

birmingham r/udat

neighborhoods - communities

regional/urban design assistance team

american institute of architects

N49127

B5AS

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"Let's wave a wand and see what could happen with proper cooperation between the private enterprise and city government."

"And yet I think many of us have come to see that what we had formerly seen as a lemon thrown to us can be made into a lemonade, and there is a possibility of utilizing the freeway system to the great advantage of Woodlawn."

"When it rains hard, that ditch overflows and floods all the low area. There was a case one time where a lady had an invalid sister living there. The water got up in the bed with her."

"When I want to buy clothes, there's no clothing store here in Woodlawn."

"We particularly needed a light down here at Georgia Road, so we could get across. They had wonderful lights at other locations to hold the traffic back, but people need to walk too."

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INTRODUCTION

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PLANNING PROCESS IN BIRMINGHAM

PLANNING FOR A NEIGHBORHOOD PLAN

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INTRODUCTION

The R/UDAT team, a creation of the American Institute of Architects, has been asked to assist with the advancement of the planning process of the City of Birmingham. The point of departure is the recently established Citizens Participation Program. Our purpose is to help assure the successful implementation of this unique organizational effort.

In order to insure that the traditional concerns of physical planning are welded with economic, social and environmental considerations, the R/UDAT team includes a variety of disciplines--economics, social science, urban design, environmental psychology and architecture.

We hope to assist in the demonstration of what enlightened neighborhood participation can achieve. We are, therefore, not concerned in this study with city wide systems of transportation, education and the like. Our suggestions or recommendations attempt to take advantage of the judgment and experience expressed in current programs and projects of the City. Some of these initiatives are the drafting of the coming year's capital improvement programs, the selection of special funds for three pilot neighborhoods, the development of a city wide land use plan, the Mayor's commitment to use revenue sharing funds to improve

conditions within the retail districts of the City's communities, the start in the establishment of a city housing policy, and the Mayor's proposals for State legislation.

We also hope to help the first neighborhood within the City that has decided to use its allotted funds for the establishment of its own neighborhood plan.

The R/UDAT team has not had the opportunity to meet with and obtain information from the large industrial interests of Birmingham. There are certainly many types and sizes of industries found in all of the eighty four neighborhoods, some that cover large portions of the land in their neighborhoods. It is our hope that the recommendations in this report will encourage development of mechanisms to include this sector in the planning process. Furthermore, the process recommended should be used to help plan and improve the economic base of the city and the industries found in its neighborhoods.

The planning process suggested in this report applies to all neighborhoods. However, in order to arrive at some recommendations within the space of only four days, it was not possible to become familiar with every neighborhood. Instead, three were selected that represent the problems and opportunities found in most, if not all, of the others.

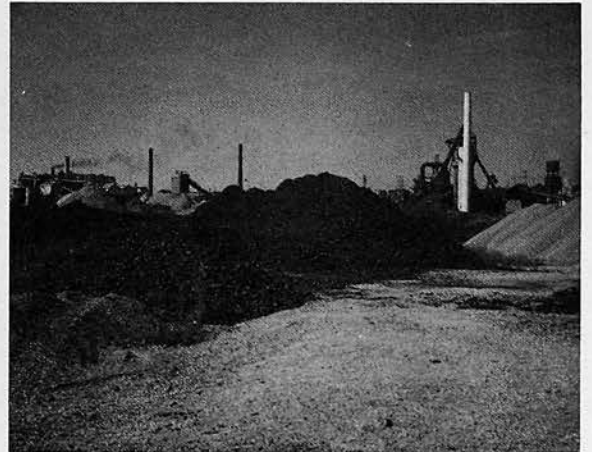
The three are Woodlawn, North Birmingham, and Ensley. They were selected for a variety of reasons. They are located in different parts of the city, they are of different sizes, they have different land use characteristics, they all have a retail shopping center. In addition, they contain varying types of homes and patterns of Ownership.

The recommendations for the three neighborhoods treated in this report are simply illustrative of what can be expected to result from the proposed planning process. We are not suggesting that these types of proposals suggested are to be implemented in only the three neighborhoods.

Again, establishment of a productive planning process is the goal of this report and it is being recommended to encompass all of the neighborhoods of the City.

The information used in the preparation of this report has come from a variety of sources. The local chapter of the American Institute of Architects, a sponsor of this R/UDAT Project, has provided an impressive amount and quality of information relating to projects, plans, and jurisdictions at all scales--the neighborhood, the community, the City, the county and the region. The City of Birmingham has told us about its agencies and their plans and projects. The team has had the opportunity to view the

entire city from a helicopter. It also has traveled by bus and foot through three neighborhoods. A variety of city wide interests and jurisdictions presented their plans, projects and advice to the group in a half-day conference with the team. On Saturday morning, town meetings were held simultaneously in all three of the neighborhoods. These meetings were opportunities for residents, shop keepers and representatives of community institutions to present their views and advice. People of all ages and backgrounds came to talk and listen. All of the participants agreed that the town meetings were helpful and demonstrated the deep concern most residents have for their community and the City of Birmingham.



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EXISTING CONTEXT

Regional

Often referred to as the "Pittsburgh of the South", Birmingham, Alabama, is the largest industrial center in the Southeast region of the United States. It is of surprisingly recent origins, for it was founded only a bit more than one hundred years ago on a site where the rare confluence of iron ore, coal and limestone offered a bright industrial future.

For a number of decades it was one of the fastest growing cities in the nation. However, due to heavy reliance on the production and processing of iron, it suffered severely during the depression of the 1930's. After the temporary boom of the war years of the 1940's, the locational advantages and more diversified economic base of competing urban centers inhibited Birmingham's expansion. Atlanta, Georgia, located approximately 150 miles due east of Birmingham, became the great magnet for commercial activities that serve the entire Southeast region. Montgomery, the capital of Alabama and 90 miles to the south, attracted government oriented activities. Nashville Tennessee, approximately 200 miles to the north, has received much of the large scale business activity generated by the undertakings of the Tennessee Valley Authority.

In recent years the City of Birmingham has also been powerfully affected by the movement of large numbers of its population to outlying suburban areas and the loss of people--mostly Blacks--who have migrated North. As a result, despite the continued moderate growth of the Metropolitan Region of Birmingham, the city proper has been losing population since the early 1950's. It is currently a city of approximately 300,000 inhabitants. It is making a determined effort to diversify its economy and to offset, through vigorous civic action, difficulties occasioned by the gradual contraction of employment in the iron and metal fabrication industries. A notable boost has come from the enormous expansion of the campus of the University of Alabama located in downtown Birmingham which today serves some 12,000 students. The city remains, however, a predominately heavy industry community with approximately a third of its labor force directly involved in the production and processing of primary metals.

The relationship of the City of Birmingham to its metropolitan region is complex and, in many instances, constraining on the development of the city. The conflicting interests and problems of surrounding municipalities often impede the delivery of essential services such as social, health care, water and sewer, many of which are under the control of Jefferson County,

the local jurisdiction that surrounds the City of Birmingham.

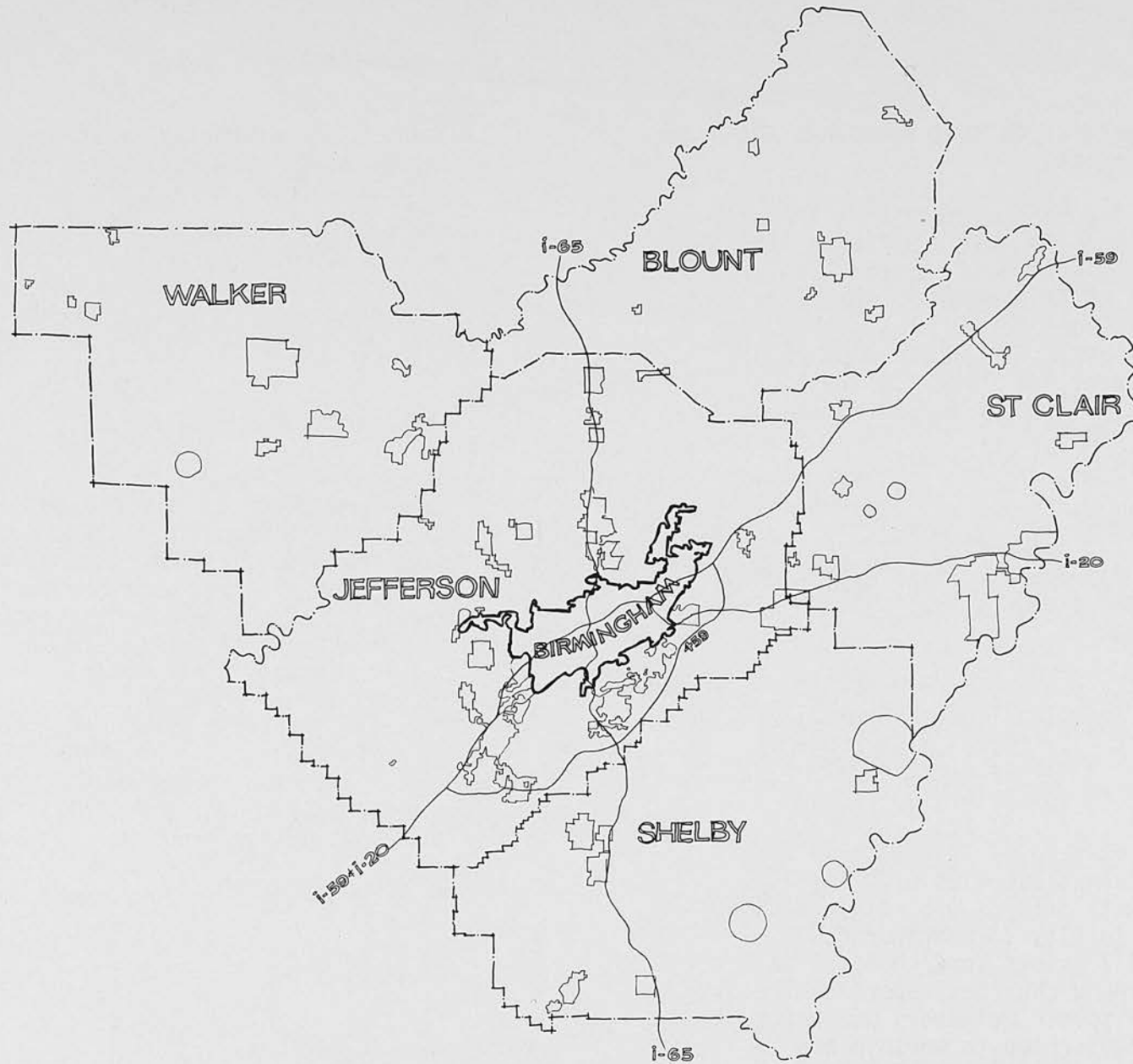
New suburban shopping centers ring the city and serve as magnets that draw sales from Birmingham's neighborhood business centers. With the loss of this business many local merchants have been forced to close and to leave behind substantial numbers of vacant stores. Citizens are forced to travel further for simple goods and services--often a burden for older persons or those without easy access to transportation.

The annexation of surrounding land is often precluded by the opposition of a relatively few very large property owners withholdings adjacent to the city. This limits physical expansion.

Ironically, the phenomenon of local business and industrial owners residing outside of the city potentially weakens their commitment to the Birmingham neighborhoods in which they operate.

Fortunately, many former Birmingham residents retain close ties with family members and with friends who remain within the city and loyalty to neighborhood merchants still brings some shoppers back. Some neighborhood churches report the regular attendance of former neighbors who return to their old neighborhood to worship and to participate in activities in familiar surroundings.

Indeed, the symbiotic relationship between Birmingham's communities and their metropolitan area is tense and significant.



REGIONAL CONTEXT

Citywide Issues

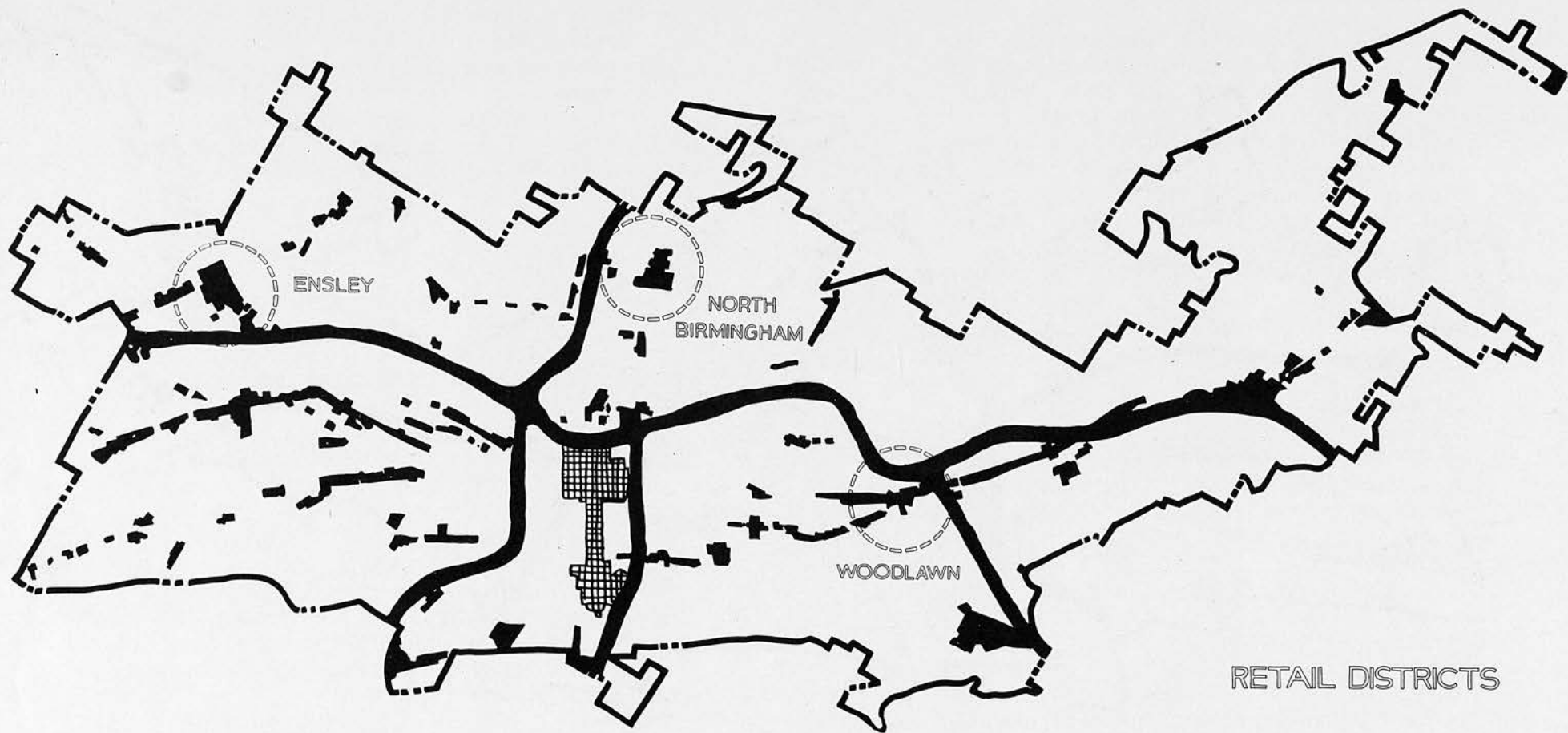
Like most of its urban counterparts, the City of Birmingham exhibits both negative and positive traits. Sources of both are rooted in its history. The scattered settlement patterns of white and blacks, excessive reliance on a few industrial types, the low per capita municipal expenditures that failed to keep up with the City's physical needs, the proliferation of autonomous governmental units in the metropolitan area, all contributed to the recent decline in the City's population. On the other hand, the same factors yielded a population with a working class background, strongly committed to identifiable neighborhoods. These are some of the virtues of Birmingham. Although most of these areas have been experiencing significant shifts of population within the last decade or two, the sense of neighborhood identification is still strong -- an identification often reinforced by the close proximity of major sources of industrial employment. The presence of substantial commercial centers and the prevalence of single family, home ownership patterns of residential development serve to reinforce this sense of place as does the presence of many strong and long established religious institutions. These continue to serve the needs of the residents while attracting former neighbors back for participation in worship and community activities. This community identification

and neighborhood loyalty cut across racial lines and serve to promote a solidarity essential for inter-racial community cooperation and eventual community rejuvenation. The critical issues confronted by these neighborhoods and the City of Birmingham comprise both the obstacles as well as the opportunities for improving its future.

Land Use

Birmingham's neighborhoods are characterized by a land use pattern of mixed, often considered incompatible, land uses. Yet despite these conflicts the communities continue to exhibit a strong identity. It appears that the proximity of home and factory reinforce one's relationship to neighborhood. In an energy conscious age seeking to overcome alienation this may be far more important than theoretical separation of land uses. These neighborhood areas historically have had central business districts, and social and religious institutions which generated the social framework through which the quality of life has been enhanced.

However, the exploitation of land by large industry has had a negative impact on much of the land use patterns in Birmingham. These are manifest in the conflict between freight transportation and residential activity; limited access by emergency

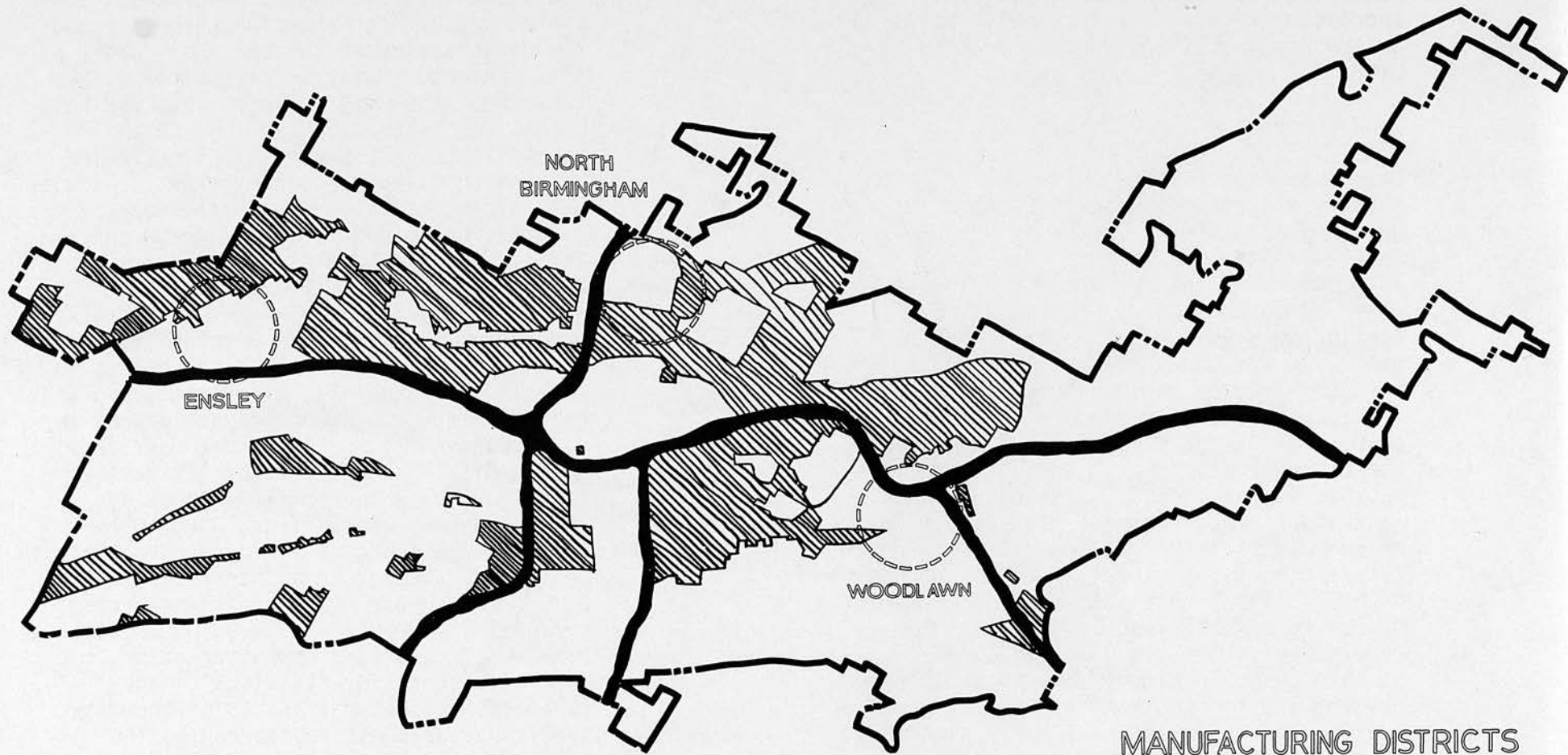


ENSLEY

NORTH
BIRMINGHAM

WOODLAWN

RETAIL DISTRICTS



MANUFACTURING DISTRICTS

vehicles, and most dramatically, the encroachment of air, water, noise pollution on the commercial residential sectors of the City.

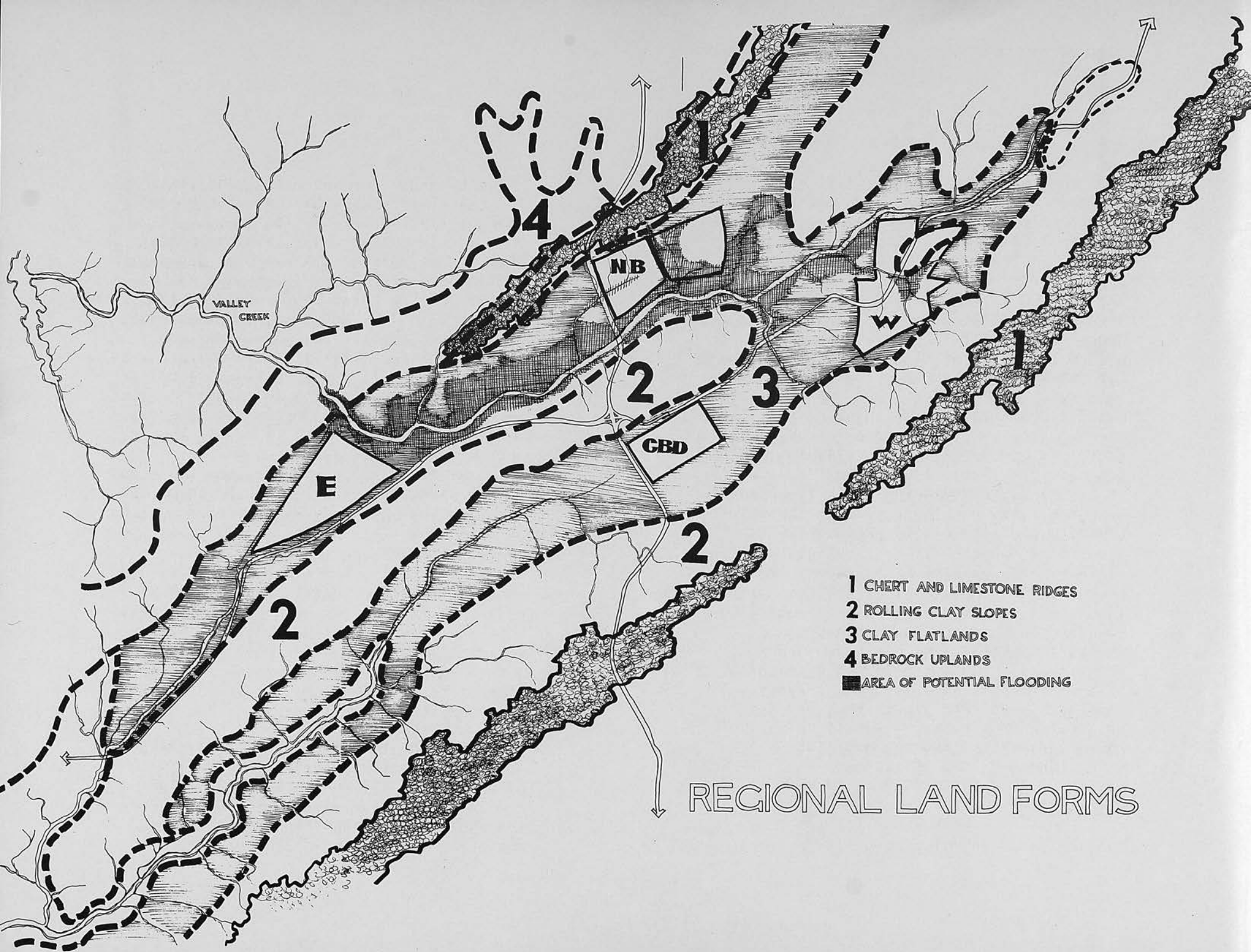
Land Ownership

Development in Birmingham dominated by our country's largest industrial giants such as United States Steel, Tennessee Coal & Iron, Bethlehem Steel and others resulted in a land ownership pattern where the industries owned or controlled more than 50% of Birmingham's non-street acreage. Much of that land was exhaustively utilized and in some cases dramatically abused. Even though it has provided Birmingham with large tracts of potentially developable land. Whether the City and its people choose to or can acquire it, whether it is to be utilized for recreation or development for residential or commercial industrial uses is subject to future discussion. What is pertinent now, however, is the fact that Birmingham has access to a large land bank for future development. The issue facing Birmingham at this point in time is how to fruitfully develop a partnership with industry based on quality and equity to rationally plan the reuse and reclamation and disposition of those lands.

Visual Blight

Nestled in a mineral-rich valley of the

red mountains, Birmingham experiences both the beauty of its natural environment and the unattractiveness of the human abuse of this setting. Heavy industrial complexes throughout the City are prominent and have not as yet taken steps to enhance their visual image. Rather than moving toward enlivening buildings and storage facilities with clean, attractive colors; local industry has made little effort to enhance its visual appeal and to contain its operations within well maintained, attractively landscaped barriers. Most industrial activities in Birmingham, are aesthetically unsatisfying and reflect an image of its namesake, Birmingham, England. Large commercial signs also are placed in an obtrusive manner throughout most areas of the City. As a result of its massive industrial base and the prevalence of garish outdoor advertising, Birmingham obscures the inordinately good care that its residents take in the maintenance of their homes and the profusion of heavily treed residential streets. Instead of projecting a sense of civic and corporate pride, the lack of concern for its visual image tarnishes the natural beauty of the City. The visual drabness reinforced by the pollution levels creates a dull, depressing environment which inevitably adversely affects the moods and well-being of the residents. Since many have unconsciously adapted to these conditions, they are unaware of its impact on their lives.



VALLEY
CREEK

NB

W

E

GBD

- 1 CHERT AND LIMESTONE RIDGES
- 2 ROLLING CLAY SLOPES
- 3 CLAY FLATLANDS
- 4 BEDROCK UPLANDS
- AREA OF POTENTIAL FLOODING

REGIONAL LAND FORMS

The Environment

The land forms of the region have constricted development and shaped Birmingham's unique pattern development. The steep chert ridges and slopes have limited access and have made building difficult and hence have retained their vegetation to form bands of greenery as a backdrop.

Commerce and housing first developed on the high grounds of the valley slopes and bottom lands, all consisting of clay soils of moderate permibility. Original Woodlawn, Ensley, North Birmingham and Downtown Birmingham are examples of such sittings. Traditionally, industry and railroads have dominated the clay impervious flatlands and particularly Valley Creek and its flood plain. Requiring extensive flat ground, the steel mills have, with its growth, filled, rerouted and culverted the creek, limiting it's flood holding capacity and restricting its flow. The result is numerous localized flooding. Siltation caused by poor management of its spoils banks and ore storage has compounded the problem, and industrial waste has chemically polluted its waters. As neighborhoods expanded, housing was forced off the slopes and into the floodplain, in order to be close to jobs. Collegeville and Fairview are such communities. With this, the increased loss of storage for flood waters caused higher flood stages and even worse flooding.

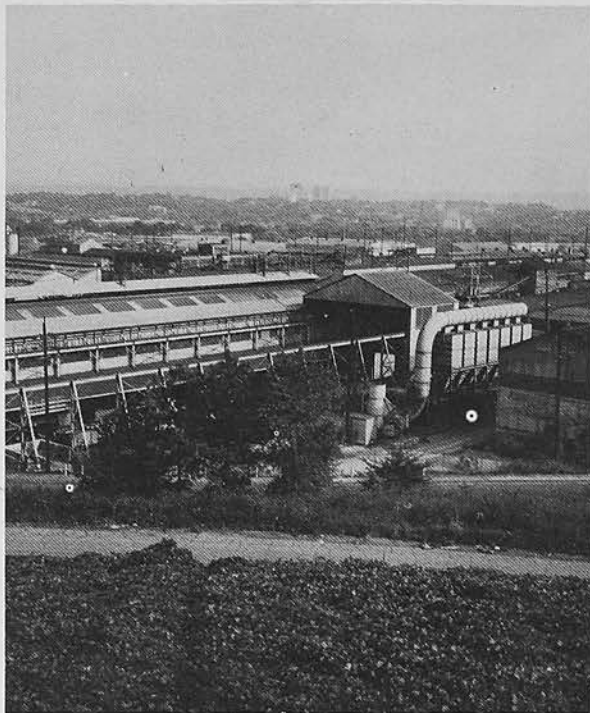
Individual houses and their subdivision plan cluster in response to these three land types. On the valley flatlands tight narrow lot housing in a gridiron pattern is typical and reaches the highest density for detached dwellings. East Ensley and Collegeville are typical. On the valley slopes, the grid becomes distorted and the lots widen in order to get drives and walks up slopes to the house site. North Birmingham and Woodlawn show this development. But on the rolling clay hills, the grid needed distortion and produced the unique communities of Norwood and South Woodlawn.

And where the topography becomes too steep or too broken, its hillsides erode or mud slides occur and are better used for parks or wilderness preserves.

The ideal of built form responding to the natural landform has not always been followed and numerous problem areas exist. But the more economically and socially viable communities tend to be those which do respond to its environment.

Mass Transportation

Until recently, mass transit in Birmingham was being destroyed by administrative insensitivity to public transportation. The Mayor successfully negotiated with a nationally known private transit company to revive Birmingham's defunct system.



Through a progressive promotion and community involvement campaign, losses have stabilized and some increased ridership has been noted but far below the anticipated mark.

Bouquets should be given for the free transit zone in the CBD, express buses using the expressway to Ensley and the 20 new buses recently purchased. But the system still suffers from over 80 - 1958 delapidated buses inherited from the previous owners, the lack of bus stops, route markers, and grade crossings.

The Interstate Highway

Birmingham for years has been behind other American cities in developing an interstate highway system but now boasts both north-south and east-west routes.

The interstate system has solved much local highway congestion and has presented Birmingham with a new and in some cases attractive image of itself, however, it has brought devastating social and economic consequences to the City and its neighborhoods.

The new highways have crossed topographical barriers opening new suburbs to the south and speeding the spread of suburbs to the east and west ends of the valley. The exodus has helped rob Birmingham of its middle and upper income population,

industry and revenues. It has also helped rob Birmingham of its once proud mix of people. Some neighborhoods have become vacant, commercial centers closed and schools emptied.

The interstate system particularly has been routed with insensitivity to local communities. In Woodlawn, the road has wiped out the black community, in Ensley, it has severed the upper income community from the downtown area and schools, and in North Birmingham, the road has isolated the Acipco neighborhood from any other neighborhood.

The commercial center of North Birmingham, once the center for the entire north region, is now 60% vacant and the range of merchandise offered is limited to discount variety. Elevated throughout much of its route, the highway cuts off breezes and causes polluted stagnant air and noise to permeate out entire neighborhoods. It also results in dark covered pedestrian crossings conducive to robbery, rape and other criminal activities.

The city must now try to recapture citizens and dollars lost, and change adjacent land uses in order to heal the existing scars.



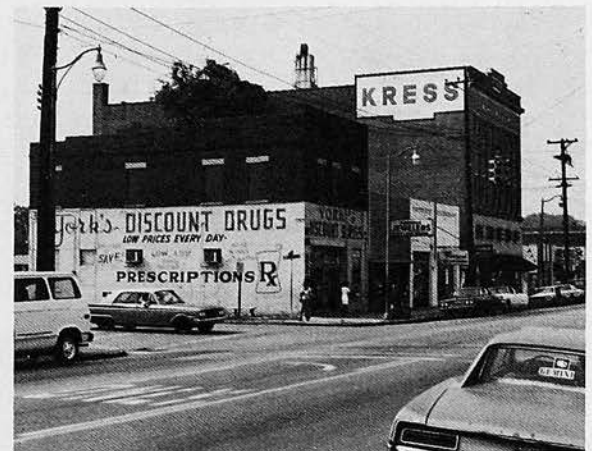
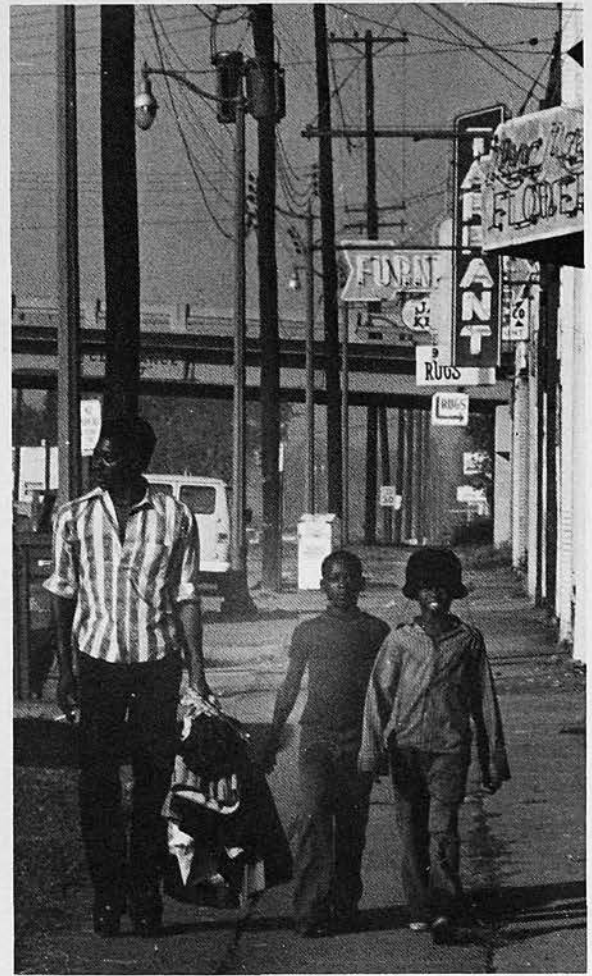
Slowed Economic Development

For several decades the City of Birmingham has been losing population to suburban areas and to cities of the north. During most of this period employment within the metropolitan area has grown moderately. However, employment in heavy industry, much of which is located within the City, has slowly contracted. As a result the large blue-collar elements of the population have been adversely affected. This decline in industrial employment had obviously contributed to the difficulties that the long established community commercial centers have experienced in recent years. Such centers, which historically have been such an important component in the identification and servicing of the many residential communities of the City, have been particularly hard hit by store vacancies and general reduction in sales.

While current figures on the rate of unemployment within the City and the three specific communities examined by the R/UDAT team are in dispute, there is little question that the rate of unemployment is extremely high, perhaps, in various sections of the City, affecting as many as 25% of the heads of households. This is a severe handicap in community development efforts which depend upon strong local support. Further, according to a recent study prepared by the Battelle

Memorial Institute for the Birmingham Regional Planning Commission, the County of Jefferson, within which the City of Birmingham is located, is not expected to experience significant increases in employment during the coming quarter-century. The long term trend is for the ferrous metal industries to become more, rather than less, capital intensive. Although it can be expected that the economic base of the City will gradually shift to encompass an enlarged service component as this is currently underway. Given the competition with the capital city of Montgomery and the regionally-dominant presence of Atlanta, it is unreasonable to expect that service industries will grow rapidly within the City of Birmingham.

These long term, general economic trends have a special significance for the programming of improvements within the City. They mean most particularly that it is necessary to draw on all of the resources of the City and exploit to the maximum the goodwill and energies of the local citizens. In order to realize these ends the inhabitants must be informed, and must be trained both in new job skills and in ways to maximize their collective energies. Hopefully the City of Birmingham has embarked on this course.



Poverty

Problems related to making ends meet rank highest in priority with the average American today; Birmingham citizens are no exception. The unemployment rate of 14.53% of the City as a whole is above the national average and the rates of Ensley (19.95%), North Birmingham (24.92%) and Woodlawn (14.28%) are even higher since these neighborhoods unemployment rates represent only heads of families. The impact of these figures in human terms has profound implications for those individuals and the development prospects of their neighborhoods.

The demoralizing sense of failure to meet obligations and expectations experienced by unemployed adults is passed through to dependent family members by a reduced standard of living, possible home loss, curtailed plans for education, recreation and the purchasing of goods and services. This loss of purchasing power results in a decline in business for local merchants. At this point the family is dependent on welfare from county agencies rather than contributing to the tax-base of the City. Opportunities for home repairs and property improvements are often impossible for the unemployed person who may have the time, but not the money needed for supplies and tools. The result is the slow, but visible, deterioration of housing, a familiar sight

in low income neighborhoods.

The R/UDAT Team was continually apprised of the dramatic plight of the elderly citizens in many Birmingham communities whose limited, fixed incomes often preclude the purchase of items essential to their health and well being. For example, some senior citizens were unable to afford to turn on the electricity because their utility bills almost equaled their monthly incomes. Others were isolated in their homes because they could not afford the bus fare, still others did not have adequate food. The safety and welfare of these older persons is jeopardized and their isolation becomes even more complete when telephone service is discontinued. In contrast, the impact of poverty on the young accelerates the drop out rates. When coupled with unemployment, and discrimination it is a major cause of alienation and crime.

No community can survive and plan for growth when its greatest resource, its people, are economically and psychologically depressed and without personal hope for a better future.

Education

Within the last decade the City of Birmingham has taken on the role of a major educational center due primarily to the expansion of the local campus of the University of Alabama and

its excellent medical school. This complex, combined with the growth of other colleges in the area adds prestige to the image of Birmingham and promises to be a major resource of employment, income and leadership. At present, however, there is little apparent growth resulting from the presence of faculty and students or stimulation of the development of laboratories, pharmaceutical firms and equipment supply houses. Further, aside from the health services normally delivered by institutions of higher learning, very little of the expertise of these institutions appears to be channeling into the solution of local problems. Cooperation between these institutions and the City is important and should result in a mutually beneficial exchange. Professional and student involvement in the development process of the City and its neighborhoods would greatly facilitate the work of neighborhood, community and city-wide groups and enhance the potential for success of neighborhood/community based programs. Leadership and professional assistance, especially from the University of Alabama, would also help alleviate bitter feelings experienced by those whose homes and communities were lost or disrupted to allow for the construction of the UAB complex. Very little of the expertise of these institutions is apparently being channeled into the solution of local problems. Cooperation between these institutions and

the City could result in a mutually beneficial exchange of professional skills applied to urban needs and educational experience for students and faculty. Such professional assistance would facilitate and supplement the work of neighborhood, community and city-wide groups, thus greatly enhancing the potential for success of neighborhood based programs.

The growing unemployment, a high percentage of blue collar workers, changes in the nature of the local employment opportunity structure, the increase in female-headed households, unemployed youth and the growing percentage of healthy and involved elderly citizens living on fixed incomes are indications of a need for vocationally-oriented adult education programs for re-entry and shifts in the labor market and the upgrading of skills required for upward job mobility. At the other end of the continuum, nursery and kindergarten programs appear to be largely overlooked and greatly needed. Neighborhood based programs of this type would also meet the growing need for day care facilities.

Public education is perceived by many to be one of the major problems facing Birmingham; however, there is a concensus that it has turned the corner and has improved in the past two years. In addition to reduction of student/teacher ratios and the improvement of physical plants, the system has begun to

implement alternative innovative education programs and new approaches to dealing with truancy. One of the innovative education programs already underway is the community school program which facilitates the full participation of the community in school and after school activities. In essence the community school is intended to be a center of neighborhood/community life. Despite all the improvement, including improvements in reading scores, the system is not now well regarded and its continued improvement through innovation and excellence in basics is essential. The socio-economic future of Birmingham is integrally related to his city's capacity to educate its young.

Housing

The housing problem in Birmingham is quite acute particularly for those in the lowest income sectors. The Community Development Office estimates that 62% of all low income renters paid in excess of 25% of their income for rent in 1975. In addition over 12,500 low income homeowners need financial assistance and all indicators are that most of them live in substandard housing. All attempts at code enforcement have created a hardship which the R/UDAT has been told far exceeds the benefits. Development of new housing has practically ceased, in fact the total housing stock has decreased by

approximately 2.91% since 1970. The housing problem faced by the elderly, the handicapped, large families and the black community has been accelerated. The issue of how to provide housing to meet their varied needs is of critical concern to the R/UDAT Team.

The inability of the City to effectively take advantage of the Federal Section 8 Rental Subsidy Program resulted in part from Federal problems in initiating the program. These problems have been compounded by local administrative and beaurocratic obstacles to housing development. Particular interest must be paid to developing a comprehensive approach to enable non-profit and limited profit developers to build housing within the Birmingham community to facilitate utilization of Section 8 rental subsidies. In particular policies should be developed to encourage neighborhood rehabilitation to protect the integrity of existing housing stock, and to facilitate mixed density residential development with a mixture of building types. Such an approach would encourage economic integration and accelerate the use of the Federal Section 8 rental subsidy which in turn would dramatically aid the neighborhood/community economy. In addition HUD's irrational application of environmental standards as well as other imposed requirements which rationally should be determined locally have contributed to the decline in the number of housing starts.

The need to develop techniques to leverage community development money for a revolving housing rehabilitation loan fund is of primary importance. The need to reorganize buildings codes and regulations, to reevaluate subdivision ordinances, while at the same time protecting citizen/consumer interest must be properly assessed.

Many of the financial institutions have asserted that they continue to provide loans to intercity neighborhoods, however, others contend that there are areas that are denied financing and where disinvestments is taking place.

While the picture is bleak and housing continues to deteriorate rapidly, there are some positive signs.

One factor that impressed the R/UDAT Team was that despite low incomes and high levels of environmental pollution, people have continued to maintain their housing, and in the process exhibit considerable pride. Gardens and other indicators of care and sensitivity to ones immediate environment is evident. Significant pockets of good and well maintained housing exists throughout all of the neighborhoods that we visited.

In addition it appears to us that public housing is well maintained even though some people perceive it to be different - deteriorating. People residing in public housing

complained about precipitously high rent increases particularly if their own income had increases or if their children got a job. In addition they complained of exceedingly high utility bills. That complaint was shared by tenent and homeowners alike from all areas. The cost of utilities was particularly a problem for the elderly and handicapped poor.

Finally while the R/UDAT Team observed relatively good and substantive white/black interaction, we found that residential segregation was increasing. In fact, we were told that residential segregation tends to increase as institutionalized and government restriction diminish. The impact of that phenomenon on the future cannot be ignored.

Neighborhood Organization

The City of Birmingham has launched one of the most significant experiments in the country in popular neighborhood/community participation and decision making. Every residential neighborhood within the City has been geographically identified by its residents and a pattern of responsible neighborhood participation has been established that extends from each neighborhood directly into the chambers of the Mayor and the City Council. A regularized form of annual popular elections has been established by which each neighborhood formally elects its civic leadership -- a President, Vice-President and Secretary of its neighborhood Citizens Committee (NCC). These three persons

are in turn members of a Community Citizens Committee (CCC) that looks after the collective interest of a number of neighborhoods. The Presidents of these committees in turn function on a city-wide level as a Citizens Advisory Board (CAB) that meets regularly with the Mayor and City Council. CAB reviews with these city officials programs for proposed capital improvements, community development and other planning activities and serves as a direct, two-way conduit between the political leadership and the residents of the city. This is a unique experiment. If successful it will have far reaching significance for Birmingham and other cities of America.

The impact of this form of direct participatory democracy cannot be overestimated. The dramatic changes that inevitably will occur in the political structure and administration will have long term implications for Birmingham. The R/UDAT team believes that the outcome can only benefit the citizens of Birmingham.

Summary

There are other critical issues confronting Birmingham, some of which may have a greater impact on the life of some neighborhoods than the ones briefly described above, however, the time constraints of the R/UDAT did not allow us to even briefly pursue them. Nevertheless they are important aspects of life in Birmingham and should be discussed. We urge

citizens of Birmingham to think through those and other issues in that they will dramatically affect the future of the City.



"We have the most patient community in the city of Birmingham."

"We want the same basic choices that are afforded in Vestavia, Hoover and Crestline. I don't want this denied me because of the particular area I live in. We don't want the ham hock, when you have taken all the center cut of the ham."

"These railroads are our own problem, and the streets are not wide enough for fire trucks to get to the fire."

"The high school students here need more recreational opportunities right here."

"More than 40% of our young men and women are unemployed, which creates other problems. If some type of jobs could be created, our neighborhood would be benefited....where there are busy citizens, there is less crime; for an idle mind is a tool to be daring or just a devil's workshop."

"Commercial area does not offer quality merchandise or food....I can buy same or better quality merchandise downtown at a better price."

Community/Neighborhood Issues

During its four day visit the R/UDAT Team focused its attention on the three prototypical communities, viewing them from above by helicopter, and at ground level by bus, car and foot. We talked with many members of each community individually and in Town Meetings and with persons responsible for the delivery of services and programs, public and private, to these communities. Out of this exposure, our multi-disciplinary team reported a group of opportunities for future development that were common to all three communities:

Opportunities Common to All Three Neighborhoods

- . Potential for expansion - vacant land and buildings especially in the Central Business District (CBD)
- . Good supply of well-maintained housing stock
- . Excellent access to highways, airport, railroad lines
- . Mixed compatible land uses
- . Strong religious institutions
- . University of Alabama in Birmingham

- . New City administration
- . Lion's Club
- . Chamber of Commerce
- . Local health services
- . Strong community loyalties and identification
- . Citizen participation process
- . Good inter-racial cooperation
- . Relatively low crime rate
- . Personal pride and concern for community development

Problems and Constraints Common to All Three

- . Drainage/Flooding
- . Sanitary System
- . Inadequate street lighting
- . Need for parks/open spaces
- . Exodus of local retail merchants/decline of central business district

- . Public safety (highways, grade crossings, open ditches, hazardous industrial nuisances)
- . Fewer young people/families
- . Increasing unemployment/poverty
- . Industrial domination
- . Inadequate public transportation
- . Community stabilization
- . Large scale absentee land owners
- . Visual blight
- . Independent public authorities
- . Substandard buildings
- . Accessibility for senior citizens



"Any Proposal for revitalizing any area must make sense economically."

"Pollution is another major problem in North Birmingham. We do not want the industries to move but we do want the pollution eliminated."

"We have had studies made for the last 45 years and have not seen any improvement in our neighborhood. We ask you gentlemen here in Birmingham, making another study, to give us something that is feasible and can help us."

"I'm happy to report the fire department has finally figured out how to get into my section of this community before the house burns completely down."

"Our area has many old people. Let's provide low cost housing for them close to shopping, medical care and transportation."

"I live down near the creek and its really bad down there. I'm the Mother of nine children. Most of my children have left Ensley--because they don't like the situation."

"City administration, including zoning authorities and inspection services must be aware of the plight of these neighborhoods and sensitive to the fact that rules and regulations can't make something happen."

3

THE PLANNING PROCESS IN BIRMINGHAM

Development of the Plan

The separation of the physical planning process from the political process of the city government is evident in the way Birmingham now does its planning. Currently, the Birmingham Planning Commission (BPC) receives advice through public hearing process especially. The Planning Commission in turn serves as an advisory agent to the Mayor and City Council. The principal link in this relationship is a land-use plan for the City which the BPC is charged to develop with staff assistance from the Department of Community Services. An extremely important advisory element in the development of the physical plan is the Citizens Advisory Board (CAB) which works closely with the Planning Commission, the Mayor's office and the City Council throughout development of the Plan. Appropriately enough this process starts at the grassroots level, the eighty-four residential neighborhoods of the City.

Implementation of the Plan

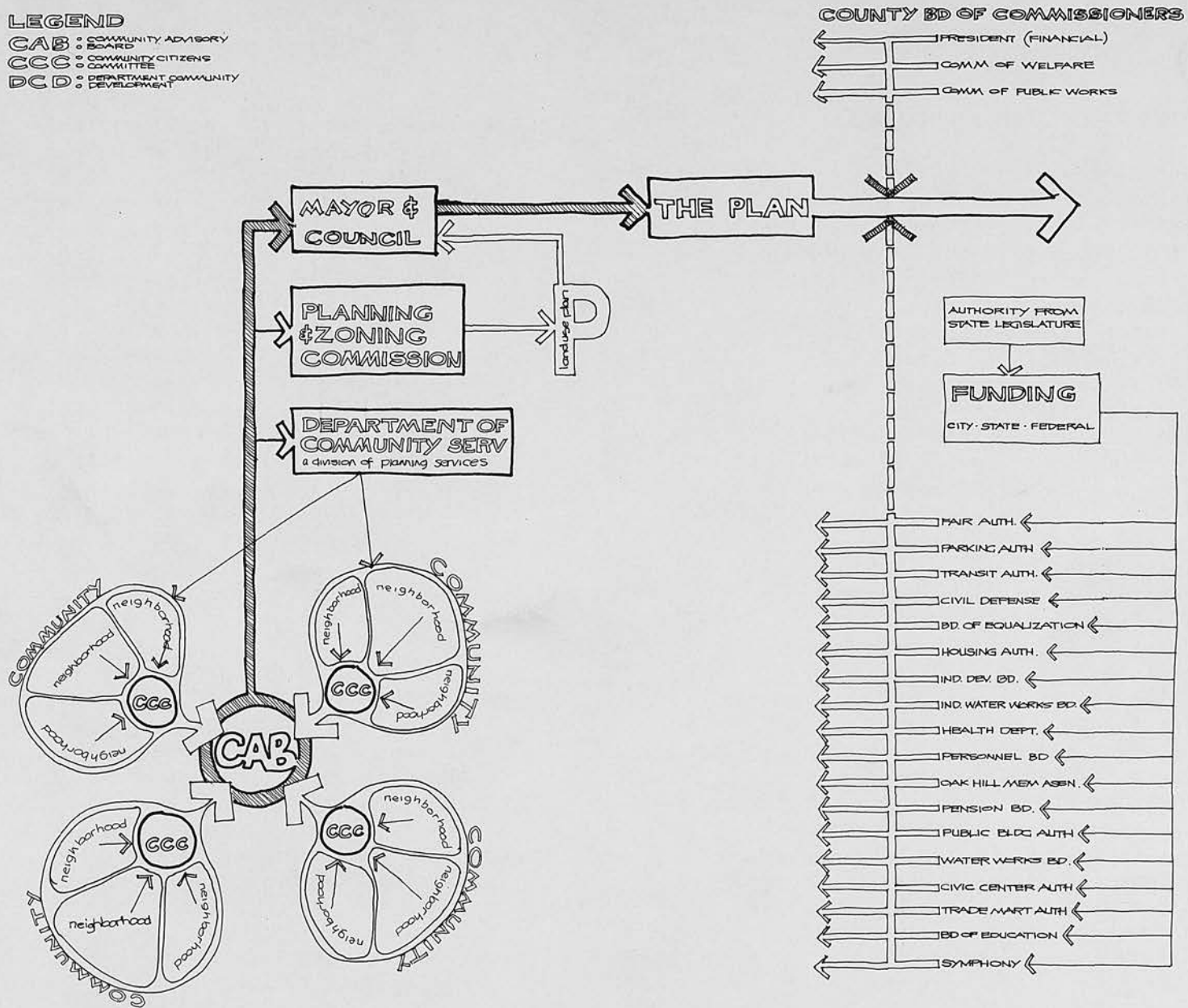
As Chief Executive and administrative officer of the City, the Mayor is responsible for the implementation of the City's land-use plan upon approval of the Council. There

are three elements of local government that the Mayor has to deal with in his efforts to implement the Plan. The first of these comprises the departments of the City Government over which the Mayor has both administrative and budgetary control. These are such agencies as the Police Department, Inspection Services and Engineering. By virtue of his control, the Mayor can implement those portions of the Plan which relate to or are effected by these departments. The second element of local government with which the Mayor must deal are the autonomous boards, commissions and associations which derive their powers from the State rather than the City. The Mayor has little or no administrative control over these agencies. He has, however, some limited leverage with these units through the budgetary process. In addition, the Mayor is a working or full member of these Boards. Of course, in actual practice as long as the day-to-day working relationship between the Mayor and City Council and these Boards is cordial, it is probable that the Mayor's opportunity to implement those portions of the City Plan which relate to or are influenced by these boards is satisfactory.

The third element to consider is the Jefferson County Commission. The essential issue in this relationship is the control of social and welfare monies. Indeed, one of the Commissioners is titled the

LEGEND

- CAB** : COMMUNITY ADVISORY BOARD
- CCC** : COMMUNITY CITIZENS COMMITTEE
- DCD** : DEPARTMENT COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT



BIRMINGHAM'S PLANNING PROCESS : NOW

Commissioner of Welfare. Thus, those portions of the Plan that contain physical elements that are meant to facilitate social goals and programs are contingent upon the concurrence of the Jefferson County Commission which controls both welfare policies and monies.

Limitations and Recommendations

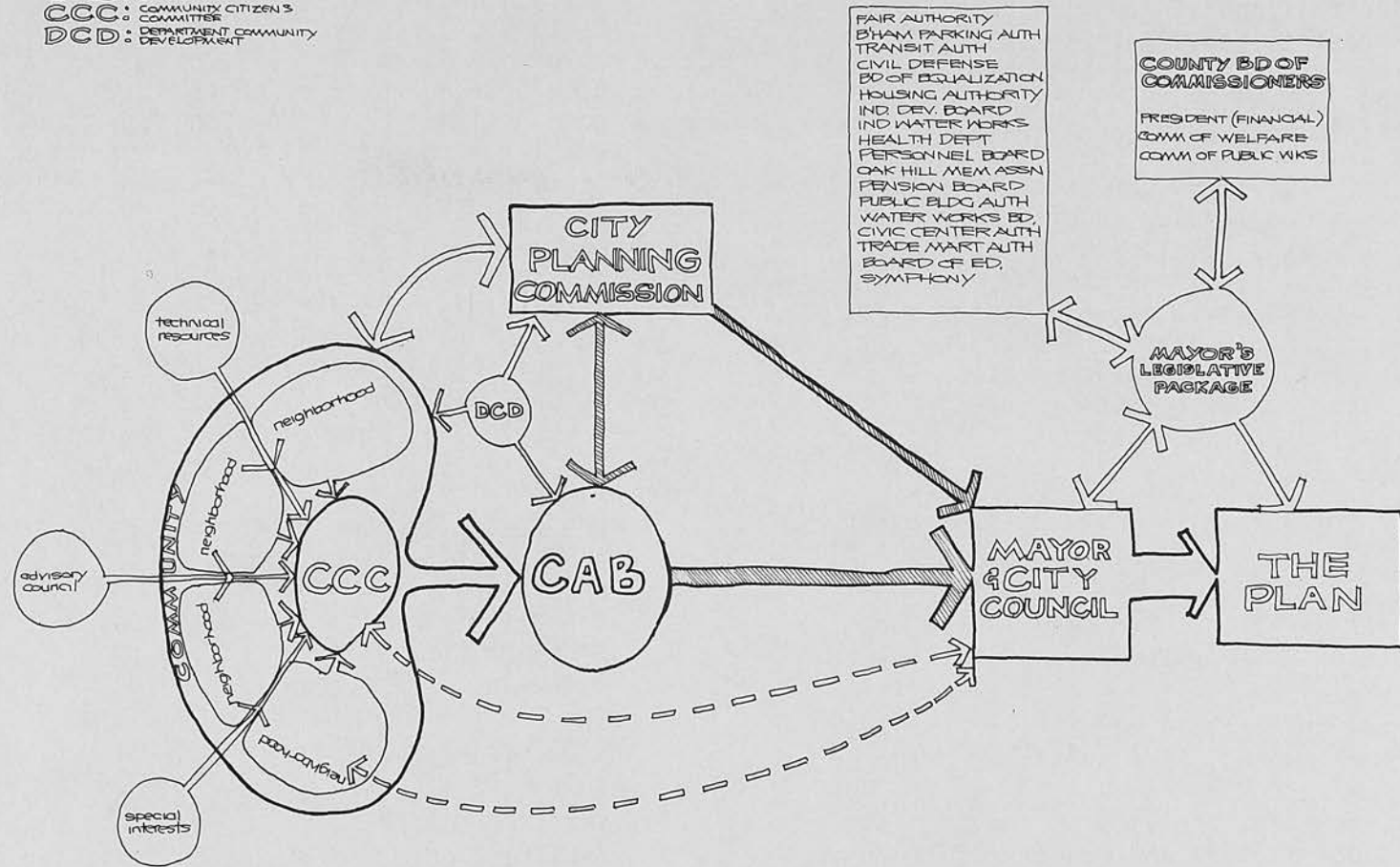
There are a number of limitations of the city's planning process as it currently exists. These stem primarily from the limited capabilities of each of the neighborhoods to assess the nature and extent of its needs and assets and the constraints placed on implementation powers of the Mayor. It is clear that almost everyone involved in the development of the Community Participation Plan anticipates that it will serve as a device for bringing about significant change. By-and-large, however, the changes are thought of simply as physical--a sort of beautification program with certain economic implications. Certainly this is partially true. What does not seem to be quite so clear, however, are the profound social consequences that result from physical changes once they are implemented. The quality of life is powerfully affected by these changes. Most importantly, however, the view of the plan as solely a beautification and economic instrument inhibits one from seeing the opportunities it contains for exerting a positive influence on the quality of life in all of Birmingham's communities and neighborhoods. The recommendations of R/UDAT

which follow are intended to increase the potential of each community within the city to recognize these opportunities and implement them.

The elements of the proposal for strengthening Birmingham's planning process derive from the Citizen Participation Plan (CPP). We view the neighborhood-community structure currently developing as the focal element around which the planning process should revolve. Our intent is to improve and expand the planning capabilities of these neighborhood-community units in order that they can perform in a competent manner reflective of the needs and aspirations of their residents. It is important that the provision of CPP which allows the Community Citizens Committees to set up advisory councils should be honored. Resource Councils to serve these committees should consist of as many technical resource persons or organizations as are needed to encourage the discovery and consideration of options respecting the social and physical environment. Thus, for example, a Pro-Bono Publico Law Group can become part or the Resource Council of any of the community Citizens Committees that feel it would benefit from this kind of expertise. In a similar way a Community Design Center or a Vista volunteer or a public health physician can become a resource for either a neighborhood or community citizens committees. In addition, we urge the expansion of the Community Citizens Committee idea to allow it to include special

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- FAIR AUTHORITY
- B'HAM PARKING AUTH
- TRANSIT AUTH
- CIVIL DEFENSE
- BD OF EQUALIZATION
- HOUSING AUTHORITY
- IND. DEV. BOARD
- IND WATER WORKS
- HEALTH DEPT
- PERSONNEL BOARD
- OAK HILL MEM ASSN
- PENSION BOARD
- PUBLIC BLDG AUTH
- WATER WORKS BD
- CIVIC CENTER AUTH
- TRADE MART AUTH
- BOARD OF ED.
- SYMPHONY

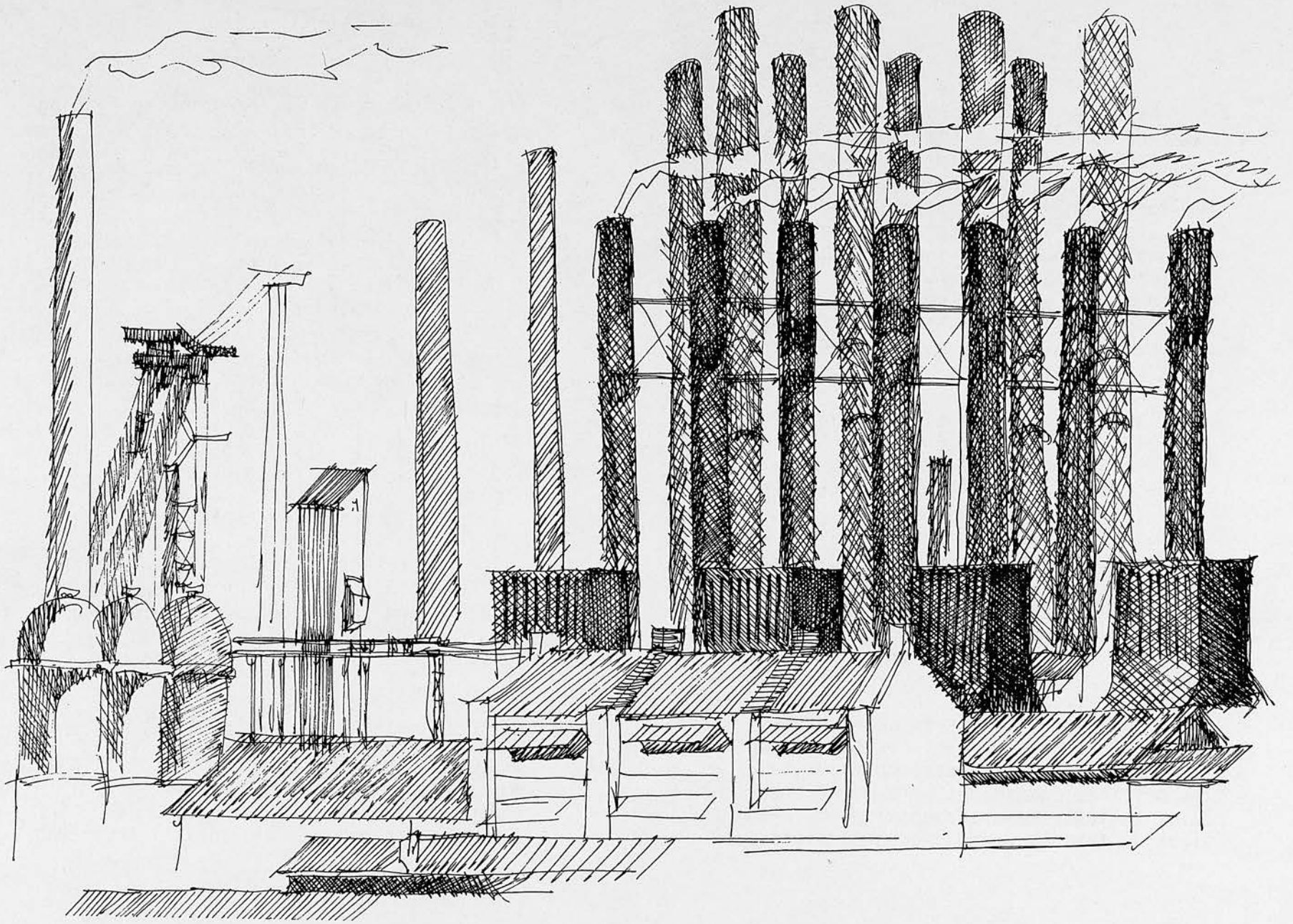
- COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS**
- PRESIDENT (FINANCIAL)
- COMM OF WELFARE
- COMM OF PUBLIC WKS

BIRMINGHAM'S PLANNING PROCESS : PROPOSED

interest groups from each community such as representatives of industrial or retail interests as advisors and full participants in the planning efforts of the CCC. The inclusion of these interests at the community level should be actively sought. It should also be stressed that the strengthening of the Citizens Community Committees should not in any way lessen or diminish the right of either an individual neighborhood or a special interest whenever it feels the need to do so. The intent here, however, is to have as much of the negotiation/concensus/decision process as possible occur at the community level. A final word is appropriate here in regard to the community units. This is the implementation of the community concept by the various departments of the City Government. Our recommendation is, wherever possible, all operating departments of the City should reorient their service boundaries in order to coincide with the boundaries of one or more communities. Further, and to the extent possible, the manpower, equipment and services should be decentralized into the community or communities they serve. Obviously, scales of economy must be recognized so that, for example, a police station might service two or three communities. However, important point is that this reorientation be along the lines of the now recognized communities.

The next two steps in strengthening Birmingham's planning process have to do with communications. Again we begin at the neighborhood level. As presently CPP encourages communication between the Presidents of the Neighborhood Citizens Committees and their residents. The actual mechanisms for the transmission of information at this level are neither strong nor well defined. Our recommendation is for the activation of as large a number and variety of communication mediums as possible in order to keep residents and currently informed about all aspects and activities of the CPP network. Specifically, we urge the consideration of community oriented radio programs, cable TV, newsletters, handbills, poster, neighborhood bulletin and the like

The second step we recommend to encourage communication among community and neighborhood groups deals with the Citizens Advisory Board, the Mayor's office, the City Council and the Planning Commission. While a significant degree of interaction already occurs between the CAB and the Mayor's office and City Council clearer, more intensive, two way communication should be occurring at this highest level of decision making. All four offices must actively participate in the give and take, month-by-month negotiations necessary to give birth to the plans implementation procedures. A further recommendation entails the establish-



ment of a new agency within the City Government - the Department of Economic and Social Development (DESD). We view the present lack of such a department as a significant void that needs to be filled to provide for the constant monitoring, evaluation and assessment of the economic and social consequences of the City's plans. This economic and social "accounting" function should be carried out in parallel with a program of economic and social development.

DESD should be the sensing mechanism which provides information on the economic and social (or quality of life) effects of the City's plans as their implementation proceeds. In addition, DESD should serve as a mechanism for further developing and advocating Birmingham's opportunities to the rest of the State and Nation. In this capacity, DESD should undertake a broad range of economic development programs such as industry incentives, manpower development and so on. On the social side DESD programs aimed at reducing alienation, providing social supports necessary to facilitate people's involvement in the social-economic life of the city and by starting in motion structural changes which would maximize opportunities for low income and particularly young people.

The benefits of this dual assessment/development function can be turned inward toward the city and outwards toward others.

Thus, for example, in a time of diminishing resources the programs of DESD can be focused inward to inform and re-educate the working force in respect to the changing economic conditions.

Conversely, as the quality of life in Birmingham moves upward this information can be directed outward to promote the growth of the city.

R/UDAT's final recommendation for the improvement and strengthening of Birmingham's planning process has to do with the legislative program for the Mayor's office. Specifically we see the need for changes in the present state legislation which affect the relationships between the Mayor's office and the independent boards, commissions and associations and between the Mayor's office and the County Commissioners.

We are not in a position to comment on the forces and legal principals which have led to the existing laws governing these relationships. We are, however, acutely aware of the impediments and constraints imposed on the Mayor's office and the City Council in

their efforts to implement their plans. In both the development phase and implementation phases of the planning process, current State Legislation hinders all parties in their efforts to serve their constituents. In addition, present statutes leave the Mayor, the County Commissioners and the local boards and commissions for either arbitration or redress of grievances.

In view of these conditions we recommend that the Mayor and City Council take whatever legal initiatives are appropriate to change the existing statutes for the purpose of insuring a greater degree of accountability and responsiveness by the independent and quasi-independent boards, commissions and associations of the city government and the County Board of Commissioners to the plans and programs of the city.

Implementation

After neighborhood and community approvals of development plans (economic and social) the process of implementation should be responsive to reasonable developer demands and city interests. The techniques for implementation should be a basic consideration of the plan and its actual solution.

Understanding economic and social resources and creating the delivery mechanism should be a capability that is formalized in the proposed Department of Economic and Social Development (DESD). While it is important to understand the sophisticated inputs it is also essential to respond to the planning process developed at the neighborhood and community level. The thrust of this new department would be to utilize the numerous tools and techniques of implementation made available through federal, state and local resources. In addition, where enabling legislation is not available it should be created. While some of this department's capabilities will lie in the delivery of hardware it will also be required to maintain software capabilities.

In the area of physical (Economic) development the responsibilities would involve Housing, Commercial/Retail, Industrial and Open Space, Institutional development opportunities.

The department should utilize the Economic development techniques that provide:

- Direct stimulus through loans and grants.
- Direct control through disposition.
- Leverage through mortgage underwriting of loans/insurance of bond issues, public improvements.
- Private investment through code enforcement.

Other economic development techniques involve:

- Utilization of conventional zoning techniques for stabilization, control and recycling of land in conjunction with other development techniques.
- The transfer of HUD Environmental Review for housing development and other physical elements such as code enforcement to a local level for the consideration of HUD programs that respond to basic needs of housing, etc.
- Citizen input into park planning, programming, and maintenance.
- Development of a Task Force of Private builders/developers and public officials to review administrative procedures and policies regarding zoning compatibility, design requirements administrative processing of permits, etc.
- The establishment of neighborhood and community leased development corporations as an outgrowth of the neighborhood planning units.
- Promotion of the Housing assistance plan to stimulate private and public investment.

The existing zoning in Birmingham is not being utilized as an effective vehicle for planning, nor is it an effective enforcement tool. In

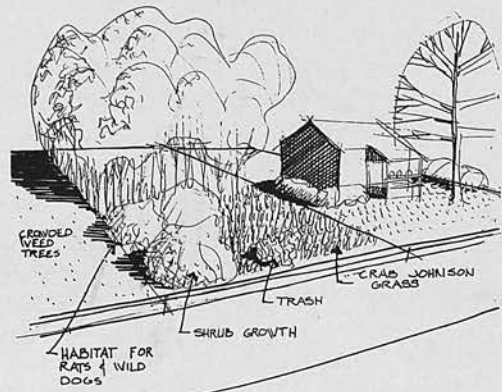
fact, it does nothing more than reflect existing conditions thereby discouraging needed improvements and development. Major revisions to the zoning ordinance are required to accomplish the recommendations in this report with respect to both the implementation of the neighborhood planning process and the many types of specific action that may arise from this process. A comprehensive zoning review is in order. Two major changes in emphasis are suggested. The zoning map and ordinance should be modified to relate to natural features and to the characteristics of the individual neighborhood.

Presently the zoning ordinances show no relationship to the indigenous and local character of Birmingham. The same zoning districts can be found in the flood plains, the flatlands, the rolling slopes, and the ridges. It is possible to modify the zoning ordinance and relate it to the natural features and the uses indigenous to them. As an example, buildings would be prohibited in the flood plains and improvements in storage capacity made a mandatory requirement in the zoning district covering the City's flatlands. The regulation of mining would both accommodate industry and protect the environment and the citizen at the same time. Zoning can become a tool for implementing a comprehensive environmental improvement program in addition to the present control of the current air quality of implementation plan. The revision to the zoning ordinance would have to be based on an ecological/natural study of the City. The resulting zoning ordinance can then

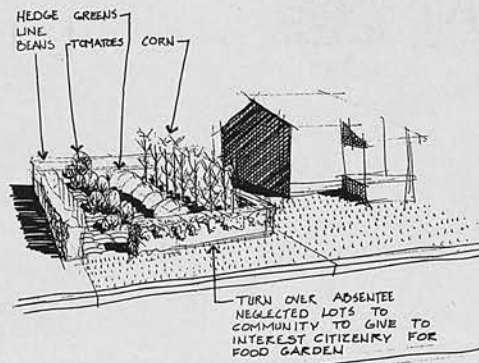
be used to help protect the city's domestic water supply, to reduce the stress on the sanitary and storm sewer systems, and to encourage the maintenance and growth of natural vegetation and wild life.

In this report we have come to recognize each of the City's eighty four neighborhoods as being unique. The zoning ordinance should recognize this unique quality while still making it possible for development to occur. The rules would be primarily concerned with bulk, open space, circulation, land uses and density. The difference is that they would be orchestrated to be sensitive to the characteristics and traditions of each neighborhood as determined by the Neighborhood Planning Process. Presently, the regulations change only at a very gross level and are not at all representative of any one place.

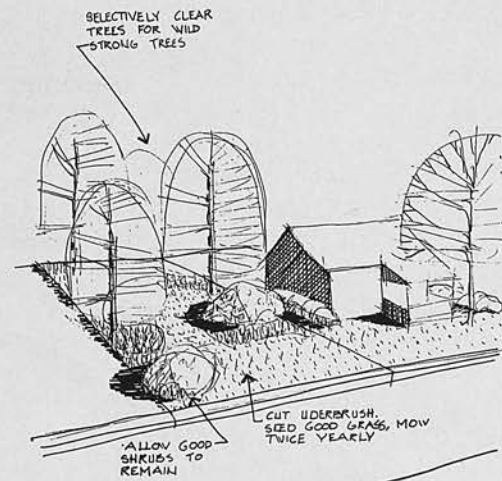
The recommended mechanism for implementing neighborhood physical planning is a separate zoning overlay on the existing zoning map, called a special zoning district. The district is determined by the Neighborhood Plan and has its own rules and regulations that supersede the original zoning. These rules provide the framework for carrying out the plan of the neighborhood. Sometimes the plan will be designed to preserve, often times the plan will encourage development. Special districts have recently been introduced in America specifically for the purposes of relating to special places. In specific terms, special zoning districts have been able to respond by allowing a mixture of land uses to occur on the same property and sometimes in



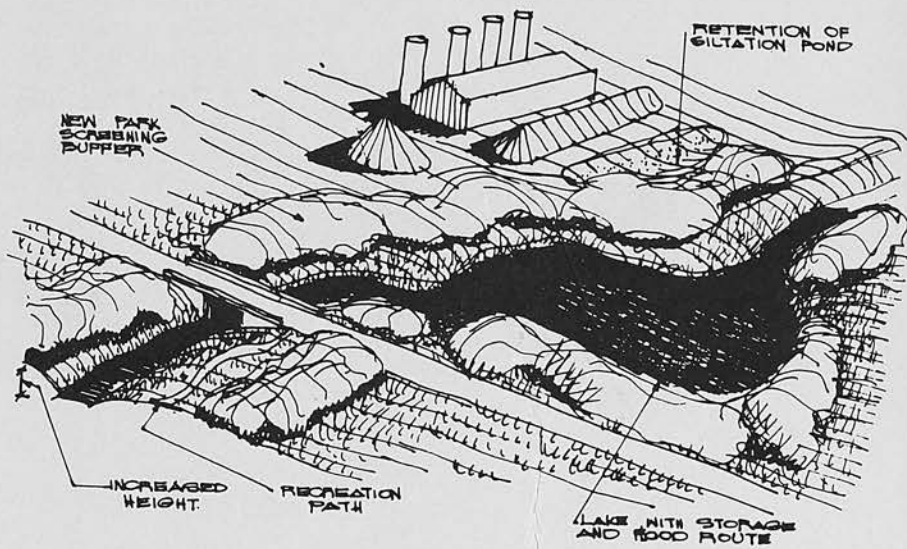
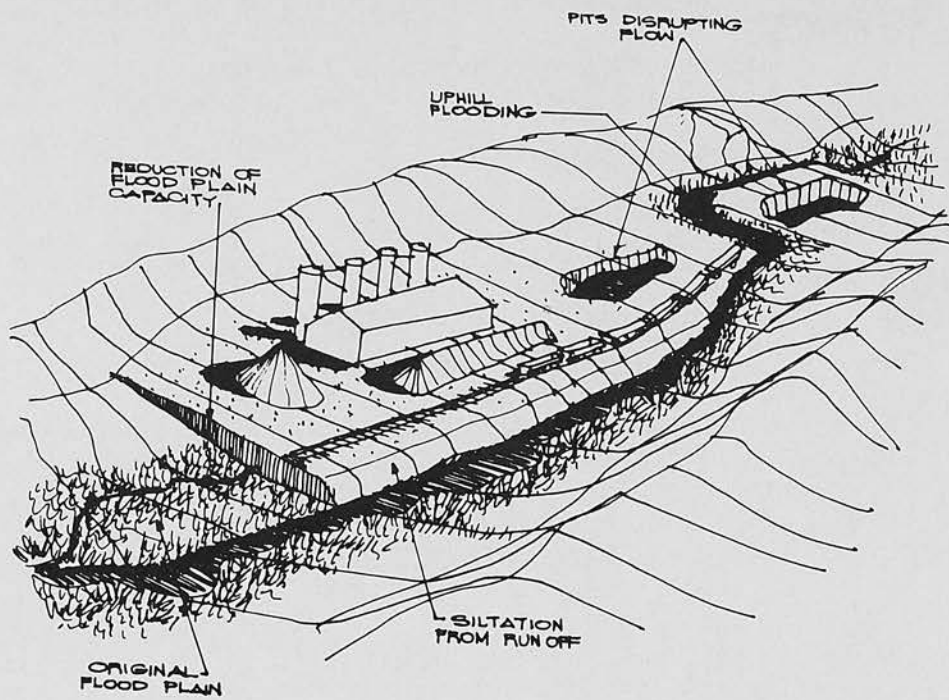
WEED LOT



ALLOTMENT GARDEN



SELECTIVE CLEARING



the same buildings; to pool open spaces into usable land; to control parking in order to improve pedestrian safety; to transfer development rights in order to save buildings and open spaces; and finally, to encourage development through incentives and bonuses.

The process of design plan review should be institutionalized in city government. Through the DESC acting as the administrator of this review board, agency personnel would review development within the special zoning districts, and determine its compliance with the plan.

In the area of software (Social) development the responsibilities would deal with the problems of:

- . Primary to the issue, flooding is the correct management of the stream course and its watershed. Standard engineering culverting will not work---it will only transfer the problem downstream.
- . Valley Creek should be re-designed in portions to create oxbows to naturally slow down the flow and store the excess capacity waters. It should be widened in spots with floodable lakes offering recreation, deepened for better bottom flow and its embankments raised to form protective levies. Such a development will provide recreation opportunities of boating, bike trails, and even camping. Similar to Boston's Fenway Park built in 1890.

Land management is essential to keep a steady even stream flow and prevent degraded water quality. Industry should not discharge waste water and storm drainage directly into the stream but into retention/siltation ponds. Spoils and ore stockpile slopes should be a maximum of 2:1 and all unused land holdings should be vegetated.

Birmingham's neighborhoods are enhanced by the numerous stately street trees planted years ago. Without them, the individual houses would be a visual jumble of differing tastes and the streets hot and barren.

While the city does its job of removal of diseased trees, it does not presently replace removed trees nor does it plant untreed streets. More critical is the lack of preventive maintenance to save and nurture its resources estimated by some as over \$140 million dollars. Corrective measures can be taken by implementing an active street tree planting and maintenance program administered by the Parks and Recreation Department as the first step in stabilizing and improving neighborhoods.

Vacant lots are yet another untapped city resource. All are overgrown weeded areas collecting debris and harboring feral animals. Lot cutting is a labor and time extensive program for the city and cannot be economically undertaken.

Alternatives Should Be Investigated

- . Request the state urban forester to undertake selective cutting to forester naturally propergated hardwoods, and shrubs and to sow dwarf native grasses which would require little or no cutting.
- . Initiate through C.D. groups and interim use of allotment gardens to nearby citizens. Appearance and property protection can be ensured by simple guidelines of screening and controlled access.

The parks of Birmingham are neat and attractive and provide needed facilities. But programs and delivery of services in the neighborhoods observed are minimal and unimaginative.

Planning has not kept pace with community change and, except for possibly Woodlawn, does not respond to many of the communities' needs. Further more, there appears to be resistance to combining the programs of the schools, the Housing Authority, and the Police Athletic League for the consolidated delivery of a recreation program. Crying for more funds is little excuse for wasted resources. Neighborhood Community Boards are a far better instrument to effect change and plan for their needs. Implementation of an effective parks program would indicate that:

- . Playground and Neighborhood parks should be more intensely developed, include tennic, jogging, track, bike trails, handball and many popular sports.
- . Activities of different ages should be separated and zoned in park plans.
- . Night lighting is essential to extend the use of these facilities and make recreation availalbe to the working population.
- . Children's play areas should be painted bright colors instead of the usual green and white and include equipment more engaging and adventuresome than the plethora of teeter totters.



"Business is good and should remain good for any business man that remembers he is a public servant."

"I like Ensley because I've been here all my life---ever since I was three---so you can understand that I like Ensley; but it has got to be delapidated and degraded and we have so many empty houses that need tearing down---so many lots needing cleaning that just makes a bad place to live."

"Our biggest problem is City services."

"Stores and commercial buildings will not be remodeled and modernized unless long term, substantial tenants are available to amortize the investment and make it a realistic thing for an investor to do."

"It seems to me that cars are the most important to get them where they want to get. The lights are put up to protect the cars; but people need to walk too."

"They have fewer shoppers which results in reduction of stock, which results in still fewer shoppers. It's just a vicious circle with everybody losing."

4

PLANNING FOR A NEIGHBORHOOD PLAN

The R/UDAT proposal reflects the belief that a city's planning is continually subject to change and modification. This is particularly true when one views planning in terms of the full range of social, economic and physical programs and services as well as the traditional land use and zoning functions. As a result, an essential element of planning on a neighborhood and/or community level is the establishment of an on-going process available and accountable to its citizenry.

The City's new Citizen Participation Plan establishes the framework within which the planning, development and implementation of programs can take place.

The strong sense of neighborhood identity and pride in Birmingham must be reflected in this planning process. In this manner the strength, energy and determination of the people can be fully utilized to preserve and rejuvenate the City.

The resources to carry out planning activities must be made available on a neighborhood level and these neighborhoods must be given the information and training which will enable them to review, evaluate and initiate activities within their areas. We propose, therefore, that each Community Citizen

Committee have the technical staff available to serve its component neighborhoods and that a coordinated system of information, communication and training be developed.

The nature of the planning activity will vary somewhat from area to area. However, the process will generally be the same. The following illustrates what one of those neighborhood processes might be.

The Neighborhood Citizen Committee or its technical assistance staff should:

Survey what currently exists in the neighborhood.

What services exist, the quality and the method of delivery, etc.;

what conditions exist in the neighborhoods, housing types, housing quality, land use, quality of streets, etc.

Analyze problems and opportunities.

Identify areas of major concern.

Assign and review priorities.

Determine areas of interest.

When appropriate the Neighborhood Planning Committee should meet

with representatives of adjoining neighborhoods, representatives of the Planning Department, its Community Citizens Committee and Community Advisory Board at open forums to review priorities. Generally the Neighborhood Citizens Committee will attempt to deal with issues that are within its capabilities in which they are the only interested party. Issues beyond their capacity or of shared interest should be brought to the attention of the Community Citizens Committee, Planning Commission and/or the Council/Mayor.

Sponsor, when necessary or advisable, public hearing by City Council prior to implementation.

In general, the right to petition the Citizens Advisors Board, Planning Commission or City Council exists as a right to all. And, of course, the technical resources of the City Planning Department and the proposed Department of Economic Development should always be available.

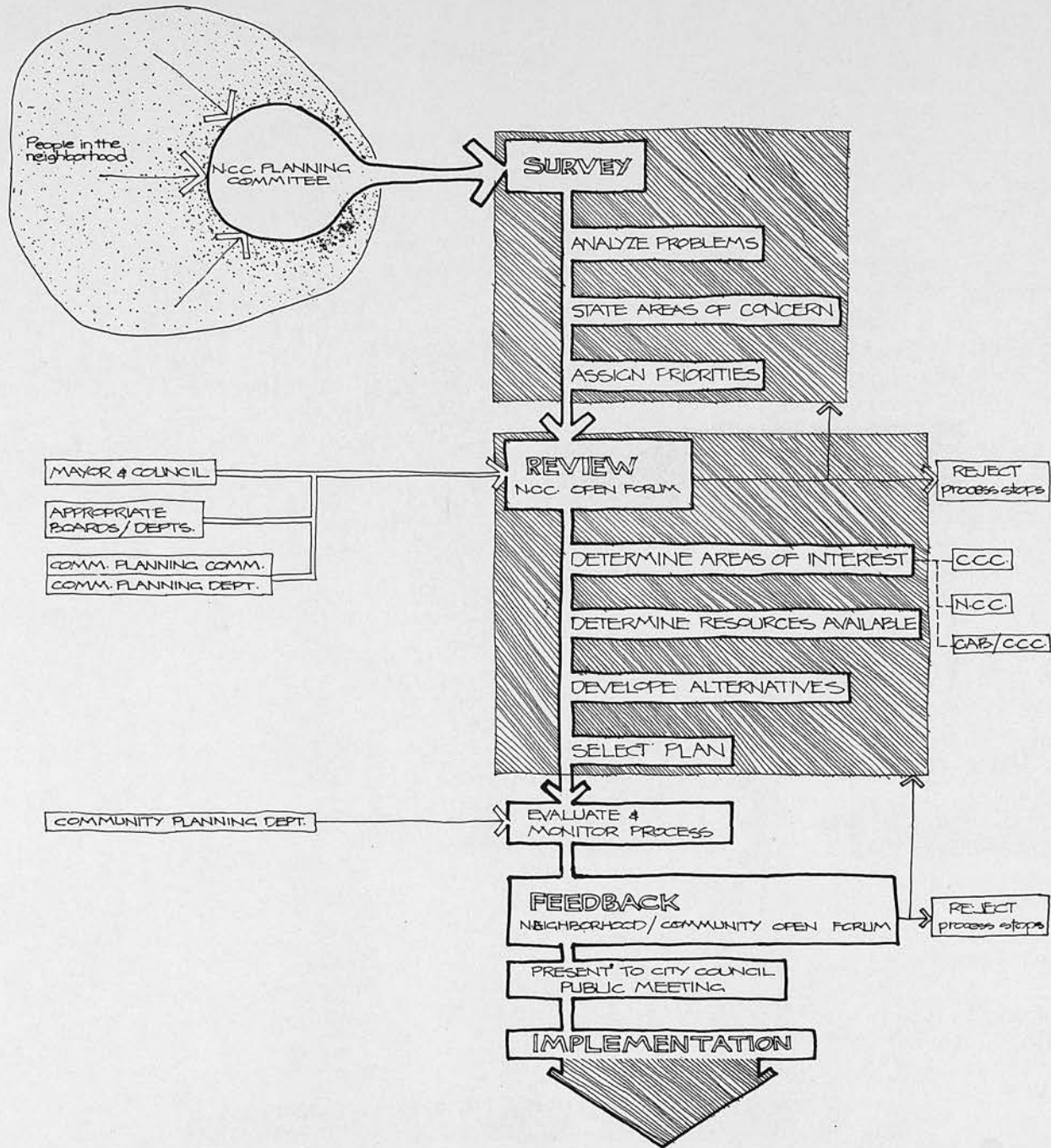
Determine resources available.

What can people do to help themselves individually and collectively; what outside resources are needed; where do they come from and, finally, what has to be done to get those resources.

Develop alternatives and select a plan of action.

Establishment of a means of monitoring and evaluation by interested planning units in concert with their constituencies.

Based on feedback from evaluation, modify original plan or develop alternative approaches after submission to a neighborhood forum.



NEIGHBORHOOD PLANNING PROCESS



"As children we were so excited when they put in cement sidewalks. We skated on the sidewalks in front of the City Hall. It was against the law and they made us quit."

"There has been a great misconception on the business man's part in this community. The businesses, during the boom of the steel mills, reaped great profits. They didn't turn these profits into the improvements of the general business conditions; now, there is nothing attractive to hold the people's attention in this area. Take for instance during the popularization of the steel mill---the people in this community did not know the way to Birmingham."

"All the water that comes up the street and across the street comes down on me."

"...The thing I would like to have most would be a Shopping Center. I think that this would greatly help the elder citizens of our community who cannot afford the cost of transportation to travel to the Shopping Centers outside of the area."

"Private enterprise cannot do it alone. Neither can city management, but together all things are possible for this great western area."

"Our residents are very concerned about the future. It is our hope that whatever recommendations are made, quick implementation will follow."

MAKING THE PROCESS WORK

The technique utilized here is to demonstrate the manner in which land uses and physical improvements diagrammatically shown in the plan can be implemented. Within each community, there exists special conditions that require stabilization and/or change. Because of these special conditions, certain implementation techniques will be discussed.

In general, these plans are designed to increase home ownership, provide means of stabilizing home ownership and increase housing. In support of housing, pedestrian and vehicular circulation would reinforce the inter-relationship with other residential sections and support facilities such as parks and recreation and shopping.

In terms of commercial development the intent is to consolidate through the recycling of adjacent property and improved circulation. Additional parking may be necessary to reinforce the commercial improvements. Sign controls, etc. would be used to support the neighborhood characteristics.

Utilization of existing undeveloped land would be enhanced through the introduction of new storm and sanitary sewers, construction of drainage ditches and grade separated crossings.

The basic premises discussed here are demonstrated in each community.

ENSLEY

The work of R/UDAT in Ensley is oriented toward assisting a community characterized by a high rate of home ownership and a strongly developed sense of community identity. The concern here is to reduce the commercial development in area by converting most of the unused commercial space to new housing sites. The provision of new housing close to the commercial area would increase pedestrian safety and provide direct pedestrian access to business as well as to outlying residential areas.

A major objective of the R/UDAT recommendation is to make the community more livable. We have identified a residential block structure reinforced by the cul-de-sac of streets connecting community focal points to each other. This block structure has connections to parks and playgrounds via pedestrian green ways. This network of green paths can be highlighted by small vest pocket parks.

The thrust of this proposal is to create new housing alternatives of varying size and income range. New housing opportunities exist

west of Avenue E on both sides of 20th street and adjacent to the NBD. Buffers to existing industrial developments farther West would also be created in this acquisition process and would tend to reinforce the housing development. The development process in this area can only be implemented by the use of CD funds. Urban Beautification money could be sought to finance the landscaping of the buffer area. Housing stock of reasonable condition can be up-graded with Neighborhood based code enforcement programs.

The strength of the business district is essential to the success of the residential environment. The area is characterized by several supermarkets and stable businesses, but quality and mix of goods and services has to be improved. Improvement can be assisted by conventional development procedures, but is most effectively reinforced through population demand and economic improvement. Effective sign control via zoning ordinances can improve the visual characteristics of the neighborhood.

Community services (health, education and welfare) must be improved to serve the residential community. These facilities can be located adjacent to the Neighborhood Business district on the North Side of 20th Street in vacant commercial space and can act as a buffer to residential areas.

While money for capital expenditures may be difficult to obtain, one for operating expenditures is easier to secure. Recycling of existing commercial space for community services located within the residential neighborhoods should be made more visible by acquisition of property and physical improvement.

Circulation within the neighborhood is of prime importance. While no major problem exists in vehicular circulation some elements can be added to the streetscape to increase its visual appearance. Street trees along Avenue E would greatly improve its visual characteristics. The width of 20th Street can be visually reduced by introducing landscaped medians and adjacent green space.

As a final recommendation to improve the quality of living environment there must be innovative programs to improve the schools.

NORTH BIRMINGHAM

Acipco...Hooper City...Collegeville... Pleasantview...reflect the suppressed energy of its residents. Heavily burdened with the visual blight of the U. S. Pipe Company and cut into a patchwork quilt of isolated pockets by railroad tracks and super-slabs, North Birmingham is a community desirous

of preserving, rebuilding and re-establishing its identity.

The struggle of each neighborhood to survive and to create a stable environment for its residents is reflected in attempts at rejuvenation of the main commercial street. The decline of the 27th Street strip is a reflection of the limited opportunities of the poor neighbors residing in adjoining areas. The poverty, joblessness, and lack of identity, coupled with the desire to overcome, is the driving force that is everywhere in evidence.

The commercial rejuvenation of the 27th St. shopping center is integrally linked to the maintenance, preservation and growth of the adjoining neighborhoods.

Inherent in the plan for rejuvenation is the principal expressed at the town hall meeting-"Bring the people Back". Given the growth of regional shopping centers in areas previously served by North Birmingham, the only way 27th St. can be revitalized is by bringing the people back. Therefore, we suggest that low rise housing be built on vacant land adjoining 27th street. In addition, services, quality merchandise, safe streets and new merchants with roots in the community must also be "Brought Back".

Road systems must also be rationalized; access improved; hazards removed; noise controlled, and services, particularly for very old and very young, established.

Specifically the suggestions include:

- . extension of 20th Avenue N. E. to Collegeville along the southern edge of Collegeville.
- . provision of vehicular access to Collegeville via grade separation crossings of 33rd and 35th Avenue N.
- . diversion of 30th Ave. to 29th Ave. near the business center in order to restrict commercial expansion
- . provision of general road and street improvements
- . improvement of the sewer system in Collegeville
- . construction of bike paths
- . development of neighborhood based home improvement programs
- . establishment of a community based development corporation that could undertake

development activities within the community's business center

- . provision of housing for the elderly adjacent to the shopping center
- . construction of several new housing complexes
- . establishment of new industry North and West of 26th Ave.

WOODLAWN

Woodlawn--the name of the community conjures up images of neighbors leisurely strolling in tree shaded expanses of green. There remain today symbols of community history and tradition--a large, suburban like high school with an expansive football field; an old and picturesque cemetery and handsome trees. The historical roots, the natural beauty, the warmth of its neighbors, the spirit and strength of its institutions can, and should be protected. The study of Woodlawn focused on the enhancement of its principle retail area located in a three to four block area around the intersection of Georgia Road and First Avenue North.

The concept is to enrich the historical and institutional character of the area by the improvement of the visual appeal and more agreeable functioning of its principle shopping center.

The spirit of the Village Green surrounded by the high school, church and other nearby historic structures would be expanded south to enhance commercial redevelopment. Small scale circulation spines that focus pedestrian movement along the interior of the block meander west from the Green between new and rehabilitated commercial structures. Pleasantly designed walks in the form of medians on Georgia Road and landscaped pedestrian spines penetrate the residential community and reinforce the village theme.

Vehicular circulation in the area is adjusted to accent the image of the Village Green. Truck traffic would be diverted to by-pass the area on the South.

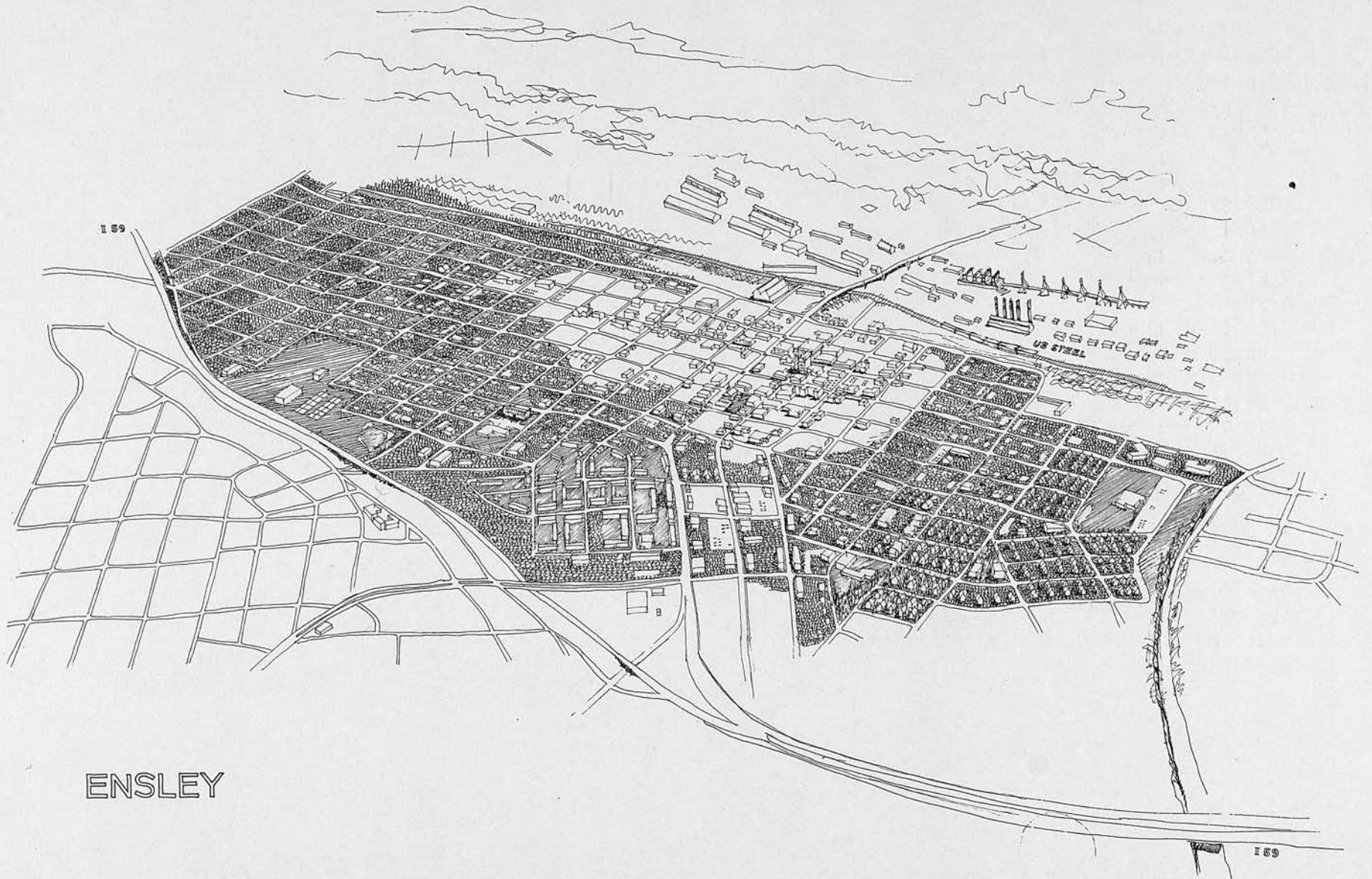
Pedestrian movement is drawn away from vehicular streets and encouraged to use the pedestrian spine developed as a connector between existing and newly created businesses. Such pedestrian spines would be encouraged to penetrate the surrounding residential areas.

Some streets in the area should be closed and the lang along with adjacent private property made available for sale and redevelopment to private sources. The assemblage of dispossessed parcels would be through the utilization of CD money for elements necessary to the redevelopment process.

Restoration of the old City Hall on the western edge of the focus area would not only anchor the system of pedestrian movement, but provide a nostalgic touch in the rehabilitation of this business area. Historic preservation would be accomplished by using Department of Interior funds in conjunction with CD money.

Existing zoning and sign control regulation would be incorporated in an environmental control district that would be under review by the newly created Zoning Development Control Board acting in an advisory capacity to the city administration.

The residential neighborhood surrounding the focal point would hopefully be reinforced by the developmental activities in the center.



ENSLEY

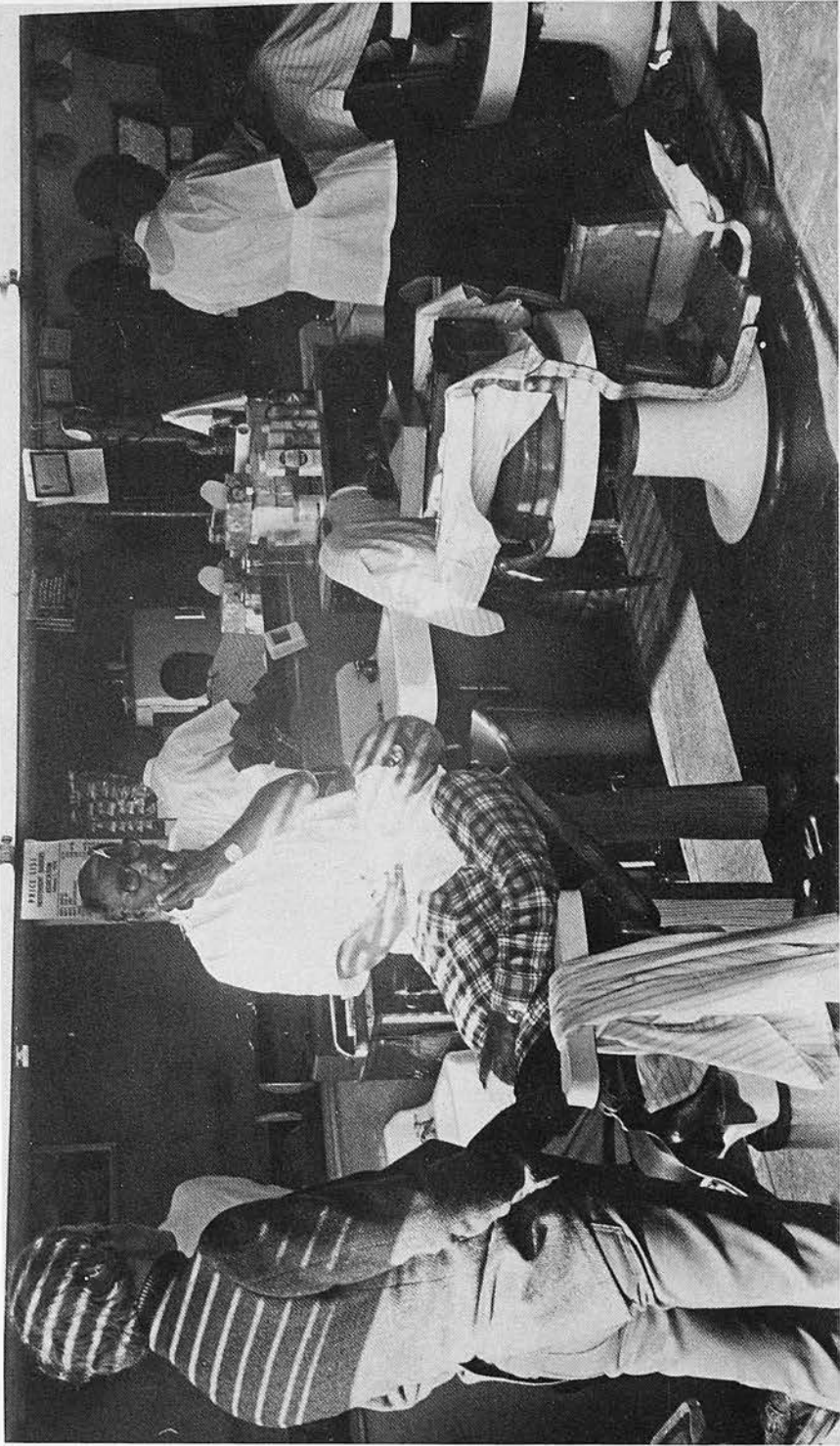
ENSLEY

PROBLEMS

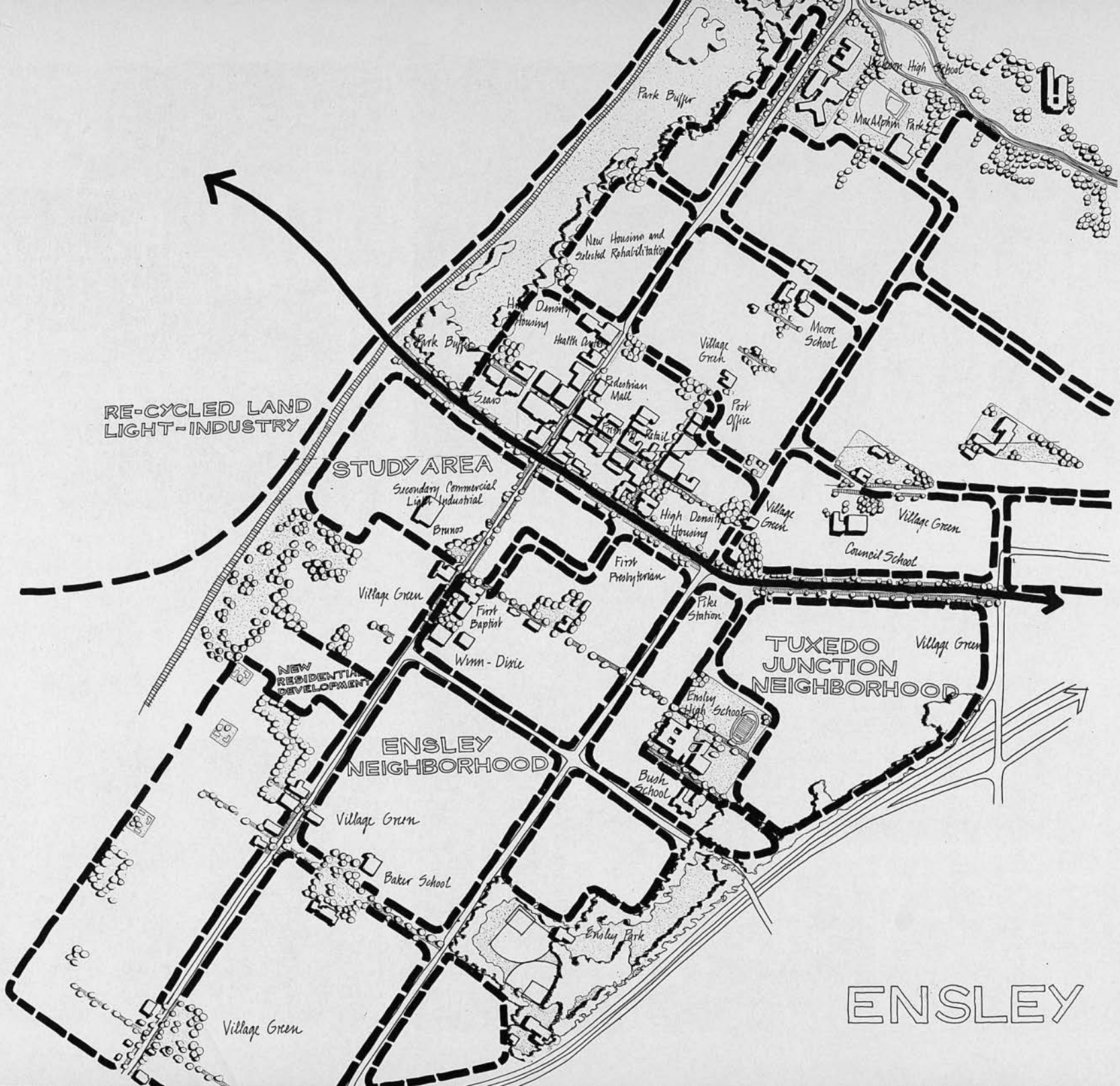
Fortress Nature of Commercial
High Crime
Light Industrial Blight
Truck Traffic
Lack of Buffers
Lack of Street Vitality
Visual Blight of New
Development Along 20th Street
Substandard Housing
Black/White Separation
Schools
Adjacent Industrial Vacancies/
Expected Vacancies
Housing Alternatives
Community Responsiveness
Economic Base for Commercial
has Declined
Limited Flooding

OPPORTUNITIES

Vacant Land
Vacant Buildings
Old Community Identity
Stable Residential Composition
Good Retail Mix
Ideal Community Scale
Community Health Center
New Port Facility Planned
Good Road Access
Local Job Opportunities
High Home Ownership
Strong Church; Street Bar-B-Que,
Family Infrastructure
Minority Entrepreneurs







RE-CYCLED LAND
LIGHT-INDUSTRY

STUDY AREA

Secondary Commercial
Light Industrial

ENSLEY
NEIGHBORHOOD

TUXEDO
JUNCTION
NEIGHBORHOOD

ENSLEY

Park Buffer

New Housing and
Selected Rehabilitation

High Density
Housing

Health Office

Village Green

Moore School

Edoebian Mall

Post Office

High Density
Housing

Village Green

Village Green

Council School

First Presbyterian

Fire Station

Village Green

First Baptist

Winn - Dixie

NEW RESIDENTIAL
DEVELOPMENT

Enslay High School

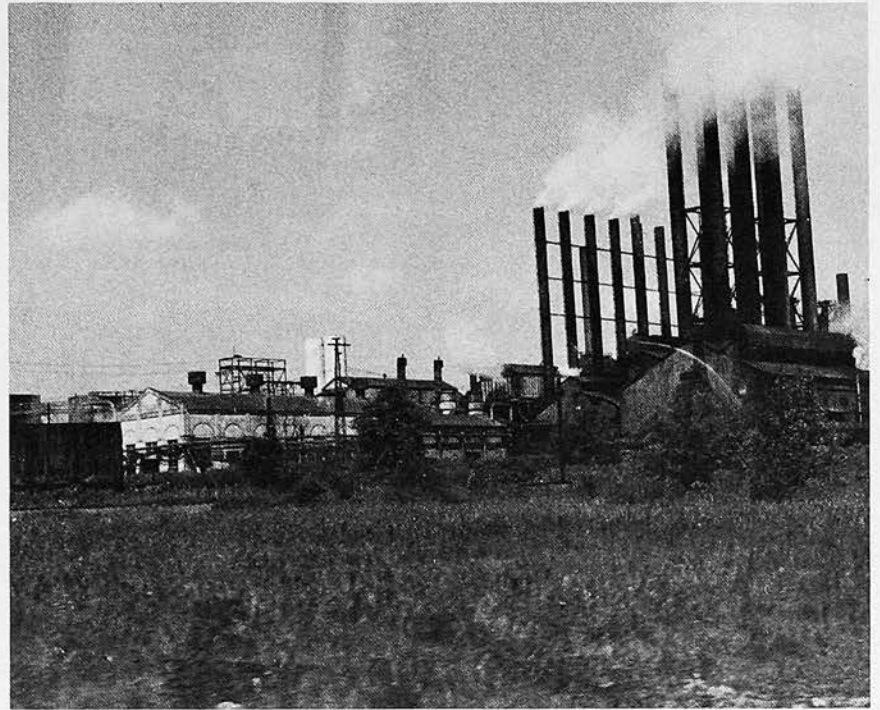
Bush School

Village Green

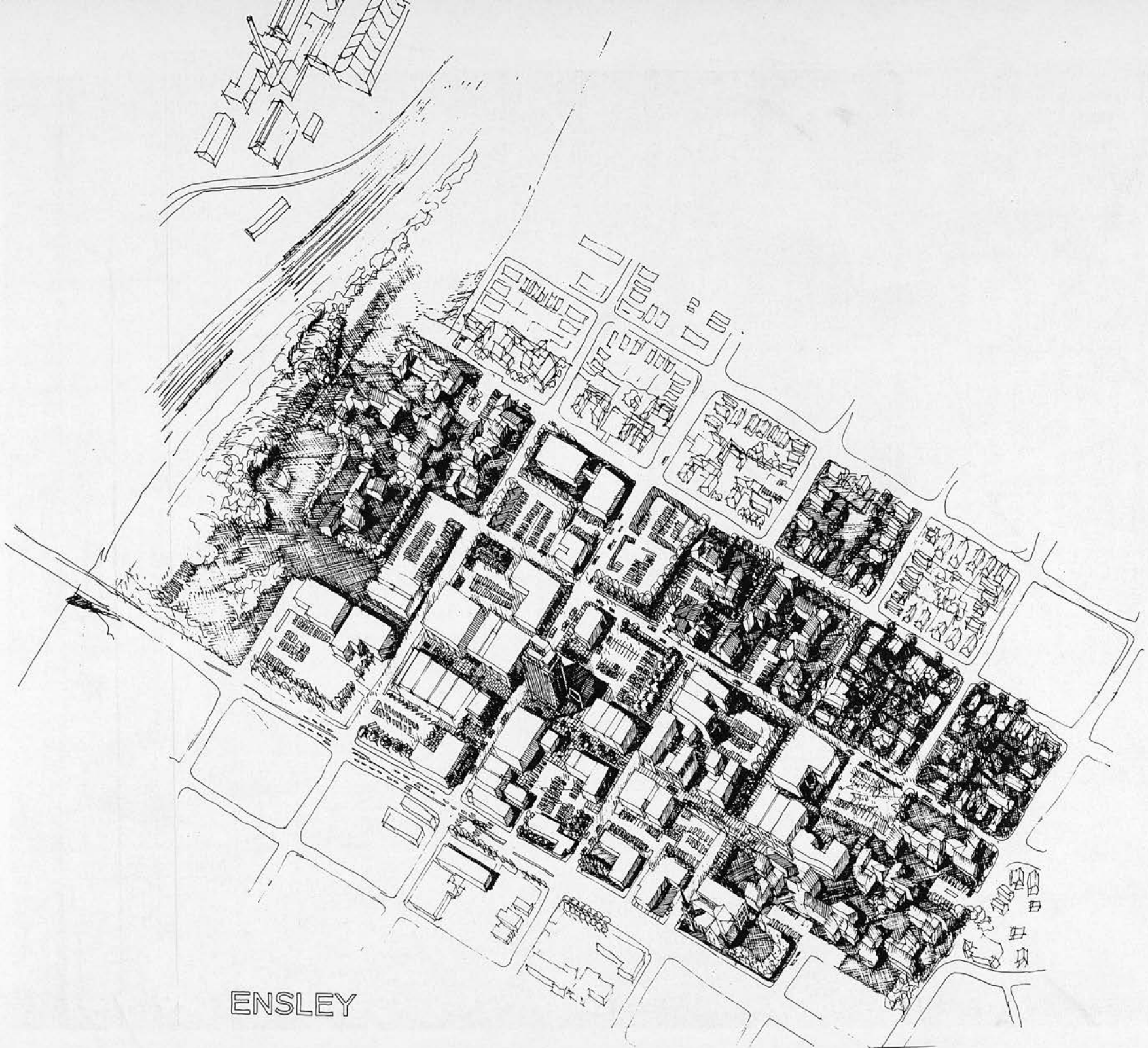
Baker School

Ensley Park

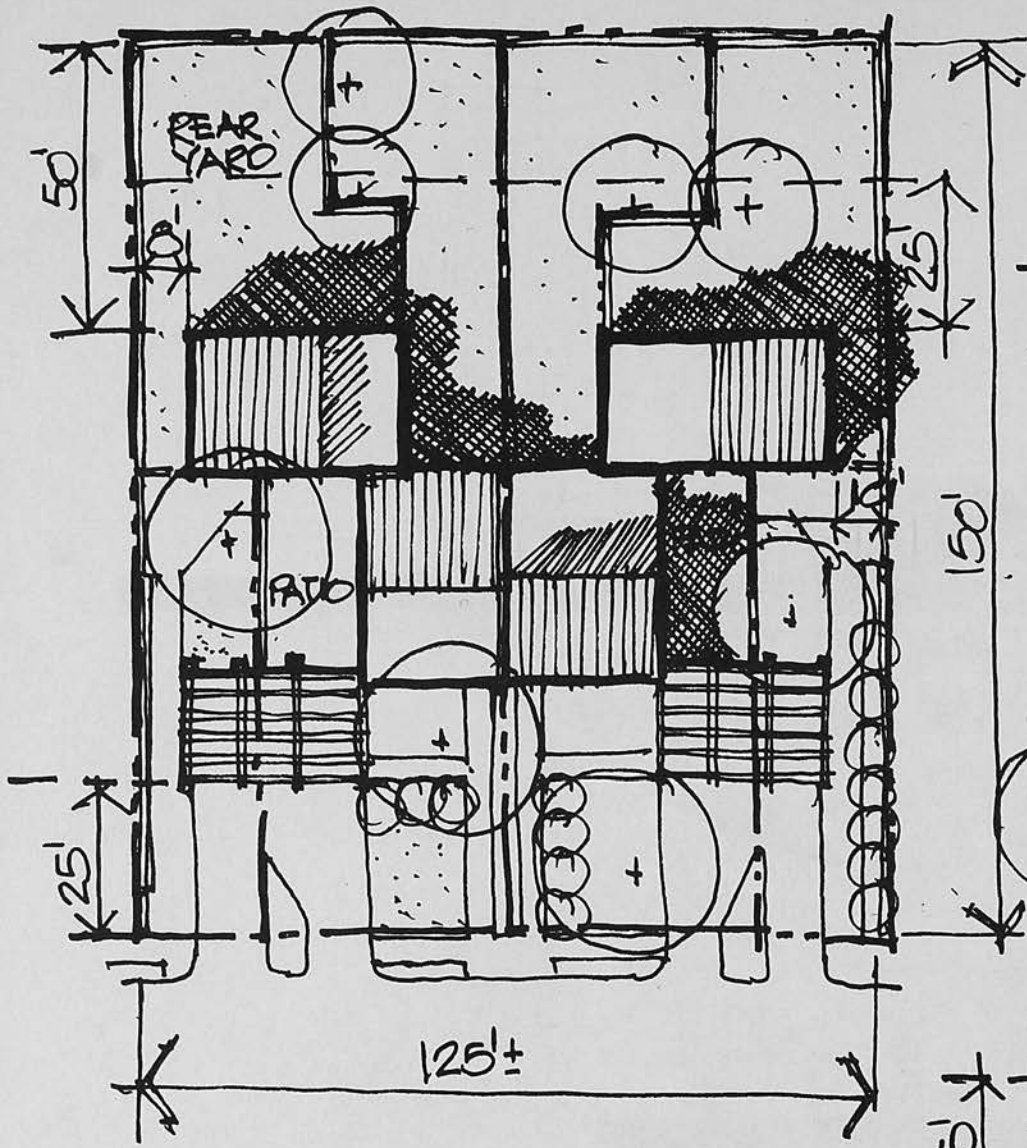
Village Green





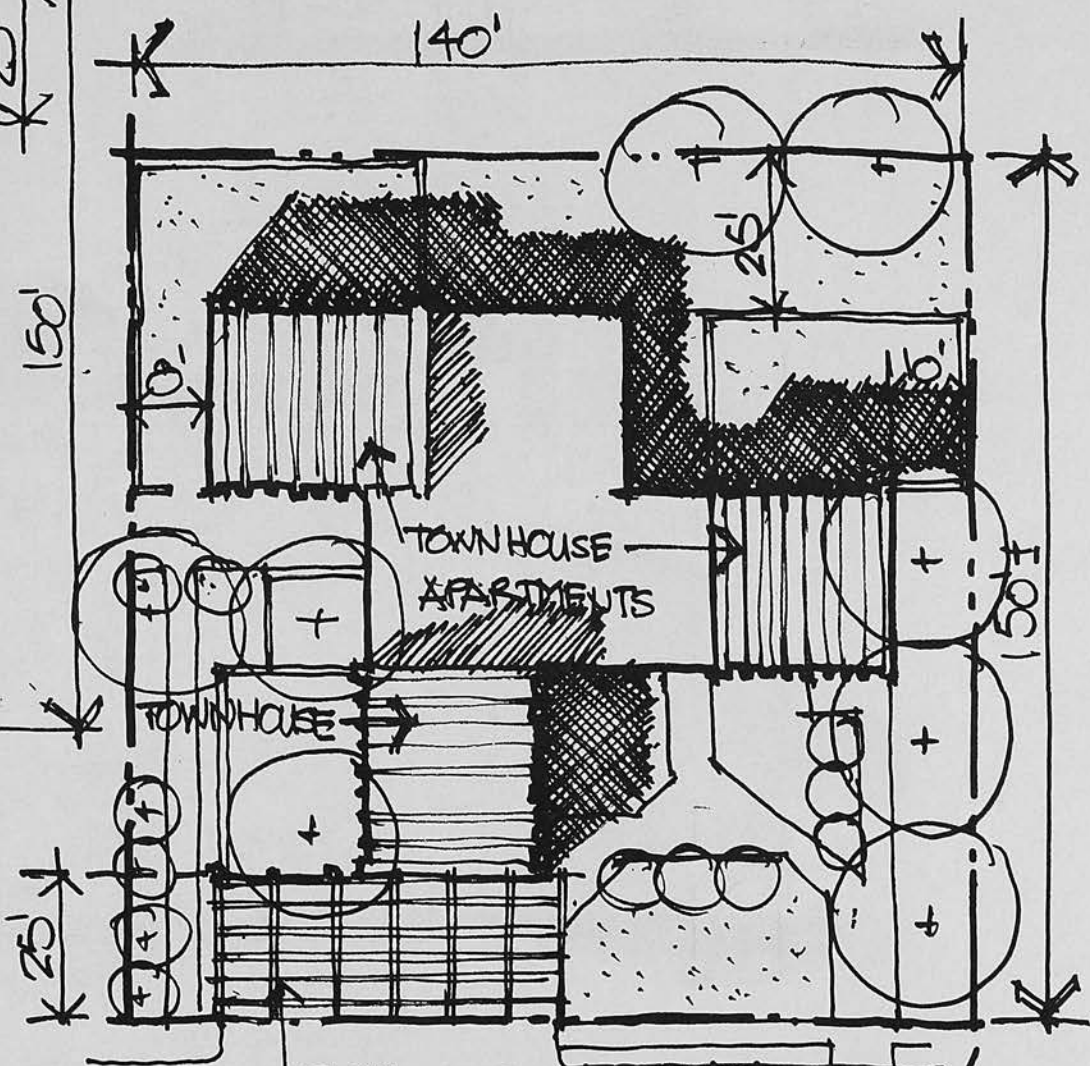


ENSLEY

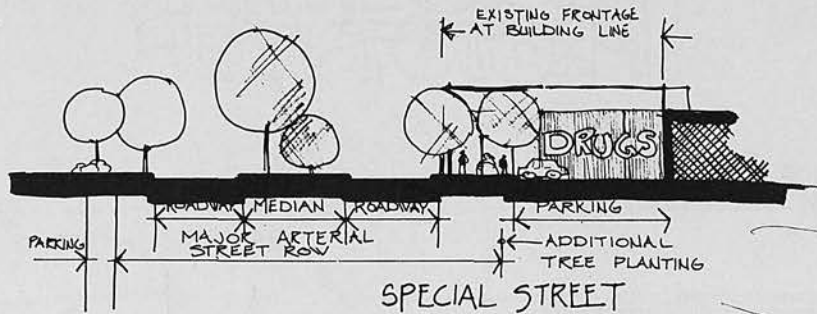


FOUR-PLEX
 8-13 DVA
 (TOWNHOUSES)
 R-5 ZONE

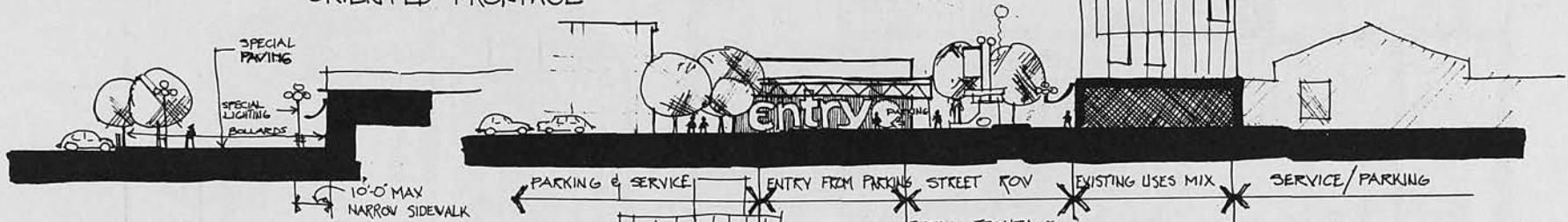
RESIDENTIAL PROTOTYPES



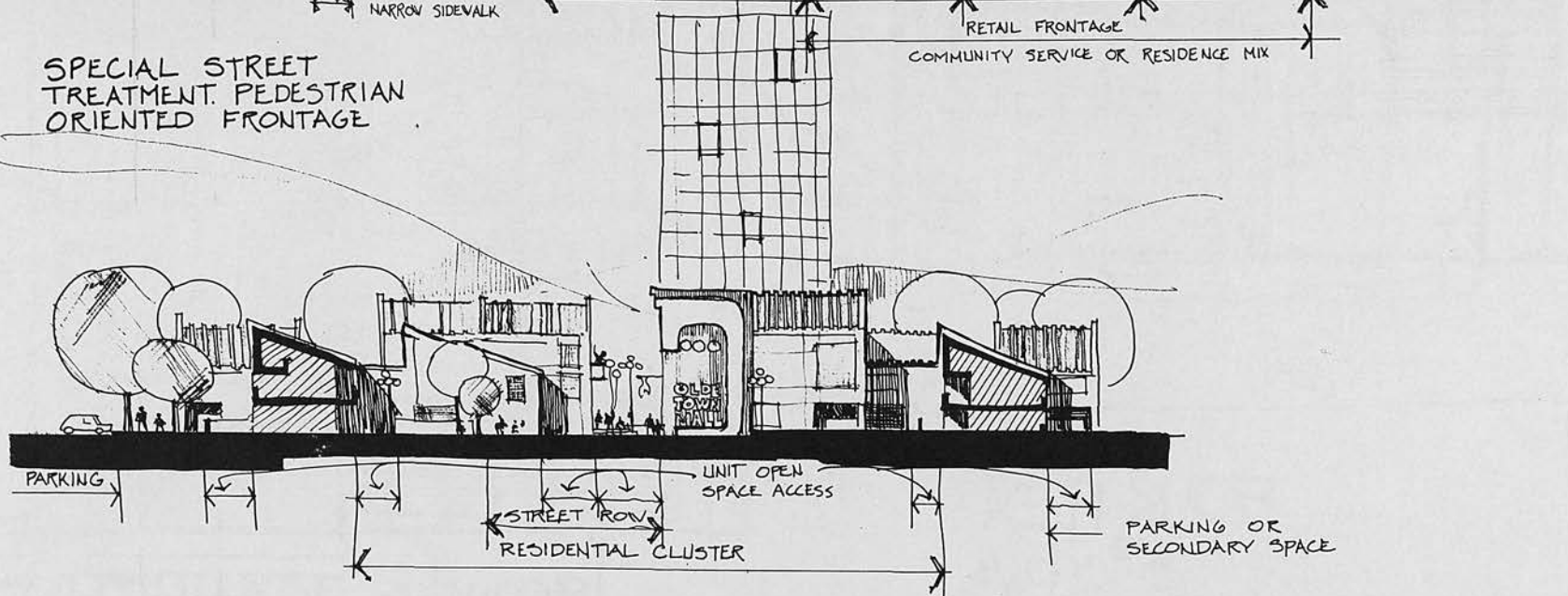
TOWNHOUSE APARTMENTS
 18 DVA
 R-5 ZONE



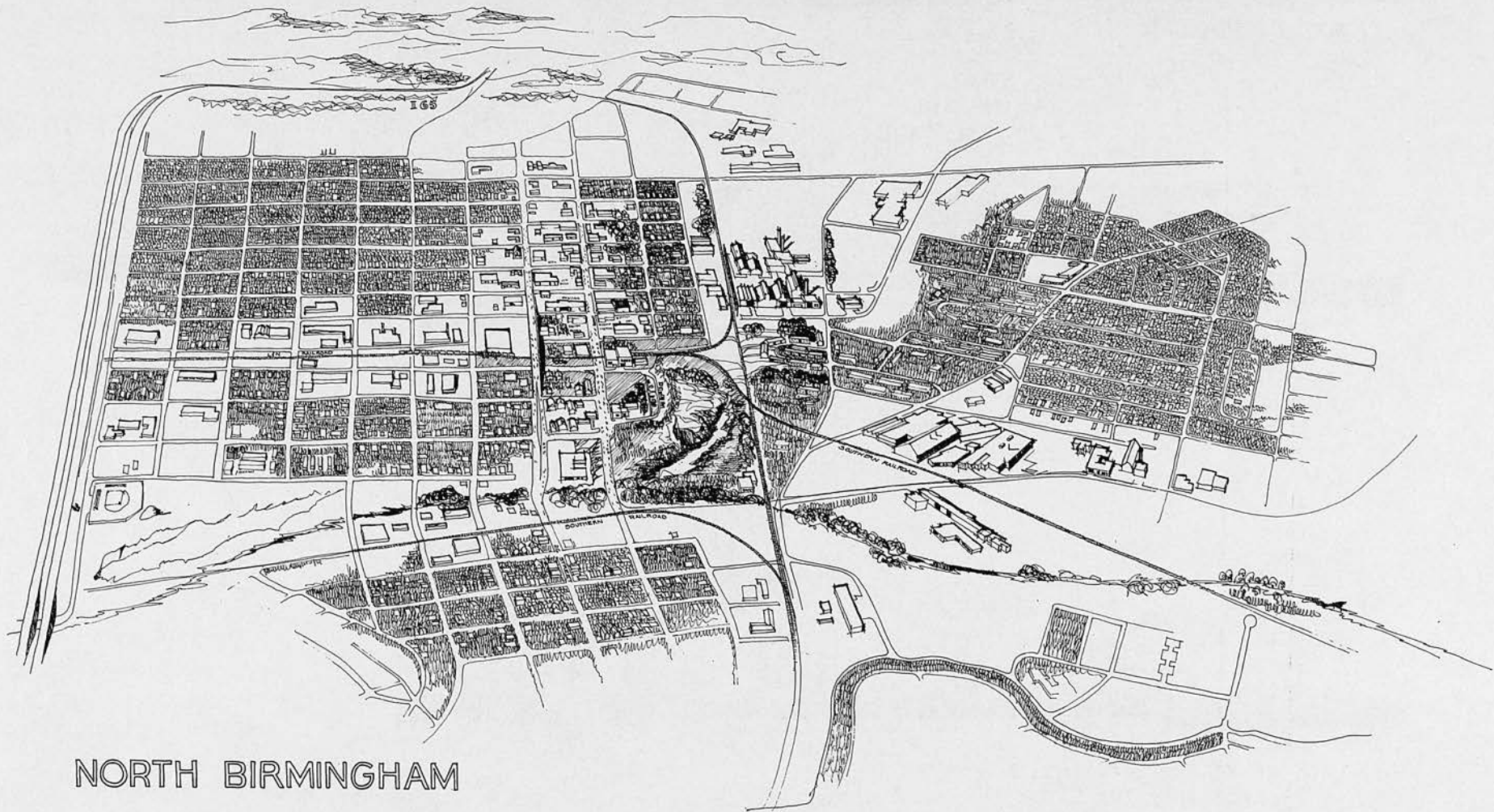
SPECIAL STREET TREATMENT AND ORIENTED FRONTAGE



SPECIAL STREET TREATMENT. PEDESTRIAN ORIENTED FRONTAGE



VILLAGE CLUSTER



NORTH BIRMINGHAM

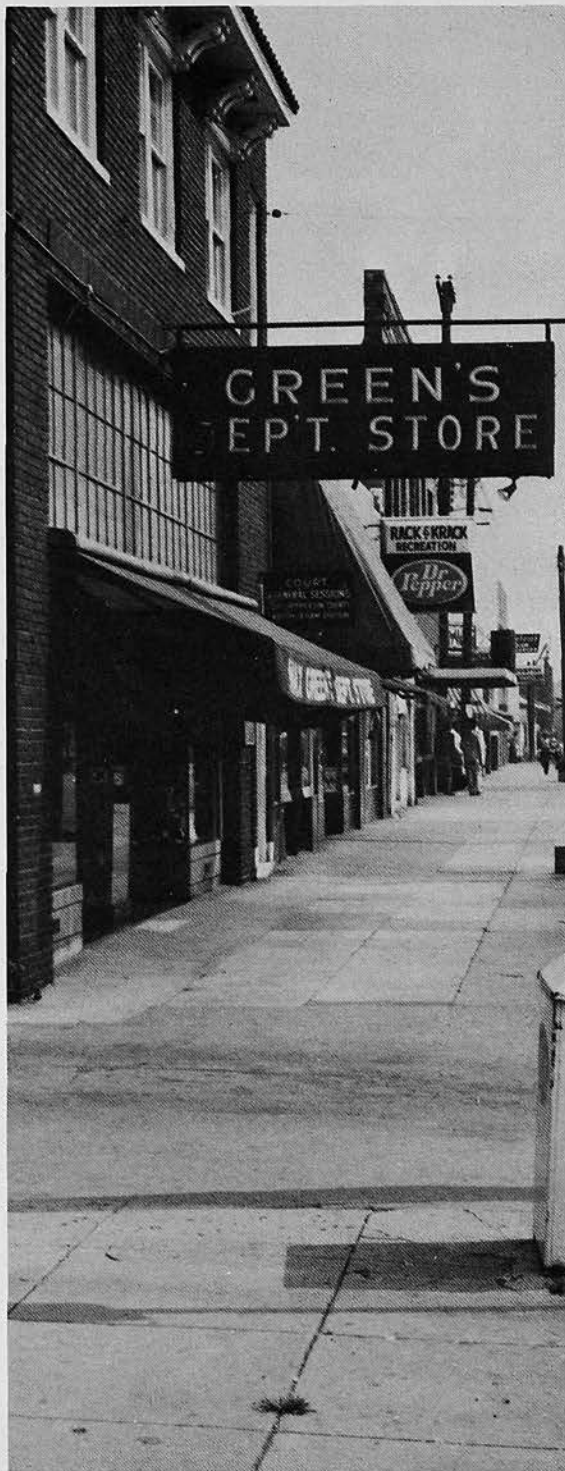
NORTH BIRMINGHAM

PROBLEMS

Physical Barriers
 Movement of Goods - Handicapped
Limited Access
Exodus of Youth
Crime / Poverty
Lack of Neighborhood Orientation
 Rehabilitation, \$ and Standards
Image in Media
 Internal
 External
Access to Public Transportation
Sanitation Service
Drainage / Flooding
Housing Shortage
Street Scape
Alleys
Lighting
Absentee and Large Holdings of
 Property
Isolation of Elderly
Lack of Retail and Service
 Facilities
Lack of Social Services,
 Particularly for Elderly
Cost of Utilities









OPPORTUNITIES

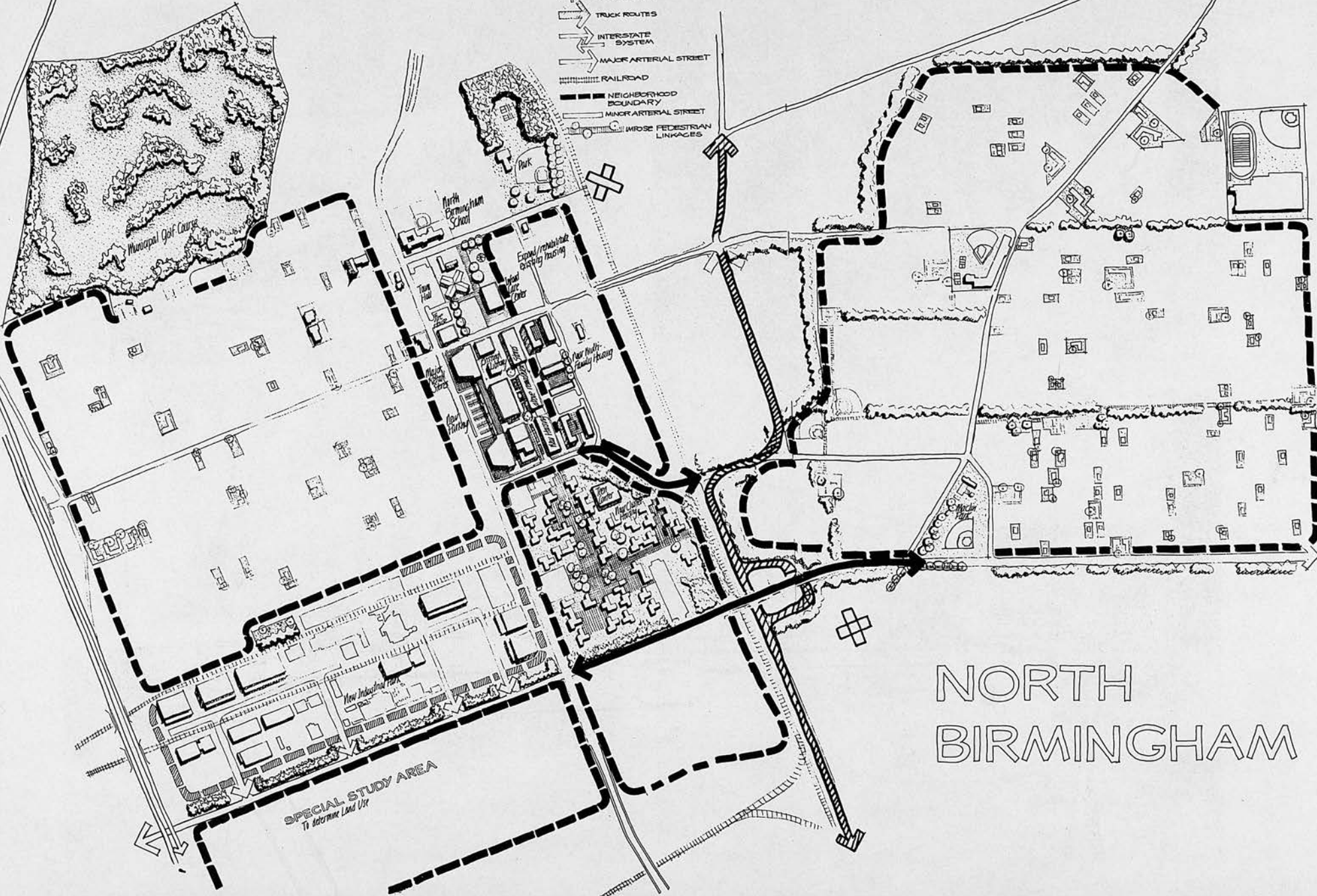
Vacant Land in CBD
Potential Market
Strong Pockets of Housing
Strong Neighborhood Identity
Organizational Structure
Cooperation Between Various Groups
Merchants / Chamber of Commerce
Proximity to Downtown
New Overpass
Connection to Interstate (Future)





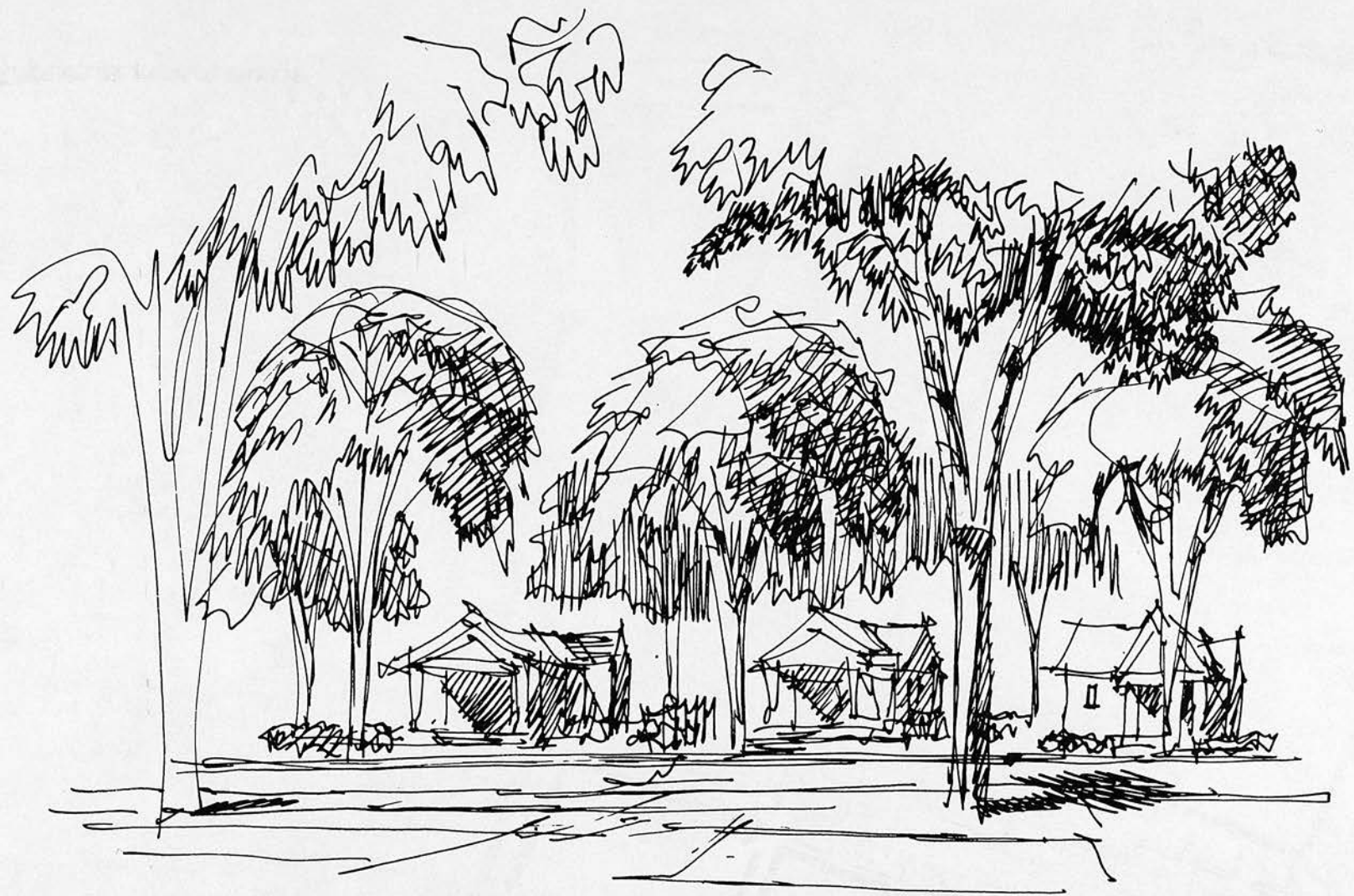
LEGEND

-  IN-FILL HOUSING
-  TRUCK ROUTES
-  INTERSTATE SYSTEM
-  MAJOR ARTERIAL STREET
-  RAILROAD
-  NEIGHBORHOOD BOUNDARY
-  MAJOR ARTERIAL STREET
-  IMPROVED PEDESTRIAN LINKAGES

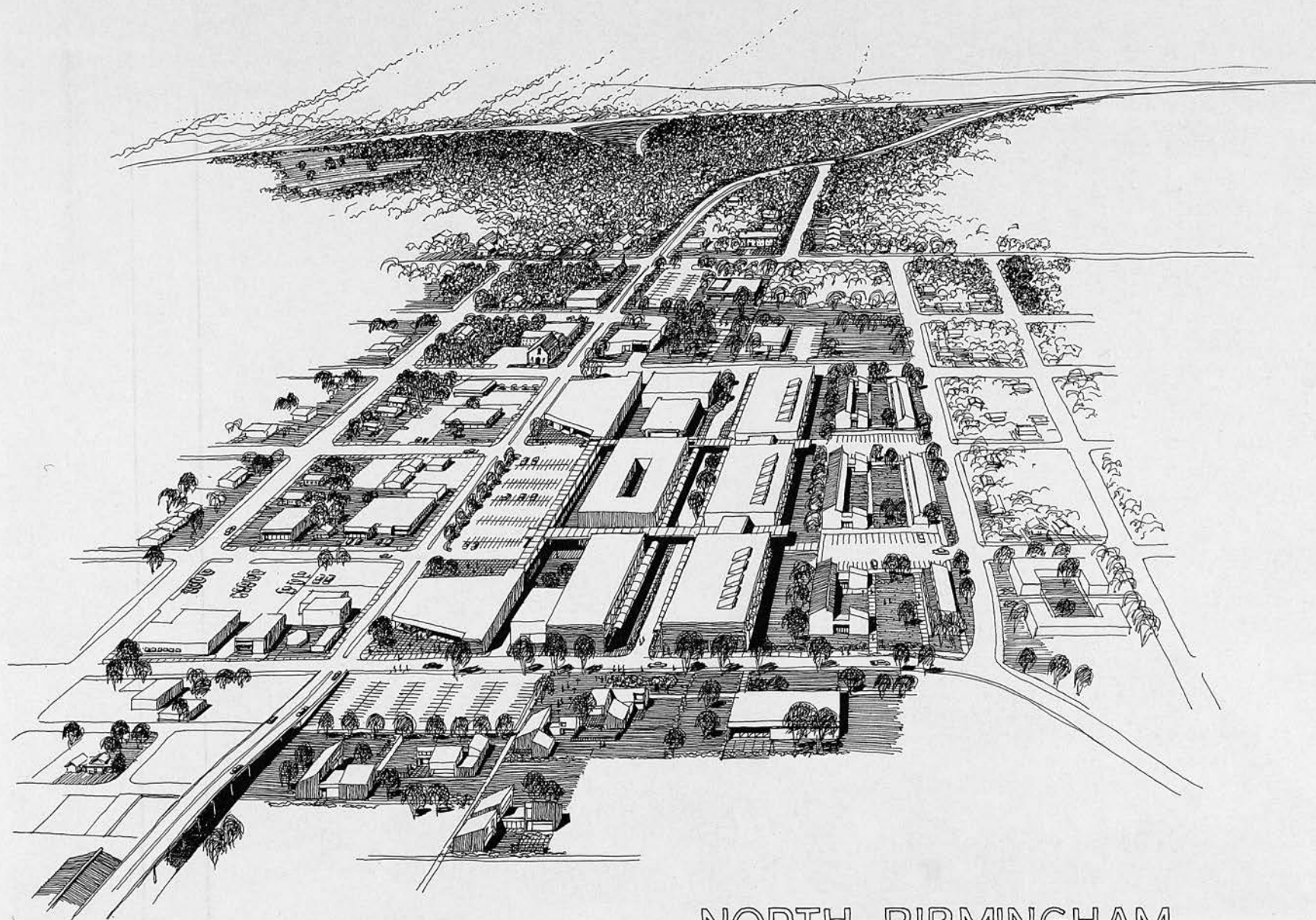


NORTH
BIRMINGHAM

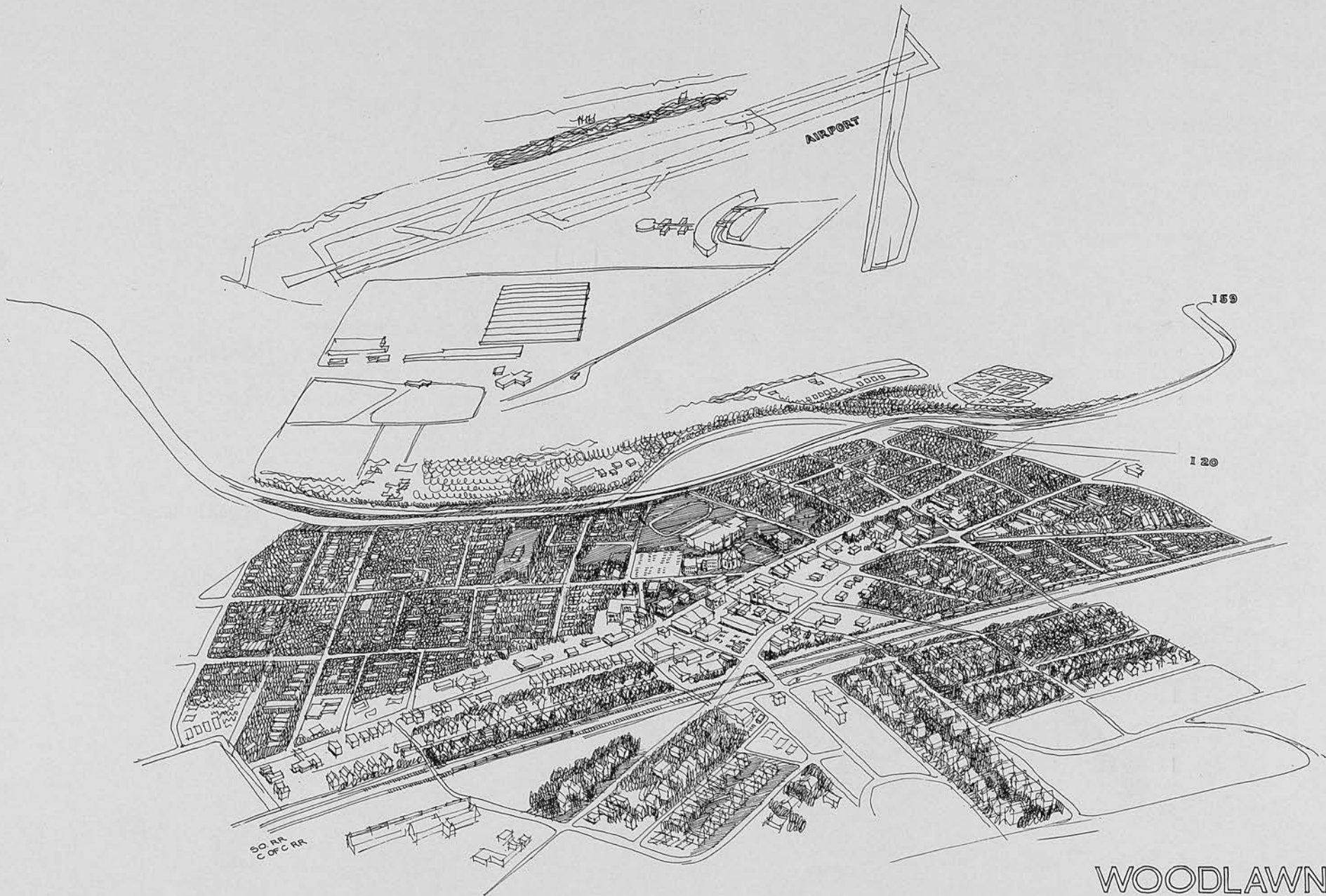
SPECIAL STUDY AREA
To determine Land Use







NORTH BIRMINGHAM



AIRPORT

159

120

50 RA
C OF C RR

WOODLAWN

WOODLAWN

PROBLEMS

Loss of Retail Outlets
Low Percentage of Youth
Zero Population Growth
Long-term Residents "turned off"
Social Services for Elderly
Employment / Job Training
Street Lighting
Lack of Foot Patrolmen
Alleys
Flooding / Drainage
Lack of Traffic Signals
Poor Public Transportation
Nursing Homes
Safety Hazards for Youth
 (Ditches and Highways)
Recreation for Youth
Public Maintenance
Desecration of Wood Family Cemetary
Maintenance of Private Homes
 for Elderly

OPPORTUNITIES

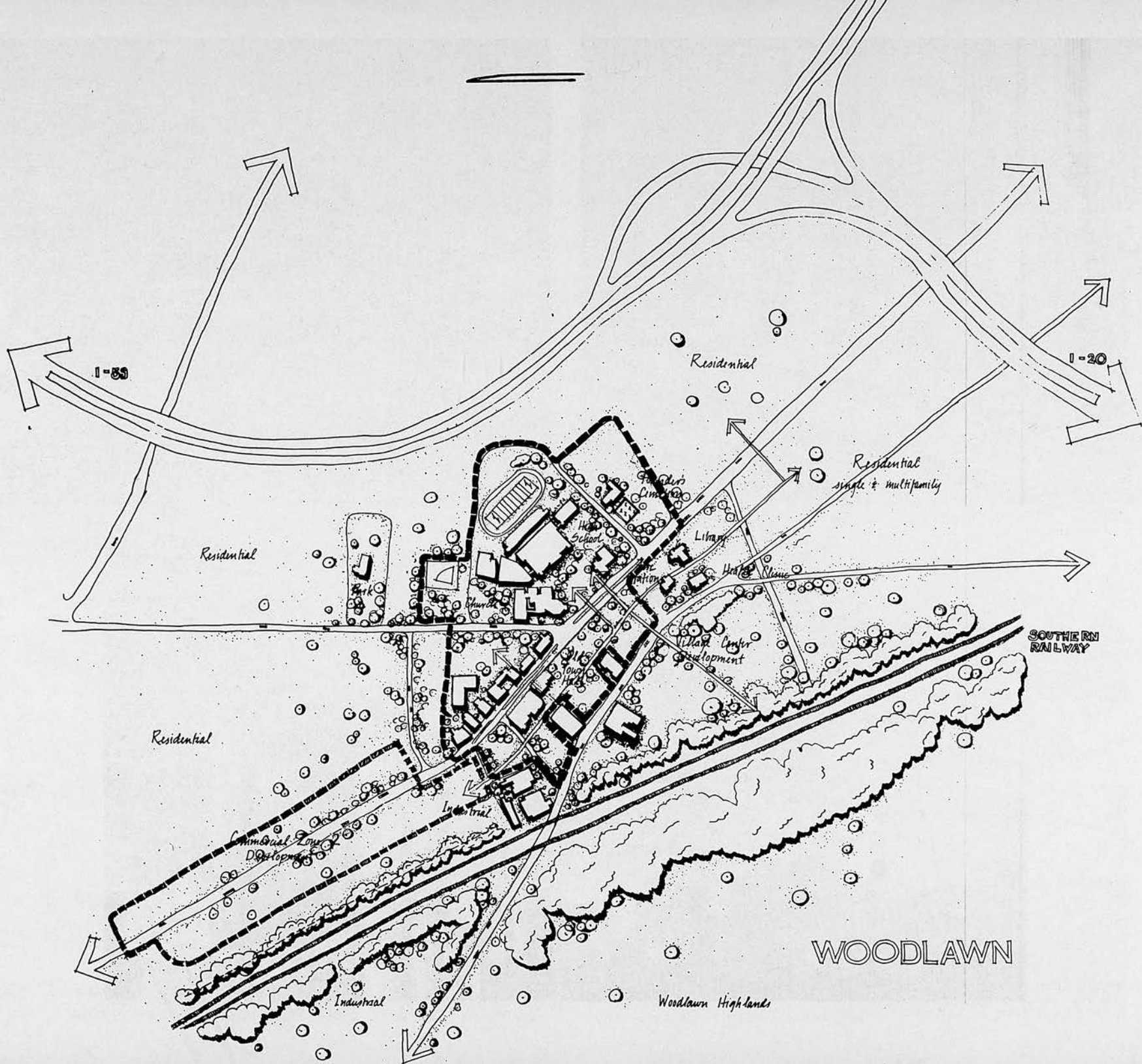
Historical Landmarks
Neighborhood Loyalty / Identity
Good Access to Transportation for
 Supplies to Industry and
 Business
Interracial Cooperation
Health Services
Good Fire Protection
 Freindly Fireman -- "Local Hero"
Low Crime Rate
Sense of Personal Security
Close Family Ties to Neighborhood
Good Church / School Cooperation
High School Sports
Money - Community Development
 \$600,000
Vacant Stores
Strong Religious Institutions
Easy Access to Shopping
 Centers / Airport



ERECTED 1908.
W.E. PERRYMAN MAYOR.
BUILDING COMMITTEE.
J. L. BURNS.
J. E. GIBSON.
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W. S. REYNOLDS.
W. L. ROBERTSON.
CHAS. W. HALL CONTRACTOR
R. E. POSEY ARCHITECT.







I-85

I-20

Residential

Residential
single & multifamily

Residential

Residential

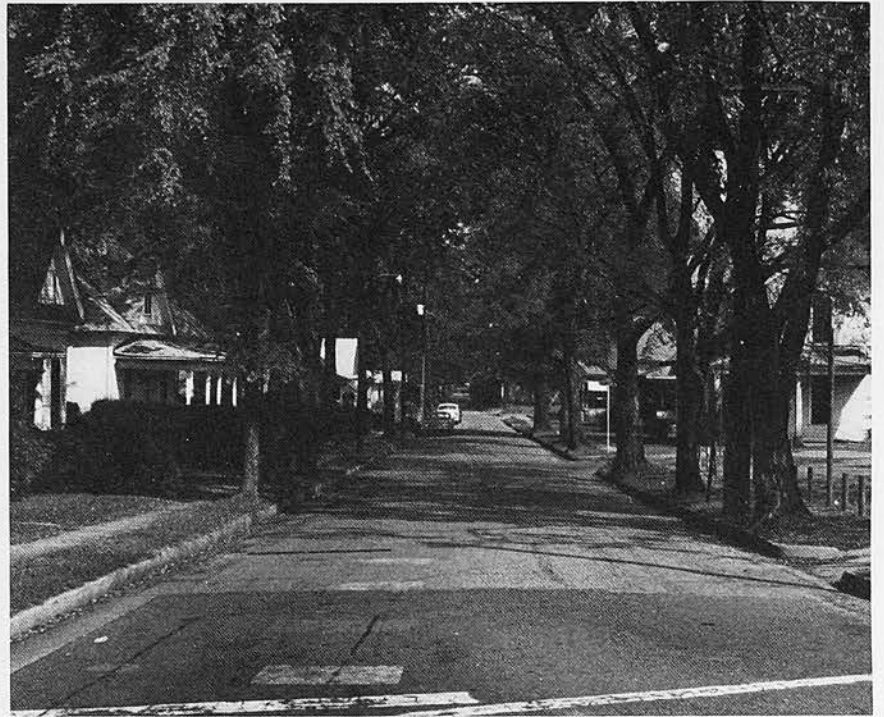
SOUTHERN
RAILWAY

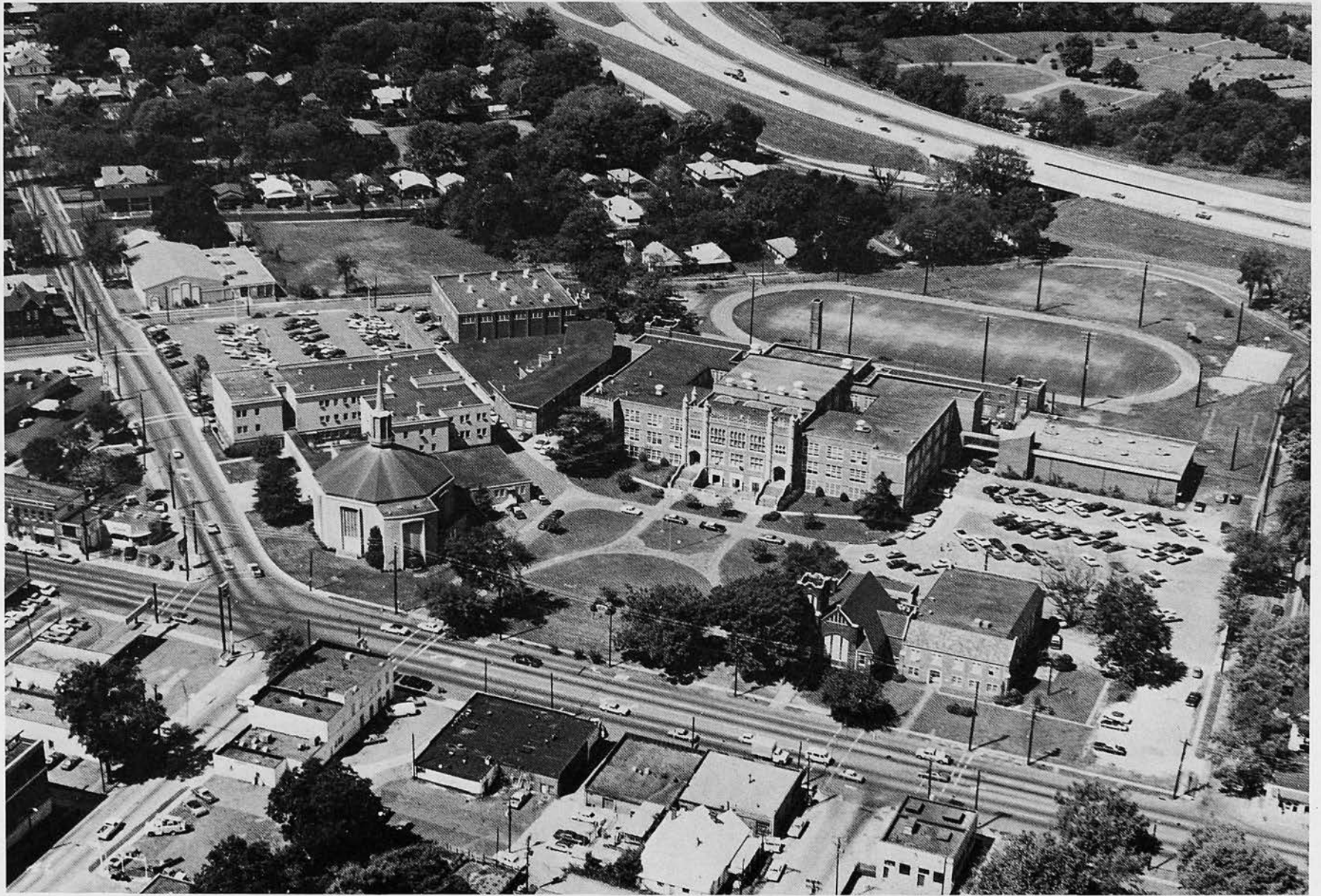
WOODLAWN

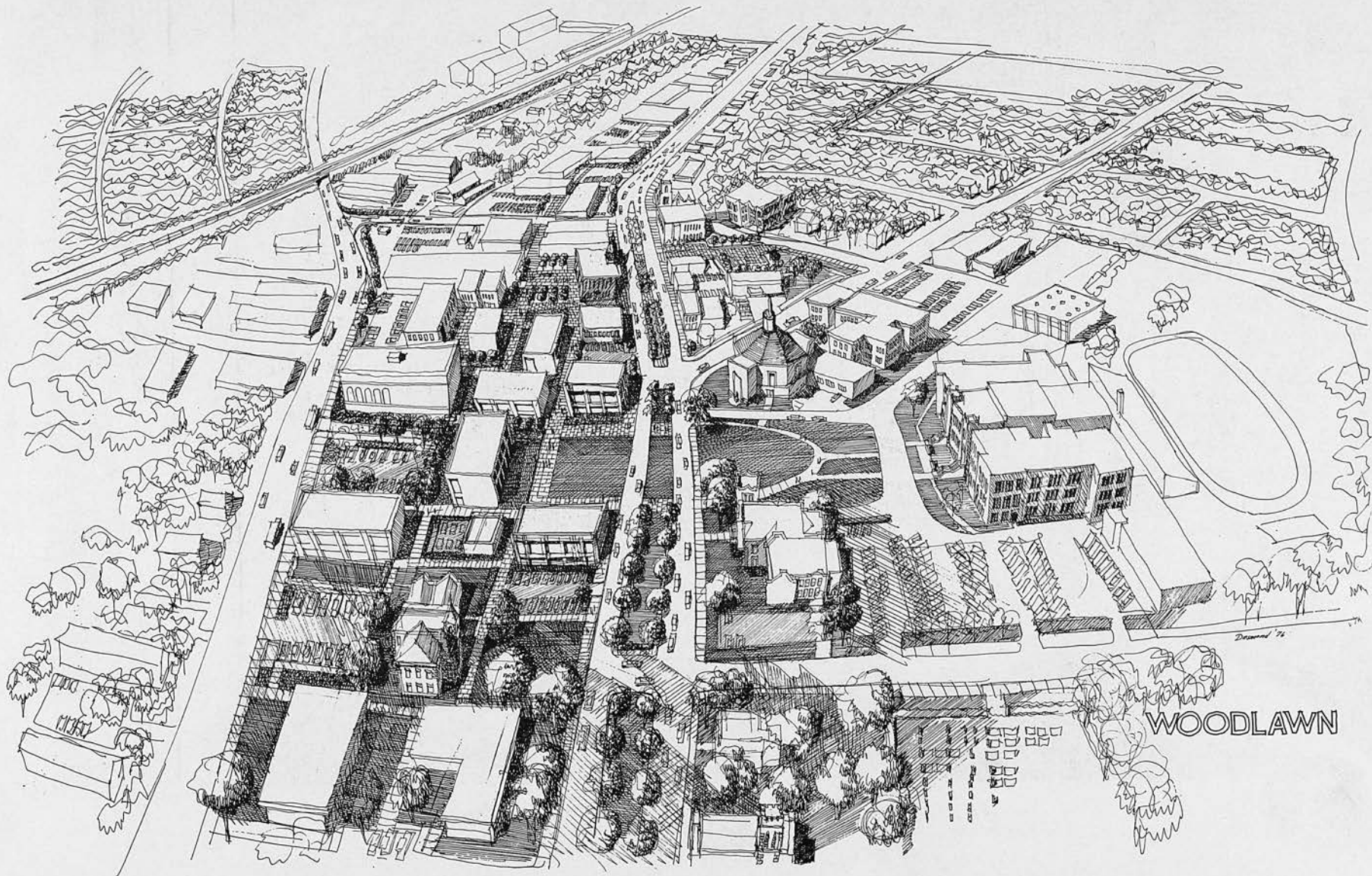
Industrial

Woodlawn Highlands









WOODLAWN



Woodlawn Town Hall



Hand-drawn sketch of a street scene

5

RESOURCES

For the neighborhood planning process to work it is essential that Birmingham develop a system that will, on a continuing and timely basis, provide neighborhoods with information concerning all potential opportunities for funding a development program. Inherent in such a system is the identification of such varied sources as the following:

- . Local resources: Particularly identification and reports of people, neighborhoods and organizations dealing with similar problems.
- . City-wide resources: What is available and where. These kinds of information broaden experience by providing the information and referral to similar activities under way in other cities. For example, how do other municipalities utilize community development funds to multiply the dollars available for housing rehabilitation.
- . Federal resources: Include programs such as community development and others that offer aid to neighborhood improvement efforts.

Revenue sharing

Section 208 Water Quality Plans

Law Enforcement Assistance
Administration

Public Works Act

Comprehensive Employment and Training
Act

Small Business Loan, Dept of Commerce

Title XX or the Social Security Act
for Planning and Coordination of
Service Delivery

To facilitate the availability of information and resources, we suggest that the Mayor and Council establish liaison office in Montgomery and Washington, D. C. to facilitate the information flow concerning potential state and federal assistance and to aid in securing the maximum support from these sources. The information obtained would be disseminated to the neighborhoods through the already established weekly communication network between the Department of Community Development and the neighborhood and community citizens committees.

The availability of information and potential resources would enable neighborhood groups to:

- . initiate a variety of locally generated programs to deal with neighborhood problems.

- . share and learn from the experience of other cities, neighborhoods and people
- . establish access to sources of revenue for neighborhoods and cities that otherwise would go untapped
- . intergrate programs on a local level

For example, implementing a commercial and neighborhood revitalization plan such as those proposed for the three neighborhoods-land acquisition might be financed by Community Development Grant monies, sewer construction might be financed through the Capital Budget and Public Works Fund, landscaping improvements with a Urban Beautification Grant, small business development through loans from the Small Business Administration of the U.S. Department of Commerce, job development training through programs such as the Comprehensive Employment and Training Act. In addition, improvements in public safety and crime prevention might be aided through grants from the Law Enforcement Assistance Administration; improvement of the delivery of social services such as senior citizens services and children's day care services through reorganization under Title XX of the Social Security Act, improved public transportation access through Urban Mass Transit Grants.

Most importantly, initiation of these activities would involve the people in the improvement of the quality of life in their neighborhoods. In sum, the City would be providing the support necessary for the planning and development activities of Birmingham.

6

FOLLOW UP AND EVALUATION

A test of the workability of any development project is an essential part of the Urban Planning process. For example, following the visit of the R/UDAT team and the open meeting for the presentation of its findings, copies of the R/UDAT report will be distributed. Its recommendations should be fully explored for determination of desirability and feasibility, for modifications to meet unrecognized objectives and for its ability to articulate the planning goals of the citizens of the area. This review process should lead to a refined program for action. One of the major failings of most local development programs is the inability to remain abreast of the evolving situation and to continuously review progress against established goals and programmatic schedules. As a result the initiative is usually lost and that which is achieved does not accurately reflect initial concepts. It is recommended, therefore, that a R/UDAT team be given an opportunity to meet again with residents in an open town meeting to evaluate the process and the final product prior to implementation. This will provide further opportunity for an objective, outside group to appraise the recommendations and planning process. This

review, which will unquestionably lead to modifications and additions, should offer greater assurance of the achievement of planning objectives. In addition, the R/UDAT team recommends that one of its members return nine months after the initial town hall review to see how the recommendation and the planning process is proceeding.



ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

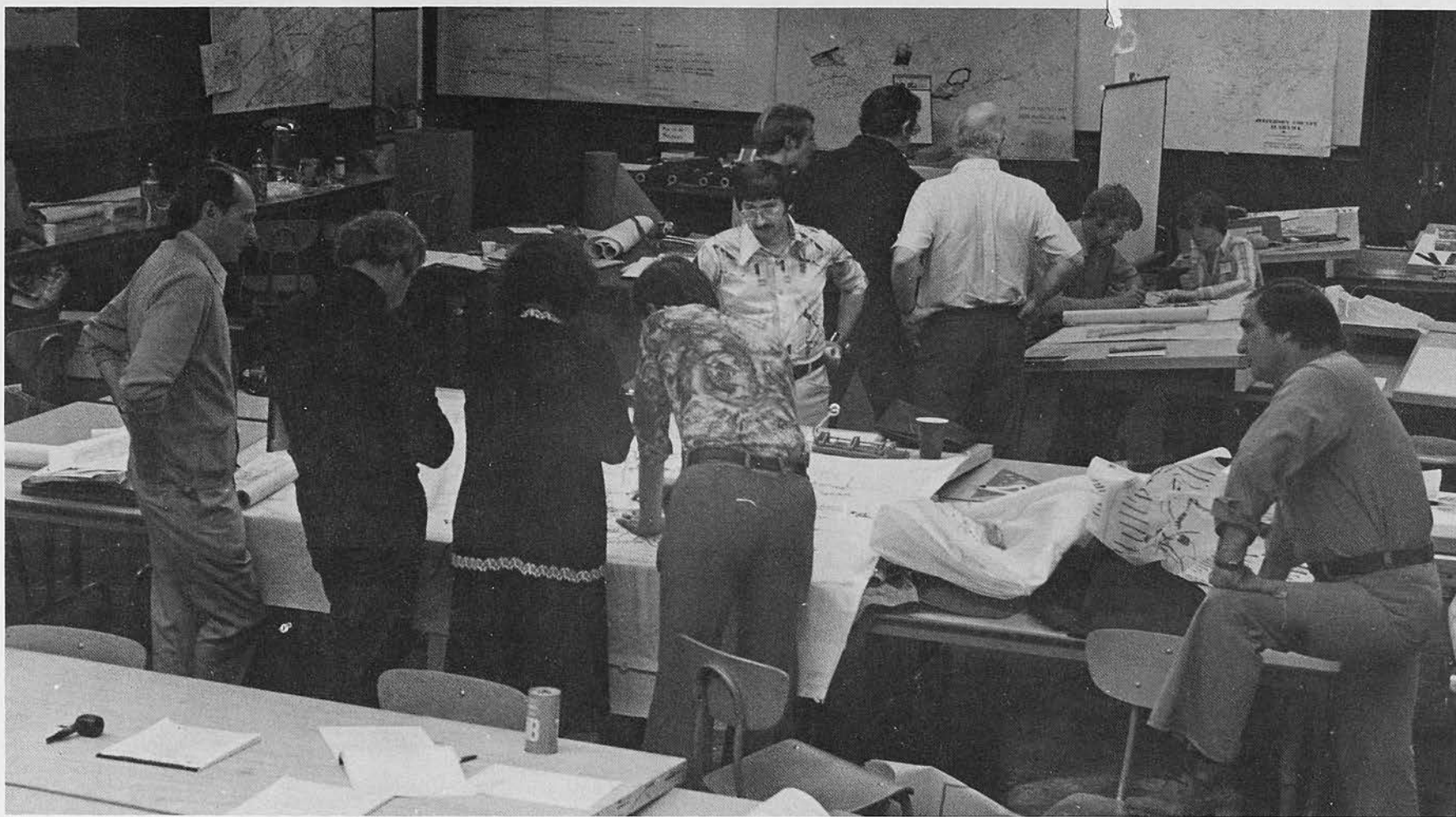
The R/UDAT visit was coordinated by James E. Adams, AIA, of the Birmingham Chapter, American Institute of Architects, Gray Plosser, AIA, President of the Birmingham Chapter, and Emory Kirkwood, AIA, past President, under whose direction the program was initiated. The members of the R/UDAT Committee and the Chapter Executive Committee assisted with local arrangements, data gathering, public relations, photography and coordination of local Architects and other resource people.

Students in Architecture and Urban Design from Auburn University and Tuskegee Institute and graduate students in the Department of Urban Studies at the University of Alabama in Birmingham played significant roles on the team. They were: William Fowler, Fred Fredericks, Daniel Osborne, David C. Herrick, and Barbara Bailey from Auburn, Vicki Carter, Josh Collier, Gary Wallace and Curtis Sartor from Tuskegee, and Betty Bock from the University of Alabama. They worked under the direction of Al Chiesa, member of the Birmingham Chapter AIA.

Secretarial services were coordinated by members of the Architectural Secretaries Association and the Women's Junior Chamber of Commerce. Documentation of the process was coordinated by Kerry Ackeridge of the Center for Urban Affairs, University of Alabama in Birmingham.

A significant contribution to this study was the active interest and participation of the City of Birmingham. The Birmingham Chapter,

AIA wishes to express its appreciation to Mayor David Vann, to Robert Land, Director of the Community Development Department, and to Ed Cobberly who coordinated the flow of information and data from city departments and agencies. The support and assistance of Operation New Birmingham and the University of Alabama in Birmingham, as well as a host of businessmen and civic leaders, and residents representing a broad cross section of the community is gratefully acknowledged.



SPONSORS

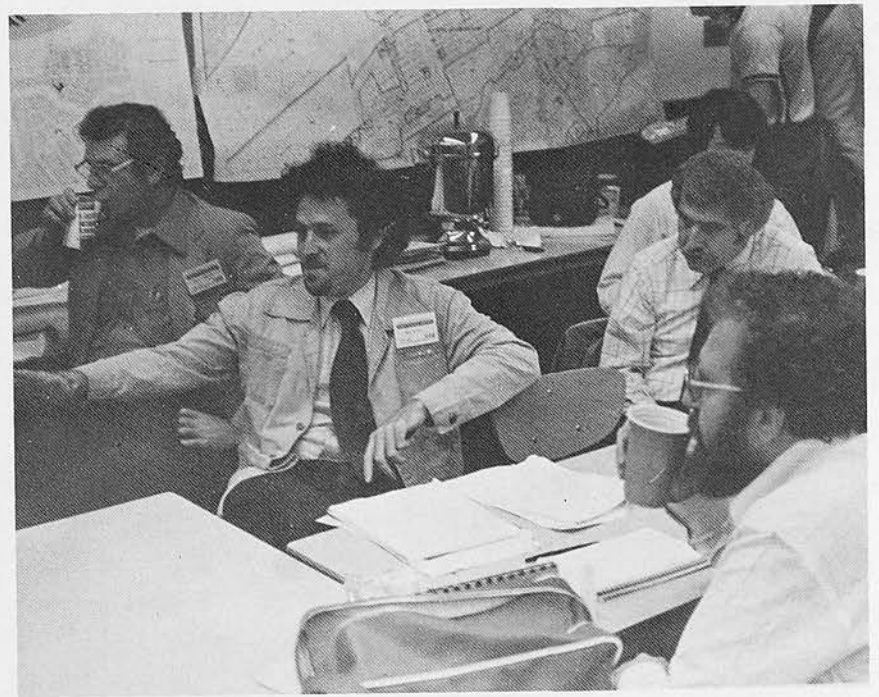
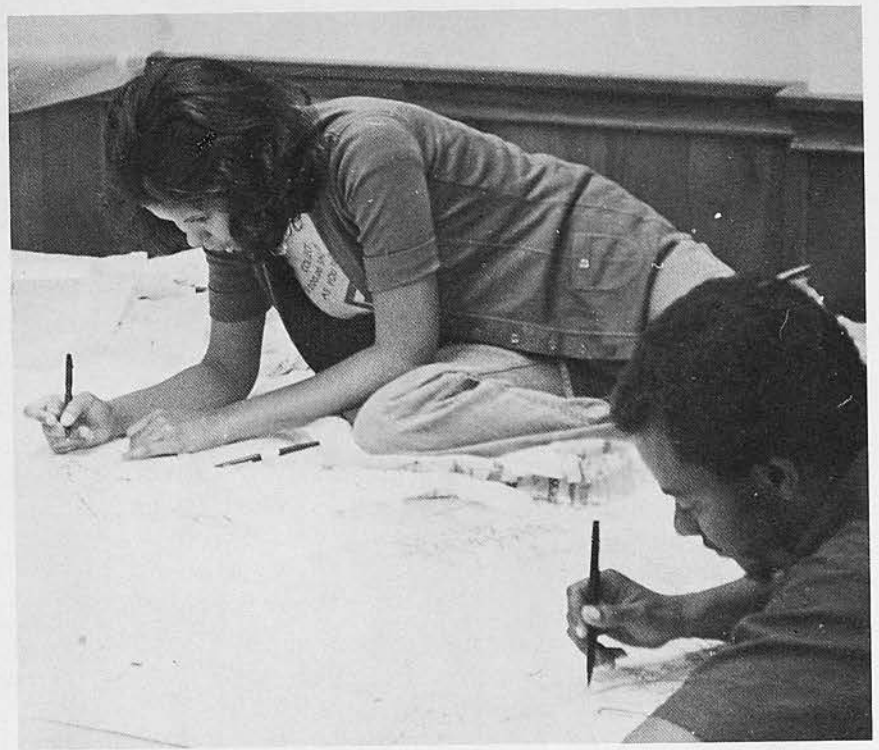
Birmingham Chapter of the AIA
City Of Birmingham
Operation New Birmingham
University Of Alabama In Birmingham

CONTRIBUTORS

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Auburn University
Tuskegee Institute
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RESOURCE DATA

National Urban Design Committee AIA
Birmingham Regional Planning Commission
Department of Urban Studies, UAB
City Of Birmingham
Community Development Department
Police Department
Street and Sanitation Department
Traffic Engineering Department
Engineering Department
Inspection Services Department
Park and Recreation Board
Birmingham Regional Health Planning Commission
Birmingham Board Of Education
Birmingham Transit Authority
Birmingham JCCEO
Jefferson County Department of Environmental Health
Institute of Real Estate Management
Birmingham Board Of Realtors
Birmingham HUD
Birmingham Housing Authority
United States Department of Conservation
Birmingham Area Chamber Of Commerce
Birmingham Trust National Bank
First National Bank of Birmingham
Jefferson Federal Savings & Loan Association
J.H. Berry Realty Company
Municipal Development Company
Jefferson Home Construction Company
Citizens Advisory Board
Community Citizen's Committee
Neighborhood Citizen's Committee
Ensley Development Steering Committee
North Birmingham Development Steering Committee
Woodlawn Development Steering Committee



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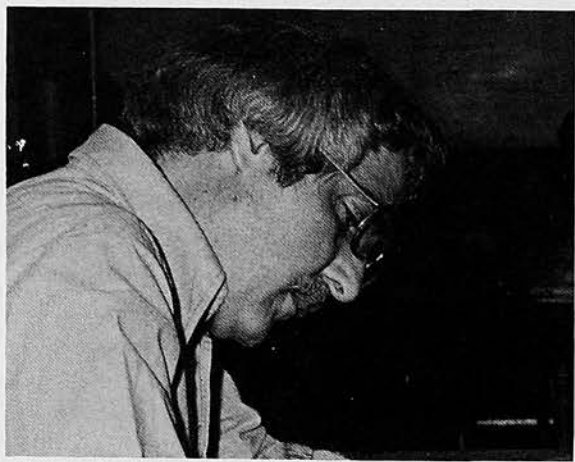
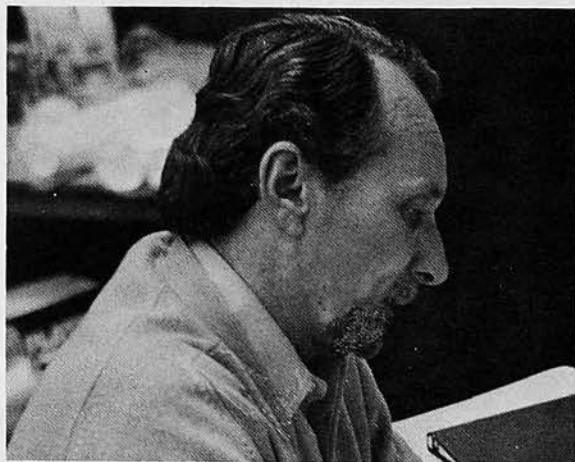
PRESS ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The Birmingham News
The Birmingham Post-Herald
WBRC Television
WBMG Television
WAPI Television
Alabama Educational Television
Birmingham Magazine

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The Committee would like to express its appreciation to the National Urban Design Committee of the AIA.



STANTON ECKSTUT, AIA
TEAM CHAIRMAN

An architect, Mr. Eckstut is Associate Professor of Architecture at Columbia University and a research associate at the University's Center for Advanced Research in Urban and Environmental Affairs. He is in private practice specializing in urban design. Mr. Eckstut is a member of the National AIA Urban Design Committee and is a former member of the Urban Design Group in the New York Department of City Planning.

CHARLES P. BOYCE

An economist, Mr. Boyce has served as consultant on urban and regional development problems for local, state, federal and international agencies including the United Nations and World Bank. He has undertaken assignments in Puerto Rico, Venezuela, Panama, Jakarta and Singapore.

DON CONWAY, AIA

The psychological and sociological impact of buildings on people is Mr. Conway's area of specialization. His education includes a degree in architecture from the University of Florida plus work in psychology at Northwestern University. Mr. Conway is currently the Director of Research for the American Institute of Architects in Washington, D.C. where he also teaches in the Department of

Psychology at Trinity College. His research covers the fields of Housing, Mental Health Centers, Office Buildings and Jails.

JOHN J. DESMOND, F.A.I.A.

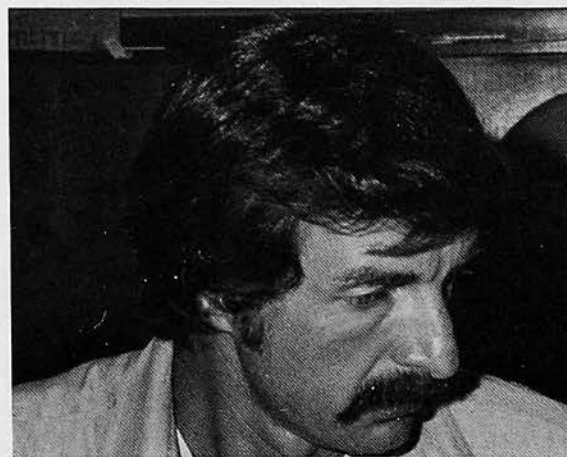
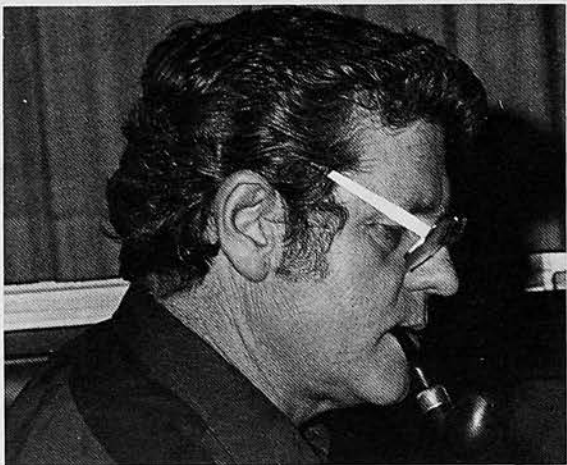
An architect and urban designer, Mr. Desmond is a member of the firm of Desmond, Miremont and Associates of Baton Rouge, Louisiana. His special interest include the relationships among buildings and groups of buildings and open spaces in the urban setting. He is a recipient of many design awards.

DR. JULIA HALL

An environmental psychologist, urban sociologist, social psychologist, Dr. Hall is an Assistant Professor of Psychology and Sociology at Drexel University. She is currently involved in the study of the relationship between human behavior and the built, social and natural setting, and the solution of problems resulting from these interactions.

RONALD B. KULL

Mr. Kull is an architect and Urban Design Officer for the City of Cincinnati, Department of Urban Development. He has been deeply involved in the creation of the urban development process practiced in Cincinnati and used as a model for other development agencies in the country. He is in private practice specializing in urban design and



community development. He has been a faculty member of the School of Architecture and Art at the University of Cincinnati.

JACK PATRICK, AIA

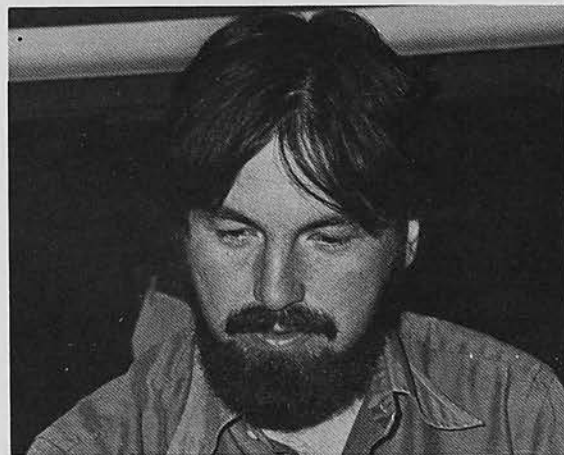
An architect/urban designer, Mr. Patrick is a member of the firm of International Design Associates in Washington, D.C. He is a design critic at Howard University. His experience encompasses project management activities in land development planning, environmental design and large scale commercial projects. He has also programmed and designed schools, recreational facilities, public improvement programs, religious and residential facilities.

R. T. SCHNADELBACH

A landscape architect, Mr. Schnadelbach is in private practice specializing in landscape architecture and ecology. He is a visiting critic and faculty member at MIT, a member of The American Society of Landscape Architects and The Accreditation Board of Schools of Landscape Architecture. Mr. Schnadelbach is concerned with environmental problems and has worked on many major public streetscapes, urban plazas and city parks.

RON SHIFFMAN

Mr. Shiffman is Associate Professor of Architecture and Urban Planning at Pratt Institute. He is Director of the Pratt Center for Community and Environmental Development, a public interest architecture and planning office serving low income and non-profit groups and organizations, and is currently coordinating and staffing a citywide coalition which is monitoring and evaluating community development activities in New York City.



Urban designers focus on 3 communities

By Frank Moring Jr.
Staff Writer

Ensey, North Birmingham and Woodlawn are in for some "consciousness raising" on community problems, according to the chairman of a team of nationally prominent urban design experts that will spend four days next month brainstorming possible solutions to these problems.

"We'll be trying to get community problems out in the open. . . it's a consciousness-raising process," Eckstut said.

Eckstut and Jules Gregory, chairman of the American Institute of Architects Regional Urban Design Assistance Team (RUDAT) program, were in Birmingham Tuesday to visit the three neighborhoods, which will be the target of intensive study Oct. 1-4 by a team of specialists under the direction of Eckstut.

In a press conference after his visit, Eckstut said his RUDAT team will seek extensive input from neighborhood residents before attempting to devise scenarios to revive the aging inner city neighborhoods. Public hearings will be held the first two days at citywide and neighborhood levels, with the goal of identifying as many neighborhood problems as possible, he said.

"In other cities we've found that a RUDAT team has been able to bring people together for the first time," Eckstut said.

On the basis of preliminary information gathered under the direction of the local AIA chapter and Eckstut, Eckstut said he found that while all three neighborhoods have similar problems as well as unique problems, each has a "model community" with a great deal of interest in solving problems. Eckstut said study there would focus on the relationship between the central business and residential districts in North Birmingham. Eckstut said he found the

greatest problems to be the relationship between residential neighborhoods and large industrial concerns located there. In Ensey the decaying central business district seemed to need the most attention, he said.

Eckstut's RUDAT team will be composed of architects, urban planners and designers, sociologists, an economist and a landscape architect and ecologist. The team will work from a central location at the UAB School of Engineering, but will spend a good deal of time in the three neighborhoods they are studying.

The object of the visit is to develop practical strategies to revitalize the neighborhoods and to generate the momentum to carry the strategies to completion. "We're not interested in pie-in-the-sky," said Gregory.

Team members donate their time under the ten-year-old program, with travel and other expenses the only costs borne locally. The local AIA chapter currently is raising funds to pay those expenses.

Urban design team to study 3 communities' problems

By Frank Moring Jr.
Staff Writer

Ensey, North Birmingham and Woodlawn will be the targets this fall of an intensive four-day study by a team of nationally prominent urban design experts who will evaluate the communities' problems and propose solutions to them.

A Regional Urban Design Assistance Team (RUDAT) headed by the American Institute of Architects (AIA) will visit the city October 1-4. Composed of experts in the fields of urban design, economics, sociology, growth management and political science, the team will work closely with residents and

leaders of the three neighborhoods to devise plans to reverse the decay of their commercial centers.

Gray Plosser, president of the Birmingham AIA chapter, announced the visit Thursday. The local chapter will coordinate the event, compiling data to be sent to the team members in advance and arranging public meetings in the target areas.

"The RUDAT team will look at particular problems in these areas," said Plosser. "The team will generate new ways of looking at these problems and hopefully come up with some ways to solve them in the future."

Plosser likened the visit to planning efforts by local architects in the 1960's that eventually led to such downtown rehabilitation projects as Birmingham Green and Morris-av. RUDAT members volunteer their services, and are reimbursed only for their travel and living expenses. They may not accept commissions resulting from the study, he said.

Mayer David Vann, who has given the program his support, said the objective of the RUDAT visit will be to do a planning sketching job of various alternatives we might take in our permanent planning process. RUDAT members will work closely with the community "at the nuts and bolts level" through the city's citizen participation structures in the neighborhoods, Vann said.

The Birmingham visit will be the first time a RUDAT team will focus on the neighborhood rather than regional problems, according to James E. Adams, local RUDAT coordinator.

"Nobody has ever tackled the problems of the decaying ring around the inner city," Adams said. "It's happening everywhere, so there will be a lot of interest in this study."

Adams said the costs of the program, including reimbursing team members and printing a final report, will be about \$15,000. Funds will be sought from private citizens, businesses, civic organizations and the city, he said.

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Urban design team checks city areas; cooperation cited

BY RON CASEY
News staff writer

If there's one thing that impressed a group of urban experts, just arrived in Birmingham to examine the problem of aging business districts in the city, it's that City Hall definitely is interested in the project.

According to Stan Eckstut, an associate professor of planning and architecture at Columbia University and leader of the group, team members got more than enough cooperation from Mayor David Vann Thursday night.

"He had scheduled 30 minutes with us," said Eckstut. "but instead he stayed for four hours. And, he was still going strong at 1:30 a.m."

The team, called a Regional Urban Design Assistance Team (RUDAT) has

been brought to the city under a program sponsored by the American Institute of Architects.

Over the next four days, the nine city experts who compose the team will be trying to find a solution to the problem of business districts in Ensey, Woodlawn and North Birmingham in hopes solutions found for those areas can be applied to other sections of the city as well.

"This morning, 10 members got their first chance to see the areas involved in their study with an early morning helicopter tour. However, said Eckstut, they've already formed some initial impressions from background information made available to them.

"ONE OF THE things we've come to realize is that these three areas are unique and individual," he said. "Our problem really is that can be applied in other areas."

Eckstut said he felt the North Birmingham area of the study would be high ringtonham where problems of high crime also are coupled with a location of several industrial sites.

"We've already asked permission for one of our urban psychologists to ride the beat with a North Birmingham police car tonight and get a better feel for the situation."

Woodlawn may have a lot of opportunities that can be developed because of the improving interstate highway system, he said. "We're very excited about that."

The area with the most potential was said to be Ensey because, "it's almost like a city within itself," said Eckstut. "It is already more prosperous than the other two."

Eckstut was a member of a RUDAT team which did a city-wide review of Atlantic City, N. J., last year. He said as a result of his team's efforts there, that city already has established several development boards and has a wide range of projects recommended by the team under way.



RUDAT MEMBERS CHECK MAP AS THEY PREPARED TO LOOK OVER CITY
... Jack Patrick, left, and Terry Schindlacher await helicopter

WOODLAWN, ENSLEY, N. BIRMINGHAM Areas to take hard look at problems

BY BILL CROWE
Newspaper writer

What do you do to turn a community around?
A community says that has been sort of on the skirts for a while. Old-time residents slowly filtering away. Property values declining. Business profits down.
Do you spend lots of money to build showplace public improvements? Do you hand together businesses and residents to get them thinking positively?
What do you do, exactly, to make things better for living and working and to be around?

COME OF THE ANSWERS, maybe, are on their way for Woodlawn, Ensley and North Birmingham.

Important meetings

If you are a resident or have a business in Ensley, North Birmingham or Woodlawn, this weekend could be a milestone in the evolution of your neighborhood. Even if you don't have a direct stake in the future of these three areas, the revitalization process which may be springing is important to every member of this community.
"Like many other urban neighborhoods, these three areas are showing signs of age. The amount of deterioration will spread.
To counter this almost universal problem of cities, the American Institute of Architects has established a program to help local citizens find solutions to their particular problems. The experts on the "Regional-Urban Design Assistance Team" (RUDAT) are volunteers who are reimbursed only for travel and expenses. Their collective advice would be prohibitively expensive if it had to be bought on the open market.
Some RUDAT members have already visited the three areas, but the most important part of the effort takes a meeting will be held in each area so that concerned citizens can tell RUDAT what they think the future of their areas should be.
These views will be combined with other information to produce realistic solutions to the problems of each area. If you care about the future of any of these areas, you should be there.
The following localities at 9 a.m. Saturday and (tell RUDAT) what you think: Woodlawn meeting will be at the North Birmingham Community Center, the North Birmingham Methodist Church, the North Birmingham Baptist Church, and the Ensley Methodist Church.
The RUDAT report will be presented at 8:15 p.m. Monday in the UAB engineering building auditorium.

of residential and business interests. North Birmingham now is mostly industrial in its outlook. And Ensley is just like a small town in its own right."
THE THING WILL begin Friday night, Oct. 1, with team members talking with city officials and others who have struggled for years with the problem of the communities.
Then, Saturday morning, they'll get an careful "town hall" public hearings in each of the communities.
The team will then retire with their reports and impressions and expertise to a weekend of work, trying to fit all the pieces together.
A large room at the Engineering Building on the University of Alabama in Birmingham campus will become what Eckstut calls a "goldfish bowl" of work team members sweating through their study while whoever wants to drop by can observe and get a piece of the action.

THEN, THE FOLLOWING Monday night, the team will lay down a full report of their findings and suggestions for City Council, residents and others to judge on their own terms.
The report will be "very specific recommendations" about what needs to happen in Woodlawn, North Birmingham and Ensley to make them better places. The combined outlooks of sociology, urban planning, economics, architecture and landscaping will be reflected, according to the idea of the project.
Then the team will depart—perhaps to return later for an update—and the real test of the program will begin, according to Gray Ploster, president of the local AIA chapter and a spokesman for RUDAT at Birmingham.
"What we do with what they give us is the key to the whole project," said Ploster. "This will give us ideas to work with for years to come."
Birmingham Mayor David Vann, who has enthusiastically adopted the program, has pointed out that plans for the three communities can be extended to other similar neighborhoods in the city. That, indeed, was a strong element in the choice of the target neighborhoods.
Turning things around, making things better, and whether that's what all the RUDAT sweat brings, will be the bottom line.

Business districts' aging problem study by experts to start

It's almost like the day before the big game.
The players should be arriving shortly and the coach perhaps with the first his arm, will land at the airport this afternoon.
Except that in this case, the only headgear required is an active imagination and the popliteal muscles will be replaced by the flow of graphic pens on legal pad.
Starting Friday, it's a nice nationally-known urban experts vs. the complex-ed problems of Birmingham's aging business districts.
UNDER A program sponsored by the American Institute of Architects, Operation New Birmingham and The Center for Urban Studies at UAB, the experts will be flying out the best efforts toward fixing out the best approach to take for the revitalization of the Ensley, Woodlawn and North Birmingham business areas.
The team of experts, called a Regional Urban Design Assistance Team (RUDAT), have been asked to come up with a game plan for those areas in which they will give citizens a key to solving the problems.
The team will begin its efforts Friday with a helicopter tour of the city before meeting with representatives of various organizations involved and starting their first strategy sessions.
Saturday, before beginning a series of public sessions, the experts will meet with citizens to form working teams in the Woodlawn community, Ensley Baptist Church and Carraway Methodist Medical Center.
Officials say the town meetings could be the most crucial part of the program because without citizen input, the experts won't get a first-hand report about what's wrong with the communities.

SUNDAY WILL BE an all-day planning session before the team members present their final report Monday night at 8:15 p.m. in the Engineering Building auditorium of UAB.
The RUDAT program is being carried on at no expense to the city and architects, urban planners, economists and public officials have proven successful in the future of the small business in the big city. Are you looking for a whole range set of guidelines to tell them what directions to take in the next several years.

3 neighborhoods preparing for visit of urban experts

Residents of Ensley, North Birmingham and Woodlawn are preparing for a four-day visit by a team of nationally prominent urban design experts that will spend the weekend brainstorming ways to revitalize the three neighborhoods.
At "town meetings" Saturday morning, residents of the three areas will have an opportunity to address members of a "Regional-Urban Design Assistance Team" (RUDAT) about community problems. Team members will then incorporate the neighborhood input into a report outlining practical ways these problems can be solved.
The RUDAT visit is part of a ten-year-old program sponsored by the American Institute of Architects (AIA) that brings experts in solving urban problems to an area for a week-long team solving, the local AIA chapter, sponsored by the local AIA chapter, the team input into a report outlining practical ways these problems can be solved.
According to the local AIA chapter, the meetings are "essential" to the team's goal to develop meaningful solutions and plans. The meeting will be held at 9 a.m. Saturday in each of the neighborhoods.
The Woodlawn meeting will be at the Woodlawn Community Center, North Birmingham residents can air their views in the auditorium of Carraway Methodist Medical Center and the Ensley meeting will be at Ensley Baptist Church.
In addition to the town meetings, team members will spend Friday inspecting the three neighborhoods by air and bus and hearing presentations from various civic organizations and government agencies. They will spend the balance of their stay thrashing out solutions to problems in Birmingham from a "war room" in the Ensley building.
The team will consist of architecture and engineering professors from the University of Alabama at Birmingham. At 8:15 p.m. Monday the public in the UAB engineering building auditorium will present its report to the team.
The team will consist of architecture and planning professor of architecture and former director of the Urban Design Group of the Department of City Planning at New York University, Charles Boyer, an economist and consultant for the Economic Development Institute of the World Bank, Donald Conway, an environmental psychologist from the University of Ohio, chairman of an urban development committee, John J. Desmond Jr., an urban design psychologist from the University of Cincinnati, Jack Patrick, an urban design psychologist from Adelphi, and architect and landscape architect, H. R. T. Schmalebach, a landscape architect from Philadelphia, Penn., and Ron Shifman, director of the Pratt Center for Community and Environmental Development in Brooklyn, N.Y.
The team will be assisted by local AIA members and students from the school of architecture at Auburn University. Team members donate their time, and are reimbursed only for travel and expenses.

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sailing rough waters

A group of Birmingham area architects are in midstream as regards their most time-consuming volunteer service since producing the Design for Progress for downtown, 15 years ago. They have put together plans for an early October visit by several other volunteers, called a Regional/Urban Design Assistance Team.

These persons are coming to Birmingham from various parts of the nation to spend four days examining three neighborhoods—North Birmingham, Ensley and Woodlawn—with microscopic closeness. Then they will suggest a "plan for planning"; or, ways to revitalize these areas as far as living, business, shopping, community pride and general improvements are concerned.

The intentions of all involved seem honorable. Their commitment is genuine. Gray Plosser, who heads the local architects' organization, has 8-10 committees working to prepare for the visit. Jim Adams is chairman of the project. Other mainstays are Donald Morrison, the original chairman, and Emory Kirkwood. "It's the biggest single effort on our part since the Design for Progress, and in some ways just as important," says Plosser.

Both parties—the hosts and the visitors—are giving their time, believing that such a study is worth their time. A budget, estimated at \$10,000, is involved to the extent of paying the expenses of the visitors, and paying for any necessary materials and the final, published report of the R/UDAT team. The City of Birmingham has pledged \$5,000 to the budget. Mayor David Vann calls the visit "an imaginative opportunity . . . that may fit in with the city's planning."

But the architects have hit rough water with increasing frequency. There

has been criticism—some of it from within their own ranks—over the selected study areas, over the question of so-called "outside experts," and over the prospect of having another unimplemented report gathering dust somewhere. Morrison resigned the chairmanship when Vann, in exchange for his verbal and financial endorsement, "pre-empted anything beyond the city limits."

As an attorney, controversial citizen-activist and member of the City Council, Vann always envisioned a larger Birmingham. He conceived the One Great City legislation, which failed. More recently he has tried annexing various unincorporated areas. But successful votes have been overturned by the courts, on appeal. In contrast to his established position, however, he insisted last Summer that no one who lived outside the city limits be allowed on Birmingham's teams to the Youth Games. Plosser says that Vann did not "unduly" influence this project; that the three locations had been chosen before he was approached for support and money.

Initially, the architects had wanted a regional approach, including studies of unincorporated areas, satellite towns, the affluent sections as well as the inner city. But the absence of an umbrella governmental structure, plus the politics of the various municipalities, forced them away from this concept. Instead, the architects recommended what Plosser calls "neighborhood conservation." He asserts, "Our thrust has nothing to do with the fact that they are in the city."

Plosser defends the program as having positive implications and addressing a problem that, in fact, is countywide in scope; that of declining

commerce and living within certain neighborhoods. He foresees the possible applications as bridging Birmingham's boundaries in an economic way, which is stronger than even politics. The study, he maintains, does not ignore any given part of the overall problem.

Whether similar kinds of professionals from within the Birmingham family could make such a study is purely a matter of opinion. Plosser doesn't think so. Such expertise, he says, is "not necessarily" available locally, with the broad range of experience in urban problems as the members will have. Neither will the visitors run the risk of having particular local interests. They should examine us with total objectivity.

To prevent the final report, as so many others, from lying idle somewhere, the architects have formed a followup committee. They will pursue the matter, but Plosser stresses, not to the point of doing free work for the city.

Undoubtedly, the projected plans suit Vann politically. For a minimum cost, he gains points with three large sections of voters, and creates new links to the individual neighborhood meetings which he initiated. The various Citizen Participation Committees also become involved.

It will be months, perhaps a few years, before the value of the forthcoming "plan for planning" can be assessed. It probably will contain visionary, creative proposals, which *might not seem practical*. Not too long ago, however, neither did a Civic Center nor a Birmingham Green seem practical. Once again, we owe our architects a vote of support. Despite the rough water, they at least were willing to set sail.



"These shopping centers have been built and they've taken the business away."

"Our dream is a Woodlawn beautified and cleaned up, with storefronts neat and attractive, ample parking available, and a wide range of businesses so that people could shop in convenience and safety. We want Woodlawn to be competitive with other areas of town in attracting new businesses, office buildings and residents."

"When you apply building codes that were written for new housing, it works a hardship to supply housing for many of our people that cannot pay \$150.00 and better per month."

"We have no open community space or area for our elderly men to sit, talk, whittle, and play checkers."

"This community needs help. It has the history and the love of the old people but the young people are just moving away."