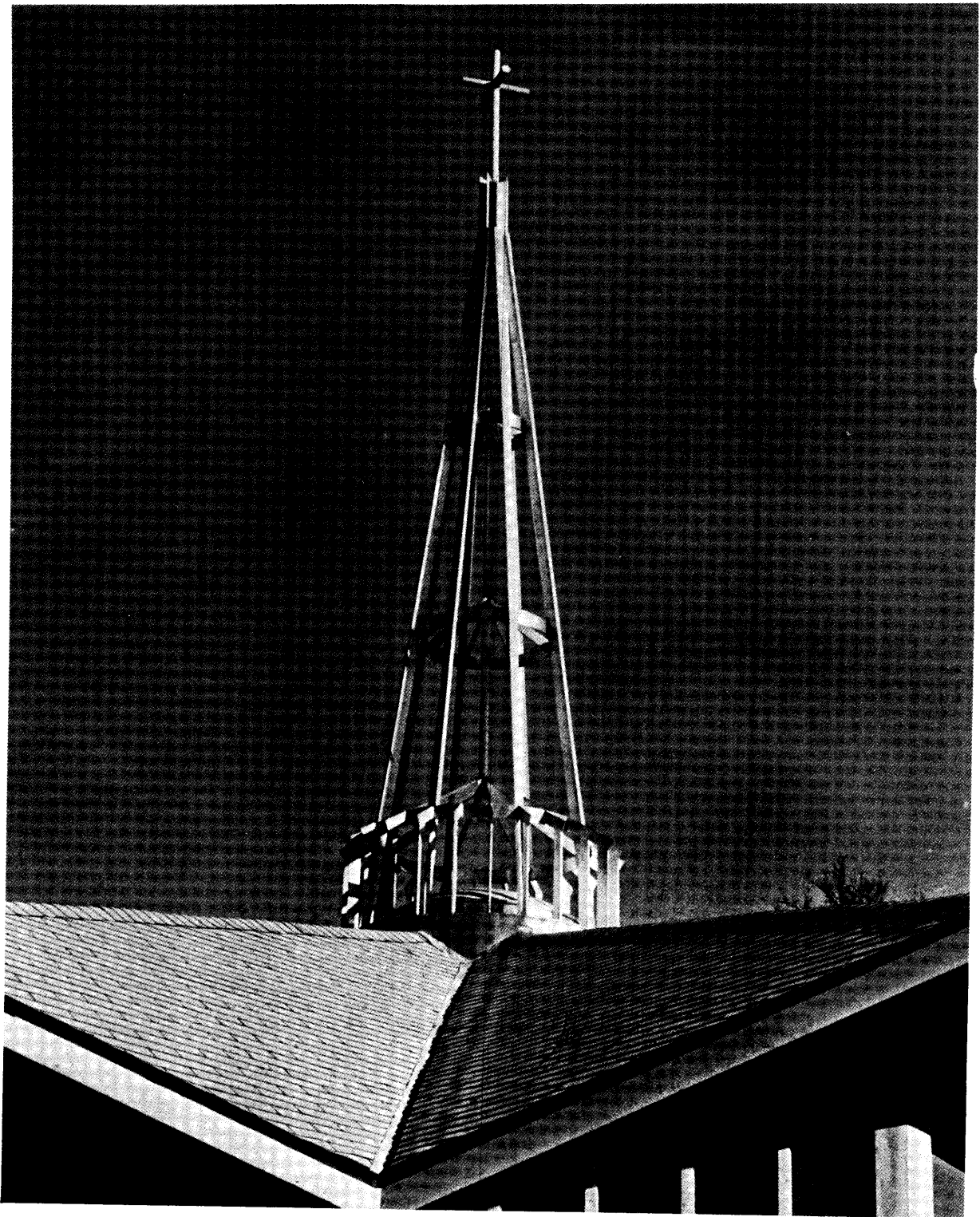
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Text layout and photography by the author. Some portions of the text dealing with the historic development of Wilson and the activities and observations of the RUDAT team have been adapted from the team's report published on May 6, 1974. Design concepts also published in the team's report are utilized throughout this article. All cover graphics and other illustrations are by the author. Colbert Howell of Raleigh processed the author's film and prepared all enlargements.





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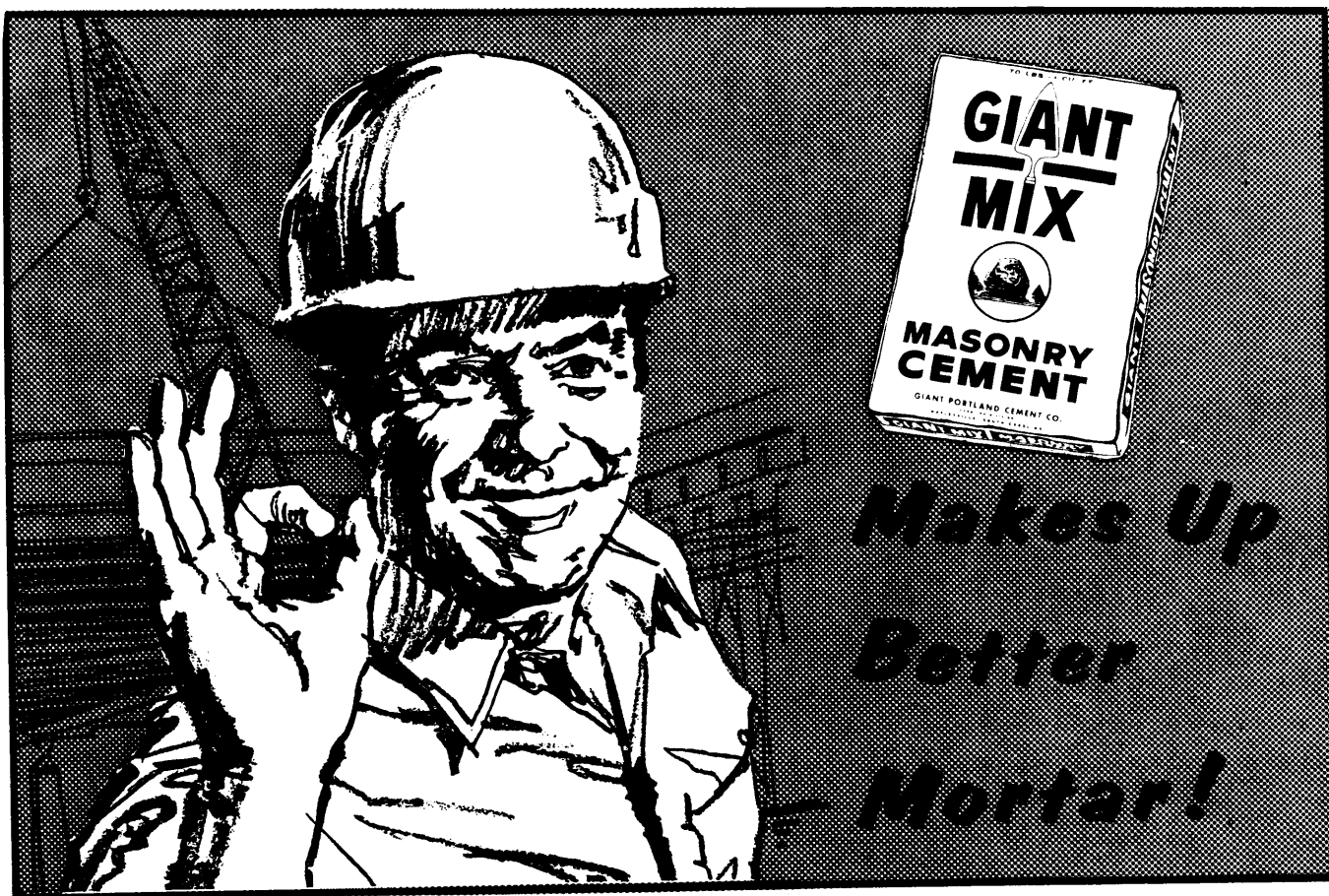
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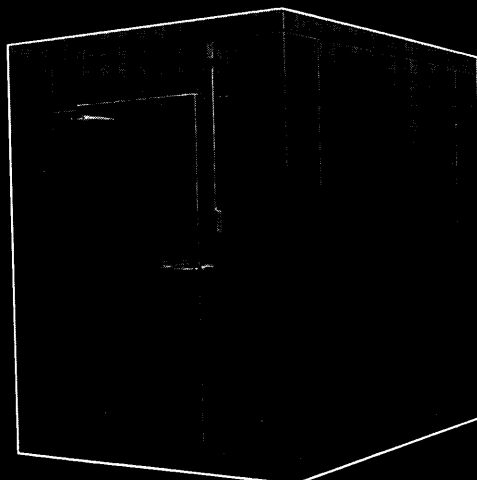
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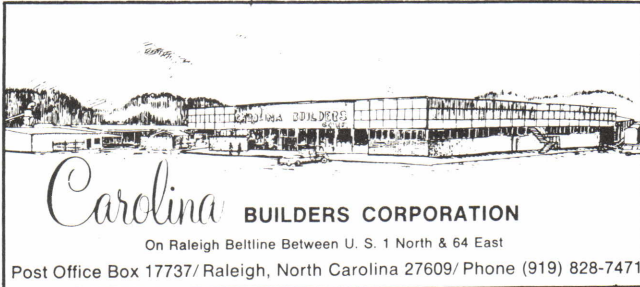


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Through his generosity, the N. C. Chapter AIA now owns its headquarters, the AIA Tower in Raleigh, which was Mr. Deitrick's architectural office for many years. He is survived by a sister and a nephew.

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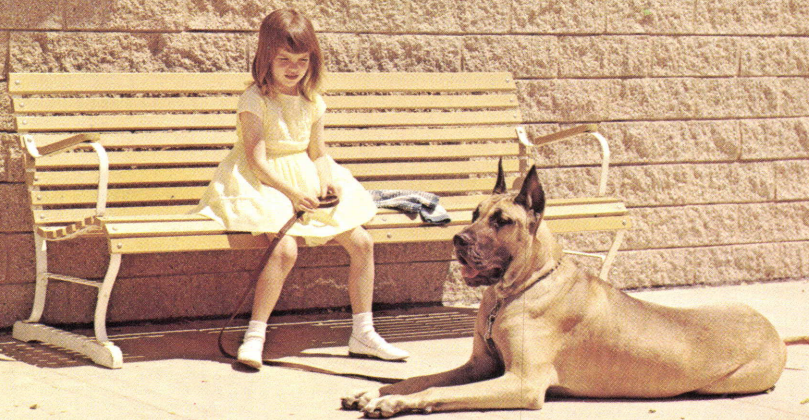
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