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REPORT ON REDMOND, WASHINGTON

of the URBAN DESIGN ASSISTANCE TEAM

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## INTRODUCTION

At the request of the City Council, the Urban Design Assistance Team visited Redmond for three days, October 18-20, 1969. Its purpose was to identify planning problems for the citizens of that city, to recommend courses of action and act as a catalyst for community action. It was not its purpose to propose any plans or designs.

The members of the team volunteered their time. Their travel and living expenses were shared by the City and the Institute.

Their agenda for the three days was concentrated. It began the first morning with a breakfast with community leaders who expressed the problems as they saw them and concluded with a banquet attended by 230 concerned citizens where this report was delivered verbally. Between these events, the team toured the city and the planning region by car and on foot, reviewed maps and statistics furnished by the Planning Office, studied carefully the problems at hand and met with press and television.

## EXISTING CONDITIONS

The team began its report with a brief slide essay on what it had observed -- from the old railroad station to the new Rocket Research plant, from Farmer John's

billboard to the old town hall, from the wooden facade of the Redmond Blacksmith's Shop to the quiet, rural Samammish Valley. They showed a highly-endowed natural environment and the best and the worst that man can do by way of building.

The planning area of Redmond, consisting of approximately 55 square miles is one of the most rapidly growing communities in the country. In 1960 it had a population of 1,500 people; today it has 20,000 and by 1985 the number will have reached 100,000 -- an increase of 100% every three years. The area has been called the last American frontier.

It lies some thirty miles east of Seattle in the Samammish Valley, physically bounded on the eastern and western sides by steep slopes. On the north and south, the divisions are reasonable political divisions between the neighboring communities of Issiquah and Bothell. Lake Samammish occupies a large part of the southern area and flows northward into the Samammish River, which empties into Lake Washington. The trees are tall, straight firs, many over a hundred years old. Skiing and camping are available in the Cascade mountains, an hour's drive to the east, and deep water fishing and boating in Puget Sound, the same distance to the west. These physical characteristics will have a great deal to do with the planning of the area where the roads and

houses will go, where recreation will occur.

The planning region is inescapably bound to its neighbors and to greater Seattle, only a half hour's drive away. It is a link in the new Metro mass transit scheme which is well under study and is a part of the metropolitan freeway system. It is not a bedroom community, having several industries of its own. People commute both to and from Redmond.

A shopping center, "Evergreen East," is planned immediately south of the city limits and the land on which it will lie must one day be annexed to the city. It will comprise more than a hundred stores in over a million square feet and provide employment for over 3,000 people. An important community college is to be located within the region. The area may presently be identified as a town. The principal road intersections provide a nucleus, although they are adjoined with many blatant commercial enterprises. Contracts will soon be let for a new town hall only a block away.

All the essential elements for a new town are present at this moment. A new town seldom starts with some maestro putting his finger on a map and saying, "build here." Geographic, demographic, physical, social and historic conditions must be present for it to work. These conditions were not present five years ago; to

wait five years from now to start planning will be too late.

#### ALTERNATIVES

The alternatives to this approach are hardly attractive. An uncontrolled development will produce sprawl with no sense of focus, no sense of place. One need only look at nearby communities to see the evidence. The economic base will deteriorate and the land form will erode. Utilities such as water and sewer will have to serve on a piecemeal basis.

Land use will be disconnected as well as the transportation systems that will follow. The resultant community will have no social or economic balance and this lopsidedness will take its toll on the individual as well as the community.

The planning process has always imposed social values on the process of growth -- both physical and economical. To deny this process is to invite chaos.

#### THE TOWN CENTER

The team proposes that the city of Redmond begin to plan a new town for the future and begin now. At the heart of this new town there be a new town center -- a center which will give vitality to the community. It will become a focus and an activity center for the people. It

should include the transportation interchange. The community college should be located there in an urban setting and close to transportation. The town center's location is already established by the new town hall, a location which seems satisfactory in every respect. The town center should act as a cultural and entertainment attraction with perhaps a movie house and other places of assembly. There should be provisions for specialty shops -- the shopping center will not supplant the town center. There are numerous examples of similar coexistence across the country. There should be ample office space for professionals and regional as well as national businesses. There might be a covered space that could serve as an occasional market area for local crafts, a flea market, a rummage sale, an outdoor cafe. High density housing might well be a part of this complex as well as adjoining it.

The town center should provide the link between car and pedestrian. Good parking must be provided, on the ground at first and probably in multistoried structures later on. Properly designed it will also serve the transit system and the other facilities as well, often doing double duty because of different hours of use. A ring road would prevent vehicular interruption yet provide simple access.

The water which flows in the river through the center's location should be channelled into lakes or canals to provide a wonderful amenity to the pedestrian. He's the key -- a "people place" should be created. Man is a social animal and loves to look at his fellow man. The mix of people and activities generates the excitement which we love in the city.

All of the elements of a good streetscape should be taken into consideration. There should be ample trees and benches and places to put trash. There should be adequate control of signs and identification and directional signs should be well designed. Lighting should be good and textures underfoot interesting. Who knows -- perhaps room could be found for a work of art!

#### THE TOWN AROUND THE CENTER

The new town must be a balanced community. At present only people in the upper income brackets can afford to live in it. This imbalance is just as serious as it is in communities where only the poor live. The new town must also find its balance with its neighbors and the region as a whole.

The physical character of the land will have much to say about the form of the new town. The shape of the valleys will produce a linear growth pattern. The trees will



not be bulldozed. Soil, marsh and gravel will have their say on what goes on above them.

The design of transportation should not be a haphazard following of land use but rather a contributing force toward its development. The community should give its support to the regional mass transit system and should have its say in how it is to serve Redmond. All kinds of transportation should be considered: the freeway, mass transit (both bus and train), railroads and local feeder roads. Where possible, different modes should be combined into transportation corridors to simplify land acquisition, to limit disruption of the land and to provide the best cost benefit ratio to the community.

The study of the future use of the land concerns where the people will live, work and play. If we divide 100,000 people into 55 square miles we come up with an average of one family per acre. Obviously we cannot spread the people on the land like butter on bread. Certain areas will want to be set aside for other purposes; certain areas will be unbuildable (lake, steep slopes). One family will want to live on a ten acre farm, another in a downtown apartment. Such choice of life styles among alternatives: farm, single house, town house, highrise gives vitality to a community and can provide the necessary social balance.

A population of this size will be broken down into 20 to 25 neighborhoods. Each will have its own distinctive characteristics -- probably an elementary school, a few shops, perhaps a park.

There are three areas where industry exists or is planned. The first is the western edge of the valley where Rocket Research is presently located, the second is at the gravel pits in the southeast where the prestressed concrete plant is now and the third is where the new shopping center will go. All three are reasonable places for industry and should be developed as such. The valley floor, since it is so visible from the surrounding slopes, should be reserved for open spaces and low density housing.

The planning region is unique in the richness of natural areas where people can play -- these must be preserved. The open spaces must organize the new town. The river, the valleys, the plateaus and the slopes must not be destroyed. They must be woven together to serve the citizens of the community and those who come to visit it.

Pedestrian and bicycle trails, canals and lagoons must link the ridges, hills and valleys. The installation of an inexpensive, hand-operated lock would provide a small boat connection between Lake Samammish and Puget Sound.

## IMPLEMENTATION

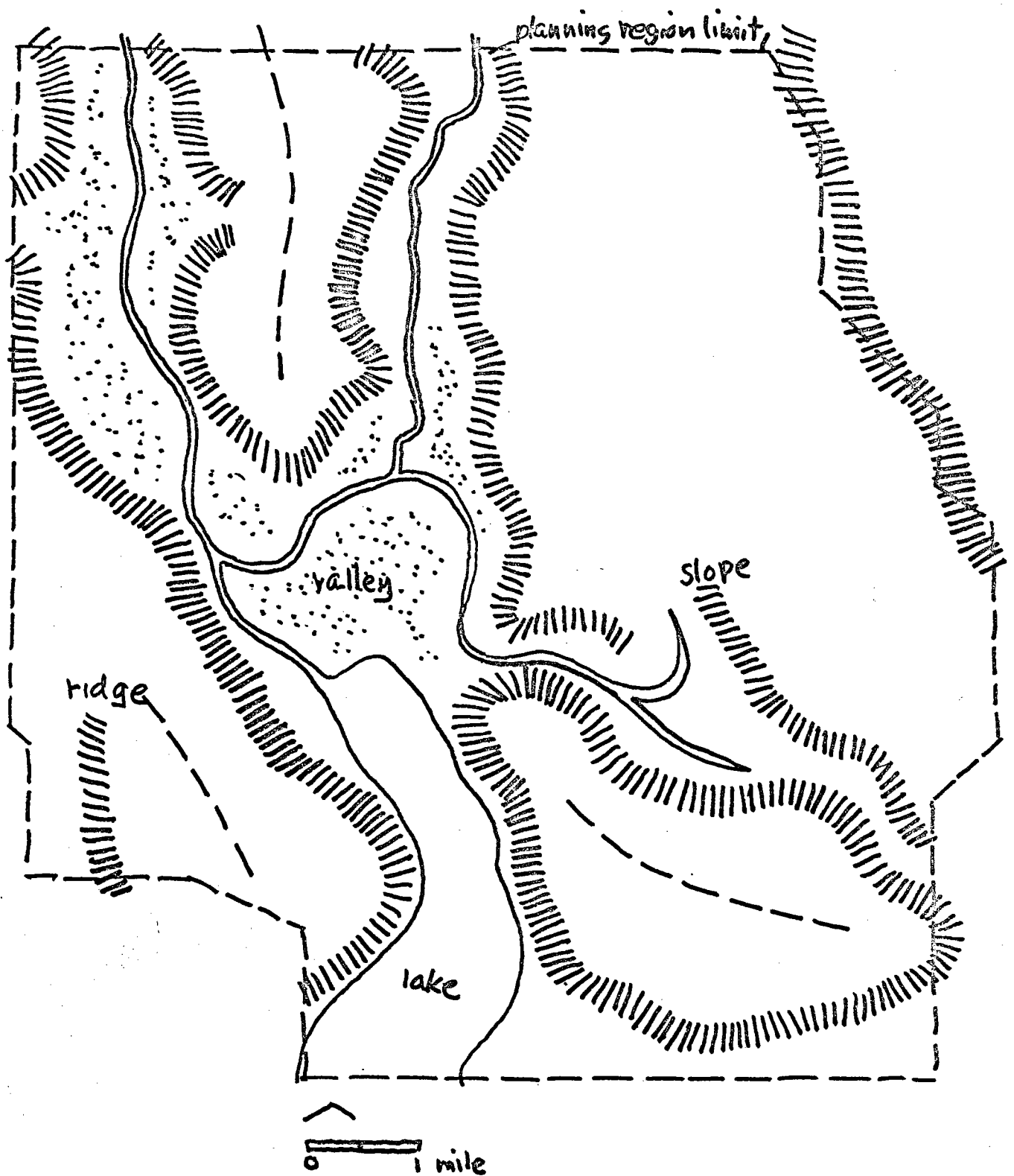
The City of Redmond is interested. That is why they invited this team here. That's why they have a Planning Office of such size and effectiveness. That's why so many people came to hear this report first hand. The political choice has to be made. To implement the new town concept will cost money. The goals of the community must establish the value of what it buys. We must know that when we spend money on our community we are improving our property and our living in the same way that we do when we buy grass seed for our lawns.

Action groups must be formed. As toastmaster Jack Wright suggested, those who attended the banquet should form a "Redmond -- New Town" committee. A strong downtown group organization should be formed as well as a new town center development corporation involving all concerned organizations in the planning region. Spontaneous citizens groups, "Rockets for Redmond!", "Save the Samammish!" should mushroom. Private encouragement should be sought.

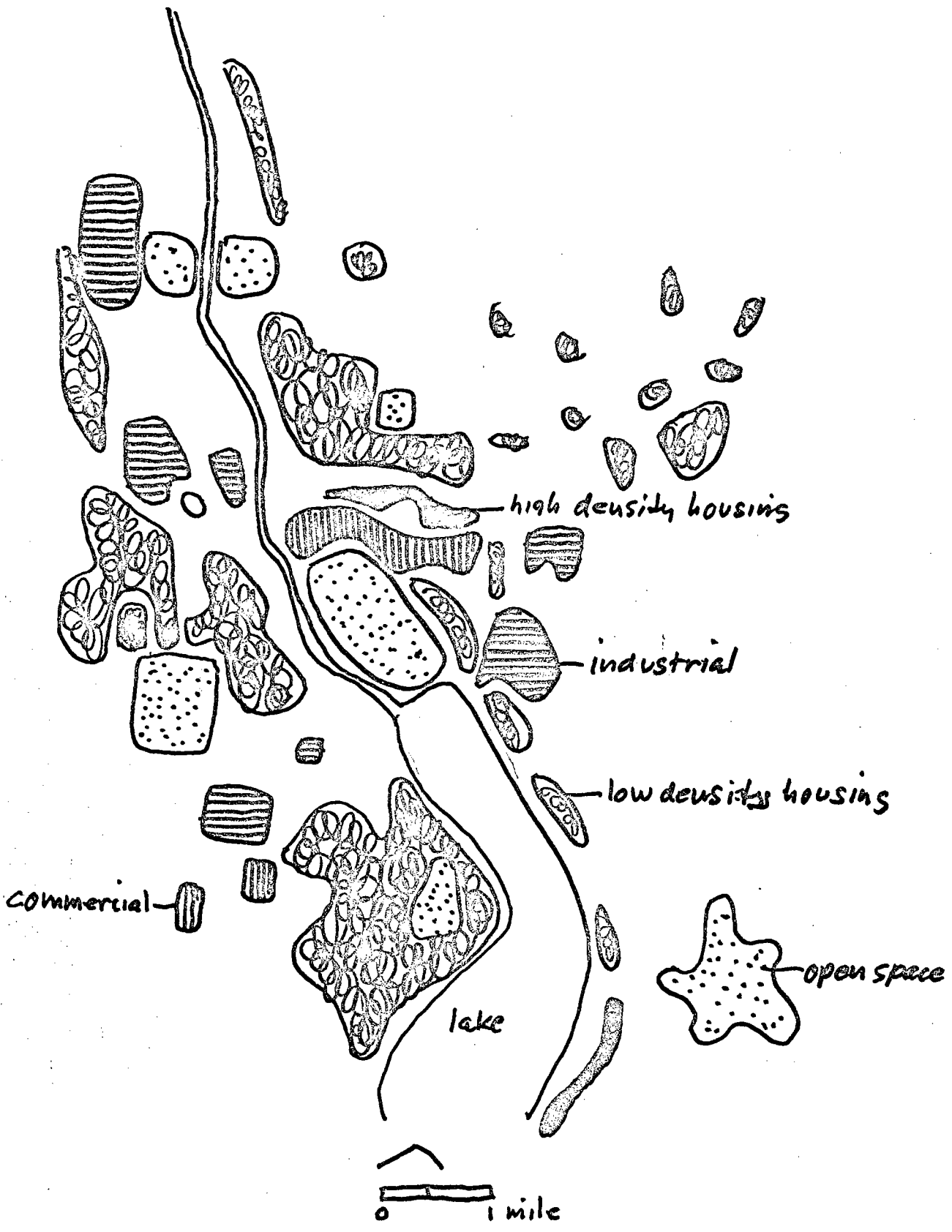
Every known device must be brought into play. Human resources must be used to their fullest. Redmond citizens must form non-profit corporations and assessment districts. "In-lieu" payments and local improvement districts must be established. Knowledgeable groups must investigate a new towns act, open space grants, planned unit develop-

ments and new zoning and subdivision ordinances. The tax structure must be reexamined. A slope policy must be designed. Turnkey projects, housing subsidies, low rent housing projects must be sought.

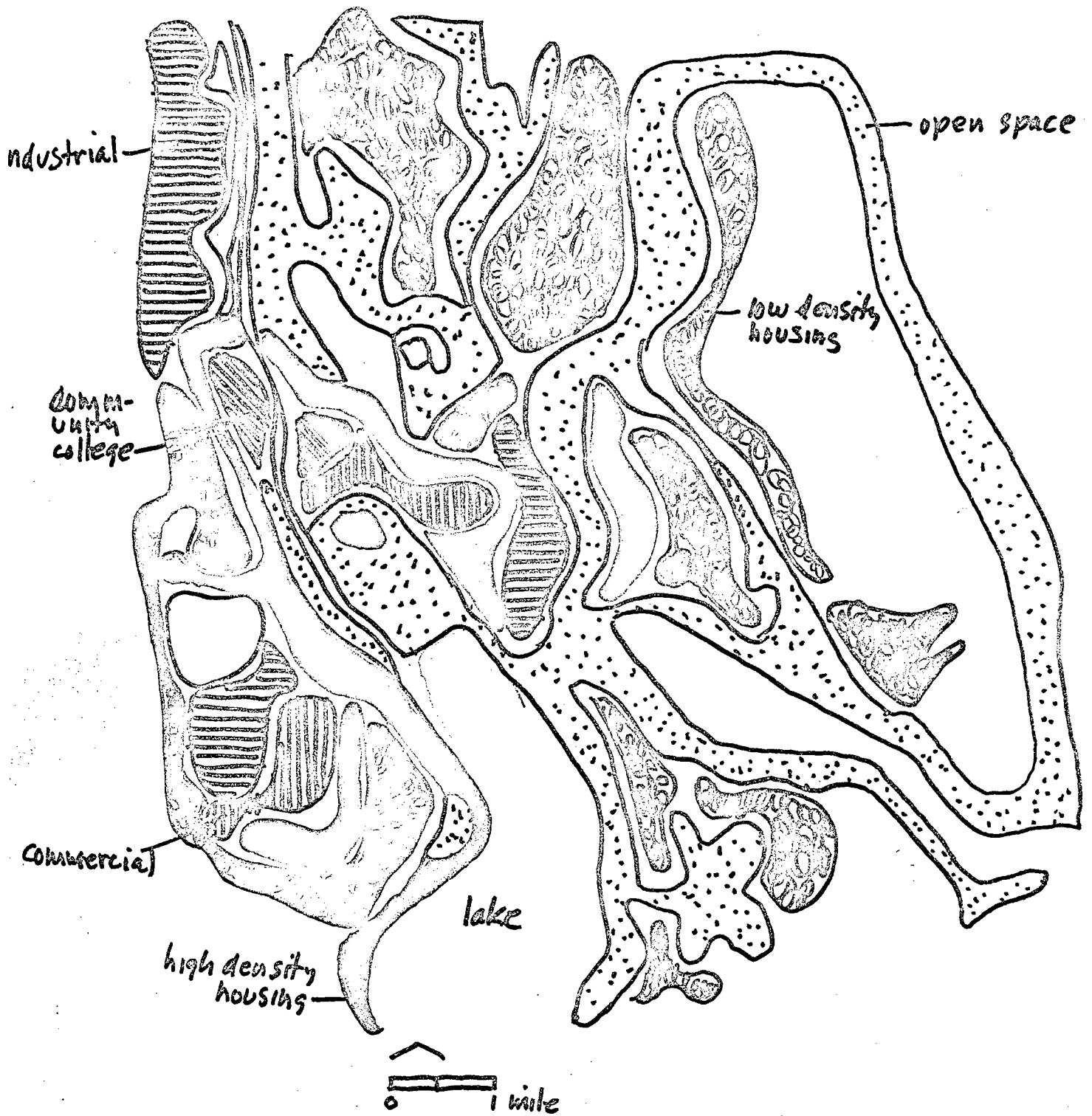
All this adds up to people involvement: the people of Redmond concerned with the people of Redmond.



Sketch 1 EXISTING LAND FORM



Sketch 2 EXISTING LAND USE



Sketch 3 FUTURE LAND USE

to Bothell

river

community college

loop road

city hall

parking

town center

station

transportation corridor

high density housing

park

to Seattle

Sketch 4 TOWN CENTER

