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# I. INTRODUCTION

## What is R/UDAT and why are they here?

R/UDAT is not a big green frog croaking, "rudat...rudat". It is the Regional/Urban Design Assistance Team which visits those communities who have requested professional assistance in the solving of their urban and environmental problems. In essence, R/UDAT is an urban design SWAT team, using their special training and expertise to solve existing problems.

The assistance R/UDAT provides is a community service (project/function/program) of the American Institute of Architects (AIA). The Urban Planning and Design Committee of the AIA receives the community's request for assistance, then selects professionals for their expertise in the specific disciplines which have been deemed necessary to respond to the particular problems of the community. The members of the team receive no compensation for their services. Furthermore, they agree prior to the visit that they will not accept any commissions or consulting work which might result from this effort.

The visit is a four day labor intensive process in which the members must quickly assimilate facts, evaluate the existing situation and

arrive at a plan of action. The format of the visit consists of air, automobile and bus tours to determine the visual situation first hand; community meetings and interviews to generate user input and to build community support; brainstorming sessions to determine a direction and to develop implementable solutions; and finally, the preparation of a written report and presentation to the community. R/UDAT studies characteristically produce implementable solutions. This means a proposal which can be accomplished within a reasonable period of time; which can be reasonably financed; which can be executed legally; and which satisfies the community enough to support it.

The origination of the Bellaire R/UDAT came in the Fall of 1977 when City Council approved participation. Letters were sent to various neighborhood, civic, religious and political groups to determine community support. The impressive response of pledges for money, equipment and personnel of a Liaison Committee and work was begun determining the scope and objectives of the study. With determination of the "C.B.D." as the focal point of the study, application was made to the Urban Planning and Design Committee in May 1978.

The strong show of broad base support encouraged the Urban Planning and Design Committee to approve the next step and in

September 1978, send a committee member, Jules Gregory, for an evaluation visit to Bellaire. Mr. Gregory toured the community by helicopter, by automobile and by foot, talking to residents and merchants. During his visit, he also met with representatives of various community leaders, organization leaders, Mayor Louise Ware and the Liaison Committee. Mr. Gregory returned and reported to the committee that "the opportunities for a successful R/UDAT" were great and that the citizens were ready to go. Upon this recommendation, the committee approved the study and the dates of November 10 through 13, 1978 were set.

The R/UDAT study has been one of the most exciting and dynamic endeavors in which I have ever been involved. It is my belief that the community will find the final report equally as exciting.

The R/UDAT study has truly been a team effort from the beginning. Although it was initiated by the City Council, the business and residential community became quickly involved in its support. Thanks go to members of the Executive Committee, Local Liaison Committee and the Downtowners Committee for their efforts in behalf of the study. Special thanks goes to members of the Steering Committee: Mayor Ware, Howard Templin, Ted Turk, Bill Borden, Roger Westrup, Joel Nash and Sara Jane White. Dan Edward's logistics assistance was invaluable. Without the splendid cooperation of these people my job would have been much less pleasant.

The R/UDAT team, under the able leadership of Ron Kull, was impressive in its makeup of energy. We were fortunate to obtain the talents of these men and women without the cost normally charged for such services. For a few thousand dollars in expenses, we received many thousand dollars worth of consultation.

Also involved were many volunteer residents, students, developers and surrounding resource people of all types.

In all there were over a hundred people in the R/UDAT effort.

It is my hope that our efforts do not end with this report but that they continue to fruition. Implementation of R/UDAT suggestions will continue to require the joint efforts of City Government and the business and residential community. Only through cooperation can we achieve our common goal of a better place to live, work and play.

*Bill Berryhill*



## R/UDAT - Intentions

1. The R/UDAT team, a creation of the American Institute of Architects, has been asked to assist the City of Bellaire in resolving some very basic issues. These issues relate to a community image, land development and traffic congestion. It is our intention to develop a clear, concise approach for solving the problems as we perceive them.
2. Action is the most important product of this team's effort. Its report to the community is structured to identify a process for reaching the end result. The method of accomplishing this result is defined in both economical and physical terms.

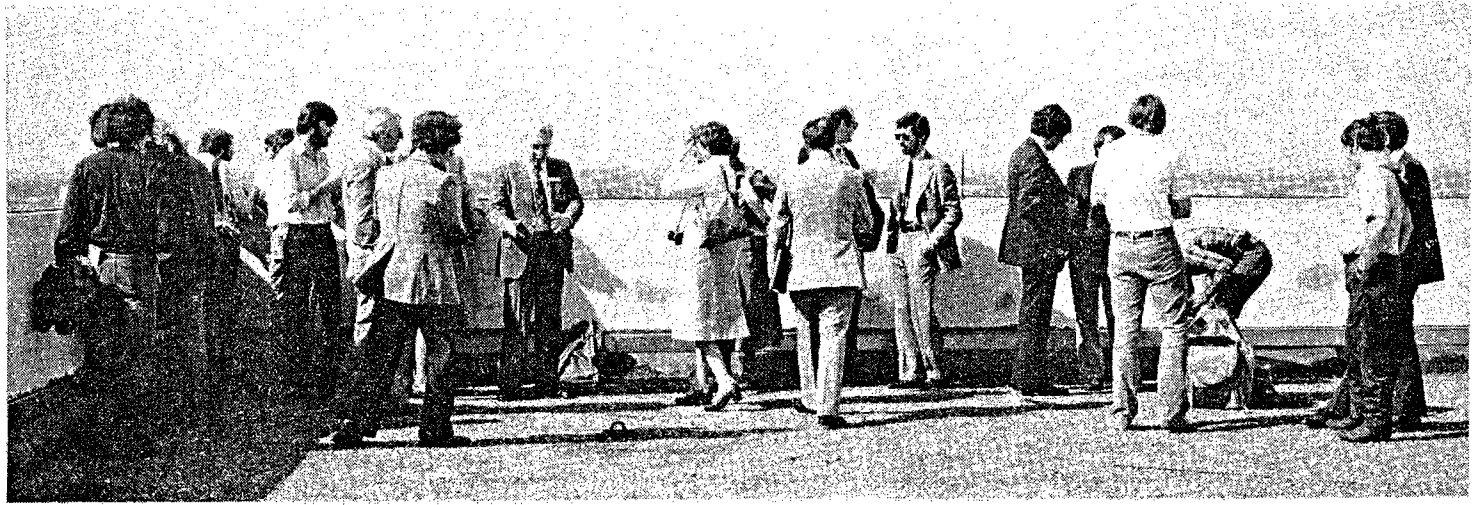
The implementation of the proposals contained in this report must be supported by the community at large. They must understand the process outlined here if the goal is ever to be achieved. The city's officials have strongly supported the R/UDAT team's study of Bellaire and are making every effort to grapple intelligently with the difficult issues facing this

community.

The R/UDAT team has spoken with many people in the community - elected officials, merchants, developers, citizens' groups, bankers, and others - and has immersed itself in a great deal of information about Bellaire in making its recommendations. Local architectural firms, city and regional governments, Rice University, University of Houston, the Greater Bellaire Chamber of Commerce and many more have provided an impressive amount of useful information about the issues facing Bellaire, existing and proposed developments and jurisdictional responsibilities.

During our stay, we have traveled by foot, bus and helicopter to get a feeling of the City of Bellaire and the problems and opportunities confronting it. We met with various City representatives and community and business leaders in a half-day session on Friday afternoon and spent Saturday morning listening to residents discuss their feelings about their community. All the R/UDAT members agree that our discussions with the many people we spoke to conveyed the community's support for R/UDAT and the hope that we might help resolve the issues facing Bellaire.





## II. CITY CONTEXT

### A. History

The City of Bellaire had its beginning in a quiet rural setting soon after the turn of the century. This was long before Houston had assumed its place as the fifth largest metropolitan area and the fastest growing big city in the nation.

Nevertheless, from the start, Bellaire had a close relationship to Houston. Houston's first residential suburb was built by the future founder of Bellaire, who was Mr. W.W. Baldwin, Vice-President of the Burlington Railroad. His first venture in Houston was so successful that he began to look for other tracts of land and thus, saw the potential of the bald, treeless prairie land south of Houston that is now Bellaire. In 1909, Mr. Baldwin purchased 9,700 acres of the DeMoss Ranch which he called Westmoreland Farms. The original townsite of two square miles was part of the purchase and subsequently filed upon in 1911. Incorporation followed in 1918.

Though its incorporation was purportedly triggered by the problem of stray cattle wandering into the yards of the 200-resident community, there is evidence that Bellaire was perceived as a town or village with a separate community identity from its inception. This is apparent in that, while the first few

homes were being built in 1910, the first Bellaire businesses were also being established. Teas Nursery was opened in 1910. Shortly after, in 1911, a two-story merchandise building and hotel were constructed. The hotel rooms were then converted into living quarters by the man who owned and operated the store below. The general store, though changing hands, continued to provide a vital service to the small community that was then "a long trip to Houston". However, that "long trip" had been made easier by the street car that made its first trip between the large city and Bellaire in 1910 and its last trip in 1929.

In the early years, there was also a realtor, a dairy that delivered milk from door to door, grocery stores, drug store, feed stores, barber shops and a post office. And then, the first cafe came to town in 1934! Thus, Bellaire's development prior to 1940 was characterized by modest residential growth, accompanied by retail and commercial growth that served the needs of the community and contributed to its vitality and sense of well-being.

The event of World War II shaped the next era in Bellaire as it did throughout the nation. Perhaps anticipating the rapid change to come, Bellaire passed its first



zoning ordinance in 1939, when there were still only 330 homes and the "handfull" of businesses previously described. Since Bellaire was now on the periphery of Houston instead of 10 miles away, its citizens felt the need to protect its residential neighborhoods.

Another significant event followed in 1949 when the City had reached a population of over 5,000. As a result, the Home Rule Charter was adopted and a council-manager form of government was established to more efficiently provide a full range of City services. No sooner had the City adopted its Home Rule Charter, gaining the right to annex more than one-half mile at a time, than it lost the opportunity to annex to Houston. Bellaire was quickly surrounded on three sides with West University enclosing it on the fourth side. Still, the community would experience a construction boom that would nearly double by 1960 the 3,156 homes that existed in 1950. The post World War II construction boom era was virtually over by that time. From the post World War II era emerged a society that was wed to the automobile. Thus came the need to provide for more and more highway and street systems to accommodate the increasing number of automobiles.

The last period of Bellaire's history, beginning in the 1960's up to the present time, is characterized by the events that were brought about by the construction of Loop 610 and the increasing flows of traffic on two major thoroughfares transecting the City. The problems of the rapid growth of Houston thus became the problems of Bellaire, and Loop 610 became the focal point of concern in the minds of Bellaire citizens.

Some saw Loop 610 as opportunity for the community to increase the tax base and a way to insure continual upgrading of public facilities serving the residential and commercial areas, without undue tax burden on the residential community. Between 1974 and 1976, this perspective led to construction of the ten story Texaco Building, Prudential complex, the Sun Building, the St. Paul Building, the Northern Gas Building and 5909 West Loop South. Four more projects were proposed or in hearings.

The rapid growth of Loop 610 commercial development aroused citizens with another viewpoint. In addition, several unrelated but unpopular proposals surfaced through the City's planning process. These forces contributed to confusion, frustration and fears of further disruption of neighborhood stability and tranquility. The

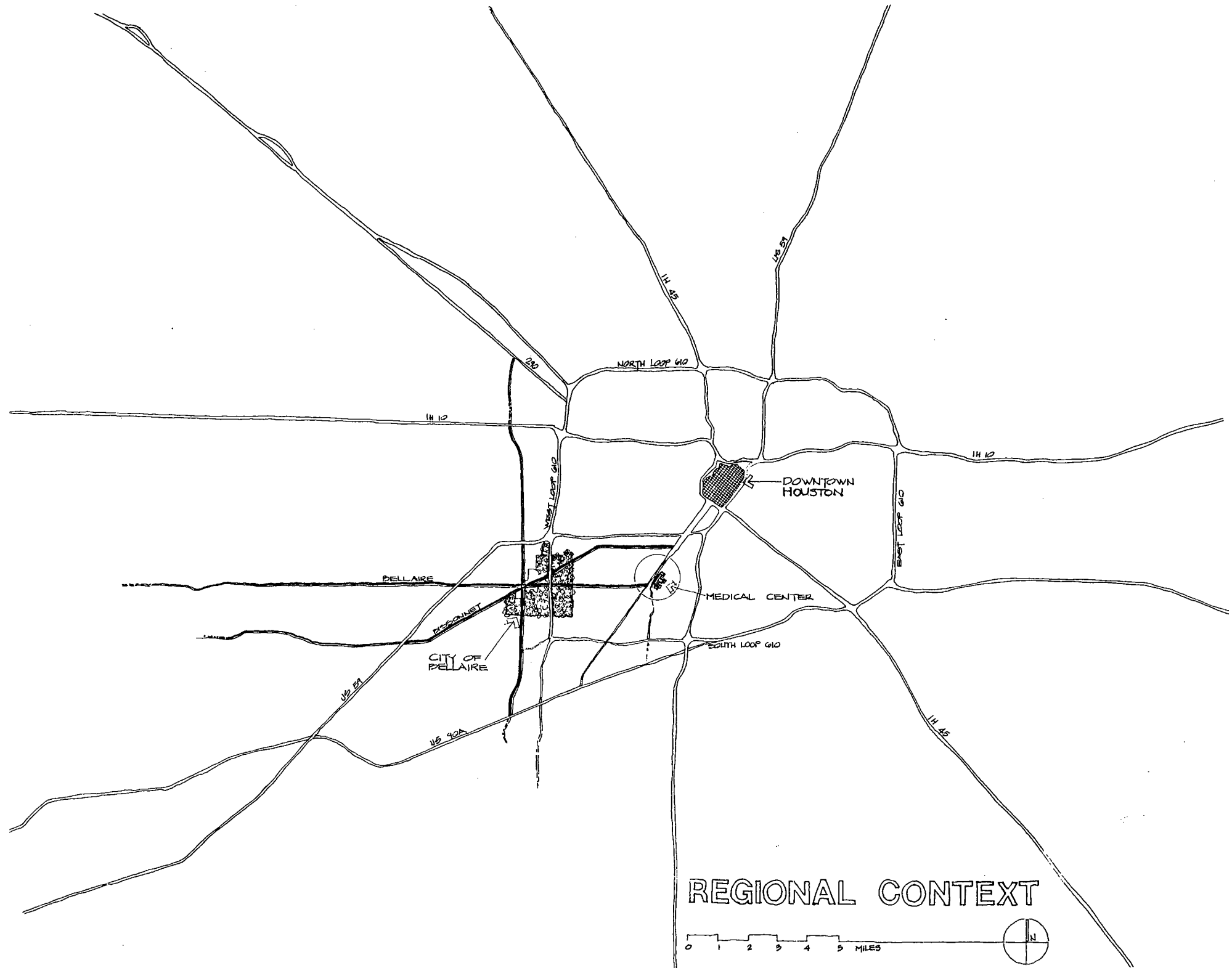
opposition organized. Political conflict ensued that resulted in three city council elections in six months, representing two reversals in the voters' decisions - from a growth to a no-growth posture, and back to a managed growth posture. Now the citizens of the community have gone back to work in an important period for the City. Policies set now will determine the future viability of the City and hopefully preserve its image as a special place to live, work and play.

B. Relationship to Houston and the Metropolitan Region

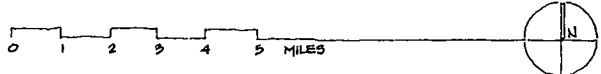
The Houston-Galveston metropolitan area will have a population of over three million persons in the early 1980's and will continue to grow at the rate of 5% per year through the year 2000. Bellaire's present population is approximately 20,000, and is expected to increase to approximately 23,000 by the year 2000. (A growth rate of less than 1% per year). This enormous differential in size and rate of growth and Bellaire's tax base, make Bellaire's position in the Houston region a vulnerable one. Houston continuously needs to annex suburban residential areas in order to broaden its tax base and provide a source of revenue to meet the increasing demand for municipal services. Houston's City Council is currently preparing to annex 14 areas which will add 45 square miles and more than 100,000 residents to the city. If the growth of Bellaire's own tax base fails to keep pace with its residents' demands for public services and its fiscal stability is threatened, it too will become a reluctant candidate for annexation.

Continuing explosive development in the southwest quadrant of the metropolitan

region surrounding Bellaire will create heavy development pressure in Bellaire itself. Large, high density townhouse developments are appearing on Bellaire's northern and western borders; pressure for additional office building development along Loop 610 will continue both to the north and to the south of its intersection with Bellaire; existing shopping complexes in the western portion of the Houston metropolitan area (The Galleria, Sharpstown, Meyerland) will continue to expand and new shopping complexes will spring up. Bellaire must be prepared to accommodate some of this growth in order to remain attractive to residents, businesses and shoppers, maintain its tax base, fiscal stability and preserve its political independence and civic identity in the Houston region.



# REGIONAL CONTEXT



### C. Natural Environment

\* Note: The Natural Environment description of this report was taken from Bellaire, College of Architecture/University of Houston Study.

The city site is relatively flat, being located in the coastal plain of the Gulf of Mexico. The area is lush in vegetation partially due to the long growing season that averages 275 days per year. Nearly every variety of tree or shrub, both domestic and imported can be found here. Native oak and pecan, hackberry, cottonwood and pine are abundant. At the time of Bellaire's conception, around the turn of the century, the topography consisted of open prairie land. Today, the residential sectors of Bellaire present a lush green environment for the inhabitants, while the commercial area is toally deprived of tree canopy and entirely paved, resulting in a harsh, hot and unprotected environment.

Hundreds of varieties of wildlife can be found, small fur bearing animals including rabbits, squirrels, rodents, etc, and bird life such as cardinals, sparrows, pigeons, woodpeckers, finch and humming birds are plentiful. The excellent tree cover and green areas provide the habitats for the many wildlife creatures. The only lacking natural element in Bellaire is water.

No major streams, ponds or lakes are located within the City limits.

#### Drainage Patterns

The primary natural drainage direction is from north to south. The City employs both curb and gutter and open ditch drainage systems. Brays Bayou, to the southeast of the City, is the ultimate discharge point for all surface drainage. It has been observed that under periods of severe rainstorms, some of the streets, particularly those in the eastern part of Bellaire, flood to the extent that some vehicular movement is impeded.





### Soils, Geology and Subsidence

The soil types for most of the City are Lake Charles, Bernard and Midland, which primarily consist of clay bodies. Being located in the coastal plain area, most soils are a result of sedimentation. As the Gulf of Mexico retreated to its present position, a layering of deposited clays developed.

The soils in this area are considered relatively unstable due to shear slippages of the clay types, as can be witnessed by the cracks in pavement throughout the area. Land subsidence has not been a serious problem in the City of Bellaire. This primarily has been due to the limited amount of multistory buildings which currently exist in Bellaire as well as the fact that water is being pumped from the ground for only residential and light commercial usage and not for heavy industrial purposes.

### Climate

Bellaire is located in a region which is characterized by a relatively mild climate with an average yearly temperature of 68 to 70 degrees Fahrenheit. Typically, the coldest month of the year, January, is approximately 55°F while

July, the hottest, is usually around 84°F. Harris County's average relative humidity is 78% to 79%, and the normal precipitation is about forty-five inches per year. All of these factors contribute to making Bellaire a favorable environment in which to live.

D. Political Structure and Government Capabilities

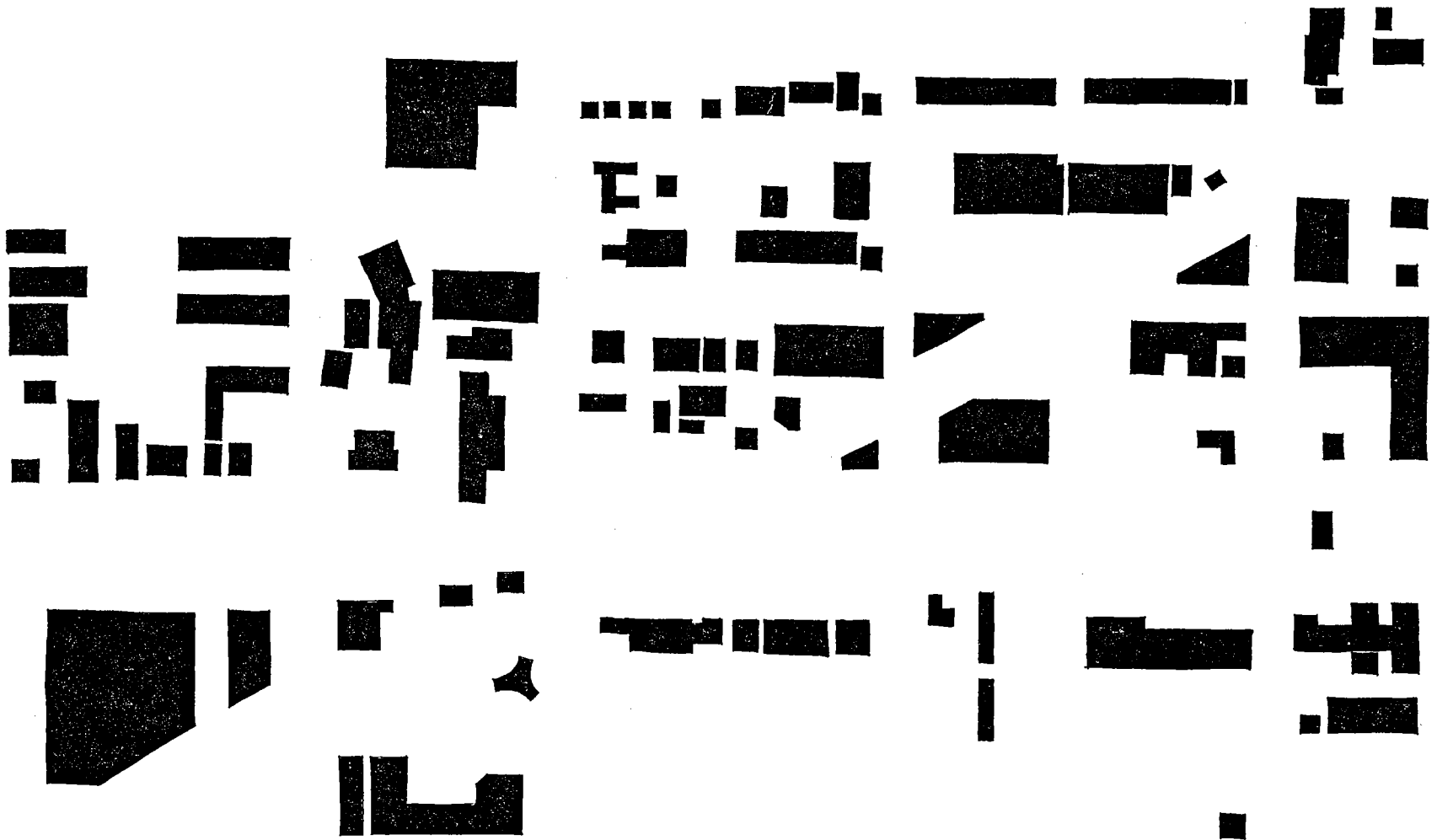
Bellaire's governmental structure is in the council-manager form. The City Council is the policy-making and legislative atom of the government and consists of six members elected at large for up to two consecutive two-year terms. The mayor is also elected by the electorate, but serves only as the presiding officer of the Council and votes to break ties. The Council appoints the City Manager the Chief Administrative officer, who carries out the Council's policy decisions and is in charge of the City's day-to-day affairs. The City Manager has an administrative staff of three. The Council also appoints the planning and zoning commission, which consists of nine members, three of whom are appointed every two years. The Commission has a staff of two: a Chief Planner and an Assistant Planner. In addition, the Council appoints the Board of Equalization, which hears appeals from tax assessments set by the Division of Assessments, and the Board of Adjustment, which hears zoning and building code variance

applications. The building department presently has two building inspectors, with funds for an additional inspector.

The present council's chief weakness is a lack of governmental experience among most of its members resulting in a degree of uncertainty regarding its policy-making role, but this weakness will obviously be cured with time and the process of self-education which the Council is now under-going. The City Manager and most of the members of the administrative boards have significant prior experience in their positions. The city government, as a whole, enjoys a reputation for competence and honesty.

The present governmental structure and staff appear generally adequate to undertake the development program suggested in this study. The necessary administrative and financial expertise probably exists among the City Staff to undertake the management duties which the development program suggested here. No additional personnel would be needed for these tasks, with the exception of a need for additional building inspectors (possibly two or three more) to administer the code enforcement program

in the C.B.D. called for in  
Phase II of the proposed de-  
velopment program.



VISUAL CONFUSION



### III. ISSUES

#### A. Community Attitude

##### Expectations

Some concern has been expressed that there have been enough plans prepared for resolving the physical and economic problems of Bellaire. However, in our opinion, the general mood is healthy and we see the community at large ready to act in an appropriate manner.

##### Desire for Change

Many people have expressed the desire to change the looks of the Bellaire business area. This feeling was expressed by merchants and residents alike. From some, the concern is manifested as a desire to make the business area compatible with the economic status of the residential area. From others, the concern identifies the need for pedestrian amenities, crosswalks, sidewalks, curbs, etc., not only to enhance aesthetic quality but also to provide safe pedestrian circulation.

Still others have requested solutions to the vehicular traffic problem, including traffic signalization.

Additional comments and concerns have been expressed about possible development along Loop 610. Whatever the concern, the citizens have expressed the need for change.

Change always has some degree of risk; there can be the fear of more plans, more expectation, more flexibility. A higher level of trust must be developed between the citizens and their government that will reduce the fear of the unknown.

##### Communication

Effective communication among citizens, council and the planning and zoning commission is very important. The citizens have a valuable contribution to make towards the future of their community, and they should be incorporated in the decision-making process. The mechanisms for effective citizen participation presently exist - citizen's groups, open commission meetings, etc. For those who want to be well informed, but take a less active role, cable television and newspapers are excellent vehicles for informing the public.

Image: "Small Town Feeling"

The majority of people want to maintain the small town feeling that distinguishes Bellaire from Houston. That feeling is manifested in many ways. To some, it's a village, a friendly place to shop and a spot for picking up those essential home improvements or automotive repairs. To other residents, Bellaire is symbolized by a feeling of friendliness, caring for your neighbor. Many expressed the feeling as a commonality of interest and goals; for others, Bellaire was their own personal identity symbol in a regional area growing so fast that all sense of the personal feeling is lost. To others, it's a manageable size that permits people to carry out the daily life cycle without ever having to leave their city. From most everyone we spoke to we heard that they were proud to be a part of Bellaire.

#### Resources

The "richness" that Bellaire exhibits is an outgrowth of it's many resources. There are numerous residential opportunities for young families,

middle aged residents and elderly. The housing market is varied enough to satisfy a broad age and economic group. This housing stock is enhanced by parks, trees and wide tree-lined streets.

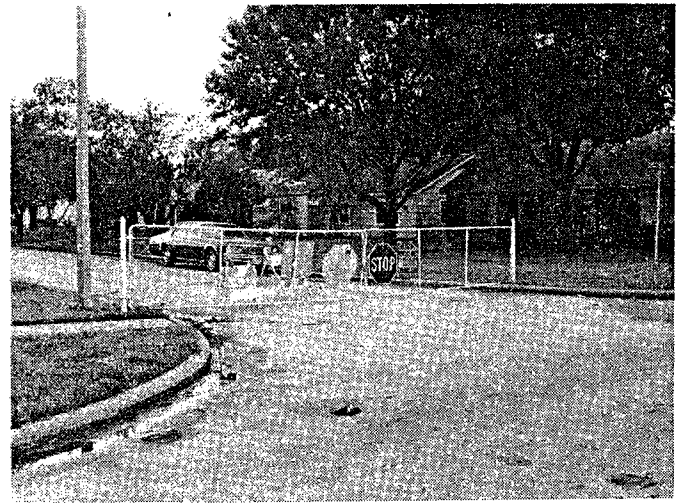
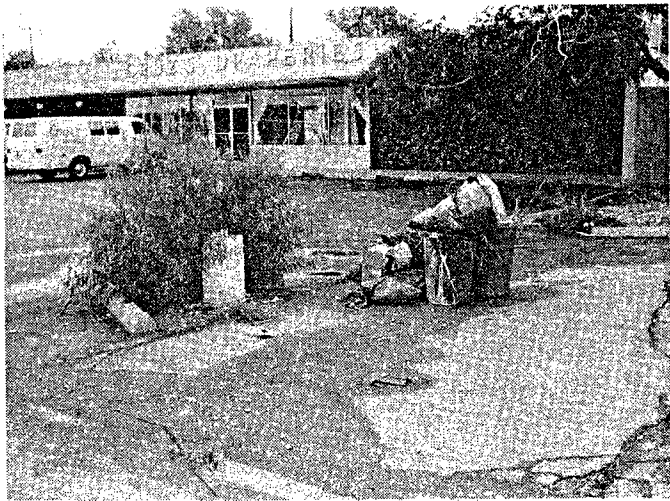
Schools become an important resource when evaluating the positive aspects of any community. To our knowledge, Bellaire respects this valuable resource.

Location is another key resource. The community is within 5 - 10 minutes, normal driving time, to three major shopping facilities. Rice University and the Medical Center are near by, and the 610 Loop offers high speed access to other points of interest in the greater Houston area.

Without question, aside from it's population, land in Bellaire is one of its richest commodities. While residential land is mostly developed, commercial sites are still available. This resource should be developed at the appropriate times with great wisdom and care.

#### Life Style

There is a general feeling that many residents are proud of the fact that they are a "pay as you go" community. The bonding capacity of the city is good and the city has little debt. This financial







solidity is reflected in the city's fiscal policies.

During our brief stay, we have heard many people say they pitch in and help landscape the school and other public facilities. This attitude of "help thy neighbor" is a very positive attitude for the future growth of Bellaire.

#### Business Mix

Many residents and merchants have told us that they want to see the business area develop with its own special character, exemplified by small, quality shops, special furniture and antiques, lighting and decorating establishments, home improvement centers and other specialty items. The retail mix of the business area could be expanded to include sporting goods, bikes, restaurants and other recreational goods designed to attract lunchtime shoppers and residents alike. Many people told us there is a great need for more eating establishments. Food places of all types are possible due to the availability of a captive market of employees along the 610 Loop and the expanded shopping alternatives.

#### Access To Shopping

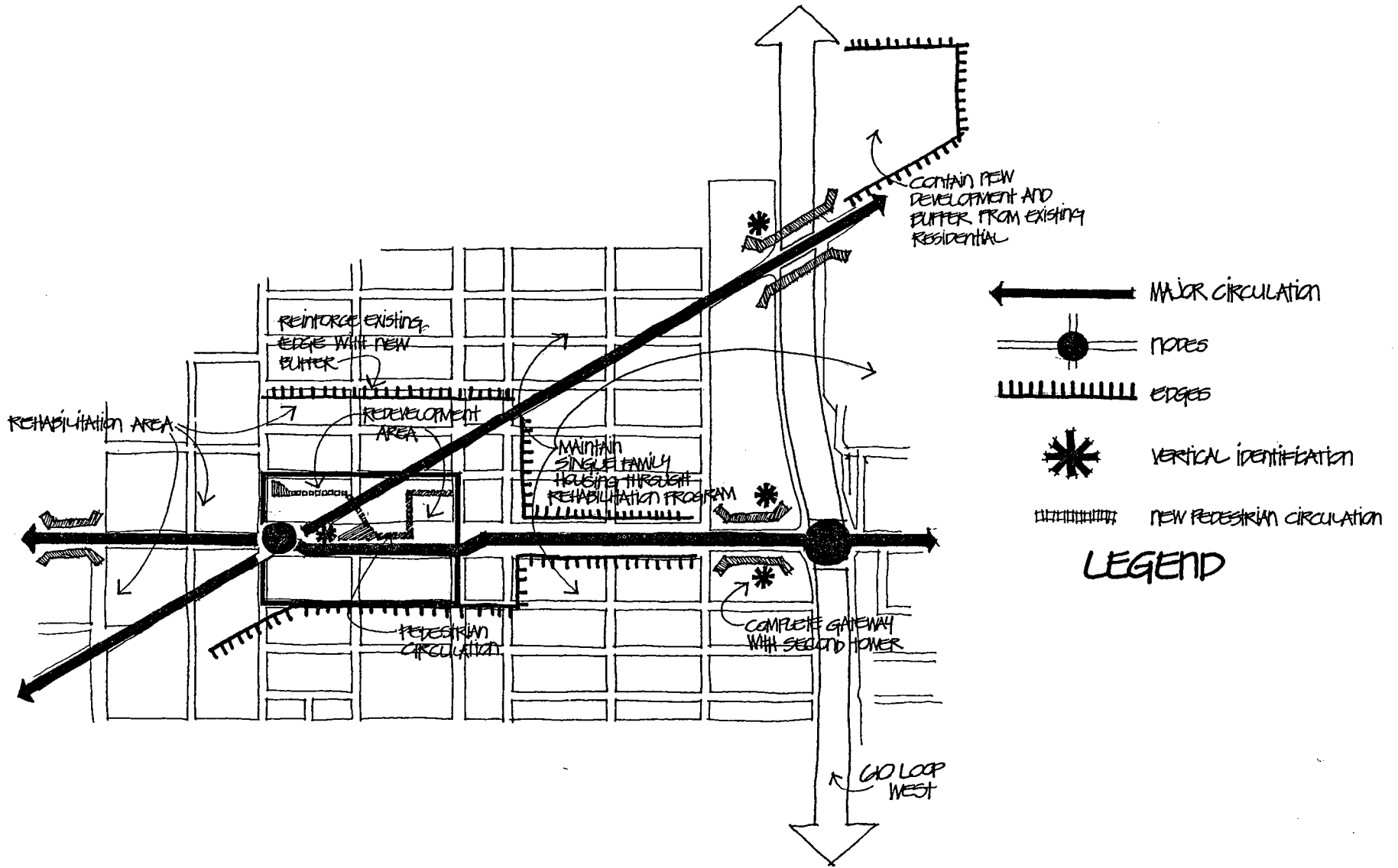
The proximity of shopping to most residential property permits easy, quick, in-and-out shopping opportunities should the need arise. Sometimes, this positive element becomes a real problem if Bellaire and/or Bissonnet are backed up.

#### Public Services

The Police and Fire Departments are described as one of the best in this region, certainly an asset to the community. It is our understanding and our own observation that other support systems such as drainage, sewers and some roads need improvement. As the city becomes more mature, more and more of the basic services of water and sewer will need replacement. The city should plan improvements if it expects to keep pace with future utility demands.

In summary, the community attitude is very healthy and positive about their future; therefore, the time is right to make decisions about the future.





# PROPOSED VISUAL STRUCTURE

## B. Design Concept

### The New "Place"

The purpose of our effort is to assist the City of Bellaire in realizing its goals for business area improvement. Our solution is the creation of a physical form that provides the focus of activity, a visual picture of the "place" that is the heart of Bellaire. This new place contains a high element (probably an office building) that signifies the location of Bellaire's commercial, social and community focus. This high structure (8 - 10) stories) is complemented with green space and fountains to reinforce the centroid of activity as a symbolic "place".

This new physical image is supported by 35 - 45,000 sq. ft. of new commercial space surrounding a public square. Within this new commercial space will be small specialty shops of high quality and numerous special eating places offering fresh yogurt, health foods, soup and sandwiches, salads and many other specialty items. This will draw residents and office personnel to Bellaire for window shopping, eating and purchasing of goods.

In order to symbolize Bellaire as a competitor with other adjacent market areas, we propose a large building (approximately 10 stories) at the

intersection of Bellaire Boulevard and 610. These two buildings (i.e. the "symbol" at Bellaire and Bissonnet and this one), will act as a gateway, a symbol to others passing by that Bellaire has a newly developed image. These buildings along with the Sun Building, create a special trend in Bellaire's financial and visual future.

Making land available at the northeast corner of Bissonnet and Bellaire, without relocation or demolition, requires the realignment of Bellaire Blvd. By moving the boulevard south, sufficient space is recaptured to construct the new development. Adjustments to the alignment of Bellaire boulevard also reduces the pedestrian crossing hazards by making the overall crossing distance shorter.

Public transit stops connected to a mini-bus route will be brought into the development area. These stops will increase pedestrian activity and heighten the vitality of the area. The "spirit" of the newly created space will be greatly enhanced by landscaping, fountains, flags, benches and lighting.

As the primary area is completed, development activities should be undertaken on the northwest corner of the Bissonnet/Bellaire intersection. We envision additional

commercial space supplemented by a new civic facility, expanded post office facilities and county office facilities. Developments of this nature will be connected with a covered pedestrian walk crossing Bissonnet at grade and tying into the primary focus area on the northeast corner of Bissonnet and Bellaire.

High intensity development activities will be supported by facade and parkway lot improvements in adjacent commercial areas. To complete the image, special gateways to the Bellaire business district will be developed near Chimney Rock, Locust and Bissonnet streets.

We have been very careful to design a proposal for improvement that has market feasibility and acceptance. Our market feasibility and financial pro forma, which follow in another section, demonstrate quite clearly that our proposal has development potential; therefore, the plan can become a reality. In addition, we have staged the development process to allow for community participation and development opportunities to coincide.

#### Physical Organization

The development of the new commercial focus orients buildings in positions

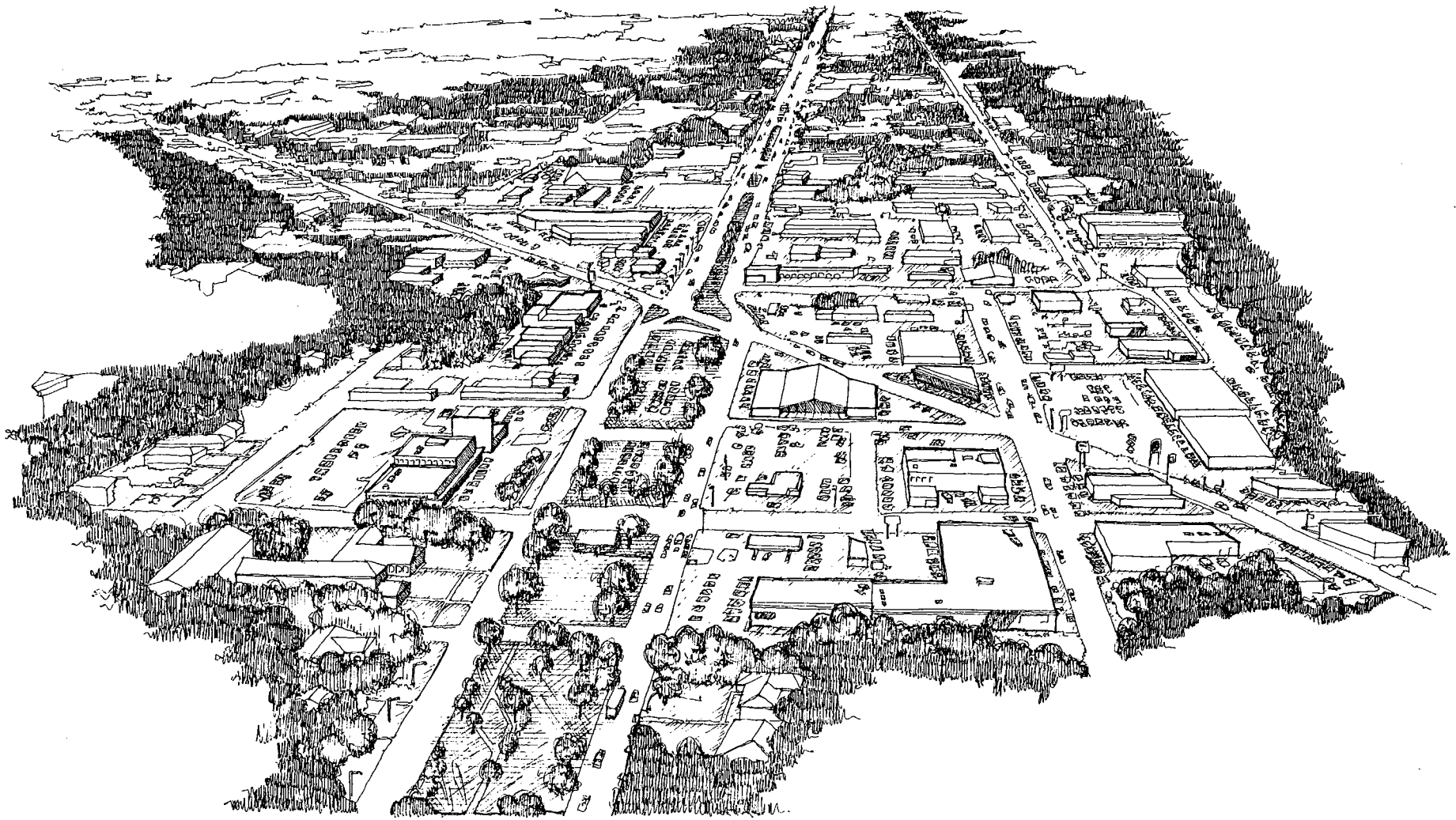
where pedestrian and vehicular access can be handled very satisfactorily. In many cases, the facade improvements mentioned earlier will also incorporate service improvements in the rear.

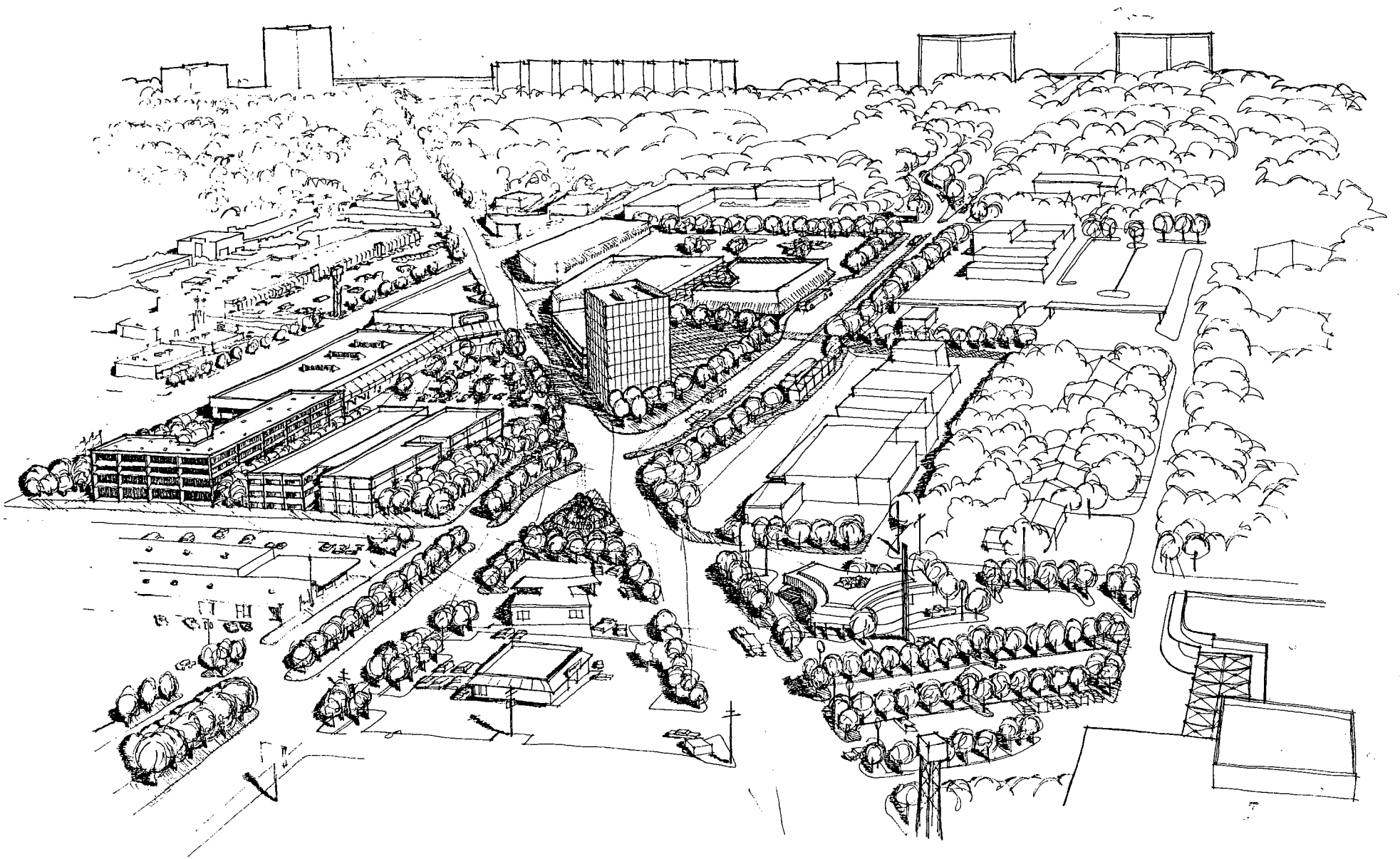
The positioning of new elements has been skillfully manipulated to create the proper image while at the same time, maintaining a delicate balance of building height and mass adjacent structures.

Special zoning and development criteria should be used to guide development. Architectural Review Boards should be established to insure high quality developments that accomplish the intended development goals.

#### Housing/Commercial Interface

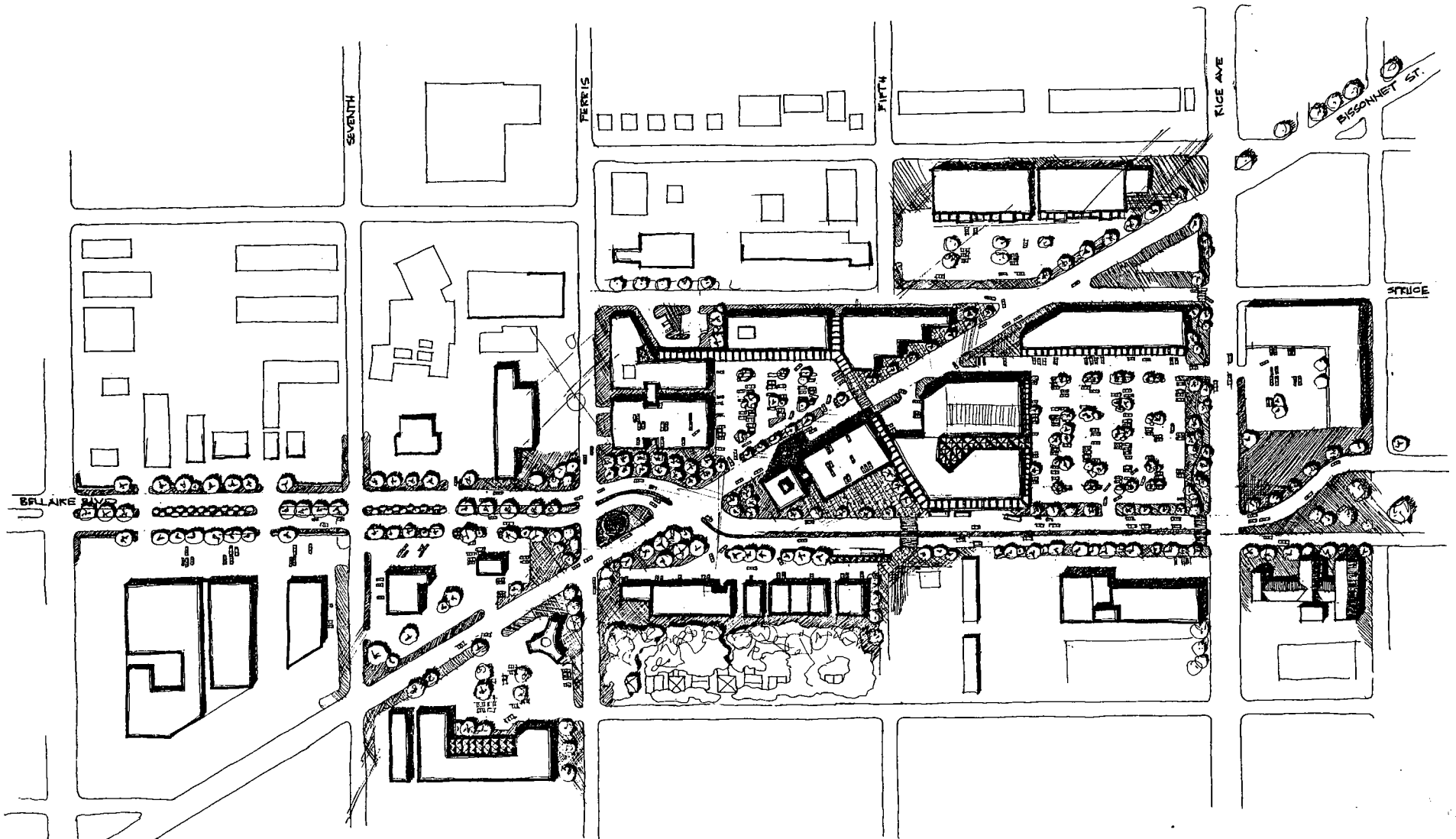
From an urban design standpoint, as well as visual improvement, the transition between commercial and housing should be carefully controlled. In some areas, landscaping should supplement the zoning code to insure compatibility of use and structure. In other areas, such as Bissonnet between Locust and Beech streets, commercial retail space should be phased out and new residential uses planned on the recaptured land. These displaced businesses should be encouraged to locate in the primary business area if the strength of the area is to be maintained.







To further assist in the separation of business and residential uses, a service road is contemplated. Such a road will facilitate vehicular movement and buffer the residential uses near the business district.



CONCEPTUAL PLAN



## Bellaire Structure

The City of Bellaire is inextricably linked to urban structure, strongly tied to it through the Loop 610 running in a North-South direction. Bellaire is physically limited to the East by the Southern Pacific Railroad tracks and the high tension power line, the other political limits of the city are visually undefined and the urban structure continues uninterrupted into the adjacent communities. However, the city of Bellaire has also a major visual axis, running in an East-West direction, known as Bellaire Boulevard. This boulevard, with its wide middle strip and mature trees lends the City an air of dignity and symbolizes a highly desirable residential environment.

The intersection of Bellaire Boulevard and Bissonnet Street, in the West end of the City, defines the commercial area, while the crossing of the Loop 610 and Bellaire Boulevard divide the City into four residential sectors. Every effort should be made to reinforce and make more functional the basic structure of the City.

## Special Neighborhood Structure

It is proposed that Rice Avenue, Evergreen Street, Newcastle Street and

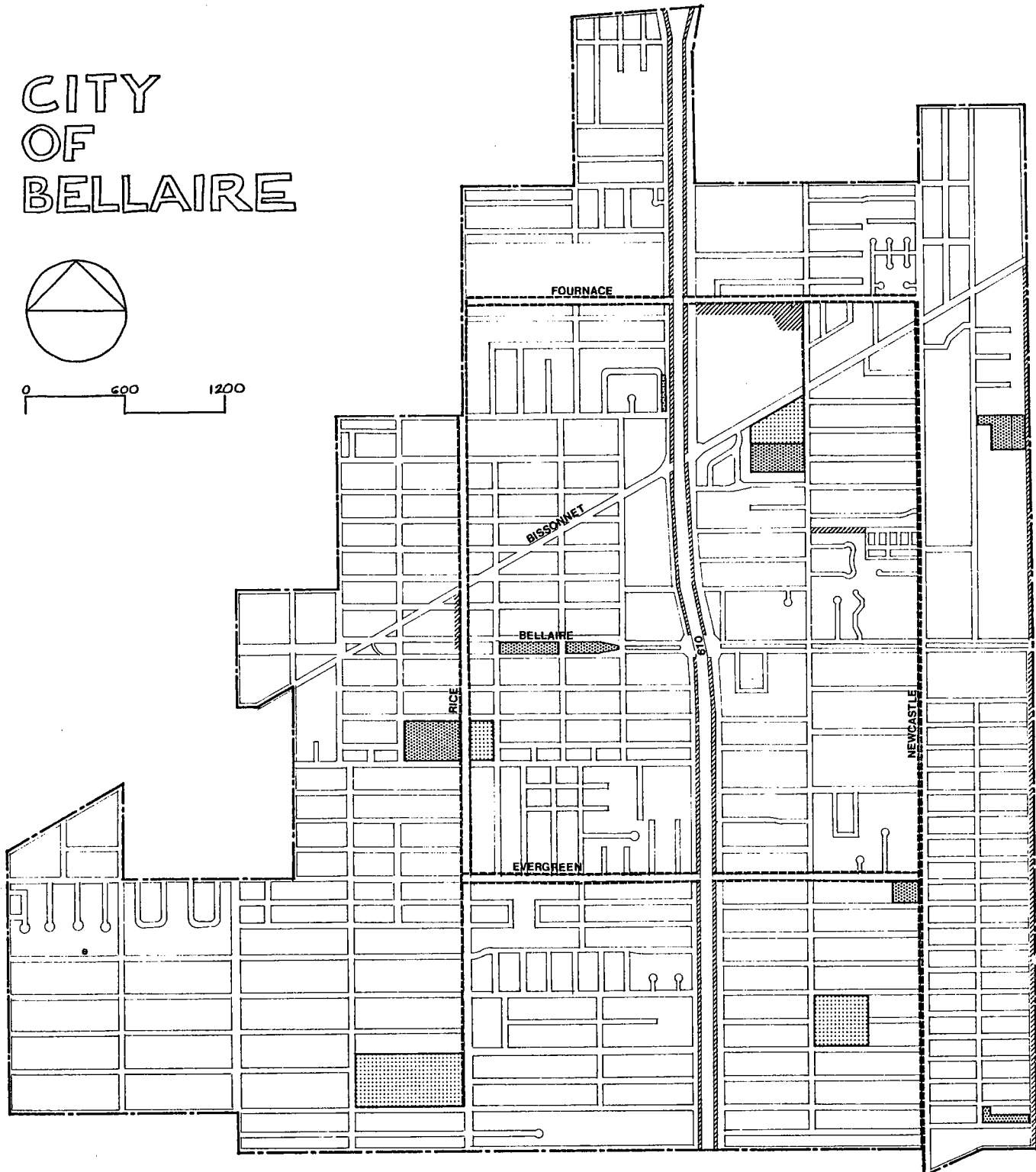
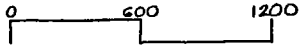
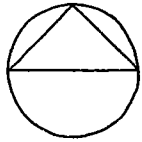
Fournace Place which intersect each other forming a continuous circulation ring, be considered special neighborhood residential streets and that they connect residential sectors and the commercial areas. This can be accomplished as follows:

1. Special landscape treatment of the designated streets right-of-ways;
2. Building sidewalks;
3. Building bicycle paths;
4. Linking parks, playgrounds, schools, and public buildings to these special streets by the use of landscape strips, walks and bicycle paths.
5. Providing a minibus service running in a clock-wise and counter clock-wise direction on these special streets, further tying the neighborhood together and to the commercial area; and providing a minibus connection between the offices near the loop and the commercial area.

Reinforcement of the residential character of the City of Bellaire can be further achieved by:

- a. Enlarging the sites of existing parks and schools;

# CITY OF BELLAIRE



## CITY STRUCTURE

- CITY LIMITS
- - - SPECIAL NEIGHBORHOOD STREETS
- [Stippled Box] EXISTING PARKS AND PLAYGROUNDS
- [Dotted Box] EXISTING SCHOOLS
- [Hatched Box] PROPOSED LANDSCAPED LINKS AND BUFFERS

- b. Requiring community amenities in the private development of the Marian property, preferably along Fournace Place;
- c. Developing a strong landscape treatment of the Loop 610;
- d. Providing landscaped links and buffers which will help to define and contain the residential areas and relate them to the commercial area.

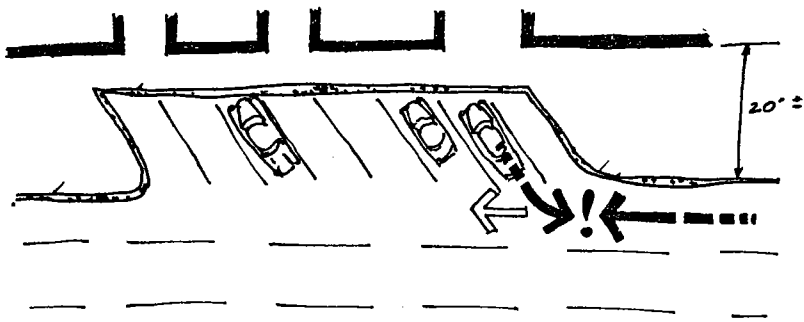


## Commercial Parking Areas

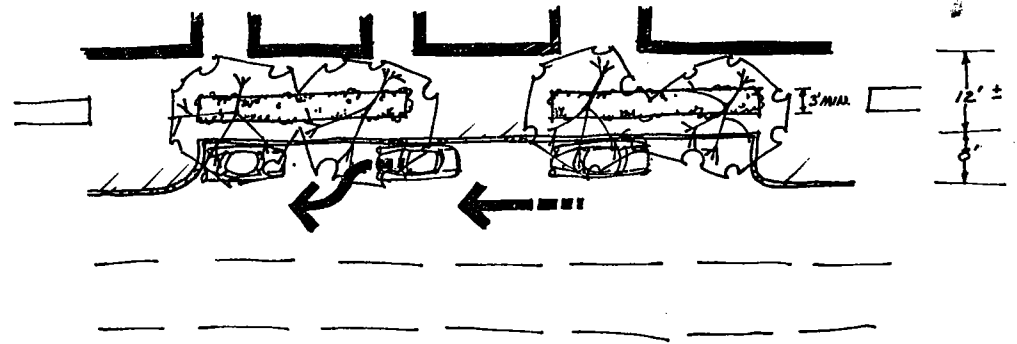
One of the major blighting influences of the commercial areas is the chaotic character of the paved parking and the undefined road alignments. It is recommended that all parking areas be redesigned and upgraded accommodating planting and pedestrian circulation, curbs, curb cuts, sidewalks and interior landscaping.

Some existing parking and road alignment situations and redesign possibilities are shown here.

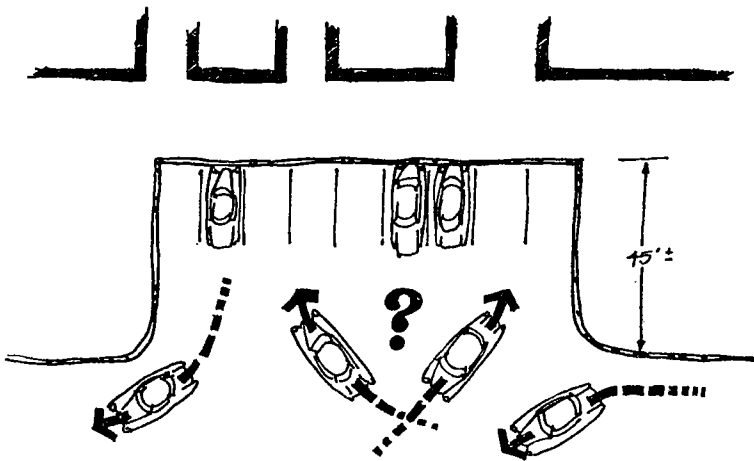
- I. Existing: Diagonal parking adjacent to an existing moving lane must be abandoned
  
- I. Proposed: Convert to parallel parking providing room for planting and pedestrian circulation.
  
  
- II. Existing: Perpendicular parking with turning space adjacent to moving lane.
  
  
- II. Proposed: Limit the points of ingress and egress. Introduce planting strip and walk.



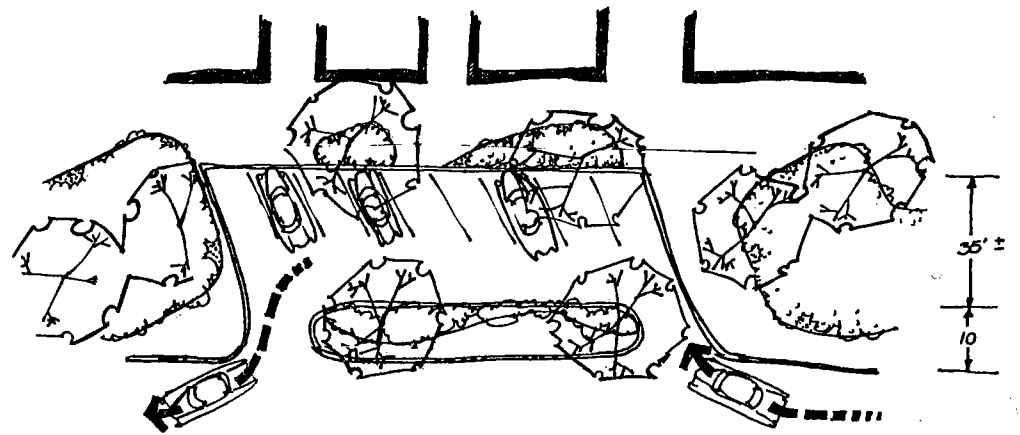
I. EXISTING



I. PROPOSED



II. EXISTING



II. PROPOSED

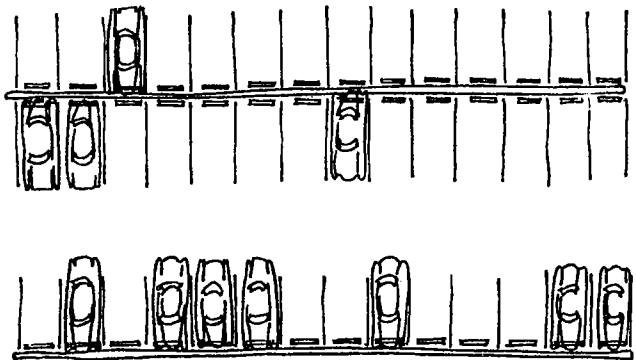


III. Existing: Perpendicular parking adjacent to road with undefined edge.

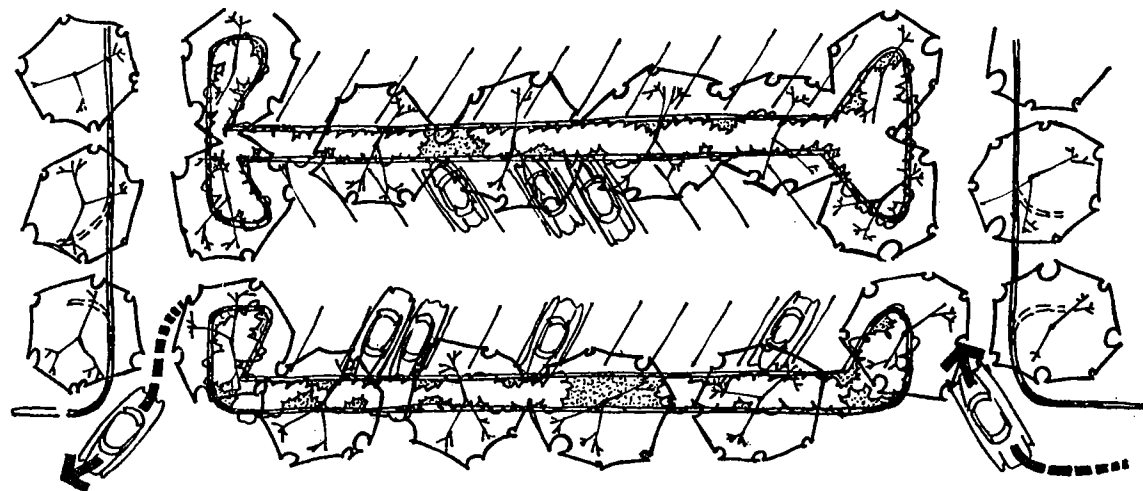
III. Proposed: Introduce planting and pedestrian strip between parking and road. Limit the points of ingress and egress.

IV. Existing: Parking lot adjacent to roads.

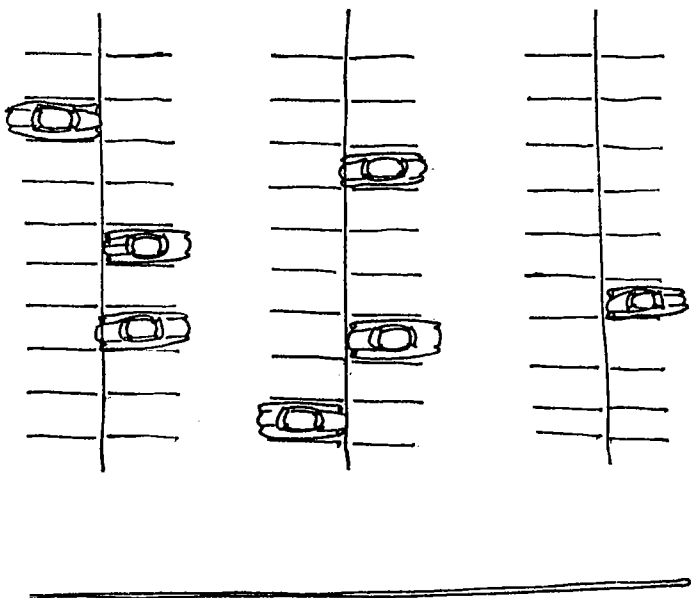
IV. Proposed: a) Introduce planting and pedestrian strip between parking collector lane and road. b) Introduce islands between parking collector lane and end parking bays. c) Limit the points of ingress and egress.



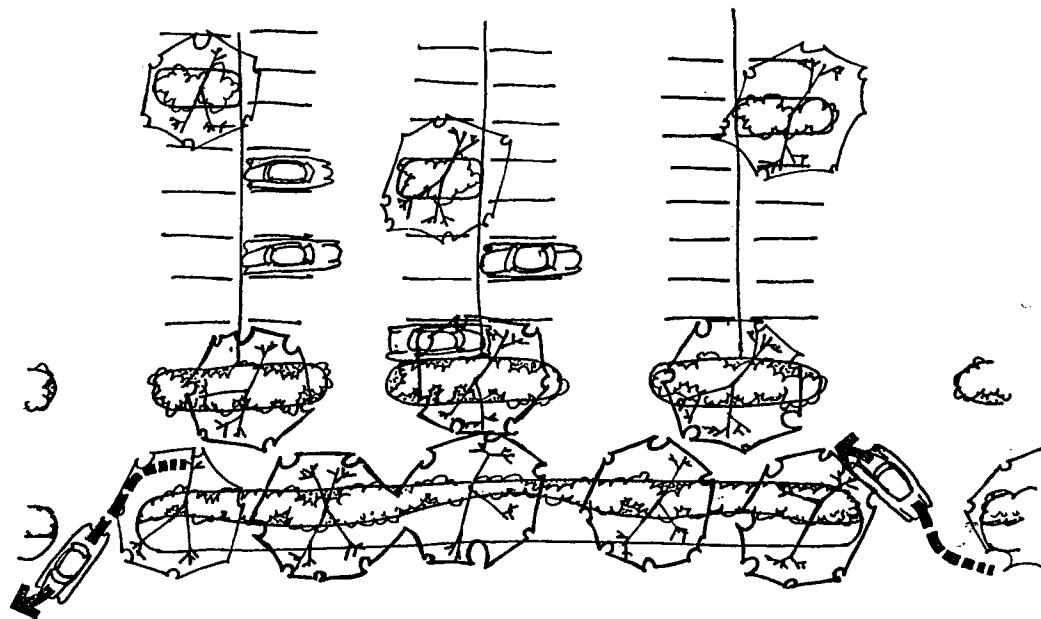
III. EXISTING



III. PROPOSED



IV. EXISTING



IV. PROPOSED

## Landscape Treatment Of The Commercial Area

Bellaire is located in a region characterized by a mild climate, but the hot, humid summers make the use of plant material in the man-made environment absolutely essential.

Plant material in the commercial area needs also to be provided in connection with the definition of parking lots, pedestrian connectors and roads.

Shrubs must be used to screen parking lots and channelize traffic. They should be varieties which are compact in growth habit and which stand shearing, such as:

Wax Leaf Ligustrum	Ligustrum Japonicum
Viburnum Suspensum	Viburnum Suspensum
Dwarf Oleander	Nerium Oleander
	Var. 'Petite Salmon'
Glossy Abelia	Abelia Grandiflora
Pittosporum	Pittosporum Tobira
Nandina	Nandina Domestica

Minor Trees can be used in dividing strips in parking lots and roads and along pedestrian connectors and they should be selected for color and texture effect such as:

Crape Myrtle	Lagerstroemia Indica & Lagerstroemia Indica- faurei
Windmill Palm	Trachycarpus Fortunei

Yaupon  
Japanese Yew  
Deciduous Holly  
Vitex

Ilex Vomitoria  
Podocarpus Macrophyllus  
Ilex Decidua  
Vitex Agnus-Castus

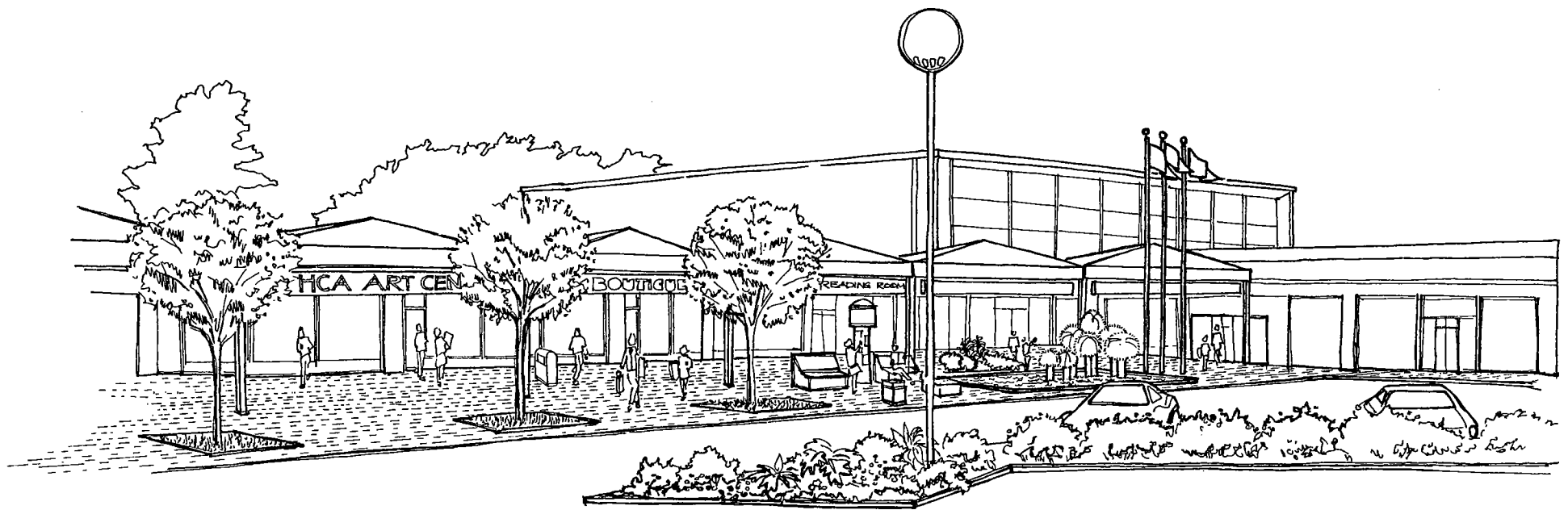
Major Trees should be used along major roads and intersection points to give structural character to the commercial area and help visually as a characteristic landmark. Trees such as:

Canary Island Date Palm	Phoenix Canariensis
Chinese Pistache	Pistacia Chinensis
Cedar Elm	Ulmus Crassifolia
Thornless Black Locust	Robinia Pseudoacacia Var. 'Inernis'
Shumark Oak	Quercus Shumardii
Cabbage Palm	Sabal Pameetto
Camphor	Cinnamomum Caphora

can provide visual unity when used consistently along roads and major connectors.

Accent Plants can be used to accentuate the entrances of the stores such as:

Spanish Bayonet	Yucca Aloifolia
Sago	Cycas Revoluta
Senna	Corymbosa
Pampass Grass	Cortaderia Selloana



PLAZA AT UNITED SAVINGS CENTER

## Signs/Public Information

The design of the visual environment is very important if a cohesive image is to be created. Special interest should be given to the present sign ordinance. It should be more restrictive in size, eliminate roof signs, permit ground signs, and logos and amortize the life of existing signs over a shorter time period.

Special consideration should be given to the myriad of signs that populate the public right of way, i.e., no parking, no standing, no parking 4-6, etc. These signs should be designed to promote uniform graphic design.

Shopping centers should be permitted to have one major sign, for all tenants' identification, provided the sign is no higher than 15 feet and incorporates materials and colors from a pre-selected palette acceptable by owners and the City.

Individual signs on store fronts should be applied flush against the building to reduce visual clutter. These signs should exist within the architectural framework of the building and harmonize with the architectural theme.

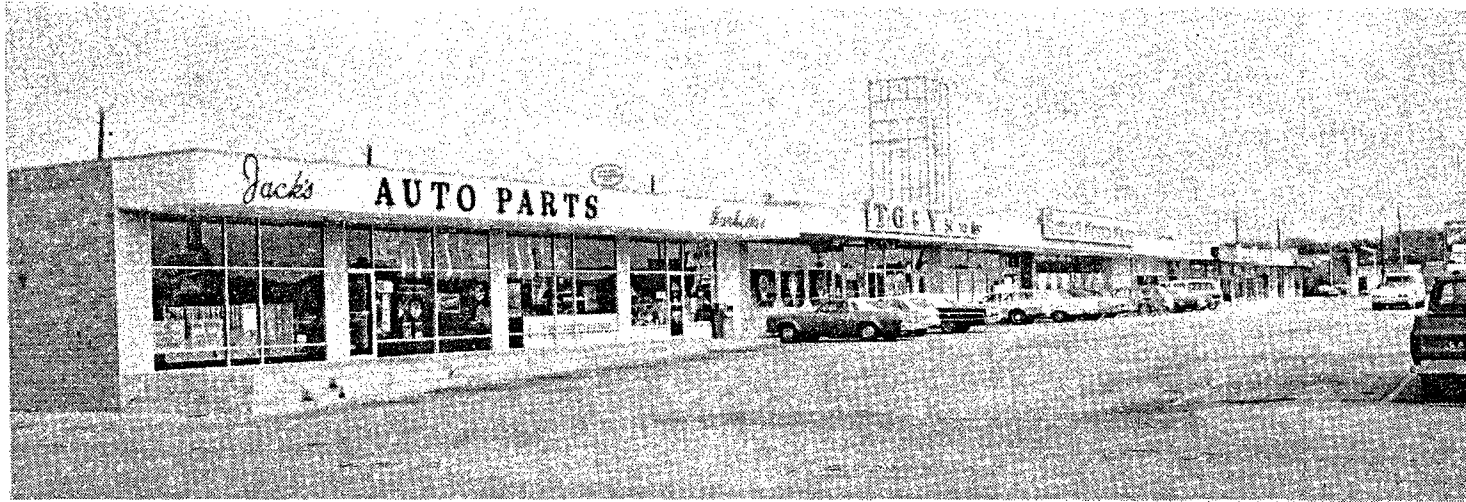
## Facade Improvements

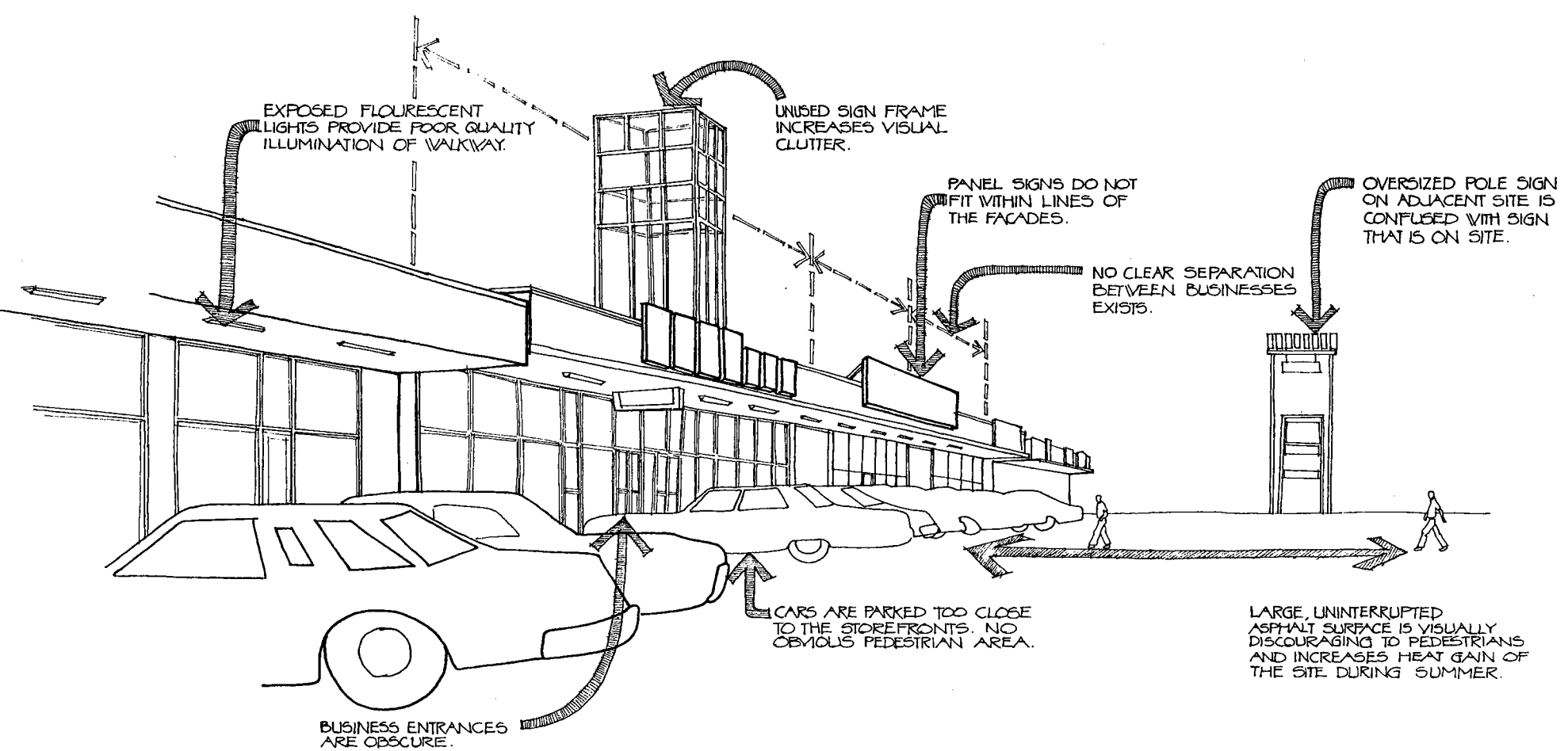
There are many businesses adjacent to the new development area that need to undergo facade improvements to help reduce visual clutter. R/UDAT is suggesting that the City and Merchants Association adopt rehabilitation standards for work of this nature. Important elements of these guidelines are:

- a. Permitted materials and styles
  - b. Complementary color palette
  - c. Graphics and sign locations.
  - d. Relationship to adjacent establishments
  - e. Screening of service areas
- Administration of these guide lines should be conducted by an Architectural Board of Review.

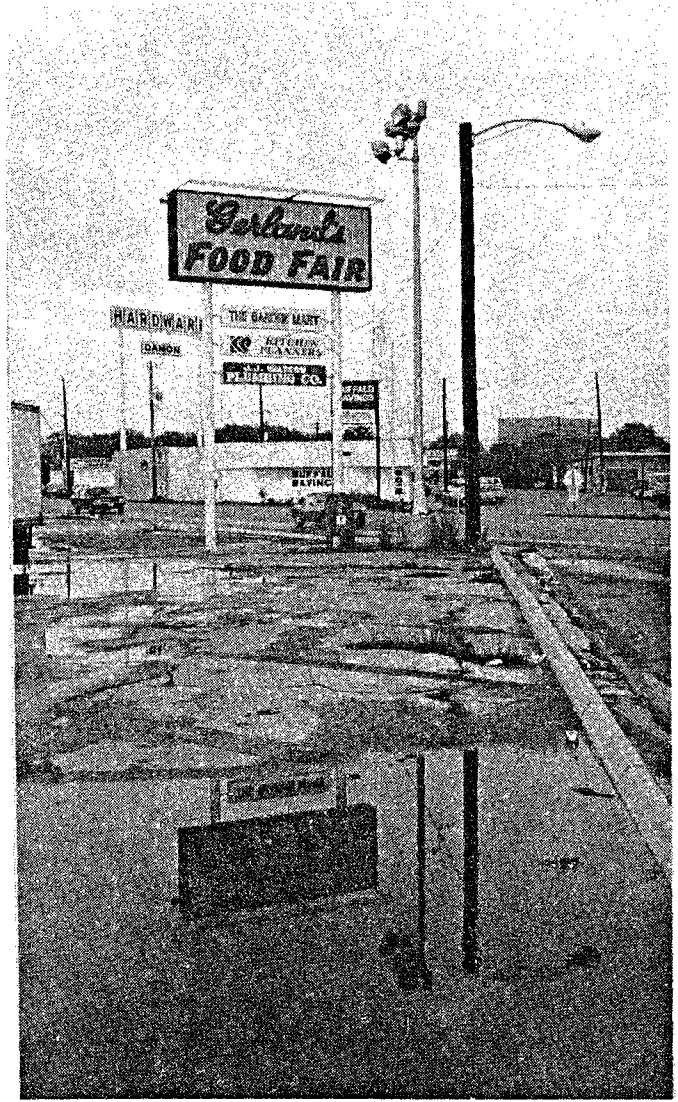
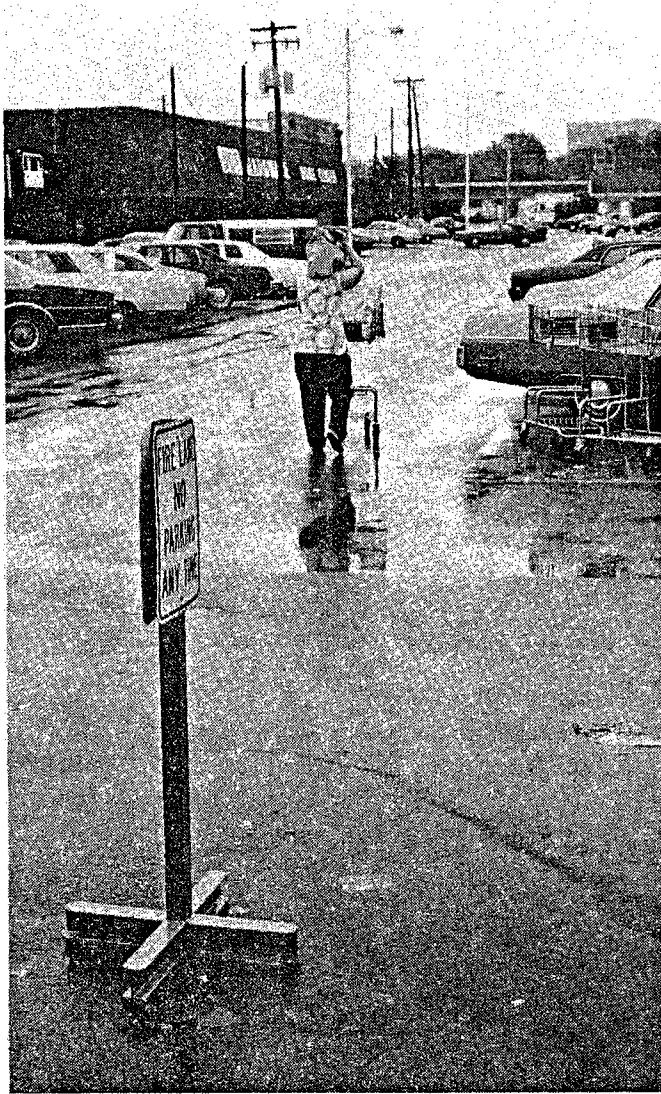
## Construction of New Buildings

New construction should respect the existing environment, mass, density and orientation. In addition, material selection should complement existing textures, color, material, etc., so that new uses will complement the existing. New construction should be approved by an Architectural Review Board.





# GERLAND'S CENTER: BEFORE





## Parking

The data indicates that there is sufficient parking available to support commercial establishments. The obvious problem is that parking areas have little if any definition. Redevelopment proposals should incorporate the installation of curbs, gutters, low walls, landscaped areas to assist in the identification of the areas. Parking spaces should be striped and organized to improve circulation efficiency.

## Street Furniture/Lighting/Public Art

New development in public and private spaces should embrace a uniform vocabulary for paving, benches, lighting, waste receptacles, etc. These amenities should be used to re-enforce the primary pedestrian circulation routes. Larger scaled lighting fixtures of similar design should be used in the parking lots.

Throughout the business area, overhead utility lines should be placed underground to reduce maintenance and reduce visual clutter.

Special consideration should be given to the enhancement of public life via the commissioning and placing of special art work within the business area.



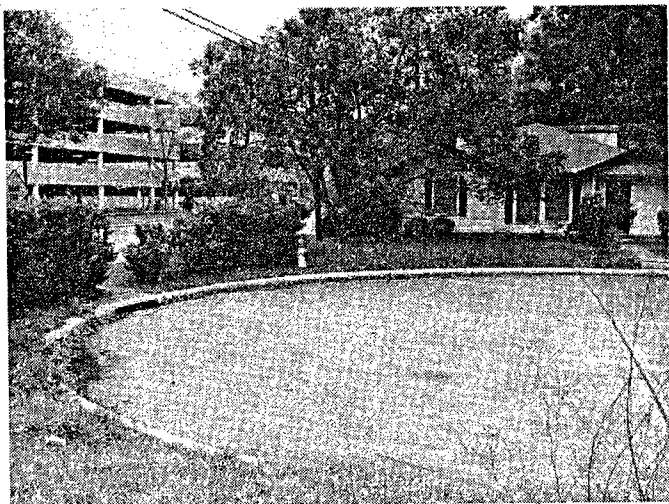
GERLAND'S CENTER: IMPROVED

## Housing Issues

Bellaire's housing stock is relatively old compared to other communities in the region; most of it dates from the late 1940's and early 1950's and is reaching the point where major maintenance is required. In order to ensure the preservation of its present housing stock and safeguard residential property values, the City should engage in a concentrated housing code enforcement program aimed at the rental housing stock, and should assist homeowners (especially elderly homeowners) and owners of rental housing in obtaining rehabilitation loans, possibly through the Federal Section 312, low-interest residential rehabilitation program administered by the Department of Housing and Urban Development. In addition, the City should provide technical assistance to homeowners and residential landlords in undertaking rehabilitation on their own.

High-density residential development has begun to appear in Bellaire, and the results have been esthetically unattractive. The City should continue to limit this trend very carefully and restrict available locations for new multi-family development. Stricter environmental controls regarding multi-family

housing should be enacted, including stringent open space requirements. The City should consider cluster-zoning for town housing to encourage imaginative site planning.



### C. Transportation

Transportation represents Bellaire's most irritating if not its most serious problem. Time and again Bellaire's citizens have described the problem, particularly in the downtown area, as "a mess". The description is both apt and to the point.

We see Bellaire's transportation mess as primarily an automobile problem and propose to emphasize solutions to it. Granted, the automobile problem might be ameliorated if enough people would use other modes of travel. But this has yet to happen anywhere in the United States and is most unlikely to happen here where people are virtually wedded to their automobiles. We therefore treat other modes of transportation with less emphasis to focus on various approaches to improving the City's street and highway system around its worst intersection, Bellaire and Bissonnet Boulevards. This intersection has important implications not only for the movement of traffic but for the health and vitality of Bellaire's C.B.D.

#### The Transportation Problem in Perspective

As a sophisticated community, Bellaire deserves to have realistic expectations regarding the solution of its traffic

problems. Without understanding the degree to which solutions are limited, the community will spend its energies and resources to achieve disappointing results. The important point to understand about transportation solutions is that they are short lived; traffic demands tend to increase "pari passu" (step by step) with the facilities intended to meet them. Houston itself is an example of the phenomenon. Its freeways seem to fill up with traffic almost as fast as they are built and congestion seems to get worse rather than better.

The City of Bellaire may be in for something similar. Given the huge reservoir of travel demand in the Houston area, it is unlikely that improvements in the Bellaire/Bissonnet intersection will solve the City's congestion problem once and for all. To be specific, whatever Bellaire does is unlikely to save much time for traffic going through the City via the Bellaire/Bissonnet intersection. This is because such improvements, much like Houston's freeways, tend to attract so much additional traffic that the initial time savings get lost in growing congestion. This is particularly true where the potential time savings themselves are not very great to begin with. Such is the case in the City of Bellaire. For example, according to the City's traffic consultants, travel along two miles of Bissonnet Boulevard from the S.P.R.R. to Chimney Rock



takes approximately 9.3 minutes. More than half that time is lost in various delays - about 4.9 minutes. Assuming that several traffic improvements might cut that delay time by 50%, there is a potential saving of approximately 2.5 minutes. This amount of time may or may not be worth saving depending on what additional benefits are generated and at what cost.

It should be understood that time savings, large or small, are not the only benefits of traffic improvements for Bellaire. There are at least two kinds of other benefits. The first would be a qualitative improvement in the kind of driving needed to negotiate the City's major intersection. Even if improving the intersection failed to result in substantial time savings, it would surely result in considerably less frazzled nerves and fewer dented fenders.

A second benefit from improving the Bellaire/Bissonnet intersection might be economic. Rationalizing the intersection will, as indicated above, probably attract more traffic through it. Assuming a more vital C.B.D. and more convenient access to it, we would expect a large percentage of that through traffic to stop and shop in Bellaire. This, of course, would further contribute

to the economic viability of the C.B.D. and the City of which it is a part.

## Two Approaches to Transportation

There are two basic approaches to addressing Bellaire's traffic and transportation problems. One approach is primarily traffic engineering. This involves channelizing traffic, signing and signalization. It might also involve street closings and relatively minor right-of-way changes. In general, traffic engineering solutions are fairly low cost.

The second approach is more far reaching and generally much more expensive. It is fundamentally a joint development approach which recognizes that transportation planning and land development are integral to each other and cannot be separated. As we shall see later, the transportation and circulation plan proposed for Bellaire is the framework which supports the kind of development that we think the City wants in its downtown commercial area. We turn first to a brief discussion of traffic engineering improvements and then to a discussion of the joint development approach we propose.

## Traffic Engineering Improvements

Bellaire can unscramble a good deal of its traffic mess at the intersection of Bellaire and Bissonnet Boulevards by applying conventional

traffic engineering techniques. The following sketch derived from a forthcoming proposal by Turner, Collie and Braden represents such a solution which involves channelizing traffic and improving signals. While it also requires the reconstruction of the intersection as shown, such reconstruction would be relatively minor. For better or worse, such a minor effort has virtually no developmental implications for Bellaire's C.B.D. Thus, traffic engineering offers a satisfactory low cost solution in terms of relieving irritation, improving safety, and saving a bit of time. But, in the very nature of such a limited approach, it fails to address the City's larger issue of creating a focus of activity and development which Bellaire can be proud of.

Should Bellaire choose the traffic engineering approach, we recommend that it follow the priority steps suggested by its consultant respecting the Bellaire/Bissonnet intersection.

1. (First Priority) Extend Bellaire left turn lanes; modify controller to provide lead-lag phasing for Bellaire; revise timing; convert on street angle parking in business to parallel parking.
2. (Second Priority) Reconstruct intersection as represented in sketch; install modern signal equipment; modify driveway access in immediate vicinity of intersection.

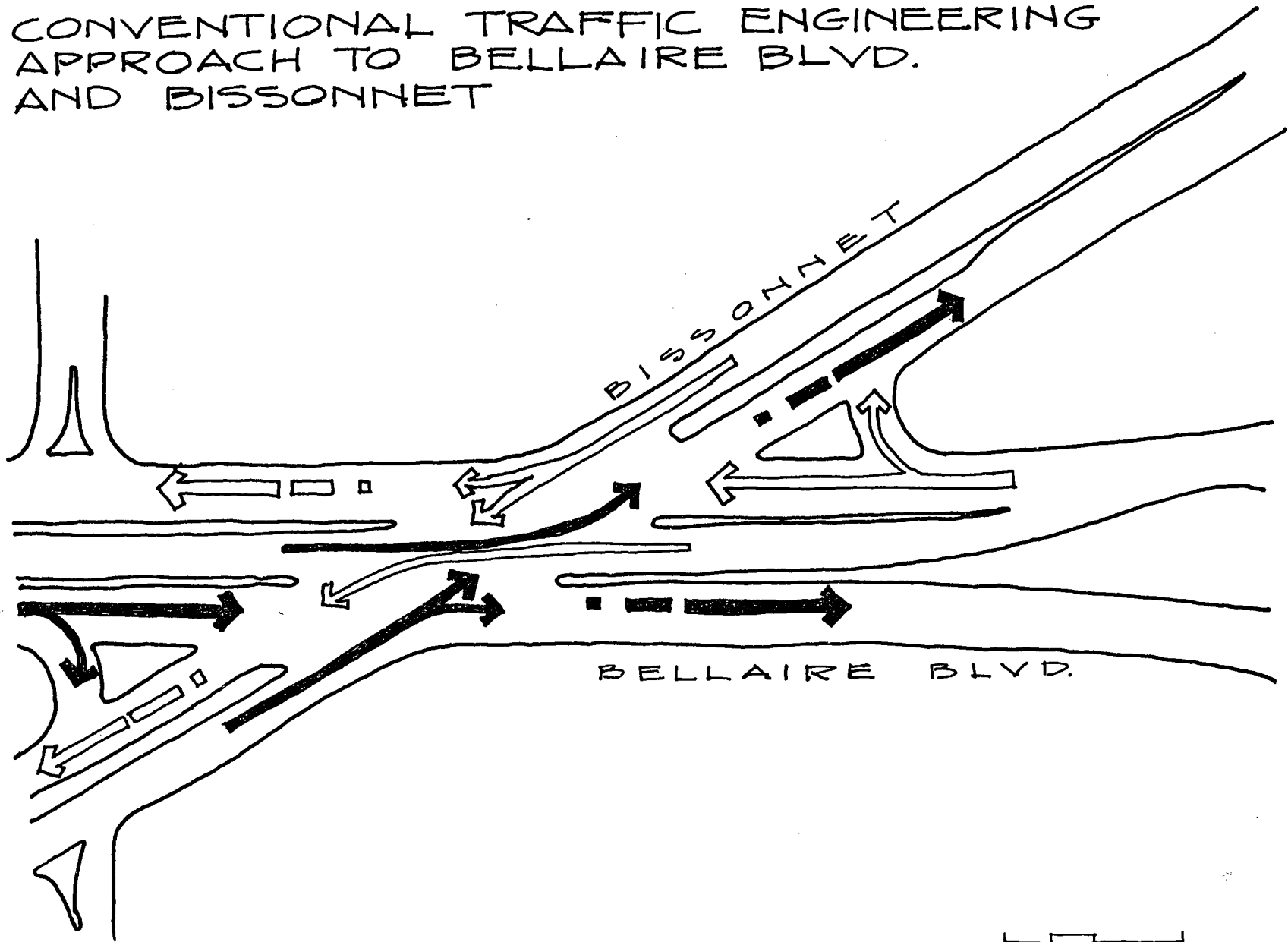
3. (Third Priority) Reconstruct curbs and continuous sidewalks on both streets through the business district; define driveway access curb cuts; landscape where space for planting exists.\*

Bellaire should also consider and act upon the other traffic engineering recommendations made in various reports regarding other intersections and problems.

- \* The R/UDAT team has given special consideration to those issues which involve better defining the transportation elements in the Central Business District.



CONVENTIONAL TRAFFIC ENGINEERING  
APPROACH TO BELLAIRE BLVD.  
AND BISSONNET



0 25 50 100 FT.

## A Joint Development Plan for Improving Transportation

Figure (p.26) shows the existing urban structure and indicates the nature of the traffic and transportation problems to be addressed. The most important of these is the Bellaire/Bissonnet intersection which presents a major physical and visual point of conflict. A lesser but still important problem is the ill-defined and diffuse character of the C.B.D. which permits so many traffic options that it creates traffic confusion. At a more general level, the layout of the existing circulation system negates the possibility of having the kind of business area that meets the high standards of the rest of Bellaire City. This calls for a joint development plan which incorporates both land use and circulation system.

Figure (p.33) shows a proposed transportation plan which addresses the traffic problems noted above. In addition, the plan provides a framework for organizing the redevelopment of the C.B.D. to provide the focus and activities that Bellaire citizens have been calling for.

The organizing element of the plan results from consolidating Bellaire Boulevard on its present right-of-way and closing Fifth Street from Spruce to Bellaire. Consolidating the boulevard frees up a sizable piece of land for development within the innermost C.B.D. Closing Fifth Street would free up still more space. Taken together these two changes in the existing circulation system would allow enough space and flexibility to do a really interesting job of redeveloping the City's innermost C.B.D. area.

The innermost C.B.D. area is contained by the loop of streets which services it: Spruce, Rice, Linden and Ferris. These streets provide easy access both to the shops within the innermost area and to the shops which border that area. As discussed later, under the suggested plan the streets would be visually and functionally defined by new curbs and plantings. Curbs would be cut at appropriate places to define ingress and egress to parking areas, thus reducing the number of options and the resulting confusion.

Consolidating Bellaire Boulevard helps to solve a number of traffic problems including its intersection with Bissonnet. Configuring Bellaire to cross Bissonnet almost at right angles would make the intersection work like a

conventional one. With the visual confusion eliminated the intersection would become more comprehensible, especially to strangers who are unfamiliar with the area. Strangers or not, motorists would no longer have to jockey for position and fight each other to get where they want to go. Thus, the clarified intersection would, at the very minimum, relieve the traffic tensions associated with getting through the existing mess at Bissonnet/Bellaire.

The consolidated version of Bellaire Boulevard would be both visually and functionally more consistent with the area it passes through than is the present configuration. Instead of looking like a boulevard passing through a housing area it would look like what it, in fact, is - a major arterial passing through a commercial area. And, instead of forming a wide and forbidding barrier which insulates one side of the street from the other it would tend to bring the two sides together. Hopefully, it would induce pedestrians to cross over to shop the other side of the street.

#### Pedestrian Circulation

The redevelopment plan for the innermost C.B.D. is predicated on introducing a good system for pedestrian circulation.

That is, pedestrians should have an opportunity to walk from parking lot to shop and from one shop to another with interesting things to do and look at along the way. This opportunity is precisely what the Bellaire business center currently lacks. And this lack makes for an extremely dull and uninteresting area which in turn means an area that simply fails to live up to its economic potential.

The economic potential of the innermost C.B.D. would be considerably enhanced if pedestrians could be encouraged to walk from one part of it to another including from the part north of Bissonnet to the part south of it. Note that the plan knits the two areas together with a pedestrian walkway system that is visually strong enough to invite people to shop the other side.

The circulation plan for the C.B.D. must do more than function properly: it must support the symbolic value of the location in that area. That is, it must help express where Bellaire is. In this plan, Bellaire's focal point is where it naturally should be - at the crossroads of the City. To express this point, the little triangle of space left over from the intersection of several roadways can become much more important than it would otherwise seem. It is on this triangle that Bellaire must make whatever symbolic statement is to be made.

## Mass Transit

Note that the plan for the new Bellaire Boulevard includes special turnouts for MTA's buses. Buses are already a fairly important mode of transportation from Bellaire to Houston. They are likely to become still more important in the future if MTA lives up to its expectations. These expectations include some new mini-bus routes (discussed later) which would focus on the newly vitalized innermost C.B.D.

Mass transit is unlikely to be a large factor in solving Bellaire's traffic and transportation problems. As indicated at the outset of this section, it is highly unlikely that many Texans can be diverted from their automobiles to mass transit. At least not enough of them can be diverted to make a difference in the traffic situation. Nevertheless, mass transit has an important role in Bellaire's transportation system.

First, mass transit must serve the needs of those who cannot, for whatever reason, use automobiles. This group includes the elderly, the handicapped and the young. The elderly and handicapped should find good transit service of special value for getting to Houston's excellent medical center.

The young might take advantage of mass transit to move about with less dependency on "Mom". Secondly, good transit might help local residents to avoid the cost of a second car. This is particularly important in an era when more and more families have both husband and wife working. Under such circumstances one member of the family might get to work by car while the other takes the bus. Mass transit can also play an important role in helping to vitalize the innermost C.B.D. by bringing more people to it. Passengers coming to or leaving from that area might be induced to do some shopping in the area if it is a convenient and attractive one.

In creating a transit node point in the C.B.D., Bellaire should make sure that future passengers can get to and from it with ease. This means providing good pedestrian access to the center as well as providing bikeways and bike parking facilities at the center itself. The location of the bus stops should permit convenient "kiss and ride" connections. Most important, the transit plan should also provide for easy connections to the mini-bus system now under consideration by MTA.

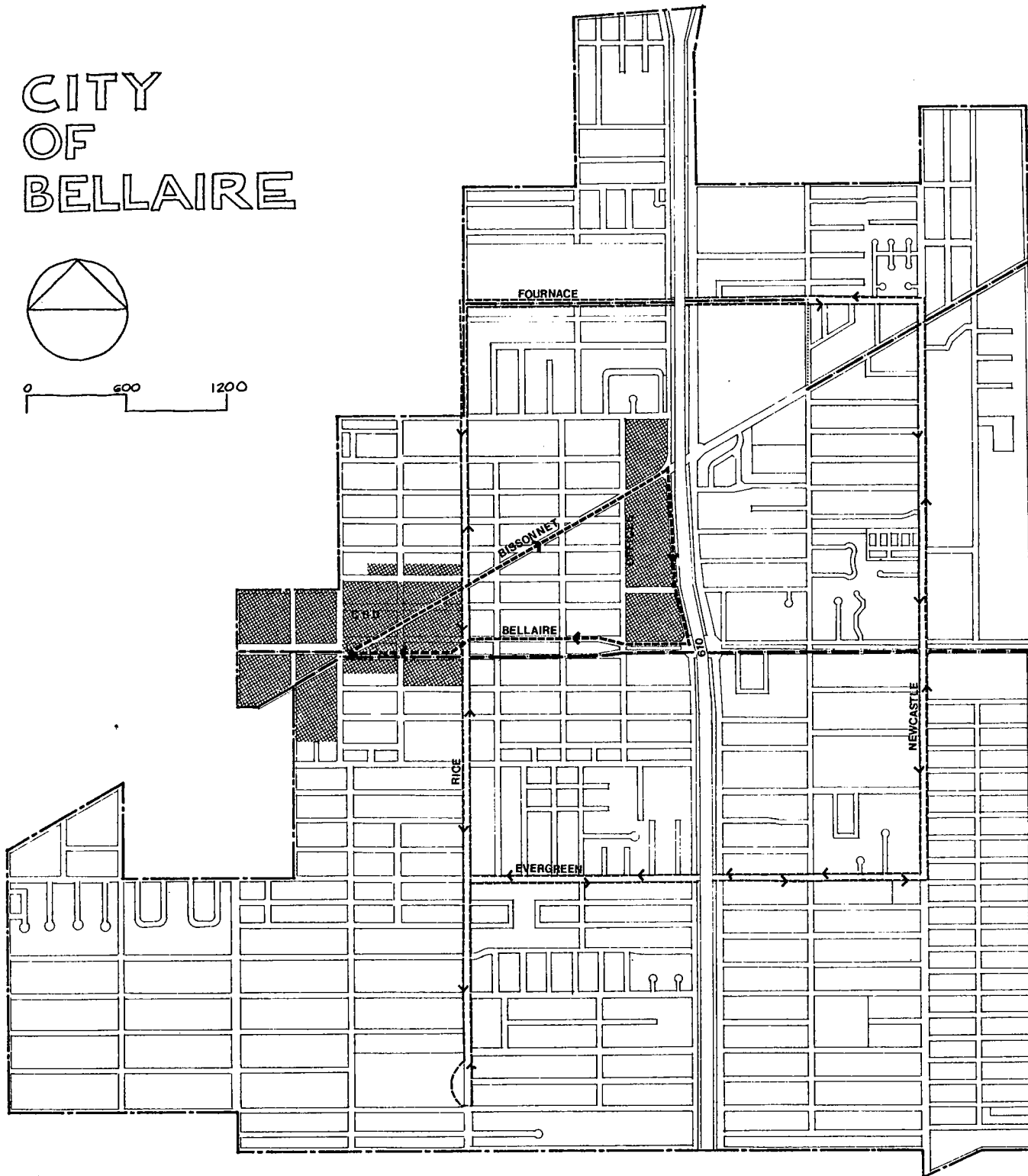
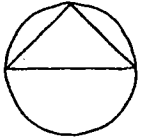
MTA in considering a mini-bus system for local areas such as the City of Bellaire. In designing such a system Bellaire should be sure that it interfaces properly with the main HouTran System. The mini-bus system should also operate as a

shuttle between the 610 Office Development and the Bellaire C.B.D., especially during the luncheon hours (p.61). When the Bellaire C.B.D. becomes redeveloped, it will become an attractive place for people now working in these offices. They will surely want to lunch and shop there - at least once in a while - particularly when the area is populated with interesting eating places and attractive shops.

Finally, mass transit might be the means through which much of the improvement of the Bissonnet/Bellaire intersection is financed. Since unscrambling that intersection would itself be highly significant for transit operations - and since a transit center would provide riders with services and amenities, this should make the City of Bellaire eligible for some of the seventy-five million dollars that MTA plans to spend on transit related projects.

To sum up: A modest reorganization of the circulation system around the Bellaire/Bissonnet intersection would permit the redevelopment and vitalization of an otherwise lack-luster business area. It would also unscramble a number of traffic problems that would change the area from an unpleasant to a pleasant one. An internal circulation plan designed with pedestrians in mind would also help make the area both vital and interesting. Combined with good design and good transit all of this could transform the Bellaire/Bissonnet area into the hub of Bellaire that its citizens want.

# CITY OF BELLAIRE



## TRANSPORTATION

- TOWN CENTER MINI-BUS ROUTE
- . - . - . RESIDENTIAL MINI-BUS ROUTES
- TRANSIT BUS ROUTES

#### D. Implementation

##### Education

Informed citizens, who understand the development alternatives which are available to them, who recognize that the public decision-making process is an evolutionary one, who are part of that process from the outset and who continues to take part in it, are vital to the success of the programs suggested here.

The creation and maintenance of public awareness of local planning and development issues, and the dissemination of information needed for effective public participation in policy decision making require intensive and extensive public relations and educational programs involving all the parties interested in local development including elected officials, land owners, retail store owners and tenants, residents, office tenants and local financial institutions.

Only when all these interested parties understand one another's goals and needs can the mistrust and misinformation which presently exists among them be reduced. Only when that mistrust and misinformation are reduced can the public policy decisions which now face the City of Bellaire be made and implemented.

## Zoning

The goal of Bellaire's zoning ordinance must be to control, direct and encourage the development pattern described in the physical and economic improvement plans discussed previously. The zoning ordinance should not merely react to development pressures and attempt to delay undesirable development; it must actively encourage the desired pattern by offering incentives designed to facilitate that pattern and make it economically more attractive than the alternatives.

Bellaire's zoning ordinance must also possess the characteristics of clarity and predictability. Its objectives and the mechanisms employed to accomplish these objectives must be clearly and simply stated, so that zoning administrators, property owners and developers and the general public can understand its purposes and operation.

Equally important, the ordinance and its administration must be predictable. In our interviews with developers considering projects in Bellaire, we frequently heard the statement that they and other developers were "scared off" by the uncertainty of Bellaire's planning policy and permitting process. For example, the City's commitment to its own economic

revitalization and future health must be reflected in a zoning ordinance which provides a clear building permit procedure which will be fairly and consistently administered. The conditions and criteria which must be met in a conditional use zone must be clearly and specifically set out and adhered to. The zoning ordinance must signal to land owners and developers that Bellaire wants a certain pattern of development to occur and that a development proposal meeting those criteria will be encouraged and approved.

Some of the zoning mechanisms which should be considered as tools to encourage the physical and economic development pattern we have suggested include the following:

1. A bonus system to encourage the development of a more desirable pedestrian environment in the C.B.D., including, for example, the provision of walks and arcades. The incentive offered in return for the provision of such amenities (in a pattern specified by the zoning code) might be additional floor area, or site coverage allowance, or reduction of yard requirements.
2. A similar bonus system to encourage the assembly by private developers of large economically viable parcels in the C.B.D. by offering progressively





larger bonuses for larger parcels, according to total area or street frontage.

and operating budget priorities should be clearly and explicitly linked to development which furthers the development plan.

3. A bonus system based on the street orientation of commercial development in the C.B.D. The present pattern of the C.B.D. where, on some streets, the shop fronts on one side of the street face the unattractive backs of shops on the other side of the street could be discouraged, and the development of "double-loaded" shopping streets encouraged, by offering density or site coverage bonuses tied to shop front orientation.
4. A bonus system for usable, well designed pedestrian open space accessible to the public, or for the provision and maintenance of planting and green space in the C.D.B.
5. A curb cut limitation and amortization program to limit the frequency of parking entrances and exits along the more heavily traveled thoroughfares.
6. A stricter sign control ordinance.

In addition to the density and other zoning incentives offered for compliance with the physical plan, public capital

## Public-Private Partnership

The development proposal advanced here - and, indeed, any development plan adopted by Bellaire - will require a partnership between the public and private sectors. Public investment to encourage and facilitate development is justified only if it triggers private investment in the community in response. The private sector - property owners and tenants, the business and financial community - must be prepared to make a commitment to private investment sufficient to justify the expenditure of public funds as a first step. Similarly, the public sector - elected officials at the local and higher levels of government - must be prepared to make a commitment to the private sector to respond to private investment by undertaking further appropriate public improvements. This public/private partnership must continue throughout the development process. The initial commitment to investment by both sides will be the most difficult; thereafter, economic forces will begin to act that will make continued public and private investment in Bellaire - in mutually beneficial ways - a matter of course.

## Public Image/Private Perceptions

Implementation of the development plan will require an effort by the Bellaire community as a whole to change it's image in the eyes of developers, investors, potential residents and potential office and retail tenants. That image is one of a community that does not yet know where it is going to go and therefore, is not going anywhere at all. The hard decisions must be made - and they must be made very soon - which demonstrate that Bellaire has made up it's mind and will stick to it's decision. Only when the uncertainty that now surrounds Bellaire's image and future direction is lifted will the City be able to make progress.

Similarly, private business and developers considering investment in Bellaire will have to work to change the way they are perceived here. They will have to convince the community that their plans will further Bellaire's development goals and that they are as concerned with maintaining the quality of life here as Bellaire's residents and existing businesses. Only when the present perception of the developer as an unstoppable, unconcerned juggernaut is changed will the Bellaire community be willing to enter into a mutually beneficial cooperative relationship with developers and new investors.

## ECONOMIC OBSERVATIONS

- Rents and leases are substantially below current economic values.
- Virtually no turnover of commercial tenants is taking place in the C.B.D.
- Assessment of C.B.D. Property.

Real estate in the C.B.D. is presently substantially underassessed for property tax purposes. Tenants of these properties hold long-term leases at rentals 50% or more below the present fair rental value of comparable space in other nearby locations. Sales volume in dollars per square foot of rental space in Bellaire is as great as that in other comparable locations, however. Thus, an assessed value based on the artificially low rent levels prevalent in the C.B.D. does not reflect the fair market value of C.B.D. property. In contrast, assessed values of residential properties in Bellaire reflect their fair market value quite accurately. This disparity reflects state laws that mandates current economic value as a consideration in commercial assessments.

- Upgrading visual as well as economic

perceptions of C.B.D. are crucial to the improvement of the C.B.D.

- Marketing Mix

Shopper surveys and interviews with merchants in the C.B.D. clearly show that most shoppers come to Bellaire to patronize only one shop. There is an enormous pool of shoppers' dollars which is not presently being captured by the C.B.D. but which could be captured if a greater variety of shops were present which would encourage multi-purpose visits by shoppers, resulting in significantly greater retail spending in Bellaire. Some of the gaps in the "marketing mix" of the C.B.D. are high-quality women's clothing, good restaurants, etc.

- Resident and shopkeepers appear to be in accord on the need for upgrading of retail tenants and shoppers.
- Landlord/tenant relationships need to reflect inflationary costs and contain an overage clause as to increased sales, and a real estate tax and maintenance cost pass along clause so as to protect the owner and the municipalities ability to collect realistic real estate taxes from the C.B.D. These types of lease clauses are standard in larger shopping centers.

Urgent need for collective marketing strategy by C.B.D. owners/tenants.

#### Sales Tax Economics

Bellaire retains 1% of the total 6% sales tax revenues. In some areas of the C.B.D., the City's revenues from its share of the sales tax is twice the amount of its property tax revenues from that areas. Increased retail sales in the C.B.D. would thus be of substantial benefit to the City's tax revenues. Increasing sales tax revenues by encouraging increased retail development would be particularly advantageous since the majority of these sales tax revenues will be captured from non-Bellaire residents who shop in Bellaire. Similarly, shopping dollars now spent by Bellaire residents who shop outside Bellaire should be captured by the C.B.D. so that the sales tax revenues from Bellaire residents' retail expenditures will benefit Bellaire. Bellaire per capita sales tax is much below average. A spot check of retail sales to determine accuracy of sales tax reporting by shopkeepers is in order.

#### Need for Maintaining Bellaire's Tax Base and Public Services

In order to maintain its individuality and integrity in an urban region overwhelmingly dominated by the City of Houston, Bellaire must continue to offer residential and business environments, municipal services superior to those available elsewhere in the area. This will require continuous upgrading of Bellaire's residential and commercial areas in order to ensure that Bellaire remains an attractive place to live, work and shop, and keep homeowners' property taxes at an acceptable level while providing necessary public services. Any major imbalance between the growth of the tax base, the demand for public services and improvements and the level of residents' property taxes can quickly destroy the City's financial stability.

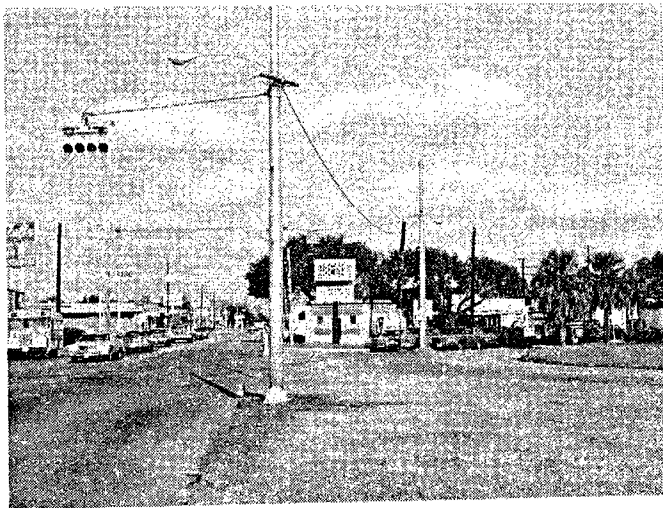
#### Need for Making Development Decisions Now

The largest vacant site available for development in Bellaire is the 35 acre Marian property in the northeast quadrant at the junction of Loop 610 and Bissonnet Road. Its strategic location, close to downtown Houston, its large size and its direct access

to major roads, make it one of the most desirable parcels in the Loop area. A lengthy delay by the City of Bellaire regarding the appropriate and acceptable use of this parcel could result in a taking of the property by another governmental authority, e.g., MTA or HISD, for a use which would be undesirable for Bellaire and of little or not benefit to its tax base and businesses. A decision as to the direction which should be taken by development of the Marian property must be made now to avoid having the decision being taken out of Bellaire's control.

A limited growth policy for moderate sized office buildings should be developed and implemented as a basis for stabilizing real estate taxes for residents, during the C.B.D. transition period. These office structures are a major municipal revenue producer, even with their traffic impact.

Need for long term commitment by municipal government to central business district development program.



Bellaire Central Business District  
(C.B.D.) Program

Phase I Private sectors investment in landscaping and street improvements by the use of an Improvement Assessment Program.

The initial phase envisions a 2 to 5 year period of implementation of a two part simultaneous program. The first part will be one of relatively low cost but high visibility with an immediate beneficial impact on the Bellaire C.B.D. It will comprise a comprehensive property line landscaping, curbing, curb cut, sidewalk, parking lot landscaping, and street furniture program. These improvements will be paid for by the private sector through an improvement assessment program for the benefiting property owners in the C.B.D. These improvements will be paid for by the owners/tenants over a 20 year period (see Economic Analysis Phase I).

The second part of this program includes the rearrangement of Bissonnet Street and the realignment of Bellaire Boulevard, the development of a public transportation terminal and the creation of a focus-type office building adjacent to the proposed street alteration with easy pedestrian access. Included in the "focus building" will be restaurants and quality specialty shops, and should be paid for with governmental funds. Funding sources are

federal, state, and local government, and possibly the Metropolitan Transit Authority.

In addition, long term drainage improvements should be undertaken in the C.B.D.



Economic Analysis

Phase I Part 1

Cost per front foot C.B.D. Improvement.\*

	<u>Cost per ft. of frontage</u>
Curbs	\$ 4.00
Sidewalk	8.00
Landscaping	20.00
Parking lot landscaping	10.00
Street furniture	10.00
Reserve for contingencies	8.00
Cost per ft. of store frontage	<u>60.00</u>
* Add 25% street front increment	<u>15.00</u>
Total cost per sq.ft. street frontage	75.00
 Yearly maintainance (life cycle) cost per street front foot	 6.00
 Bond Issue (City and/or local redevelopment corp. sponsorship.) 20 years 8 1/2 % constant Debt Service Cost	  \$ <u>6.38</u>
 Total yearly cost per store frontage foot, including maintaining	  \$ 12.38
 Typical 20 foot store frontage (assumed 25 ft. street frontage)	  \$247.60

Typical square foot cost per year  
(based on 20 sq.ft. x 50 sq.ft.  
store 1000 sq.ft.) (rounded) \$ .25

\* Based on a 25% increment of street frontage to store frontage.

Phase II C.B.D. Improvement to Facades, Signs, etc.

Phase II calls for private investment in improving the C.B.D. by repairing and upgrading store fronts and signs and the commitment by private property owners to improving maintenance. This program would be reinforced by a concentrated building and sign code enforcement program in the C.B.D., with appropriate penalties for violations. Phase II represents the private response to the public investments in the C.B.D. in Phase I, and form the basis for a continuing public/private partnership to improve the C.B.D. Financing for Phase II improvements could come from a cartel of lenders or a to-be-formed non-profit Bellaire C.B.D. Development Corporation who would make available low interest revolving loans. The directors of the new corporation would be composed of interested citizens, property owners, tenants, and members of the financial community, with municipal officials as ex-officio members.

Phase II Economic analysis of facade and sign improvement program

Typical 20 front foot store.

Estimated cost per front foot, facades sign improvement \$ 200.00

Typical 20 front foot cost \$ 4000.00

Cost per year based on 10 year loan of 14.24% constant payment per year \$ 569.51

Cost per sq.ft. (based on 20 x 50 ft. store, 1000 sq.ft.) .57 \*

\* Low interest loans may be obtainable and this cost could be materially reduced.

Economic Analysis

Phase II

Increased sales per year per sq.ft. needed to pay for improvements based on tenant's ability to pay for 8% of sales per year as yearly rental.

$(\$ .57 \div .08) =$   
\$7.13 per sq.ft. per year

Phase III Land Assembly and Amalgamation of areas in the C.B.D.

It is envisioned that the improvements in Phase I and II will upgrade the C.B.D. to such an extent that parts of the C.B.D. will be underutilized and ripe for higher and better economic uses. The economic analysis of Phase III predicts a major thrust at land assembly and amalgamation of areas in the C.B.D.

Economic Analysis

Phase III

This feasibility analysis is an attempt to induce owners to engage in a land assembly and amalgamation in the C.B.D. for new and re-use development with introduction of a zoning bonus system for approved superior development.

Determination of Economically Feasible Package, and Residual Land Value

Minimum suggested site 200,000 sq.ft.  
(The larger the site the more predictable the profit base)

Necessary green area (15%) 30,000 sq.ft.

Parking requirements  
(5 cars for every  
1000 sq.ft. of  
commercial space.) 102,200 sq.ft.

Space available for  
commercial development 68,000 sq.ft.  
200,000 sq.ft.

Available space for  
rent 68,000 less 10%  
non-leasable space 6,800 sq.ft.  
Gross leasable area 61,200 sq.ft.

Achievable rent 1980.  
Superior regional type  
development

8% of sales @ \$200 \*\*  
per sq.ft. of gross  
leasable  
area (\$200 x 8% x 61,200  
sq.ft.) \$ 979,200.00  
Less 5% vacancy  
factor 48,960.00  
Estimated net achievable  
rent \$ 930,240.00

Cost of development  
without regard to land  
development and other  
costs @ \$40 per sq.ft.  
\$40 x 68,000 sq.ft. \$ 2,720,000.00

Estimated debt service (1980) 10% constant payment of \$2,720,000.00	\$272,000.00
Maintenance and operation (Owner's responsibility all other costs and future increases passed onto tennants)	
Real estate tax - at current rates and assessment practice (Tenant responsible for any future increases in real estate taxes)	58,000.00
Total Annual Costs	<u>\$398,000.00</u>
Available for residual land valuation (\$930,240.00 - \$398,000.00)	\$532,240.00
Capitalized residual land value (@ 10% of capitalization rate)	\$5,322,400.00
Less: Rent up and carrying charges prior to construction	\$ 250,000.00

Less demolition cost	\$50,000.00
	<u>\$5,022,400.00*</u>

\* This valuation does not take into account indeterminate relocation and lease buyout costs.

Residual land value \$25.11 per sq.ft.

\*\* Independent inspection of newer shopping area stores reveals current 1978 sales of \$150.00 per sq.ft. in stores that market to upper middle income shoppers, and expected increase to \$200.00 in 1980.

The Phase III solution is extremely profitable and owners should be encouraged to consider same.

Cost estimate for C.B.D. Programs prepared by H. K. Bell, November 1978.

Central Business District Improvement  
Program Timing Schedule

Phase I

Part I Landscaping, Curbs, Parking  
Lot Improvement  
2 to 5 years

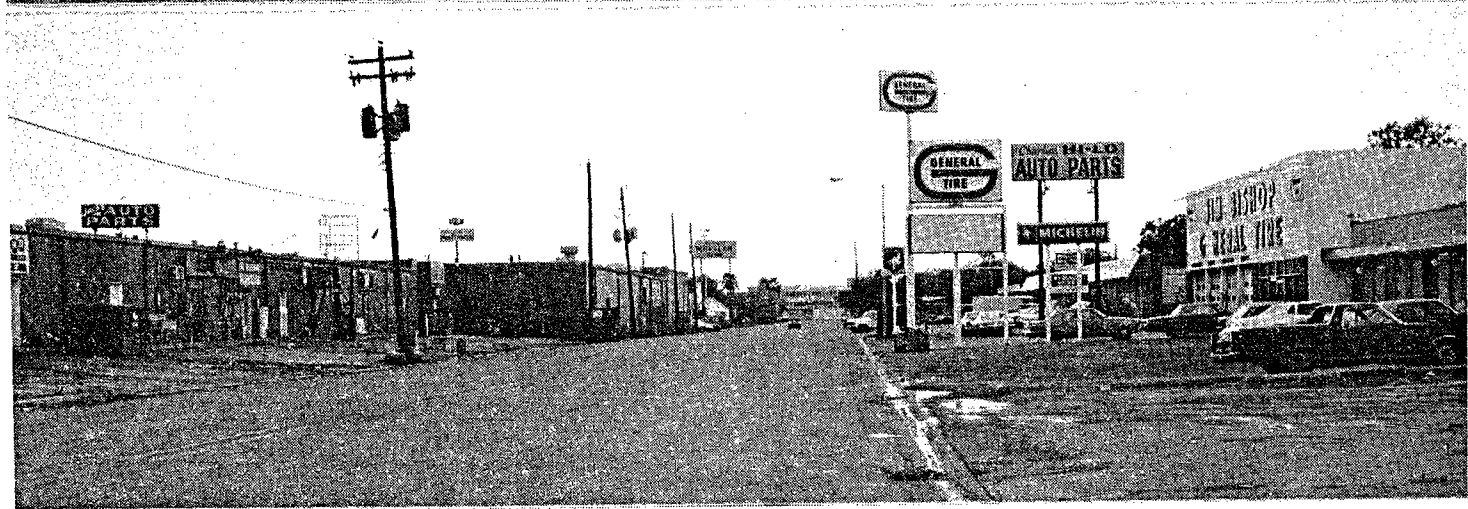
Part II Road Realignment, Drainage  
Improvement and Focus  
Building  
2 to 7 years

Phase II

Improvement to Facades, Signs  
2 to 7 years

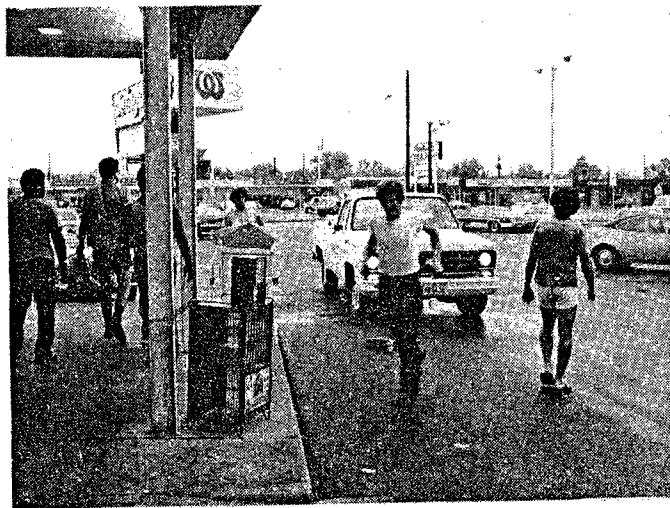
Phase III

Land Assembly and Amalgamation  
2 to 7 years



## IV. 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.





# V. ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The R/UDAT effort was made possible because of the assistance of many under the administration of two Bellaire City Councils. The present City administration finalized the details for the R/UDAT visit. They are:

Hon. Louise Ware - Mayor  
Bill Repass - Councilman  
Barbara Milwee - Councilman  
Jim Gill - Councilman  
Bill Berryhill - Councilman  
Griff Vance - Councilman  
C.F. (Doc) Maginnis - Councilman  
David Doty - City Manager  
Sara Jane White - City Planner  
The immediate previous City Council was responsible for the initiation of the R/UDAT visit. They are:

Hon. Rodney Rethwisch - Mayor  
David DeWhitt - Councilman  
Carolyn Schum - Councilwoman  
Louise Ware - Councilwoman  
Bill Berryhill - Councilman  
Raylor Hick - Councilman  
Tom Kilbey - Councilman  
David Doty - Councilman

Local civic organizations and business organizations were responsible for donating financial assistance to the R/UDAT effort. Their representatives

served on the Executive Committee of the R/UDAT Liaison Committee. The organization and their representatives are:

The Bellaire City Council  
Bill Berryhill - Chairman & Co-ordinator  
Honorable Louise Ware - Mayor  
The Greater Bellaire Chamber of Commerce  
Ted Turk - Executive Committee  
Roger Westrup - Executive Vice-President  
The Bellaire Civic Action Club (BCAC)  
Michael P. Smith - Executive Committee  
Lynn McBee  
The Bellaire Northeast Civic Club  
Bill Borden - Executive Committee  
Clyde Wilbern  
Jim Lane  
The Southeast Bellaire Neighborhood Association  
Patsy Thorn - Executive Committee  
Joe Badders  
Johnnye Bass  
Southwest Bellaire Quadrant Representative  
Charles D. Griffin - Executive Committee  
Northwest Quadrant Representative  
Inez Stewart - Executive Committee  
Planning and Zoning Commission  
Jim Bryant - Executive Committee  
Dr. W.C. Watkins

The following persons served on the R/UDAT Executive Committee. These persons represented special interest groups, organizations or individuals who expressed an interest in the participating effort and continuous involvement.

All members of the Executive Committee:

H.B. Hood - American Association of Retired  
Persons  
Alf Davey - Houston-Galveston Area Council  
Lou Stoltz - Faith American Lutheran Church  
Al Richardson - Bellaire Church of the  
Nazerene  
Col. Henry Dittman - Harris County  
Commissioner's Court  
Richard Kabat - Texas Department of Highway  
Public Transportation  
Betty Sellers - City of West University Place  
Dr. David Andre - Bellaire General Hospital  
John Hansen - Loop 610 Interests  
J. Grant Webster - Realtor  
Frank Herzog - Central Business District  
Richard Keating - American Institute of  
Architects

The preparation of the R/UDAT Study was  
also assisted by the following graduate  
students, interns and citizens:

Don Peacock - Architect Intern with Charles  
Tapley  
Mike Maher - Graduate Student, Rice U., Urban  
Economics  
Chris Brown - Developer  
Richard Cooper - Graduate Student, Rice U.,  
Architecture  
Peter Jones  
Eron Elliston - Photographer  
Lanette Joubert - Graduate Student, Rice U.  
Mark Moore - Graphics, Format and Layout

Michael Seeber - Landscape Architect  
Ben Burdsall - Architect  
Howard Templin - Architect  
Adele Santos - Rice U.  
Mike Webster - Printing  
Jim Bishop - President, Houston Chapter AIA  
Jan Corenswet - Graduate Student, Rice U.,  
Architecture  
Leslie Lewis - City of Bellaire  
Don C. Edwards - City of Bellaire

The following groups, firms and entities  
contributed to the R/UDAT effort:

The City of Bellaire  
The Greater Bellaire Chamber of Commerce  
Bellaire High School  
Fluor Corporation  
Henry's Steak House  
Northern Natural Gas  
Prudential Insurance Co.  
Skidmore, Owings & Merrill, Architects  
3/D International  
The Beacon Newspaper  
The Bellaire Texas Newspaper  
The Bellaire Women's Civic Club  
Carroll's Discount Office Furniture  
Mike McCorkle - Photographer  
Marriott Motor Hotel (Astrodome)  
John Hansen - Developer  
Sharpstown Dodge  
Lanier Word Processor - LTE2

There were five task force groups responsible for various details before the R/UDAT's arrival and during the R/UDAT visit.

Task Force 1 - Logistics and Budget -  
Co-Chairmen - Ted Turk and Howard Templin

This task force was responsible for securing work space, furniture, office equipment, printing, film processing, secretarial support and records for the budget.

Task Force 2 - Itinerary  
Co-Chairmen - Bill Borden and Roger Westrup

The task force on itinerary was responsible for scheduling all events during the team's visit including air, bus and foot tours. Scheduling meetings with citizen groups, resource people, community leaders and arranging lodging, transportation and meals. Dan C. Edwards assisted the task force on itinerary with many hours of time.

Task Force 3 - Public Relations  
Chairman - Joel Nash

This task force was responsible for involving local media and newspapers in the R/UDAT study. Richard Elkowitz and Sam Flowers of The Beacon Newspaper and Carol Bartholdi and Ned Pederson of the Bellaire, Texan Newspaper assisted

in the media coverage. Jerry Horton of Gulf Coast Cable Television also assisted in providing cable television coverage of the final R/UDAT presentation.

Task Force 4 - Data Preparation  
Chairwoman - Sara Jane White

Bellaire's City Planner and head of the Community Development Department. Data gathered by former City Planner, Bob Schernig was also used. Bellaire's Tax Assessor-Collector, Jerry Ogden, City Manager, DAvid Doty, Assistant City Manager, Bill Gaither and City Attorney, Firmin Hickey also provided useful data to the team.

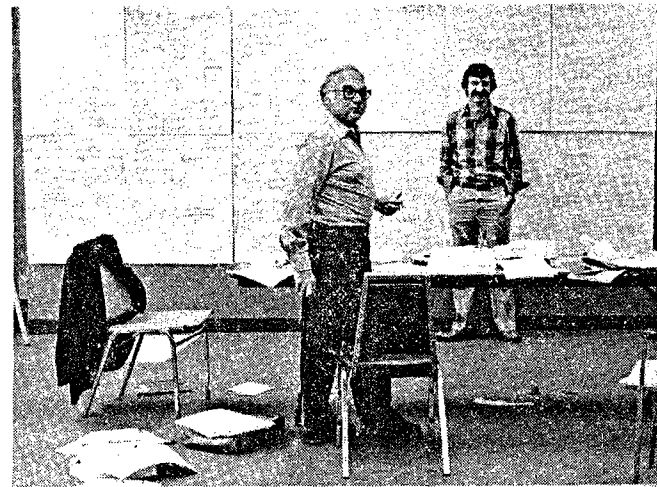
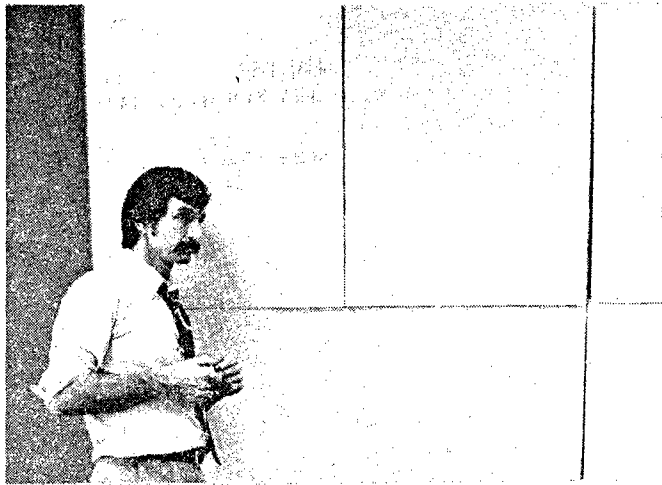
Task Force 5 - "The Downtown Committee"  
Co-Chairmen - Jim Bryant and Frank Herzog

This committee was responsible for encouraging the C.B.D., merchants and property owners to provide input and support to the R/UDAT efforts before, during and after the team's visit.

The Regional/Urban Design Assistance Team and the students who participated in this R/UDAT visit, wish to express their sincere appreciation to the following individuals who contributed significantly of their time and energy.

Dan Edwards  
Leslie Lewis  
Sara Jane White  
Howard Templin  
Roger Westrup  
Bill Borden  
Ben Burdsall

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