

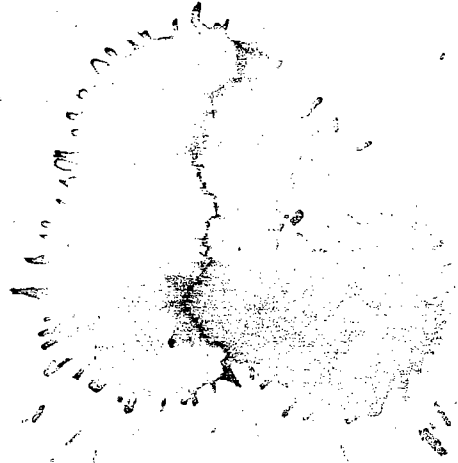
REPORT FROM THE  
AMERICAN INSTITUTE OF ARCHITECTS'

# URBAN DESIGN TEAM

STUDY OF

# ELY, MINNESOTA

ON JULY 18-19-20, 1970



91-B6105  
NA9127.E49  
A44 1970

CHARLES WILLIAM BRUBAKER, ARCHITECT  
OF PERKINS & WILL, CHICAGO, ILLINOIS

SAM CAUDILL, ARCHITECT  
OF CAUDILL AND ASSOCIATES, ASPEN, COLORADO

AND THE NORTHEAST MINNESOTA CHAPTER  
OF THE AMERICAN INSTITUTE OF ARCHITECTS:

- C. EVERETT THORSEN, committee chairman
- E. A. JYRING, chapter coordinator
- KENNETH SWEETNAM, MARINUS WESTERHAM,
- PHILIP BLOTT, DAVID MORGENSTERN, ROBERT SCOTT.

# ONTARIO, CANADA

QUETICO PROVINCIAL PARK

SUPERIOR NATIONAL FOREST

Lake Superior

ELY

RIBBING

DULUTH

MICH.

ST. PAUL

MINNEAPOLIS

MINNESOTA

WISCONSIN

IOWA

ILLINOIS

Lake Michigan

CHICAGO

MILWAUKEE

94

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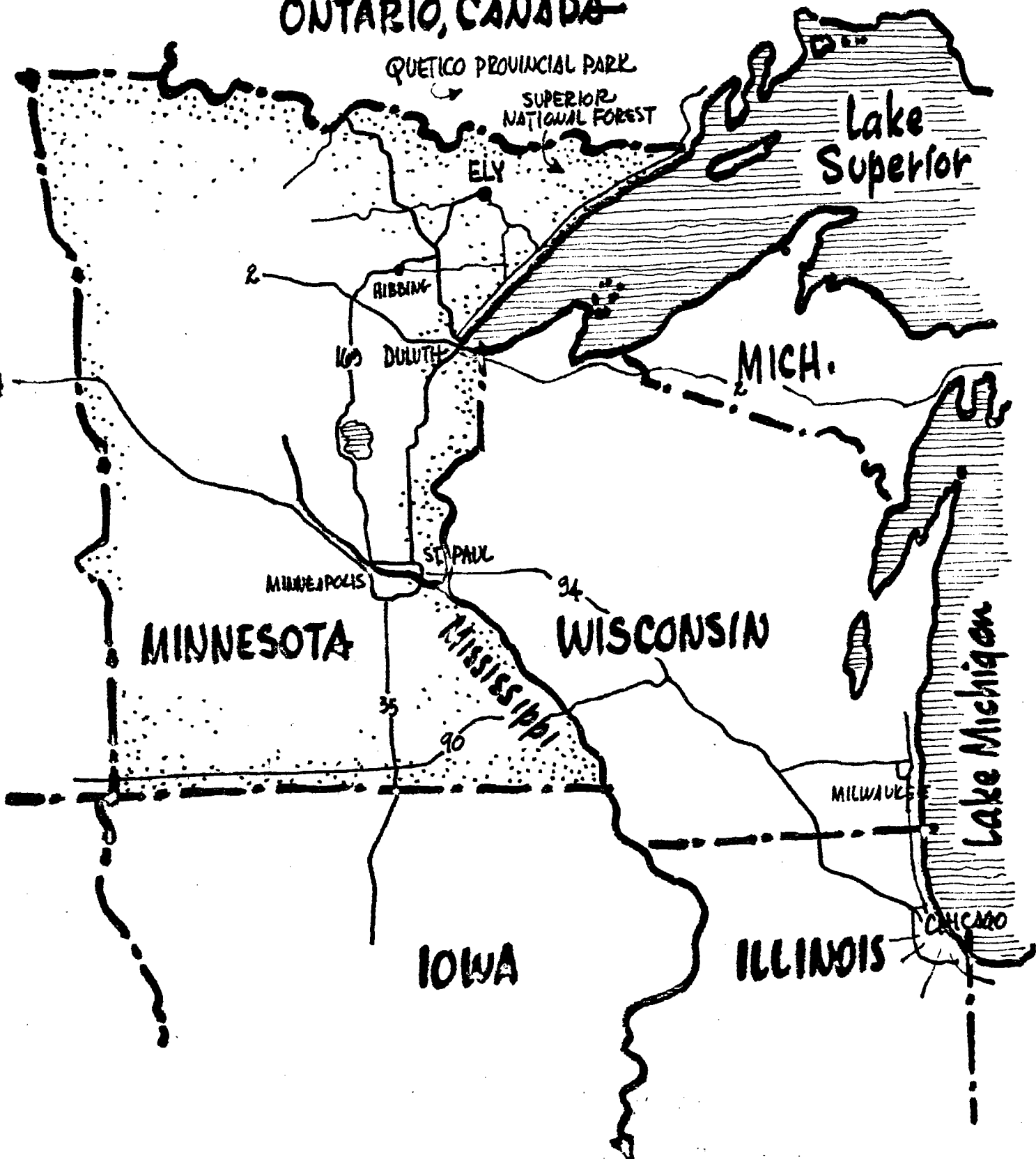
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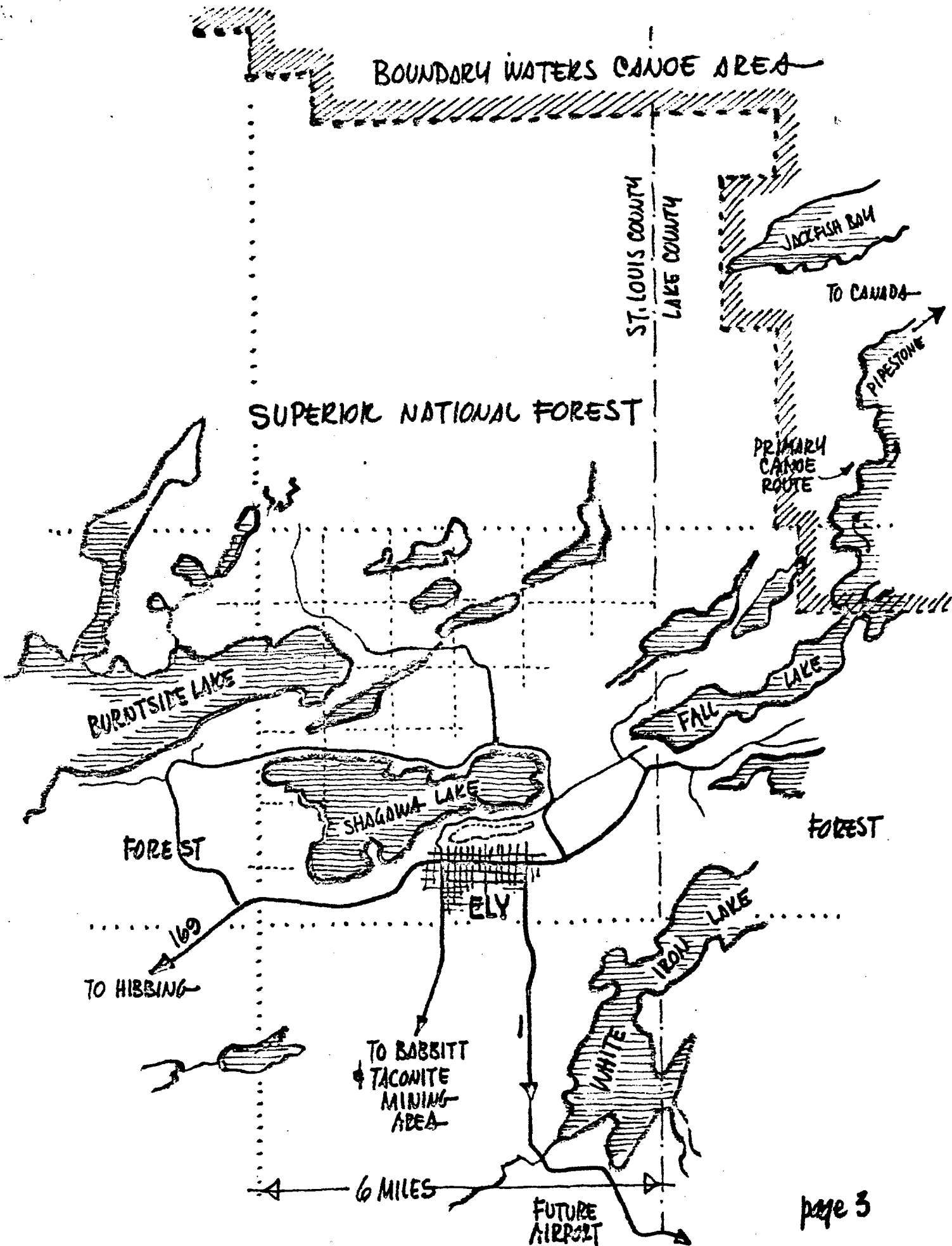
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90

MISSISSIPPI



BOUNDARY WATERS CANOE AREA



Background - Dick Brockbank

population mix = (1/2 Yugoslavia 1/2 Finland)  
... Catholic ... Lutheran

most of Ely built about 1895-1915  
then after 1920s, decline

Ely's "Pioneer Mine" closed 1967  
since not then economically attractive  
to go lower than the 17th level

= lost tax base  
& Ely has now a very high  
tax rate.

Taconite mines more attractive, more competitive..

(now, Ely's  
economy improved  
due to recreation,  
potential nickel  
and copper.)

"Community Action Program" started 1967, Dr. Milbrath..  
"how can the community help itself?"

(several subcommittees  
as 1) Tourism 2) Education  
3) Civic Improvement  
Action Committee

Northeast Minnesota Development Assn.  
brought together a group in Ely, 1968,  
to discuss Ely's future  
60 people agreed:  
"a face-lifting needed"

"an idea group"  
Richard Brockbank  
chairman

"Operation FaceLift" started  
emphasizing re-painting  
for immediate action

Jerry Syring was  
interested in the problem;  
John Harris joined him in  
renewing new interest  
in an Ely study  
"especially with AIA."

Ely invited  
NEADA, 1969 to help attract  
national organization (print assn)  
to participate in a special program  
of improvements.

"Overlay plan" suggested, with  
AIA participation, but action of dollars  
by Ely.

Dr. Milbrath  
went to Washington  
Dec 69  
for application for an  
AIA Urban Design Team.

Minnesota Society of Architects  
(C. Everett Thorsen, chair.)  
"interested in the Ely program"  
"will have its board meeting in Ely  
Monday."

Natl. AIA committee, headed by Henry Steinhilber,  
after planning team with Ely  
appointed Caudill and Burkholder  
as team members.

July 18, 1970 - 1970 date set..  
"much publicity, public invited,"

Breakfast meeting  
Saturday, July 18  
1970

Dick Brockbank, M.C.  
... introduction of architects  
from Ely, Hibbing, Duluth,  
Aspen, Chicago.  
and Ely citizens.

Dr. Alvin Hall  
county commissioner  
chairman -  
"Ely Community  
Action Program"

\* including Sam Caudibvich, alias Sam Caudill, architect  
and Villi Paakari, alias Bill Bwbaker, architect  
(Perkins & Will, Chicago)

Dennis Cherno  
pres., Chamber of Commerce

Fred Childers  
publisher  
"Ely Miner"

Walt Pfeifer  
communications  
Forest Center

Joe Pellikka  
president  
First National Bank  
chairman  
Ely Airport Commission

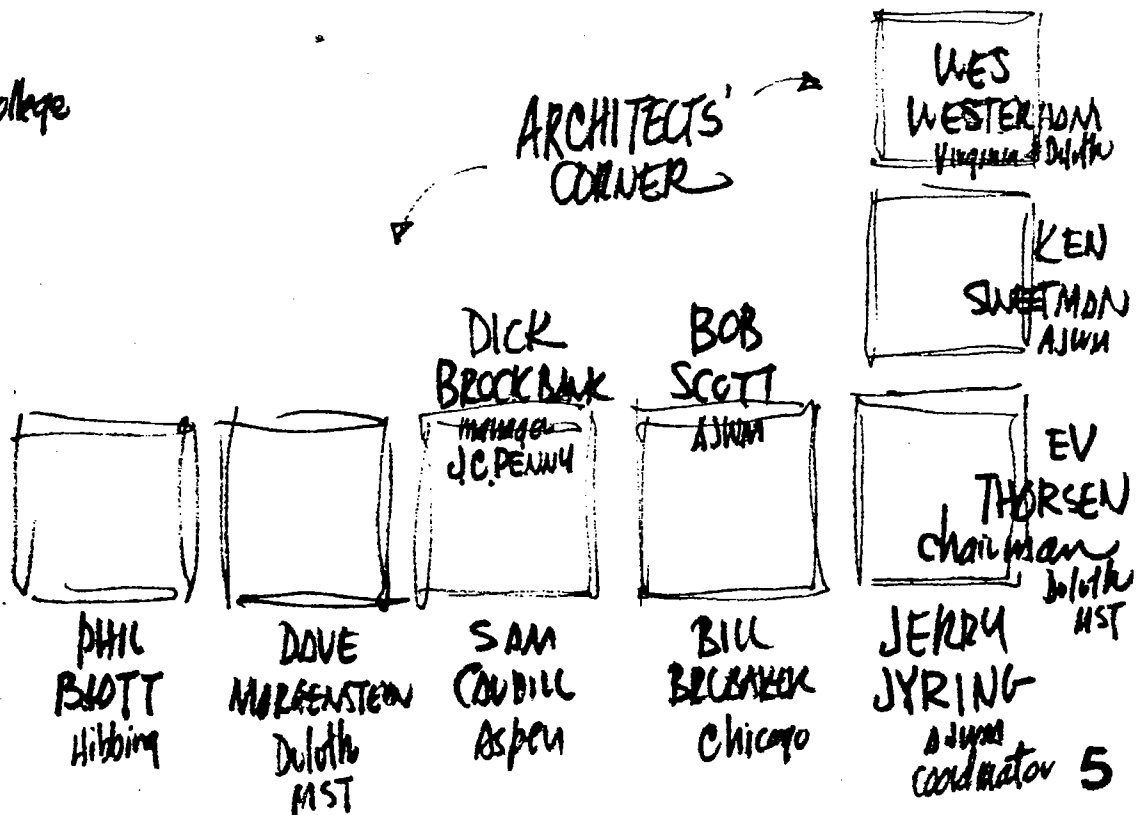
George Bubash  
chairman  
Ely Planning Commission

John Artisensi  
president  
Ely Development Council

C. Don Miller  
president  
Vermillion State Jr. College

Also = luncheon meeting  
including Dr. J.P. Grabelek  
mayor

ARCHITECTS' CORNER



VERMILION STATE JUNIOR COLLEGE

(Don Miller President)

under construction occupancy Dec '70

fine high location with good views ..

" area needs re-forestation "

next = ... high quality landscaping req'd.

good location ... high visibility.

HIDDEN VALLEY WINTER SPORTS AREA

family ski area ... 60 & 30 Meter  
bar lift, rope tow, jumps, cross country, coffee shop, etc.

" a city of Ely facility "

ELY BLOOMENSON HOSPITAL

Cowan St.

about 12 years old plus recent additions.

= good design ... an excellent hospital

Northman Terrace Tranter Park

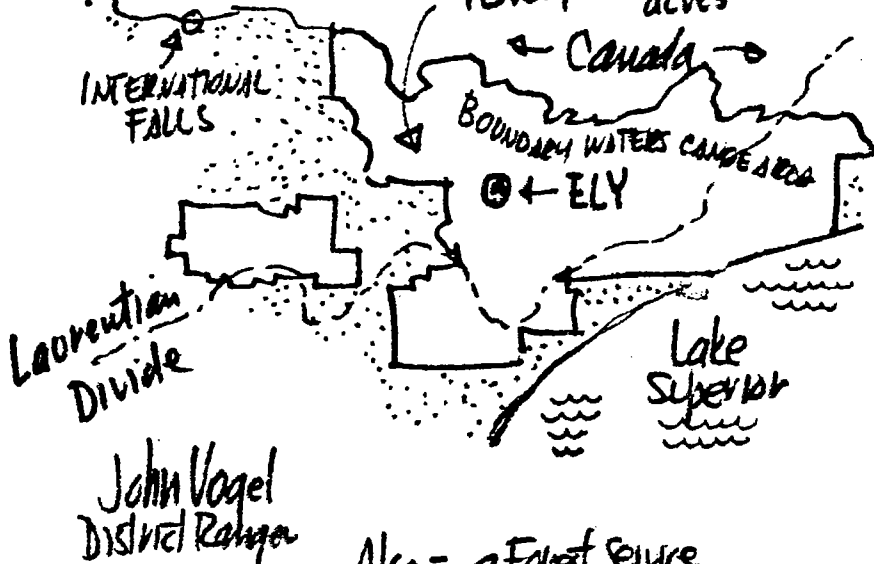
lacks trees, Landscaping, Walks, etc. ... but potential is good.

U.S. FOREST SERVICE INFORMATION CENTER

"THE VOYAGEUR" VISITOR CENTER

Superior National Forest = 2 million acres

KDAL TV coverage



Also = a Forest Service "Service Center" is projected for area across the road.



"The Voyageur" an excellent facility ... good character = 40,000 visitors/year

(including permits for canoe trips to Boundary Waters.)

signs of the times

SHAGODA LAKE PILOT PROJECT ... 222 Cowan St.  
Eutrophication Control Research & Development Program (US Dept of Zedown)

US FOREST SERVICE (just west of Central)  
EQUIPMENT HUB

five control equipment  
for Superior Forest  
& entire NE United States!

= will move out to Voyageur  
Visitor Center area

" making  
the land available  
for other purposes!  
" good location

existing, inadequate  
ELY AIRPORT (south of  
Sheridan, on 17th)

owned by St. Louis County

" to be moved  
6 miles south

"  
CEMETERY  
adjacent

Future  
Industrial  
Park??  
" or residential ...

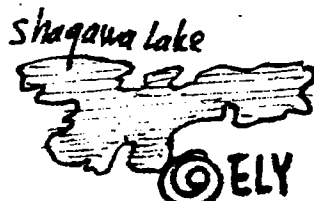
EAST END ...

CENTURY  
truck terminal  
with problem  
slab heap  
to north east ...

... ZEU-ELY  
PLANT  
makes animal bedding

KINZ LUMBER CO  
cuts pine .. saws boards ..  
makes chips ...

HELMBERGER LUMBER CO  
uses Aspen (an now aspens)  
" makes boards for  
pellets



ELY GOLF CLUB

9 holes  
" minimum clubhouse  
good residential area potential

SCHOOL CENTER

West = JFK Elementary (new)  
Center = Junior College (remodelled  
high school)  
East = High School

(remodelled  
1925 ± 3 floor)  
Athletic Fields .. not well developed

WHITESIDES PARK  
" across the street  
& LOW RENT HOUSING - FOR ELDERLY (v.e.)

RESIDENTIAL AREA

" east of schools ...  
good new homes ... but ..  
" streets unpaved, unclear,  
poorly defined  
(What is the policy?  
- future curbs, walk?  
- maintain "rural"  
character?)

CHURCHES  
fine facilities  
choice locations

NINTON ..  
an old sawmill  
TOWN  
on Fall Lake ..  
" a number of  
cave outfits now ..

" Shagawa River



EAST OF ELY ...

## On taxes -

at one time  
mining companies  
had 90% of assessed valuation

people grew up in an environment  
where they experienced practically no real estate taxes  
then, with closing of mines,  
tax burden shifted to real estate.

(examples = an old house, selling for \$15,000,  
has taxes about \$300/year)

... \$30,000 house = 600/year

City of Ely has no debt.

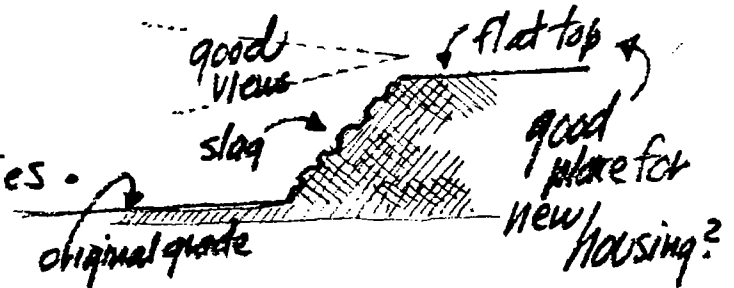
School district does, however.  
Consolidation needed probably ...

note =  
purchase of 10 old houses  
downturn = \$150,000  
10 x \$15,000 = \$150,000  
plus loss of 10 x 300 =  
\$3000/year  
real estate taxes.

## On slag heaps

mine dumps ...

some have been transferred to the City  
some are owned by large mining companies.



Joe Grahek's argument =

... in lieu of establishment of a National Park

→ why not utilize existing towns  
as tourist centers

If copper & mickle mines (INCO does  
research now)  
become active,

Ely's population could double  
from present 5000  
to future 10,000

theory =

... in lieu of spending  
millions of dollars  
creating a new park  
in the woods  
(damaging the woods)  
... why not spend that money  
creating an in-town  
tourist center  
(saving the woods  
& restoring Ely ..)

Also on taxes =

Sam Caudill observes =

→ Aspen has a 2% sales tax  
which generates \$600,000/year  
... with funds used  
for airport  
publicity, chamber & visitors bureau,  
parks & recreation.



Ely Locker Plant A



"THE PIT"  
mine cave-in  
... area unused

"THE TOWER" or  
"THE SUPER-STRUCTURE"  
... now abandoned

both have been turned over  
to the City

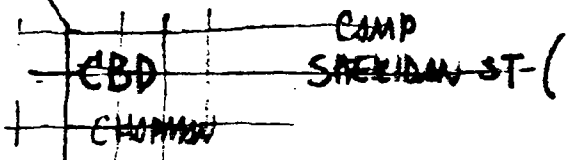
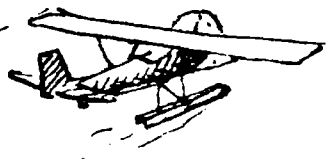


SANDY POINT

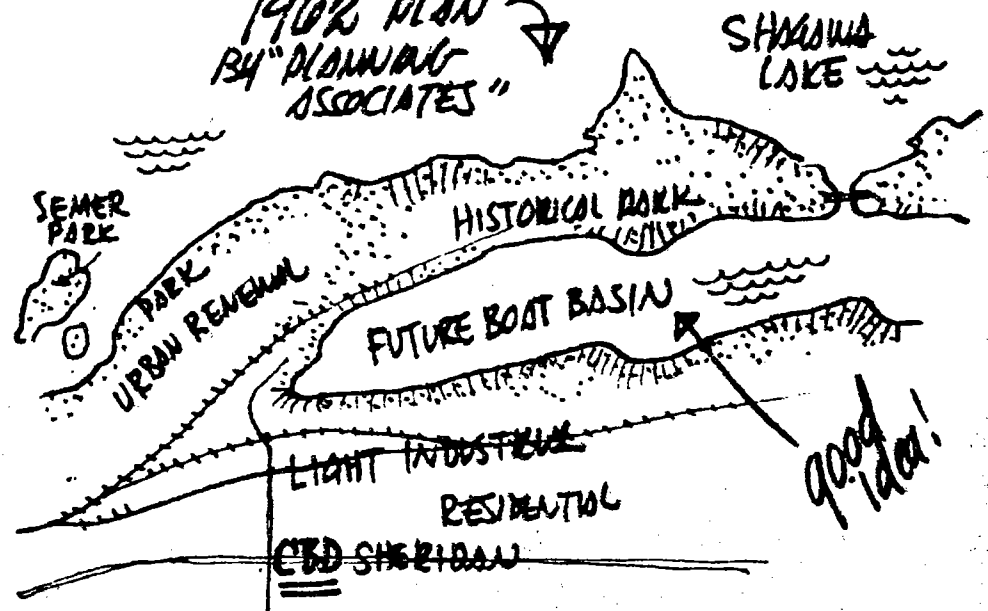
"WILDERNESS WINGS"

seaplane base  
(about 50 float planes)  
in the Ely area

privately owned  
Marque



1962 PLAN  
BY "PLANNING ASSOCIATES"



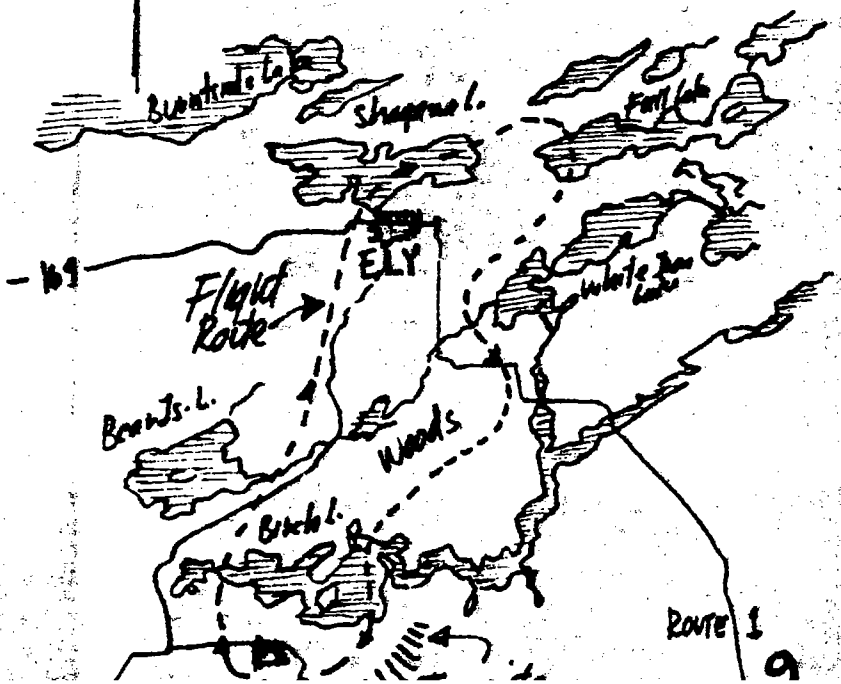
"FINN HILL"

"a residential area  
with irregular streets  
"excellent location  
interesting character  
good future potential  
(problem = difficult for utilities)

\* Saturday afternoon  
Flight!

on a floatplane  
over Ely, Babbitt  
and the lakes ... →

... with Al Smisek, pilot  
and





# MIDWAY REVIEW =

## Possibilities

for the Monday presentation =

- 1) Central Business District \*
- 2) Airport (with compliments & companion to Aspen)

### 3) Recreation =

- a) Conversion of The Pit into Lake & boat basin
- b) Motel-lodge-facilities in town  
as along Shagan Lake in Foothill Area
- c) All-year enclosed-heated swimming pool  
— closely related to in-town motel-lodges
- d) Boating related to downtown Ely d<sub>2</sub> ski center  
— excursions?? in the pit.
- e) Cultural activities (ala Aspen)  
where music-drama-art attract many people...
- f) Conventions  
— made possible by new airport, new in-town motel-lodges  
— requires convention-size facilities
- g) Imaginative recreation = dog-sled trips to a remote lodge for dinner

note: Aspen tax, 2%, for recreation !!

at Burntside Lodge...

Saturday night

- architects
- Jerry Spring
  - Bob Scott
  - Dave Morgenstein
  - Phil Blatt
  - Sam Cardill
  - Bill Burbaker

Recognize need for recreational- & cultural activities for wives & children while men are canoeing & fishing.

Compare Aspen experience, remote lodges in Barkhamut, Virgin Island, etc.

### 4) Improvement of the Residential Environment

- a) existing areas lack trees, defined streets, walks
- b) future potential = as old US Forest Service "service hub" as around the existing Golf Course  
as Foothill Area = the best location in the city and therefore potential for a great residential area!  
as mine dumps northeast of Century Trade Terminal.
- c) Fill in vacant lots in existing areas = higher density more desirable.

### 5) new industry

a) if copper & nickel mines open = many new jobs (meanwhile Tacoma grows in importance)  
b) other, too.

\* CBD

- A) New traffic patterns
- B) sign control
- C) parking
- D) trees
- E) mail for pedestrians?
- F) alleys are a wreck!
- G) unity vs variety?
- H) new life downtown?
- I) paint up! - with a plan!
- J) a unique character?

## Concerning Trees = " George Bubarsh

Ely is surrounded by the Superior National Forest  
... but the visitor finds a "main street" that is treeless! \*

... and residential areas, generally, are raw, open, treeless ...

(a few exceptions ...  
like beautiful Chapman St.  
east of City Hall.)

It was not always like this -

Sheridan Street was a fine tree-lined entrance to Ely  
only ten years ago - with huge maples on both sides ....

Then the highway department destroyed all trees along Sheridan  
about 1960, to widen the highway. (The trees, planted about  
1920, were mature  
at that time,  
in 1960.)

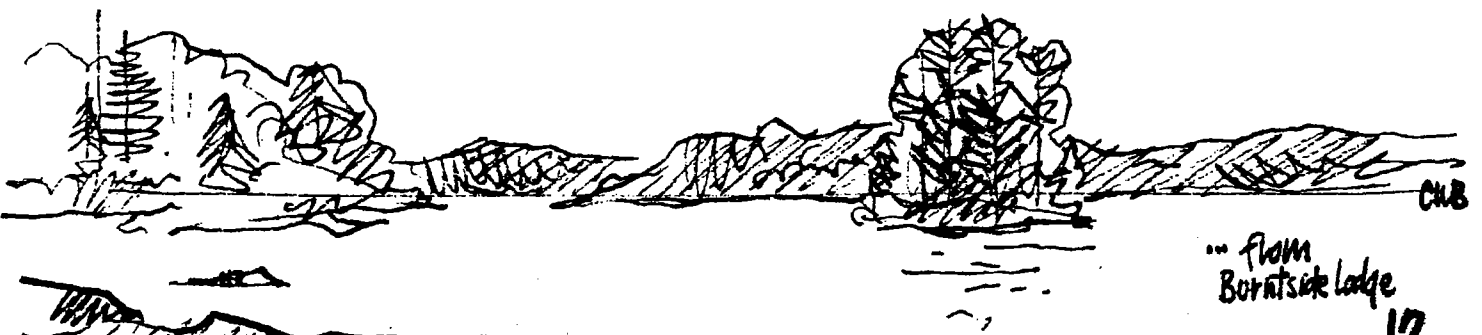
Now - the time has come to recognize the importance  
of fine trees on all streets.

»»» No single program would be more effective  
than planting of new trees along all streets.

## Concerning the AIRPORT =

-- essential for high quality recreation development (summer and winter)  
and for industrial development.

- note 1) Aspen, Colorado (with only half the population) has an airport that can take  
small business jets ...  
.. and scheduled airlines  
fly many planes to Aspen every day.
- 2) Pellston, Michigan (near Mackinac Island)  
.. has a number of North Central Airlines flights every day (incl. DC-9 jets)



... from  
Borntside Lodge

note

The following pages, tho not "a plan" quite yet, are meant to record some "thought stimulators," = some ideas (many from Ely citizens) presented here by the design team.

Shagawa lake

CAVED-IN AREA

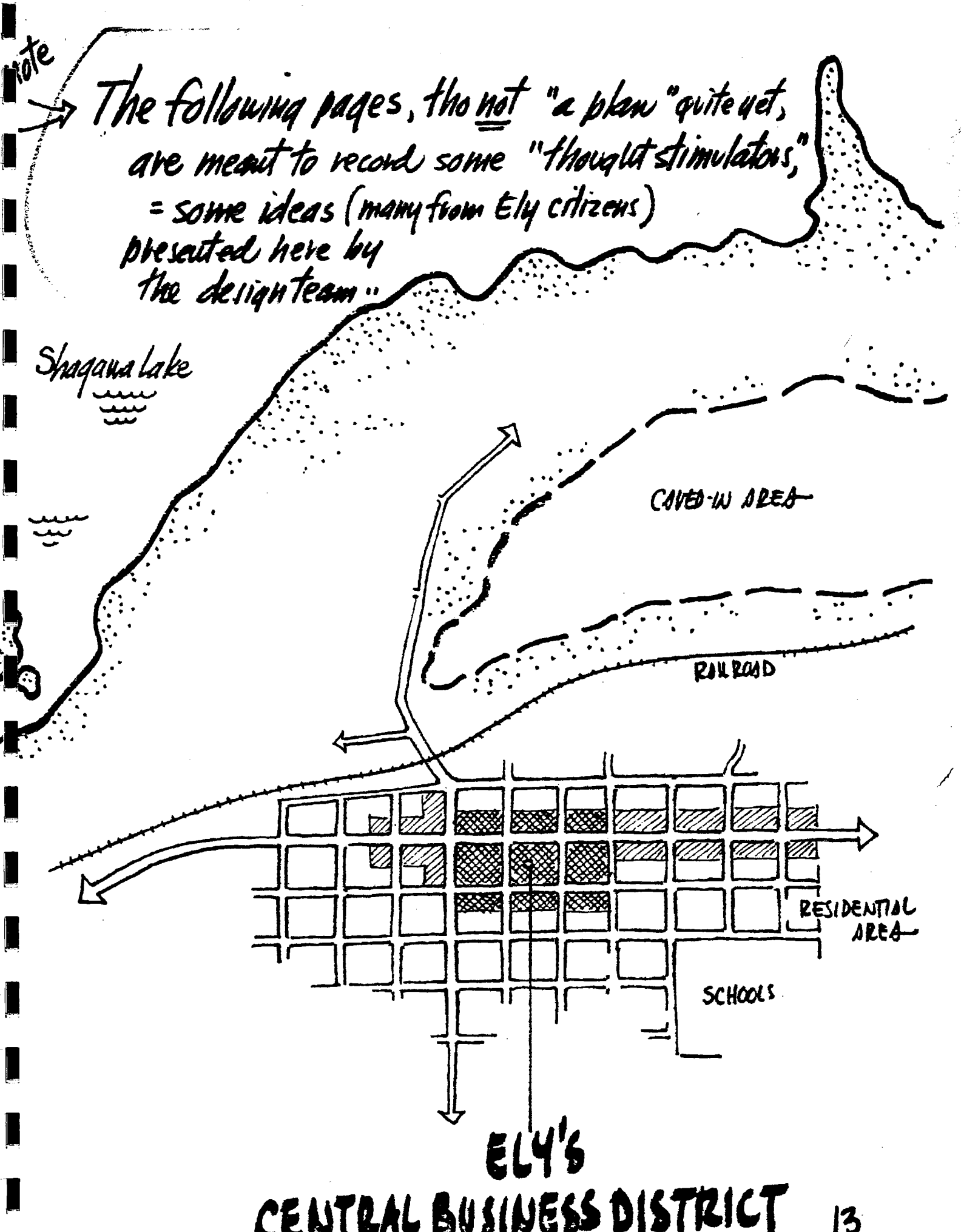
RAILROAD

RESIDENTIAL AREA

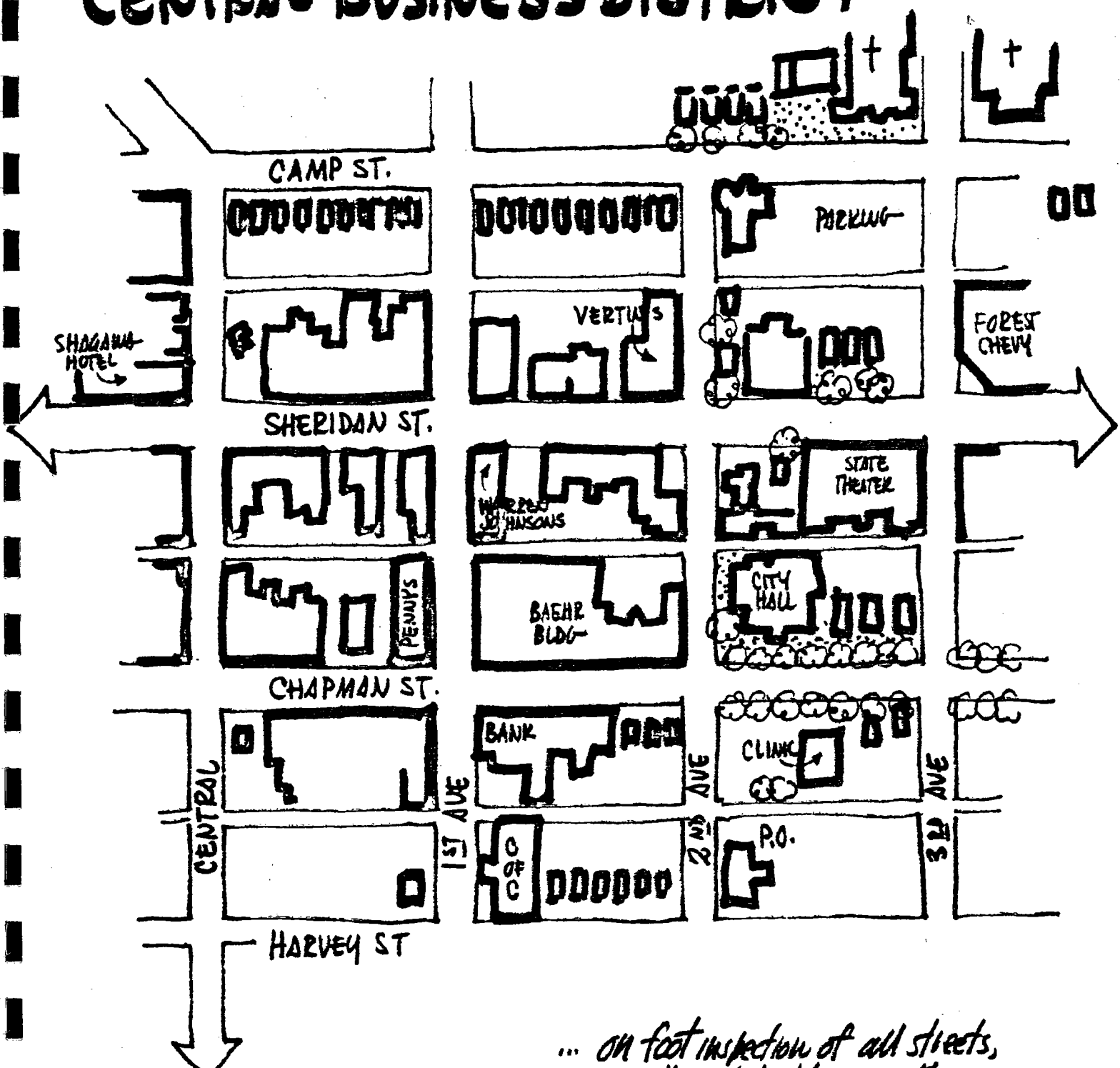
SCHOOLS

ELY'S

CENTRAL BUSINESS DISTRICT



# ELY'S EXISTING CENTRAL BUSINESS DISTRICT



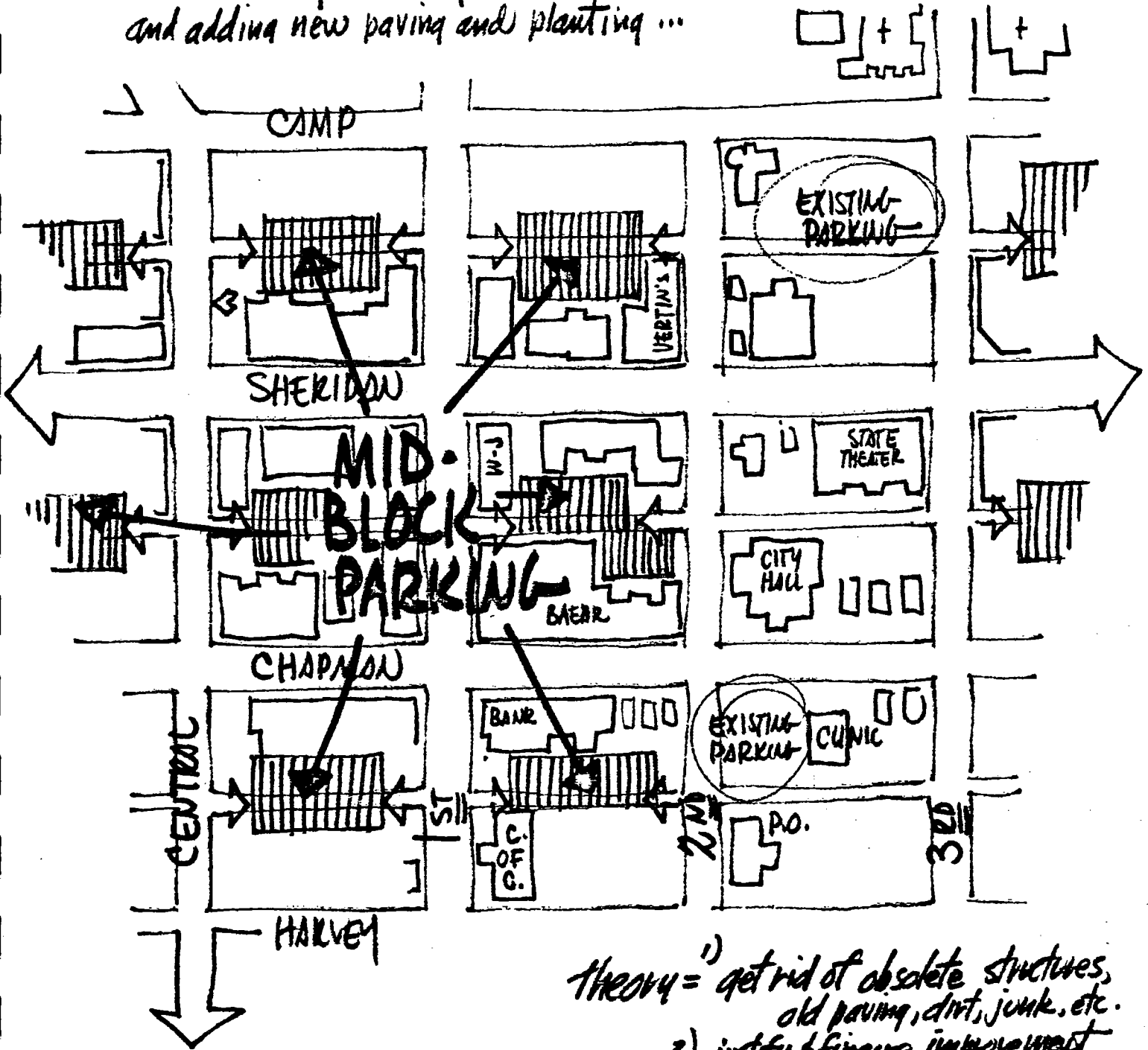
## CONCLUSION ...

"not bad ... agreeable! ...  
 ... but needs new trees,  
 sign control, some new structures  
 mixed in with the old,  
 painting following a co-ordinated plan, ..."

... on foot inspection of all streets,  
 alleys, & buildings in the  
 central business district  
 Sunday, July 19  
 by Sam Caudill and Bill Brubaker,  
 Phil Blott (who did all photography)  
 and architecture students  
 Hoefft, Wisley, & Kirkland.

# THE EXISTING ALLEYS = AN UNMINED RESOURCE

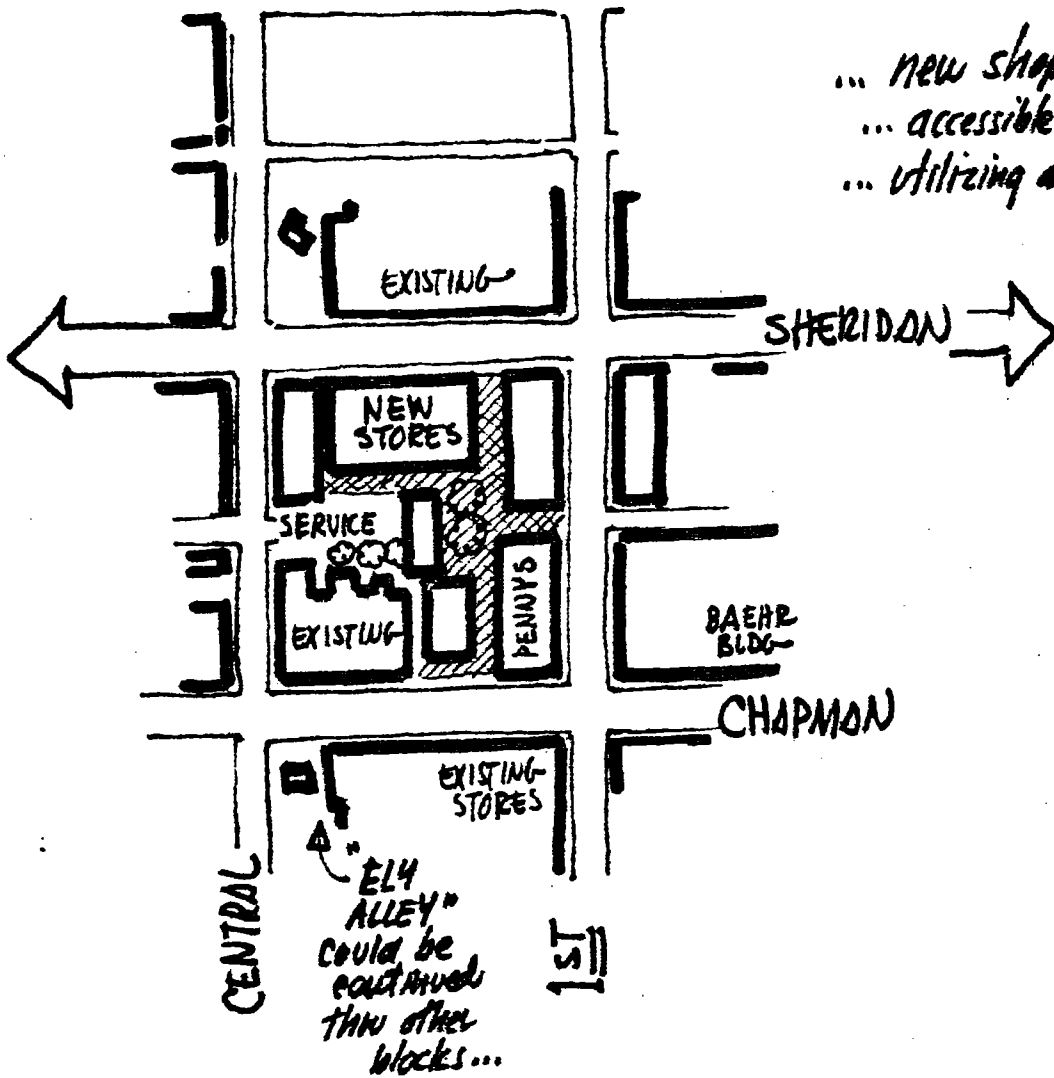
ELY'S DOWNTOWN ALLEYS ARE UGLY, DIRTY, & UNUSED.  
 Why not create new customer parking areas  
 by removing old sheds, junk, etc ...  
 and adding new paving and planting ...



- theory =
- 1) get rid of obsolete structures, old paving, dirt, junk, etc.
  - 2) justify & finance improvement by using the space for prime customer parking.
  - 3) improve the environment.

# "ELY ALLEY"

A PEDESTRIAN SHOPPING ARCADE  
CONNECTING SHERIDON AND CHAPMAN



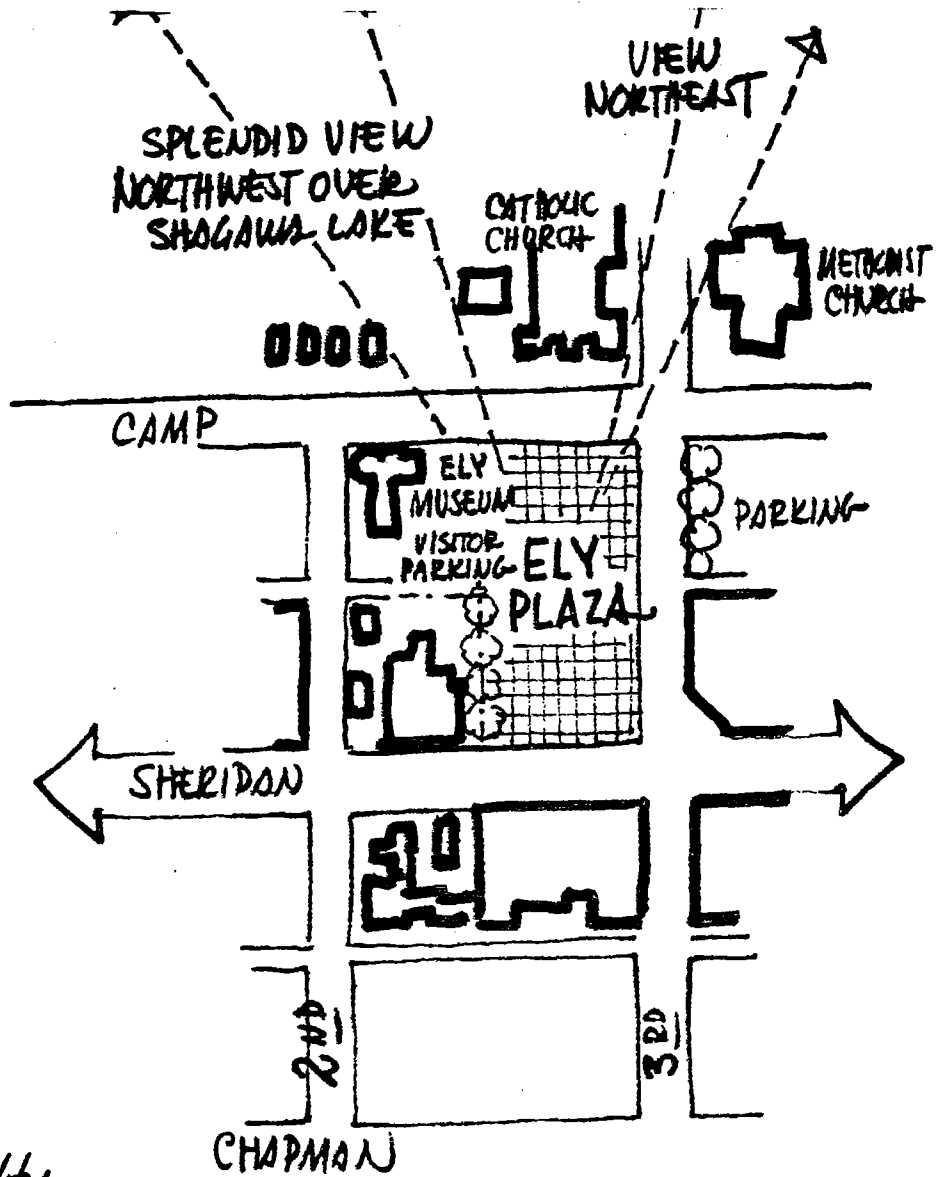


# "ELY PLAZA"

AT THE CROWN OF THE HILL ...

3RD AVE  
BETWEEN  
CAMP & SHERIDAN

... a new magnet  
for town and tourists  
... with splendid views  
to the north, over  
Shogawa Lake



"ELY PLAZA" =

- 1) a community use facility
- 2) a tourist facility

(an attraction for traffic on Sheridan  
to show visitors the great views to the north  
from this high point.)

including =

- tourist information
- business directory
- Ely Museum
- visitor parking
- viewing place
- rest stop
- civic events plaza
- a downtown mini-park
- sculpture
- historic information
- an in-town landscaped area

The church-on-the-plaza

is a fine, old idea -

" as New England's

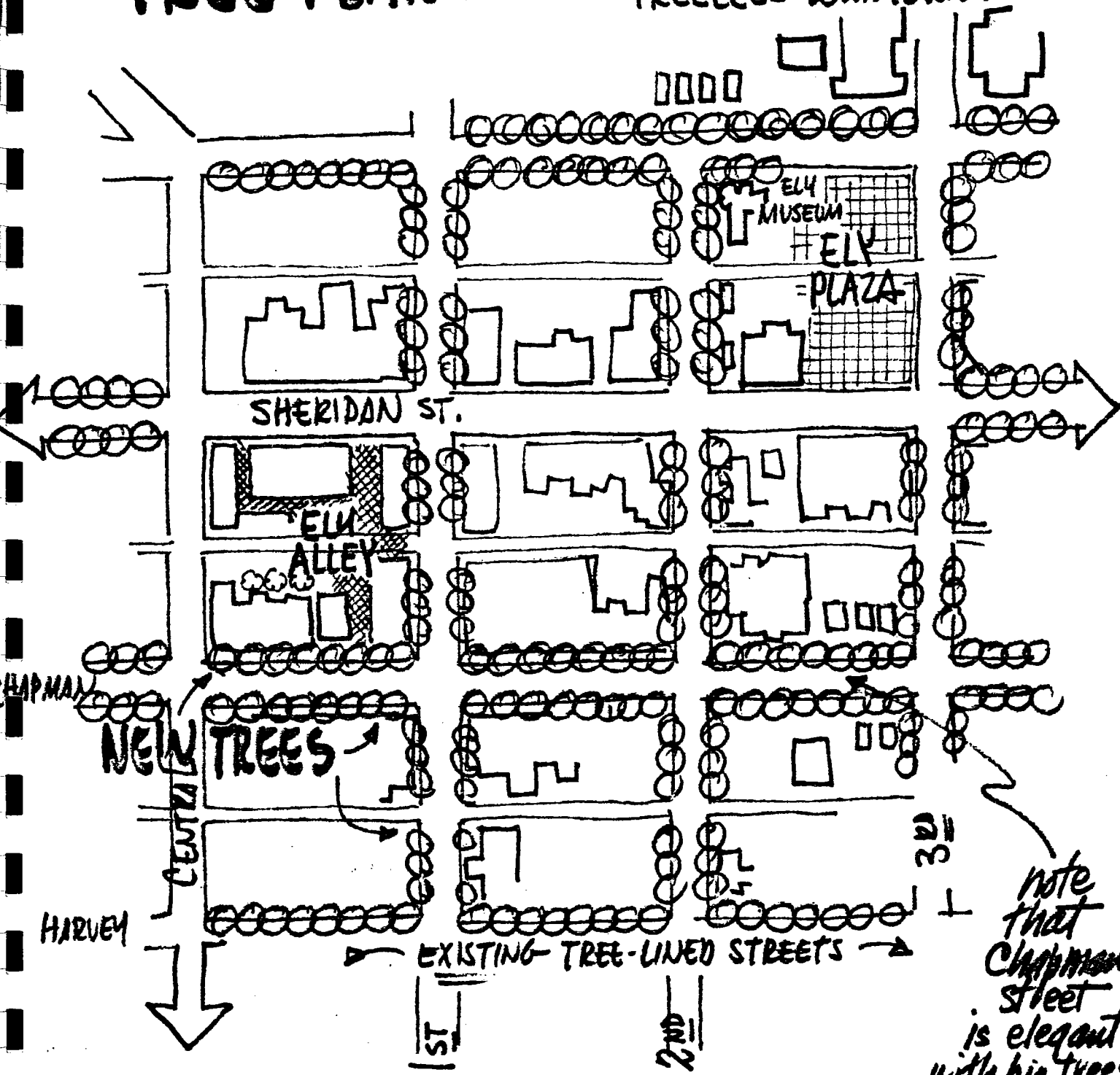
churches facing the Green

" as Mexico's

churches on the plaza.

# OPERATION TREE PLANT

ELY, SURROUNDED BY THE SUPERIOR NATIONAL FOREST FINDS ITSELF WITH A TREELESS DOWNTOWN!



Strive for streets with different character,  
 .. each with its own special identity =

for example =

- 3 BLOCKS OF SHERIDAN = no trees; attractive signs; tourist services, etc.
- ALL BLOCKS OF CHAPMAN = tree-lined; more controlled & dignified signs; shops, stores, bank, city hall, etc. 18

note that Chapman street is elegant with big trees east of 2nd Ave!

# GOOD SIGNS ...

Generally, they're not bad in Ely, downtown,  
but to achieve a high quality business district  
(essential to attract high quality tourists)  
... sign control is essential ...

Sign ordinance  
allows only 10  
square feet of sign  
per building =  
for example =  
one sign 2 1/2' x 4'  
... or one 1' high x  
10' long.

# GOOD MATERIALS ...

Existing downtown buildings use a variety of materials =

- BRICK (notice beautiful brick wall on 1<sup>st</sup> Ave ... Ace Hardware)
- WOOD (the "Town & Country Shop" on Chapman is excellent ...)
- STUCCO (many satisfactory buildings ... often well painted)

... and, unfortunately, FAKE BRICK & STONE (... the worst possible material..

Recommend = brick, wood, & stucco.

... always devalues property..)

# AND GOOD DESIGN ...

The painting idea, developed earlier, is  
a good idea ...

Would suggest a co-ordinated design  
for colors.

In the long run---

Ely needs simply good design =

- ... good judgement in the placement of new buildings...
- ... thoughtful preservation of old structures...
- ... good design of streets, signs, planting
- ... fine civic open spaces, interesting alleys, etc.

Good luck!  
- Bill Bunker  
- Bill Bunker