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NC Architect

May
June 1975

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

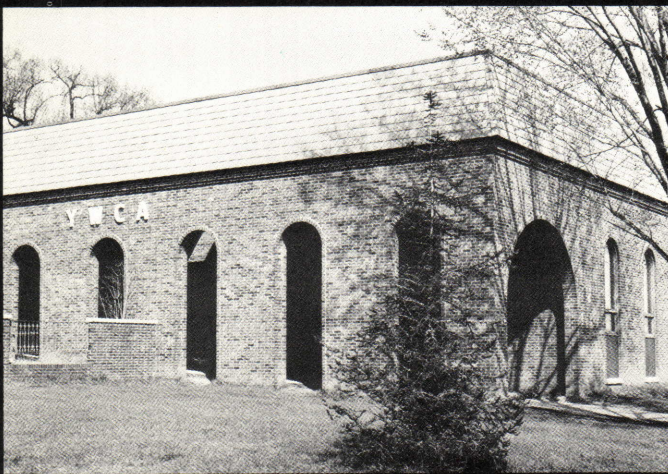


WHAT HAS HAPPENED TO OUR DOWNTOWNS?



BRICK

IN NORTH CAROLINA
ARCHITECTURE



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Greensboro, N. C.

Architect:
Atkinson, Wilson & Lysiak, Inc.
Edward Loewenstein (Deceased) Designer

General Contractor:
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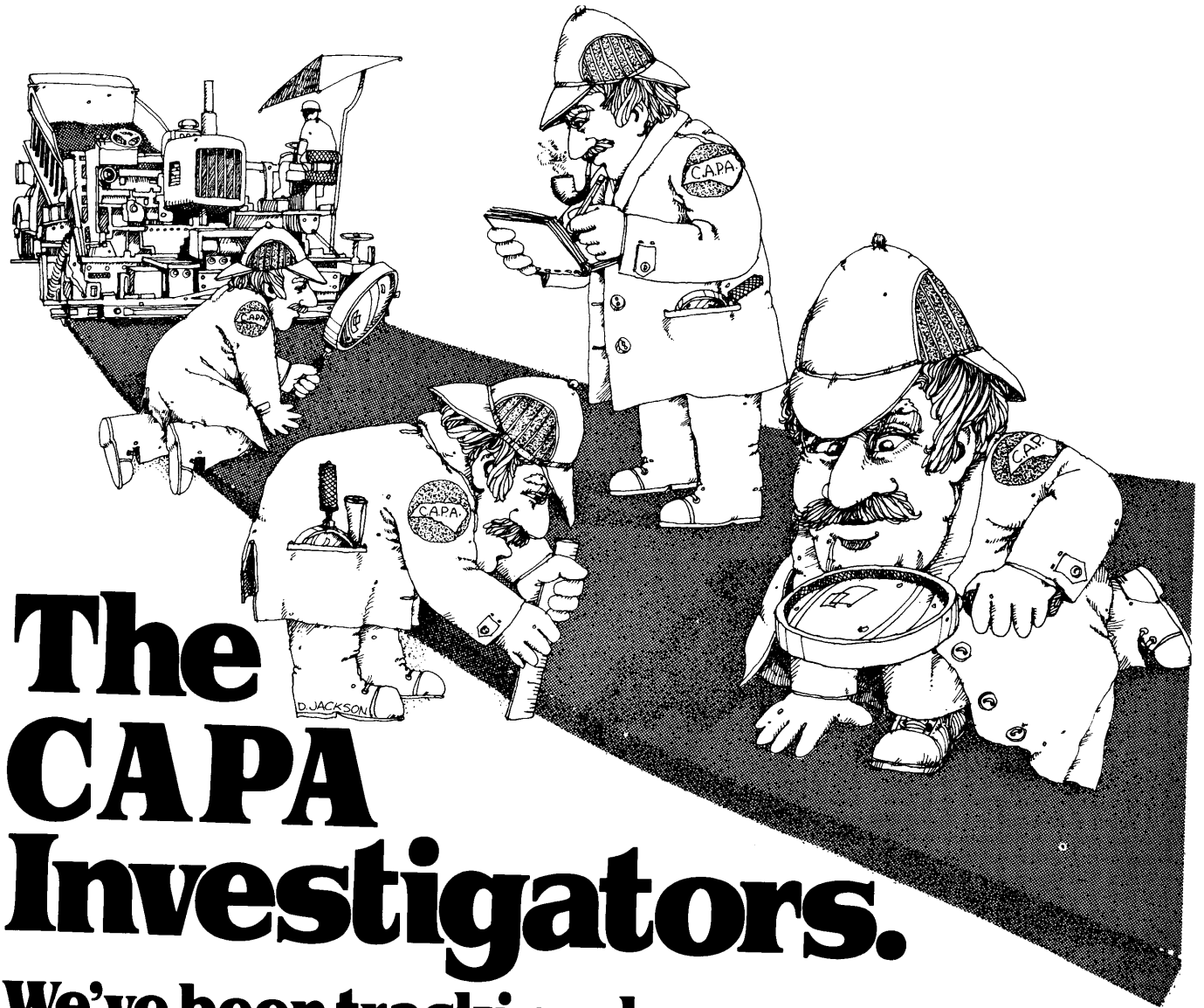
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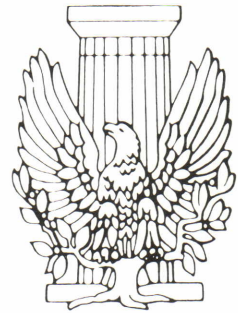
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North Carolina Architect is published by the North Carolina Chapter of The American Institute of Architects, Mrs. Betty W. Silver, Executive Director, 115 W. Morgan Street, Raleigh, North Carolina 27601. Advertising rates on request.

North Carolina Architect was formerly published as Southern Architect, Volume I, No. 1, through Volume XI, No. 11, 1954-1964.

Opinions expressed by contributors are not necessarily those of the North Carolina Chapter of the American Institute of Architects.

Lithographed by Theo. Davis Sons, Inc., Zebulon, N. C.

A CITY IN NORTH CAROLINA

Much has been said, written, hashed and rehashed, analyzed, planned and re-planned, then documented for our cities in the past three decades. Most of this has been done in good faith, but like any pot of soup with so many cooks, the results leave much to be desired—a porridge of lumpy, unpalatable, tacked together, added-to, subtracted-from, solutions. Soon followed the curbs and gutters, roads, parking areas, and buildings which became the image of progress measured in terms of the newness of brick, mortar, concrete, and glass. Soon was gone the very essence of the old cities—people and places for people, the tastes and smells of baked bread and candy, the frivolity of restaurants and theaters, the rubbing together of friends passing in their daily activities, and lastly, as one merchant expressed it—"the pazazz."

Haste had indeed made waste and seeing the pristine glory of what urban renewal combined with urban planning did to cities like Charlotte, Asheville, and Greensboro (to name

a few) created a desire in the participants of this study to strive for something better—that being to keep together a city's traditions while embracing the various political, social, economic, and public forces which demand new focii. The city is Durham, North Carolina and this is the story of the design process which was born nearly four months ago and is now going through the throes of acceptability.

Grateful acknowledgement is made to Peter Batchelor and the Publication Committee of the North Carolina Chapter of the American Institute of Architects for the opportunity to present this story.

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Ralph L. Graham
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Graphics Consultant



THE BEGINNING



Twenty years ago there commenced an ongoing relationship between the landscape architects as consultants to various architectural firms working in Durham—these being Carr, Harrison, Pruden, and DePasquale, Kenneth Scott, Ham, Keener, and Williams, John D. Latimer and Associates, Harris and Pyne, and J. N. Pease and Associates. Project responsibility was that of the architect with the landscape architect working in a planning/exterior decorator role. Projects were entities in themselves seldom ranging beyond the scope of their property lines nor proposed budgets. However, they did range in scope from public housing and urban renewal to banking and public service institutions, schools, shopping centers, churches, universities, and tobacco industry projects. The pieces were always there to work upon.

What precipitated the Downtown

Durham Plan? Our last project—a proposed City Hall being designed by John D. Latimer and Associates; the site, a parking area immediately in front of the existing Police Building; the time, 1974. This building was planned to be one of the larger additions to downtown Durham and was located directly beside one of the new four lane arterial highways running through the city. The architects indicated to the landscape architects a desire for some thought to be given to the area outside of the project limit lines since there was some discussion at that time of building a park “for people” across the highway from this facility.

Upon walking the streets of downtown Durham, seeing the concrete bunkers with small trees in them decorating the streets, feeling the terrible danger in crossing streets

filled with motorists fighting for parking spaces, noticing the beauty of many of the older buildings which remained, ascertaining the availability of urban renewal properties for open spaces and parks, discerning the cultural centroid of the downtown churches, upon groping through the terrible clutter of poles, posts, meters, directional signals, and devices, and upon comparing the vacated stores with new financial institutions—we noted that all pointed to the fact that *somewhere* we, the designers and planners of this city—collectively, were “missing the boat.” We were building curbs, gutters, buildings, bunkers, poles, posts, and other new artifacts, yet *the city was dying*. Everyone knew it, a revitalization commission was created to study it, a report documented it, and another artifact—a civic center—was proposed to save it.

Once one decides to get mad at any process or processes, he or she must decide *why* then work to create a viable alternative. The Design Team of Bell, Graham, Leister, and Taylor created this alternative. Next, one must find an advocate or “client” to back this alternative or change. This we found in one man, Mr. George Watts Hill, Sr., banker, businessman, farmer, education activist, patron of the arts, historical preservationist, in short, a “Renaissance Prince” much like Lorenzo D’ Medici of Florence who could see that the creation and development of a city was to the highest and best interest of all citizenry. Mr. Hill became the advocate for the project and through his auspices, friendships, and efforts, this alternative was presented to the business, social, religious, political, and civic activist groups of Durham. Through his perseverance lies the hope for its fruition. Therefore, this article is dedicated to Mr. Hill for his communal respect to new ideas, to design aspirations, and his general good will.

Bell Design Group/Wayne Taylor

Analysis

- Figure # 1 Existing Through-Traffic and Surrounding Land Use
- Figure # 2 Proposed Through-Traffic
- Figure # 3 Existing Circulation (Pedestrian and Vehicular)
- Figure # 4 Proposed Concept of Durham Downtown District

The Plans

- Figure # 5 Schematic Plan of the Downtown Durham District
- Figure # 6 Proposed Urban Park
- Figure # 7 Proposed Urban Park
- Figure # 8 Proposed Urban Park
- Figure # 9 Durham Graphics Program
- Figure #10 Durham Graphics Program
- Figure #11 Durham Graphics Program



**Durham
Circa 1925-1930**

Introduction

The present revitalization program for downtown Durham really began in 1865 when Mr. John R. Green, on the advice of his good friend, John Y. Whitted of Hillsborough, adopted the bull as a symbol for his tobacco product. Mr. Whitted predicted a wide market for Mr. Green's tobacco and a future for Durham as "a great commercial center." The correctness of his predictions has surpassed even the wildest imagination of Mr. Whitted. A great tobacco industry was established and the city of Durham achieved worldwide fame as the town which grew around that industry. Durham also became a major center for trade, banking, textiles, and other industries. Its churches, schools, and hospitals became vital parts of the community and

the state. But these successes did not come without difficulty, as stated in Professor Boyd's history, *The Story of Durham*; they came from clashes in opinion and intense competition; they came from individualism and leadership; but most of all, the past successes of Durham came from cooperation. In that tradition of cooperation the Downtown Revitalization Foundation was formed in August of 1973, primarily to serve two purposes: (1) to establish common goals for and to promote and revitalize the entire community by development of a plan for the future of downtown Durham, and (2) to implement that development plan.

The following proposals and innovations for the implementation of the previously adopted Downtown Revitalization Plan By LBC&W emphasize a high quality of urban experience. These proposals carry beyond the mere inventory of existing conditions and produce a flexible end product capable of immediate implementation in overall concept. These plans hark back to a time when downtown Durham was filled with the activity of trade and rich, sensory experiences, and hopeful futures. In conjunction

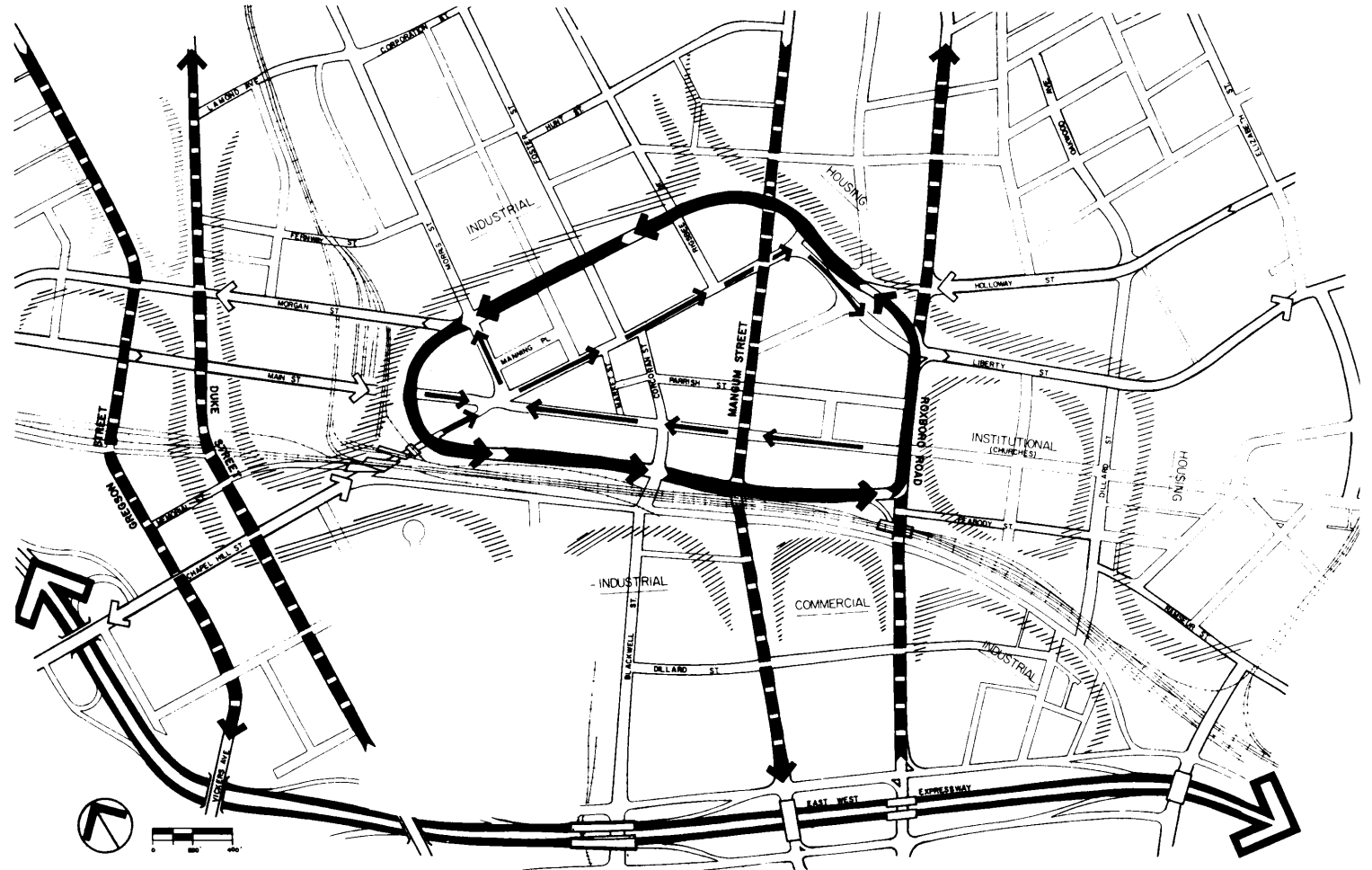
with the forthcoming National Bicentennial celebration, this project is conceived as a stimulus to continue a massive rejuvenation of downtown Durham. The primary objective of this program is to re-create an attractive, humane, and efficient urban place.

The following drawings are more than plans for the changing of traffic patterns, the closing of streets, the building of plazas and pedestrian ways. The plans indicate a future for downtown Durham as a place of festivity, a place to live, a place to work, trade, and to invest; a place for the celebration of life.







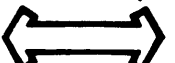
These plans indicate four major projects:

1. The development of a pedestrian *Line of Life* which links all parts of the downtown shopping and office areas with an urban park.
2. The development of this park.
3. The encouragement of renewed housing around this park and the business district.
4. The development of a cultural theme (i.e. Durham District) with supporting sign systems, advertising, and promotion.

Figure #1 Existing Through-Traffic



LEGEND

-  DILLARD ST
-  OTHER NAMED STREETS
-  DOWNTOWN DURHAM LOOP
-  SECONDARY THRU TRAFFIC CIRCULATION WITHIN LOOP
-  NORTH-SOUTH ONE WAY STREET PAIRS
-  EAST-WEST CIRCULATION INCLUDING ONE WAY STREET PAIRS
-  EAST-WEST EXPRESSWAY

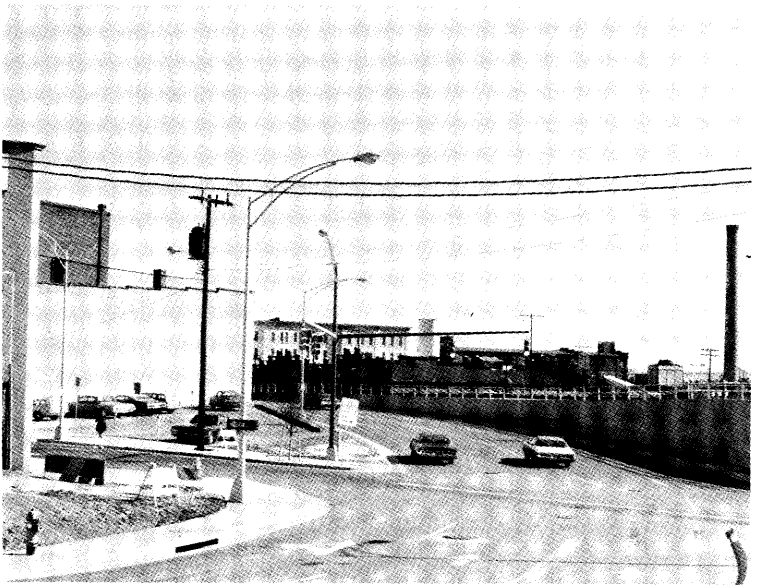
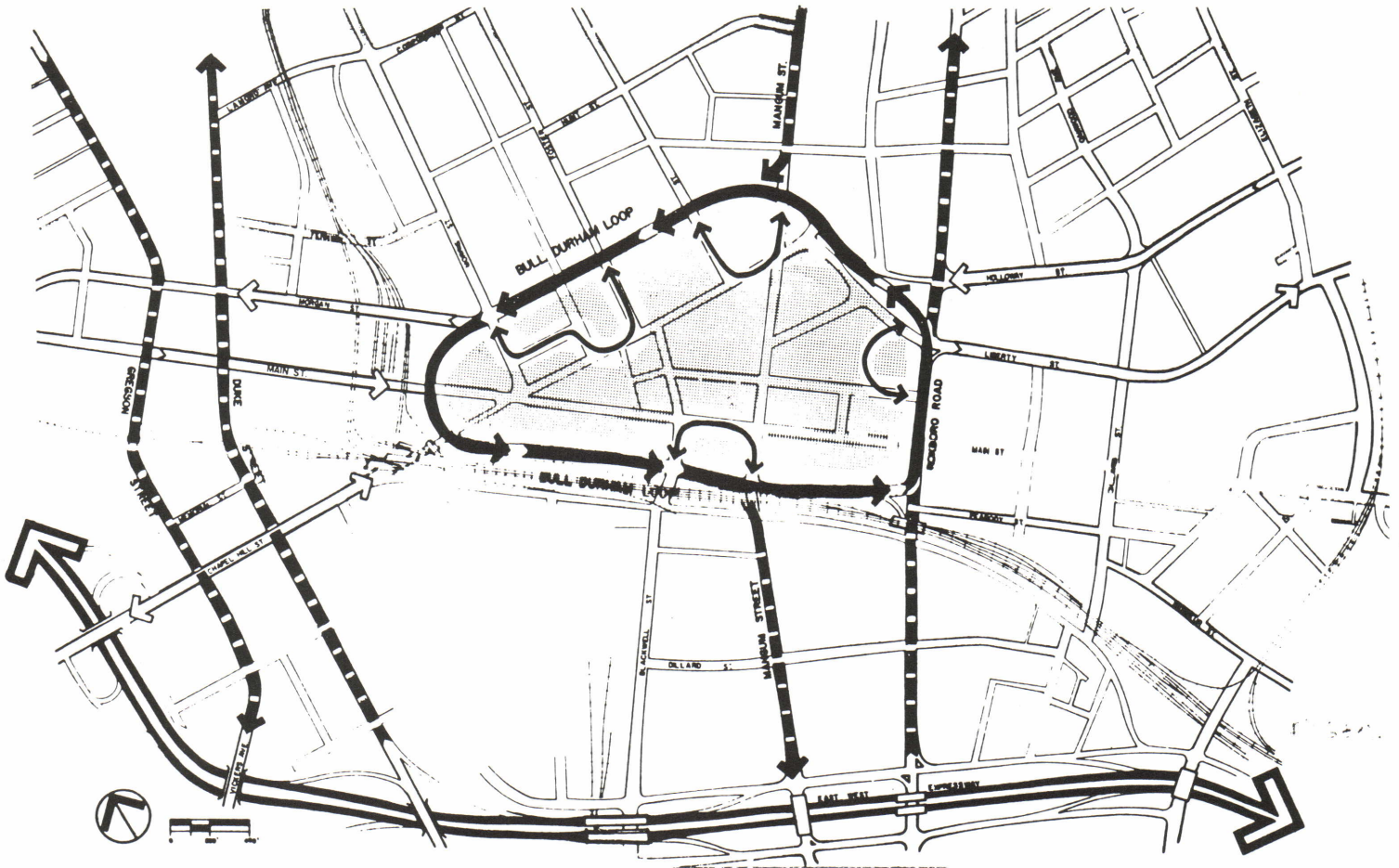


Figure #2 Proposed Through-Traffic



LEGEND




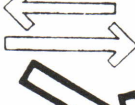

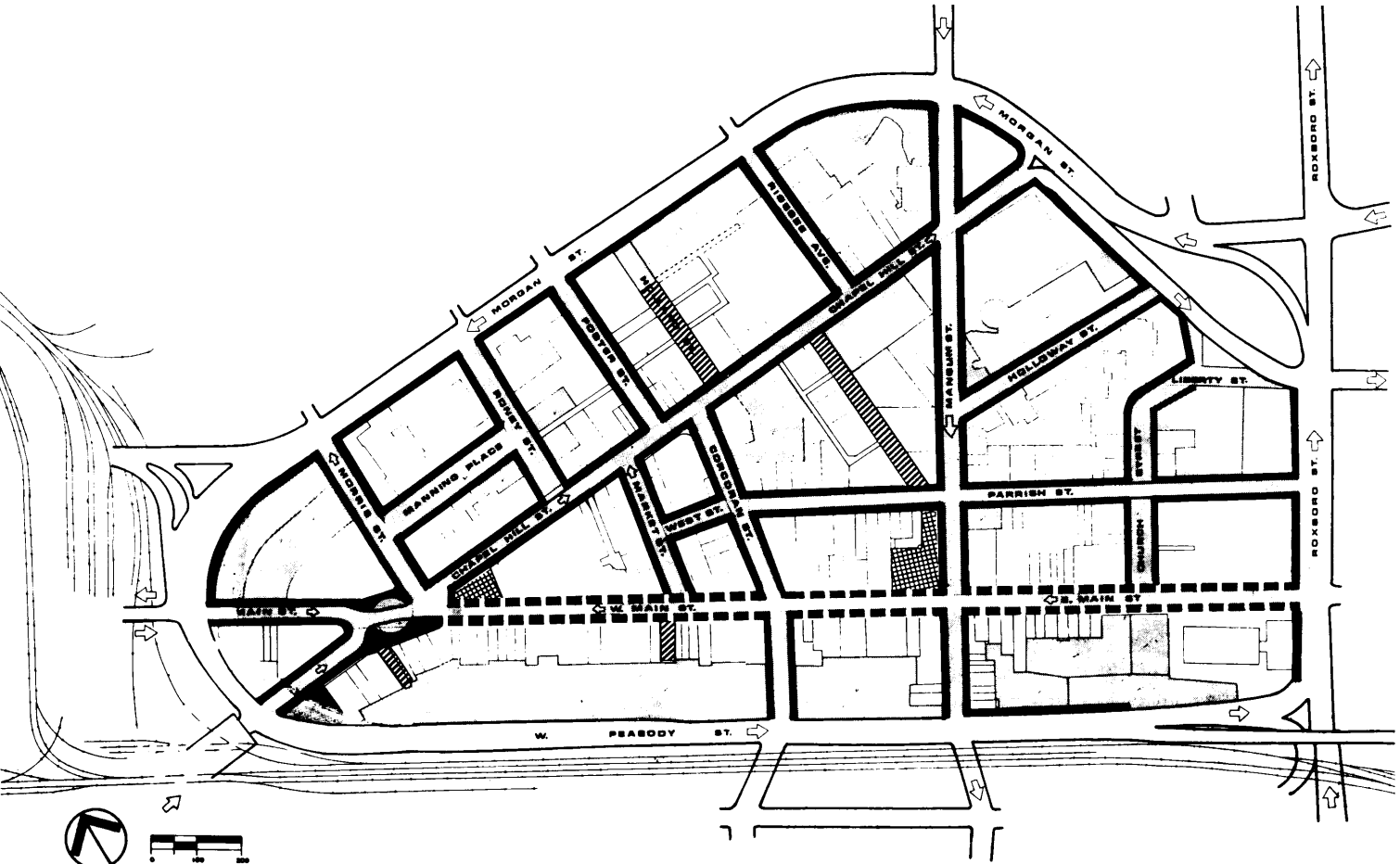

-  BULL DURHAM LOOP
-  ACCESS STREETS
-  NORTH - SOUTH PAIRS
-  EAST - WEST PAIRS
-  EAST - WEST EXPRESSWAY

Figure #3 Existing Circulation (Pedestrian and Vehicular)




LEGEND


VEHICULAR

 STREETS & PARKING

PEDESTRIAN

 GREENWAY

 STREET SIDEWALK

 LANDSCAPED SIDEWALK


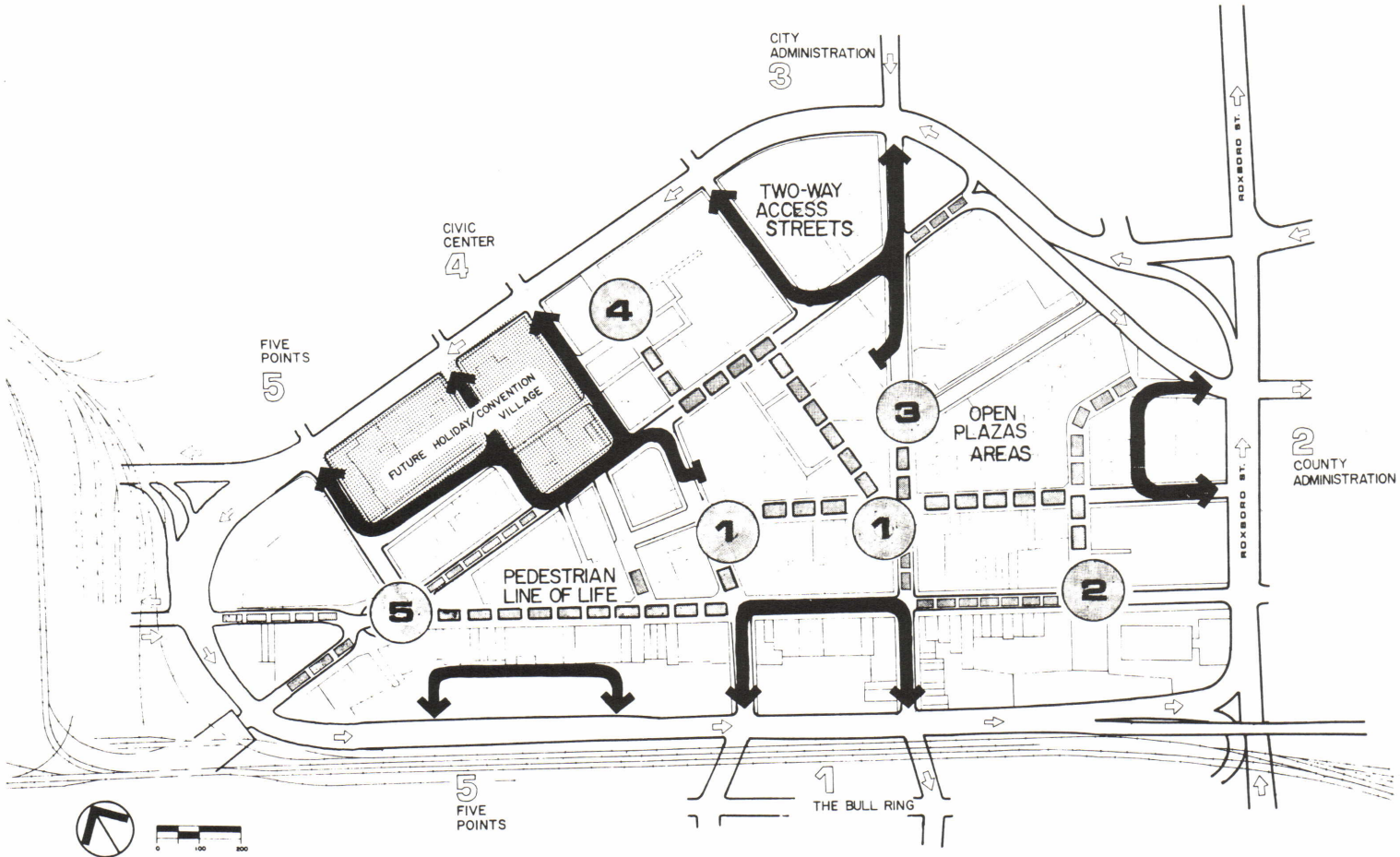
 PARK SITE

Figure #4 Proposed Concept of Durham Downtown



LEGEND



PLAZA AREAS



PEDESTRIAN LINE OF LIFE



TWO WAY ACCESS STREETS



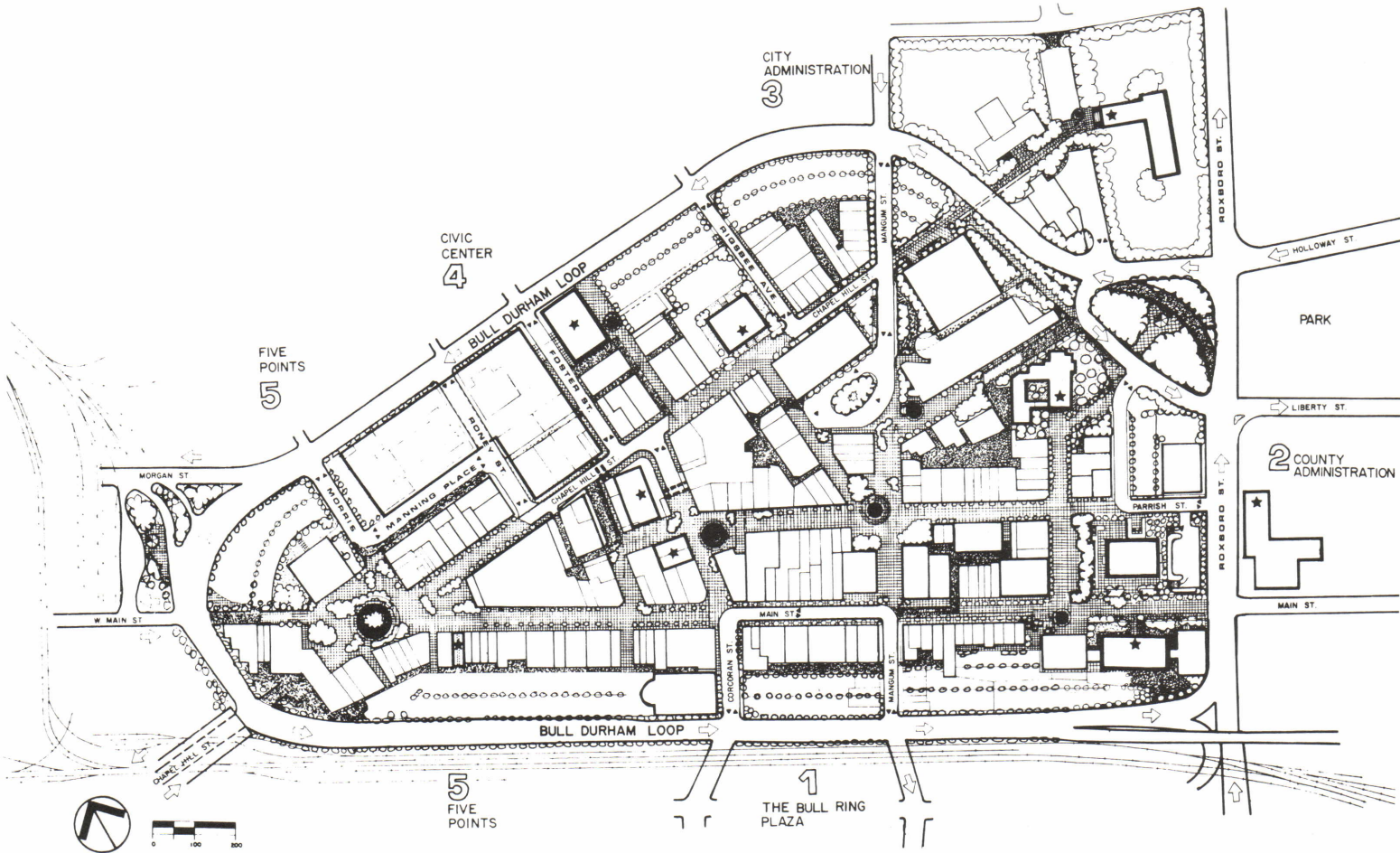
BULL DURHAM LOOP

Pedestrian Line of Life





The pedestrian in Downtown Durham must have a more equitable opportunity to circulate freely in the business district if this major center of retail trade is to remain viable. The focus of this proposal (Figure #5) is to give over a protected core of the downtown streets to the pedestrian, thereby providing for the citizen on-foot, uncontested out-

door spaces which are usually dominated by motor vehicles. A pedestrian "Line of Life" with plazas, fountains, greenways, and shopping malls will link all parts of the downtown shopping and office areas with a proposed urban park to the east of the Business Core (Figure #6). All of the necessary vehicles will continue to perform their function within the business district with the exception of through-traffic. Emergency and necessary service vehicles will still have access to all portions of the existing street framework. Also, certain streets are designated as access streets (Figures #2 and #4). These sets of streets form minor loops into (but do not sever) the protected core so that individual and mass transit vehicles may drop off or collect pedestrians within an easy two-block walk of any point in the core. These vehicles may then quickly return to the major downtown loop formed by Roxboro, Morgan, and Peabody Streets. The logic of this circulation system is enhanced and made possible by the fortunate implementation of the plan for a major downtown loop and the placement of automobile parking on the periphery of the Business Core formed by that loop.

Figure #5 Schematic Plan



LEGEND

-  PEDESTRIAN WAYS - THE LINE OF LIFE AND PLAZAS
-  FOCAL POINTS OF PLAZAS - FOUNTAINS AND MAJOR SCULPTURES
-  CORRIDORS FOR SERVICE VEHICLES
-  LAND MARKS - MAJOR EXISTING STRUCTURES OF HISTORICAL SIGNIFICANCE
- 2** AREAS OF ACTIVITY WITH DIRECT ACCESS COUNTY FROM BULL DURHAM LOOP ADMINISTRATION

Urban Park and Housing Redevelopment

citizen. Essential to the successful achievement of the desired new urban space in the downtown Durham District is the reclamation of adjacent land to the north and east to support the Durham District with a range of new quality, affordable housing. This supporting housing should bring back the resident and merchant to downtown.

Over-construction of buildings, streets, and parking with little regard for accessible open, green space must be avoided. In the transformation of those adjoining parcels into new housing, as much attention must be given to places where we *should not* build as to those places where buildings and streets *should* occur.

An urban park (Figure #6) will connect this housing and the business district, and it is proposed that the highest and most scenic hill in the downtown (upon which is clustered a number of historic churches) be preserved as this large open, natural park. Other land such as the existing stream beds in the new housing area is unfit ecologically for construction and should be preserved as green-

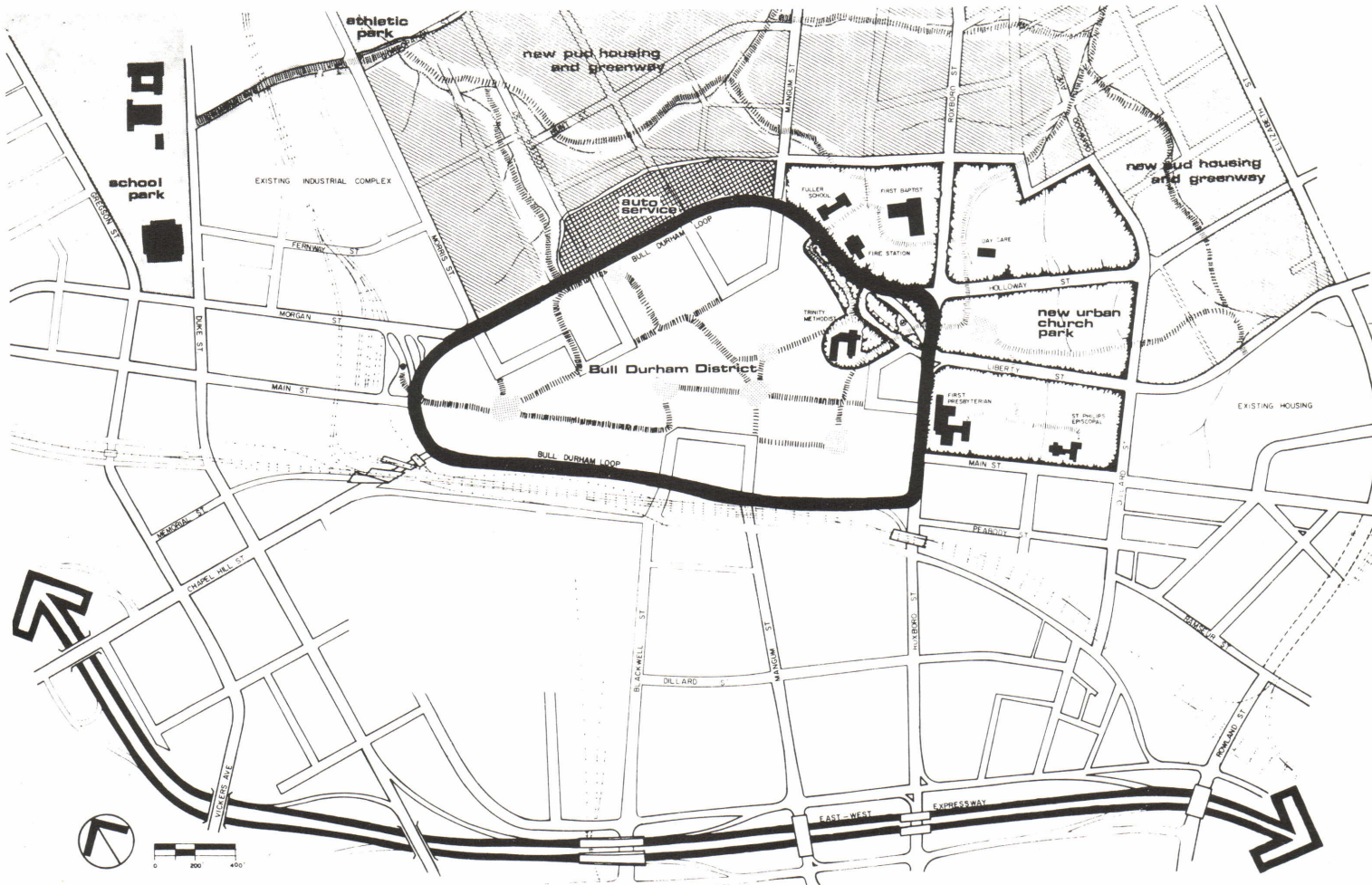
ways linking and integrating the church park with the Durham District, the new housing, and other existing developments. The park and network of greenways would not only provide a source of after-hour, weekend recreation for new downtown residents, but would also shape and direct the future growth pattern of the downtown.

The park itself should be designed as a place where the simple social activities can take place—walking through a pleasant setting, relaxing in a beautiful garden, or flying kites, training dogs, playing sports, listening to a concert—all in the open greens. Accessibility for such purposes is critical in all forms—walking, cycling, and motoring. The present streets and proposed greenways, when properly designed and regulated with under- and over-passes, guarantee the maximum use of the park and surrounding space.

A long history and some excellent examples of urban parks and their influence on sustaining urban life are found in many of the older cities of this country and abroad. Durham can capture this lasting value for its downtown as well.

With the gradual deterioration and removal of all of the residential areas originally adjacent to the downtown business district, retail outlets sought other locations in Durham nearer to the shopping

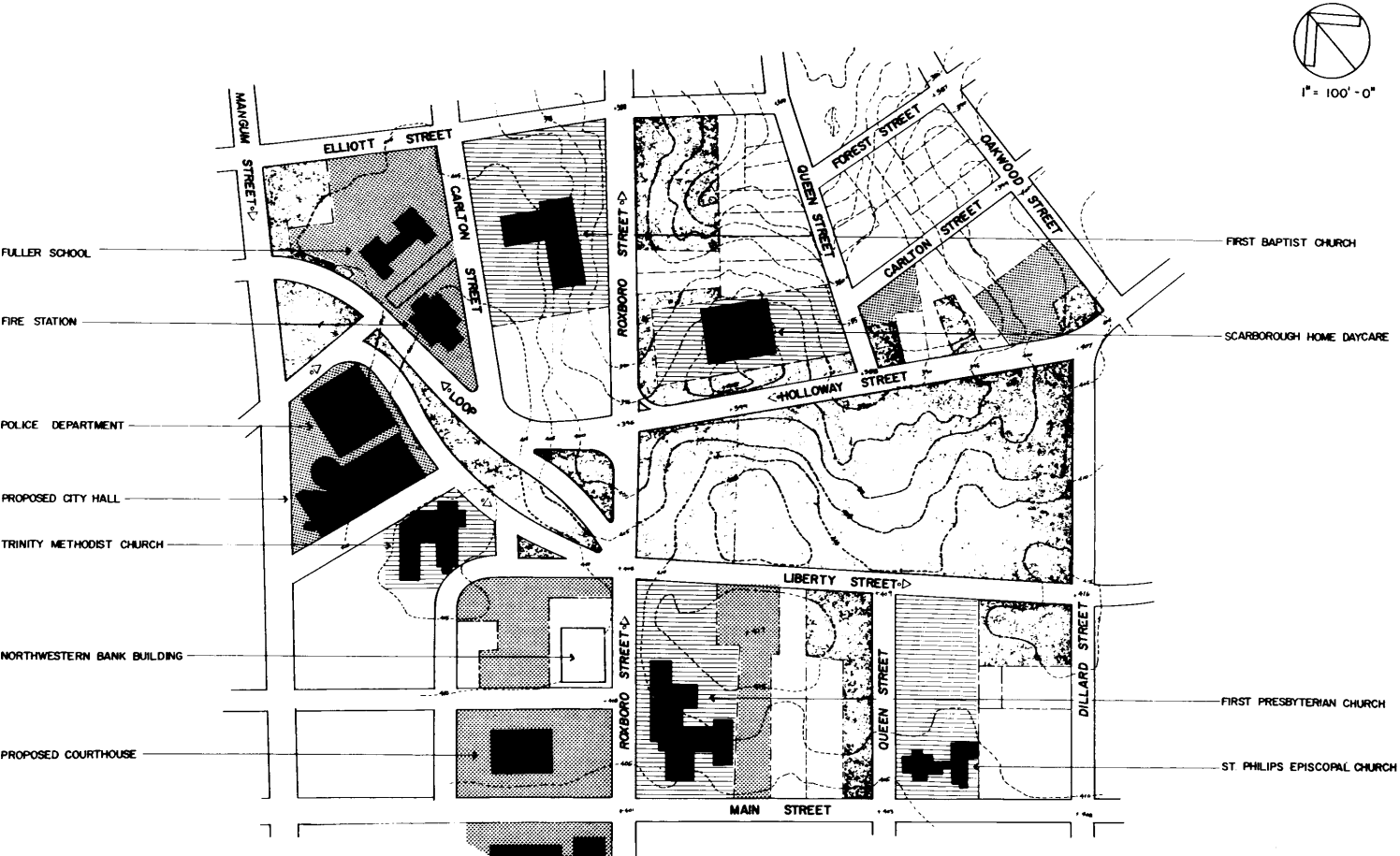
Figure #6 Proposed Urban Park



LEGEND

-  CHURCH PARK
-  WALK & BIKE GREENWAY
-  NEW HOUSING DEVELOPMENT UNITS
-  AUTO SERVICE CENTER
-  EXISTING STRUCTURES

Figure #7 Current Ownership, Church Grounds Park



LEGEND




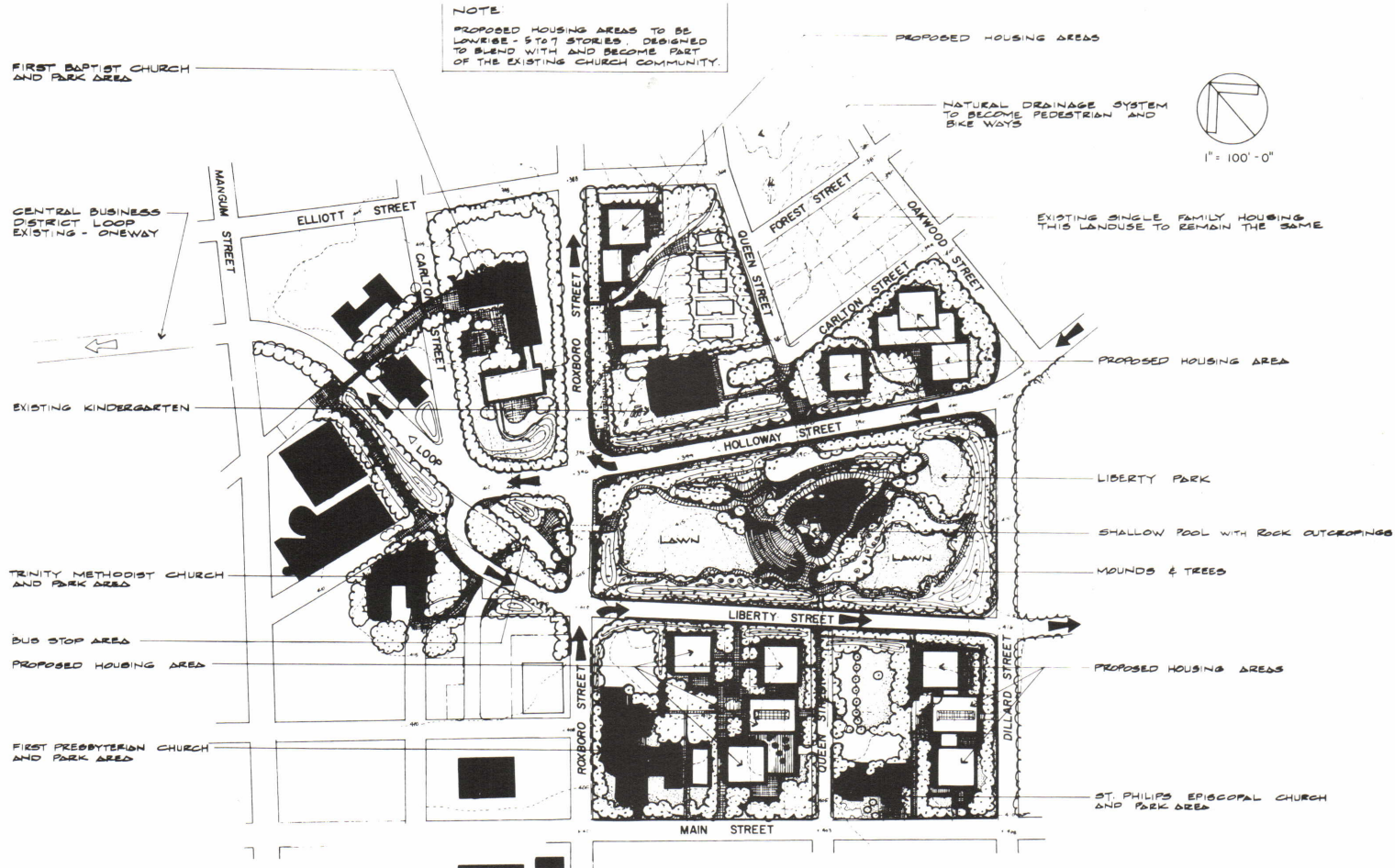
	REDEVELOPMENT COMMISSION
	CITY OF DURHAM
	INDIVIDUAL CHURCHES

Figure #8 Master Development Plan, Church Grounds Park



Cultural Theme

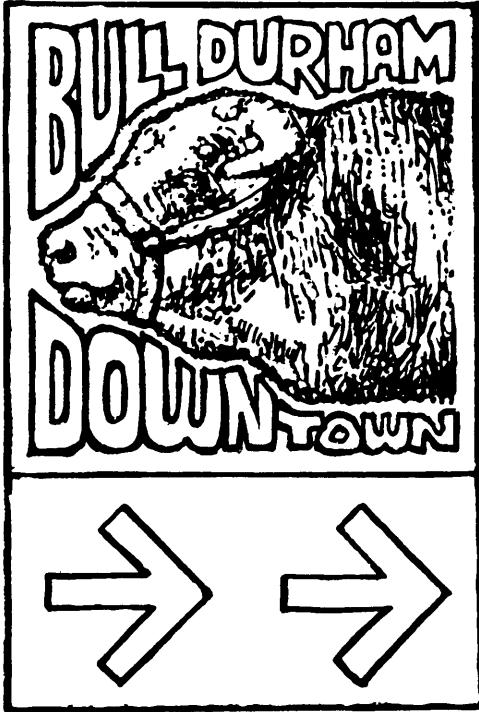


Fig. 9

This proposal recommends the adoption of a culture theme (i.e. *Downtown-Durham District*) with supporting sign systems, advertising, and similar promotion to give the Business Core an easily recognizable identity (Figures #9, #10 and #11). To help promote and reinforce the new special image of the Downtown Durham District, its pedestrian plazas, adjoining church park, and planned housing, the area needs an effective and pleasant series of graphic signs located along the Durham Loop and at other key locations in the City. These

signs which index centers of activities and parking information for the arriving motorist will quickly establish the new vitality and culture of Downtown Durham. The historical symbol of the bull would serve as the trademark for that identity.

Another level of signs scaled to the person on foot and located at key points would direct and inform the pedestrian as he moves about. In addition to well-located and appropriate signs, the attractiveness of parking lots, plazas, and greenways can be increased by coordinating and combining other landscape elements such as lighting, utilities, street furniture, walk patterns, and groups of trees and shrubs. The use of oversized painted pictures, referred to as "supergraphics", can add particular zest and interest to otherwise large, bland walls facing the parking lots and plazas.

With the development of a high standard sign system in the District, it is contemplated and encouraged that merchants and businesses will want to adopt the theme and character of the downtown graphics. A code for aesthetic review and regulation should be drafted to determine future street signs on an individual basis.

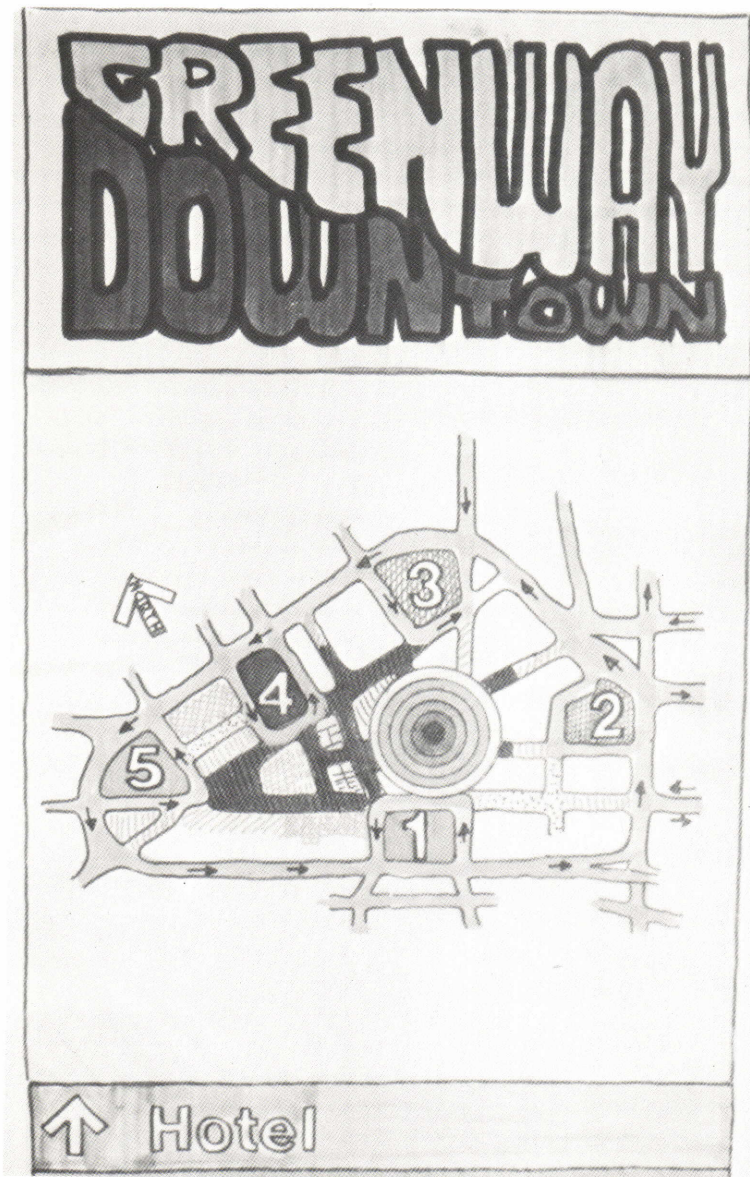


Fig. 10

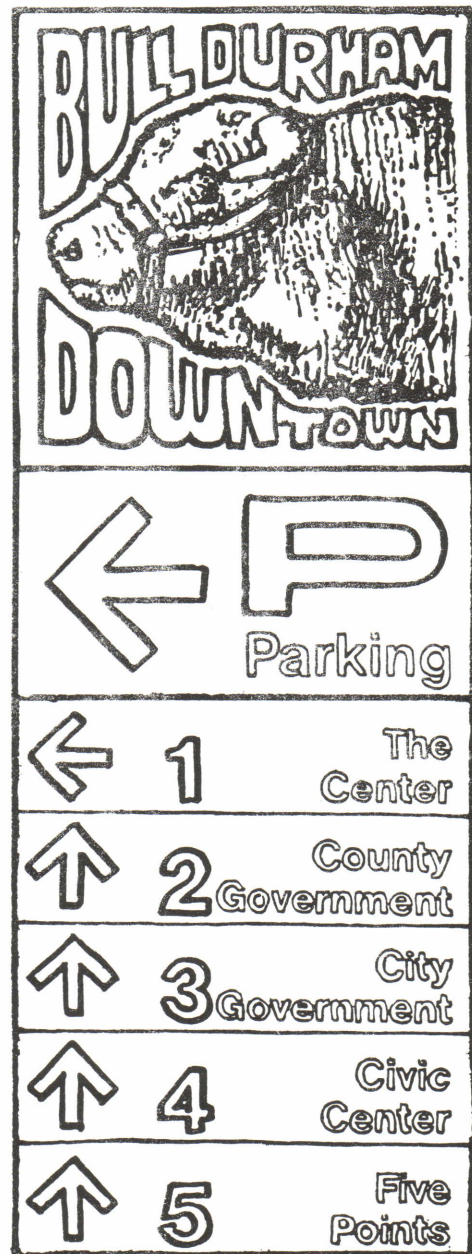


Fig. 11

“What Has Happened to Our Downtowns?”

The downtown areas of our cities and towns are dying. It is a cold, harsh fact. Every day more and more familiar shops close their doors and move from Main Street to a new shopping plaza several miles away in Suburbia.

What prompts merchants, who for twenty five years or more have maintained their shops in these downtown areas to relocate in outlying shopping centers?

Ask almost any citizen and he will tell you that the worst part about going downtown is the traffic and the availability of parking. The thoroughfares are clogged with automobiles, buses, and taxis. Upon leaving one's automobile, there is a constant fight for survival to walk from store to store across the busy streets carrying traffic to and through the city. There is no human scale to the resultant environment and certainly no pazazz. As a result, fewer people are going to the downtown areas to do their shopping.

And few can name more than one or two positive aspects when pressed to answer, “What do you think of or notice most when you go downtown?” Automobiles, litter, grim facades, hurrying people, strangers, crumbling or deserted buildings, lack of color, “daily grind,” and human debris. Rarely does one linger about town as in years past. The streets are hard, uninviting places; automobiles crowd the lanes and strangers hurry by on their way to conduct their business. The familiar shopkeeper no longer stands outside of his store and chats with friends and neighbors while prospective customers meander along the sidewalk window shopping and stopping to browse.

Banks, savings and loans, municipal offices, etc. occupy most of the downtown buildings today. In many cities the central business district has ceased to be a commercial and retail center, but has developed into a massive network of office buildings. Beyond 5:30 p.m. when the last car

emerges from the parking garage, the streets become devoid of activity and the sidewalks empty. There is little need for restaurants, entertainment, or assemblage.

Along the routes entering the core of many cities, tenements abound. A study by the Community Development Program in Greensboro in 1974 showed that over a period of time in neighborhoods near the downtown area, the removal or conversion of older homes and apartments in the wake of increasing non-residential uses resulted in the blighting of other homes nearby. Internal over-crowding led to a more rapid deterioration of houses still in use (often converted from single-family to multi-family); existing streets which were too narrow for higher densities and commercial purposes were widened and vacant spaces were made into parking lots and the residential character of the area was further diluted. Residents, dismayed by the loss of neighborhood character and amenities, eventually moved away or sold their homes or converted them into multi-family dwellings. The result was a place that was no longer attractive enough to survive as a residential area but instead became suitable only for wholesale commercial or industrial usage.

The result of these non-resident uses which is evident in neighborhoods around downtown has had an increasing impact over the years. The change has been gradual, almost imperceptible, but dramatic. It has increasingly separated residential neighborhoods from the downtown core. Since non-residential development on the downtown fringe often depends upon the demolition of houses, new construction has taken place on lots and block parcels laid out in grid patterns with little regard for open space and with public services designed for residential purposes. The

result is a mix of uses compatible for neither residential or non-residential purposes.

The non-residential development on the fringes of the business district has caused the once central core to spread out over a broad area. In contrast, compact shopping centers offer a wide range of stores and services within a well-defined and concentrated area.

Another aspect of the spreading of the downtown is the decrease in the ability to effectively manage the development that occurs therein. New construction of various types is permitted to take place with little consideration for future growth and needs.

The lack of a residential fringe eliminates a crucial element of the downtown itself—people. Neighborhoods contain people and downtown needs people at all hours of the day and night to remain economically viable. But because of non-residential development, neighborhoods have drifted from downtown toward the larger, open areas and outlying shopping centers have developed around the higher residential concentrations.

The majority of the housing that is left in or near the downtowns of a majority of cities is relatively low-cost, high density housing. Homes left by concerned citizens in the wake of downtown expansion deteriorate rapidly, yet fill an important need within the city's housing supply. It provides housing for the poor and near-poor people.

The elderly and low income families who occupy these tenements have little buying power and the effect on the downtown businesses is tremendous. Retail merchants are faced with a two-fold dilemma: If they are to continue to sell their products, they must appeal to one of two markets—that of the low-income resident or that of the moderate to



higher income customer. They cannot reach both. As the merchants find it more profitable to sell merchandise that is higher priced and of better quality, their shops lose the low-income trade; the merchants feel forced to move to the regional shopping centers where the higher income market can be reached with little difficulty.

Few persons are attracted by the poverty and deterioration that mark many downtown areas. Those who do frequent the downtown do so because their offices or places of business are there or because they live there. The group in the former category leave at the end of the work day and return to comfortable suburban homes. The others, the poor and elderly who live downtown, must find entertainment and comfort in their surroundings. Criminal statistics show that the majority of criminal activity takes place in such an environment. Security is a problem. And most persons avoid the darkened empty corridors after their offices close in the afternoon.

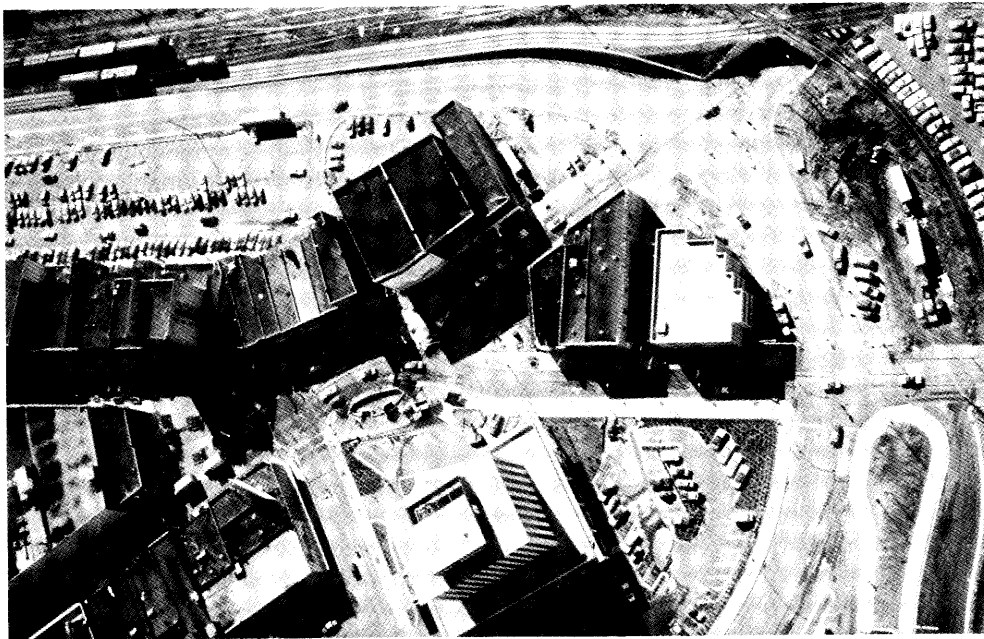
In view of the many negative aspects of living and working downtown, is it any wonder that few sources of entertainment locate there? Theaters, restaurants, nightclubs, etc., thrive on customers, people. Unless these businesses can attract large crowds willing to spend large sums of money, they soon deteriorate and become adult movie houses or bookstores, rundown taprooms, etc., or they simply go out of business altogether.

Shopping centers provide several forms of entertainment, both expensive and inexpensive. Other than shopping, there are often exhibits of art, crafts, and music for the visitor's pleasure as well as the usual theaters, small coffee-houses, or nightclubs. Restaurants of all kinds flank the promenades including expensive steak houses, foreign cuisines, pizzerias,

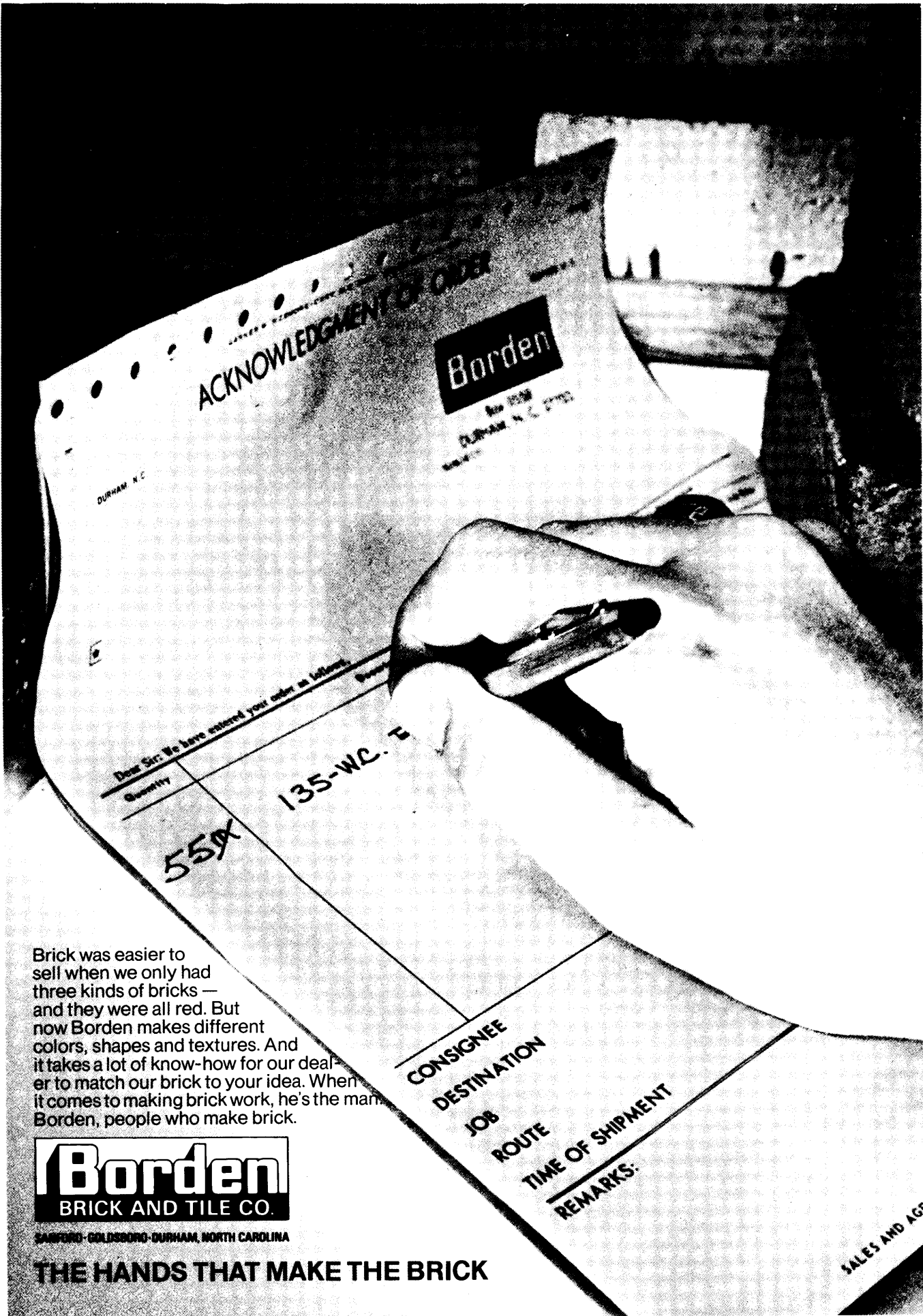
and hot dog stands. In a type of "mutual admiration society" the entertainment sources and the special shops and department stores co-exist, each supporting the other and attracting the throngs of people which each require to survive. This same kind of cooperation must be at work downtown if it is to compete with the shopping centers.

There is no question that the provision of some stimulus besides the simple need for a particular item results in the festive and profitable atmosphere that the shopping centers enjoy.

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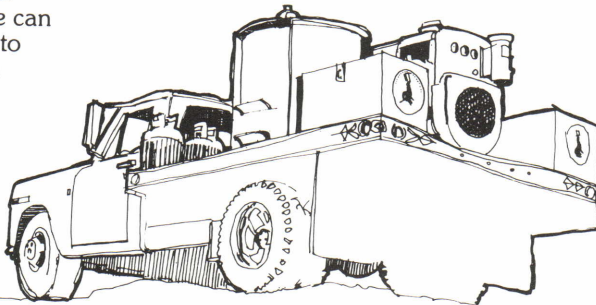
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PHILIP JOHNSON'S GLASS HOUSE RECEIVES AIA 25-YEAR AWARD

The elegant glass house designed by Philip Johnson, FAIA, for his estate in New Canaan, Conn. received The American Institute of Architects' 25-Year Award. The award was presented during the Institute's annual convention in Atlanta, Ga., May 18-22.

The award is given for architectural design of enduring significance, and is restricted to structures at least 25 years old. Built in 1949, the glass house joins a small but distinguished list of buildings that have been honored with the award.

One of the best-known of Johnson's works, the house is a 56 by 32-foot rectangle of glass, set in a wooded landscape. There are no partitions; a brick cylinder enclosing a bathroom and a fireplace is the only architectural element to reach the ceiling. Living areas are defined by furniture groupings which, says Johnson, are never changed.

The natural setting is an integral part of the glass house, visible both from the inside and from the outside, as one looks through the house. According to an article in *Architectural Forum*

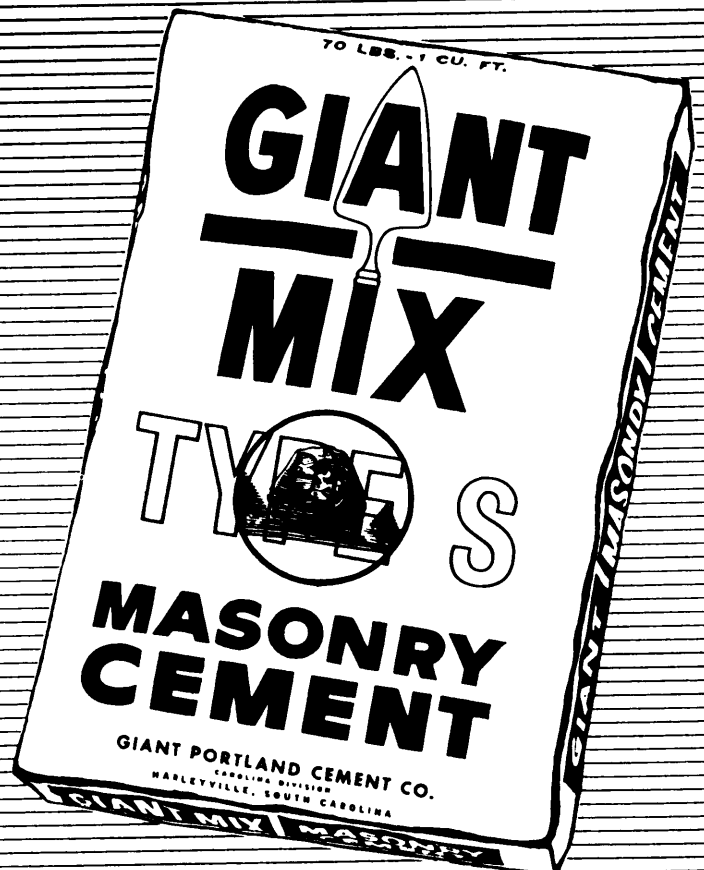
published at the time the house was built, "... the open secret is that the house alone is not the complete dwelling unit. The real living space is the tree-bounded, three-level piece of land."

In addition to the glass house, Johnson's New Canaan estate also includes a brick guest house, a small pavilion by the lake, an art gallery, and a sculpture gallery, housing selections from Johnson's extensive collection of contemporary art.

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NECROLOGY

It is with sincere regret that we report the deaths of two members of the North Carolina Chapter AIA. Louis H. Asbury, Sr., AIA of Charlotte died on March 17 at age 97. He was an incorporator of the Chapter in 1913 and served as its first Vice-President. He was also the first AIA member in this state, elected in 1908, the year he established his practice in Charlotte. He is survived by an architect son, Louis H. Asbury, Jr.

James P. Milam, AIA, 52, died on April 5 at his home in Greensboro of a heart attack. He was a graduate of N. C. State University and had been a member of AIA since 1958. He served as Chairman of the Chapter Publication Committee for a number of years. His wife and two children survive.

NCAIA SUMMER MEETING
Center for Continuing Education
Boone, North Carolina
July 24, 25, 26, 1975



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