

U.D.A.T. Report
GILBERT



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1985



The Mayor and Town Council of Gilbert:

We are pleased to have been invited to come to Gilbert and work with some of your residents and the Rio Salado Chapter of the American Institute of Architects. We are grateful for the hospitality afforded us and the sincere and capable efforts of the Town's staff in assisting our work.

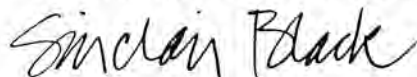
Gilbert is a uniquely situated community, with an opportunity that you have recognized to become one of the most desirable middle-sized cities in the country. To achieve what is possible, however, will require not only foresight, but a long term commitment to excellence by both your officials and citizens. Considerable hard work lies ahead, and many disappointments along the way will frustrate both your efforts and your supporters.

Achieving quality urban design is as much a carefully constructed process as it is a specific plan. If the goals are clear and the objectives meaningful, a good plan, though often modified, will survive. The plan itself is a very crucial element to achieving quality -- not so much as a specific drawing, but rather as a set of guiding principles that will accommodate unforeseen needs and even errors; yet will still provide the framework that will ultimately achieve the desired results over the long term.

The commitment necessary to create a community of distinctive quality must span over decades. It is not something to be done today and forgotten about tomorrow. It is a continuous process -- requiring monitoring and adjustment. Refinement and detailed studies will necessitate many hundreds of hours of professional and community thought. But the goal is achievable, and it is worth it.

We wish you every success in this noble undertaking.

For the Members of the Gilbert/Urban Design Assistance Team,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Sinclair Black".

Sinclair Black, FAIA

February 5, 1985

SB:kl

PURPOSE

The Regional/Urban Design Assistance Team (R/UDAT) is a public service program developed by the American Institute of Architects (AIA). The process typically begins when a local government, a community organization, or an AIA Chapter recognizes a local urban design or community planning issue. Upon invitation by the community, the AIA organizes and arranges to field a team of specialists and experts drawn from throughout the nation. This normally results in an intensive four day workshop at the locality in question. Since the first R/UDAT in 1967, more than 100 teams have been selected and dispatched.

The Gilbert/UDAT was initiated by the east valley based Rio Salado Chapter of the AIA. Its members felt that as professionals, they should contribute as an organization toward the general welfare of the built environment. A major community concern is the current rapid population growth, which appears to be outpacing the local government's capabilities to plan and direct. The acute situation in Gilbert seemed to present a significant opportunity for producing long range benefits. An initial meeting in the spring of 1984 between city officials and Rio Salado Chapter representatives resulted in an agreement to pursue the G/UDAT concept.

Since Gilbert was about to embark on a major update of its General Plan, there was some urgency in getting the R/UDAT under way. If the Gilbert/UDAT study could be accomplished in a timely manner, some of the results might be incorporated into the long range master plan. In order to minimize the lead time for organization of the effort, the RSC/AIA chapter decided to manage the process locally, following the guidelines established by the national organization.

The Chapter believed that the results of the Gilbert/UDAT would raise the level of awareness of public issues that will be facing the community. If the public could understand and perceive alternatives of what Gilbert could be like in 20 or 30 years; perhaps appropriate immediate actions and activities could be stimulated by the citizens of Gilbert.

11-8546 11/11/84 GAGS

GILBERT/URBAN DESIGN ASSISTANCE TEAM

National Team Members

Thomas Laging, AIA; Lincoln, Nebraska
Charles Rapp, ASLA; San Clemente, California
Sinclair Black, FAIA; Austin, Texas
Alfred Dewey Jensen, PhD, Flagstaff
Tim McGinty, Architect, Scottsdale

Local Team Members

Russell Weymiller, AIA, Gilbert
Michael Fifield, AIA, AICP, Tempe
James Abell, AIA, Tempe
Bruce Kimball, AIA, Phoenix

Student Team Members - Department of Architecture
Arizona State University

Craig Booth	Ilija Mosscrop
Susan Charnetsky	Lesley Partch
Curtis Clark	Richie Poole
Vincent Dibella	Greg Schouten
Paul Glosniak	Debbie Shideler
Susan Johnson	Mario Stellino
Alan Kenson	Todd Voelker
Cordell Lietz	Jeff Sinarjo

Facilitator & Editor

Roger Schluntz, AIA

Steering Committee - Rio Salado Chapter
American Institute of Architects

Members:

Alan Turley, AIA, Chair
Jesse McDowell, AIA
Eric Paul, AIA
David Scheatzle, AIA

Community Representatives:

Elaine Morrison
Bradley Barrett
John Ellingson
Paul Huston
Kent Cooper

Town of Gilbert

L.J. Reed, Mayor
Arlon Peterson, Vice Mayor

Council Members

Robert Lowry
Al Jenkins
Gary McCleve
Rob McCabe
John Whitmer

Planning & Zoning Commission

Bradley Barrett, Chairman
Victor McCleve
Gary Bulechek
Kenneth Simkins

Consultants For The Gilbert General Plan

BRW, Inc., Phoenix
°John McNamara, AIA, AICP
°Rick Pilgrim, PE
°Rich Unger, AICP

Town Staff

Kent Cooper, Town Manager
Kevin Smith, Economic Development
Rick Merritt, Director of Planning
Glen Van Nimwegen, Assistant Planner

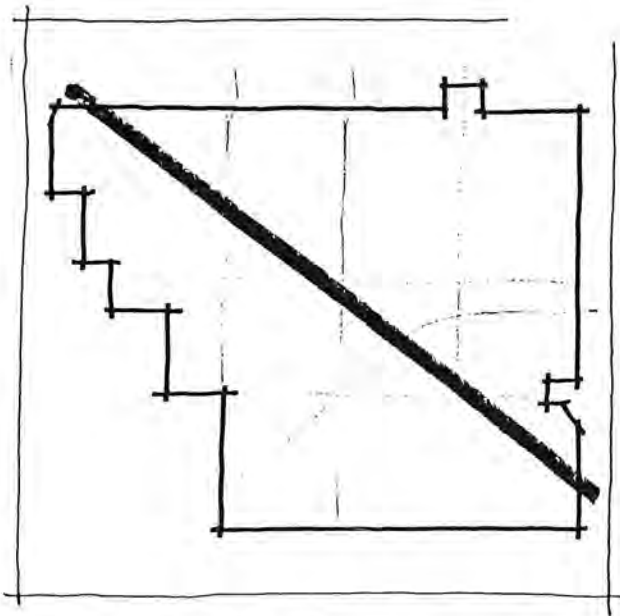
Funding Sponsors

Special thanks are also due to the Gilbert Public Schools for their support and use of facilities, and to Richard Morrison for providing the team aerial reconnaissance. Also, to Kari Lillis for manuscript typing and Kevin Garey for booklet layout.

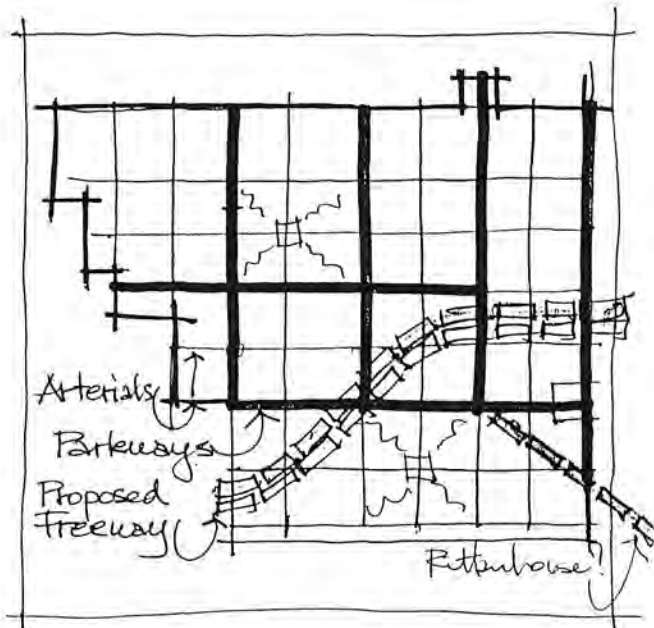
Continental Homes
Val Vista Lakes Development
Wolfswinkel Group
Grand Canyon State Bank
American Investments, Inc.
McCleve Construction Company
Sierra Building Corporation
Valley National Bank
Salt River Project

SUMMARY REPORT
GILBERT/URBAN DESIGN ASSISTANCE TEAM
GILBERT, ARIZONA

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Importance of the rail road.



Important streets / potential paths.

HISTORY

The original settlers of what was to become Gilbert found brush and desert when they first appeared in the 1890's. According to legislation proposed by Abraham Lincoln and passed by Congress three decades earlier, federally owned land could be acquired by citizens in plots of 160 acres: provided those individuals not only improved the land by clearing, tilling, and building upon it, but also remained on it for a period of five years. After five years of continual occupation, the land passed from federal to private ownership; the new owner could sell or remain, as he chose.

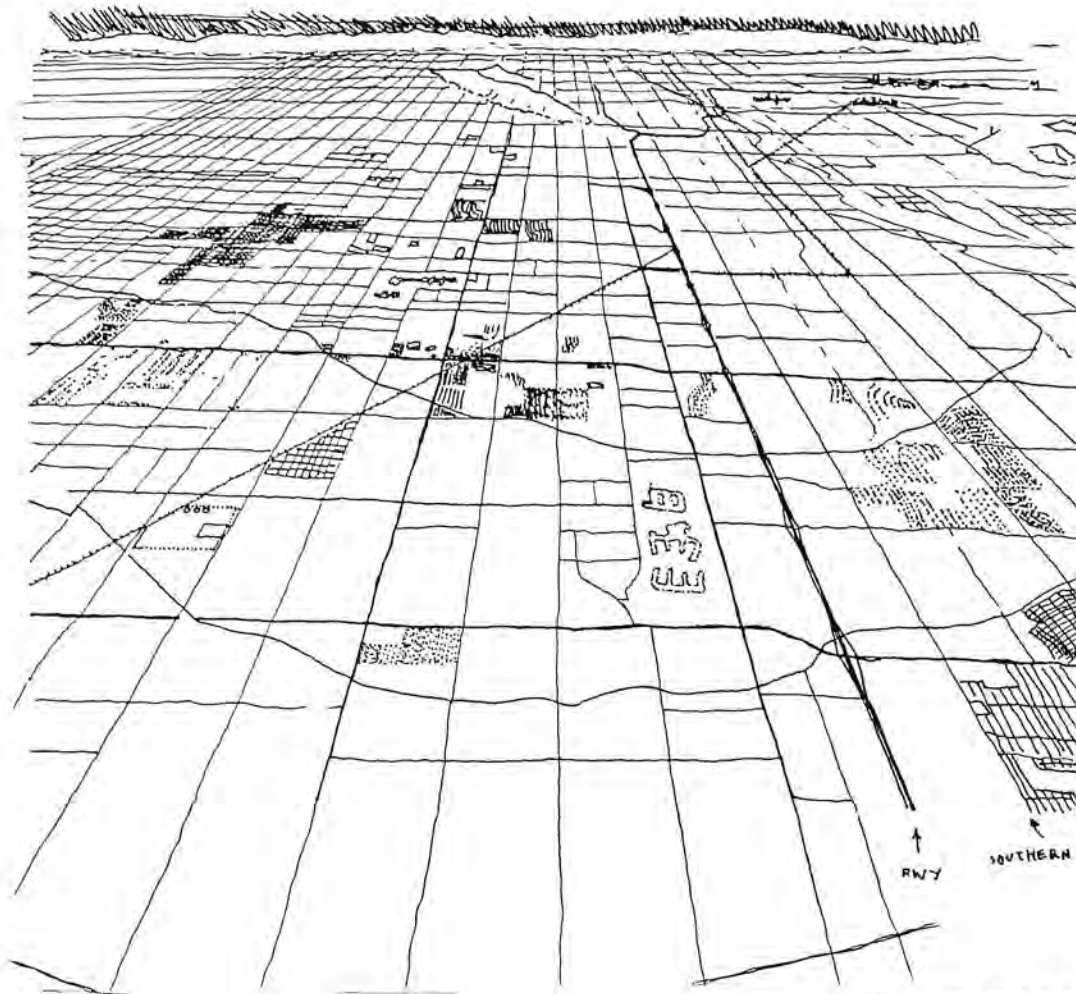
Between 1896 and 1899 six homesteads were claimed in an area of southern Arizona, one by William M. ("Bobby") Gilbert. In 1902 the Arizona Eastern Railway Company (later to become part of the Southern Pacific) constructed a main line from Phoenix to Florence and Ray. The short spur, required to ship the crops of farmers on this main line, ended on Mr. Gilbert's land and this "rails' end" soon came to be called Gilbert.

From the beginning, one or another form of irrigation had to be employed by the farmers in the vicinity of the rails' end. In 1911 Roosevelt Dam was completed. Now that a large amount of water was consistently available, the town of Gilbert began to take shape. Its grocery store, blacksmith shop, lumber yard, pharmacy, and creamery were the center for dairy farming and alfalfa growing.

In 1920 Gilbert was incorporated. The Town could boast of three churches, both an elementary and high school, a weekly newspaper, a theatre, and even telephone service. From this foundation, by slow but relatively steady growth, emerged the present community of Gilbert.

Through the process of annexation, the community has recently assumed the responsibility for the development of a fifty-four square mile area -- roughly extending from Baseline Road on the north to Germann Road on the south and from Power Road on the east to Arizona Avenue on the west.

The original rails' end at Gilbert came about by "happy accident." The pace of life allowed changes to occur incrementally over a long period of time. "Planning" was a relatively uncomplicated process, and needed adaptations could usually be accommodated. This is no longer possible today. The responsibilities, complexities, and the opportunities are too great.



Gilbert today.

CURRENT DEVELOPMENT ACTIVITIES, PLANS & GOALS

Because of the vast discrepancy between its physical size and its present population, the Town of Gilbert faces considerable difficulties in achieving the financial resources necessary to undertake detailed comprehensive planning. It appears, however, that the town is represented by qualified elected and appointed officials, with a first-rate management and planning staff. As with any rapidly growing area, the ability to keep pace with development proposals severely taxes the resources of the town staff, and makes extremely difficult any rational process for long-range planning.

The first general plan for Gilbert was prepared by William Walton Associates and adopted in February 1981. Last year, BRW, Inc., a Phoenix planning firm, was contracted by the city to develop an up-dated general plan for the Gilbert Planning Area. This project is to be completed for council consideration and adoption in June, 1985.

A comprehensive waste water collection and treatment plan was adopted in August, 1984. The Town also participates in the Maricopa Association of Governments (M.A.G.). The East Valley Transportation Plan is currently under consideration and adoption is expected in March, 1985. The M.A.G. is also developing a long range mass transit plan for metropolitan area.

The Water Supply & Resource Study by John Carollo, Engineers, (August, 1984) similarly is under final consideration; with the town anticipating adoption early 1985.

A recent market study has indicated a potential demand of 9200 dwelling units/year in the Gilbert Planning Area. Indicative of the developer response to this need are three very large (each approximately 800 acres) Planned Area Developments: The Islands, Val Vista Lakes, and Neely Farms; all currently in the development process. Also well advanced in the planning state is Fiesta Tech Center, south of Baseline to Guadalupe between Arizona Avenue and the Chandler Railroad Spur (about 320 acres total) -- is an industrial, commercial, and multi-family mixed use area.

The current population of the "old" Gilbert incorporated town is approximately 10,500 people; an estimated 12,500 people live in the 54 square mile Gilbert Planning Area. Population projections for the next 30 to 40 years range from a total of 120,000 up to 378,000 residents.

PROSPECTS & ALTERNATIVES

Gilbert is perhaps unique among American towns. Situated adjacent to the rapidly growing area of greater Phoenix few, if any, doubt that the tremendous pressures for growth will result in vast changes to Gilbert over the next three or four decades. With an apparent readily available supply of water and few geological or other barriers to development, the flat acreages of cropland perhaps pose the fewest restrictions on development in any of the expanding metropolitan suburbs. The further extension of the Superstition Freeway, burgeoning job opportunities in the adjacent towns of Mesa and Chandler, and the proposed southern loop expressway each suggest that the 54 square mile planning area of Gilbert will receive considerable attention from those interested in residential and accompanying commercial building. Rapidly escalating land values confirm what is also apparent on the horizon -- a massive infusion of investment capital that will precipitate what was described to the G/UDAT team as the "impending tidal wave of development."



Existing Conditions: Downtown Gilbert 1985.

The G/UDAT study is an attempt to convincingly demonstrate that the people of Gilbert -- both current and future residents -- do have choices about the form and quality of the resulting city. While some people and common wisdom may often convey an attitude of resignation to the forces of development -- towns are planned -- and positive directions can be charted.

Nothing happens, good or bad, unless someone, at some specific time, makes a decision. Shaping the quality and coordination of those decisions -- directed toward definable and realizable community goals -- is the purpose of planning. Public policies must be coordinated with private interests in achieving common objectives. Urban design attempts to go one important step further; by understanding and incorporating elements that effect the "form" of the town we begin to visualize what the resulting alternatives may be. These alternatives can then be studied, compared, and often modified.

For example, we can all envision a future that consists of mile upon mile of undifferentiated strip development along major arterials. Commercial outlets appear to be slightly rundown, signs blatantly and unsuccessfully compete for attention, a motley collection of overhead wires effectively eliminate a sense of the sky and horizon, attempts at landscaping are feeble and for the most part unkempt, and the major activity is that provided by automobiles moving along the street and turning left against the traffic into parking lots that front the buildings. This is certainly a pedestrians no-man's land. There exists no interest, no excitement, no sense of urbanity or community.

The vision of the future of the residential areas are better, but not much. While each house may be carefully attended and appropriately sited, there exists a sameness so incessant as to suggest a collective repression of individual initiative. There are no real choices here -- no diversity, nothing unexpected; just houses -- not homes, not neighborhoods, not cities.

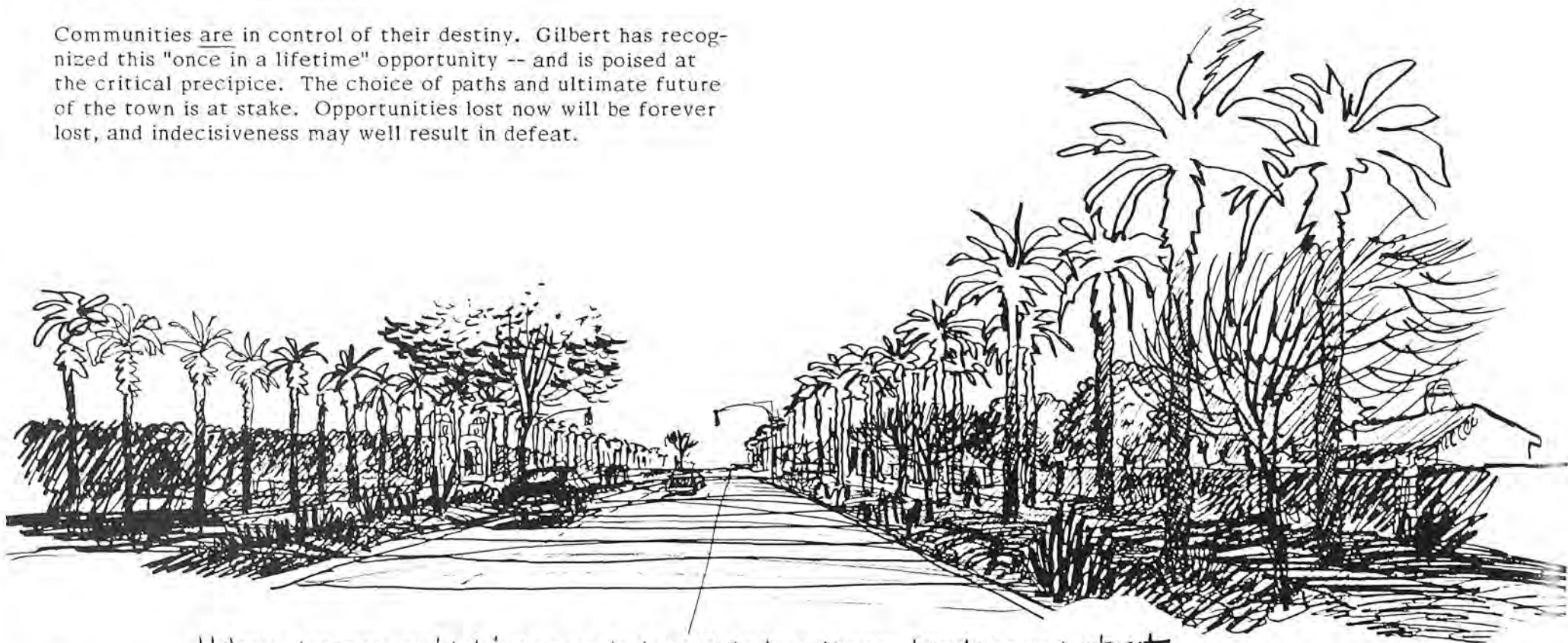
Other alternatives are possible. There could be a time, before all the concrete is placed, when the people suggest that they want something better -much better. Retail and service establishments could be grouped to accommodate the neighborhoods that they are located in -people could walk from one shop to another, or sit in a courtyard and watch other shoppers and children. Each neighborhood center could have its own identity and unique features. There could be a variety of styles of houses and lots in the neighborhoods -- providing homeowner's a choice and visual interest. Streets could be harmoniously landscaped, signs controlled. A network of parks, paths and trails could connect the diverse elements of the town successfully -- schools, shopping areas, recreation centers, and the neighborhoods themselves.



This alternative is achievable! In fact, with but a little foresight, the people can decide that they want a place to live equal or better in all aspects than other cities of a similar size and setting. Gilbert is in a position to have this opportunity -- to begin to shape a future that will not only reinforce the values and desires of its townspeople but to create a "sense of place" distinctive from all other cities and the envy of its neighboring communities.

To achieve all that Gilbert might become, many factors are obviously necessary. But unless the public is fully informed of the alternatives and committed to pursuing a path that will lead toward excellence, positive results will not be achieved. All successful towns have one commonality -- an educated and interested electorate. The public interest is seen to be of equal importance to private ownership and wealth accumulation. Usually these communities are also blessed with distinguished public and private leadership who have a faith in the future, and a commitment to future generations.

Communities are in control of their destiny. Gilbert has recognized this "once in a lifetime" opportunity -- and is poised at the critical precipice. The choice of paths and ultimate future of the town is at stake. Opportunities lost now will be forever lost, and indecisiveness may well result in defeat.



PRECEDENTS & COMPARISONS

With its current 54 square mile planning area, Gilbert has reached a geographical size surpassing many mature cities. A few comparisons may help demonstrate the magnitude of the task of planning and urban design for this area:

<u>Geographical Entity</u>	<u>Area In Square Miles</u>	<u>Approximate Current Population</u>
Gilbert Planning Area	54	12,500
San Francisco	45	716,000
District of Columbia (Washington)	69	756,000
Manhattan, NY	22	1,525,000
The Combined Burroughs of London, Westminster and Kensington & Chelsea	14	414,000
Tempe, Arizona	39	120,000

While Gilbert may expect unprecedented population growth, the city to be is not a "new town" in the traditional planning sense. Unlike Irvine, California; or Reston, Virginia; Gilbert has many, not one, property owners. And unlike the new towns of France and Great Britain, there is no central planning authority that can authorize and designate housing, places of employment, infra-structure, and open space. The urban design task facing Gilbert is typical of the American West, where local government must work with private investment interests to direct and shape growth. While much more complicated and perhaps cumbersome, planning is not impossible.

Many towns, if not most, have fallen far short of their potential. There are, however, several notable examples in American planning history that suggest towns can be different, as well as better, as a result of planning foresight. The impact of good decisions made early in the development process should not be underestimated.

Cities that today have notable park systems (such as Minneapolis, Boston, Washington DC, San Francisco, and New York) each accepted an early vision far beyond what most people probably appreciated at the time of enactment. Today, these parks provide a major element of the overall quality of life in these cities.

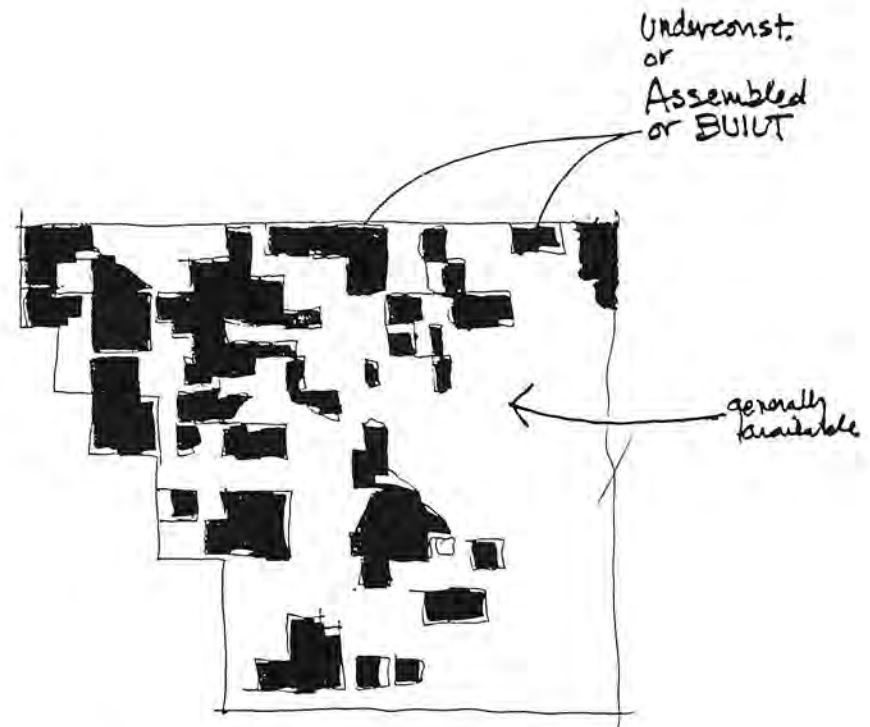
For example, it is hard to imagine Manhattan without Central Park, yet in 1851 setting aside this acreage -- several miles from the built up area, seemed to many an incredible waste of public money.

Another remarkable design insight was developed in 1929 for the plan of Radburn, New Jersey. The concept assumed that automobile and pedestrian traffic could be totally separated by carefully organizing neighborhoods and street patterns. This idea did not entail a commitment to expensive public works projects. But the resulting parks and the ability of children to bicycle or walk safely to school is still acknowledged as a model much emulated in American and British urban planning.

Most are also aware of the impact that effective sign ordinances may have on the visual image and perceived quality of a town. Both Carmel, California and Scottsdale are known and respected nationally for their foresight and determination in controlling visual chaos. The lack of such consciousness can be readily appreciated by driving down any major arterial in most any city, including Phoenix and Mesa.

Likewise, the care given to the design and control of our public rights of way can have an enormous impact on one's judgement of the quality of a community or neighborhood. In the early part of this century the "City Beautiful" movement gave great emphasis to the design of boulevards and parkways. Sometimes we take these examples of careful planning for granted, and do not appreciate that years ago someone made an important choice. The entrance of the Biltmore Resort did not happen by chance.

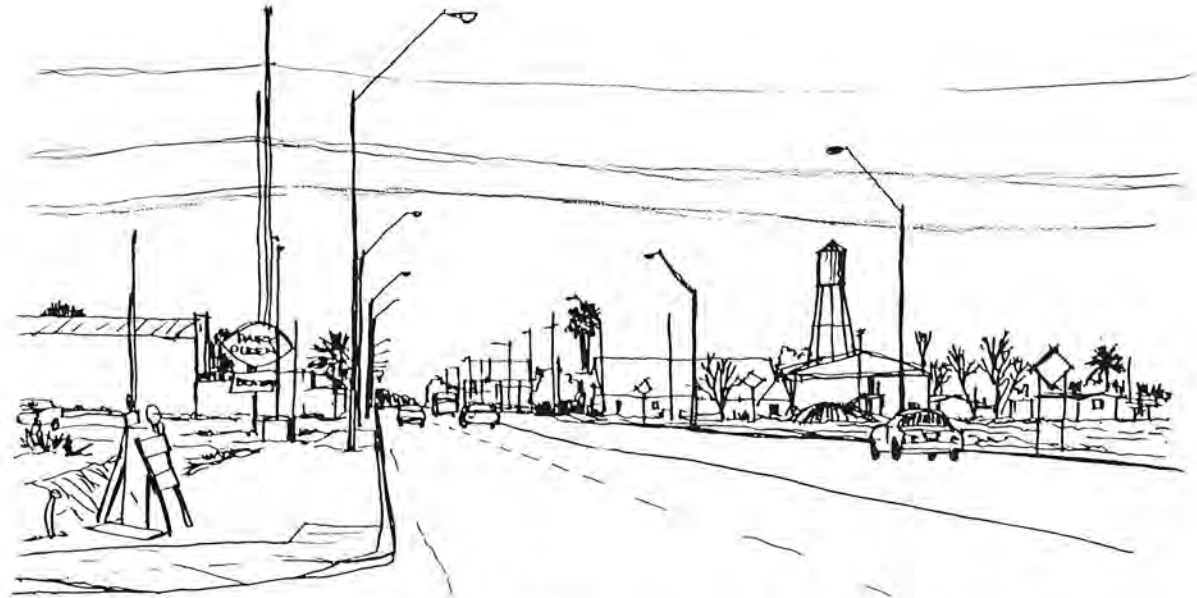
One of the biggest visual problems of almost all American cities are overhead wires. While more expensive initially, the lower maintenance costs and the increased property values resulting from underground wiring more than offset any first cost differential.



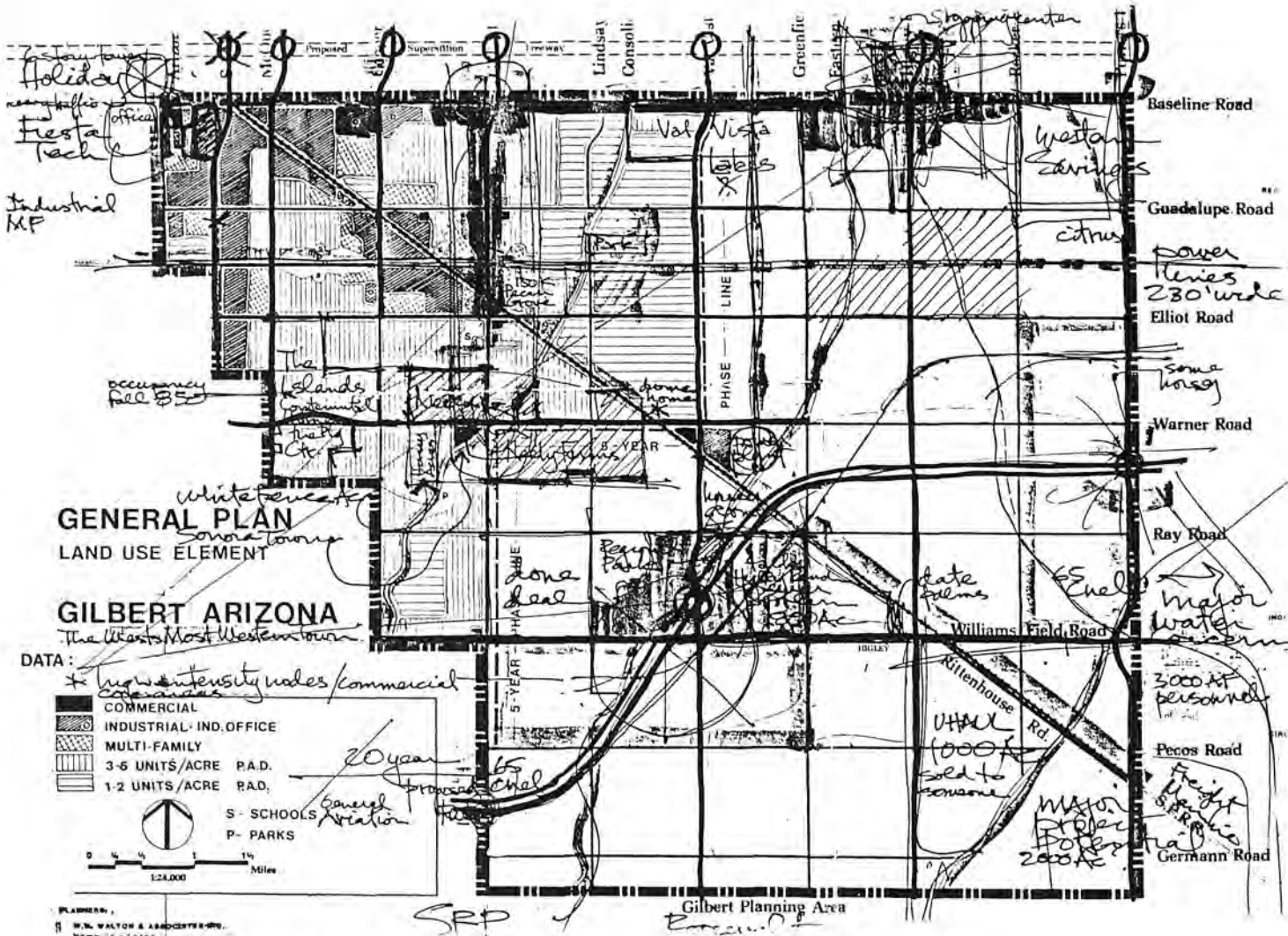
Current conditions

After development is complete, the cost of burying wires often becomes prohibitive. But with early planning and commitment, the resulting blemishes could be readily avoided. Where cities have accepted this design, development and stewardship of the public trust, a sense of community achievement, pride, and well being are readily conveyed to resident and visitor alike.

In towns that communicate a healthy environment and quality, the streets and highways are always well landscaped and tended. These public spaces belong to the people, and should be treated as front yards, and not as service alleys. Gilbert has a unique opportunity to establish a level of expectancy for the quality that it desires in its neighborhoods. These expressions of commitments and subsequent ordinances are necessary now.



Existing conditions: Gilbert Road, views toward downtown 1989.



Existing conditions: Inventory of the character of Gilbert done at the beginning of the U. D. A. T. visit.

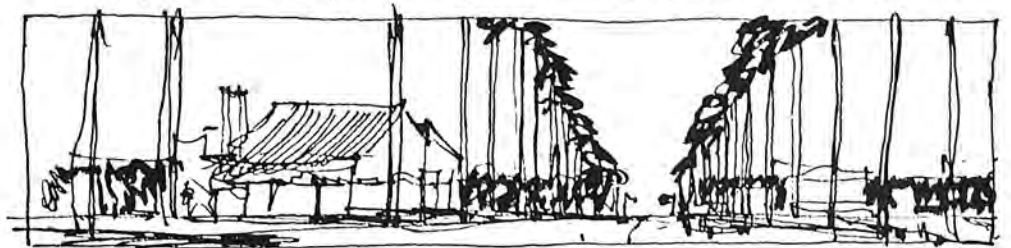
ISSUES OF URBAN FORM

In developing a strong sense of "place," two types of needs are apparent. The first group relate to the establishment of concepts that will provide for a strong sense of urban form for Gilbert. These concerns develop an identity for Gilbert -- one that will convey to all that it is a place different from Tempe, Chandler, or Mesa; and not just a continuation.

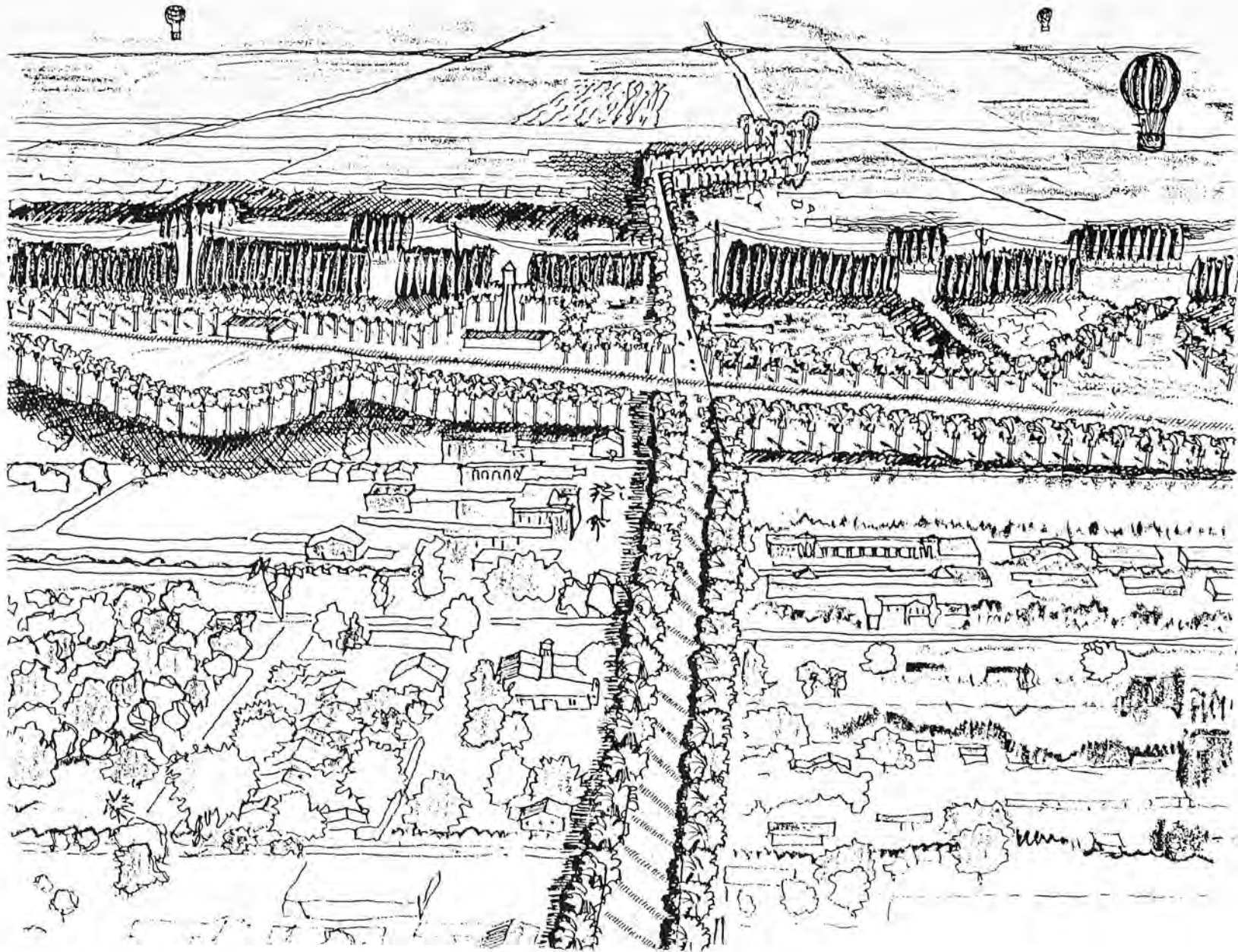
The second set of issues focus on opportunities to enhance specific sites, "edges," or views. Vistas can be carefully controlled or developed, and visual landmarks constructed in appropriate locations. The character of specific streets or boulevards can be established, such that a memorable "sense of place" will result.

In Gilbert the basic undifferentiated topography of the landscape accentuates the importance of almost any vertical element. On a clear day, the distant mountain ranges seem to move closer, and provide a means of orientation. In most neighborhoods, however, typical one and two story developments will be sufficient to disrupt this visual relationship, adding to the sense of monotony so pervasive in other Valley communities. New form giving elements must be established.

Two overriding concerns of urban design are (1) the form of the built-environment and (2) how people use the environment. These are difficult tasks to accomplish together in a highly satisfactory manner. In some cities, the process has been evolutionary, literally developed and refined over centuries. The level of difficulty in achieving desired results can best be measured, perhaps, by how few instances of outstanding successes that can be counted, particularly with newly developed areas. In the following sections the team demonstrates how Gilbert might be organized to accommodate growth while preserving and enhancing aesthetic goals.



"Enhancing the Edges"



A landscaping policy will help create memorable urban form.

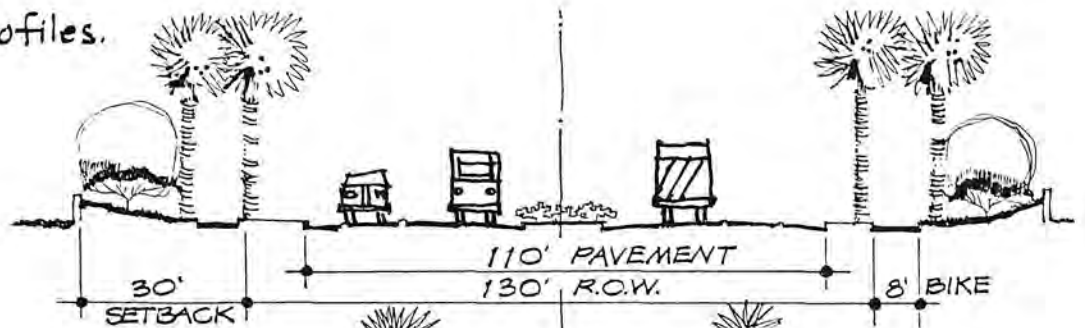
DESIGN STRATEGIES - TRANSPORTATION

The Gilbert/UDAT members recognize the necessity of basing future plans on existing patterns, rather than restructuring the basic systems already evident. There remain, however, numerous options of how the future urban form can be shaped and growth directed.

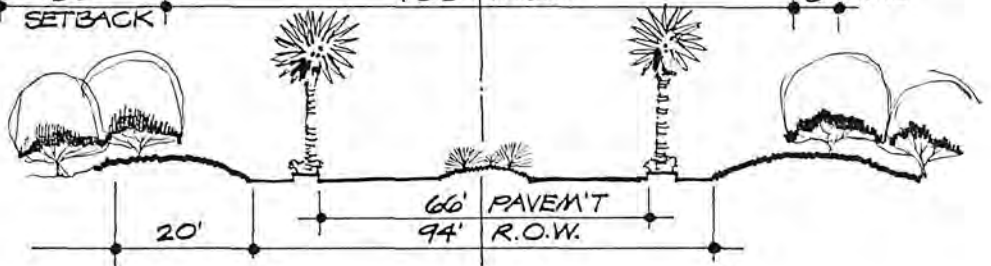
Two major elements effect the image of a community: the first and most persistent is the street pattern; the second, which will be discussed at some length in the next section of this report, is the open space network. Together, these elements, once defined, provide the essential keys for all future development and the subsequent urban form. The transportation and open space systems must be mutually responsive, but for the purposes of introducing the design, concepts will be approached first as distinct issues.

Recommended street landscape profiles.

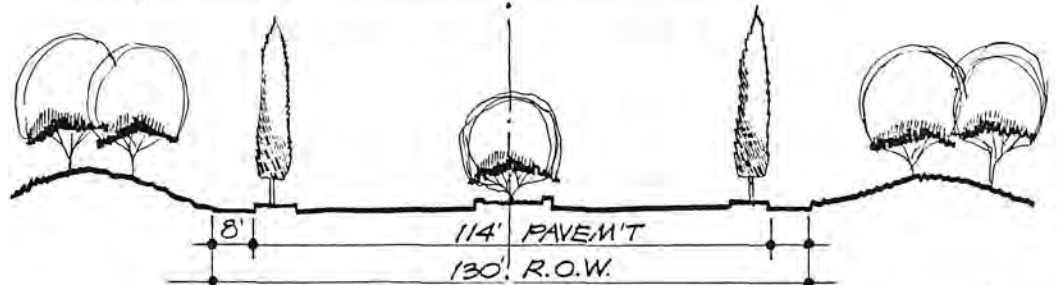
HIGH SPEED
ARTERIAL

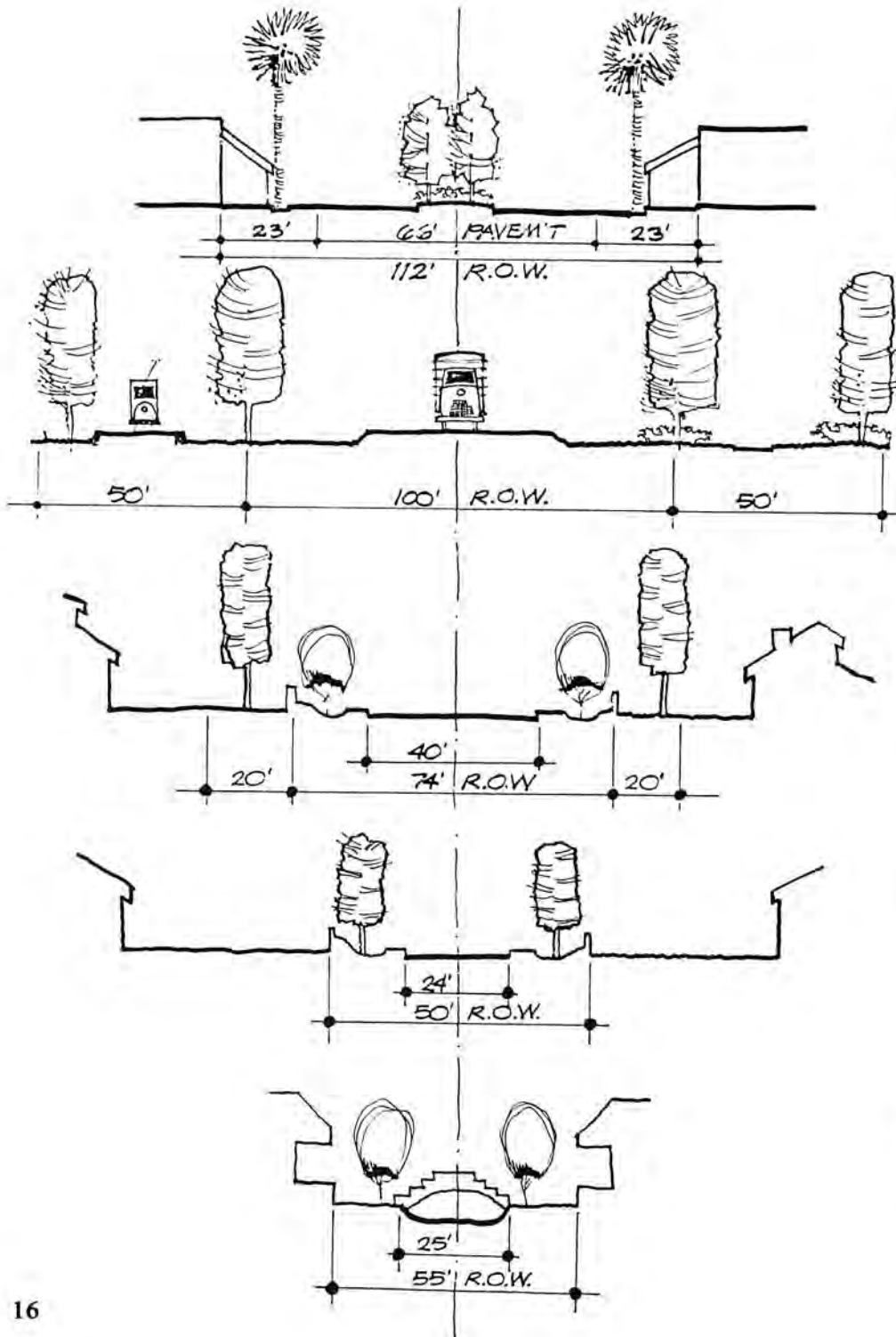


COMMERCIAL
COLLECTOR



RESIDENTIAL
BOULEVARD





URBAN
COMMERCIAL

RAIL & LINEAR
PARKLANDS

LOCAL
RESIDENTIAL
STREET

RESIDENTIAL

RECREATIONAL
WATERWAY

Circulation Systems & Imageability

Like most midwest and many western communities, the basic road system of Gilbert follows precisely a one-mile grid pattern laid out along the cardinal points. These roads will, in all likelihood, become the major service arterials, a trend already convincingly established in Mesa, Tempe, Phoenix and Scottsdale.

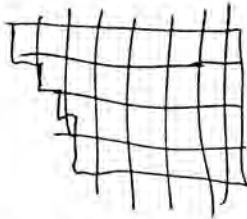
To discourage through traffic in much of the metropolitan area and provide some sense of relief from the persistence of the grid, the residential streets contained within the one mile grid area are typically laid out in curvilinear forms. In many instances this pattern establishes -- throughout much of the Valley-- its own sense of monotony. The clarity imposed by the arterials is in marked contrast to this inner warren of often confusing loops and cul-de-sacs.

The dreariness that one might anticipate from these street patterns is accentuated by a virtual lack of any topographical break. In Gilbert, there is the exception provided by the three major SRP canals running from the north to the southwest and the crispness of the Southern Pacific railroad diagonally imposed across the grid from the northwest to the southeast of the town. Rittenhouse Road follows these tracks for several miles, also contrasting sharply with the regularity of the grid arterials.

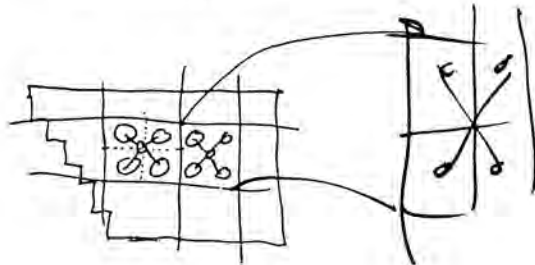
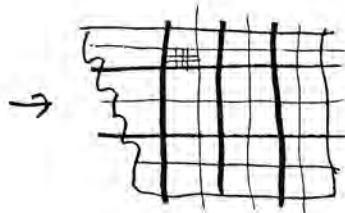
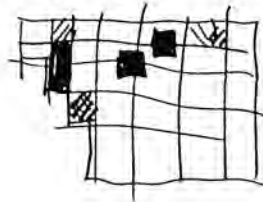
Because towns and cities are viewed from the streets, the streets themselves are the primary image provided to both visitors and residents. To establish itself as unique among towns, the design of the street must assume a high degree of importance. This design must include studies in both plan and section (the third dimension!) to be effective.

The Team recommends that the Town of Gilbert adopt as a matter of public policy, guidelines that will insure a landscape treatment for the arterials that will accomplish specific visual goals.

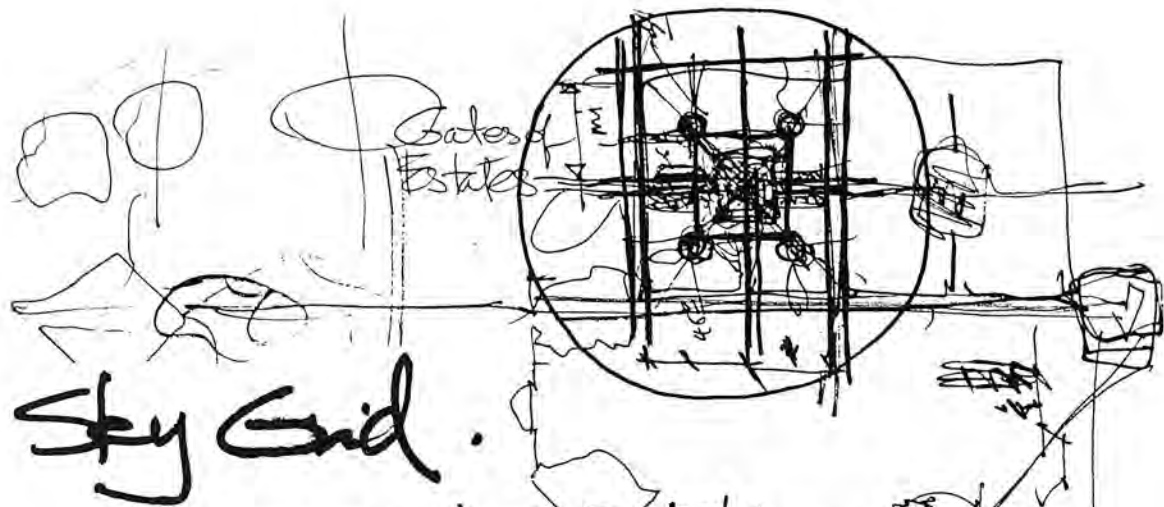
using and
controling regional!



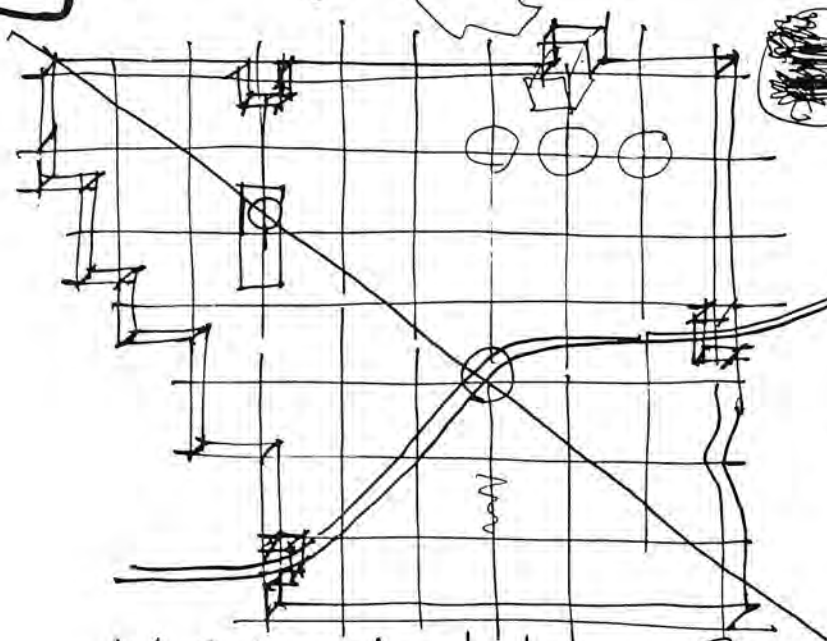
Influencing the grid



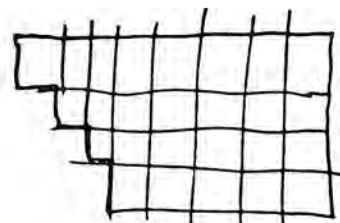
Idea sketches: design strategies.



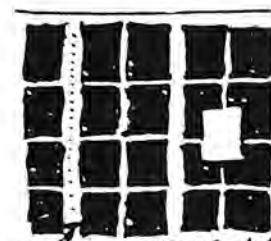
sky grid.



What is going to happen?



"NON-SPATIAL"



MEMORABLE
"SPATIAL"
CHARACTER
of the streets
structure

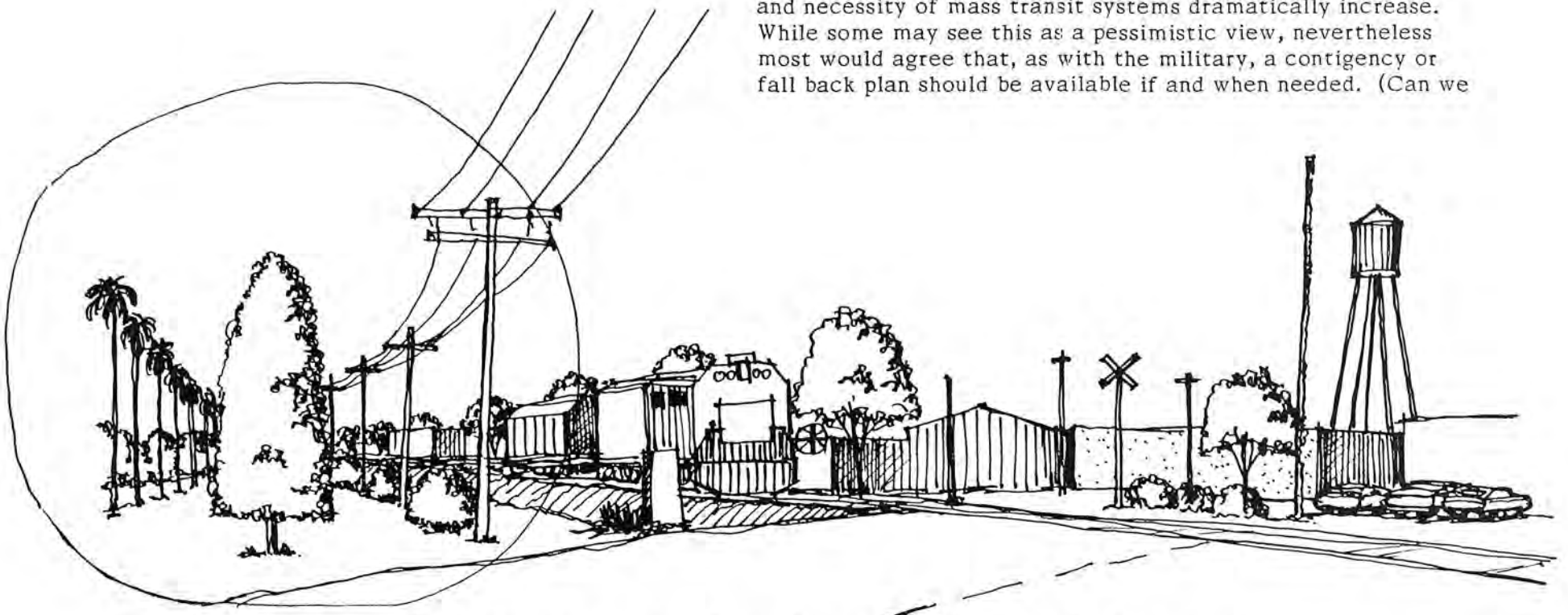
MOVE FROM ... TO

Idea sketches: how to develop a neighborhood character within the grid pattern.

Southern Pacific Railroad

Crossing diagonally from the northwest to the southwest across the Gilbert Planning Area, the Southern Pacific Railroad corridor may someday again be a primary circulation element of Gilbert. Decades ago the railroad stations in Gilbert and Higley allowed agricultural produce to be shipped to market. Amtrak still uses this route, along with an occasional freight train. As the metropolitan region begins investigation of the feasibility of a fixed rail transit system, this line -- with its direct link to downtown Phoenix via Mesa and Tempe -- should assume added importance in future plans.

While no one can predict the future with accuracy, it is the Team's opinion that there does exist a significant probability that a fixed rail transit system in the Valley is a serious possibility. If any of the projected energy shortages occur, the feasibility and necessity of mass transit systems dramatically increase. While some may see this as a pessimistic view, nevertheless most would agree that, as with the military, a contingency or fall back plan should be available if and when needed. (Can we



Idea sketch: the rail corridor becomes a key element in the overall park and development plan.

be sure there won't be future energy shortage?) Even assuming an optimistic point of view regarding the cheap availability of gasoline, it might still be desirable to invest in a rapid transit system that would link the primary and secondary cores of the area. Gilbert would certainly benefit from such a proposition in the long run.

The possibility for mass transit suggests a rationale for the location of higher density housing and future employment centers. At least three nodes of concentration can be postulated: the existing town of Gilbert, Higley, and between them the point where the southeastern loop freeway intersects the railway.

This corridor provides the most direct linkage between the areas in the northwest and the southeast of Gilbert. It is not difficult to envision the need for a future high speed arterial, using either the air-rights or more probably the adjacent right-of-way, following along this corridor. This route could conceivably extend to downtown Phoenix.

It is important for the city to begin a policy of land assembly for a transit/park corridor in anticipation of these future needs. By expanding the right-of-way and securing development easements on either side of the rail line, Gilbert can be assured of keeping available its options well into the future. Because of its directness and central location, the corridor might also be developed as a part of the open space network, providing additional cycling and equestrian paths. A continuous, if narrow, park could act as a buffer for future residential housing nearby.

While arterial grade crossings currently pose a degree of hazard, the railway should be seen as a potential amenity, rather than impediment, for future growth and development. Long range planning should begin in order to reduce the number of "at-grade" arterial crossings, and to increase opportunities for pedestrian underpasses and overpasses. With careful planning, this corridor will be a key organizing element in the future urban area of Gilbert.

Arterials

First, the concept of a "sky-grid" can achieve a sense of orientation by defining the major arterials with continuous street tree plantings of vertical palms. The ultimate visual impact of such plantings may take several decades to achieve, but the design objective should be clearly articulated now and initial plantings begun immediately. The result of such plantings can be seen in some of the early suburbs of Los Angeles and even in parts of central Phoenix. The accompanying illustrations demonstrate the dramatic impact such a concept will produce.

These "grand avenues" may act to define the ceremonial entrances into Gilbert as well. By keeping the avenues open and defining the edges with strong tree plantings, the view of the distant horizon is preserved and framed. Objects on the horizon (such as Red Mountain when proceeding north on Power Road or the McDowell Range when viewed from Gilbert Road) become key, referential landmarks.

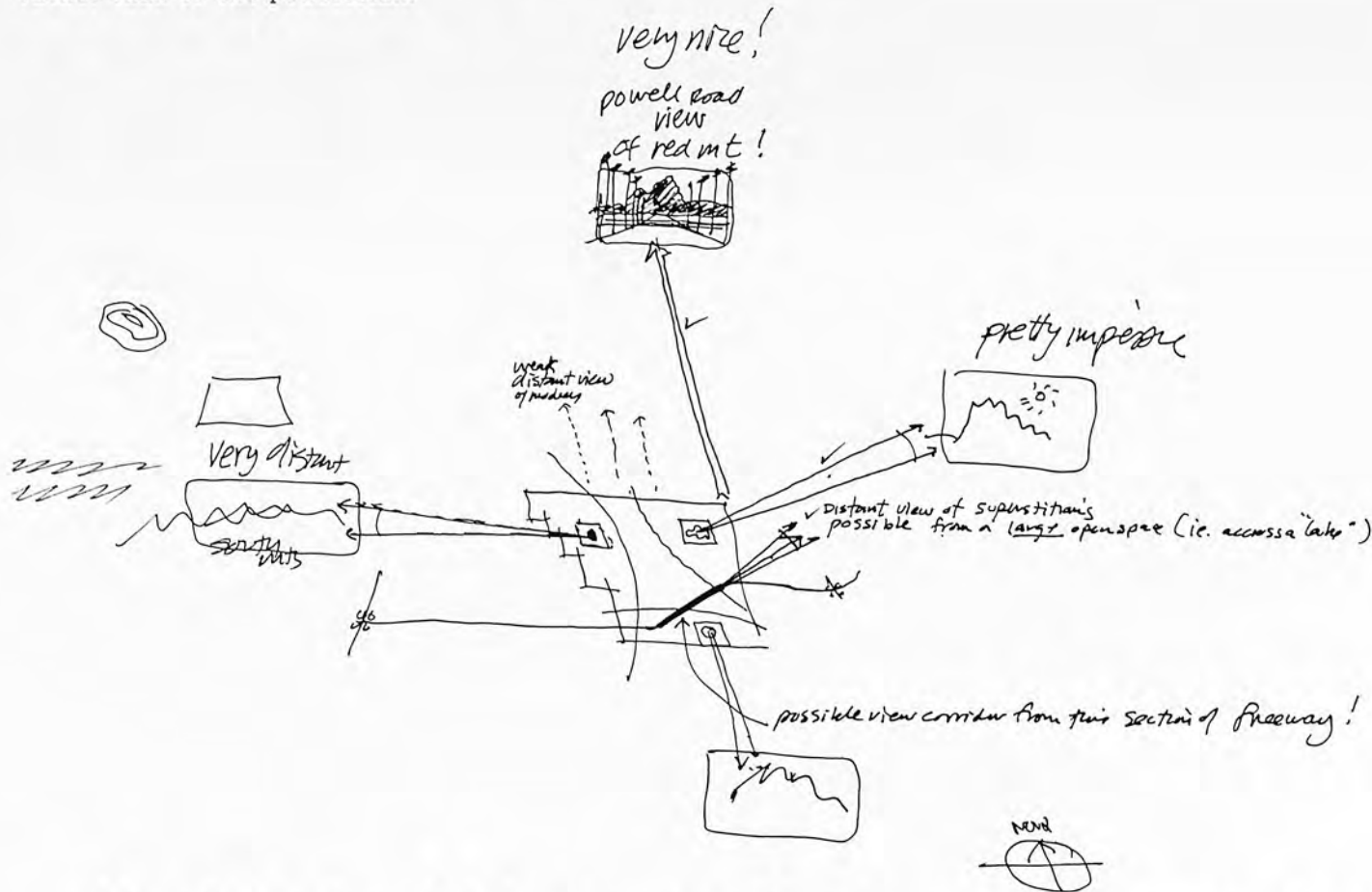


Idea sketch: the sky grid at a neighborhood node.

As a starting point, the team believes that immediate attention should be given to Baseline Road (the northern boundary) and Gilbert Road south of Baseline (the primary functional entrance into the town).

Service Arterials & Neighborhood Centers

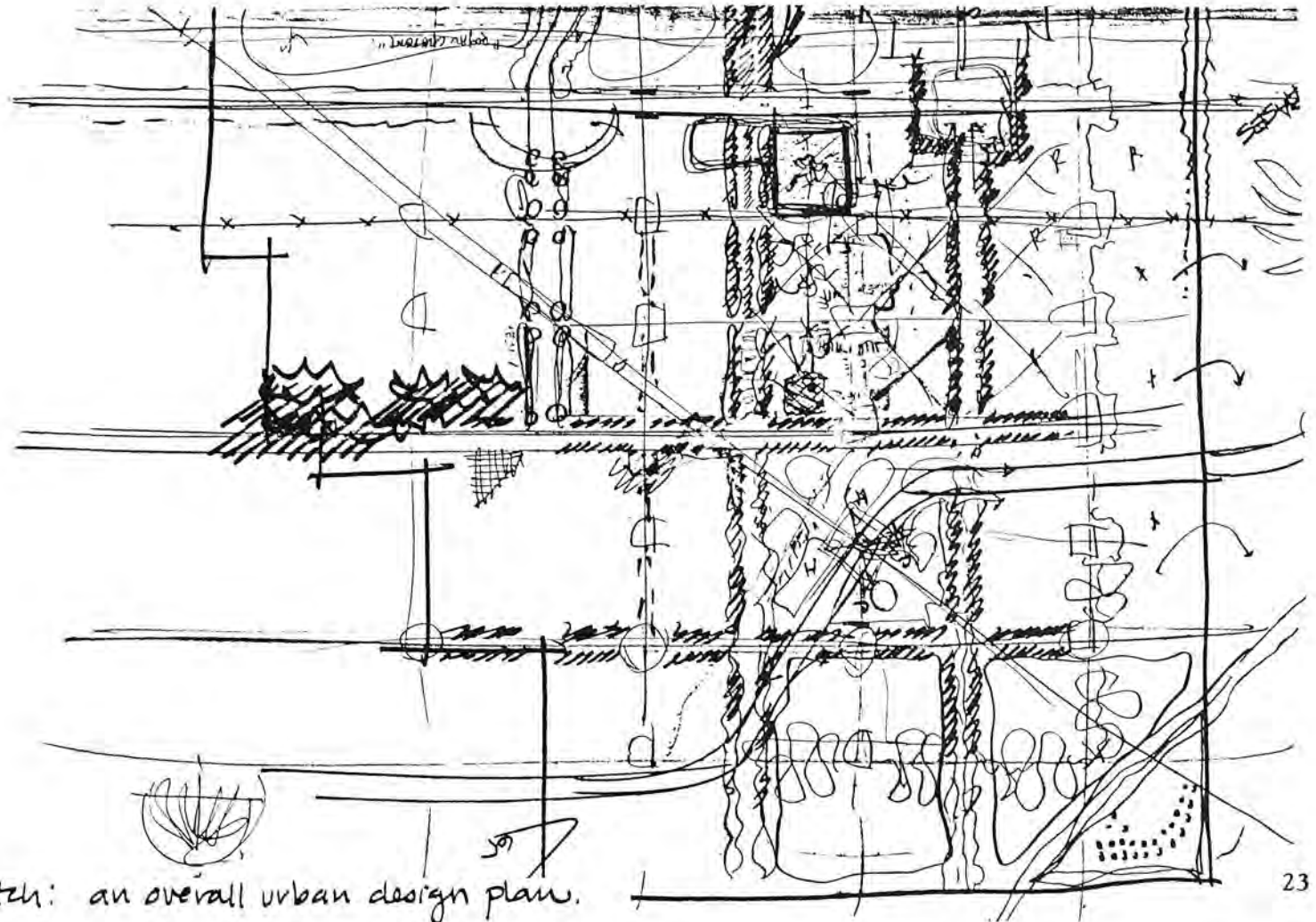
A particular problem visually and functionally usually occurs at the intersections of the grid arterials. Because of the relative high level of accessibility, these intersections are usually the desired location for fast-food outlets, gasoline stations, and a host of other retail activities -- all oriented to the automobile rather than to the pedestrian.



Idea sketch: how to take advantage of distant views with view corridors.

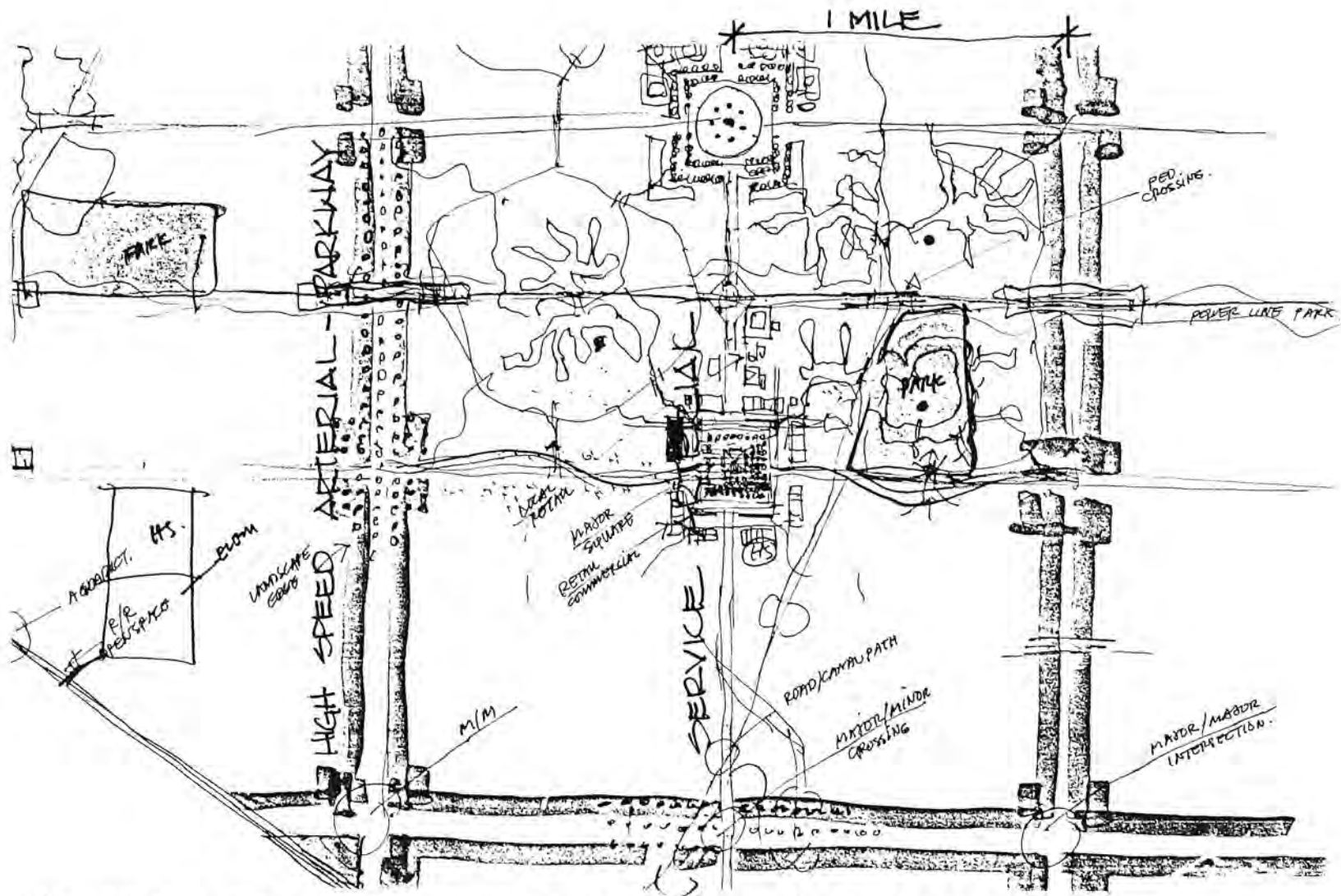
Already the crucial part of the transportation network, the arterial intersection becomes less serviceable in moving through traffic due to the congestion caused by the newly located retail functions. Any possible pedestrian activity or movement is completely stifled. Simply landscaping these nodes will not solve the future circulation problems. A new development strategy is necessary to achieve a new order for development.

This study proposes to clearly differentiate between two types of arterials: first, the through roads (high-speed arterials) and second, the service arterials. These two types would more-or-less alternate each mile in each direction. Landscape and design guidelines for each would vary, providing a clearer sense of orientation.



Idea sketch: an overall urban design plan.

Neighborhood commercial and service development would be reached directly from the service arterials and are clustered together in a "village square" concept. These commercial "nodes" would generally be located approximately midway between the high-speed arterial net.

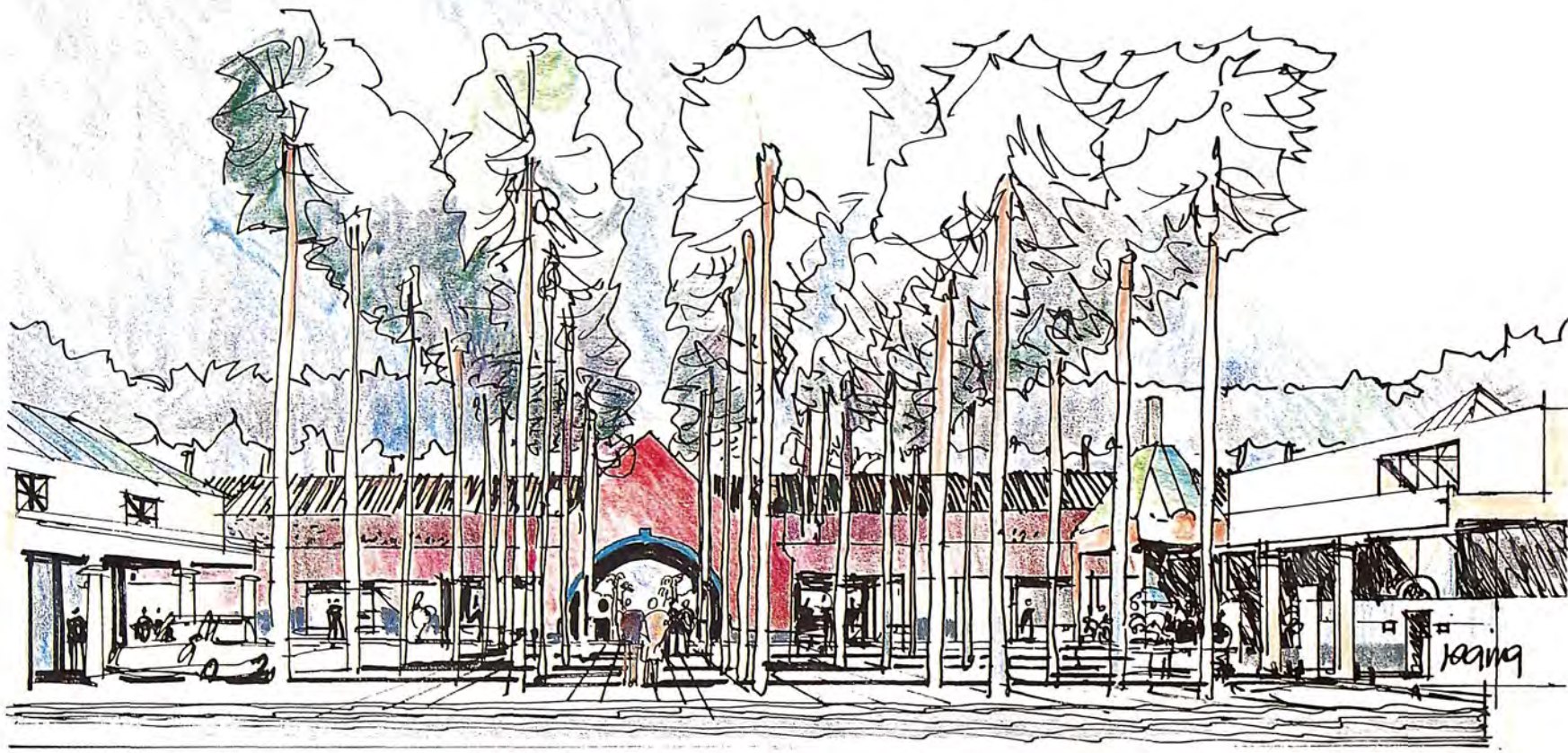


Idea sketch: alternating "service" arterial streets (and neighborhood commercial nodes) with high speed arterials (parkways).

The size of these commercial nodes would vary depending on the functional need and geographic circumstance. Civic functions would be incorporated as appropriate -- branch libraries, small plazas, post offices, for example -- to provide for a sense of community and place. This strategy would provide an opportunity for visual amenities to be added in the public square -- somewhat comparable to the network created by Oglethorpe's historic plan for Savannah, Georgia. Each node could achieve its own identity and unique qualities, providing variety and community pride.

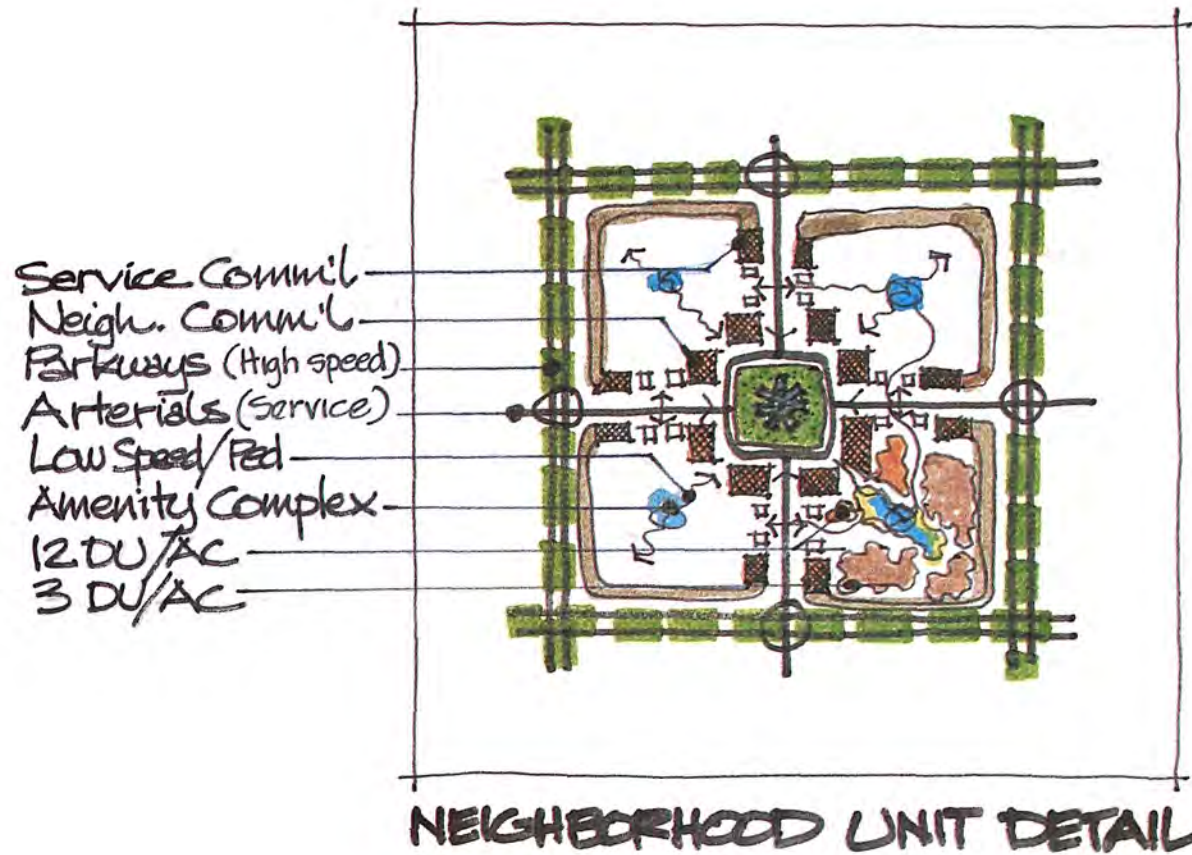


Idea sketch: a neighborhood commercial node.

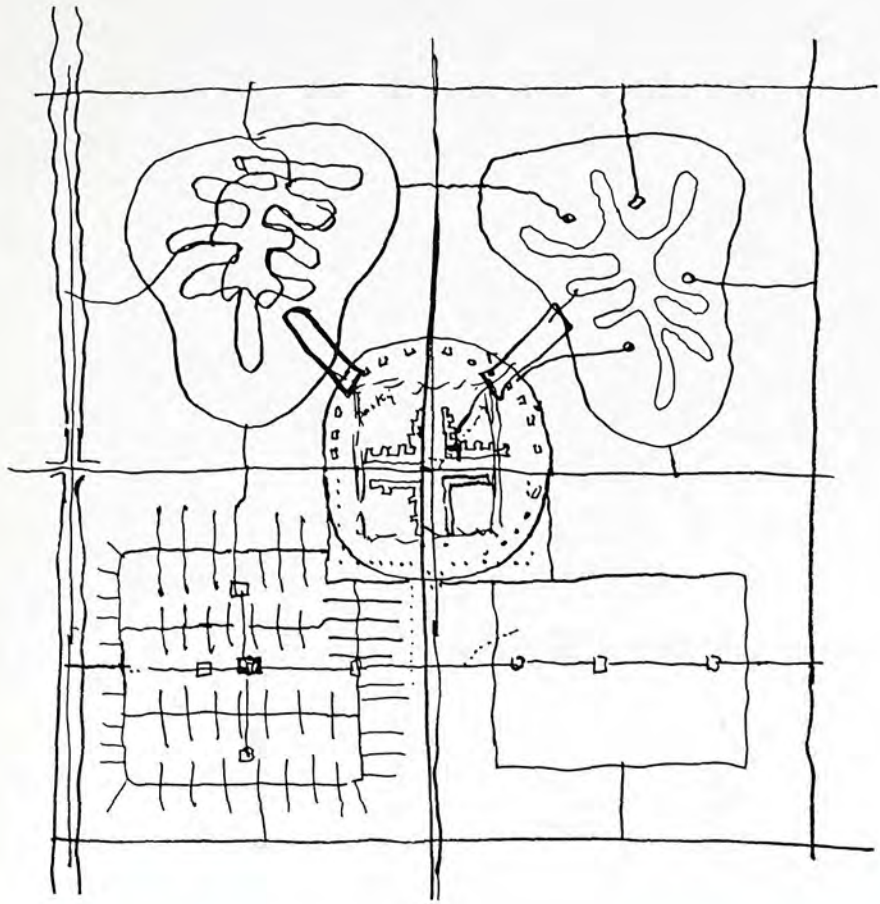


Idea sketch: a neighborhood community node.

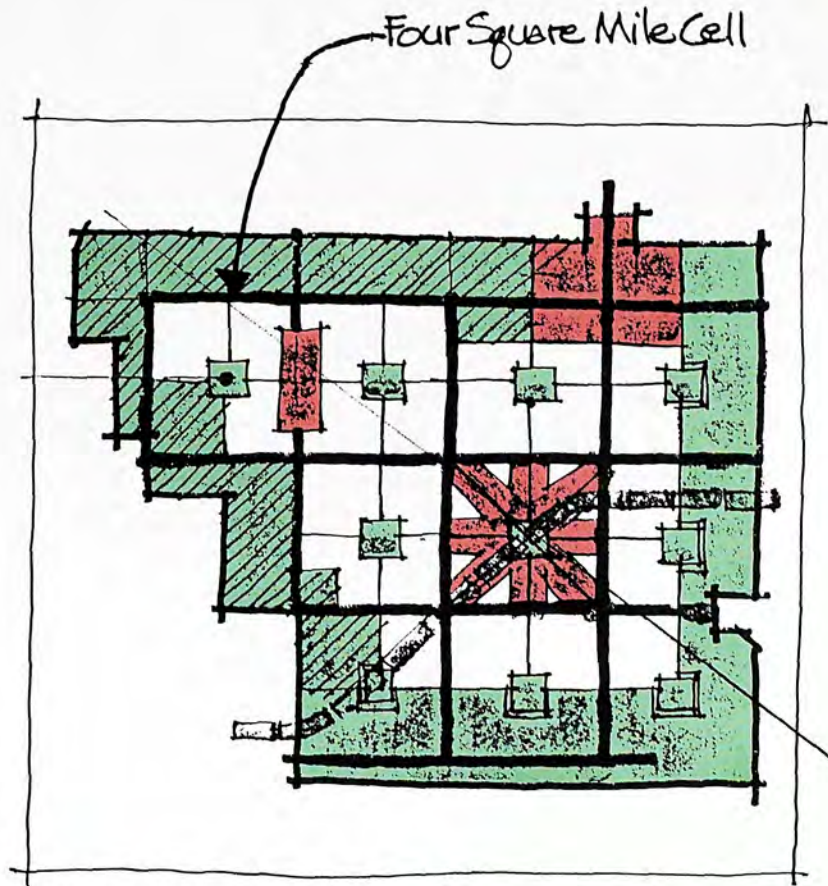
The antithesis of these centers is the commercial strip, typical of much of the urban development of the midwest and west. These linear developments seldom contribute to a sense of community, either visually or functionally. The choice is not one of cost, but one of planning and community determination. A new vision is possible, and well worth seeking.



Idea sketch: a neighborhood node centered in the arterial grid. Four to eight "Planned Area Developments" make up a four mile neighborhood unit.



Idea sketch: neighborhood units can be made out of existing developments and new "planned area" developments.



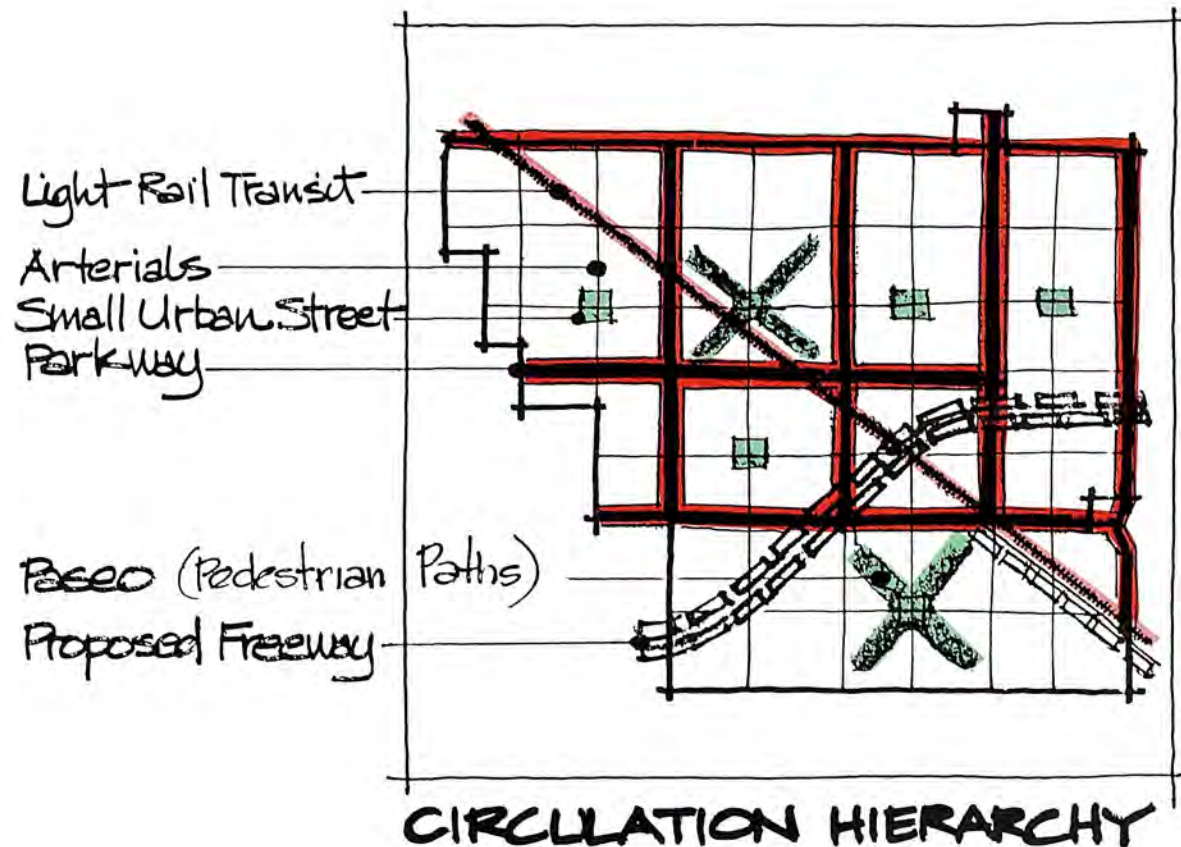
PLANNED NEIGH. UNITS

Idea sketch: the City of Gilbert is made up of 4 square mile neighborhood units.

SOUTHEAST LOOP FREEWAY

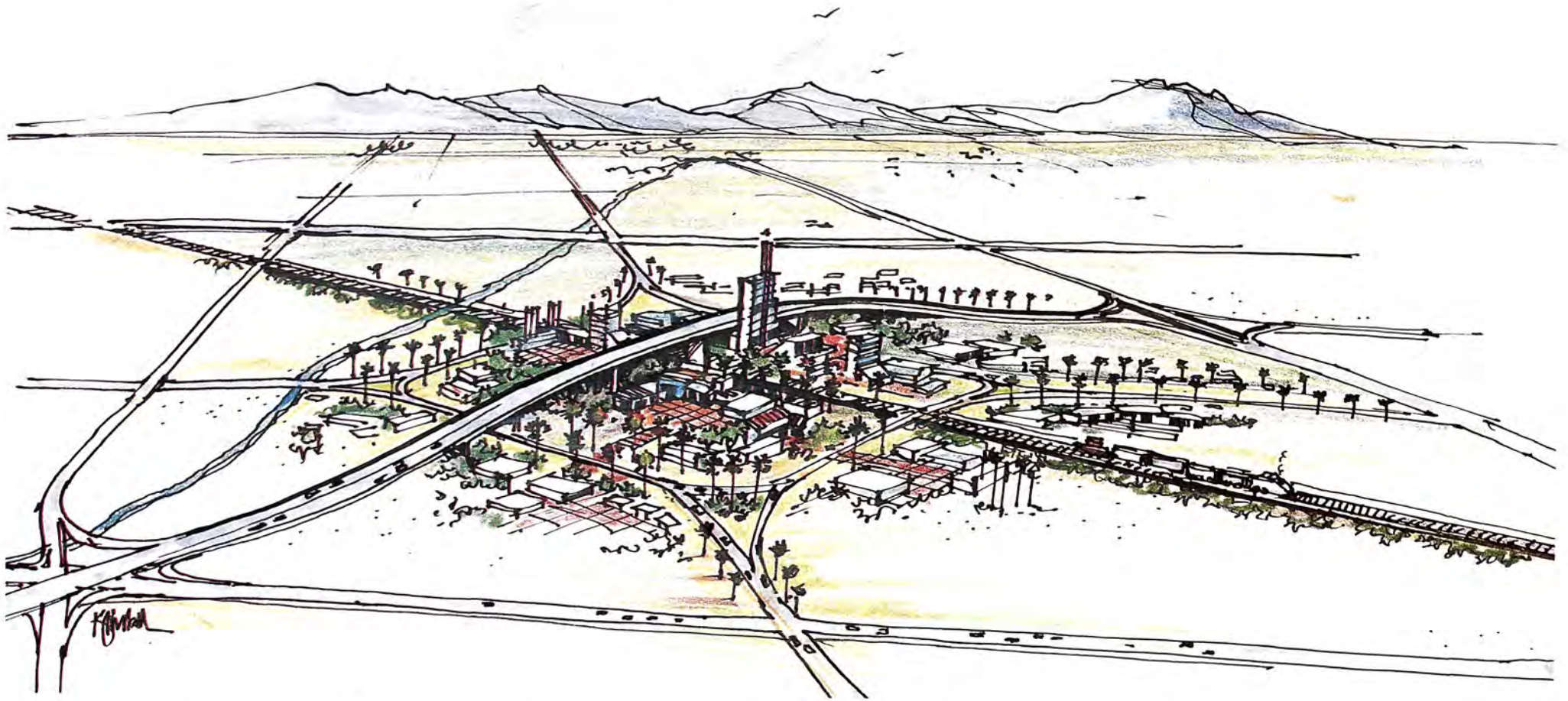
The proposed outer freeway will provide Gilbert with a major new movement system that will undoubtedly have a tremendous impact upon future development patterns. Because of its anticipated high volume of traffic, the freeway will become a major gateway for those entering or passing through Gilbert.

At its two points of entry into Gilbert, the city has an opportunity to state visually that one has "arrived." The landscaping of these key points along the freeway will convey symbolically the intentions and aspirations of the town. The freeway may be elevated as it crosses the border also providing a panoramic view. For much of its length, however, we should expect a configuration not unlike the Superstition Freeway, depressed below the normal grade line. This has the advantage of alleviating problems of noise and minimizing the disruption to the arterial grid system.



Where the traffic lanes do surface and rise above the grade (such as is probable at the crossing of the Southern Pacific Railroad), views and view corridors from the roadway must be studiously controlled. It is at these points that image of Gilbert will be formed by many visitors.

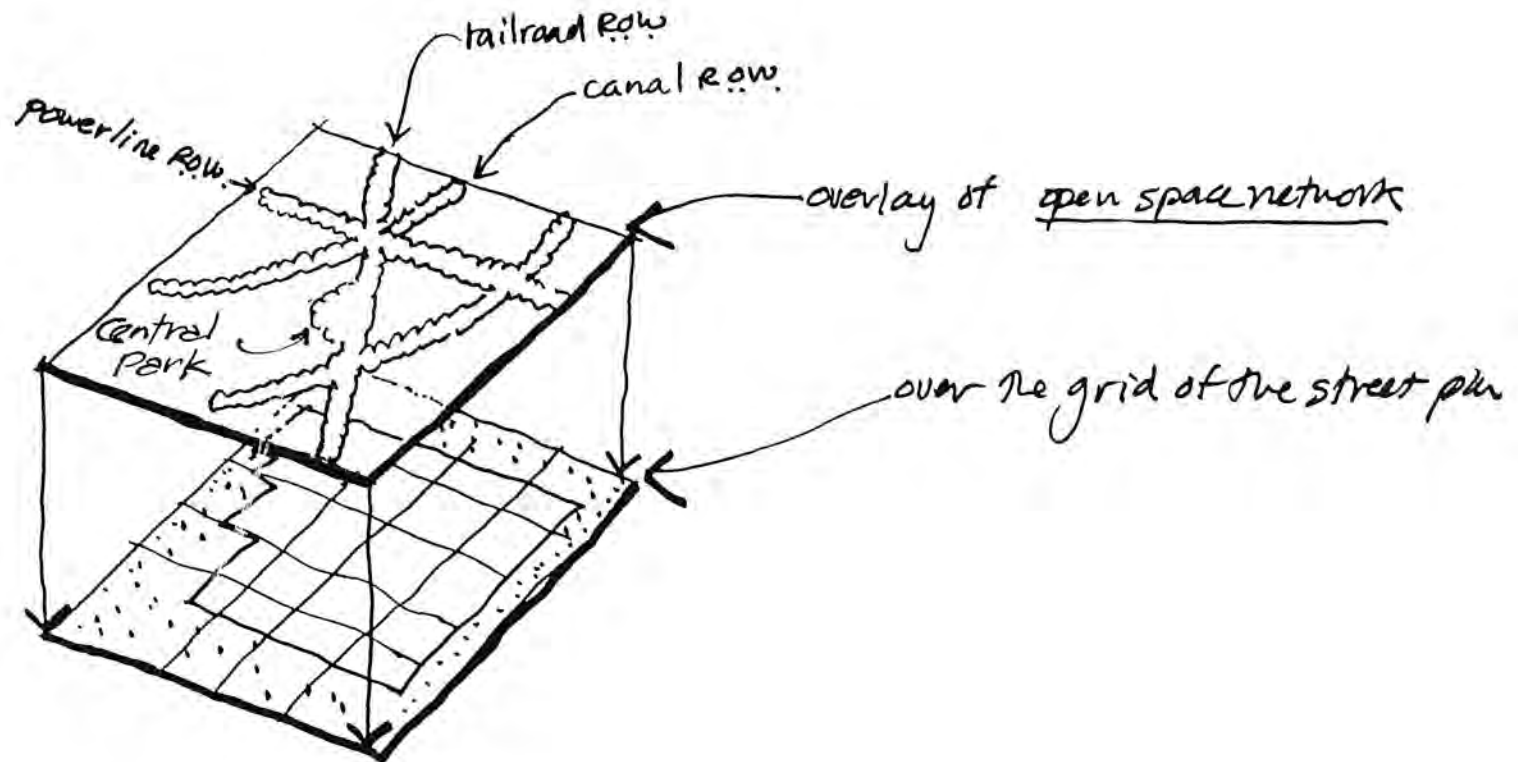
Each interchange will provide an opportunity to create a secondary gateway into Gilbert. The adjoining arterials must have in place strict development controls if chaos is to be avoided. Programs are needed that require highway engineers and landscape architects to make these functional connections visually successful as well.



Idea sketch: a raised freeway at the railroad crossing will provide a view corridor.

A RECREATION & OPEN SPACE NETWORK PLAN

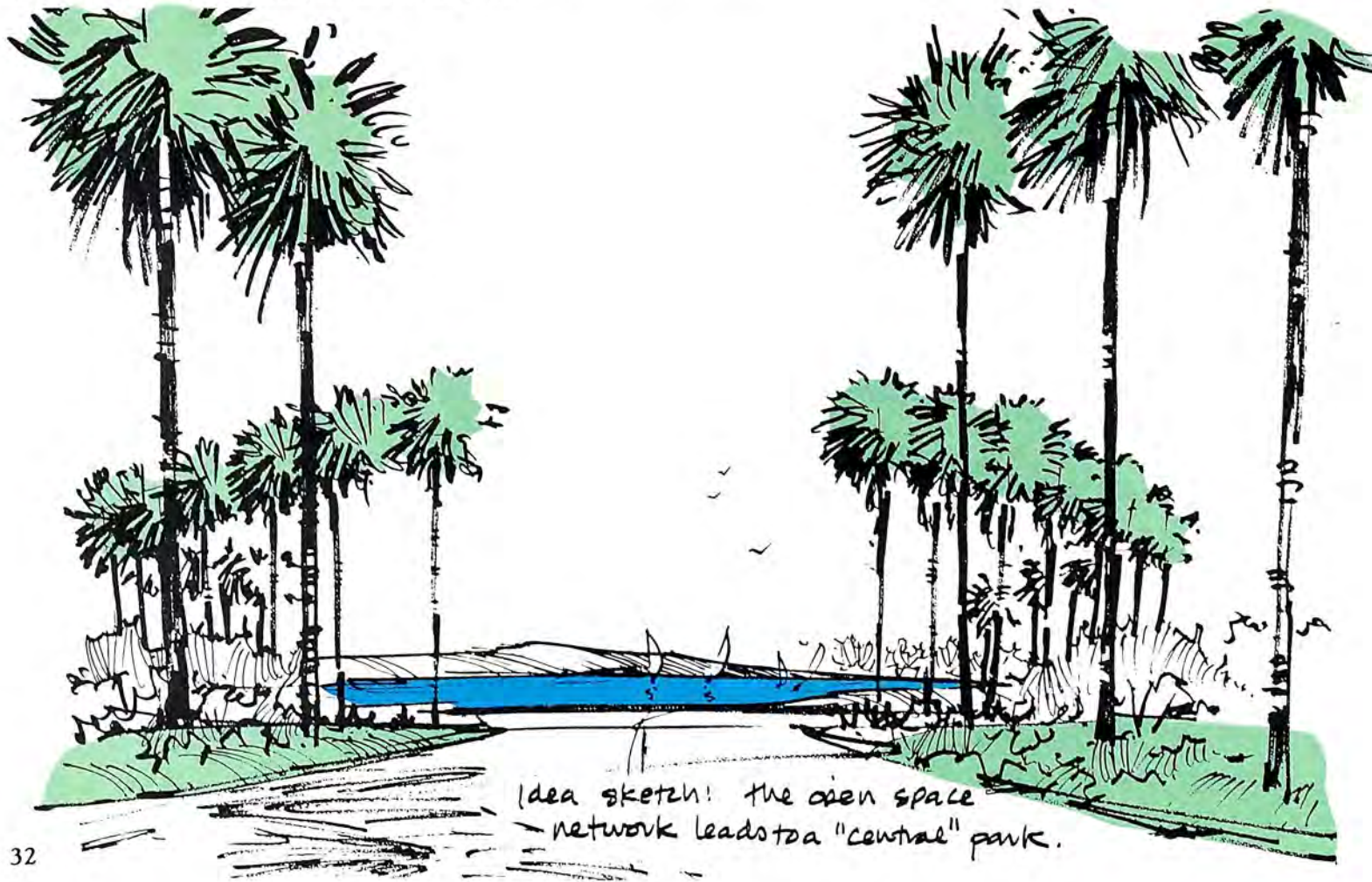
The development of a plan to achieve an open space system should be seen as one of the most critical undertakings for the town of Gilbert, and one that can be initiated immediately. While the total realization of such a network will probably not be achieved until the area is fully developed, policies must be implemented now such that the objectives can later be fulfilled. Otherwise a very significant opportunity will be lost.



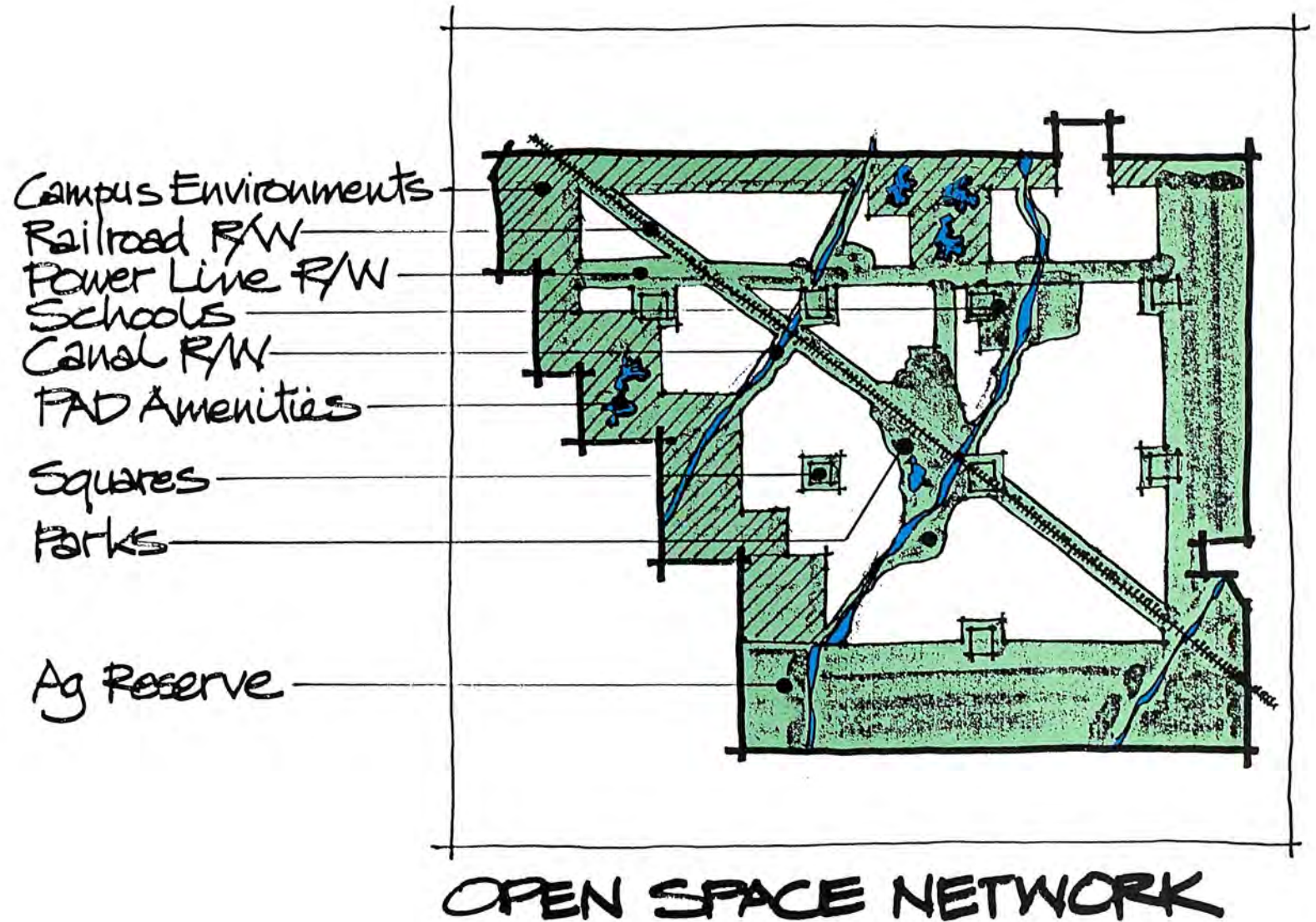
Idea sketch: take advantage of existing R.O.W.'s as a framework for an open space network.

The G/UDAT team envisions a continuously linked system of paths and trails that effectively tie the various parts and neighborhoods of Gilbert into one coherent community. Most of the future recreation elements would also be directly linked to this open space; allowing children, bicyclists, and adults a safe transportation alternative with little or no conflict with the automobile. Equestrian trails could be included over much of the network.

The system will also act as a buffer for residences located near competing land uses, such as will occur along the proposed freeway and the existing railroad. Because of its continuous park-like form, the open space network will provide visual relief and an outdoor amenity for many residential areas.



With careful and coordinated planning the network would be developed such that existing and future schools (and their playgrounds) could become an integral part of the system. The quasi-public open space and park areas set aside by large residential developments (planned area developments) would be similarly linked.



While realizing the development limitations necessarily imposed by the Salt River Project for its canal system, the possibility of an adjacent, linear development for bicycle and other trails is easily envisioned. Where appropriate, this additional public right-of-way or easement can be enlarged to accommodate small parks intended for a variety of uses. Examples of these opportunities can be found in Phoenix and Scottsdale. In Papago Park and the Phoenix Zoo, for example, a chain of small lakes have been created from a single outlet from the SRP Crosscut Canal. The recreational activities that can be provided by this foresighted



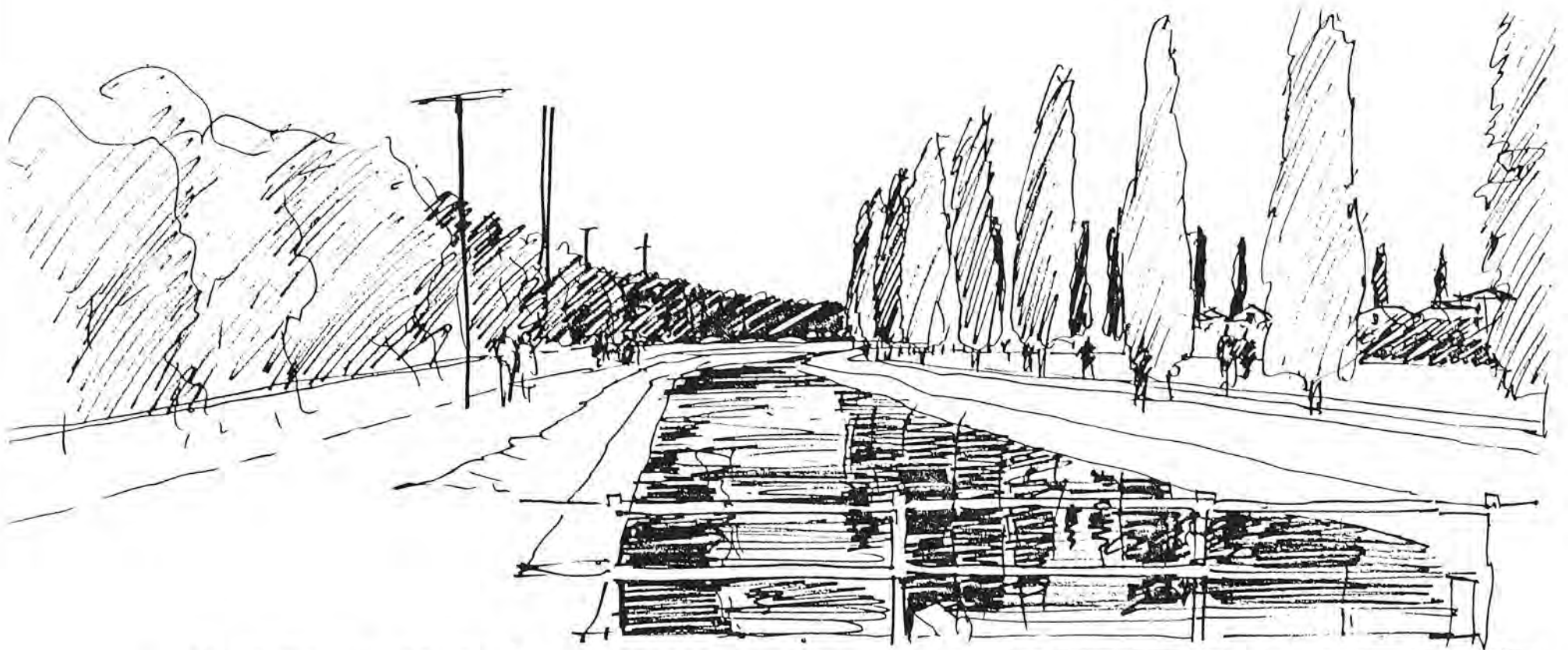
Existing conditions: are the canals an eye sore or a resource for the community?

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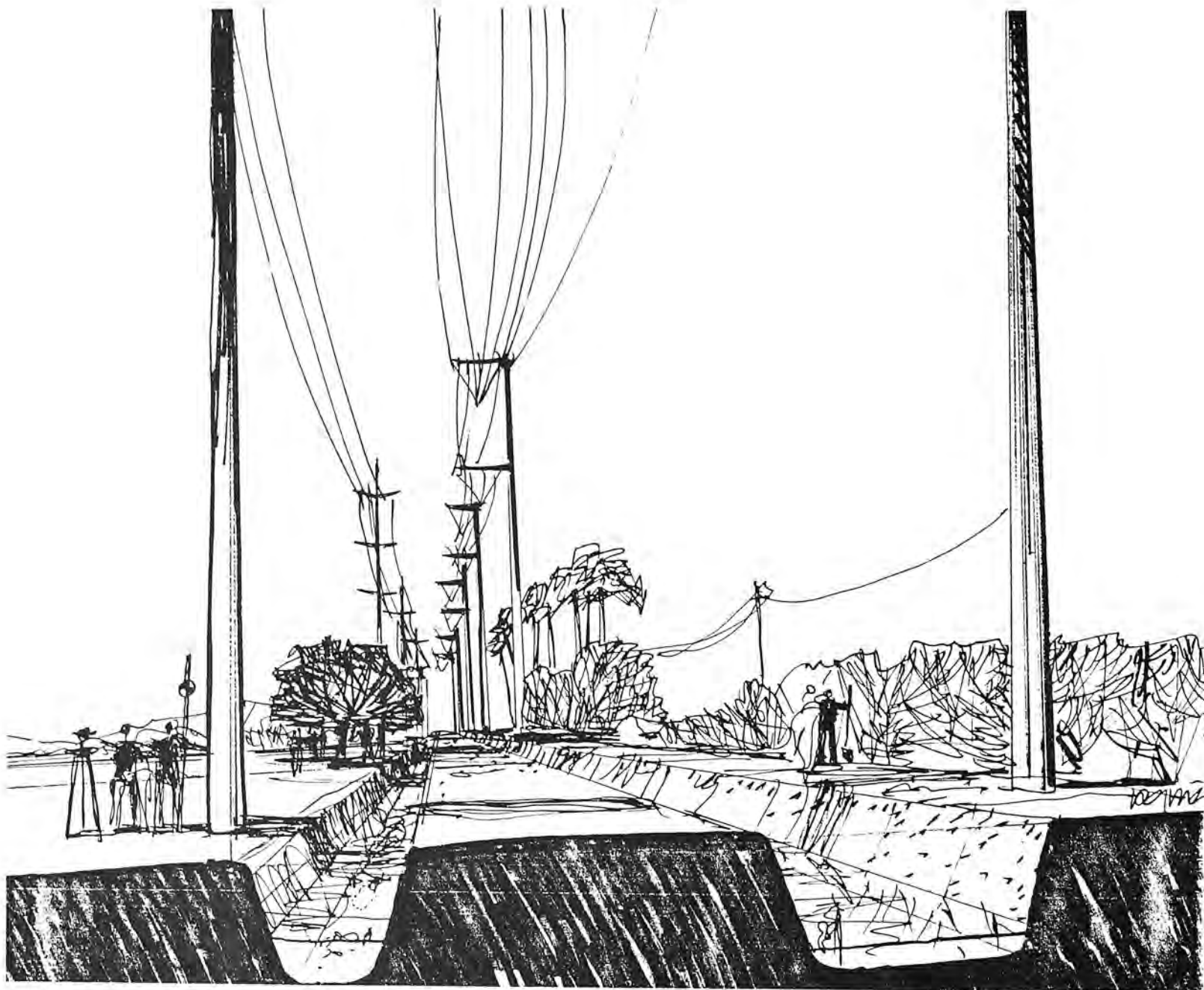
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planning are extremely significant in the overall development of a community.

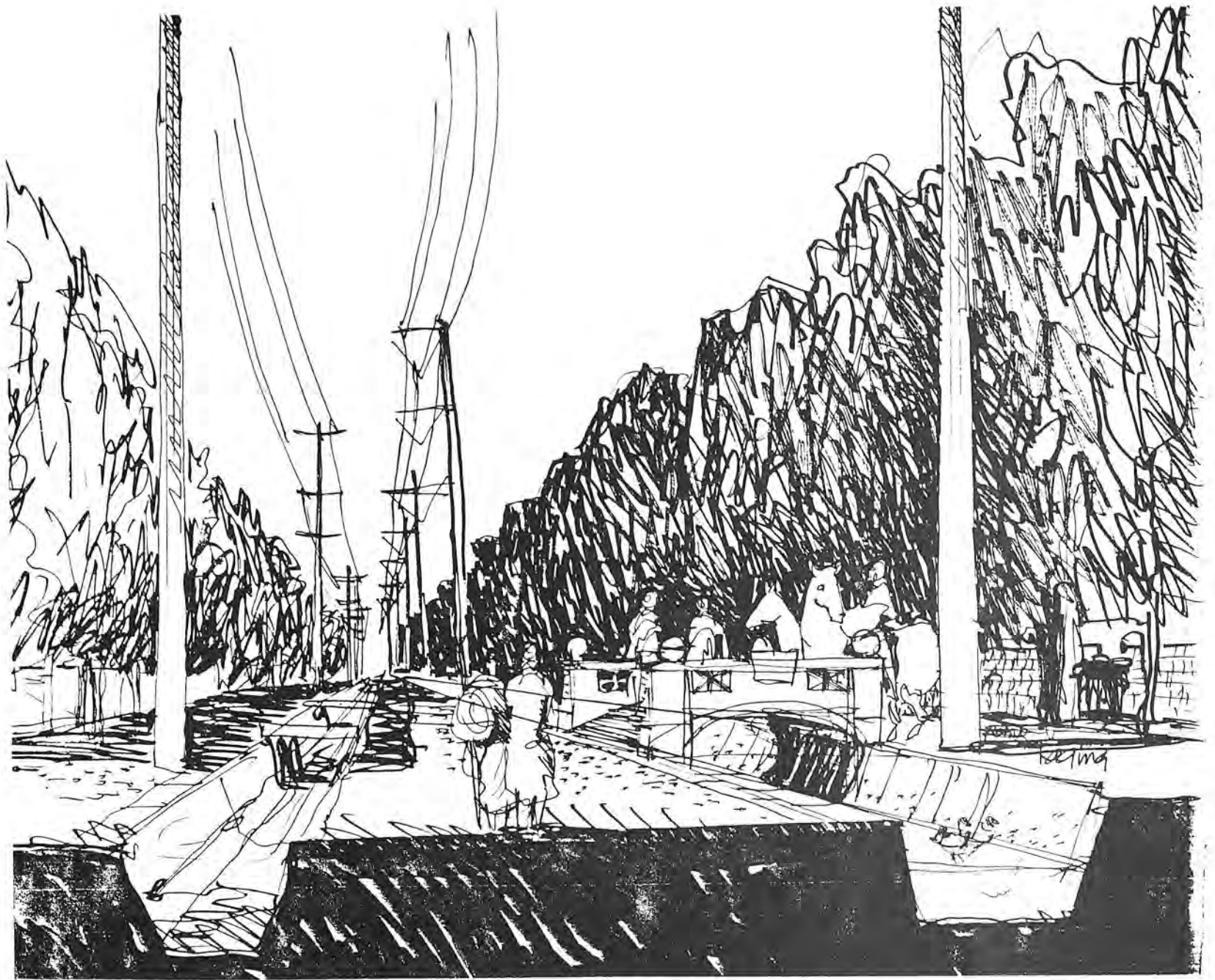
Presently many of the existing rights-of-way for public services (i.e., circulation elements, canals, major overhead transmission lines) are accepted as necessary dangers and eyesores, rather than viewed as opportunities. In the same manner that the Indian Bend Wash development dramatically reshaped much of Scottsdale, these elements can provide a key in directing Gilbert's future character.



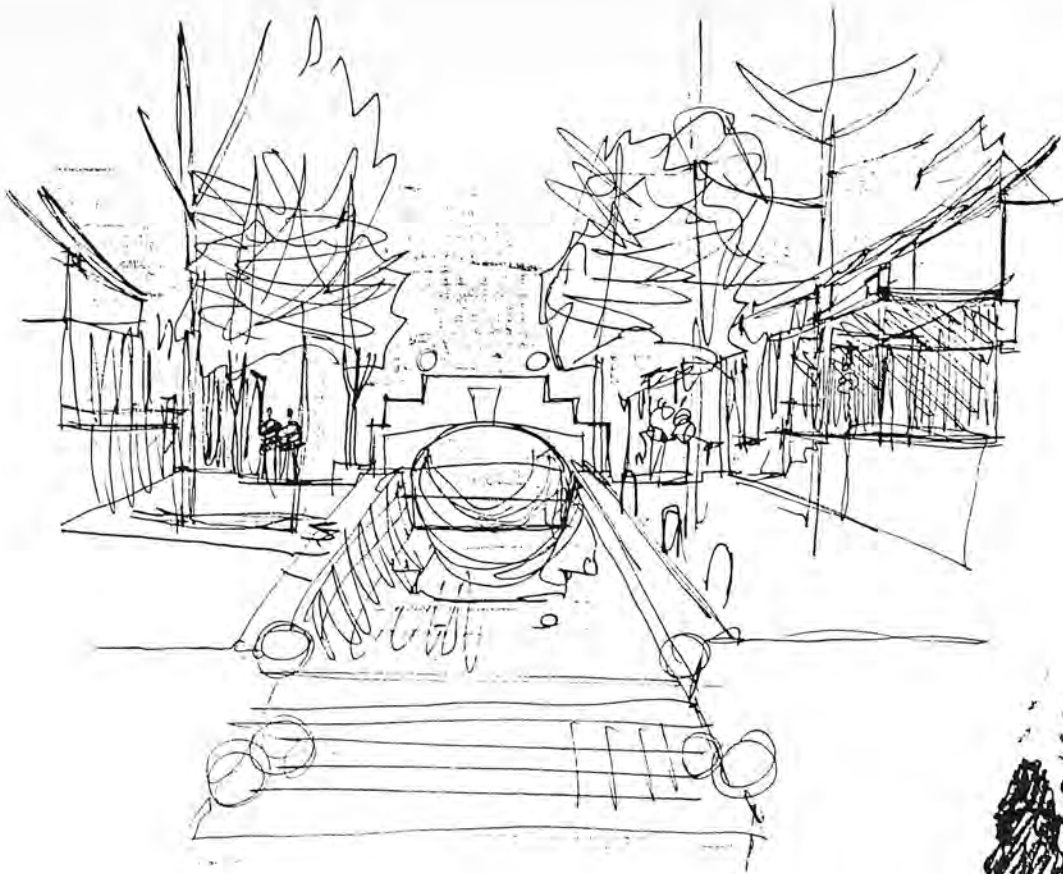
Idea sketch: Landscape the canals and make them a part of the open space network.



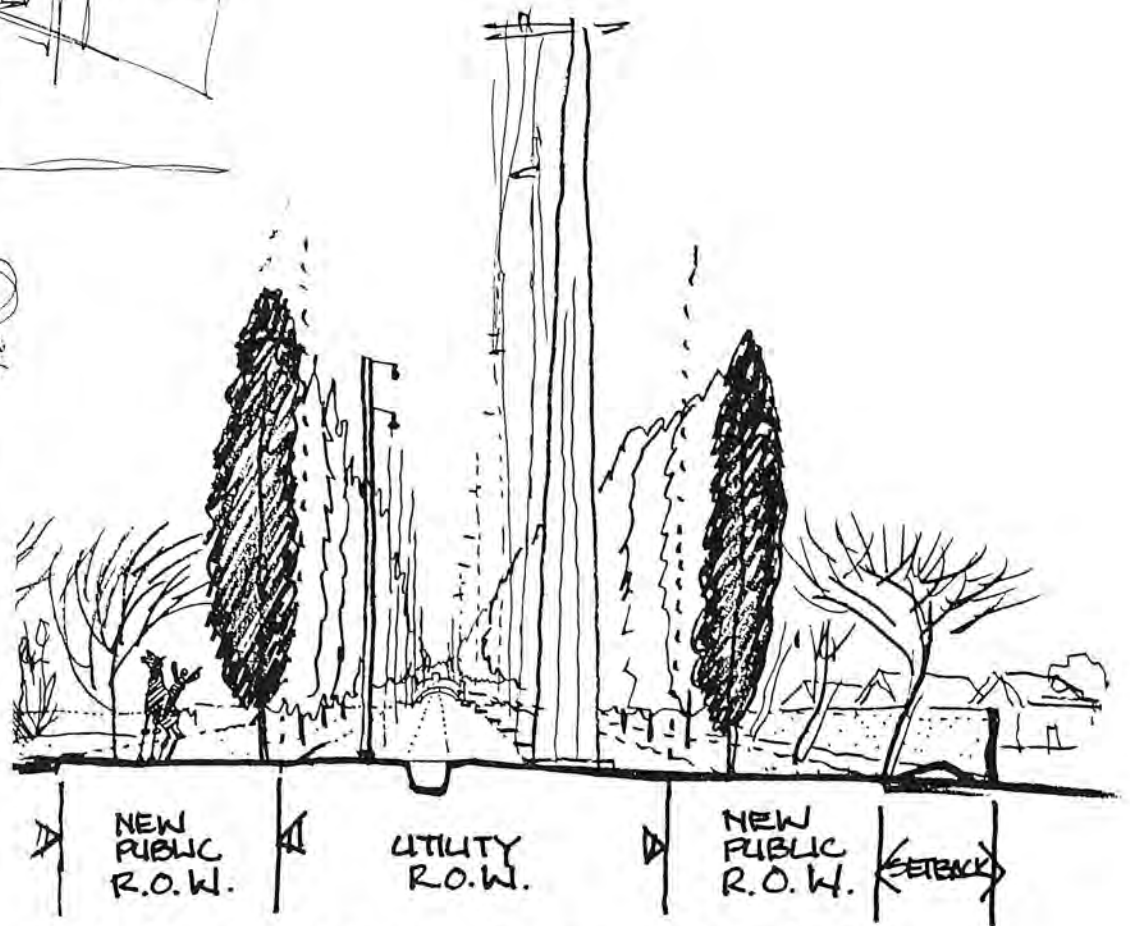
Existing conditions: are the power-lines an eyesore or a potential?



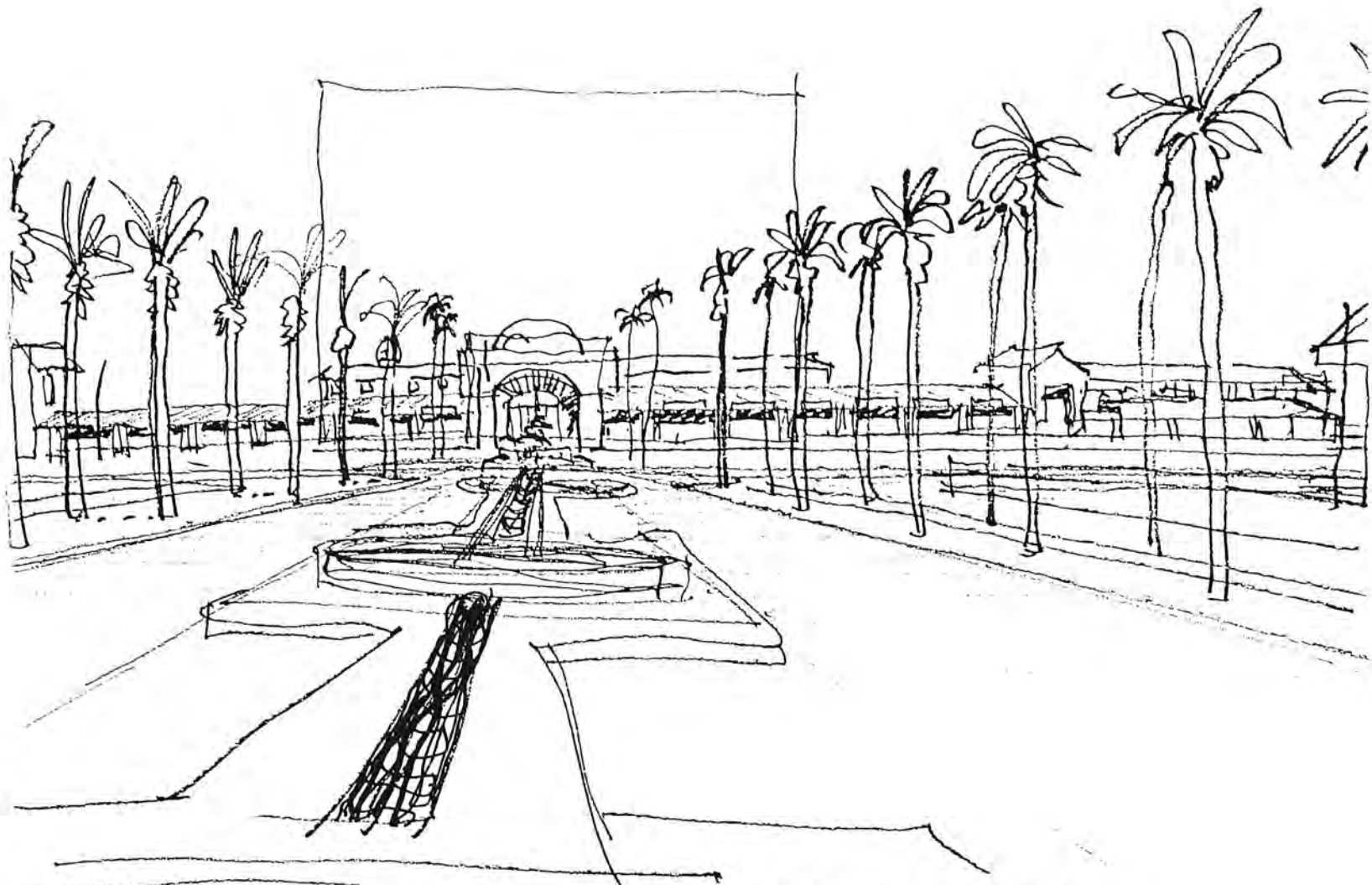
Idea sketch: reduce the impact of the powerlines with parallel planting, and gain a pedestrian, equestrian network.



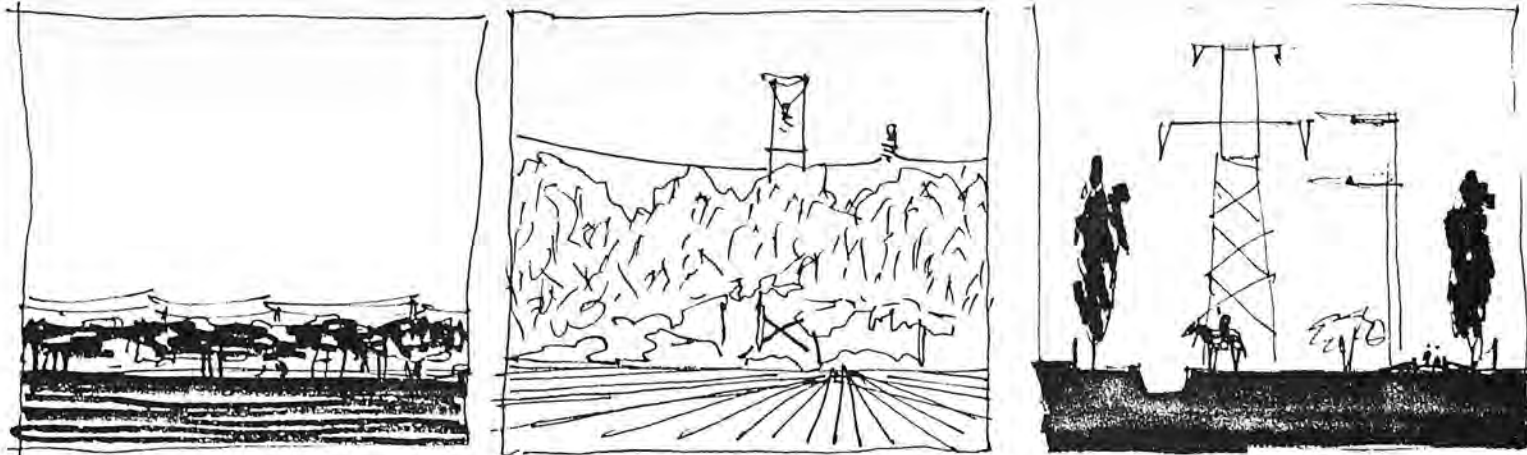
Idea sketch: civic bridges for the canals.



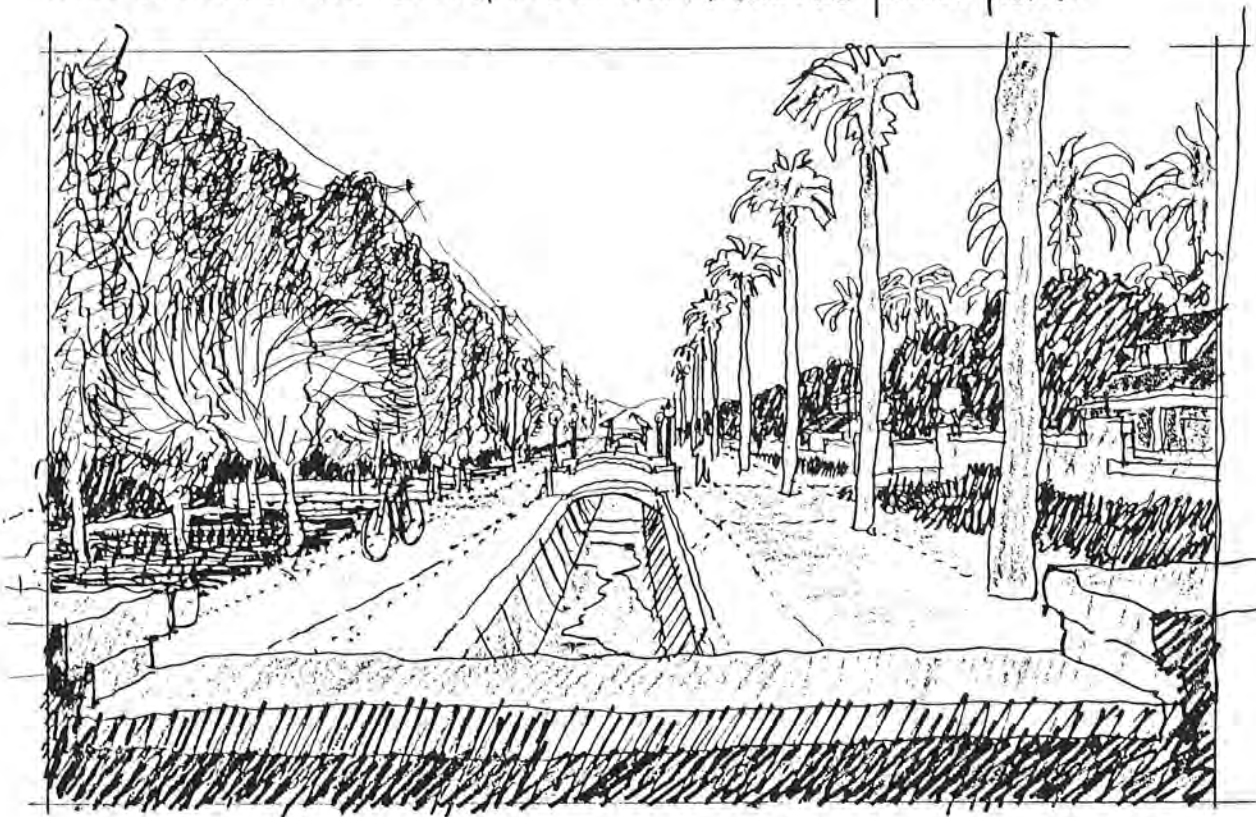
Idea sketch: public R.O.W. parallels utility R.O.W.'s.



Idea sketch: new canals create a path network leading to neighborhood commercial nodes.



Idea sketches: the eucalyptus curtain and the power path.

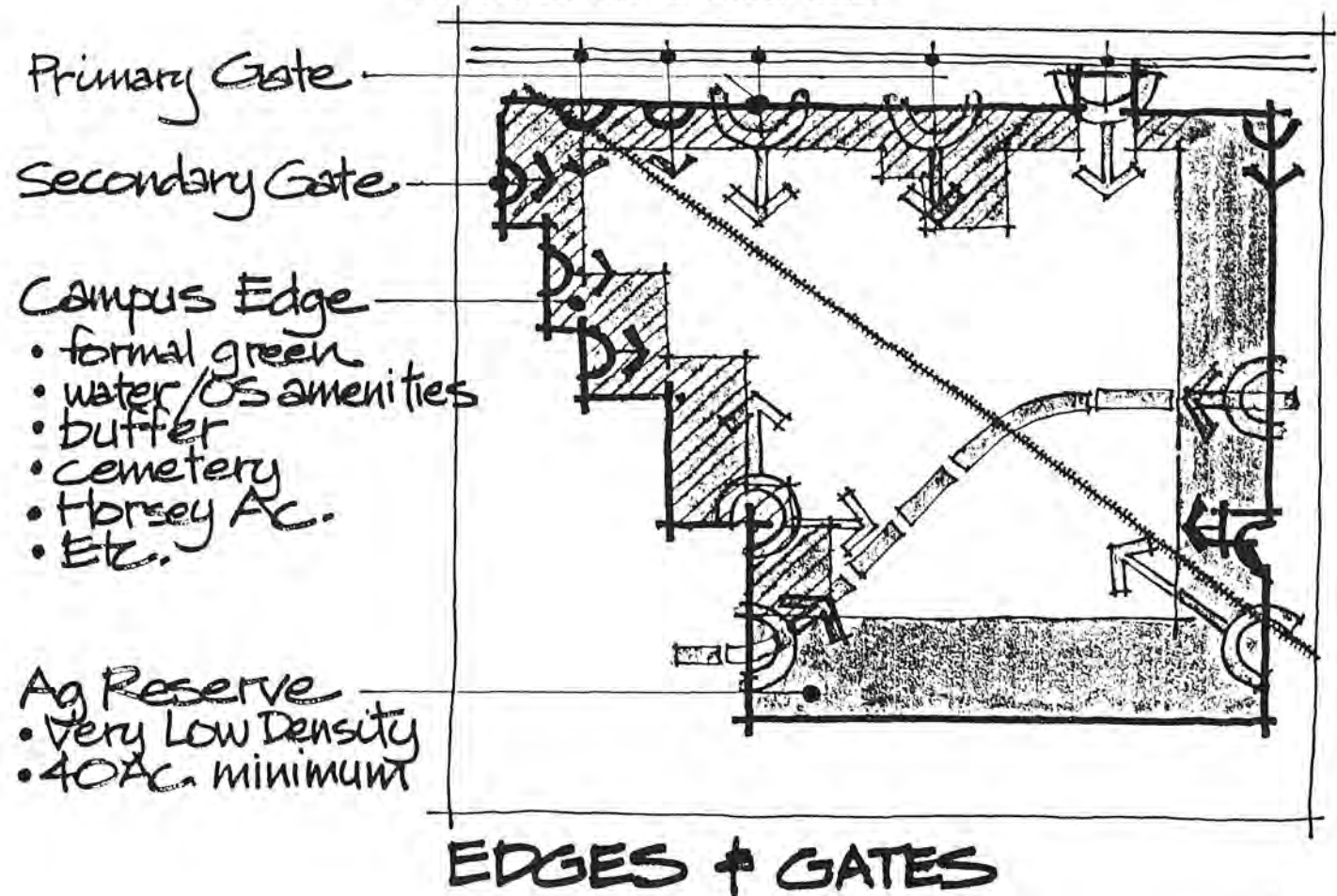


Idea sketch: the canals

THE AGRICULTURAL PRESERVE

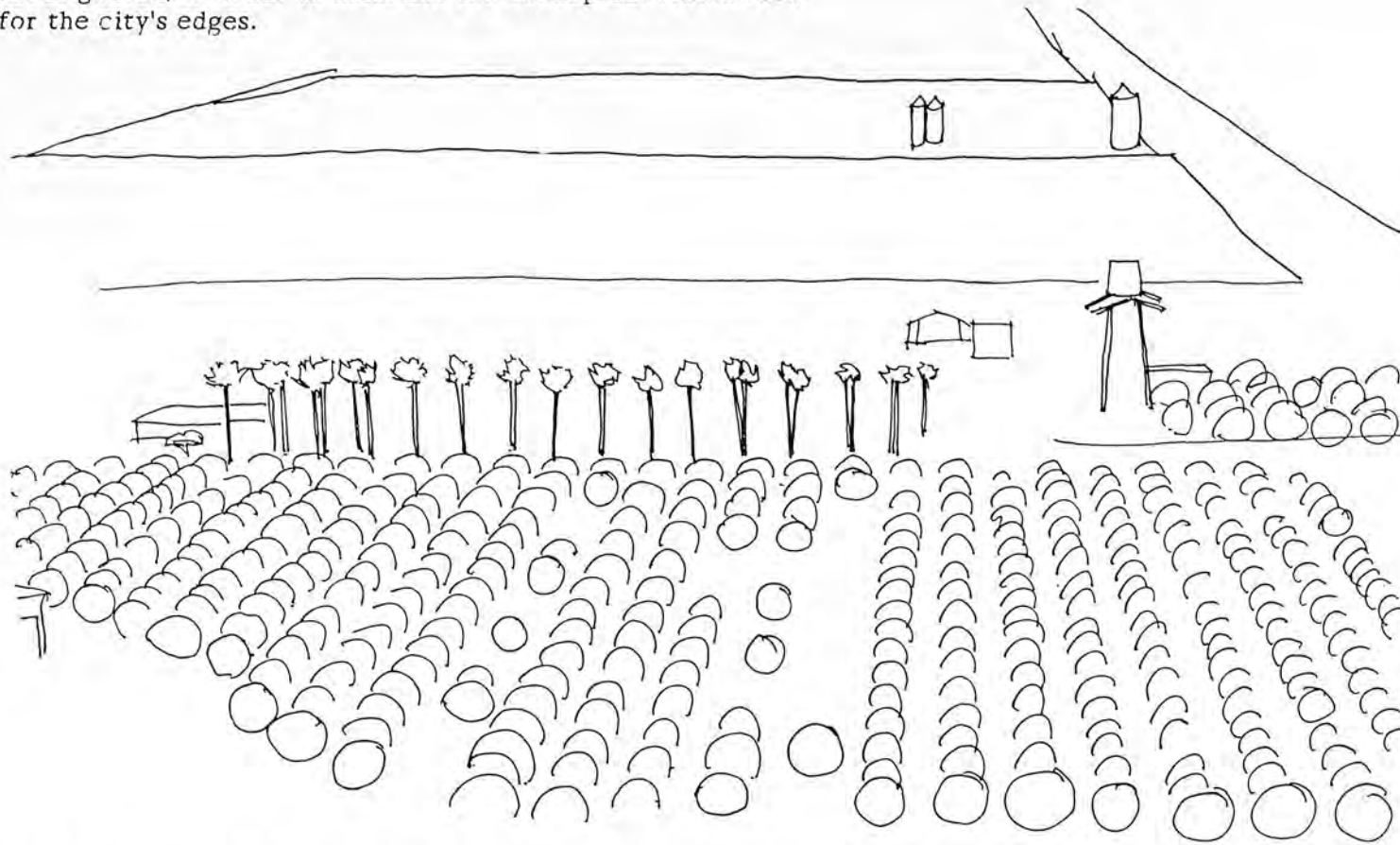
A major additional component of the open space network envisioned for Gilbert is a conceptual plan that is intended to insure a distinctive edge for the town. An open space preserve, to be used for agriculture and other low intensity uses, should be extended along the perimeter of the Gilbert planning area. On the south and east, this reserve may be a mile in width, on the more highly developed areas of the north and west, the concept can be modified to respond to existing conditions and needs.

Not unlike the greenbelts surrounding the new towns of Great Britain and even London, this perceived open space provides "breathing room" for the community, and clearly differentiates Gilbert from other urbanized areas.



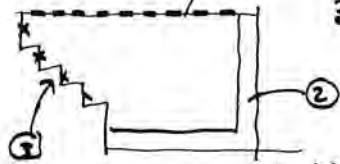
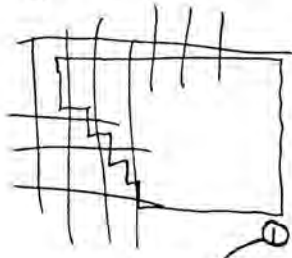
Because of pressures for development in the area, many current agricultural uses and farms are being forced out. Given the fact that this region includes some of the most productive agricultural land in the world, a serious moral question regarding the proper stewardship and use of the land might well be raised. By retaining 15%-20% of the area in primary agricultural use, a way of life historically associated with Gilbert can be preserved.

New orchards could be located in this designated area, and important dairy operations could perhaps be relocated through a land-swap program. If the Town annexed land further to the south, the "greenbelt" area could either be expanded or shifted (i.e. redesignated) in order to maintain the conceptual framework for the city's edges.

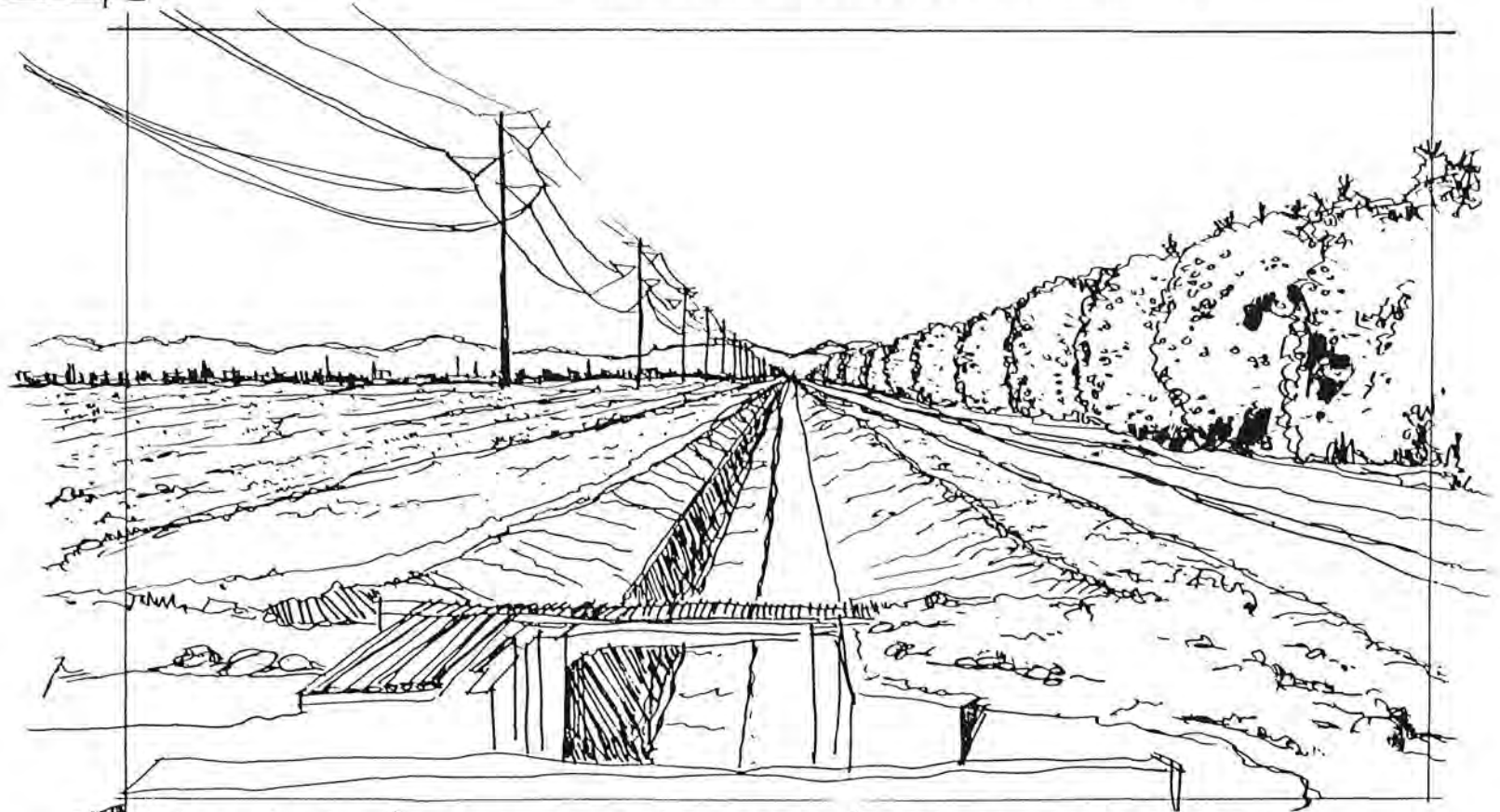


Idea sketch: create agriculture reserves to preserve one aspect of Gilbert's heritage.

using & controlling the edges of the city



3 buffer concepts



Urban design idea: maintain clear edges for the open space reserves.

Acreages as small as five acres could also be permitted in this preserve, accommodating a large number of families that have houses for recreational purposes.

The northern edge of Gilbert, e.g., south of Baseline Road, would presume a different development treatment, yet one still in keeping with the conceptual pattern. Immediately adjacent to Baseline a public easement should be developed to provide for pedestrian, bicycle, and horse trails. Densely planted trees, in some cases in formal rows, would achieve an identifiable visual edge to Gilbert and would convey a strong impression of continuous open space along the town's perimeter. Variations in this pattern can occur to meet specific constraints and to take advantage of opportunities provided by existing development.



Existing conditions: the railroad makes Higley corners an important crossroad.

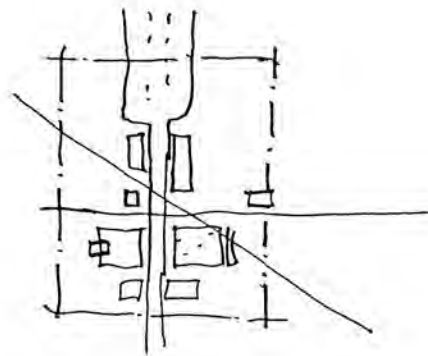
EXISTING GILBERT -- THE PRESENT

The Team recognizes the history and functions of the currently incorporated area of Gilbert, and shares a concern that the future expansion in the planning area may result in its neglect and eventual decline. The Town currently provides a diversity of services and retail activities -- and these, one would expect and hope, will be stabilized or enhanced as a result of the anticipated growth in the larger area.

One distinguishing characteristic of existing Gilbert is the diversity of housing types that presently exist. New suburban areas typically cannot provide a wide assortment of individual housing types, and cannot capture the qualities resulting from the maturity and variety that parts of Gilbert now currently enjoy. These neighborhoods are a unique asset, and provide opportunities that do not, and most likely will not, exist elsewhere.

The Team recognizes that successful cities typically have a broad assortment of family sizes and individual needs and desires; therefore, neighborhoods and residential units must be able to respond successfully to diverse interests and incomes. The existing Town of Gilbert may be best situated to accommodate these various and sometimes eclectic values. For many communities this diversity provides an important sense of vitality and interest.

BRW, Inc., has recently completed studies for the downtown which attempts to unify the street into a coherent area. Recent surveys suggest that the residents are reasonably satisfied with the downtown services. This is not to suggest, however, that thought is not needed in planning and guiding needed changes and future development within the town. Many small improvements, when taken together, could have a significant impact on the overall quality.

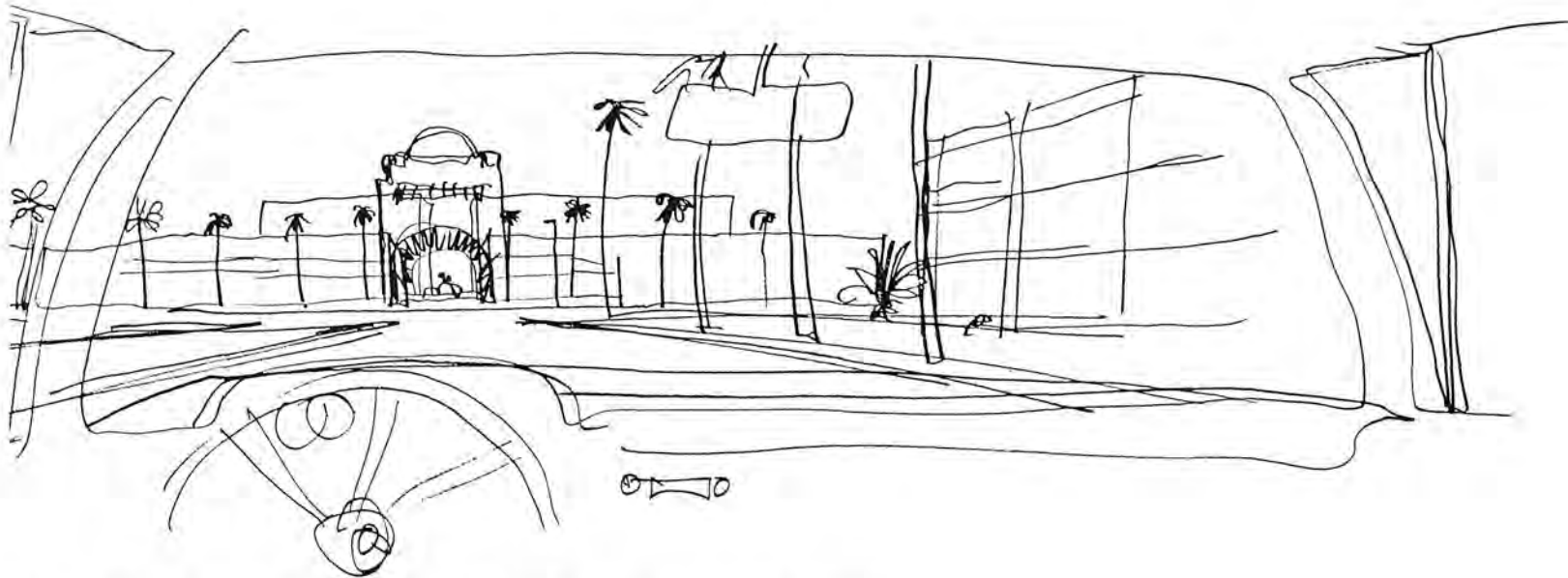


Gilbert will soon be needing a greatly expanded Civic Center. The town should begin the process for master-planning this center now. This would include describing the program elements that will be needed in successive ten year increments; up to the time the town reaches its maximum projected population.

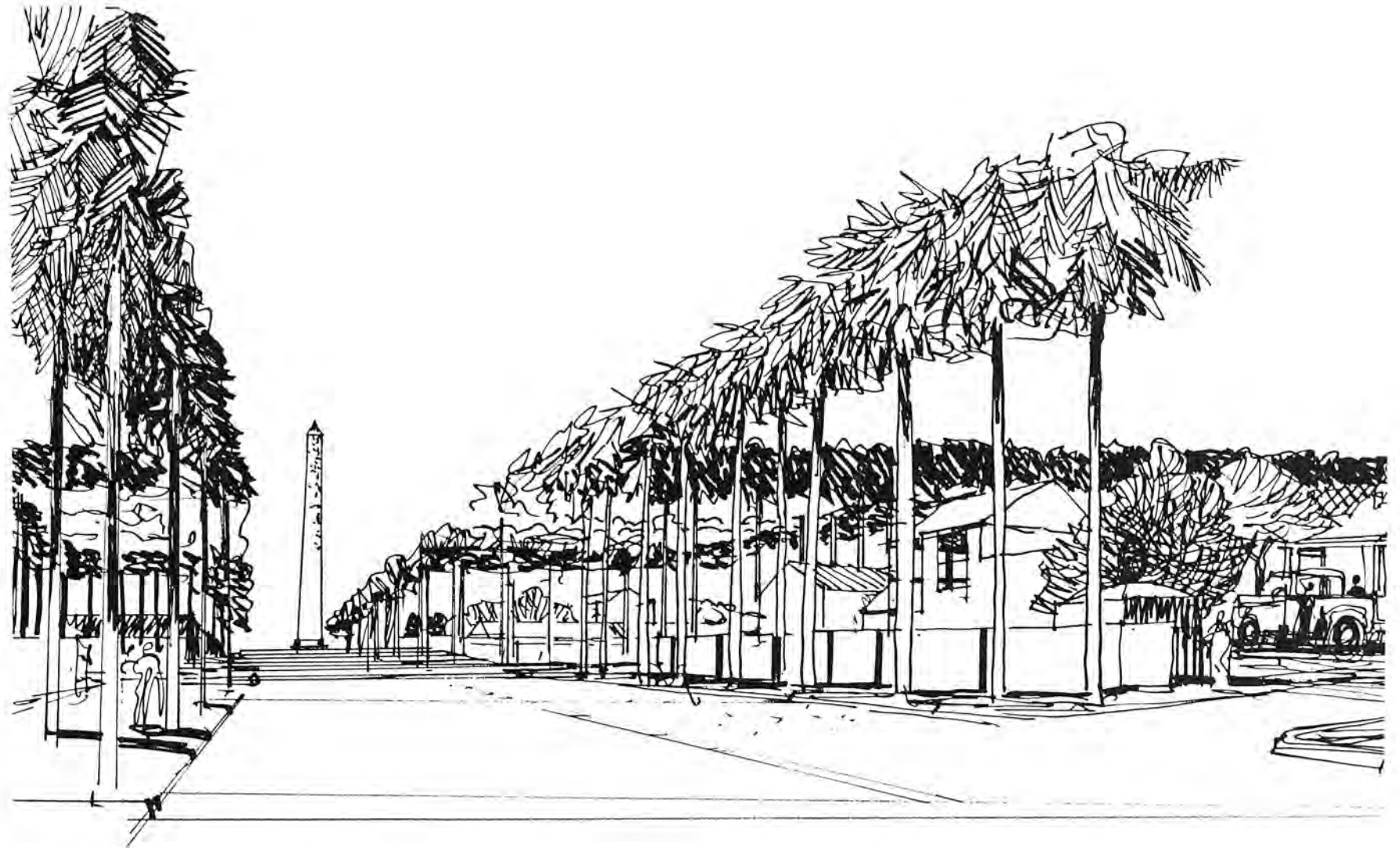
The Team believes that the proposed new Civic Center should remain an identifiable part of the existing town of Gilbert. If relocated on the southern edge of town, the Center would provide

a needed anchor to Gilbert while at the same time moving somewhat closer to the city's future geographic middle.

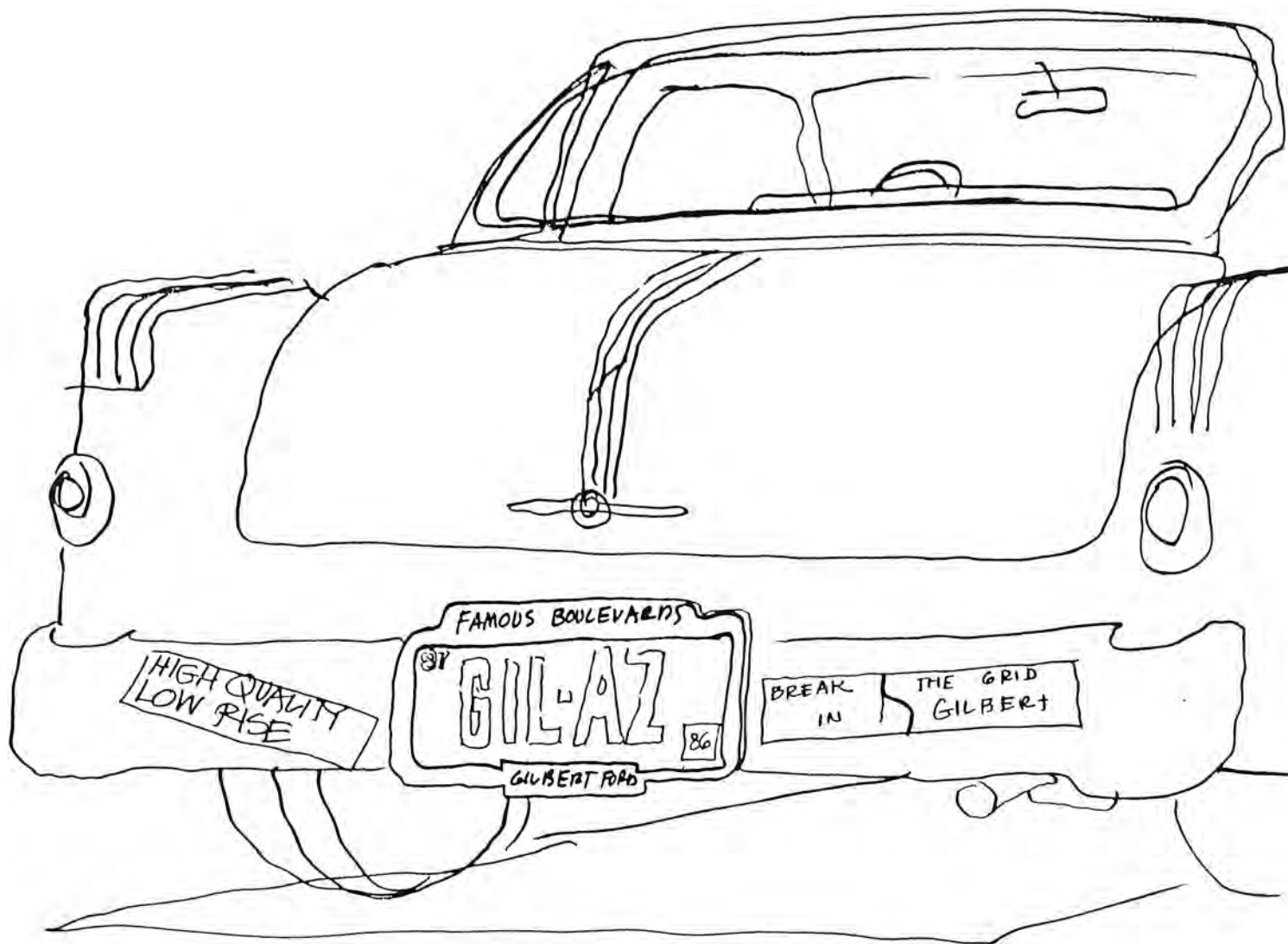
The Center should attempt to include a diversity of functions, such that a "people place" -- friendly and open, can be developed. The drawings suggest a pattern based on generous courtyards, incorporating water features, with low and mid-rise structures serving the government needs defining the public spaces -- rather than dominating them. Specialized retail should be incorporated in the lower level, serving both workers and visitors; to insure activity and interest.



Idea sketch: approach view for the new civic center.



Idea sketch: civic monuments give character to neighborhood units.



"CROSSROADS" CENTER

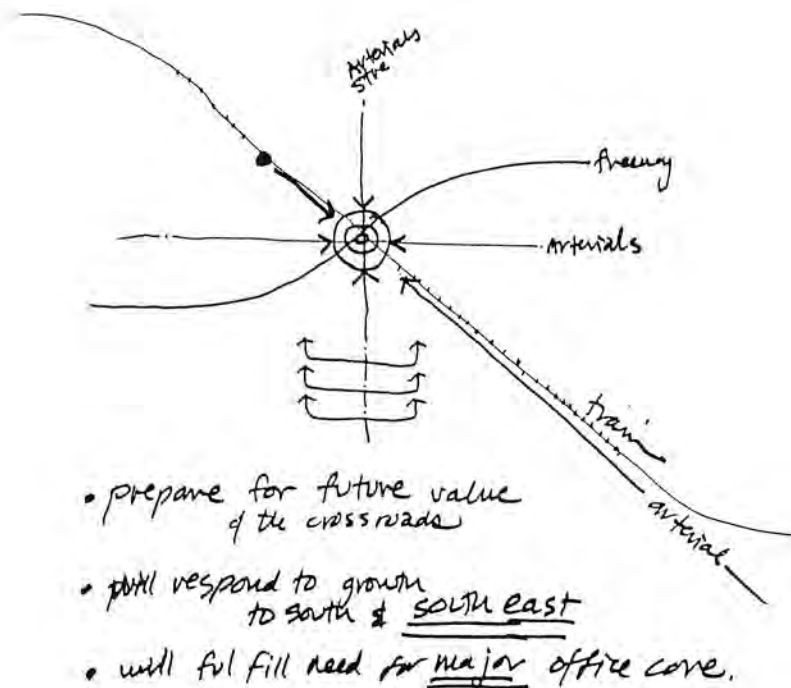
Gilbert has a unique opportunity to develop a totally new commercial center. Critical decisions must be made soon relative to the character, form, and uses that are desired. The focus of the center will logically be at that point of highest accessibility -- thus an obvious target would be at the intersection of the new freeway and the railroad, with additional accessibility from four of the town's major arterials.

The function of such a center would be to provide a new, central employment location. This would add economic stability for Gilbert, and also complement the envisioned neighborhood centers and the existing Gilbert incorporated area. Typical of the uses of the "Crossroads" would be offices, a future major hospital, light industry, major retail (shopping), high density housing, and entertainment. This might well be the site for a future institution of higher education, such as "ASU East."

The future designers of the Crossroads center must look specifically at an urban design agenda that addresses the summer temperature extremes, the desire for a predominantly pedestrian environment, an appropriate mix of uses, a public commons or "green," logical controls for building heights and ground floor uses, and policies that will result in quality architecture. Unfortunately, many of the new "centers" in this and other countries are dismal failures with respect to urban design considerations. A major national or international design competition might be the best alternative to provide a basis for the eventual planning of the Crossroads.

General Planning Guidelines

To achieve an approximate image and to keep development consistent with community goals and needs, many cities and towns rigorously imposed building height limitations. Most have found these moderately successful; despite the quarrelsome and seemingly relentless agitation of succeeding generations of investors who are intent on "cashing in" on zoning changes. Scottsdale is one such community, Washington D.C. another. Many of the older historic communities, such as Annapolis, Maryland rigorously impose development limitations to achieve design objectives and preserve community values.



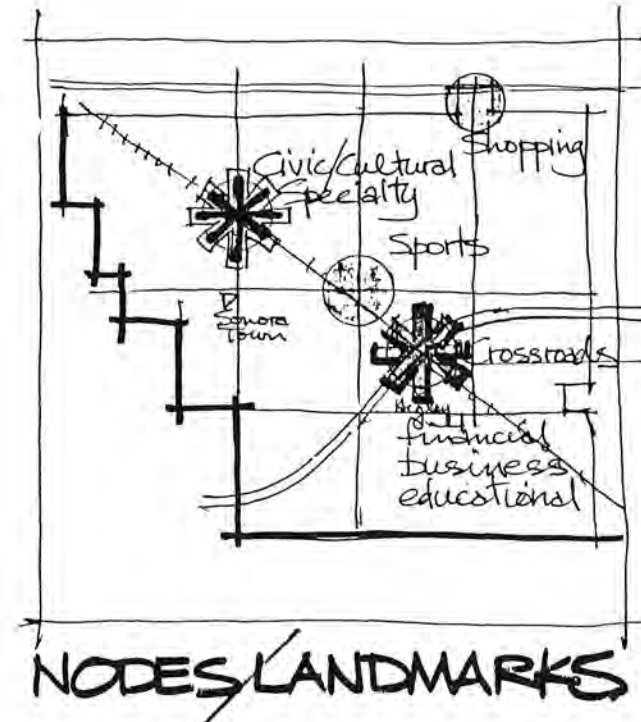
Idea sketch: the transportation crossroads has the potential of becoming a regional business center:

The form and character of towns are greatly influenced by building design. Arguments to the contrary notwithstanding, tall buildings are not inherently economical except in rare situations of tremendously expensive real estate. The purpose of most tall buildings is to become a "billboard," drawing attention or prestige to itself -- rather than the community. The "economics" are either in its advertising value or inflated rents that such "prestige" might attract. All too often tall buildings have a devastating impact on their immediate surroundings -- drawing off existing and future commercial leases from other potential developments while creating a vast sea of parking lots at its base.

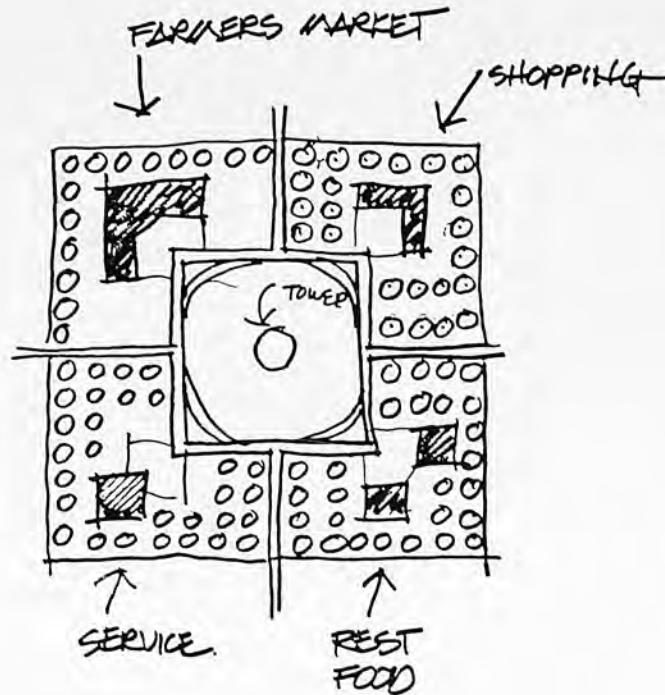
The Team firmly believes that for the next ten to fifteen years, Gilbert should restrict buildings to a maximum of four stories, except in the newly designated Crossroads Center where this limit could be increased to eight. These and other restrictions should then be reviewed, as the community will be in a much better position to assess needs and development goals. Now is the time for Gilbert to clearly articulate its current objectives for urban form, public airspace, and view corridors; before uncontrollable pressures begin to mount for single purpose, randomly placed, multi-story construction.

One exception might be permitted. A single spire, tall and slender in the Crossroads Center area might well serve the purpose of a visual counter-point to the generally horizontal nature of Gilbert and of the future development. Preferably this building or structure would be a public edifice, in a symbolic manner such as offered by the presence of the Eiffel Tower or our Nation's capitol, representing the interests of all the residents.

NO BUILDING
SHALL BE TALLER
THAN THE
TALLEST PALM
ON THE SITE...
T.L.



HIGLEY MARKET



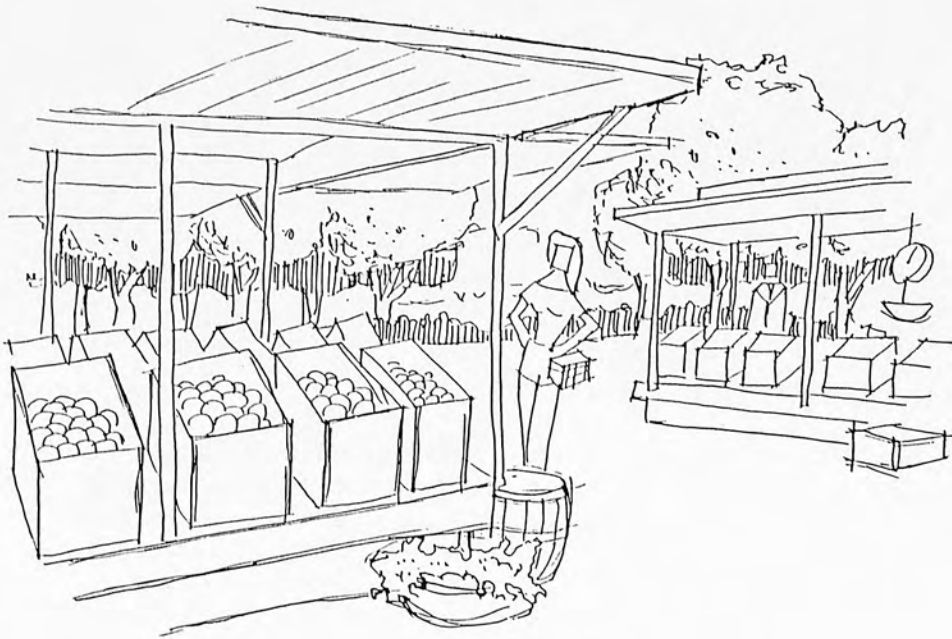
Idea sketch: a farmer's market
at Higley neighborhood center.

If cities are great places to live, it is because they offer a diversity of opportunities that enhance life. Gilbert must attempt to nurture diverse activities and interests if it is to reach its potential as the most desirable place to live in the Southwest.

One such opportunity is presented by the small, unincorporated area of Higley. At the current northwestern terminus of Rittenhouse Road, Higley enjoys very good accessibility via both Williams Field and Higley Roads. The railroad line could provide efficient and direct service to existing Gilbert as well as the proposed "Crossroads" commercial center in the future. The geographic setting the southeastern corner of the Gilbert Planning Area would suggest that Higley could become a significant neighborhood center as the town increases in population.

The current market and shipping activities hint at what Higley might one day become: a colorful, perhaps even festive market area that would enjoy regional recognition as a distinct, interesting, and even entertaining place to shop or visit. Higley Market would cater both to producers and the public, serving both groups in a manner unique to the Valley. The market might also become a major, regional produce distribution center for the East Valley.

It is easy for the Team to envision Higley Market being as well known and frequented as the Los Angeles Market. We would hope that the vitality of the market would not rely on tourists; but instead act as an important part of the life in Gilbert as well as the economic center for trade for the various citrus and agricultural producers.



Idea sketch: a farmer's market.

SONORA TOWN

"Sonora Town" is a small (6-8 acre) community of residents, mostly of Mexican heritage, located on the southwest corner of Gilbert and Warner Roads. The settlement, bordered by a SRP canal on the south, includes approximately forty single family detached dwelling units. The population is believed to be between 100 and 200 residents. Originally the community provided low-income housing for migrant farm workers.

The location of the community is significant for several reasons. First, it is at the intersection of two major arterials. Second, it is located at the southern node of what may become one of the major planning efforts in the city: that of the Gilbert Road City Center. The area is just outside of the current town limits but well within the planning annexation area. Third, directly across Warner to the north is Neely Farms, a major planned area development of approximately 800 acres.

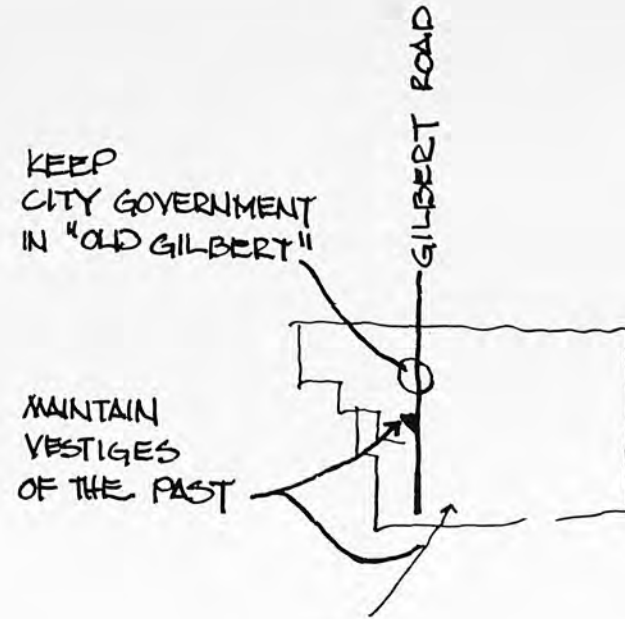
Most of the homes and accessory structures (sheds, "barns" and garages) seem to have been built by the residents; most with what appears to be salvaged building materials, and appear to be older than thirty or forty years. Five or six dwelling units, however, have been constructed with conventional building materials, and are built in a professional manner. One extremely small home (about 300 square feet) is "adding on" (block wall construction) approximately 1,000 s.f. of new construction. Six to eight houses of better construction are kept up with nicely, although simple, landscaping. Most of these also are in good repair and with "new" paint. Most of the lots are narrow -- 30 to 40 feet in width -- but occur in a regular pattern.

The houses facing Warner Road have approximately 20 foot wide front yards, bordered in some instances with a three foot high link fence. Another 15 feet of dirt separates the fences from the current edge of the pavement. When Warner Road is widened, it would appear that the right-of-way will encroach into the yards. There are about half a dozen houses that front the canal with auto access only from the canal R.O.W. road. Most houses do not have driveways. Many older vehicles are parked in front of houses in yards or on the street. One loop road is paved, although in need of improvement. A single, yellow fire hydrant provides some sense of fire protection for the area.

Mature trees border the community and are prevalent within the community. Livestock and animals (horses, cows, goats, chickens, dogs and cats) are also in evidence.

The Sonora Town area, although appearing to some to be run down in general, still is perhaps the only residential area in Gilbert that has a strong sense of community. This character is derived partly from (a) common background and heritage; and (b) a higher density. This housing pattern, in fact, is one the city might consider for other areas. It provides an alternative lifestyle and the richness of a dense community that larger parcels do not and cannot provide.

Because of the complicated ownership patterns ranging back through several generations, it is unlikely that dramatic changes would occur except by unanimous, voluntary consent of the residents. The Team sees no reason that the Town of Gilbert should pursue any relocation efforts. In fact, a stronger argument could be made for enhancing the area by a street improvement program which could include tree plantings; developing self-help workshops for improvements of the residences; and investigating possibilities that might include better public services and a plan for possible incremental expansion of the development pattern to the west.



IMPLEMENTATION

The major obstacles to achieving exemplary communities are usually not directly related to the availability of large sums of funding for public construction. They are instead:

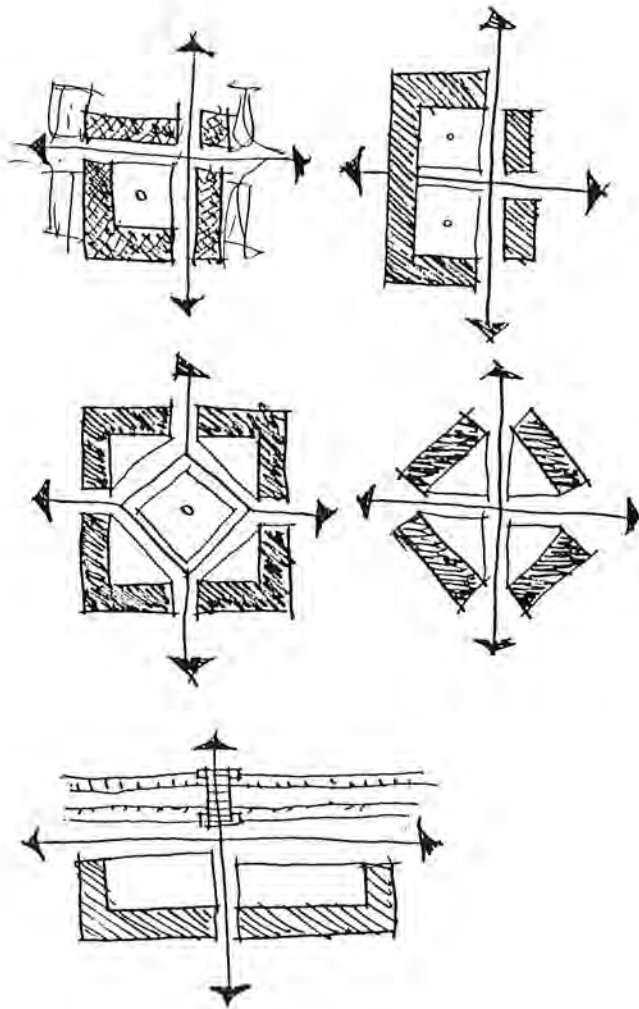
- (1) A lack of community consensus or agreement of objectives, plans or courses of action.
- (2) A lack of quality plans with vision.
- (3) A lack of community resolve and commitment over a long time frame.
- (4) A lack of human resources (staff and consultants) to develop and monitor the necessary implementation strategies and procedures.

Essential to a community consensus is an awareness and understanding by the majority of the citizens of the full range of future options and alternatives and the benefits and costs associated with each. The public must not only understand "what," but also "why," "when," and "how."

Only in communities where the development sector is perceived as also acting in the interests of the broader community -- with a commitment to the very long term -- can one expect broad community participation and support. Without a high degree of private-public sector cooperation, the objectives suggested in this study will not be achievable.

The Town of Gilbert must work very hard at informing and, when necessary, educating the public. The Town must be fair, and often very tough, with developers. The town cannot later "take back" zoning changes and variances once given away. An "attract the project -- at any cost" attitude that disregards the immediate and long term implications will result in lost opportunities. The decisions and results are irrevocable. The town must exercise patience, and must be able to maintain a superior negotiating position of control when considering and recommending on private sector development proposals.

This study has attempted to develop alternative ideas and suggest opportunities for the town's future development. These plans and ideas, while developed quickly, have the benefit of advice



Idea sketch: alternate ways to make neighborhood commercial nodes.

and input from many persons who have had long experience in addressing problems and needs of Gilbert. Nevertheless, these recommendations should not be taken as the end of the debate, but rather the beginning.

The ability to undertake the G/UDAT in cooperation with the long term General Plan update by BRW, Inc. (scheduled for completion three months later) provides a unique opportunity to contrast long range possibilities with shorter term imperatives.

Can these objectives be meshed together?

Certainly a key to a good design are highly skilled professionals. While all designers may have been born equally, they are not -- unfortunately -- equally capable. The Town must continue to work hard at attracting and retaining staff of the highest quality. It must be willing and able to seek out design consultants with the best credentials. These costs are probably the most important investments (and will pay back the biggest dividends) of any the Town will ever make. The successes and failures of other communities easily demonstrate the effect of this clearly established commitment toward achieving excellence.

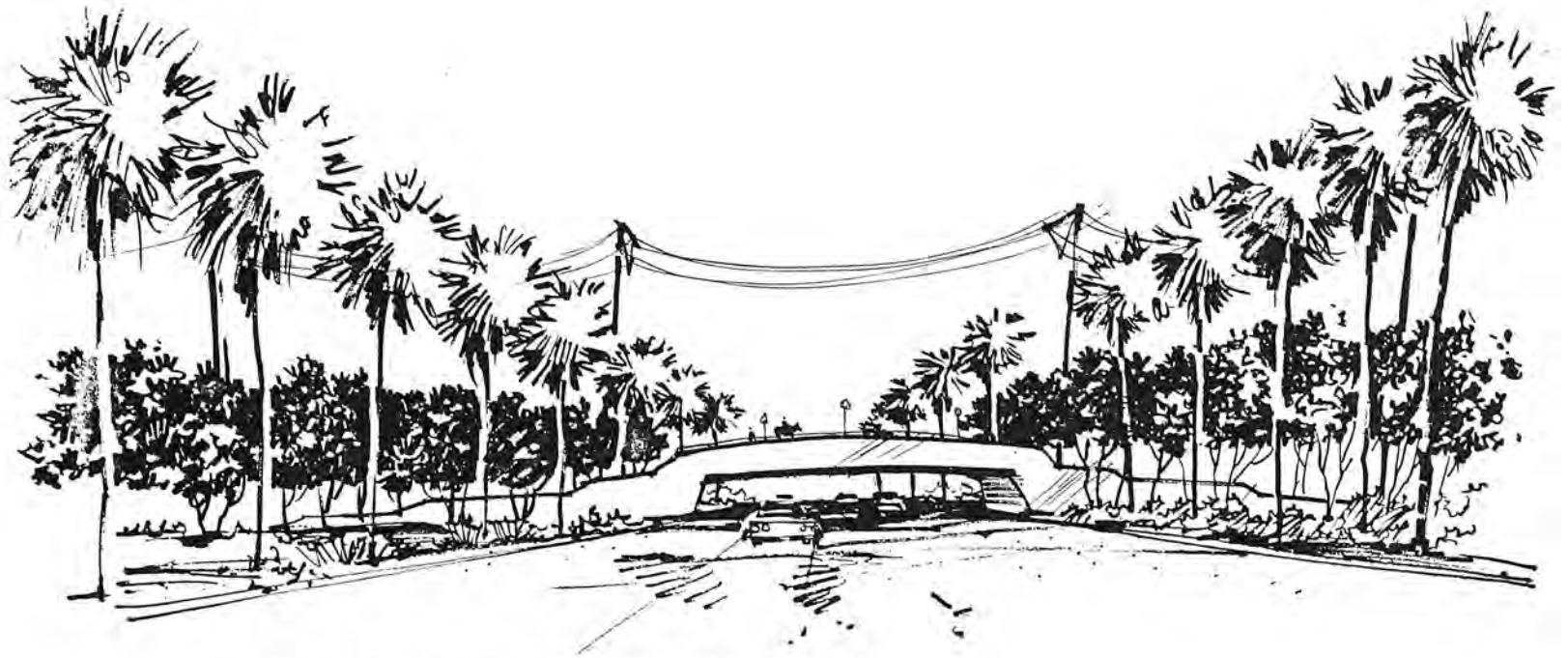
As with most towns that are rapidly growing, demands on the municipal staff far exceed the available resources. In a "catch-up" ball game, where each day yields a new crisis or group of immediate problems that must be solved, little time and energy is usually devoted to long-term goals and the refinement of specific strategies on objectives.

Long range planning and design efforts cannot be relegated to the "back-burner." The Town must discipline itself with a specific timetable for achieving necessary planning tasks -- even when there is no apparent pressure to focus on these policies and strategies. Gilbert must get, and stay, well in front of development if the town is to optimize its opportunities. And while this task may be easy to both write and even accept, very few communities have been able to do what obviously must be done. Anticipating future problems and directing -- rather than following -- growth is a crucial responsibility and continuous activity.

In addition, communities known for their quality virtually always have a dedicated and usually broadly based core of enlightened citizens who have the time and energy to push for civic improve-

ment and to fight (and stop!) projects of dubious value. This leadership is usually fairly small in number, but constantly evolving. It is not a "one-issue" group, and this leadership can sustain efforts over very long periods of time -- sometimes decades. Characteristically this group of respected civic leaders must also have the ability to draw upon very large numbers of other concerned and committed citizens when necessary.

The best and most successful communities also have open political processes, with a very high degree of public participation. Issues are reported widely and fairly by the press -- and their newspapers act as the single most important vehicle for public education. Unfortunately, democracy seems to some a roadblock rather than a basic foundation for building our communities. Only with informed and full participation can we expect greatness in the eventual development of Gilbert.



Idea sketch: equestrian overpass
over arterial streets.



Bill Callis, Sponsor
American Investments



Jay Ellingson, Sponsor
Western Savings



Victor McCleve, Sponsor
McCleve Construction



Dennis Barney, Sponsor
Val Vista Lakes



Ray Olsen, Sponsor
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Dave McNelis, Sponsor
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State Bank



Gene Morrison, Sponsor
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Construction



Fred Moor, Sponsor
Valley National Bank



Beky Beaton, Editor
Gilbert Independent

THE PEOPLE BEHIND THE GILBERT/UDAT...



Alan Turley, AIA
Steering Committee
Chairman



David Scheatzle, AIA
Public Information



Rick Merritt
Gilbert Planning Director



Vice Mayor
Arlon Peterson



Team facilitator Roger Schlantz, AIA, Chairman of ASU's Department of Architecture, discusses the team's work with Elaine Morrison, a member of the Steering Committee, and Town Manager Kent Cooper.



Mayor L.J. Reed



Jess McDowell, AIA
Post Study Documents



John Ellingson
Steering Committee



Paul Huston
Steering Committee



Bradley Barrett
Steering Committee



Eric Paul, AIA
Accomodations and
Facilities



The Salt River Project donated helicopter time for the Team's orientation flight over the Gilbert Planning Area. From left: Team Members, Russell Weymiller, Sinclair Black, Thomas Lagging, James Abell and Town Planning Director, Rick Merritt.



Kevin Smith
Gilbert Economic
Development



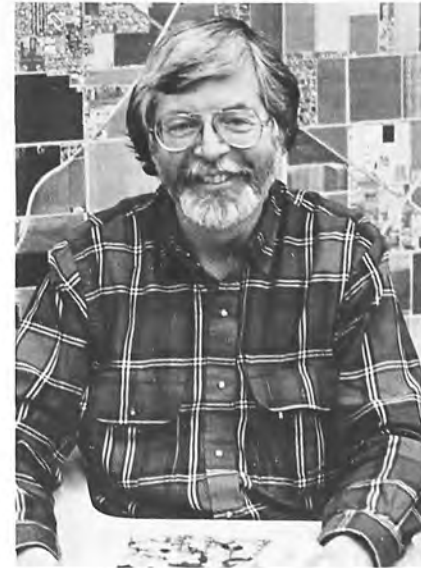
Bob McNamara
Steering Committee



Charles Rapp, ASLA
San Clemente, Calif.



Thomas Lagging, AIA
Lincoln, Nebraska



Sinclair Black, FAIA
Austin, Texas



Tim McGinty
Scottsdale, Arizona



Bruce Kimball, AIA
Ahwatukee, Arizona



James Abell, AIA
Tempe, Arizona



Russell Weymiller, AIA
Gilbert, Arizona
Steering Committee



Michael Fifield, AIA
Tempe, Arizona
Faculty Advisor



A. Dewey Jensen, Phd
Flagstaff, Arizona

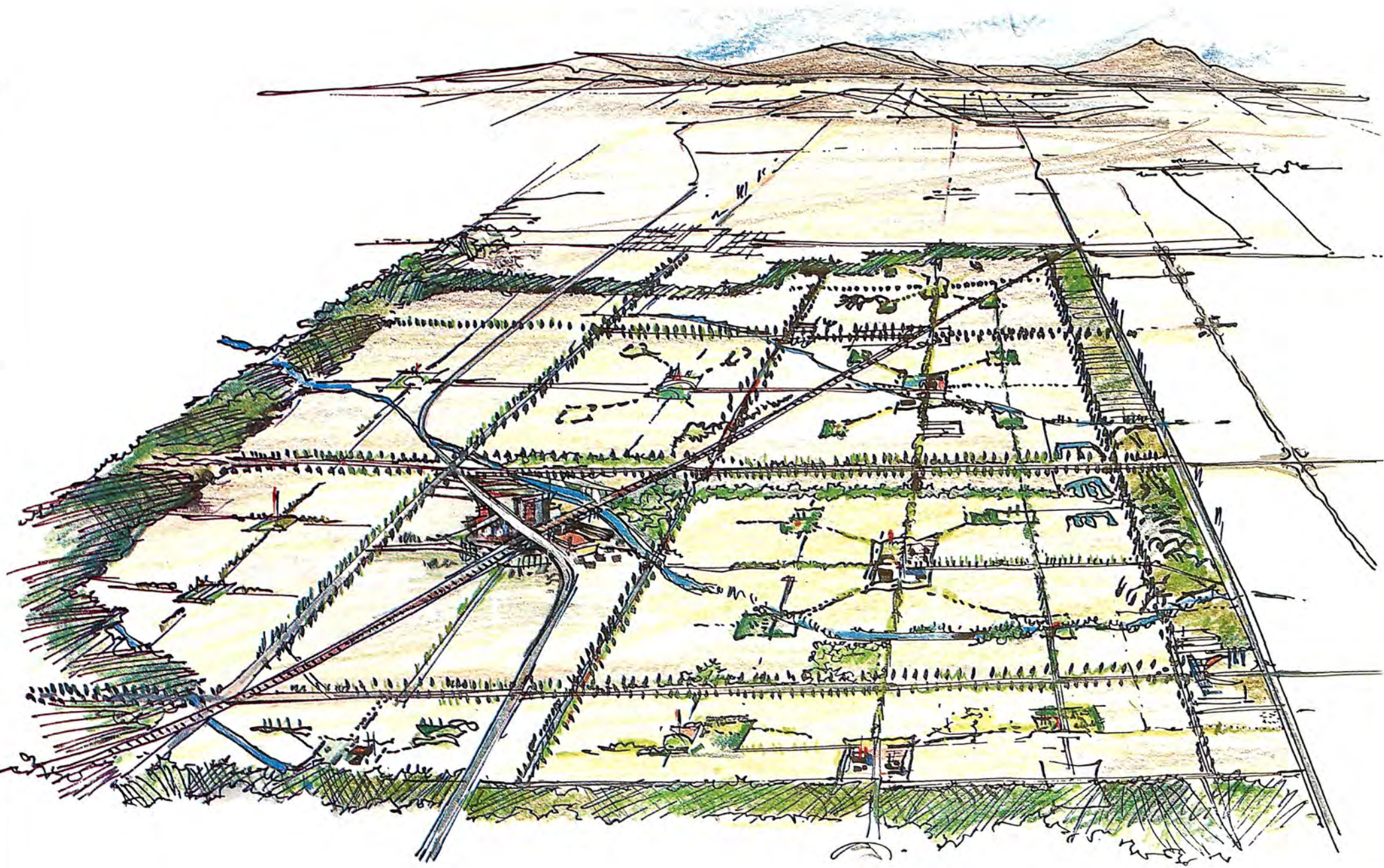
The Members of the Gilbert Urban Design Assistance Team



Above: Arizona State University 4th year architecture students prepared for and assisted in the team's visit. **Kneeling** from left to right: Alan Kenson, Jeffrey Sinarjo, Curtis Clark, Vincent DiBella, Greg Schouten, Mario Stellino, Susan Johnson, Todd Voelker. **Standing** from left to right: Professor Michael Fifield, Susan Charnetsky, Craig Booth, Paul Glosniak, Cordell Lietz, Ilija Mosscrop, Richie Poole, Debra Shideler, Lesley Partch, Roger Schluntz, Chairman.



At Left: Professor Michael Fifield, Eric Paul, Roger Schluntz, and Richard Morrison who piloted and donated flying time for the team's orientation.



Gilbert Urban Design Assistance Team, Rio Salado Chapter, American Institute of Architects

