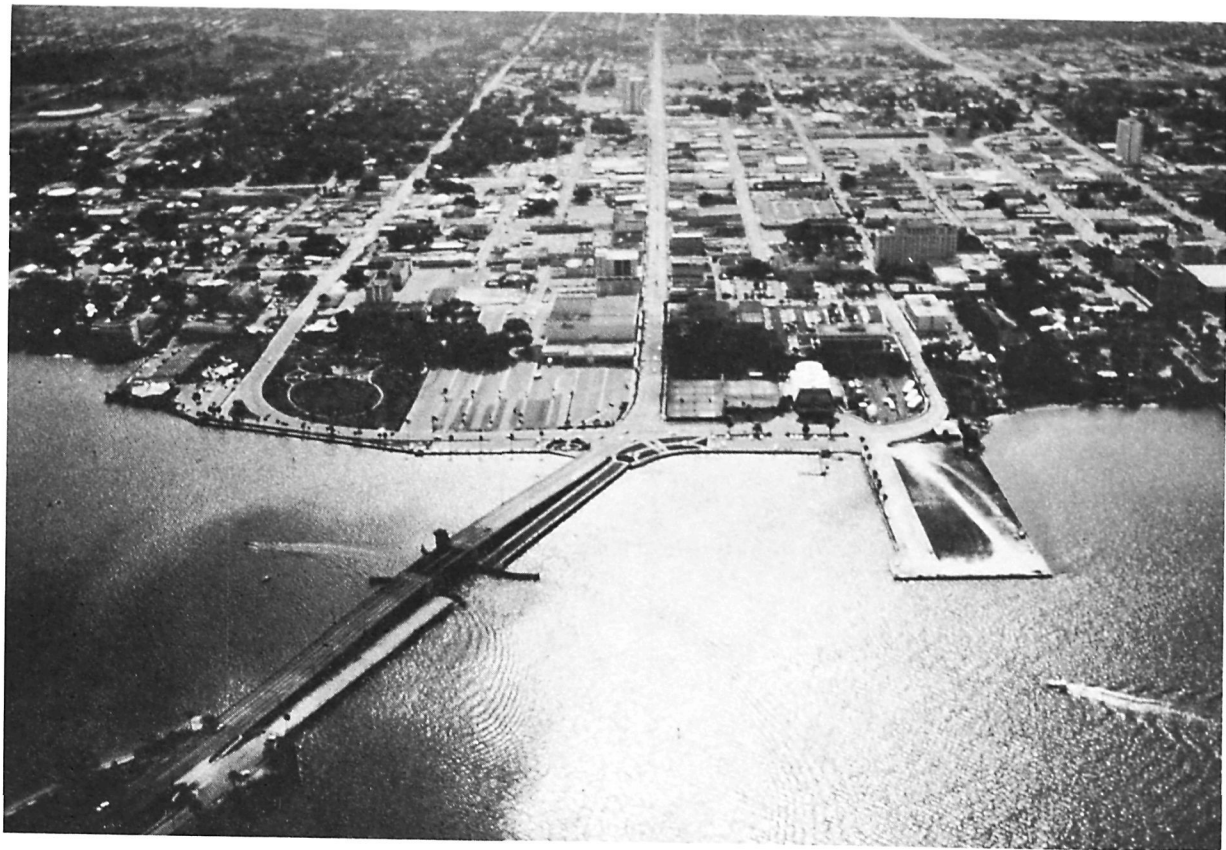


# CLEARWATER

NA9127  
.C56A4

Summary report of The Urban Design Assistance Team  
American Institute of Architects

92-8/627



In January 1972, a dialogue developed between members of the Clearwater Section of the Florida Central Chapter of the American Institute of Architects and the leaders of the Clearwater community — the Downtown Development Board, the Chamber of Commerce, the City Manager, the City Planning Office — concerning the advisability of a visitation by an AIA Urban Design Assistance Team. Its purpose would be to act as a catalyst for planning action in the downtown area.

In February, the idea intensified. The need was expressed in letters from community leaders to the architects who, in turn, made an application to the Urban Design and Planning Committee of the AIA for a team visit.

This was approved; the team was organized and on April 28th, the chairman made a reconnaissance trip. On May 20-22, the team made its visit, culminating with slide show reports to the community leaders and to the press on the afternoon of the 22nd.

This report summarizes the contents of these presentations.

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UDAT



The Urban Design Assistance Team program of the AIA is about five years old. This is the twentieth team visit. Each team is organized by the Urban Design and Planning Committee to comprise professionals with those skills which will be most useful to the community under study.

The members serve without compensation except reimbursement of expenses by the community. They may not accept commissions resulting from their recommendations.

The objectives of the program are:

1. To improve the quality of urban design throughout the nation.
2. To demonstrate the importance of design in urban planning.
3. To dramatize problems of urban design in order to interest the public in solving them.
4. To provide local AIA chapters with the support of the national AIA in becoming actively involved in urban design issues.

The team consisted of the following members:

ARTHUR EDWIN BYE, FASLA, landscape architect, heads the office which bears his name in Cos Cob, Connecticut. He has collaborated with such architects as Frank Lloyd Wright and Marcel Breuer. He has lectured for many years in the schools of architecture at Columbia and Cooper Union.

JULES GREGORY, FAIA (team chairman), is chairman of Uniplan, a partnership of architects, engineers and planners in Princeton, New Jersey. The work of this office has received many awards and has been published widely. He was formerly a vice president of the AIA.

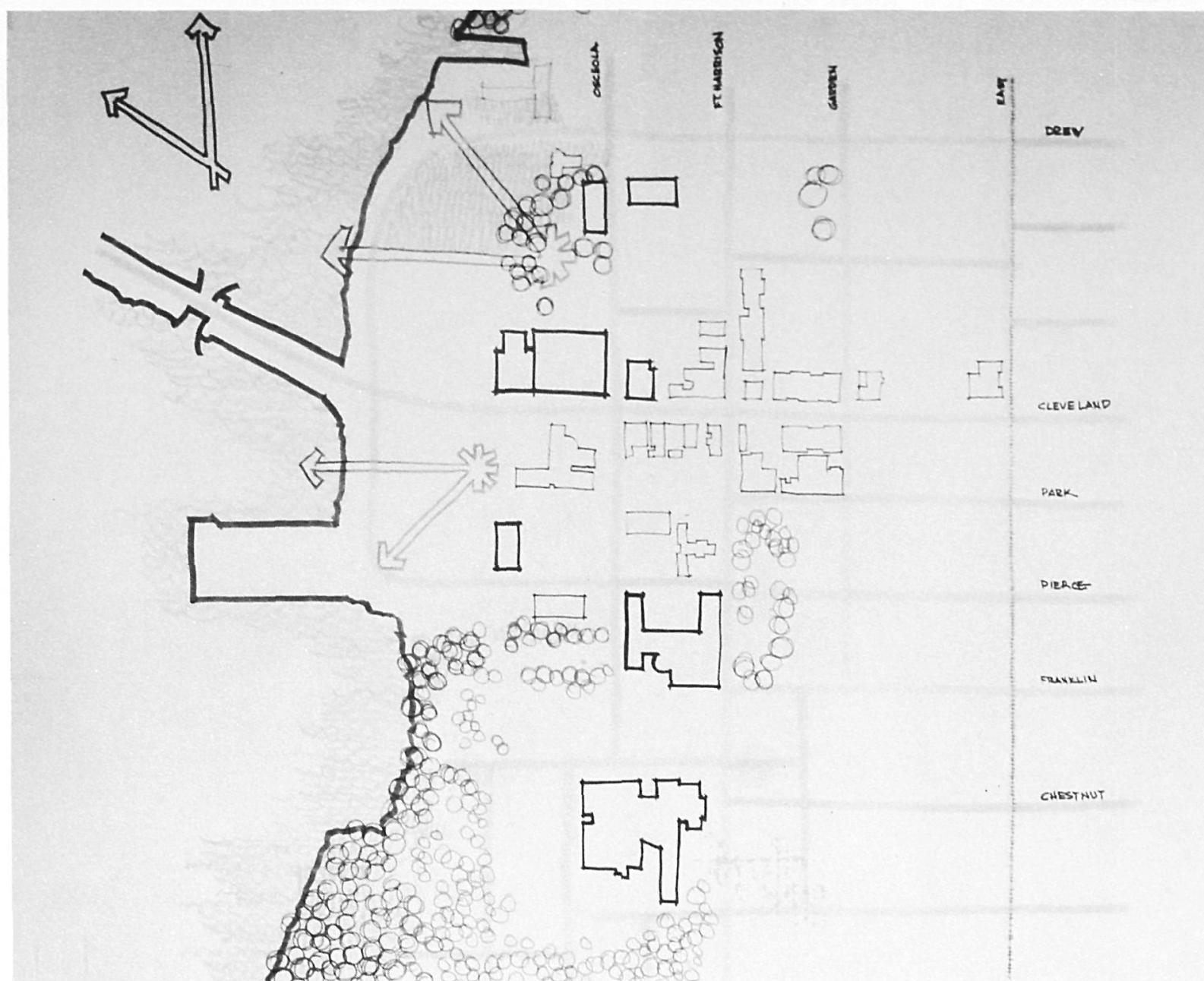
J. RICHARD McELYEA is Executive Vice President of Development Research Associates, economic consultants with offices in Los Angeles, Chicago, New York and Washington. He supervises a wide range of assignments in housing, urban land development, transportation and recreation economics.

RONALD A. STRAKA is an architectural and urban designer from Boulder, Colorado. He has been associated with a number of urban projects in the middle and far west that have received national recognition. He has taught at Case-Western Reserve, Ohio State and Kent State.

ASSETS



THE BEACH



THE PEOPLE GENERATORS, THE FINE VIEWS,  
THE WATER, THE TREES

Clearwater, Florida, is a city of about 60,000 people, located in Pinellas County on the west coast, in the middle of the state. It is about 20 miles distant from St. Petersburg to the south and Tampa to the east. It is a rapidly growing area. Pinellas County's population is expected to increase from 375,000, in 1960, to 1,000,000 in 1985.

## PHYSICAL ASSETS

When observing Clearwater in relation to other similar cities, one finds Clearwater blessed with an abundance of natural assets and amenities. These physical features are composed of natural and man-made features which give the community its identity. These natural characteristics are its

### LOCATION

It is on the Gulf of Mexico.

It is close to Tampa as a regional transportation and industrial center.

It is accessible to natural resources and recreational areas such as the Gulf and Clearwater beaches, and a wildlife preserve only accessible by water.

The central business district is very close to the waterfront and beaches.

### WATER

It is Clearwater's greatest asset with symbolic as well as physical implications.

It has an ever-changing character reflecting the time of day, season of the year, sunlight, moonlight, and changing activities. It has sound, smell and motion. The water offers something to look at and something in which to participate. It acts as a very strong magnet for development.

### CLIMATE

Blessed with plenty of sunshine and mild gulf breezes, Clearwater possesses a year-round climate which is conducive to recreational activity. It is a good place to visit and a fine place to live.



THE NEW TOWN HALL



## TOPOGRAPHY

Located on a relatively flat bluff, 25 - 30 feet above sea level, overlooking Clearwater Harbor, it offers the city some great views and vistas of the harbor, beaches and Gulf.

## BEACH:

It provides its own environment and way of life with its recreational and housing facilities for tourists and residents.

## CLEANLINESS

Due to the lack of heavy industry, Clearwater enjoys a pollution-free environment.

## GOVERNMENT

It is the county seat of Pinellas County.

These combined assets could make for a great place for people to live, visit and enjoy. These basic components existing in Clearwater would be impossible to duplicate. Unfortunately, the majority of these natural assets have either been neglected or taken for granted by the city. They have not been utilized to their fullest potential, but have been viewed as isolated elements in the environment. They have not been pulled together in an homogenous urban form which relates to the city, region, or its people. Through an orderly process of urban design, the city can maximize these resources.



FINE OLD TREES



## LANDSCAPE ASSETS

As a starting point for revitalizing business activity and attracting people, Clearwater's downtown business district has remarkable landscape architectural assets. Most importantly, there is the waterfront and bay, the park adjacent to the waterfront, and many empty parking areas suitable for conversion into green spaces for trees and lawns, sitting areas and pedestrian ways free of cars. Secondly, there are streets lined with spreading old oaks, green lawns around government buildings, and adjacent residential areas and streets good for pedestrian ways. And, thirdly, the refreshing off-shore breeze that penetrates the business district sufficiently well to modify the microclimate.

Our recommendations are to exploit these assets by turning them into positive forces that we know are beneficial to our environment.

## ECONOMIC ASSETS

Clearwater has a number of economic advantages as a base to work with:

1. Existence of a thriving major department store (Maas Brothers) which has recently expanded. In most central business districts, the department stores are hurting and looking for relocations outside downtown.
2. Existence of a major convention oriented hotel (Fort Harrison) which has recently been remodeled. In most smaller central business districts, the only hotels are old, badly deteriorating properties.
3. Existence of a new City Hall and County Building in the central business district, in proximity to one another.
4. Two major banks which are legally prohibited from moving out of downtown.

The first three points are all generators of people to the downtown and provide an important base to build on. In most studies of this type, we are desperately looking for generators. The combination of a good retail attractor and a good tourist attractor are unusual in cities of this size.



THE BIG STORE

PROBLEMS



NOBODY DOWNTOWN

The overriding problem of Clearwater's downtown is that it is devoid of people. There is nothing to do, nothing to see. There is no sense of the city. There is no pervading, overwhelming vitality.

#### PHYSICAL PROBLEMS

The conflict between automobiles and people is a major problem. One's first impression of Clearwater is that the automobile has top priority over everything else. It consumes the major percentage of downtown area with its streets and surface parking lots. Some existing areas of conflict are:

Through traffic to the beach severely impedes local traffic and pedestrian circulation.

Excess of surface parking lots in an uncoordinated pattern take up valuable land within the central business district.

The water is completely inaccessible from the downtown. The road is as much a barrier as if it were a great stone wall. The city's greatest asset is discarded.

There is an excess of parking area (if you can imagine such a thing)! There is space for about 5,000 cars and need for about 4,000. These vast open sunbaked asphalt areas keep the active areas too far apart and discourage interaction.

There are few amenities for the pedestrian — a concrete bench here, a tin litter basket there. There is little physical variety — certainly no place of focus. The landscape doesn't improve the life of its beholder.



PARKING

## ECONOMIC PROBLEMS

### Suburban Shopping Competition

The phenomenon of the suburban shopping center competition was somewhat slow in coming to the Clearwater area, but its impact is now being felt in the downtown. The Sunshine Mall with its air conditioned mall and approximately 350,000 square feet of shopping space has created the first impact, but a great amount of additional competition is on its way. Interviews with informed sources indicated that approximately 1.3 million square feet of department store type space, including discount stores, is either planned or under construction. This is equal to six stores the size of Penney's in Sunshine Mall. Time did not permit a market analysis but it would appear that the retail projects proposed and under construction combined with existing space will probably take care of the need in the Clearwater trade area up close to 1980.

Up through 1969, the downtown was able to maintain a relatively constant share of sales in the total trade area. Since that time, we understand that this market share has dropped, and with the additional competition outlined, it is certain to drop further. In a growing metropolitan area, it is normal for a downtown to capture a decreasing share of the area's retail sales as the area expands. However, with the amount of competition that is coming on the market, it is clear that this downtown will have to make some substantial changes to increase its attractiveness, to be able to hope to capture any share of this growing market.

### Vacancies, Failure to Renew Leases

The downtown area is marked by several vacancies at the present time. In addition, it is reported that some major tenants are not planning to renew their leases and others are uncertain. Thus, the timing is critical in order for revitalization to be effective and avoid major move-outs.

### High Land Values Impede New Development

Although not high in comparison with many other cities of its size, the land values of Clearwater's central business district are high as compared with alternative building sites in other parts of the trade area. Thus, under present conditions, there is no economic incentive to build in the downtown area. Existing techniques are available, such as incentive zoning, density bonuses, special CBD district, or other methods of proving incentives to building in the downtown as compared with other areas, but the City has been reluctant to use these techniques to favor



the downtown property owners.

There are other problems such as absentee landlords, and the like, which are common to all downtowns.

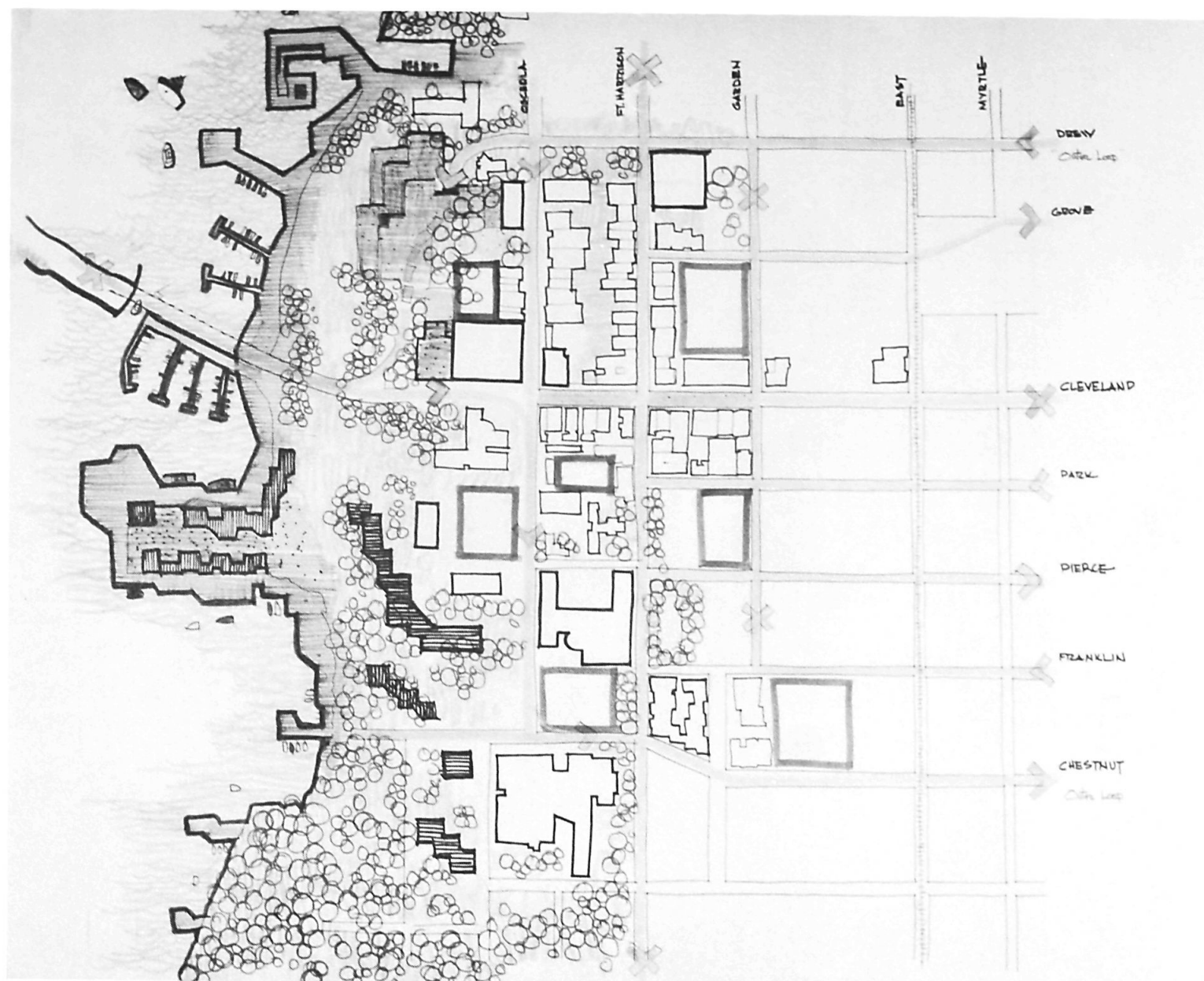
DOWNTOWN CLEARWATER IS AT A CRITICAL POINT. IT IS FORTUNATE IN THE FACT THAT IT HAS NOT LOST ITS OPPORTUNITIES ALREADY, AS HAVE MANY COMMUNITIES, BUT IS TRULY AT A CROSSROADS POINT IN TIME.





THE BIG BARRIER

SOLUTIONS



THE WATERFRONT

## PHYSICAL SOLUTIONS

There is no simple solution to Clearwater's problems. It lies rather in a combination of changes to several, perhaps most, of the Urban systems.

Through the urban form of the city, it can give visual orientation to both residents and tourists, provide a distinction between urban and rural development, which is quickly and easily imagined and create a physical form which will enhance the unique natural and man-made characteristics of the city.

The town must take its natural assets and preserve, enhance, and utilize them — reunite them with the people. They are the lifeblood of the community, and without people, towns die and become vast wastelands and ghost towns of the past.

We must take the framework of our existing cities and analyze, evaluate, redefine and revitalize it in relationship to the present and future goals and values of the city.

Cities must provide the necessary people amenities in a cohesive pedestrian environment, access to buildings, pedestrian movement, separation from vehicular traffic, protection and enhancement of views, open space, and 24-hour activity.

Through a complete integration of people with the urban form and systems of the city, Clearwater can create a "sense of place," which would be unique to Clearwater alone, a place which would not be a copy of another resort area or in competition with the beach and outlying major shopping centers, but a place which would possess its own characteristics.

In proposing a direction, the first area of concern was that the originally designated boundaries of the central business district (Drew on the north, Myrtle on the east, Chestnut on the south, and the waterfront on the west) were too large an area especially with the proposed easterly extension to Greenwood Avenue. The Urban Design Assistance Team proposes a smaller area maintaining the same north, west, and south boundaries, but pulling the eastern boundary back to Garden Street. With this smaller area, it could create a greater density and a more viable pedestrian area with activities in closer proximity to each other, minimizing walking distances and keep more within the scale of the city.

With this basic recommendation, we would now like to explore some specific possibilities.

More freeways, traffic lanes, and parking spaces are not always the answer to circulation problems, nor is the shortest or easiest route for a road always best. Priorities must be established and maintained for the whole community. The major roadway is a form determinant — it acts as a barrier to cross movement; it is a major traffic carrier and a major capital investment — all contribute to its permanent condition. The noise resulting from the traffic prohibits certain types of land use along its path. The roadway system must be totally integrated within the total community development; they can take the lead in generating amenities in a city. The design of the environment of a freeway counts more than the structure itself.

Specific Recommendations are:

#### IMPLEMENT ONE-WAY STREET SYSTEM

An outer or regional loop, west bound on Drew, east bound on Chestnut, would basically service through traffic to the beach and around the central business district.

An inner or local loop would service the local central business district area, residential and civic activities.

Both of these loop systems would connect with parking structures which could be located for multi-use capabilities. This would allow for the possibility of increasing sidewalk areas where required for easier pedestrian circulation, for tree planting and for street furniture which would enhance the environment of the street for the automobile and the pedestrian.

#### REALIGNMENT OF THE PROPOSED LOOP ROAD AND THE BRIDGE

Align the loop road right-of-way in close behind the Chamber of Commerce Building and the City Library, along the foot of the existing bluff, then to the Maas Brothers parking lot. In this area, the roadway would be enclosed, covered, and totally integrated with the park to allow pedestrian access to the waterfront and maintain the existing views, vistas, and trees. In the area of Maas Brothers parking lot, the roadway would become a ramp type bridge which would connect at the high point with the existing causeway, thus allowing the waterfront park to be continuous, and pedestrians to have free access to the water's edge without the conflict of people and cars. The southern leg or eastbound traffic artery from the new bridge connection should be located near the existing City Auditorium and the City Hall until it connects with the Pierce





Street Extension. Both the northern and southern legs must be integrated into the proposed park to allow for unobstructed pedestrian access to the waterfront. If the alignment goes along the water's edge, it will permanently seal off that portion of the water from public use and would be neglecting one of Clearwater's greatest assets and potentials for development. It would become a permanent obstacle and a monument to short-sightedness with which future generations would have to live. This item is of major concern for it is the essence of the whole concept.

#### CLEVELAND STREET PEDESTRIAN MALL

Eliminate traffic on Cleveland Street between Osceola and Garden, and allow the street to become a pedestrian mall for easy access to shops without the conflict of automobiles and with appropriate landscaping and street furniture. North-south through traffic on Fort Harrison would continue.

#### WATER TAXI

Provide water taxi service to the beach, the wildlife preserve and possibly to St. Petersburg, Sarasota and Tarpon Springs. Use hydrofoil motor boats, or other means of water transportation, with dock facilities on the waterfront, within close proximity to parking structures. Provide free shuttle service from waterfront to beach on weekends.

#### FUTURE NORTH-SOUTH EXPRESSWAY LOCATION

If deemed necessary at all, it should be planned with great care so as not to divide the city but be integrated within it.

#### WATERFRONT "OPEN SPACE AND PARK"

With the elimination of the traffic barrier, the waterfront would, in fact, become Clearwater's greatest asset. Combine this with the people-related waterfront activities and it could become the focal point and "sense of place" which Clearwater so desperately needs. It would provide the public with an opportunity to see and feel the waterfront activities which are basic to Clearwater's economy and growth.

The main concept is to reunite the city and its people with the region by connecting the lush green foliage and open space at the water's edge, to the north and south, and to tie together these areas of the city now

separated by endless acres of hot asphalt. This can be accomplished by creating a people-oriented park which utilizes the assets of its waterfront location and extends back into the heart of the city and ties them both together.

By creating this pedestrian-oriented waterfront, we would accomplish the following:

1. Provide unobstructed easy pedestrian access to the water's edge from the apartments, housing, and motels to the north, from the central business district in the center, from City Hall, Fort Harrison Hotel, County Building, and housing to the south.
2. Provide separation of vehicular and pedestrian traffic.
3. Continuation and connection of the open space network.
4. Protection of views and vistas of the waterfront.

Pedestrian access from the central business district to the waterfront could be accomplished by a series of terraces that would step down from Osceola Street, between the library and Maas Brothers Department Store, to the water's edge, terracing over the northern leg of the realigned loop road. This would offer overlooks to the waterfront and Gulf and provide the library and Maas Brothers the opportunity to expand and provide space for commercial and civic activities. At the water's edge, would be a continuous broad, various-leveled, tree lined pedestrian promenade offering a variety of views and experiences of waterfront activity (fishing, strolling, or people watching). It would be an environment where there would be something for people of all ages, a place which would provide access to the world or a retreat from it, where people could be themselves, either alone or with family or friends, where they could be spectators or participants. Night lighting should be integrated with the park by lighting the Jasmine trees and objects in the landscape rather than by the typical garish street-type lighting. This would offer yet another experience for those using the park or viewing it from the water, beach or city.

#### PEOPLE ACTIVITIES

The people-related activities can unite the town and water to become one and to cause the interaction of people, environment and the city. It should directly relate to Clearwater and its environs and be of interest



to those who live there and visit. Some of these activities may be:

1. Outdoor Water Amphitheater: this could accommodate cultural and civic events, plays, festivals, political rallies, water shows, beauty contests, fireworks, outdoor movies. It might be used as a band shell or as a fishing pier; a place where people could arrive via boat from the beach or nearby cities for such events.

2. Marina Facilities:

Small boat harbors to provide permanent and visitor dockage

Inter-city boat dock; St. Petersburg, Sarasota, Tarpon Springs, etc.

Water shuttle to beaches and wildlife preserve

Excursion boats for pleasure craft, fishing, sightseeing, floating restaurants, cruises

Rental facilities for boats, fishing and water skiing equipment

Boat launching area as a tourist attraction; the weekly event of launching the large boats presently being built north of Clearwater

Private and public boat launching

Boat service center for service and repair of boats

Fishermen's Market where people could sell their products either from their boats or from waterfront stands.

Fishing piers

3. Seaside Restaurants and Cafes

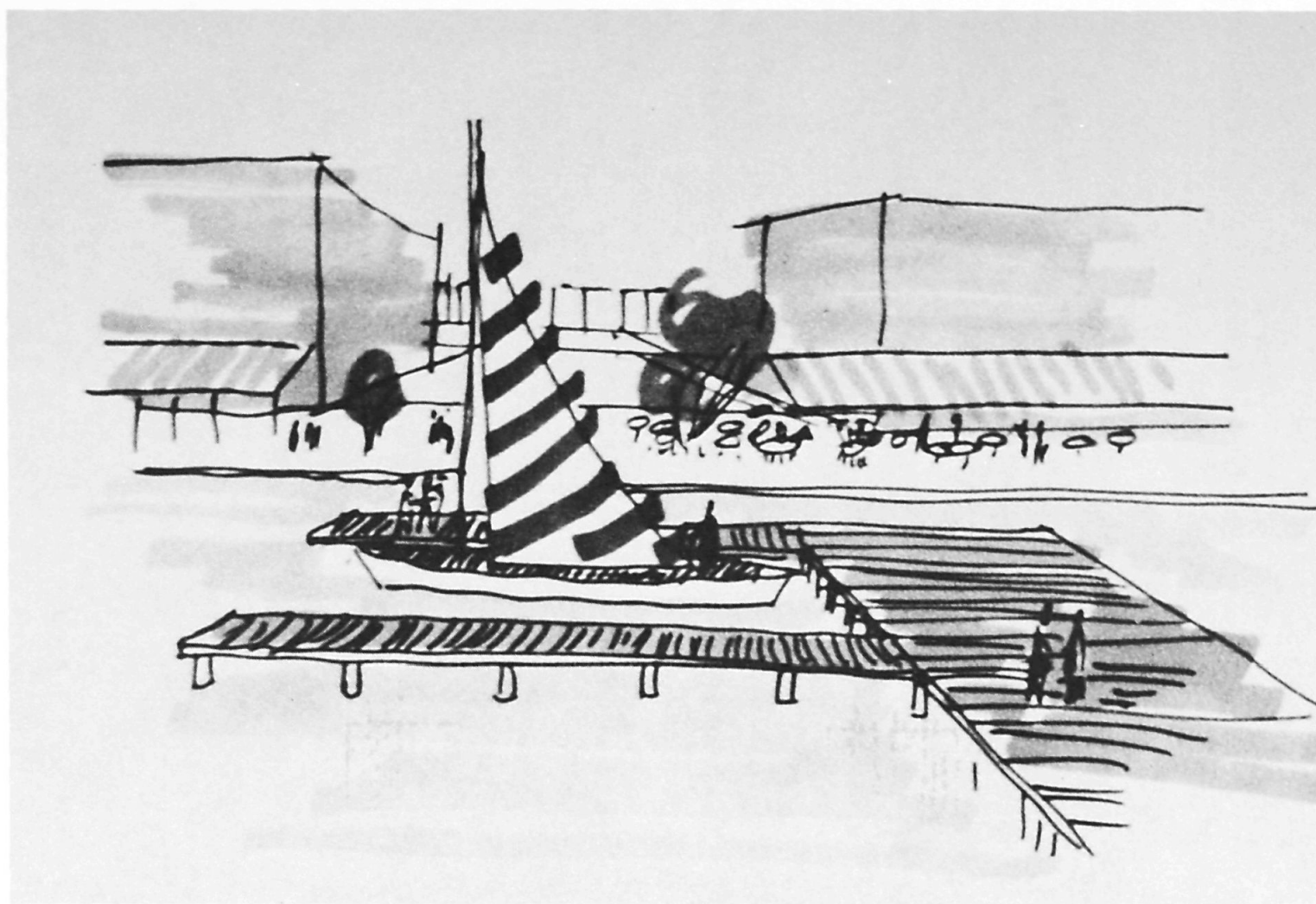
Waterfront sidewalk cafes featuring stone crabs and other fine native foods

Seaside cafeteria and social center for retired people and others

4. Spectator Sports

Water ski shows, regattas, etc.

Sprawling lawns for picnicing, children's play, people watching and



MARINA IN TOWN

sun bathing

5. Bicycle paths
6. Exhibit space for maritime and oceanographic displays
7. Smith's Finger revitalization (an existing pier)

Locating specialty shops, quaint restaurants, galleria type shopping area to accommodate nearby residential, hotel and beach traffic.

Excursion boat stop

Observation tower (contemporary lighthouse); a multi-function facility; could be utilized as a radio tower, weather station giving boat and weather conditions via signal flags; an observation tower where people could climb to varying levels to get a different view of the city, harbor, Gulf. This could become the focal point of the area. The tower and, perhaps, the gift shop, restaurant, etc., could be illuminated at night as a point of orientation and landmark.

#### 8. Museums

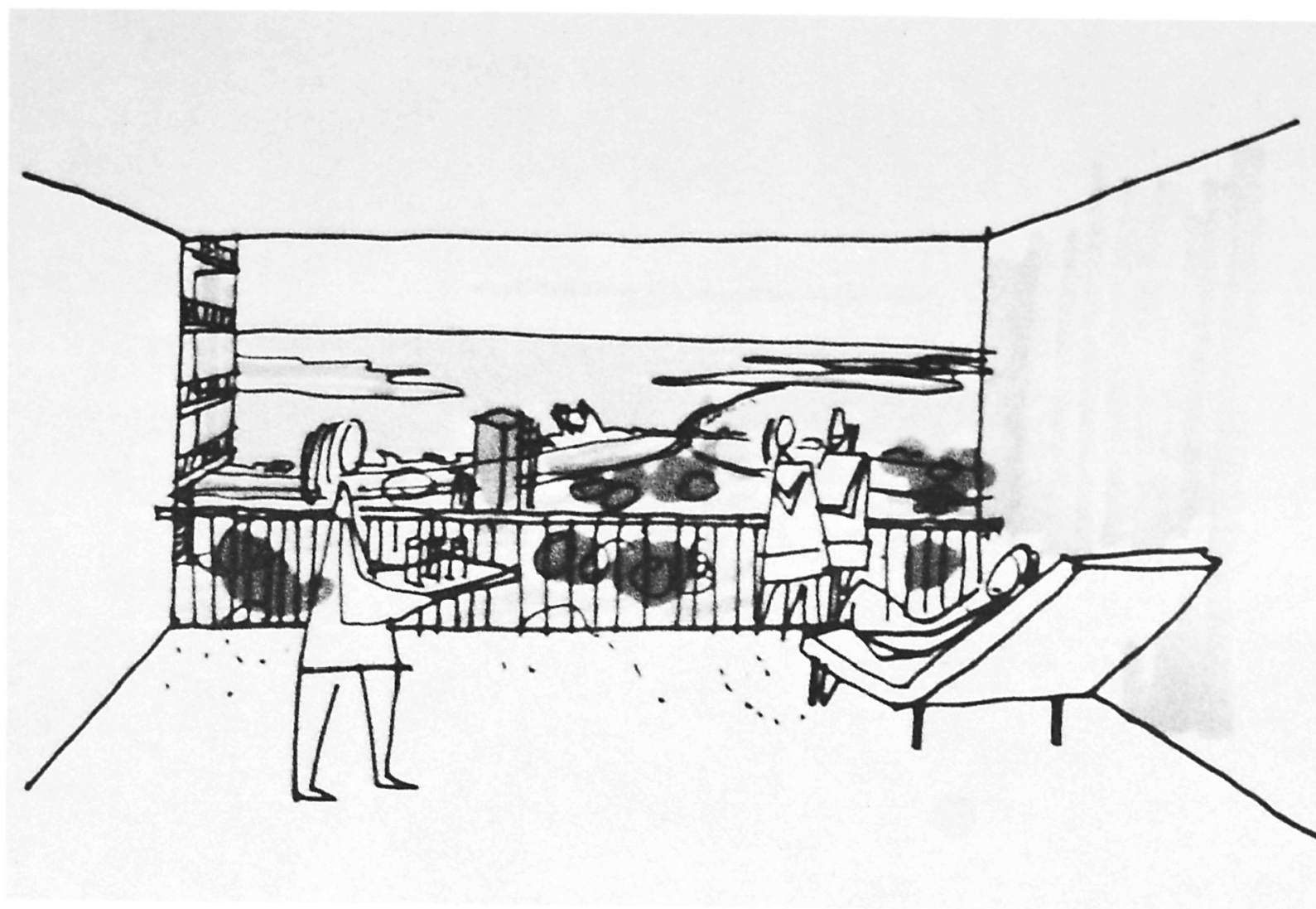
Seafront education museums could display different types of fish, shells and marine life of the area

Sailing school and museum

All of these elements; the Park, the Water and People Activities, integrated with one another as a total urban form, could give Clearwater its focal point, its uniqueness, its SENSE OF PLACE.

#### HOUSING

Provide housing close to the waterfront, especially in the area from Pierce Street to the existing residential area to the south. Integrate the building forms, parking and service facilities with the topography and vary the height and density to maintain the views, vistas, and pedestrian access to the waterfront and park.



## INFILL BUILDINGS

Fill the gaps in the existing urban fabric, create a higher density and provide a diversity of uses, commercial housing and related uses. This will make the area more viable, and orient more pedestrian traffic along the waterfront, especially in the areas along Osceola and Fort Harrison. Create inner courts as landscaped, pedestrian ways with access between or through buildings to connect with public open spaces, parking structures and streets.

## PARKING STRUCTURES

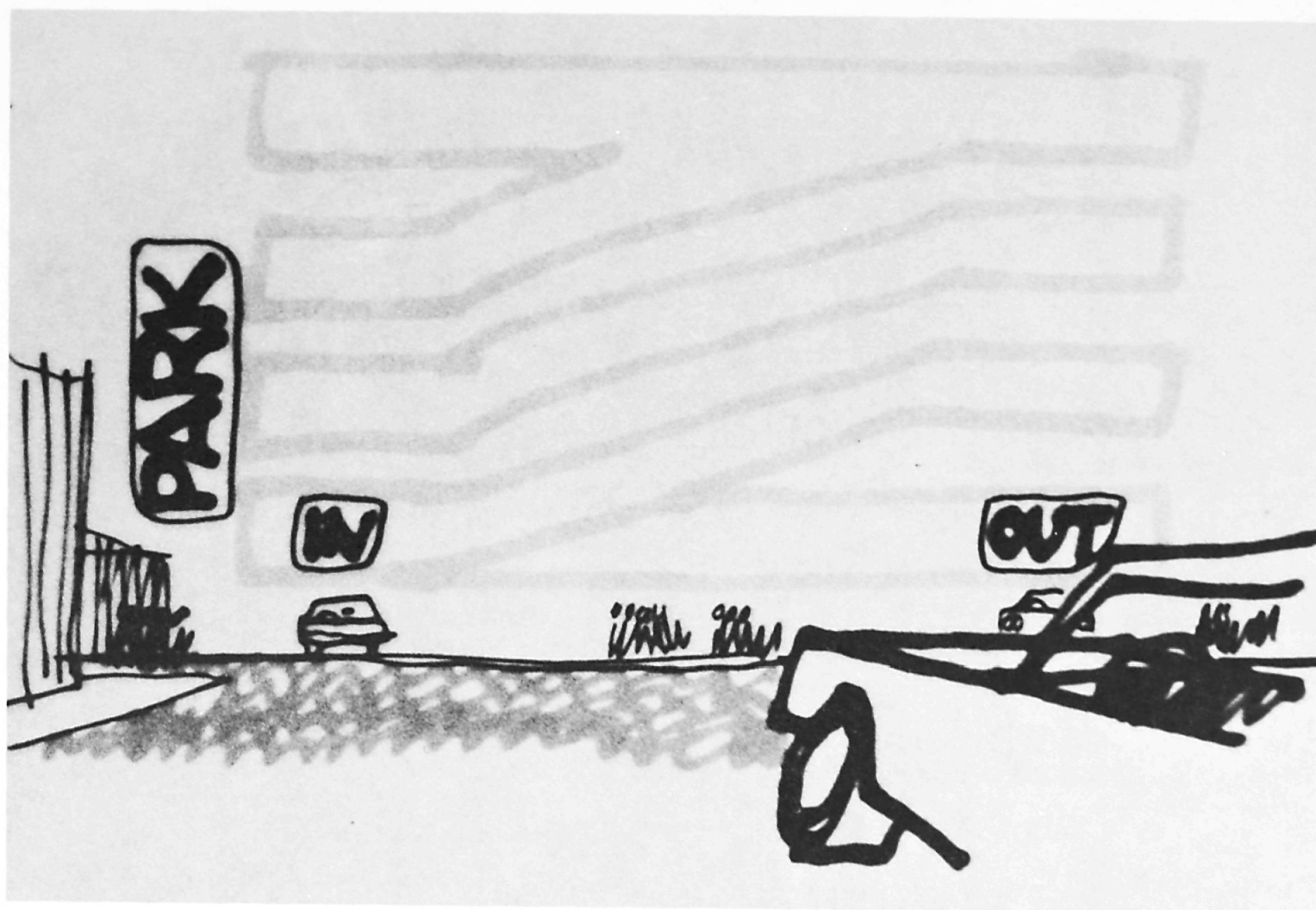
Consolidate surface parking into parking structures thereby gaining a better utilization of land.

Locate the structures at key locations, between major roadway systems and loop road, and at the periphery of the central business district, so that they are within easy walking distance for shoppers and easy car access to major arterial roads.

Provide maximum utilization of parking facilities for weekend and night time activities as well as daytime uses.

Put commercial functions at street level.

Integrate with buildings, landscape, and topography, where possible.



CONCENTRATE CAR STORAGE





## LANDSCAPE SOLUTIONS

We strongly suggest that our sketches be carefully studied. They show an expansion of the waterfront park, not only along the waterfront to link the residential areas on both sides, but expansion also into the business area. This would invite a flow of shoppers, tourists and businessmen to the boardwalk to enjoy the colorful activity of boats and docks. There they would encounter intimate courts with specialty shops, outdoor eating areas, and spaces for sitting, linked with spaces for outdoor exhibits. All this may be brightly illuminated for night-time activity.

With the waterfront roadway moved to its suggested location, we are free to replant the park to accentuate the view of the bay. The spotty planting should be removed to provide a large open lawn that would allow the eye to sweep across to the water. Then, to frame the view, heavy groves of trees should be planted at the extremities of the park, especially those that flower to dramatize the scene and scent the air. With all the green of lawn and trees quite far removed from noisy vehicular traffic, we recommend that a larger pond be formed from the one already there, replete with illuminated changing fountains and water jets for children's play. Wider walks would then be needed, not only for the fountains but for access across the park from the business district.

We know that Clearwater has a street planting program. If funds are available, we recommend that it be extended to include pedestrian ways, local parks and outdoor sitting areas. We list below the tree planting concepts that would greatly enlighten the program:

1. The concept of trees as focal interest. Many trees in their middle and old age become focal points of interest, yet even when young trees are planted as groupings (6, 8, 10 in a group, for instance), they, too, can become points of interest.
2. The concept of using tree groupings of a single species to identify sections of the city. One section near the waterfront could be planted with flowering trees, another section with broad, spreading live Oak, or another with Magnolia.
3. The concept of using trees to reduce the glare of the sky.
4. The concept of using small trees in lieu of shrubs: They relate better to large buildings, walks, courts, streets and parking areas.



They do not "catch" debris as shrubs do and they do not need yearly pruning.

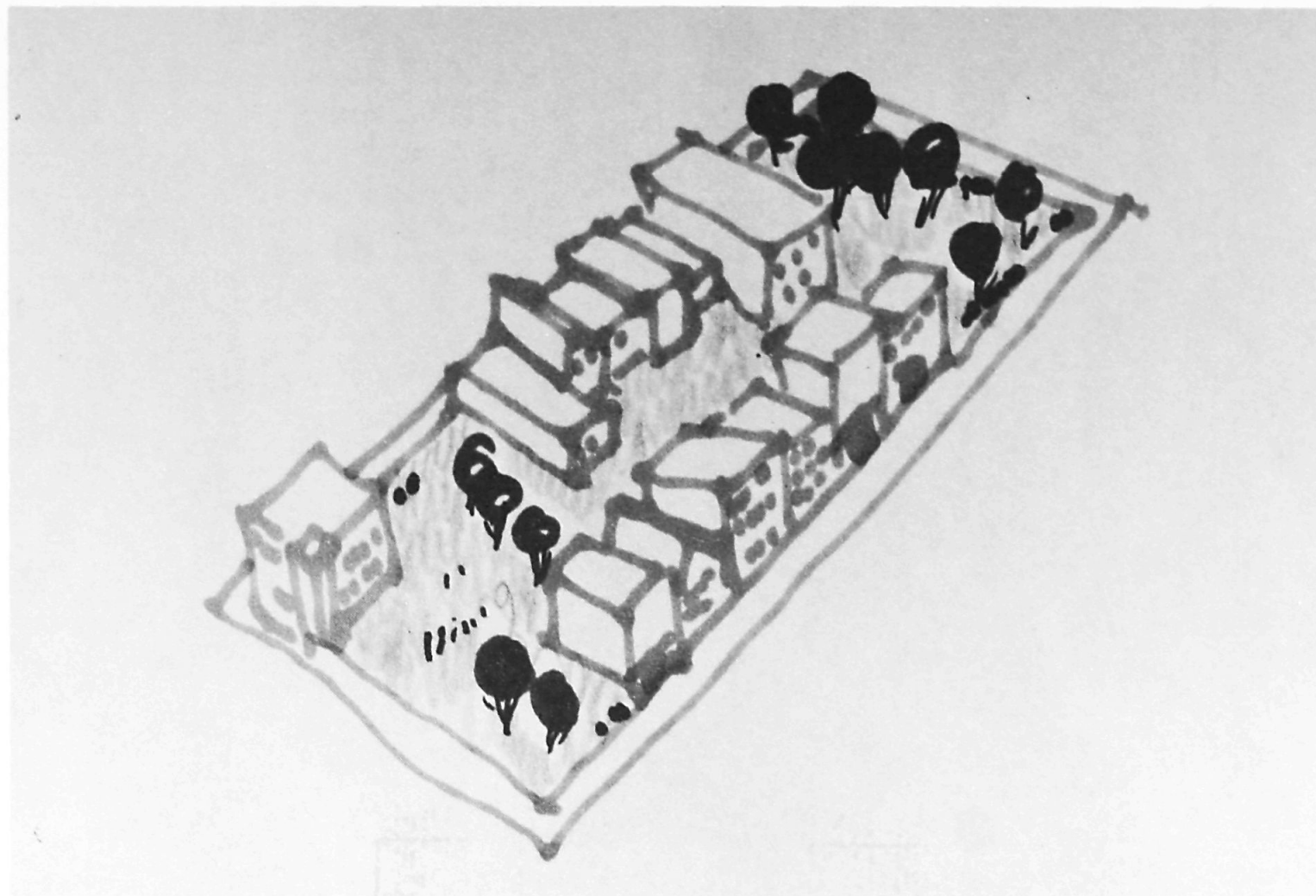
If smaller plants are desired, we recommend raised planters to deter pedestrians from walking over or through the shrubs. The planters can be constructed with 2'0" copings for sitting, or, if this is not feasible in particular areas, high curbs of 6, 8 or 10 inches can be specified.

The concept of the use of planters need not be limited to large paved areas, but can be used to enclose areas adjacent to walks and parking areas. They would, in effect, create pedestrian channels from one part of a city block to another.

5. Lastly, the concept of using a single species of tree in masses. Several of the same kind become stronger visual statements than single trees standing alone. They need not be planted 30 feet on center, as most cities do, but close together — as close as 10 feet. They will thrive normally as they do in the forest.

The permeation of green in, around and through the city business district is one of our strongest recommendations for making it dramatically different from nearby competing business areas. Trees, green areas and water greatly modify the microclimate. They cool us psychologically and physically. They live and grow, spreading aesthetic charm by their color, odors, textures and interesting branching.

As humans, we evolved from the forest. We need green around us just as we need clean air to breathe and water to drink.



OPEN UP BLOCK CENTERS FOR PEDESTRIANS

## ECONOMIC SOLUTIONS

### RETAIL STORES

In contrast to recommendations of previous studies, we do not see a need for or support for an increase in total retail space in the downtown in the near-term and possibly only a small amount in the longer term.

Instead, the need is for an improvement in the quality of the retail, and a compaction and consolidation of retail space into more attractive and efficient selling units.

Retail improvements should be concentrated in the blocks bounded by Fort Harrison, Cleveland, Garden and Drew on the west side of Cleveland and on Fort Harrison to the east of Cleveland. The area bounded by Cleveland, Osceola, Fort Harrison and Drew also offers some opportunities for infill retail together with green areas, as the "sea" of parking lots is hopefully converted into parking structures, offices, retail and green areas.

In these areas, we would envision the improvements consisting of rehabilitation where possible, demolition and new construction in other areas, using the implementation tools described later in this report.

Assuming that a major revitalization program is undertaken, we would envision support for the addition of 75,000 to 100,000 square feet of new or rehabilitated shoppers good specialty stores in the near term.

One of the most attractive areas for new specialty shopping is on the east side of Fort Harrison between Cleveland and Pierce. The trees in this area provide a beautiful setting and should be saved, and the hotel provides a traffic generator as well as being an attractive structure in itself. Many of the buildings are in a badly deteriorated condition. We believe that Fort Harrison should be a good retail street serving as the north-south axis for the major retail concentration.

We do not believe that a major department store would be interested in moving into the downtown at the present time. However, if the major program described in this report is undertaken, including all of the elements, it is possible that the downtown may be able to attract a second major department store in the next five years. A favorable location for such a store would be at the corner of Garden and Cleveland. This would provide an anchor for the downtown retail on the east and reinforce the pedestrian mall on Cleveland.

## COMMERCIAL OFFICE

Osceola Avenue is an existing office location for some tenants and offers an attractive location for new buildings, particularly if the surface parking in the block bounded by Cleveland, Drew, Fort Harrison and Osceola is consolidated into structures.

The rehabilitation and new building of retail space should also create a favorable environment for new and rehabilitated professional offices amidst the retail, such as the rehabilitated attorneys' offices on the west side of Fort Harrison, just north of Cleveland.

## COMMUNITY CENTER

The much talked about, but not clearly defined, Community Center for Clearwater could be an important factor in the revitalization of the downtown area and should be located in the downtown.

Without benefit of a detailed study, it would appear that the facility would be designed primarily to serve the needs of Clearwater residents, with adequate provision given to its use for convention groups to complement hotels in the downtown area.

Facilities would likely include a theater-type auditorium seating from 2,000 to 2,500 persons plus a number of meeting and conference rooms and an exhibit area. The theater could be used for musical and theatrical presentations as well as for large meetings. The meeting rooms could be used for a multitude of local activities and would also serve well for convention meeting groups. The exhibit area would serve for all types of local shows, dances, receptions, and the like, and would also serve as exhibit area for conventions.

The combination of local events and convention activities would be an important stimulous to retail, hotel, and restaurant business in the downtown area. Thus, the location of the facility should be chosen to take advantage of this activity generator. One previously mentioned location, on the fill property at the end of Pierce Street, would isolate the facility and not accomplish this objective. Instead, the facility should be used to revitalize a portion of the downtown that is in need of renovation. Another advantage of locating the Community Center near the retail and office activity is that benefits of dual usage of parking can be realized. A location fronting on Drew, east of Fort Harrison,

would be one possibility that would be close enough to existing hotels and retail area to have a favorable effect and would also be well located from a circulation standpoint.

#### MARINA COMMERCIAL

The proposed development of the waterfront area would provide an ideal location for a concentration of specialty shops and restaurants catering both to tourists and to local residents.

The development would not have to be large, 50,000 square feet would likely be adequate. The integration of this development with a boatel should be considered.

Water-oriented retail and restaurant groupings have proved very popular in a number of cities throughout the country. The setting in this location would be a marina orientation which would differ from the beach orientation on the island.

A "theme" structure would lend an interest to this development. Harbour Town, a specialty retail and restaurant complex built around a marina on Hilton Head Island is a good example of this type of development.

#### HOTEL-MOTOR HOTEL

Downtown hotels are reportedly doing well; the recent remodeling of the Fort Harrison Hotel attests to this conclusion. If the revitalization program for the waterfront area, described earlier in this study, is implemented together with the Community Center, outlook for additional tourism and convention business for hotels in the downtown area should be favorable. A near term demand for a hotel with 200 to 300 rooms appears reasonable.

Hotel operators will be seeking locations which provide views of and access to the waterfront development and will be convenient to the Community Center for possible convention use.

#### RESIDENTIAL

The downtown area offers attractive opportunities for quality residential development, particularly for sites on the bluff, overlooking the waterfront. Development of the waterfront for a variety of activities and ease of access to the waterfront will increase the attractiveness of the down-



town as a residential site.

At the same time, introduction of quality residential into the downtown would provide a very favorable stimulus to downtown retail and restaurant development.

#### PARKING

At the present time, parking is taking up far too much of the downtown area and is not particularly well located. The plan provides for a consolidation of parking into structures and, where possible, aims at dual usage of parking.

Dual usage of parking is possible with some land uses because of the parking characteristics of building users. For example:

Government office and commercial office parking is almost entirely daytime, non-weekend usage.

Community Center and theater parking is heavily oriented to evening and weekend use.

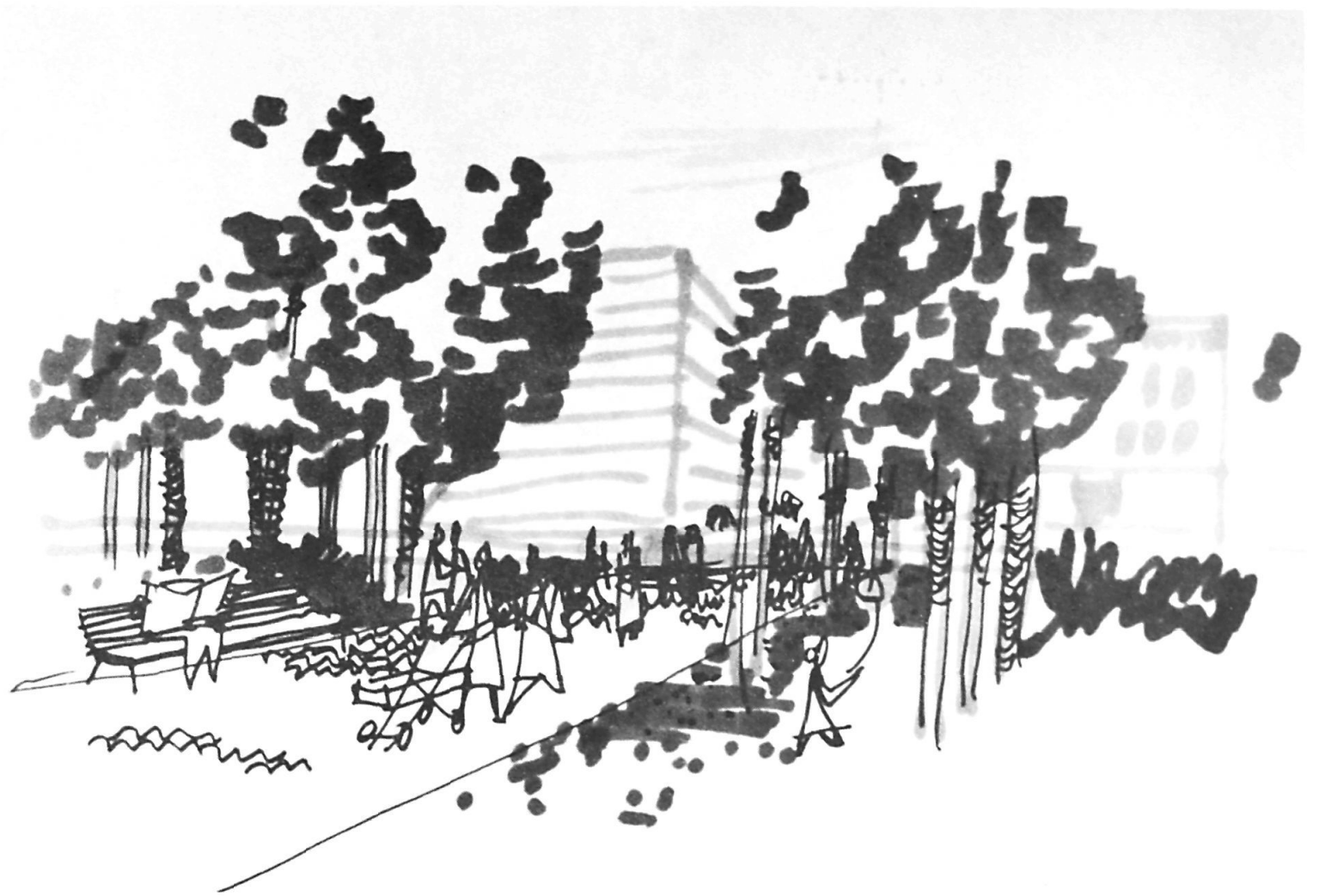
Tourism commercial (including restaurants) is most heavily oriented to weekend and evening uses, but also experiences daytime use.

Hotel demands are heavily peaked in the evening, but space is also needed for tourist visitors during the day and persons attending conventions and patronizing restaurants.

Retail usage is primarily daytime with peaks on weekends plus any evening opening nights.

Residential parking usage is varied and requires a full time commitment of the space, in most cases.





GREEN SPACES IN TOWN

IMPLEMENTATION

## DEVELOP THE ECONOMIC TOOLS

Following are the implementation tools currently available to the city as well as those which are potentially available and some objectives or performance criteria which the implementation/financing framework should meet.

### IMPLEMENTATION/FINANCING DECISION MATRIX

One of the first steps in developing an implementation program is to set up a matrix which matches currently available and potentially available implementation methods with development actions to be undertaken by public and private sectors over the time period covered by a development plan. This can most easily be done with an implementation/financing decision matrix such as the one shown on the following page. In the time available, it was not possible to review all of the programs which would apply to Clearwater; therefore, we have shown an example of such a matrix prepared for the City of Los Angeles which reflects California legislation. The matrix is a framework for implementation and a starting point. The key to successful realization of an implementation program is the establishment of mutual commitments to action by both public and private sectors, based upon recommendations agreed upon in a downtown development plan. This cooperative effort is particularly critical in the short-range implementation period, so that an initial basis for continued cooperative action can be established.

### IMPLEMENTATION OBJECTIVES

Specific objectives of the program can only be established after review and acceptance of a plan for the downtown. However, we recommend the following general objectives should be considered in developing an implementation program for Clearwater.

A balance should be maintained in the implementation program insuring that functional efficiency, adequate economic returns to both property owner and public coffers, and environmental/design quality standards are appropriately balanced in all development.

To the greatest extent possible, the cost of public developments should be self-liquidating, minimizing cost to the general public through the use of "user-generated" revenues, tax-increment financing (discussed later), and other similar means to defray costs of these projects.

IMPLEMENTATION  
OPTIONS  
MATRIX

(Indicates possible implementation methods for major physical development actions of the LA/CBD plan)

Arterial Street Improvements

Local Street Improvements

Overpasses of Railroads

Street Landscaping & Lighting Programs

Parking Facilities

Utility Improvements

Open Pedestrian Malls

Enclosed Pedestrian Malls

Skywalk System

Governmental Center

Special Events-Convention Center

Greenway System

Low-Income Housing

Moderate-Income Housing

General Market Housing

Housing Rehabilitation

Housing Conservation

Neighborhood Upgrading

Public Facilities Construction

New Retail Construction

Rehabilitation of Existing Retail

New Office, Other Construction

Rehabilitation of Existing Commercial

Downtown Area Beautification

Air Rights Construction

"Packaged" Downtown Development

Local Special Transit System

FEDERAL PROGRAMS

Federal Housing Programs  
Federal Urban Renewal Program  
Early Land Acquisition Program  
Neighborhood Development Program  
Open Space Land Program  
Urban Beautification Program  
Code Enforcement Grants  
Certified Area Grants  
Demolition Grants  
Housing Rehabilitation Loans and Grants  
Interim Assistance for Blighted Areas Grants  
Federally Assisted Conservation Effort  
TOPICS, Other Road Programs  
DOT Grants and Loans

STATE AND LOCAL PROGRAMS

California State Highway Program  
California State Community Renewal Law  
Los Angeles City Parking Commission  
General Obligation Bonds  
Special Improvement Districts  
California State Mall Act of 1960  
Revenue Bonds  
Special Taxes  
Zoning Ordinance  
Special Development Controls  
Incentive Development Controls  
Local Private Development  
Tax Increment Financing  
City Growth Control  
Major Corporate Developers  
Local Financing Sources  
Center City District

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**Parking Commission:** This is one of the most frequently used tools of implementation in downtown projects. Throughout the country, there is wide variation on the extent of powers available to parking districts. In most cases this entity can utilize eminent domain, lease, or purchase powers to acquire needed land, can issue revenue bonds (approved by general election); can build parking structures; assume control of existing parking facilities as part of a unified program; can receive all revenues generated by parking and invest revenues in construction and acquisition of new facilities. In some cases the parking commission can assume wider powers with land assemblage beyond that immediately required for parking garages. Retail space can be developed by parking commissions under parking garages as part of the structure.

In many states revenue bonds issued by parking commissions are not obligations of the city; thus, they are not tied to the total bonding limit of the city and provide a more flexible means of financing projects than in states where such commissions cannot provide needed facilities because they are linked to a nearly exhausted or overextended city bonding limit. Bonds may be paid by user fees (parking charge) assessments (parking benefit district), validations (a form of benefit district), and other typical revenue sources.

Thus, the parking commission is a very flexible tool and can fill in to some extent for urban renewal in the absence of such a program.

**Special Improvement Districts:** A large variety of special improvement districts are currently in operation throughout the country, primarily for the purpose of providing lighting, curbs, gutters and other improvements to various residential and commercial areas. These districts normally require a majority approval by the affected properties and operate on an apportioned assessment basis, defraying the cost of the improvements over benefited properties. This type of legislation is the general basis for the more specialized parking district described above and the Center City Improvement District described below.

**Center City Improvement District:** In some jurisdictions, cities are authorized to impose taxes on businesses, within a designated parking and business improvement area (such as a central business district) in addition to the general business license tax. Proceeds from these taxes may be spent for the development of parking structures, building decoration, promotion of public events, furnishing of music to public areas, and the general promotion of retail-trade activities.

Public improvements of benefit to the entire Clearwater community, such as the waterfront development and park system, improvements to the arterial street system and the like, should utilize not only traditional population and property-based financing sources (such as general obligation bonds) but should seek, through innovative use of revenue bonds and county, state and federal financing sources to lower the percentage of the total cost which the local population and property owner must bear.

Improvements of total or partial benefit to a specific sector of the community (geographic and/or economic) should have a proportionate share of their development cost borne by those uses benefiting from the improvement (except where the improvement is an obvious responsibility of a local government body, such as streets).

The pooling of local development capital should be accomplished through formation of local development corporations or similar entities which could combine forces with each other and with public agencies to help to achieve major implementation efforts.

#### TOOLS OF IMPLEMENTATION

Implementation tools are discussed under two headings -- State and Local and Federal. Stress has been placed on tools at the State and Local level because of the reluctance of Clearwater to be involved in Federal programs such as urban renewal. Some of the tools mentioned here (such as tax increment financing and public development corporation) are not possible under present Florida legislation. However, they do represent very realistic approaches to implementation programs such as contemplated in Clearwater and thus have been covered in this section.

**General Obligation Bonds:** The City may issue general obligation bonds for various public improvements, including public works, public buildings, parks and other facilities upon a vote of the general electorate. The constraints of this type of financing are: (1) a vote is required, (2) the level of indebtedness is limited to a percent of assessed valuation, and (3) the tax burden is not tied closely to users or those benefited.

**Revenue Bonds:** Revenue bonds may also be issued by the municipality for public improvements, with revenues pledged to their retirement being either those generated by the improvement itself or by related services which produce revenue.



Potentially Available State and Local Programs--Unassisted Urban Renewal Utilizing Tax Increment Financing: The implementation tool discussed below has proven to be successful in other states. We have gone into the level of detail given here because of the substantial interest expressed on this implementation method during our presentation.

Unassisted urban renewal projects are normally operated within applicable state enabling legislation. Most of these are patterned after the California Community Redevelopment Law, Section 333000 et seq. Although the great majority of communities undertaking urban renewal throughout the country utilize federal assistance, some communities have successfully undertaken unassisted projects. This approach, while removing the ability of a community to utilize federal cost-sharing, does provide for certain advantages to the community. Since the City of Clearwater does not, at this time, plan to utilize federal assistance, it is particularly necessary to examine more closely the concept of unassisted or locally financed redevelopment.

Unassisted projects are not subject to the complicated reviews and approval by federal agencies normally experienced in a federally-assisted project.

It is often possible to move unassisted projects quickly from the planning stage to the development stage, since local action is the only constraint upon project completion.

The increased tax base and other benefits falling to the community are therefore subject to acceleration in the project, as red tape is minimized; early community returns from project expenditures are therefore increased.

The obvious liabilities of unassisted projects are the cost factors, and the fact that the community shoulders the entire burden of marketing and execution of the project.

Tax Allocation Bonds as Local Resources: Legislative provisions in states with such legislation have provided redevelopment authorities with a method of debt financing which the agencies have found extremely beneficial. This method is known as tax allocation or tax increment financing. Basically, the use of tax allocation financing is as follows:

When an urban renewal project plan is adopted by local authorities, the existing assessed value of all properties within the area is

"frozen" for accounting purposes, and termed the "base valuation."

From that point forward, through the life of the project, any additional assessed valuation (and revenue potential) over and above the base is termed the "increment" due to redevelopment.

All tax revenues flowing from the additional assessed value may be pledged, by the municipality, to repay bonds sold on the market to finance the project.

The bonds are generally sold at a reasonable interest cost; the extra cash available reduces the city's necessity to float general obligation bonds or special assessment bonds; and a successful project may be accelerated by having the local resources larger in earlier years.

Generally, these bonds are sold by agencies based upon expectations of rapid new development in the project area. Obviously, a slowdown in new construction or heavy demolition of buildings after the base year can throw new valuation and bond repayment fund off into the future. Thus, the examination of the market for new development is crucial to the tax-secured bond method of renewal finance.

The Workings of Tax Increment Finance: In order to capture and utilize the "tax increments" flowing from assessed value increases in a project area, the city must accomplish the following:

Formally adopt or approve a redevelopment project area.

"Freeze" the project area assessed valuation for further calculations. This is normally accomplished by legislative resolution and reflected in the provisions of the urban renewal plan document for the project area. This normally occurs at the same time as required actions for a federally-supported project; usually the "frozen base" is the latest equalized (adjusted) assessor's roll.

Have completed sufficient detailed study of the subject project to support bond counsel's favorable underwriting of a bond offering. This involves a financial feasibility study of the project plan.

How the Tax Increment is Used: Once the Urban Renewal Authority has complied with the State provisions for tax increment financing, and the local legislative body has approved the issuance of bonds, the procedures for employing this approach are relatively simple:

Tax increment-secured bonds are offered and sold in the marketplace. Normally, these bonds enjoy income tax protection in the same fashion as other municipal securities, although this type of bond is considered a higher risk.

Annual repayment of principal and interest is then made by the locality, nominally the Urban Renewal Authority itself, but in a general sense by the city.

Under optimum conditions, a project underway generates sufficient tax increment (tax revenues in excess of that generated by the "frozen base") to more than cover said principal and interest. In the event it does not, funds are generally advanced from the city treasury to cover debt service, with reimbursement scheduled at a later date when tax increment flow is increased.

It is in this area of timing of bond sales vs. ability to repay that most tax increment finance programs turn sour. Often the bond proceeds are needed in early project stages, but the sale of redevelopment parcels and completion of new taxable development does not occur until a later date. Thus, the urban renewal agency faces a cash flow problem, when bond repayment is not in phase with tax increment flow.

Although it is impossible to pin down a cash flow sequence for projects in the downtown Clearwater area, it is possible to generally illustrate the overall potential for use of tax increment financing in projects. The discussion below contains estimates pertinent to the issue.

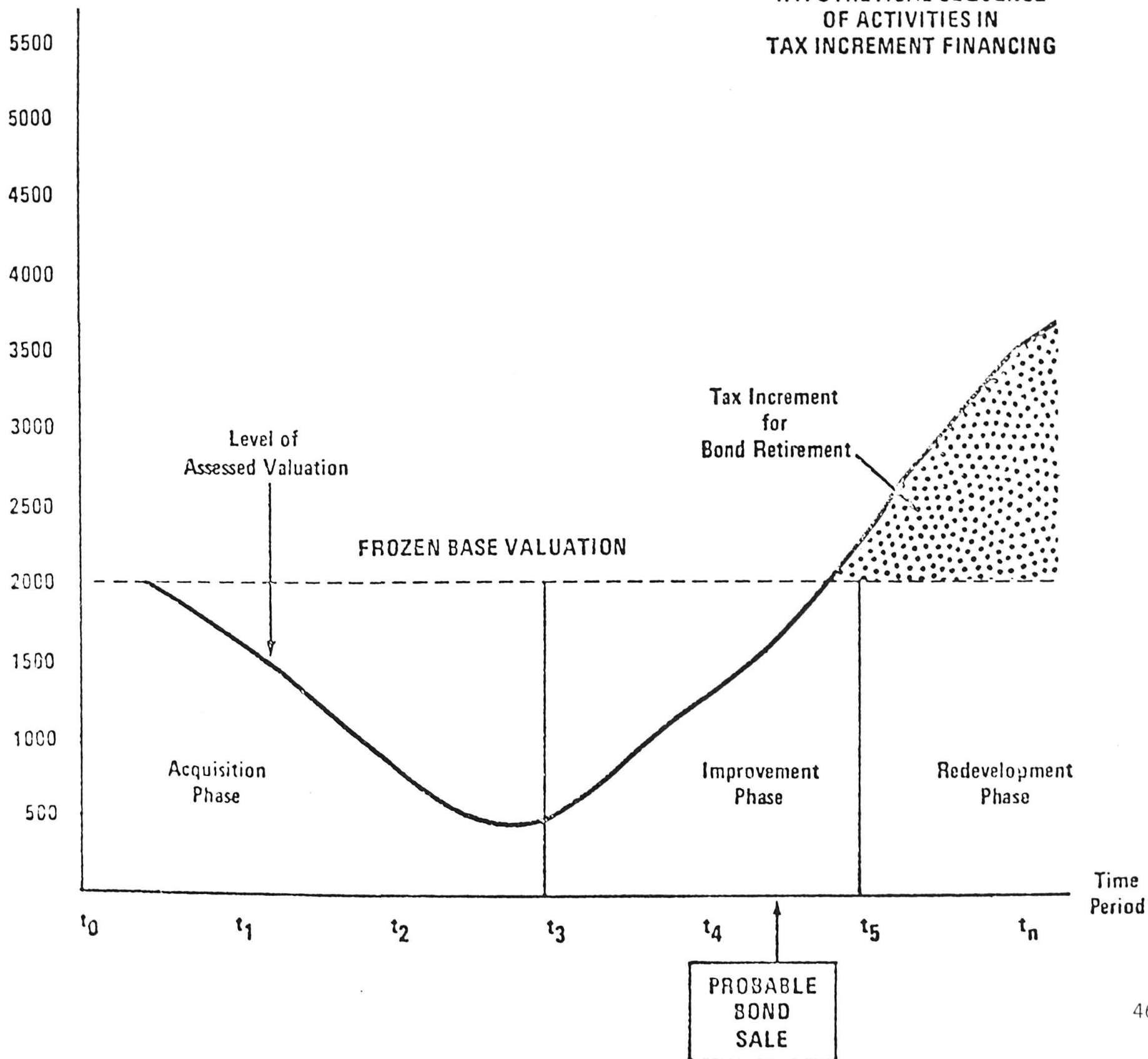
#### Hypothetical Project Tax Increment Financing

Given the considerations listed above, we must examine the potential for tax increment financing in a project area where definite action in the next five years is likely. The first step in this analysis is the setting of an estimated "frozen base." This is the estimated assessed value of existing properties in a project area.

The second step in the analysis is estimation of the potential valuation changes in each project brought about by redevelopment activities. For reference, the following diagram illustrates a hypothetical redevelopment project's changes in this base valuation over time. The first stage is illustrated as the acquisition and site preparation phase. During this period, the project area's assessed value drops significantly as the public authority acquires land and buildings for demolition.

Assessed  
Valuation  
(\$000)

HYPOTHETICAL SEQUENCE  
OF ACTIVITIES IN  
TAX INCREMENT FINANCING



A second phase is project improvement. During this period, only minor new construction is added to the tax rolls, although land marketing and installation of public improvements are actively underway. The third, and all-important phase, is redevelopment. At this significant point, land should be undergoing rapid conveyance to private interests and new construction should be added to the tax rolls.

There is overlapping between each phase, of course, but this example indicates the relationship of new construction to the original frozen base value. It also indicates the importance of timing tax increment bond sales in relation to the anticipated flow of tax increments from the new assessed valuation. Bonds sold too far in advance of actual increment flow will become a liability upon the city general fund.

The following table presents a hypothetical tax allocation financing case for a project area. The "base" assessed valuation is the current recorded assessed valuation within the boundaries of the study area.

Some other important considerations related to tax increment financing are:

In a project with extensive anticipated clearance for redevelopment, the early project stages may result in a substantial reduction in assessed valuation. Thus, for tax increment planning, there is an extended period whereby bond debt service is unavailable. Such a project requires careful planning for sale of the bonds to avoid the necessity of a major subsidy to meet debt service.

In a project where properties to be cleared are of relatively high valuation (commercial and industrial), reuse or redevelopment value must exceed significantly the value of original uses. This poses a problem for projects where public or residential redevelopment follows clearance of high-value existing land use.

The actual offering of tax increment bonds must be staged to keep the intrinsic value of the offering stable. A healthy (1.5 or 2 to 1) ratio of anticipated tax increment reserves to annual debt retirement payments significantly increases the salability of such notes.

In Clearwater, there is a definite potential to utilize this tax allocation financing to supplement available capital program and general funds. For instance, the bond proceeds can be used to construct land acquisition and public improvements.

HYPOTHETICAL TAX ALLOCATION  
(INCREMENT) FINANCING FOR REDEVELOPMENT

New Project Area Fair Market Value*	\$8,000,000
New Assessed Valuation (25% of FMV)	2,000,000
Less: Base Assessed Valuation*	<u>(1,000,000)</u>
Incremental Assessed Value	\$1,000,000
Annual Tax revenue from Incremental Assessed Value @ \$12/\$100 AV)#	\$ 120,000
Potential Tax Allocation Bonding <sup>X</sup>	1,200,000

\* Example only

# Includes County, school, special district levies  
Underwriters' estimate of surplus to annual debt repayment ratio  
is 1.5 times annual surplus

X Assumes 30 year, 6% bonds, level payment



## COST OF INDECISION

As a concluding point it is informative to look at one aspect of the cost of not moving ahead with a major program of revitalization for downtown Clearwater. One method of looking at the cost of not moving ahead with such a program is to examine the potential loss of taxes that would likely occur if the program does not move ahead.

In our opinion, if a major program in the downtown does not take place, there will be little stimulus for development of retail shops, office space and hotel accommodations. Assuming only the loss of the short range elements of the plan, the cost of indecision is estimated at \$300,000 per year, as shown below.

Type of Development	Yearly Property Tax Estimate *
Retail Shoppers Goods - 160,000 square feet	\$ 54,400
Commercial Office Space - 200,000 square feet	102,000
Hotel-Motor Hotel - 250 rooms	106,250
Marina-Retail - 75,000 square feet	<u>38,250</u>
	\$300,900

This is meant to be illustrative of the potential revenues that would be lost to the city. We recognize that there would also be some increased cost associated with these new facilities.

\*Based on an assessed valuation of 85% of actual value and a combined tax rate for the city and schools of \$20 per \$1,000 in assessed value.

## AUTHORIZE FINAL PLANS

Clearwater has had one study a year, on some aspect of the downtown problem, for the last six years. They don't conflict. Time is running out. The City is at the crossroads. Immediate and decisive action is called for.

The team to perform the final studies and develop the final planning must be assembled. It must encompass a wide range of expertise — from architects, urban designers, landscape architects and economists to sociologists, traffic experts and communications consultants. The highest caliber of talent must be sought. The work must be planned under a tight schedule.

A fluid, three-way organization between the planning team, the decision-making structure and the community must be developed. The collaboration of the City Planning Department, one Downtown Development Board and the Clearwater Section of the Florida Central Chapter of the American Institute of Architects, is essential in this organization.

## IMPLEMENT FIRST PROGRAMS

Certain steps can take place almost immediately because of the smallness of the cost involved. The one-way street system can be initiated. This is long overdue — one-way streets were started in this country more than fifty years ago. A program of street furniture can be begun. The results of research by HUD in this field are available and useful. The present tree planting program can be put into high gear.

## ORGANIZE THE FINAL POLITICAL PROCESS

Once all the foregoing is underway, the citizens and government of Clearwater will start the final political process — one that everyone is familiar with — organization of press, TV and radio, mustering public and private community groups — the American political tradition. The citizens of Clearwater have already indicated their concern in the previous planning referendum which was passed 7 to 1.

The time is now!