

2/12/78

PR indicate  
should be included  
in a planning  
report

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PR indicate has  
be discussed adequately  
in a planning report.

September 9, 1977

KALAMAZOO 1977 STUDY

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Subject: Report #1

1977 Kalamazoo Downtown Planning Program

Project: 77:63

Meeting Date: September 1, 1977

Actions taken:

- Conferred with private and public leaders re future downtown Kalamazoo planning
- Made walking tour of several downtown areas
- Reviewed current planning efforts briefly with Planning Department staff
- Discussed DDC formation and activities with director

Summary

On September 1, 1977 I met with several influential people who are concerned and interested in the healthy and continued growth of the Kalamazoo downtown area. This concern is expressed as a desire to see the total Kalamazoo community benefit by a stronger downtown.

In the morning I first reviewed the background of my re-involvement with Roger Kooi and Carol Roberts of the DKA. They said that the day's activities were a kickoff to get the basic implementing groups together again so as to gain ideas, set some goals and to evaluate the current position of downtown to see where it goes from here. After this brief session, we joined a larger group at Mr. Ray Dykema's office. This group consisted of Jim Hilboldt, Jim Weston, Irving Gilmore, Ray Hightower, Garrett Van Haaften, Ray Dykema, Roger Kooi and Carol Roberts. Later in the morning several others joined the group at various times including Carolyn Ham, Robert Bobb, Don Swets, Mike Conlisk, Ray Purden, Evan Laduc. The discussion which continued for about two and one half hours was spirited, concerned, positive and contributive. I asked each of the people present to express their views about downtown

Kalamazoo and why this re-awakened interest which resulted in my being requested to be involved again in the planning effort.

PR Ray Dykema said that he was prompted by the fact that there had been a long period of time between our previous hard look at downtown and now. He particularly felt that specific goals must be reset. Outside investment patterns are a serious consideration today and there are many areas in downtown Kalamazoo that could use the positive interest of such investors. \*

Others expressed similar thoughts and I have combined the expressed opinions of the many talented people at this session in observations summarized below. It should be noted that the comments do not all agree with each other and there may be some contradictions. This is merely a listing of how people feel about downtown and the planning effort. The points are given at random with no attempt in organizing them for the present. They are numbered for easy reference.

- PR 1) Some felt the south area of downtown is over built and that we must begin to focus now on the north end of downtown. This may be an especially appropriate time to begin such efforts since a new transportation center and a new county building are under construction at the north end.
- PR 2) Good boundary neighborhoods of the downtown are encouraged to even better development by excellent planning and implementation of downtown programs. Considerable interest was expressed in making the downtown not only a well planned area, but also a beautiful area. It was mentioned that one of the original concepts of downtown was that it could become a botanical garden. In any event, the stress on beauty and quality must be maintained.
- PR 3) There is a need to keep up the gardens once they have been well planned. Mr. Dykema mentioned the need for the unexpected which are still attractive.
- PR 4) Most at the meeting felt that the published plan is an incentive to people who are thinking of occupying the area being planned.

- 4) We must hitch a wagon up so it is headed for some place.
- 5) The search seemed to return time and time again during the meeting to discussing what it is that downtown needs to remain healthy and vital. Such questions as - do we remain a shopping center, do we increase institutional use, do we bring traffic into the heart of downtown, how do we avoid congestion, how do we maintain the beauty of an already beautiful area, what is the land/use mix best for Kalamazoo? These and other questions indicate a strong need to isolate the elements that people are willing to work with and toward to retain downtown health. \*
- PR 6) On a positive note it was stressed that many major programs have move ahead in the downtown since 1959. Just a few include the Upjohn investment of about 30 or 40 million in their downtown facility, Bronson Hospital's expansion which is sizable, construction of the Bell Telephone building, construction of the Kalamazoo Center and of course, now the construction of the new Transportation Building and the County Building. In addition, there is every reason to believe that some major retail expansions will take place in the very near future, along with construction of the necessary multi-level parking facilities. Thus, there is continuing evidence that downtown is attractive and can be made appealing to the businessman and to the people who use the facilities.
- TR 7) The heart of a successful free enterprise downtown establishment is its ability to make money. Therefore, if we are to maintain a level of private enterprise in the Kalamazoo CBD, there must be customers and people who can use the services offered so that the proprietors do make a profit. This, no matter how many public or semi-public institutions are located there. One member of the discussion group suggested that over a period of time Kalamazoo's downtown might grow to be largely institutional, interlaced with retail facilities that service those people work-
- PR

- 7) ing and visiting the various institutions. It is necessary for all people involved in this planning effort to constantly visualize in like fashion how they feel downtown should look and grow. It is only by conceptualizing and identifying the model characteristics of Kalamazoo in 1999 that we can actually achieve a directed pattern of improvement to get to that point that we visualize.
- 8) Irving Gilmore voiced a strong concern for the empty stores that are beginning to show up in the downtown. It was pointed out that the Woolworth lease expires in 1980, the J. C. Penney lease is running out in 1981 and there is evidence to indicate that these two stores will not stay in downtown. Although there is concern for vacancies along Burdick Mall, others indicated a concern for the total downtown area and the vacancy picture that is being expressed there. It would seem that some statistical information on vacancy trends would be helpful. This matter should be investigated with the planning department.
- 9) There was a great amount of discussion about the good and bad of residential development in and adjoining downtown. Most of the participants recognize that certain kinds of housing would be good and other kinds might be less good. If we are to consider that population is necessary to generate downtown health, then certainly a buying and using population nearby downtown would be healthy. This matter is presently being explored by many parties and our efforts perhaps should be to bring together the thinking of the various groups involved to see what actually can be done.
- 10) Ray Hightower said that our major focus to now has been on the open mall. It could be that now is the time to restudy the closing in of the mall areas and an extension of this concept to surrounding parts of the main business core. He expressed a very interesting theory that if you see people getting enthusiastic, generally they are getting enthusiastic about something that is apt to happen. We must instill enthusiasm in those who

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16) retail expansion program may get underway shortly. However, it should be cautioned that a development corporation is not the sole answer. It can, by virtue of its structure, provide a tax break to the investor and also provide low cost financing. However it still takes know-how and where withall to assemble the complex details of any business expansion. Presently the EDC is just beginning its operations. It can prove to be very valuable.

PR 17) At this point in the conference the rhetorical question was posed to me - what, in my opinion, can we as people vitally interested in the health and improvement of downtown Kalamazoo do? In light of this, it seems that my basic assignment, at least initially, is to establish the kind of visionary projection that is achievable and attractive. We decided that we would use the year 1999 as our current target date since it is, as Victor Gruen once paraphrased, close enough to be understood without being far enough to enter the realm of science fiction.

PR 18) Frequently during the meeting there was a return to the very specific day-in and day-out ideas that would make downtown a better place in which to be. At this point a list is given of some of the more direct 'now' activities so that we can return to these occasionally and gain an idea as to how they could be used.

The items included:

- a. Close in the mall
- b. Provide totally free parking
- c. Construct skyways between upper levels of buildings
- d. Construct close-in residential housing
- e. Provide underground connective facilities
- f. Gain larger shares of federal funding or subsidized funds
- g. Conduct better businessmen's education programs
- h. Attract and locate more local businesses in downtown
- i. Relocate the railroad

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- 18)      j.    Improve mall lighting  
           k.    Improve downtown security  
           l.    Increase the institutional population in downtown  
           m.    Demolish buildings that are habitually vacant and intensify land use on occupied parcels, - this, to provide open spaces and increase the density of use,  
           n.    Generate increased public relations efforts to show people the attractive features of downtown. Everyone agreed that people must have a reason for coming to the central city.  
           o.    Extend business open hours.  
           p.    Concentrate on the major land parcel concept.  
           q.    Provide more entertainment facilities in the downtown area.

All of these concepts have merit but it should be remembered that they are merely part of the conceptual model, not the model itself.

- 19)      It was brought up time and time again that the vacant store syndrome is one that must be examined in depth since it is indicative of a growing evacuation of the downtown area. We must not consider that this in itself is a sign of weakening downtown but we should find the reasons why certain kinds of businesses can exist. The analysis might be compared to the rationale for furniture stores moving out of the central city in the mid-50's. Basically the reason was that they could not afford the large space demands of retailing furniture in the downtown area and thus, moved to less expensive parcels of land where adjoining parking was available. Cost was a deciding factor.

- 20)      The governmental leaders that were present at our session were very interested in insuring that the private sector worked with the public sector in this renewed planning effort. There apparently is good rapport between the downtown business people and the city government at present. This is encouraging and we will make every effort in our work to maintain this excellent relationship.

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- 21) Presently the city is working to a comprehensive plan that encompasses many of the points discussed during our session. Mike Condlisk, the city planner, suggested that we establish and maintain close liaison with his group to remain aware of what is being done.
- 22) The city manager, Robert Bobb, emphasized that the railroads have come in for increasing attention over the last 3 or 4 years. Apparently there is now a well defined plan for relocating and consolidating the railroads. However, the cash requirements for this activity are 12 to 15 million dollars and no federal funding program is available. This poses some problem since there are few, if any, vehicles available for such funding at the present time. Nevertheless, most at the meeting felt that the railroad problem must be continually attacked so that a solution can be implemented.
- 23) There was a brief discussion of the transportation center which is now under construction. It will be used by taxi, limousine, bus and train services. Some feel this will generate enough short term population at the north end of the city to increase the desirability there of certain small businesses. Also, construction of the new County Building should assist in improving population density at the north end. This matter should be studied in more detail to see what the impact will be and to get ready to accommodate the demand for the type of facilities best suited for such generating use.
- 24) Some discussion was held about the South Mall and many consider it to be a very vital development effort to downtown. The total land use has not been set as yet and studies are still underway.
- 25) There was a brief discussion about the impact of the Kalamazoo Center on downtown. There is no doubt that it has been a strong force in maintaining the health of the core, however, to continually exert such healthy influence, it must be kept healthy in itself.

- 26) Mr. Ray Purdin emphasized that we must think of downtown as not just a few blocks of mall but that it extends in all compass directions for a considerable distance. He feels that we should focus not only on vacancies on Burdick but also expand our thinking process to encompass the reduction of vacancies on other downtown streets.
- 27) There was an interesting concept expressed by Mr. Purdin that perhaps the use of city land may be revised dramatically over the next few years. It might be that eliminating some of the vacant buildings, opening up green areas and increasing the density of use on the parcels occupied might be of help in making downtown more attractive. This concept ties in to the major land parcel ideas that were reviewed several years ago by the downtown Kalamazoo planners. This concept should definitely be restudied.
- 28) The matter of increasing the density of downtown population for an extended period of time was the focus of several sub-discussions of major topics during our meeting. It would be interesting to find some answers to questions as to whether people actually will stay downtown no matter what the attractive features are past certain hours. The nature of the population and the using group plays a large part in determining this. It might be helpful to gain some community attitudes toward extended hour use of downtown facilities. This might be done by the planning department or the Chamber of Commerce as a survey project. Apparently students from the University of Notre Dame are presently doing some work in the downtown area and this might be integrated as a part of their studies.
- 29) Don Swets emphasized that the major land parcel concept proved of strong interest several years ago and should be re-introduced as a planning tool. He also mentioned the level concept of traffic movement that we used in the initial relocation study. It would be wise to restudy these concepts in light of the present downtown Kalamazoo situation.
- 30) Some discussion was conducted about the advisability of establishing Food retailing operations in the downtown area. There presently is some potential for relocating some smaller food stores in downtown.

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- 30) However, the trend over the past few years has been for the food store to move away from downtown and to attract them back would require some definite reason for such a move. It should be kept in mind that normally for food operations except of a very specialized nature to exist that ease of access and convenient high turnover parking is a necessity.
- 31) It was agreed that <sup>ag</sup>glomerating major parcels of land in downtown is very difficult. The rail conflict resolution would be of help.
- PR 32) There was a reminder that the DKA several years ago used a very simple, straight-forward and unselfish technique of assembling land parcels as they came on the market. It might be wise to again look at the method used then to see if it would be appropriate today. It should be kept in mind, as pointed out by one of the members at the meeting, that we should not expect miracles happening over night. Improvement of downtown areas is difficult and takes time, effort and dedication. Studying all the techniques that will help improve downtown is important.
- ~~33) Mike Conlisk, the city community planner,~~

November 3, 1977

KALAMAZOO 1977 STUDY

Subject: Report #2  
1977 Kalamazoo Downtown Planning Program

Project: 77163

Meeting Date: October 25, 1977 and October 26, 1977

Actions taken:

- Conferred in depth with planning department staff re downtown planning program
- Made walking tour of all sections of downtown with particular emphasis on the southern perimeter
- Conferred with DPW staff re thoroughfare planning and downtown traffic planning
- Made detail inspection of north mall areas
- Conferred with several members of DKA re future patterns of downtown growth and development

Summary

On October 25, 1977 and October 26, 1977 I visited Kalamazoo to continue gathering material and formulating concepts for the 1999 target planning effort for downtown. The objective of this trip was basically to gain the ideas and thoughts of the official representatives of the city technical departments, as well as to make in depth reconnaissance of the various areas that are affected.

The morning of the first day I met with representatives of the planning division of the Community Development Department, including Mr. Evan Leduc,

Mr. Al White, and Mr. Mark DuBay. Mr. Mike Conlisk visited with us briefly. The purpose of this session was to formulate ideas and concepts that would help improve the downtown area of Kalamazoo, as well as all other sectors. Items discussed at this meeting are given below at random and numbered for easy reference.

- 1) It was apparent from my early discussions with Mr. Leduc, Mr. DuBay, Mr. White and Mr. Conlisk that the technical staff of the Community Development Department and the city of Kalamazoo is vitally interested in the downtown area as a critical element in the city's health. Mr. Leduc pointed out that there are over 10,000 people employed in downtown Kalamazoo, that the interest in residential development is extremely high and that in survey after survey downtown ranks very high, consistently with people when asked their opinion of it as a shopping center.
- 2) There are some serious concerns the planning division has. One of these deals with the projected expansion of shopping center facilities to the south by Dayton Hudson. There is some concern already that the Kalamazoo community is approaching an over-built position relative to commercial square footage and that this additional center may not be assimilated in the commercial marketplace as well as earlier centers have been. Apparently there were several efforts made to interest Dayton Hudson in building in the downtown area of Kalamazoo, probably at the north end. However, their commitments were such that this was not possible.

- 3) During our morning conference the mention of a 24 hour downtown was made frequently. We clarified the name and it was agreed that what we are really speaking of when we use the term - a 24 hour center - is a center with extended occupancy hours. The planning division agrees that the city of Kalamazoo is not a Toronto, a Montreal, a Chicago or a Paris. Thus, a central business district operating with facilities round the clock is not the intent. It is the need to extend the hours of use both during the week day and over the week end that is of strong interest.
- 4) Apparently the planning division, it is felt by the staff, takes a strong lead in maintaining interest in downtown planning. This, of course, is important since a meaningful effort in planning must have the blessing of the commission.
- 5) The men at this session uniformly felt that housing in the south section of downtown particularly is critical to its ongoing success. There were various concepts about what the development would be like. One of the more interesting observations was that Kalamazoo seems to be a community where, if its downtown could be encouraged to maintain a 19th century friendliness and scale, could be very successful. This observation could very well have come from the recent involvement of the community development division in the photo history of Kalamazoo residences. The idea is interesting and merits further evaluation.
- 6) Mr. Leduc said that according to their most recent study, the assessed valuation of downtown is now about 8% of the total assessed value of the city. It still occupies about 1% of the land area.

- 7) As part of this discussion I tried to clarify with the planning division staff my position in the downtown planning program. I emphasized that my job is not to supplant or become an adversary of the GDD, it is instead to lend whatever credence my ideas have to the implementation of such ideas as are mutually acceptable to the planning division, to the private sector, to the city and the others concerned. I also would like to strive to reduce the number of acceptable alternates to improving the central business district to a small group that have the highest probability of achieving fruition by 1999. This involves two sets of probability elements. First, selecting projects where the probability of gaining support to go ahead is high. Second, to proceed in a fashion so that the probability of success once implementation has begun is at a maximum.
- 8) In general discussions it appears that the planning division feels it draws its strength from the neighborhood supported gains <sup>additional strength</sup> from the financial sector of the private business group, from real estate groups, certainly from the DKA and to a certain extent, from Kalamazoo industry.
- 9) All of the people participating, Mr. Leduc, Mr. White and Mr. DuBay are enthusiastic about the planning effort relative to downtown. They feel the CBD can be approached, <sup>not only,</sup> as an identifiable unit in the city but certainly as a part of the total city itself. The CBD is still in some people's opinion a small town downtown and should be kept as such. Walking distances are manageable now and should be maintained as they are. One of the heavy benefits pointed out for downtown is that people in Kalamazoo still have the option of living within walking distance of their work.

- 10) Mr. White said that the neighborhoods surrounding downtown Kalamazoo are not dominated by non-residential characteristics such as heavy traffic, power lines and other elements that sometimes dominate the commercial sector of the downtown areas.
- 11) Although there have been many expressions to the contrary, this group of people felt that downtown is still very accessible from most sectors of the Kalamazoo community. The major access problem seems to be from the south. There needs to be additional work on the Portage and Burdick entries.
- 12) Mr. DuBay pointed out that we must improve the circulation patterns within the city starting immediately. We had considerable discussion about the way the traffic patterns are developing and it is quite apparent that serious consideration should be given to re-opening negotiations and discussions with the State Highway Department. While discussing the traffic system with Don Swets later on, he called attention to the city of Kalamazoo thoroughfare system plan prepared in 1971 by an ad hoc committee. I briefly reviewed some of the concepts in this plan and strongly suggest that it be brought out again and studied as to its present application. It appears that this may offer some guidelines for once again re-establishing the important contacts at the state level. It also could give direction to our work within the Kalamazoo area.
- 13) There is a mild emphasis by the planning staff on the use of mass transit. There is a sincere desire to improve rider density in private cars since the present density is only 1.2 persons per car

throughout the Kalamazoo traffic study area.

\* 14) There was a continuing emphasis in the discussion of traffic patterns

for both days on the need to study return of Michigan Avenue to two way traffic. In some cases it was felt that the present traffic

pattern on Michigan makes it merely an in-city freeway with little regard for pedestrians trying to cross the street. Others felt that it divided the city with a broad moderate to rapid speed thoroughfare and in all cases it was felt that a return to two way traffic could tend to slow and make more useful the Michigan Avenue right-of-way. It should be pointed out here that an alternate scheme to Michigan Avenue has been for many years to ultimately pair up Kalamazoo and Eleanor as the one way pair at the north, and keep Michigan Avenue for lower speed local traffic. Over a period of time the restriction on Michigan Avenue traffic could continue as alternate routes are found in the east-west direction. This matter should be a critical part of our updating of the downtown study program.

15) The planning department presently seems to feel that a routing of the north-south connector between I94 and US131 should be to the east side of the downtown area. Its exact location is subject to some discussion presently but it appears that the route generally follows that as discussed in the 1971 thoroughfare plan mentioned above. This, again, is a reason why this plan should be reviewed again.

16) There was some discussion about the attitudes of people who live in Kalamazoo toward the city. Mr. Leduc feels that people who

live here still believe the city is one of single family residences and that it should be kept that way. Again, it should be emphasized that the concept of an extended time use of downtown does not make it a city as busy as the major metropolitan areas which operate on entertainment and business basis 24 hours per day. Mr. White emphasized that we want to maintain a small town character about Kalamazoo and its downtown. Again, the concept of living in a 19th century village where things are within walking distance was brought out.

- 17) The concept of the small town could be encouraged by mixed land use and low rise housing. As an instance, Mr. DuBay felt that there was a strong need for a major food store in the south sector of downtown. This would be a very important land use in the type of facility we are now considering. However, whether it is appropriate for downtown or not should be carefully thought through. The reason many of the automobile oriented facilities such as food stores began to move out many years ago was because of the moderate demand for high volume purchases and the lack of parking spaces available as would be needed for the very large food markets. Specialty food stores are certainly a consideration, however.
- 18) We took a side tack here and talked about another objective of our thinking process. All agree essentially that it would be wonderful to recapture the imagination and stimulate an intense desire for CBD improvement by those who can do something about it.
- 19) The geographical configuration of downtown as defined in the 1950's with some modifications at the southwest corner are now accepted as the proper configuration for the present downtown. This is now a census boundary and as such we can expect that statistics and data will be consistently drawn from the area.



- 20) A summary question was asked - what do you all see the downtown as looking like in 1999? Comments were rather sparse since everyone has difficulty projecting a vision of a downtown in the future when asked an opinion. However, the consensus was that there would be less and less major retail, particularly large stores and more and more reduction in the scale of operations, particularly retail operations. Yet the group emphasized the desire to bring people downtown on an extended day basis.
- 21) All agreed that parking is still a problem. People basically dislike paying for parking. This has been intensified over the past twenty years by the increasing availability of free parking space so called at shopping centers. Irrespective of whether the parking is actually free or not, people do like to be able to park without restrictions and without paying. I strongly recommend that we consider a method by which we can eliminate all parking charges in the downtown area within the next three years.
- 22) Mr. DuBay said that he could see the city becoming a financial center rather than a commercial center over the next few years of development. The concept of building a downtown around different types of use is a planning device and a thinking stimulator that we should use in our study.
- 23) Mr. Leduc said that we must look at downtown as a new type of entity. He mentioned that some cities have generated as many as three or more distinct, identifiable operations in their downtown - sometimes by district. This is somewhat consistent with the concept of the mixed use since the supporting facilities for those that work there and visit the area must be near at hand. He said that Albuquerque, New Mexico and Denver, Colorado are examples of cities that are functionally divided.

- 24) We continually return to the question as to why people want to live in Kalamazoo? In summary, they want to live there because the city itself is the attraction.
- 25) The concept of an enclosed passage threaded through the matrix of mixed uses in the downtown from and to major population centers could stimulate circulation. Thus, we begin to look at people moving from -
- car to building
  - building to building
  - bus to building
  - car to bus
  - bus to car
  - level to level
  - ~~into~~ out
  - out to in
  - building to car
  - building to bus

This movement process must be made pleasant and overall comfortable enough to attract people to it. Total comfort is not necessarily essential since quite often people enjoy a change in weather, such as walking outdoors with inside clothes on during the winter time merely to get a breath of fresh air. However, overall it has to be a safe, pleasant and interesting environment. If a series of mixed uses were ~~identified within~~ the major block concept, then the connections between them would ~~provide ease of~~ passageway from sector to sector of the city. This is a concept that we should explore in greater detail.

26) It was felt by the group that the trend toward smaller vehicles in the new techniques of mass transit should encourage ease of access and egress. It was felt that we should not encourage automobiles inside the downtown.

27) Five questions were then posed to the group for long range consideration.

These were:

A. What is to be the long term evolvement of the CBD (to 1999)?

Some immediate answers to this question indicated that the group felt there will be deterioration. Also, it was felt that the downtown will begin to lose some of the private sector business men. It would be interesting to make an analysis of the trends in tax free property increase or decrease within the CBD over the past few years.

B. What should be the nature of the directed long term improvement of the CBD?

The group felt that the city must provide an atmosphere conducive to achieving a good, mixed use. There were no major discussions about what this good mix would be but it is felt critical that the city participate in providing as much help as possible.

C. What immediate improvements are desirable, what immediate improvements are possible?

One of the first answers to this was a strengthening and assistance to the Economic Development Corporation. Another improvement that was felt both desirable and possible is to enclose portions of the mall. This suggestions still is offered rather cautiously since there is serious doubt as to the economic benefits to be gained from such a move. However, it should be part of our studies.

Another suggestions was that we focus immediately on the north blocks of the mall where there appears to be more potential for real development over the next few years.

D. Who should spearhead the improvement and the directed thrust?  
It was generally agreed that the DKA should be the motivating force here.

E. What should be our timetable of action?

We have agreed generally that 1999 will be our present target planning year and I suggest that we adopt this officially as our thinking and conceptual target.

To close out our session we did a set of flip charts on the various classifications of elements that are important to considering downtown planning. The major headings included:

- Uses, sizes, shapes, adjectives, scale, time use, interrelates with, impact upon. A full list of these has been typed on a separate sheet.

28) After the meeting with the Department of Community Development, I met briefly with Roger Kooi and we covered several points in our discussion.

A. Roger pointed out rather interestingly that everything that has been done recently has been administrative in nature. There has been very little legislative involvement in improving downtown. I am not exactly certain what this means or even if it is an accurate assessment. However, it is a very interesting observation.

B. Roger pointed out that the major new projects in the downtown area recently have been the county building, the transportation

center, the renovated depot, the purchase of the armory and its demolition proposed in 1978, the southern parking ramps and the adjoining Jacobson expansion.

C. After our discussion of the conversation at the city, Roger said that he would assemble a laundry list of desirable, immediate improvements. This will be prepared in readiness for our ongoing meetings to be held early next year.

- 29) I reviewed the basic concept of the balanced mixed land use and believe it still represents a valid approach to stimulating use of the major land parcel concept (as proposed in the City of Kalamazoo Thoroughfare System Plan of March 1971). I shall proceed on this basis as one of the directions of the replanned downtown study.
- 30) It would be wise to consider that we have several projects in the downtown area that are possible and desirable. It would be wise to make some assignments of these to various people in the DKA who have exhibited strong interest in the future. Thus, we could assign the enclosing of the malls to one individual, the achievement of free parking to another, the outlining of the major land parcels to somebody else and the definition of best mix to still others. This would get the people involved in a planning effort and although they may not have the expert knowledge needed to carry these plans into detailed studies, conceptually they should be able to think through the ideas very well.
- 31) Discussions with those who are involved with the hotel at the Kalamazoo Center are beginning to think it is not presently large enough and will have to be expanded sometime shortly.

32) As part of the reconnaissance I noted that the west side of the mall between Michigan and Water needs a complete review and restudy. The present problems are mainly physical and aesthetic in nature since the sidewalk level there is above the mall level and access is difficult except at the stairs. Also, the corner of the Kalamazoo Center at Burdick and Michigan is a lower level area reached by stairways. It is pleasantly designed but apparently very few, if anybody, uses the access route. Thus, the entire west side of the Burdick Mall between Michigan and Water is a blank space for pedestrian circulation at mall level.

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On October 26, 1977 I met with Mr. Don Swets, city engineer, to discuss planning progress in general. The latter part of the morning was spent in a full reconnaissance of the total downtown by foot. I then had lunch with Ray Dykema and a business friend of his to discuss downtown development. After a brief recapping and review, I then left for Detroit. Some of the more important points are covered below at random.

33) Don Swets feels the Thoroughfare System Plan done in March 1971 by the ad hoc committee should be applied to the present planning of the downtown. Obviously there have been some changes since then, but the fundamental principle, he feels, is still good. If there is to be a shift back to the city as a living area, the concept could very well make a success of this approach to downtown improvement.

34) We talked at length about the traffic circulation pattern and it was felt that John and Rose could possibly be a one way pair with Burdick a two way street all the way to the mall. Mr. Swets feels that neither South Street nor Rose Street should be blocked.

- 35) We then discussed rail consolidation and there are present efforts to merge the lines on the east side of downtown so that a single grade separation can be built for all the railroads located at Michigan and Kalamazoo. We also discussed the expressway penetrations to the downtown and Mr. Swets pointed out that many of the concepts in the Thoroughfare System Plan of 1971 are still felt valid.
- 36) I made a full reconnaissance of the southern area of the downtown and reviewed the potential street improvements that Mr. Swets discussed. These should be looked at in great detail over the next few months since they are critical to many of the developments that we are considering.
- 37) The afternoon of October 25, 1977, I made a full reconnaissance on foot of the entire downtown with Mr. Jim Visser of the Department of Community Development. He provided me several proposed site maps of differing development concepts for sites that are under consideration for improvement. This tour was invaluable in getting me reacquainted with the downtown improvements brought about over the past few years.

Ralph J. Stephenson, P.E.





RALPH J. STEPHENSON, P.E.  
CONSULTING ENGINEER

KALAMAZOO CONCEPTS AND IDEAS  
FROM DISCUSSION WITH PLANNING  
DEPARTMENT Oct. 25, 1977

Project: 77:63

WHO ?  
WHAT ?  
WHERE ?  
WHEN ?  
HOW ?  
WHY ?

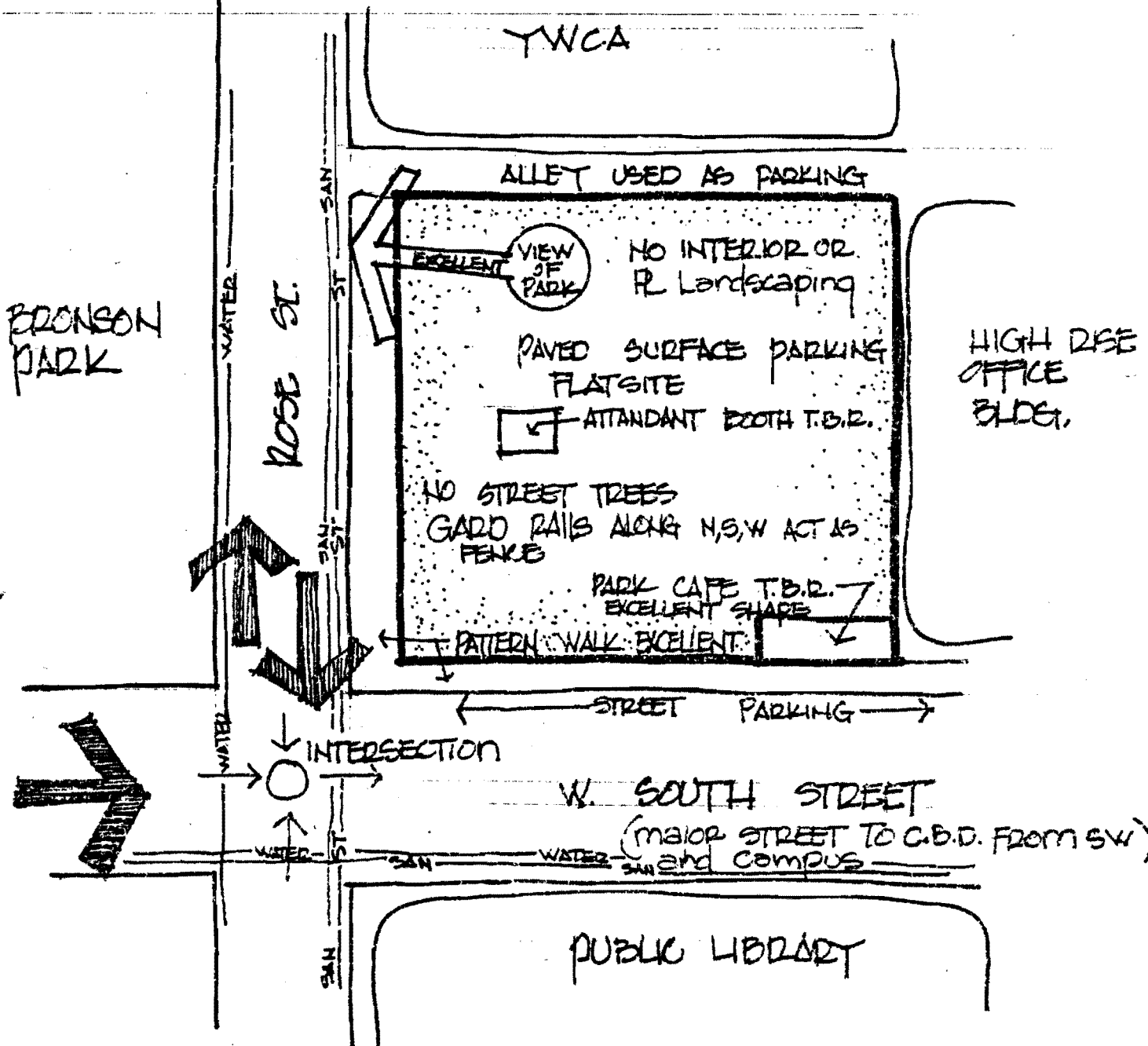
1. What is to be the nature of the long term evolvement of the GBD  
(to 1999)?  
(undirected growth or deterioration)
2. What should be the nature of the directed long term improvement  
of the GBD?
3. What immediate improvements are desirable?  
What immediate improvements are possible?
4. Who should spearhead the improvement and the directed thrust?
5. What should be our timetable of action?

10/25/77

# SITE INFO

SIZE \_\_\_\_\_ 17,000 SQ FT 4 ACRES  
 SITE OWNERSHIP \_\_\_\_\_ PRIVATE  
 ZONING \_\_\_\_\_ 3-GENERAL BUSINESS  
 EXISTING USE \_\_\_\_\_ SURFACE PARKING  
 ASSESSED VALUE \_\_\_\_\_ 79,800

*Jim Vein*  
 would like high  
 rise residential  
 & office - together



PLANNING DIVISION SITE INVENTORY  
EXISTING CONDITIONS

NOT TO SCALE  
 8/22/77 ALWITE

SHT. 1

SITE CBD REDEVELOPMENT - RES

Development Type:

Redevelopment - Residential (Primarily)

Street Address:

140 W. South St.

Transportation Facilities:

Ownership

Private

Utilities

SBC No.

5360

Development Purpose (Staff Recommendation):

To increase the City's housing supply to meet the demand for residential development in the downtown area, and to preserve the economic vitality of the CBD.

Proposed Land Use (Comprehensive Plan):

Commercial/high intensity residential

Proposed Land Use, Adjoining Properties (Comprehensive Plan):

North: Commercial office

South: Public

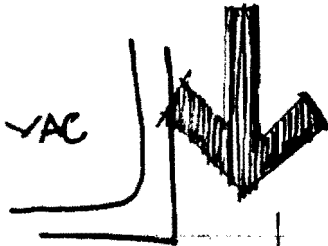
East : Commercial office

West : Park-open space

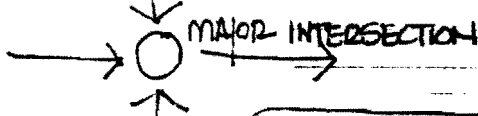
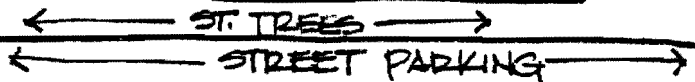
SITE INFO

SIZE \_\_\_\_\_ ACRES  
OWNERSHIP \_\_\_\_\_ PRIVATE (2 OWNERS)  
ZONING \_\_\_\_\_ 3- GENERAL BUSINESS  
EXISTING USE \_\_\_\_\_ SURFACE PARKING  
ASSESSED VALUE \$158,800

KALAMAZOO CENTER AND INN



LANDSCAPED DROP OFF POINT FOR CENTER



MICHIGAN AVE



ST. TREES

BUS STOP FOR CBD

SMELL NOISE

MAJOR ARTERIAL

ST. SAN

WATER

LANDSCAPE SITTING AREA

BUS STOP FOR CBD

STREET NOISE

ROSE

WATER

GARD RAIL

MAJOR WAITING AREA FOR BUS RIDERS, LITTER, OFFENSIVE ATMOSP.

ATTENDANT'S BOOTH T.B.R.

FLAT, PAVED NO PLANT MATERIALS

VIEWS OF BLDGS IN GOOD SHADE

VERY ARCHITECTURAL CHAIN & POST SPACE

HIGH OFF BLDG

COUNTY COURT HOUSE

ALLEY

HEAVY DELIVERED TRAFFIC SURFACE POOR SHAPE

LANDSCAPE & WALK AREA could be improved

ISB BANK

HIGH RISE

LANDSCAPED AREA

BRONSON PARK



PLANNING DIVISION SITE INVENTORY EXISTING CONDITIONS

SITE 2 CBD REDEVELOPMENT - RES



Development Type:

Redevelopment - Residential (Primarily)

Street Address:

111 - 157 W. Michigan

Transportation Facilities:

Ownership

Private - 2 owners

Utilities

SBC No.

1640

Development Purpose (Staff Recommendation):

To increase the City's housing supply, to meet the demand for housing in the downtown area, and to preserve the economic vitality of the CBD

Proposed Land Use (Comprehensive Plan):

Commercial/High intensity residential

Proposed Land Use, Adjoining Properties (Comprehensive Plan):

North: Public/commercial

South: Commercial office

East : Commercial office

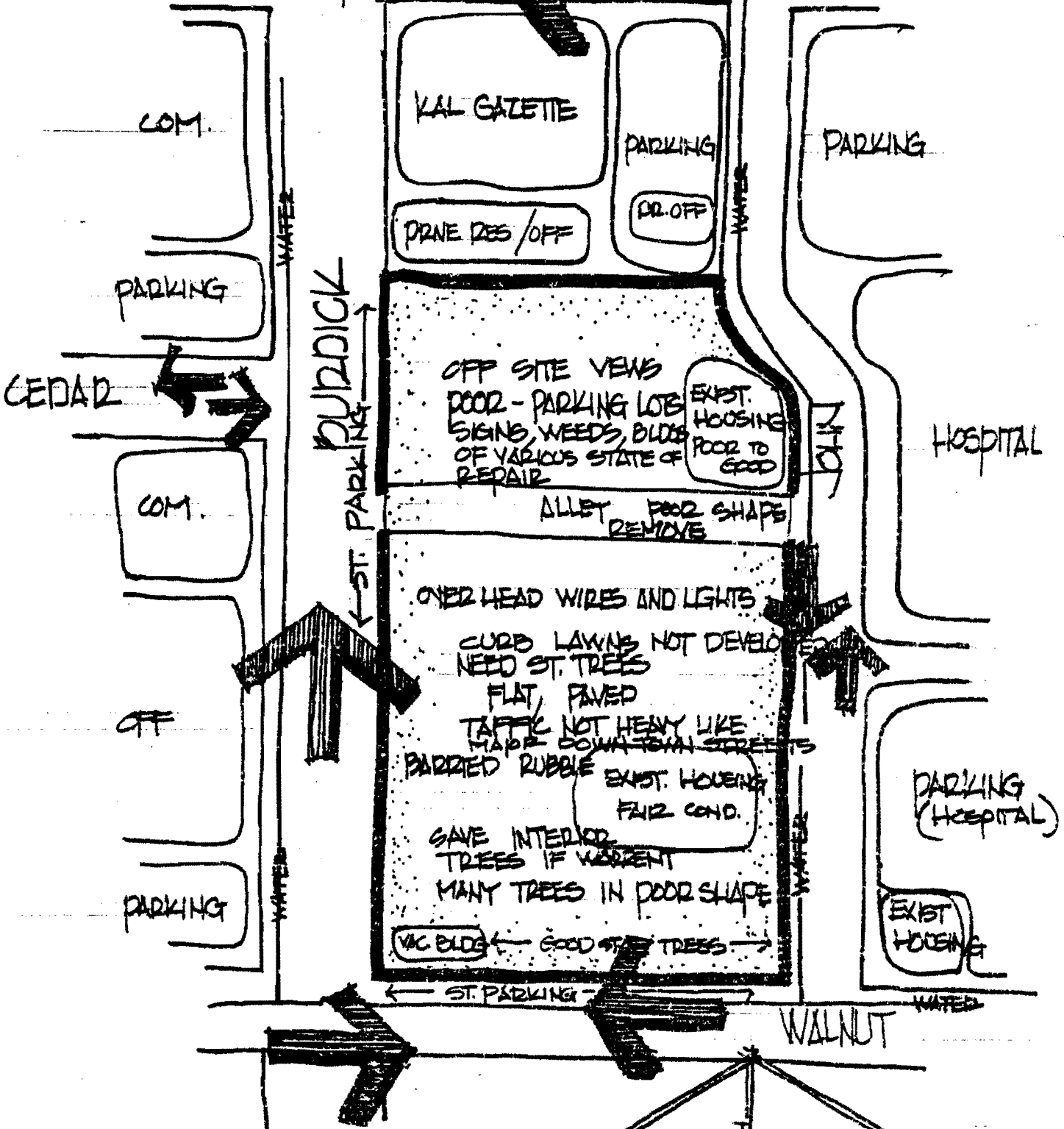
West : Public

SITE INFO

SIZE \_\_\_\_\_ 5 ACRES  
OWNERSHIP \_\_\_\_\_ CITY OF KALAMAZOO  
ZONING \_\_\_\_\_ 3, 4, 6  
ASSESSED VALUE \_\_\_\_\_ EXEMPT  
EXIST. USE \_\_\_\_\_ SURFACE PARKING

INDAHOZ ONE WAY ARTERIAL

LOVELL ST.



PLANNING DIVISION SITE INVENTORY  
EXISTING CONDITIONS

NOT TO SCALE  
9/23/22/TTALWHITE

SITE 3 C.B.D. REDEVELOPMENT - RESIDENTIAL

Development Type:

Redevelopment - Residential (Primarily)

Street Address:

511 - 715 S. Burdick

Transportation Facilities:

Ownership

City of Kalamazoo

Utilities

SBC No.

99100 - 102240

Development Purpose (Staff Recommendation):

To increase the City's housing supply, to meet the demand for housing in the downtown area, and to preserve the economic vitality of the CBD

Proposed Land Use (Comprehensive Plan):

High Intensity Residential/Commercial

Proposed Land Use, Adjoining Properties (Comprehensive Plan):

North: Commercial office, Public parking

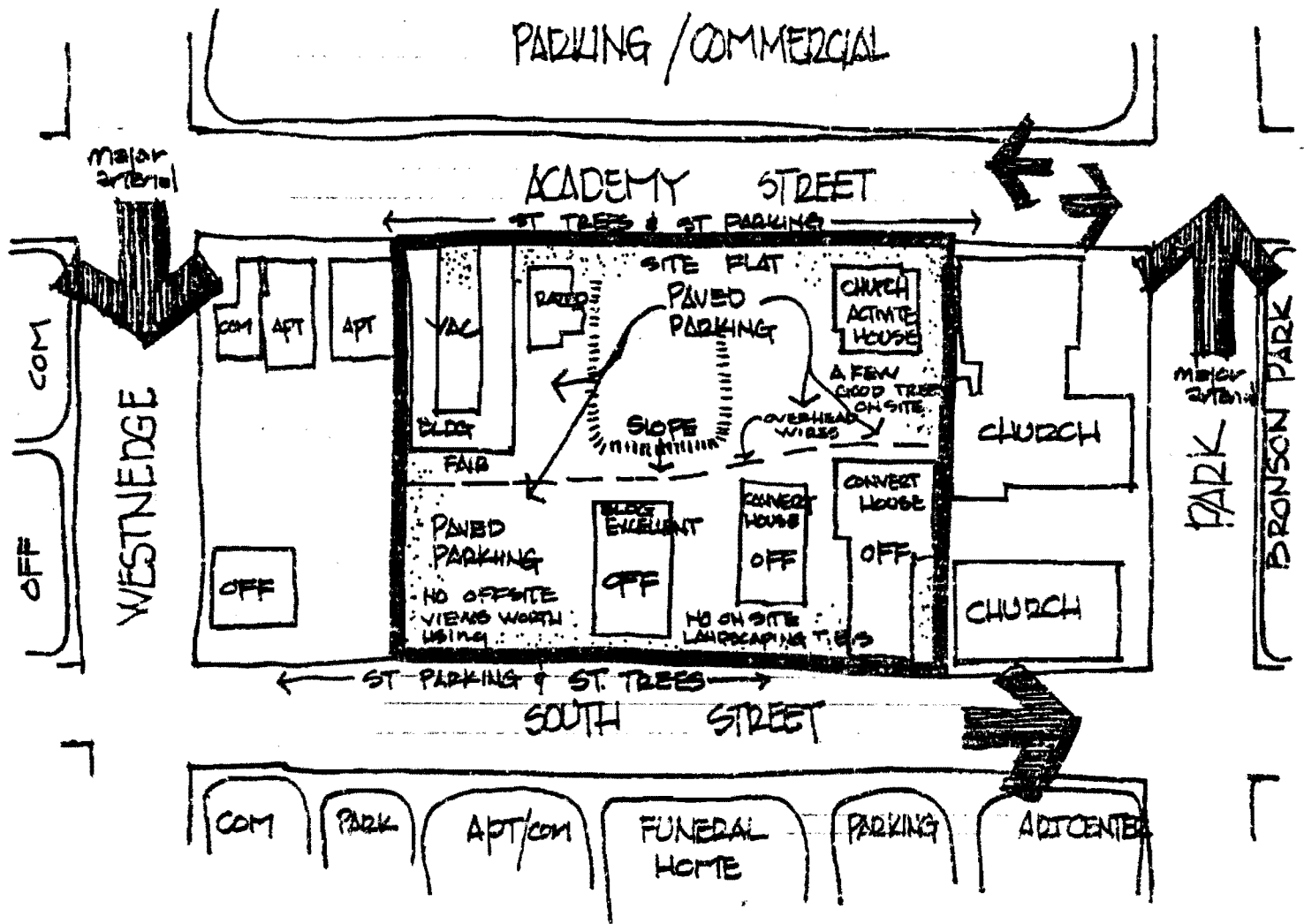
South: High Intensity residential

East : Institutional

West : Mall Extension, commercial

**SITE INFO**

SIZE \_\_\_\_\_ 1.8 ACRES  
 OWNERSHIP \_\_\_\_\_ PRIVATE  
 ZONING \_\_\_\_\_ 3 GENERAL BUSINESS  
 EXIST USE \_\_\_\_\_ OFFICE & PARKING  
 ASSESSED VALUE \_\_\_\_\_ \$195,600



PLANNING DIVISION SITE INVENTORY  
 EXISTING CONDITIONS

NORTH  
 NOT TO SCALE  
 8/25/77 AL WHITE

SITE 4 CBD REDEVELOPMENT - RESIDENTIAL SHT. 1



Development Type:

Redevelopment - Residential

Street Address:

439 - 477 Academy  
426 - 480 West South

Transportation Facilities:

Ownership

Private

Utilities

SBC No.

Development Purpose (Staff Recommendation):

To increase the City's housing supply and to meet the demand for housing in the CBD.

Proposed Land Use (Comprehensive Plan):

High Intensity Residential

Proposed Land Use, Adjoining Properties (Comprehensive Plan):

North: Commercial

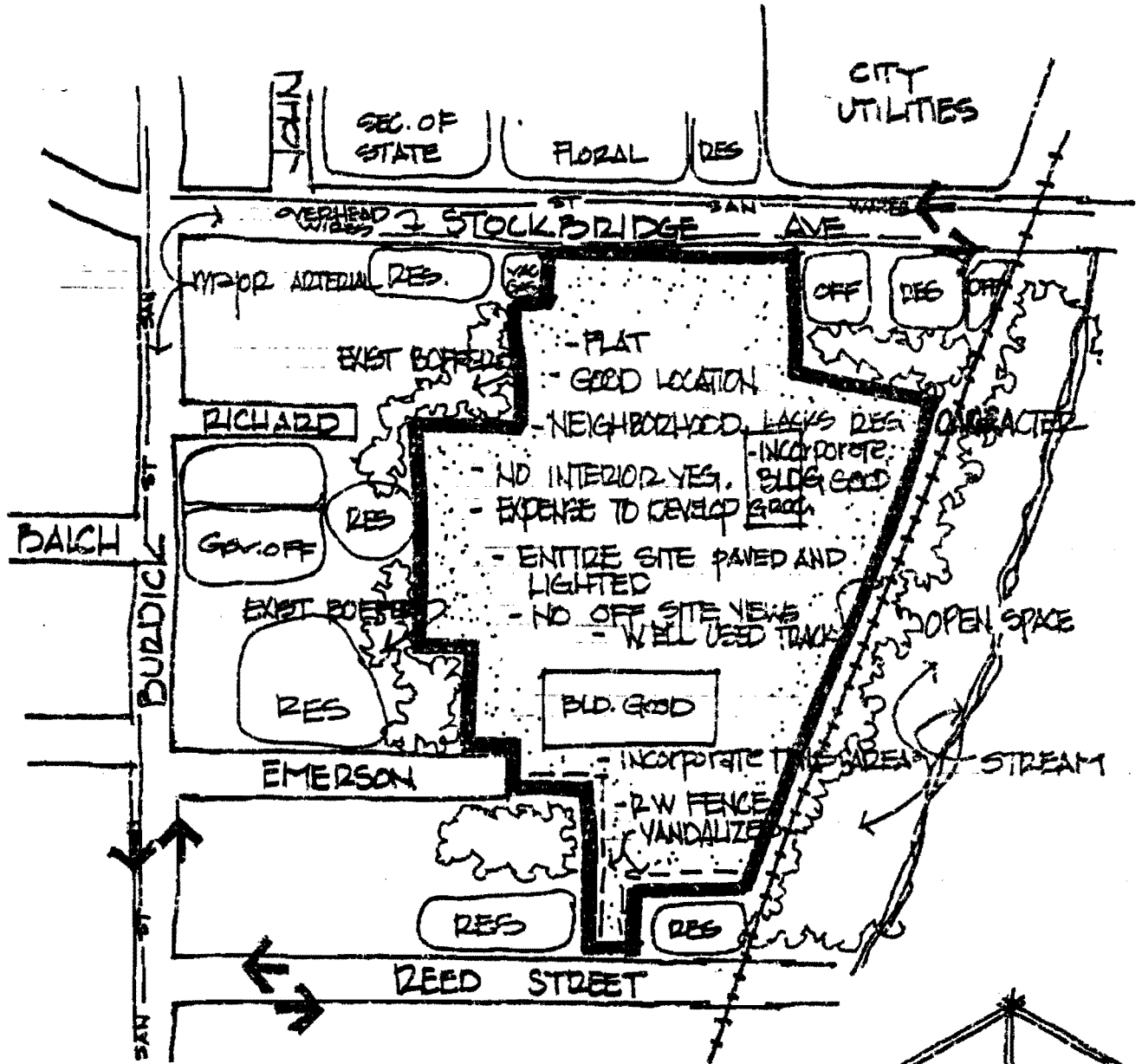
South: Cultural Amenities, High Intensity Residential

East : Churches

West : Medium Intensity Residential

**SITE INFO**

SIZE \_\_\_\_\_ 19  
 OWNERSHIP \_\_\_\_\_ KALLEE ASSOC.  
 ZONING \_\_\_\_\_ 4-SHOPPING 5-LOCAL STORE  
 EXIST. USE \_\_\_\_\_ ABANDONED NIGHT CLUB AND PARKING  
 ASSESSED VALUE \_\_\_\_\_ \$384,100



PLANNING DIVISION SITE INVENTORY  
 EXISTING CONDITIONS

NOT TO SCALE  
 8/26/77 ALWHITE  
 NORTH

REDEVELOPMENT RESIDENTIAL NO. 6 SH-1

Development Type:

Redevelopment - Residential

Street Address:

322 Stockbridge

Transportation Facilities:

Collector and Arterial  
Streets

Ownership

Kalkee Association

Utilities

SBC No.

057620	57625
57612	57605

Development Purpose (Staff Recommendation):

To increase the City's housing supply and to revitalize this area of the Central City neighborhood.

Proposed Land Use (Comprehensive Plan):

Medium Density Residential

Proposed Land Use, Adjoining Properties (Comprehensive Plan):

North: Low Intensity Residential/City Facility

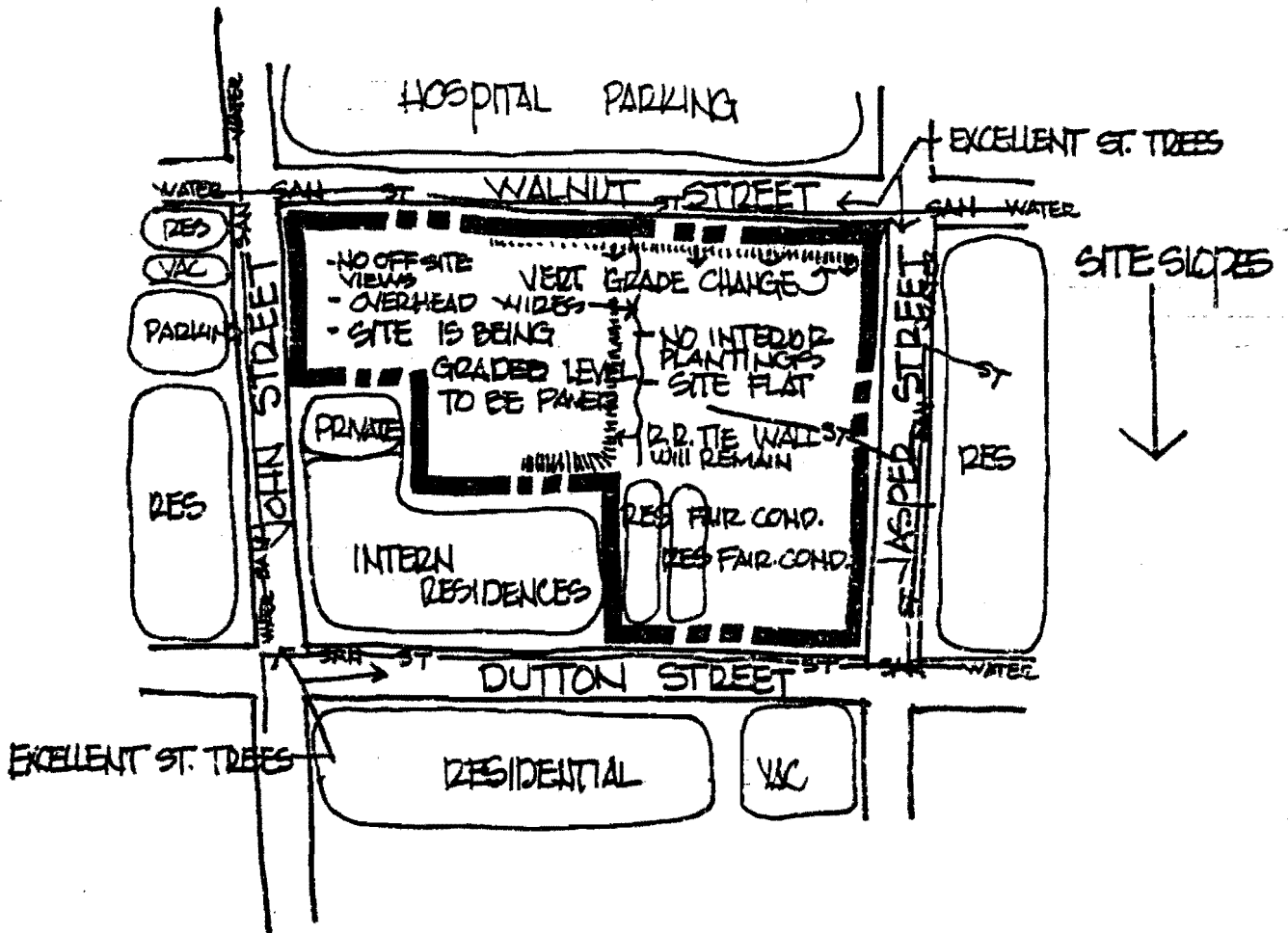
South: Medium and Low Intensity Residential

East : Park link system and Low Intensity  
Residential

West : Low Intensity Residential

# SITE INFO

SIZE \_\_\_\_\_ 3.35 ACRES  
 OWNERSHIP \_\_\_\_\_ BRONSON HOSPITAL  
 ZONING \_\_\_\_\_ 6-APARTMENT-HOTEL DISTRICT  
 EXIST. USE \_\_\_\_\_ SURFACE PARKING  
 ASSESSED VALUE \_\_\_\_\_ EXEMPT



PLANNING DIVISION SITE INVENTORY  
 EXISTING CONDITIONS  
 REDEVELOPMENT - RESIDENTIAL NO. 8

NOT TO SCALE  
 8/29/11 AL WHITE  
 NORTH  
 SHT-1

Development Type:

Residential - Redevelopment

Street Address:

214 E. Walnut

Transportation Facilities:

Ownership

Bronson Methodist Hospital

Utilities

SBC No.

109460

Development Purpose (Staff Recommendation):

To increase the City's housing supply and to provide adequate housing near the CBD.

Proposed Land Use (Comprehensive Plan):

High Intensity Residential

Proposed Land Use, Adjoining Properties (Comprehensive Plan):

North: Semi-public or Institutional

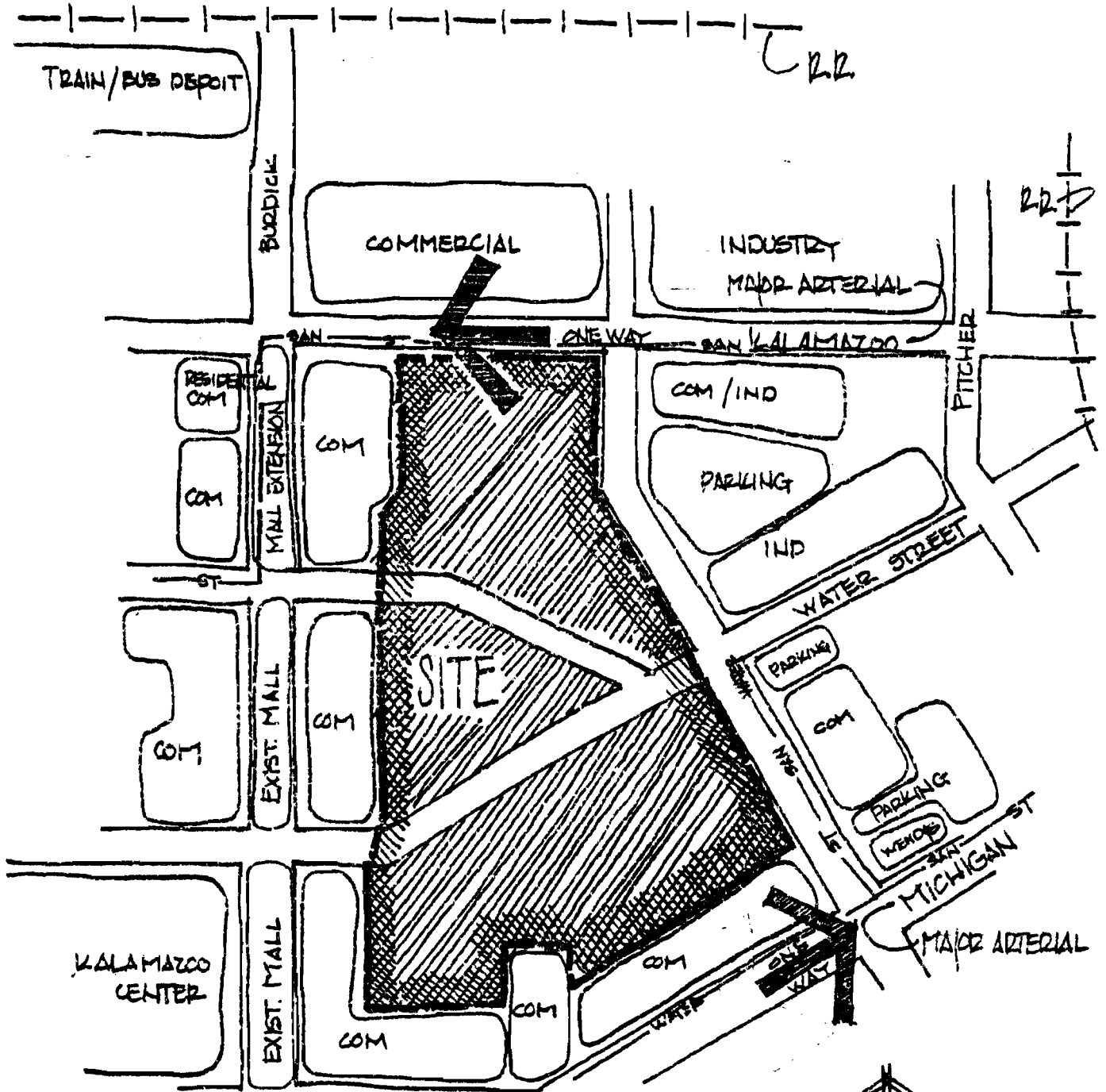
South: Medium Intensity Residential

East : High Intensity Residential

West : High Intensity Residential

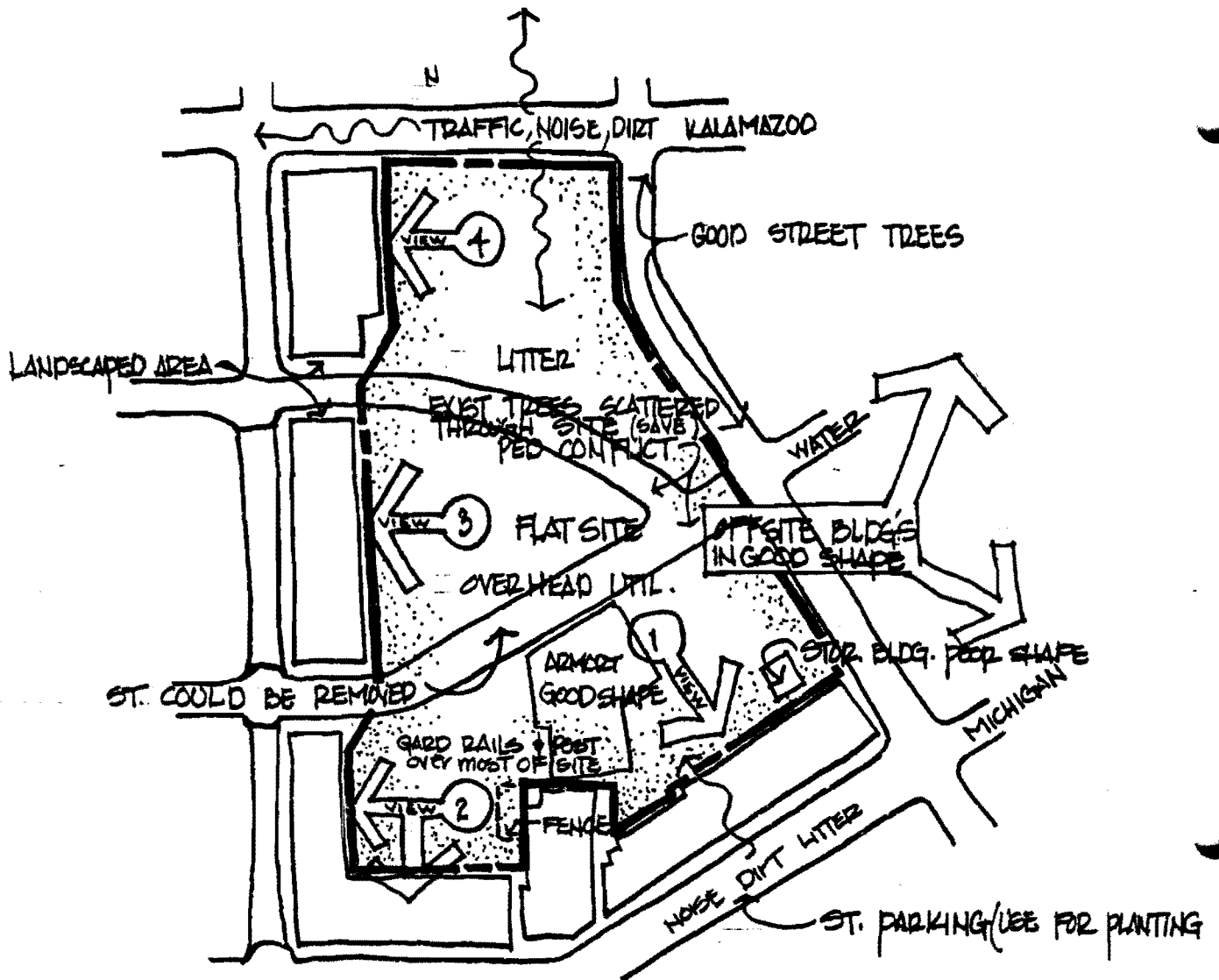
# SITE INFO

SIZE \_\_\_\_\_ 59  
 OWNERSHIP \_\_\_\_\_ PUBLIC (CITY) AND PRIVATE  
 ZONING \_\_\_\_\_ 2 - LIGHT MANUFACTURING  
 EXIST USE \_\_\_\_\_ SURFACE PARKING LOTS  
 ASSESSED VALUE \_\_\_\_\_ \$1,000 (NON EXEMPT)



PLANNING DIVISION SITE INVENTORY  
 EXISTING CONDITIONS  
 SITE 1 CBD

NORTH  
 DO NOT SCALE  
 5/17/77 ALVAHE SH1 1



**VIEWS**

- 1- REAR OF BLDGS CLUTTERED WITH SIGNS, EYE TROUBLES, FIRE ESCAPES WIDES AND GARBAGE CONTAINERS. PAINT AND BRICK FAIR TO POOR. ALLEY LIKE ATMOSPHERE.
- 2- PAINT POOR, BRICK NEEDS WORK, REAR AREA CLUTTERED AS IN #1
- 3-4- SOME WORK DONE TO IMPROVE BLDGS. ADDITIONAL WORK NEEDED

**GEN. VIEW**

LIMITED TO BLDGS. MOST IN FAIR-GOOD CONDITION. NO NATURAL FEATURES WORTH DESIGN SENSITIVITY.

PLANNING DIVISION SITE INVENTORY  
 EXISTING CONDITIONS  
 SITE 1 CBD

↑  
NORTH

DO NOT SCALE  
 8/17/77 ALWANTE SHT 2

Development Type:

Street Address:

Water-Edwards streets

Transportation Facilities:

CBD Collectors

Ownership

Private,  
City of Kalamazoo

Utilities

All

SBC No.

Development Purpose (Staff Recommendation):

To preserve the economic vitality of the CBD and to provide a major commercial anchor for the northern end of the CBD

Proposed Land Use (Comprehensive Plan):

Commercial

Proposed Land Use, Adjoining Properties (Comprehensive Plan):

North: Commercial

South: Commercial

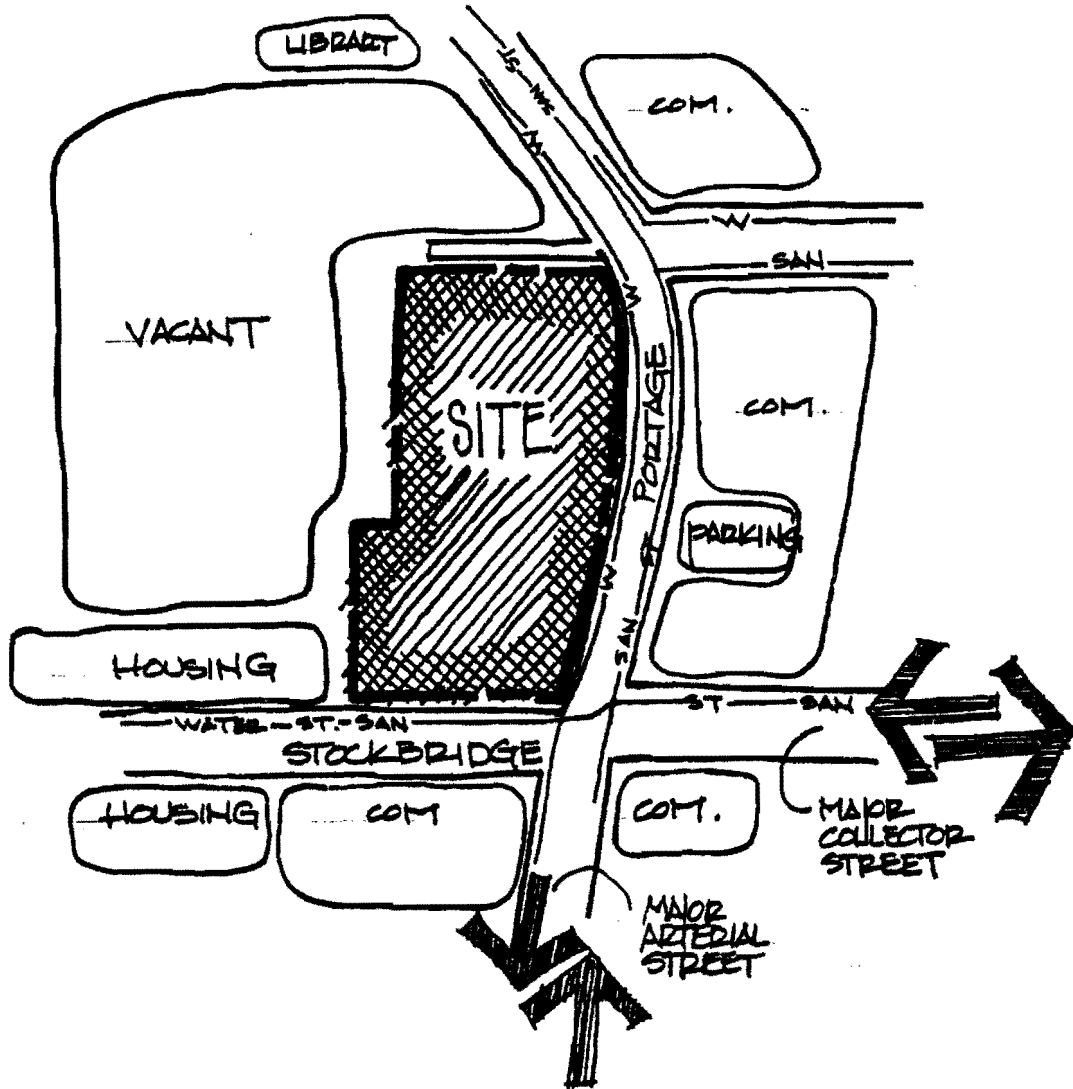
East : Commercial

West : Commercial



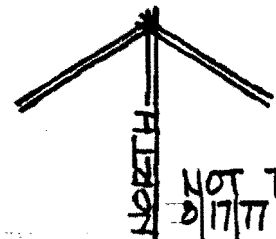
# SITE INFO

SIZE \_\_\_\_\_ 3.0 ACRES  
OWNERSHIP \_\_\_\_\_ CITY OF KALAMAZOO - PRIVATE  
ZONING \_\_\_\_\_ 4 SHOPPING DISTRICT  
EXISTING USE \_\_\_\_\_ SURFACE PARKING, COMMERCIAL AND VACANT STRUCTURES  
ASSESSED VALUE \_\_\_\_\_ \$100,250 NON EXEMPT

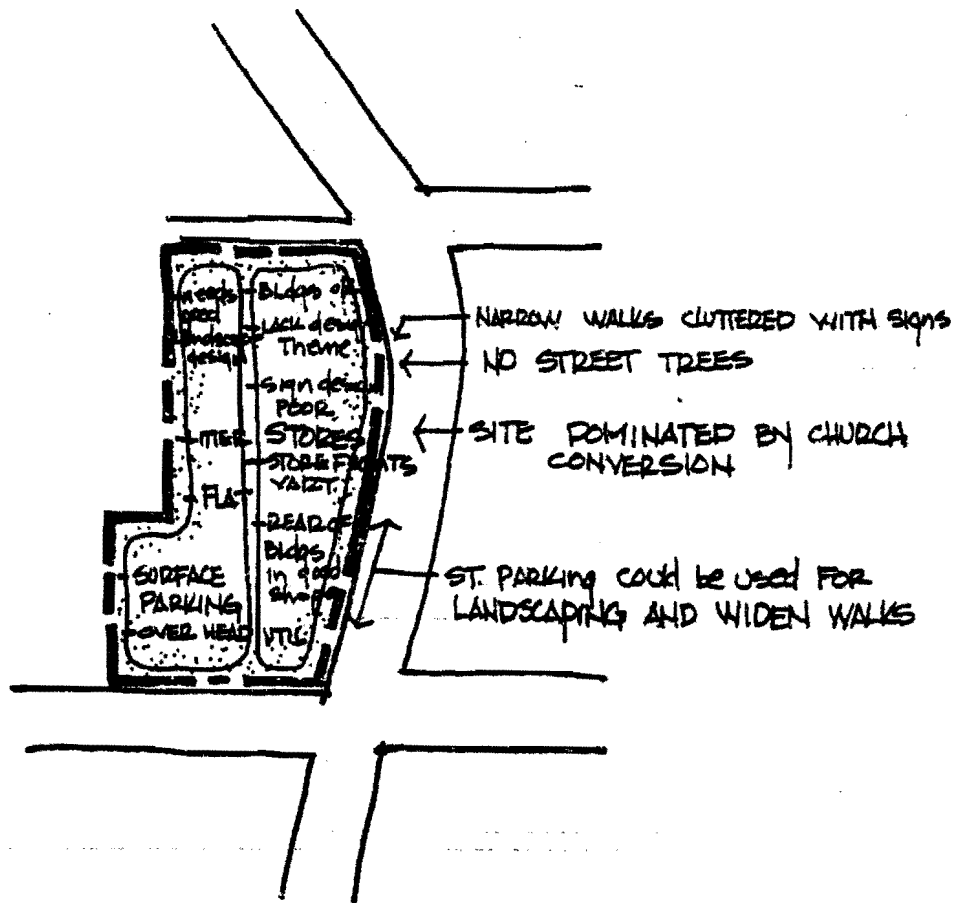


PLANNING DIVISION SITE INVENTORY  
EXISTING CONDITIONS


SITE 2 WASHINGTON SQ WEST



NOT TO SCALE  
2/17/77 AL WHITE  
SHT 1



PLANNING DIVISION SITE INVENTORY  
 EXISTING CONDITIONS  
 SITE 2 WASHINGTON SQ. WEST

  
 NORTH  
 NOT TO SCALE  
 8/17/77 AL WHITE  
 SHT 2

Development Type:

Street Address:

Washington Square- West

Transportation Facilities:

Arterial

Ownership

Utilities

All

SBC No.

Development Purpose (Staff Recommendation):

To provide for continued commercial growth in the City and to upgrade the Washington Square commercial code through redevelopment  
Proposed Land Use (Comprehensive Plan):

Proposed Land Use, Adjoining Properties (Comprehensive Plan):

North: Residential

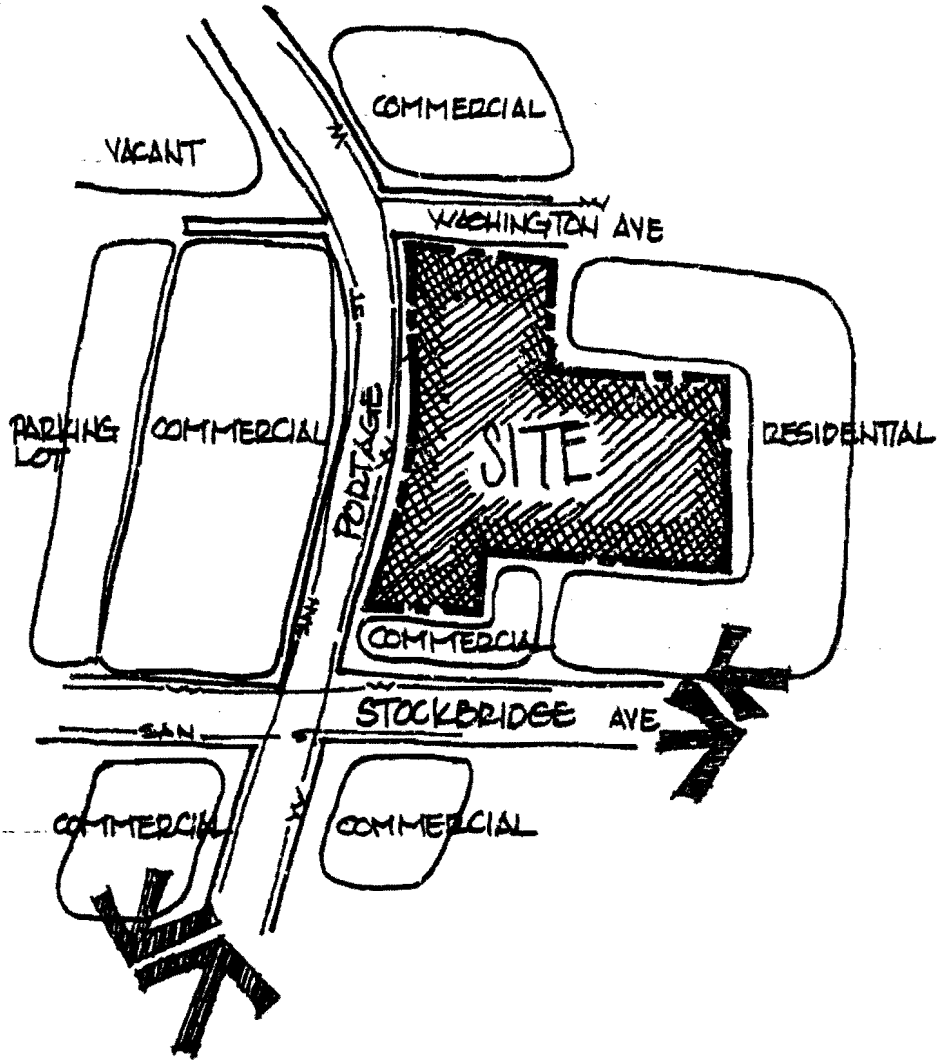
South: Commercial

East : Commercial

West : Residential

# SITE INFO

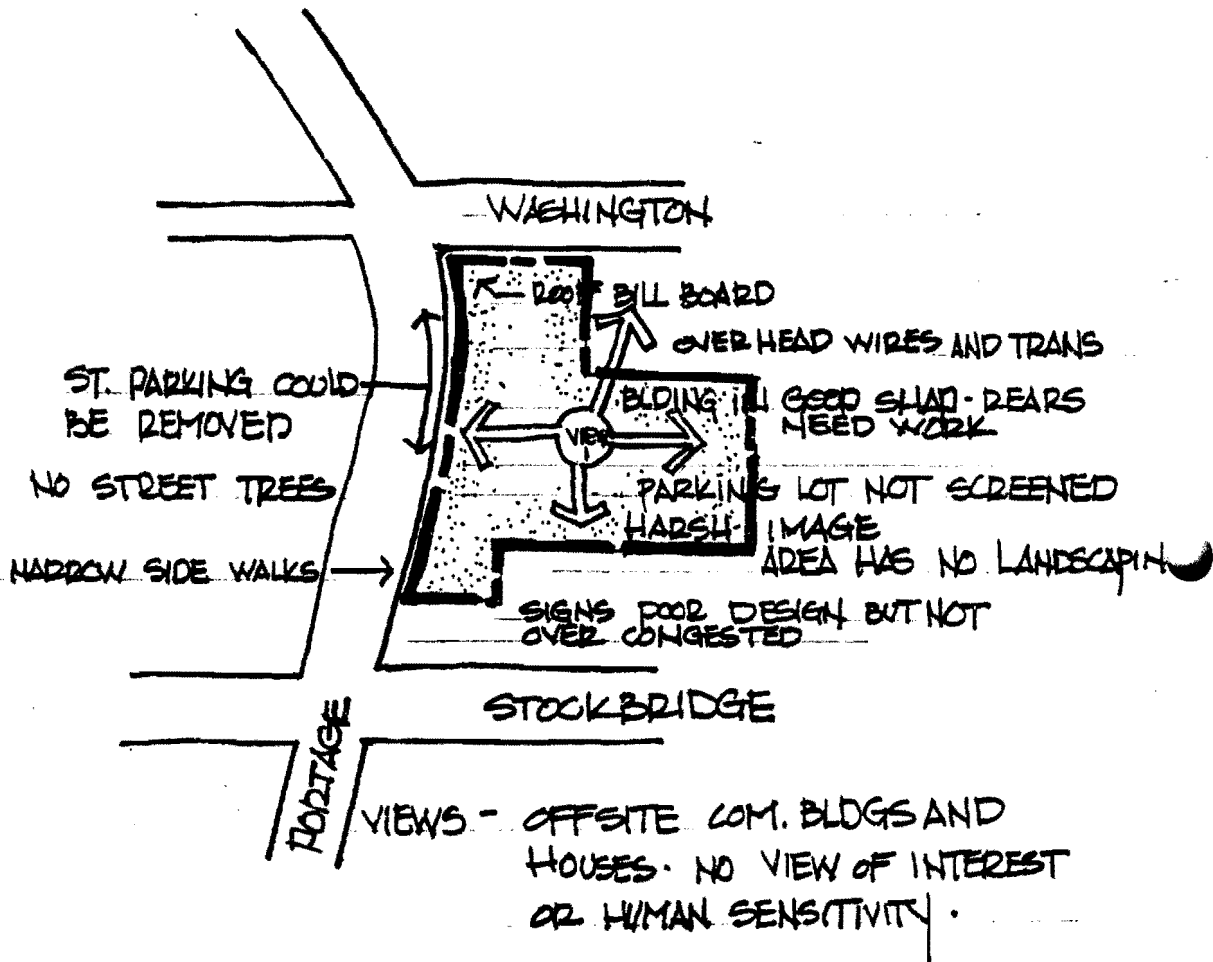
SIZE \_\_\_\_\_ 1.6 ACRES  
SITE \_\_\_\_\_ PRIVATE  
ZONING \_\_\_\_\_ 4 - SHOPPING DISTRICT  
EXISTING USE \_\_\_\_\_ COMMERCIAL AND SURFACE PARKING  
ASSESSED VALUE \_\_\_\_\_ \$119,600



PLANNING DIVISION SITE INVENTORY  
EXISTING CONDITIONS

SITE 3 WASHINGTON SQ. EAST

NORTH  
NOT TO SCALE  
8/10/77 AL WHITE  
SHT 1



PLANNING DIVISION SITE INVENTORY  
 EXISTING CONDITIONS  
 SITE 3 WASHINGTON SQ EAST

NOT TO SCALE  
 8/18/77 AL WHITE  
 SHT 2

Development Type:

Street Address:

Washington Sq. East

Ownership

Transportation Facilities:

Arterial

Utilities

All

SBC No.

Development Purpose (Staff Recommendation):

To provide for continued commercial growth in the City and to upgrade the Washington Square commercial code through redevelopment

Proposed Land Use (Comprehensive Plan):

Commercial

Proposed Land Use, Adjoining Properties (Comprehensive Plan):

North: Commercial/Residential

South: Commercial/Residential

East : Residential

West : Commercial

- CRITICAL PATH PLANNING
- LAND PLANNING
- MANAGEMENT CONSULTING
- PLANT LOCATION

**RALPH J. STEPHENSON, P. E.**  
CONSULTING ENGINEER

15064 WARWICK ROAD  
DETROIT, MICHIGAN 48223  
PHONE 273-5026

February 13, 1978

Downtown Kalamazoo Association  
223 Dewing Building  
Kalamazoo, Michigan 49001

Dear Russ, Roger and Carol:

Enclosed is the first planning report for Kalamazoo Downtown 1999. I have decided since I have such an immense amount of material gathered from my sessions there so far that it would be best to release it in planning reports so you can absorb the information as it is formulated in my own planning mind. I hope this proves to be a satisfactory vehicle of communication and of course, it will be coupled with my periodic visits to Kalamazoo.

I will try to issue these reports on a regular basis (perhaps weekly or bi-weekly) so you are kept aware and up to date on my feelings about how we should be moving on the program.

I have also sent Roger the flip chart sheet dealing with the several projects we have talked about already and in the next issue of the planning report, we will look at some of these major projects in some detail.

It might be that you wish to distribute these reports as planning bulletins to key members of the downtown group. Please feel free to do so.

Sincerely yours,

Ralph J. Stephenson, P. E.

RJS  
m

Enc.

February 13, 1978

DOWNTOWN KALAMAZOO - 1999

PLANNING REPORT #1

Downtown Kalamazoo 1999 can be more challenging, more exciting and more profitable than the 1978 Kalamazoo downtown. This despite the fact as we move closer to the year 1980, Kalamazoo has achieved probably more in the way of consistent downtown success than most other communities of its size.

Our objectives in the coming years should be to retain the spirit that has made it possible to improve from the 1950's to the 1970's and to spark the imagination that always stimulates and enthuses the American public. Admittedly this is becoming harder to do as we face new business problems, increasing social difficulties and must continually cope with a fickle American public attracted to the winner like a moth to the flame.

The key to winning, if there is such a key, requires that everybody wins something and that there are no losers. This in essence, is the whole philosophy of good downtown planning since it is evident that a successful downtown means a successful city.

The reasons still stand as noted twenty years ago in the Kalamazoo 1980 program. There the question was asked - why should we do anything to downtown Kalamazoo? It was answered by stressing that Kalamazoo's downtown is not just a retail district! It contains the functions of government, culture and entertainment; it houses offices and hotels; is the focus for practically all mass transportation entering and leaving the city; and even then was the place where one employed person out of ten in the community spent his or her working day. It was further noted that 80% of the attorneys, 60% of the physicians and 23% of the real estate brokers in Kalamazoo had their offices downtown. In the 1950's nearly 7% of Kalamazoo's total city real estate tax was borne by downtown property owners. Yet this property then occupied only .8% of the whole city area.

If we were to re-examine these same statistics today, we probably would find that many of them still hold true. However, there are significant differences now. For one, some of our central cities have become closely identified with major functions, i.e. parts of the Dallas business district are devoted totally to marketing shows.



In San Francisco tourist areas account for a sizable part of the downtown section. Even smaller communities become closely identified with certain functional operations. Some become governmental centers for the county. Lansing is well known as the seat of our state government. In Ann Arbor, the University of Michigan accounts for a huge portion of the wherewithall by which the city sustains itself.

In summary, a community may be oriented toward the financial market, the trade show, government centralization, medicine, education, research or even as with the O'Hare Airport community in Chicago, an international transportation center.

Then, too, we have those cities that are recreational in nature, such as Reno or Las Vegas and a heavy tourist orientation is easily observed in cities such as Petoskey, Mackinaw City and others in our own state of Michigan.

So part of our new thrust in planning downtown Kalamazoo has to consider the trend toward the urban community developing as a functional unit containing one or many specialized operations. Whether this is desirable or not is academic. It foretells a trend, and although within the next twenty years urban development may change back to a more diversified outlook, for the time being, even Kalamazoo is developing in a sense this special type pattern. Witness the Upjohn complex and its recent expansion. Take note of the construction of a new government center at the north side of town, near the intra-motel transportation center. Look at the slight though noticeable location of good eating spots to the east side of downtown. Then, of course, we have the increasingly successful Kalamazoo Center which brings the focus of business, conventions, retail trade, and just plain and simply, people density to the core of the CBD. There also is an increasing trend toward service operations in downtowns and certainly with the expansion of Bronson Hospital, Kalamazoo downtown has to be called a major medical center.

I have posed six basic questions to many leaders in the Kalamazoo community. The questions should be seriously thought about and answered by every person concerned with Kalamazoo's downtown.

They are:

- 1) What is to be the long term evolution of Kalamazoo's central business district by 1999?
- 2) What should be the nature of the directed long term CBD improvement to 1999?
- 3) What immediate improvements are desirable and what immediate improvements are possible?
- 4) Who should spearhead the improvement and the directed thrust toward an improved downtown?
- 5) What should be our timetable of action?

And the sixth very important question that must be asked in any kind of long range effort is -

- 6) What are our goals and objectives for
  - a) the next 21 years
  - b) the next 11 years
  - c) the next 6 years
  - d) the next 12 months?

The Downtown Kalamazoo planning report will deal with these questions and how they can best be answered. In the next issue we will look at several specific projects that have been identified by leaders in the community as important to Kalamazoo's downtown. Watch for it.

Ralph J. Stephenson, P. E.

RJS  
m

February 21, 1978

DOWNTOWN KALAMAZOO - 1999

PLANNING REPORT #2

The essence of good downtown planning is good community goal setting. Valid goals must have worth, be possible and must have the power to excite a spirit of adventure.

Question #6 in planning report #1 asked - what are our goals and objectives for downtown Kalamazoo in the coming years? On January 17, 18 and 19, 1978 some dedicated business and government leaders met in a short series of work shops and identified several specific projects which require goal definition. It was suggested as a result of these meetings that a careful evaluation of each possible project and its objectives be made to determine desirability, potential effectiveness and positive impact and worth as both a project to be done now and a project to be accomplished in the future. We called the immediate implementation value the now worth and the future value the then worth. Priority weighing of projects is to be based upon a 12 question measurement:

- 1) How important is the project to downtown?
- 2) What is its life cycle cost?
- 3) How damaging would it be if the project weren't done?
- 4) How beneficial will it be if the project is done?
- 5) How important is the project to downtown interests?
- 6) How important is the project to the entire Kalamazoo community?
- 7) Does the project fit well into the comprehensive plan for the entire Kalamazoo community?
- 8) What is the potential for the project stimulating good surrounding development patterns?
- 9) How effective will the project be in bringing about good pedestrian and vehicular traffic patterns?

- 10) What political benefit will accrue Kalamazoo from the project?
- 11) To what extent are the resources available to do the job?
- 12) To what degree does the enthusiasm exist to insure project success?

The projects against which the 12 question evaluation is presently being made are described briefly below. More projects will be added as they are brought on line but it should be cautioned that only the most important and critical few should be selected initially so the effective action focus is on downtown planning elements that have a high degree of success potential.

Projects for consideration are listed below at random and are lettered for ease of reference.

\* a) Rail consolidation

A project aimed at combining railroad routing and trackage at the east side of downtown to concentrate crossings at one major point near the intersection of Kalamazoo and Michigan.

Several detailed plans have been prepared and the choice has been narrowed down to two or three considered technically feasible. Heavy efforts are now being put forth by the city to implement the consolidation plan and reduce the serious conflicts presently existing between rail and cross vehicular movements.

b) Luxury residential development

Provision of high rent or high cost multi-family dwellings to increase population density in the more attractive areas of Kalamazoo's downtown.

The goal of all types of residential development is to increase the close-in downtown population and consequently improve desirable market characteristics for the downtown.

c) Mid range residential development

Same as luxury residential except rent and cost scales are lower.

d) Low range residential development

Same as luxury and mid range except this development considers placement of low rental, low cost multi-family residential in or near the downtown.

e) Improvement of internal CBD traffic patterns

Continuing efforts within the CBD boundaries to improve movement relations between pedestrian, vehicular and service traffic. This includes such analyses and improvements as the Kalamazoo/Eleanor one way pairing, vehicular traffic routes relative to rail consolidation at the east, and improvements to traffic entering downtown from the south, particularly on Burdick Street.

f) Improvement of traffic

External to CBD - how to better relate traffic movements external to the CBD with internal CBD patterns.

The thoroughfare plan for the city of Kalamazoo impacts heavily upon internal downtown traffic patterns. Continuing efforts to improve this total thoroughfare pattern including consideration of routes to and from major state and interstate penetrators are part of the improvement program.

g) Thoroughfare penetrators to CBD

Improvement of moderate to high speed, high capacity traffic routes to and from downtown generally interconnecting with major thoroughfares and expressways around the city.

Specifically this project includes connections between downtown and I-94, as well as between downtown and 131 to the north.

h) Office and commercial development

Continued improvement of office and commercial facilities in downtown.

The program includes both rehabilitation of existing facilities, and construction of new. Possibilities exist for such facilities to be located in specialty areas, such as office parks or small shopping centers or it may be that the major land parcel concept can encourage mixed uses of balanced demand facilities.

\* i) Parking decks at south

Construction of parking decks to accompany expected commercial improvements in the southern area of downtown.

These could be significant in their impact upon internal and external traffic patterns, as well as influencing how perimeter properties of this entire south area are ultimately used. The proposed parking decks also impact upon new and existing street locations at the south.

j) Upper level interconnections for downtown facilities

Building pedestrian movement corridors above streets and sidewalks to connect facilities at their upper floors.

Many cities, notably Minneapolis, are making excellent and successful use of upper level interconnections between downtown buildings. It must be remembered, however, that larger cities have many more multi-story vertical use structures than does Kalamazoo. However, it should also be noted that Kalamazoo already has two upper level interconnections; one to the Gilmore store from their parking deck; the other at the Kalamazoo Center from its adjoining parking facilities on Rose.

Upper level facilities have dramatic appeal and if properly planned and designed, can offer exciting, new dimensional perspectives for Kalamazoo downtown.

k) Transient lodging development

Improvement of hotel and motel facilities in downtown Kalamazoo.

Although at present the Kalamazoo area is seemingly saturated with hotel/motel rooms, there exists difficulty at certain times in obtaining good transient lodging. Constant improvement of such facilities, particularly in downtown, are essential if downtown is to attract the transient visitor to the city.

l) Removing the armory

This program simply consists of demolishing the present armory and beginning improvement of the land upon which it now sits.

m) Arcadia Creek improvements

The possibility of turning the Arcadia Creek channel into an attractive water feature has always fascinated downtown supporters. It is a potentially beautiful visual corridor and should be a part of any long range downtown improvements.

n) Improve Portage Creek

Portage Creek improvements are somewhat similar in their impact as the Arcadia Creek improvements noted in 'm'. However, Portage Creek extends into only a portion of downtown and does not presently constitute a major feature except at the southeast corner.

o) Knitting the transportation center and the CBD more closely together

The transportation center is just now getting into full operation and soon could have a sizable impact upon short duration visitor density to downtown. The center is far enough away so a walk to the mall is more than most visitors would undertake. By providing nearby facilities to the transportation center and by supplying attractive and perhaps even vehicularized (low speed) access to downtown's heart, some rather exciting and interesting methods of tying the two units together could be put to work.

p) Enclosing part or all of the malls

The interest in providing year round, weather protected shopping is of high concern to most business men in the downtown area. There is much concern that the outdoor beauty of the mall areas not be sacrificed merely to provide weather convenience. This project calls for careful study and must be an integral part of total future downtown planning work.

q) North mall west side improvements

From Michigan Avenue north, the west side of the mall at Michigan/Water and Water/Eleanor has not provided the pedestrian interest and traffic appeal seen on the east side. Part of the reason concerns the west side structural and architectural configuration between Michigan and Water.

Also, the area needs an interest drawing pattern so circulation back and forth across the mall will be stimulated. Presently it is a dead space that inhibits rather than encourages pedestrian circulation, the heart of any pedestrian mall concept.

At the north block the problem is basically vacant stores. Concerted efforts must be made to breathe new life into these currently empty properties.

r) Providing ongoing economic base evaluation

There is a strong feeling that some agency, perhaps the Upjohn Institute, should be charged with the responsibility for making continual economic evaluations of the total Kalamazoo market, as well as specific downtown potential. The reason expressed has been because of the need to provide updated, accurate figures to all those who hope to build or expand in downtown (or other parts of Kalamazoo).

This project, in some people's minds, represents a very high priority program, even though it does not deal solely with improving downtown's physical characteristics.



s) Reinforce and strengthen the Economic Development Corporation

The EDC is potentially a good basic tool to encourage downtown improvements. It does need, however, ongoing attention and support from all concerned. The people involved to date are competent and dedicated. It is hoped by many that this corporation will continue to be increasingly effective and active in the future.

t) Housing for the elderly and for convalescents

A traditional pattern of concern for the elderly and for the convalescents has been expressed in Kalamazoo and there are several facilities in downtown Kalamazoo designed for this very important group. Ongoing development and improvement of such facilities is an important consideration.

u) Mass transit

Everybody talks about mass transit but few know what to do about it. This is true of practically every city in the United States. Perhaps with innovative ideas, Kalamazoo can show the way for what promises to be a very important element in urban communication over the next few years.

Of strong interest is the increasing trend toward smaller multi-passenger vehicles that will provide service flexibility in picking up and discharging passengers at varying locations.

v) Parking fees

Parking fees in downtown no matter how small or insignificant are still a deterrent to even the most dedicated downtown buff. I suggest a constant trend toward downtown totally free parking for the customer be encouraged.

This is a difficult concept to accept for many, but there is a growing feeling that until the downtown customer can park anywhere he or she wants and for absolutely no cost that the total parking program will be less than effective.

w) Renovation of existing buildings

Downtown Kalamazoo, like all cities, is faced with deteriorating structures and facilities that grow old without even being noticed. We become used to seeing a dilapidated structure, an ugly fire escape, an unpainted facade or a collection of unrepaired building elements.

To the fresh eye, however, these are unattractive and oftentimes indicate lack of care and concern.

The above are only some of the major projects suggested within which there are literally hundreds of sub-projects. Before we can adequately set goals and start out to implement our Kalamazoo 1999, we must identify which of the above or which added projects are most important so we can focus our efforts there. I suggest you all look closely at this list of possible projects and give a value of 1 to 10 to each possible project as to whether it is least important or most crucial to downtown success both now and in the future. (1 being least important, 10 being the most important.) Once you have done this, it would be interesting to assign a probability of the project being initiated and carried out. This is a considered guess at how probable the project is. If it is very probable, it would be assigned a value of 10. If it is highly improbable, it would be assigned a value of 0 or 1. Once you have each done this, it is possible to truly rank the projects by probability and worth.

The excitement of detailed designing, planning and constructing will come within the broader concepts of the projects which make up the goals of 1999's downtown Kalamazoo. We will talk more at length of these in future planning reports.

Ralph J. Stephenson, P. E.

RJS  
m

March 13, 1978

**DOWNTOWN KALAMAZOO - 1999**

**PLANNING REPORT #3**

An essential ingredient of downtown health is occupant interest and activity. In planning report #2 a 12 question measurement was suggested to determine the worth of a project. We then discussed several programs under consideration that would be of help to downtown Kalamazoo and the total community. Now comes the difficult question of WHO is to do the work?

It boils down to the fact that a consultant can only suggest direction and approach. The person on the firing line doing downtown business day in and day out, enjoying the benefits, sharing the concerns and experiencing the problems must be the one to spearhead revitalization. I suggest for each of the projects selected as high priority programs that a small, concerned and interested task force be appointed.

The responsibilities of a project task force will be to:

- a) Assess the true worth of the project measured by the 12 question yardstick.
- b) Set achievable goals for the project team.
- c) Generate a plan of action considering all steps necessary to produce specific recommendations and actions.
- d) Set a timetable on activities.
- e) Make assignments within and without the task force to insure the activities will be carried out.
- f) Regularly assess progress to insure the activities undertaken are profitable, directional and will contribute to success.

It should always be remembered that studies are just studies, analyses just analyses, programs just programs until they become reality. The job of each task force is to bring about this reality.

The techniques are many. The approaches are almost without number. The rewards are a magnificent downtown that will be successful beyond anyone's fondest dreams.

It is my recommendation that the Downtown Kalamazoo Association gently conscript its willing (and not so willing) members into a volunteer organization that will tackle the most critical areas and resolve them one by one, establishing clear-cut direction, timetables, plans and action oriented goals in the coming months. Steps have already been taken toward this end and I shall mainly devote my visits to Kalamazoo toward assisting in achieving success in those programs considered most essential.

With this in mind, I suggest the following:

- 1) The DKA should, using the 12 question measurement technique, set its priority projects based upon now and then values.
- 2) Volunteers should be solicited to serve on task forces whose lines are well defined. Each task force is charged with the responsibility to evaluate, recommend and launch an implementation program that will bring projects to successful completion.
- 3) Each task force should insure the members have reviewed available literature and information on the subject. Excellent studies now exist.

(On rail consolidation, for example, the analysis of April 21, 1975 entitled City of Kalamazoo East Central Rail/Highway Study is a thorough review of rail consolidation and an excellent statement of the domino effect consolidation would have upon the internal and external vehicular circulation patterns of downtown. I commend it highly. Copies are probably available for loan from Mr. Don Swets at the City Engineer's office. It, coupled with recent studies by the engineer's office, could form a solid basis of revised traffic pattern implementation over the next few years.)

- 4) Task force activity should be directed toward setting goals, identifying a plan of action to get there and then carrying out what has to be done to insure success.

If a task force system is established, I suggest my own interacting activities as the DKA consultant can most effectively be added by meeting regularly with task forces, perhaps once every month and a half to monitor progress and give direction, guidance and advice relative to how they can be most effective in their work.

\* \* \* \* \*

The next planning report will begin detailed discussions of some of the planning options open to improving downtown.

Ralph J. Stephenson, P.E.

RJS  
m

April 4, 1978

DOWNTOWN KALAMAZOO - 1999

PLANNING REPORT #4

Traffic and the Major Land Parcel Concept

The two major functions of an urban street system are:

- 1) to provide major thoroughfares that are effective in carrying high volumes of traffic with few interruptions and low side friction
- 2) to furnish a secondary street system within the primary system that allows direct land access by slower moving traffic in lower volumes.

In most cities the street system accommodates both functions and quite frequently at the same time. This can be done with reasonable success under moderate traffic conditions but does not work under high volume conditions. A way must be found to serve both purposes while the two functions are carried out separately.

It might be said we are striving to achieve a workable interior traffic system that is logically and effectively connected to an exterior traffic system. The first operates at low to moderate low levels of speed, while the second operates from moderate low to moderate high levels of speed.

Modern concepts of the traffic handling ability of a street can be concisely stated by two yardsticks -

- a) design speed of traffic
- b) level of service

The following criteria were put forth in more detail in the preliminary Kalamazoo thoroughfare system plan published in March 1971. (It bears careful study.)

Scale of Traffic

Speed of Traffic

Designed for speeds of:

1	65 to 80 MPH (inter-urban traffic between cities)
2	50 - 65 MPH (intra-urban traffic)
3	35 - 50 MPH (intra-urban traffic)
4	15 - 35 MPH (intra-urban traffic)
5	0 - 15 MPH (intra-urban traffic) (Note: This includes parked traffic in lots, streets and structures.)

Level of Service

Condition of Traffic Flow

A	Free flowing
B	Stable flow, medium to low density
C	Stable flow, ranging toward high density
D	Approaching unstable flow
E	Unstable flow, street at capacity
F	Forced flow

For instance, a street with an indicated rating of 3C is one carrying high traffic volumes moving efficiently and designed for speeds in the 35 - 50 MPH range. Using this classification system (perhaps with some modifications to reflect changes in speed limits), the characteristics of a roadway can be briefly and clearly represented. As an example, figure 1 on the attached sheet shows a sample street pattern that might be found in a typical urban area. On this hypothetical map existing conditions relative to scale of traffic and level of service have been noted. Notice differences in the level of service indicate that capacity still exists in the streets and that certainly some of them serve less than a high density function.

Subject KALAMAZOO - MAJOR Date 4/3/78  
 Job No. LAND PARCEL CONCEPT Page 1

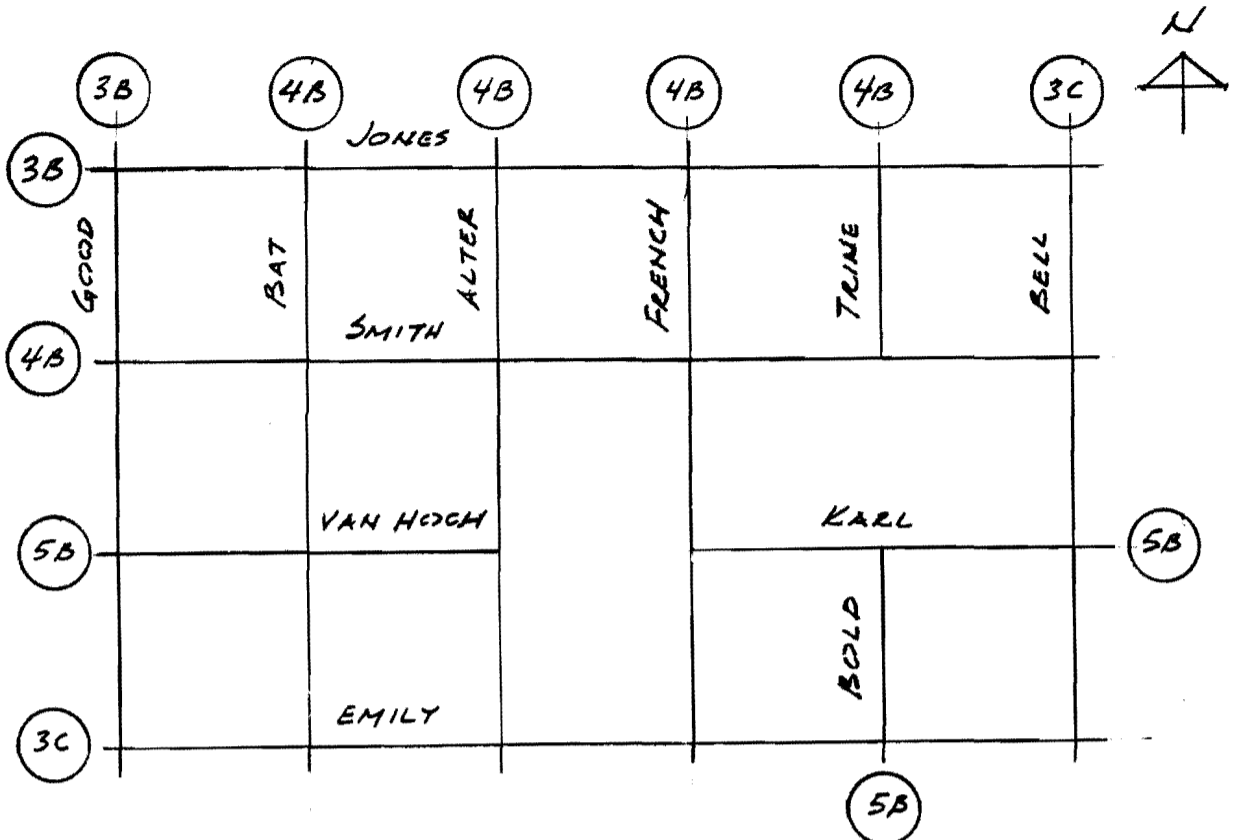


FIGURE 1 CONVENTIONAL EXISTING STREET PATTERN

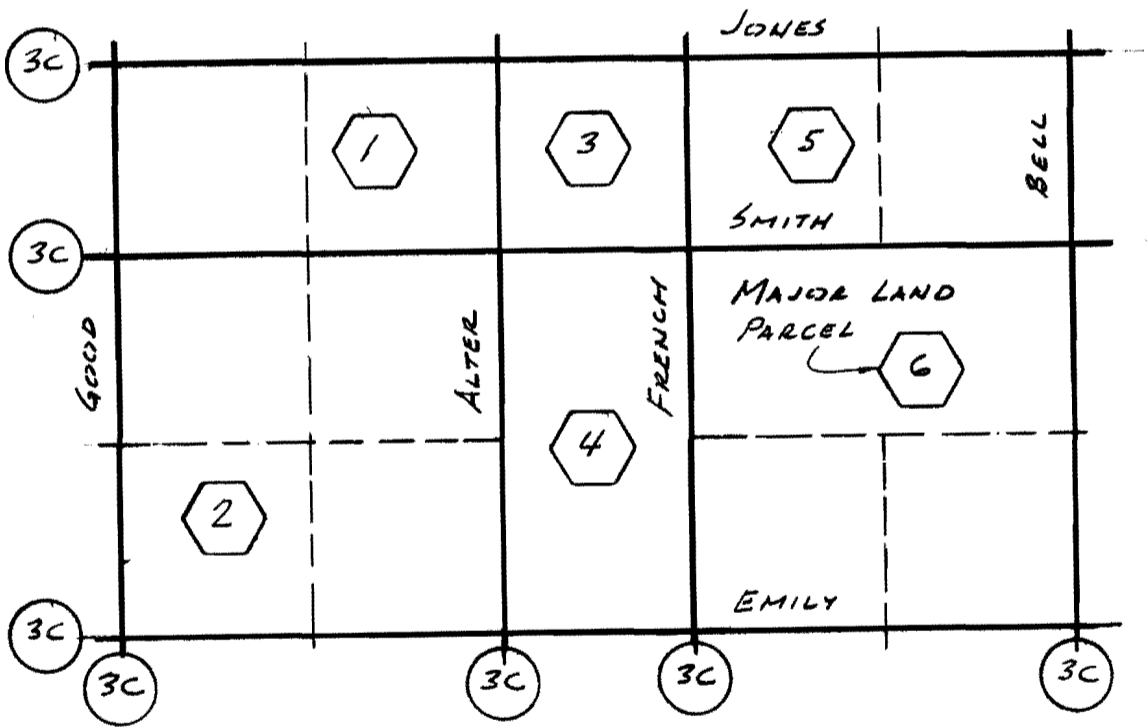


FIGURE 2 MAJOR LAND PARCEL REVISED STREET PATTERN



Being able to selectively rechannel traffic flow so that traffic going through the area shown in figure 1 can move quickly and safely from one side to the other while still allowing slower moving traffic with a destination in the area to stop and stay there for shopping, business, living or other such functions is an important and desirable characteristic of a good urban street system.

Just as traffic moving through downtown should be allowed to do so without interfering with that bound for downtown, so traffic moving past a certain area should be allowed to do so without harming traffic that wishes to enter the area. By by-passing non-local destination traffic, the local destination traffic is better accommodated and service to adjoining properties is certainly enhanced.

For traffic with a local destination a slower pace is created which is tolerant of parking and pedestrian movements. Mass transit service can be accommodated within or along the local interior system with ready access to the major street system for its external routes. Thus, as portions of the existing major street system are changed in characteristic and function, it becomes feasible to consider dropping out some street sections altogether.

It appears that a restructuring (to a major land parcel concept) can evolve from this system. It requires that streets found to be unnecessary for through travel, circulation or service be vacated and returned to the tax rolls, while combining existing blocks into large major land parcels more suitable for imaginative, new development and expansion of existing land uses now constrained by street boundaries.

For instance, our conventional existing street pattern shown in figure 1 might be altered by careful and attentive planning to the major land parcel pattern shown in figure 2. Notice that the dotted lines are former streets that have been vacated and are a part of major land parcels that offer greater development potential.

The thoroughfare system report of 1971 suggests major land groupings are beneficial in that:

- a) Regrouped parcels are large, varying in size from 2 to 40 acres.
- b) Each major land parcel is bounded by good access routes to and from the internal area to be developed.

- c) The parcels are arranged so that present ownership and desirable internal physical features can be retained without damaging the new thoroughfare pattern.
- d) Private ownership possibilities are at a maximum. These, however, are controlled within the free enterprise interplay of those presently owning and those in the market to buy.
- e) By assembling properties within the major land parcels, highly desirable land improvements can be carried out in an open business system and in a matter conducive to high value land use.
- f) Historical and naturally significant land marks may be preserved by maintaining integrity of large land parcels.
- g) Application of good real estate principles allows consistent high grade internal planning within the expanded blocks. This should aid in stabilizing and improving land values.
- h) The diversity of size and location of major land parcels gives the owner, the investor and public agencies wide latitude in land use planning, engineering and architectural design. This insures interesting and diverse use of the space.
- i) Large land areas bounded by the thoroughfare system permit good internal circulation patterns to be provided for vehicles and pedestrians, all properly related to boundary thoroughfares.

The principle of the major land parcel has been proven valid by its wide acceptance in many communities throughout our country and throughout the world. Even in Kalamazoo several examples of major land parcel utilization are already in effect. This principle, once recognized, can be of immeasurable help in improving the entire urban community.

Specific actions the DKA and its downtown planning task forces can take -

- 1) Identify traffic scales and service levels for each street in the downtown Kalamazoo area. This would be best done in conjunction with the Department of Public Works and their traffic engineer.
- 2) Identify those thoroughfares that are major and secondary. (Additional classifications may suggest themselves as the study proceeds.)
- 3) Become familiar with the parcels bounded by major thoroughfares and intersected by secondary or minor thoroughfares. Look at these on the ground. (For instance - the area bounded by Eleanor on the north, Michigan on the south, the Kalamazoo Mall on the west and Edwards on the east, is a good example of a potential major land use parcel. There are many in downtown and some have been identified by the planning department.)
- 4) With the help of the planning department, prepare land use potential maps identifying major land parcels with perhaps suggested uses. (Some of this work has already been done by the staff of the planning department. Their work should be obtained and reviewed.)
- 5) Once an inventory of major land parcel potential has been established, take specific steps to attract development interests and investment.

Ralph J. Stephenson, P.E.

RJS  
m

PLANNING REPORT #5

The Northeast Face of Downtown

Within the next two months demolition work will start on the Water Street armory. With its removal, a whole new vista will suddenly appear to anyone looking northeast from Whiskey Alley. As Kalamazoo observers have known for years, the parking lots in this area, variously known as the Carney lot, the Water Street lot, armory parking and the Eleanor lot, represent a valuable resource, one that will be seen in an entirely new light. Removal of the armory will visually open up additional adjoining space.

Interim plans call for the new area to be used for parking and this is good. I urge, however, that long range thinking for the total area be put into work for real. Clearing of the armory should also re-awaken an interest in the old Harris Hotel block, further east.

Let us, for a few moments, turn on our imaginations to the armory/Eleanor/Water/Carney area and see what might result! First, I suggest we do not immediately assume this area should be used for any one purpose until we have explored in depth a variety of potential uses. In fact, it may just be a variety of uses that will spur an entrepreneur to engage in developing this valuable land.

The consideration is what we call mix. Mix is determined in successful developments by the skill of the developer and designer, the accuracy of market information available and the present and projected physical characteristics of the project. When these factors are combined with the primary, secondary and tertiary trade area potentials for various kinds of business, the amount of business available to the area under normal circumstances can be estimated. To do this, of course, requires ongoing economic evaluation material which is recognized as essential to strengthening the Kalamazoo appeal to potential downtown business.

Once we have the hard statistics regarding potential for the area, we can explore every potential use and sub-use possible.

There are many techniques available and usually arraying the possible uses and then examining them for what should be done is the best. For instance, in the Kalamazoo 1980 plan, on pages A11 and A12, a good elementary starting list of land uses is shown. There are others more complete and current but these can be used by all those interested in

this project to begin exploring what they think the site might contain. Basic downtown uses are usually classified as:

- retail trade
- service trade
- office
- parking
- transportation
- transient residences
- permanent residences
- public and organizational buildings
- industrial
- wholesale
- vacant

Then I would like to add to the conventional list another - enhancement uses.

There is a valuable commodity which traverses the Carney/armory/Water/Eleanor sector that probably not one person in fifty is aware of. Arcadia Creek, which can be seen exposed for a brief stretch directly to the west and in back of the old Home Furnishings building, then flows underground across the downtown community to the Kalamazoo River. It can be traced across our northeast property by a series of storm inlets and gratings. It starts across the northeast downtown at the rear of the Bible Shop and cuts through the various parking areas until it meets the sidewalk at Kalamazoo Street near Pitcher. From there the stream runs on out to the river.

It has been known for many years that improvements to Arcadia Creek must be considered an integral part of storm drainage system improvements. The water generally runs clear and the stream bed is well known to be under capacity.

Downtown Kalamazoo - 1999  
Planning Report #5  
Page three

I suggest we now take advantage of this unusual asset to consider how it might be an integral part of any development built in the Carney/Water/armory/Arcadia blocks.

Presently in Flint, Michigan, a major river beautification program is underway which takes advantage of the Flint River by diverting a part of the flow into an Archimedes Screw which carries it to a high elevation, running the water down a long flume to a pumping station. At this point the water is directed over a series of major water walls where it then flows into canals and on down into a Grand Fountain area where additional pumped water displays are being built. Certainly Arcadia Creek is no Flint River; but the major item present in both is plenty of water and our engineering capacity to change hydraulic gradients so this water can be picked up, allowed to fall by gravity, repumped and allowed to flow on down in just about any way the inventive, imaginative mind can devise.

But enough for this planning report - it is time to go to work on the Water/armory/Carney/Eleanor area and we should all start thinking about what to call it and what to do with it. Walk over and take a look now and when the armory is down. I am certain you will see the potential in this valuable downtown asset. (see attachment)

In our next planning report we will explore the possibilities of this area further. Meanwhile, what do you think the entire section should be called? - Arcadia Center, Water Park, Northeast Corner -- give it some thought....

Ralph J. Stephenson, P.E.

RJS  
m

Downtown Kalamazoo - 1999  
Planning Report #5  
Page four

RALPH J. STEPHENSON, P. E.  
CONSULTING ENGINEER

Map Attachments

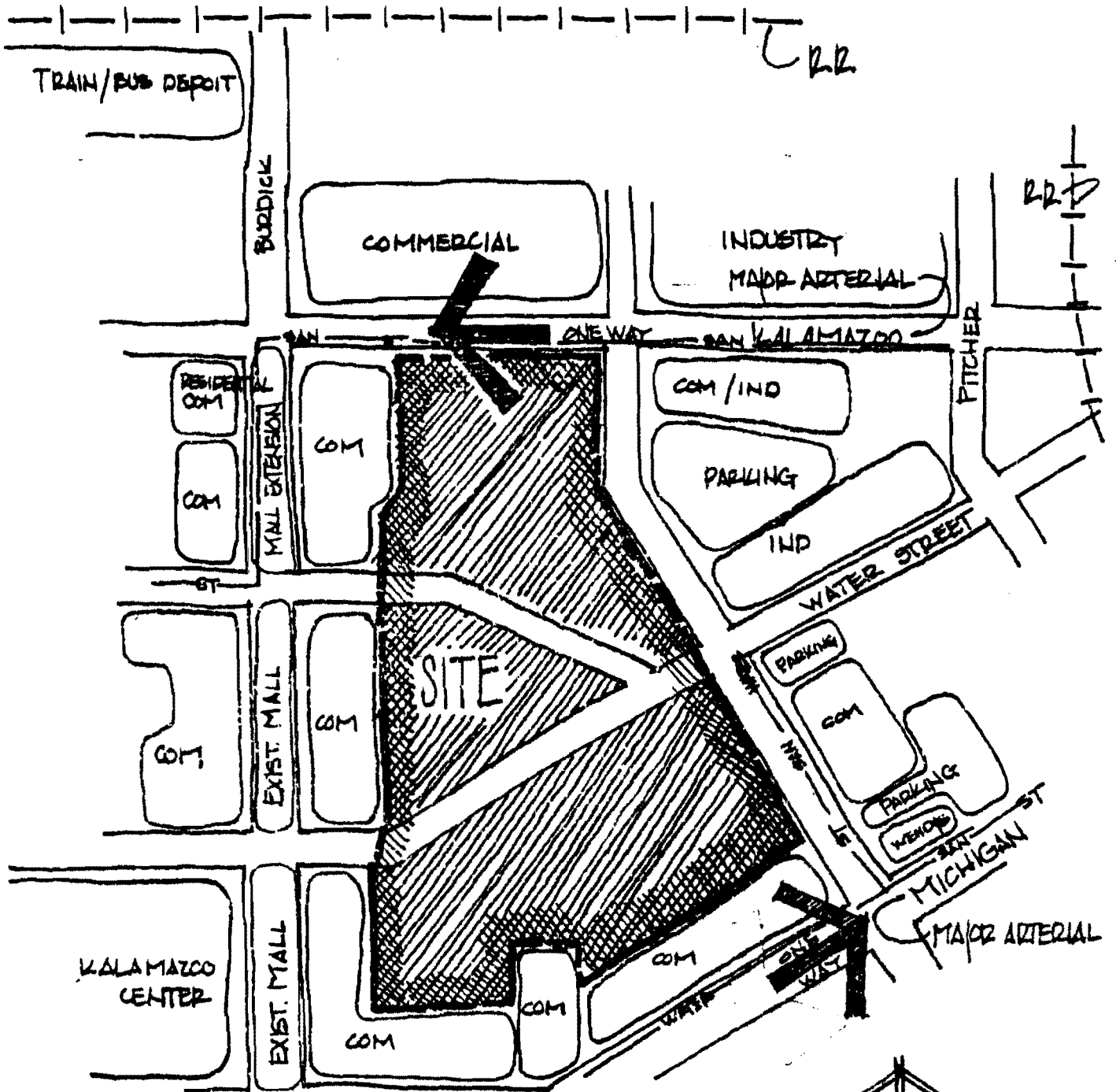
Accompanying Planning Report #5 are two maps of the armory/Water/Carney/Eleanor section. These were prepared in 1977 by the Kalamazoo city planning division while making site inventories of existing conditions. The information in the two small drawings will give you a better insight into the location, size and orientation of the property described in Planning Report #5.

It would be of interest to those so inclined to walk the site with a fresh approach and to trace the route of the Arcadia Creek on the site maps. It will be seen to occupy a strategic sector of the northeast block and could be used in a major development effort with considerable effectiveness.

R JS

# SITE INFO

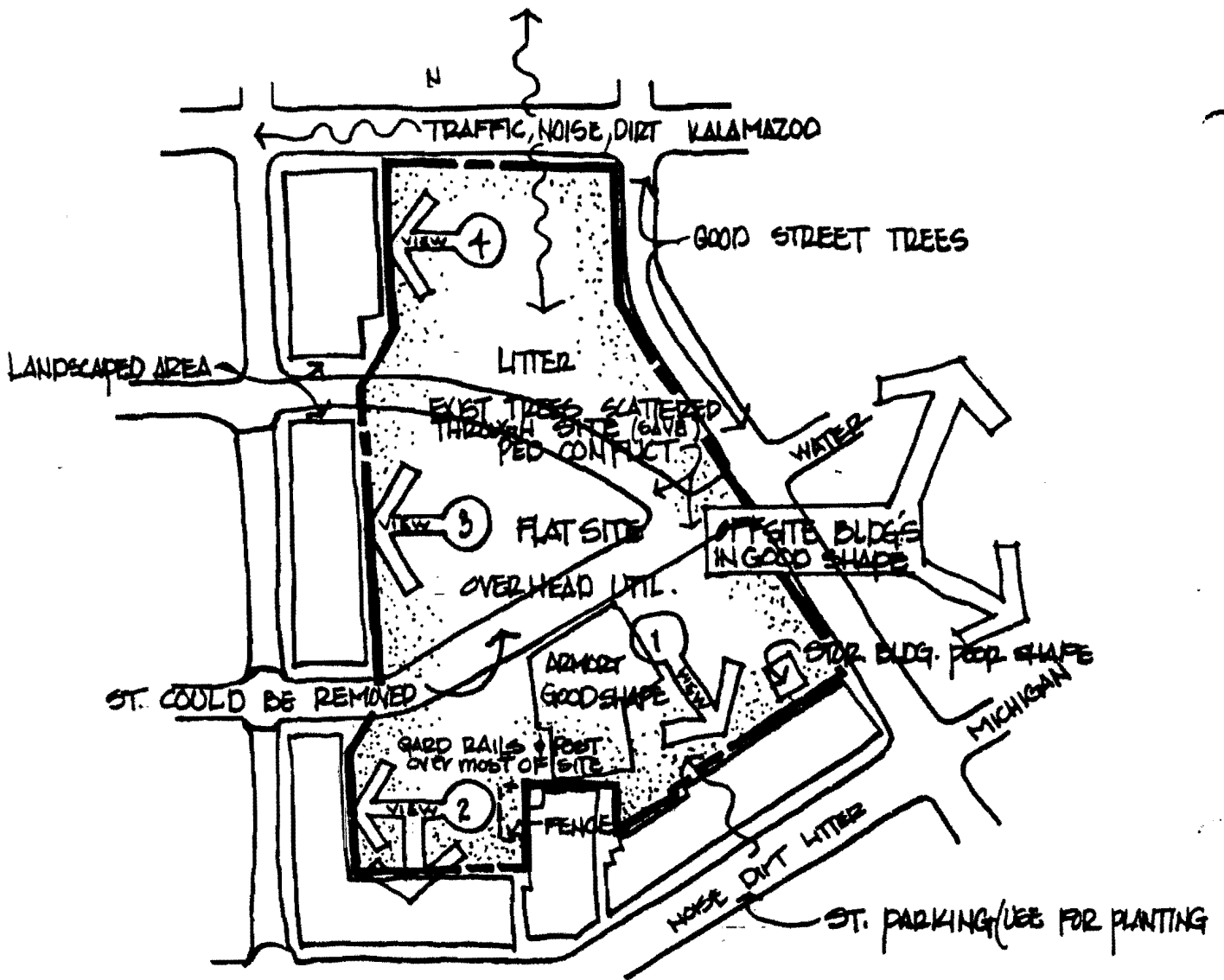
SIZE \_\_\_\_\_ 59  
 OWNERSHIP \_\_\_\_\_ PUBLIC (CITY) AND PRIVATE  
 ZONING \_\_\_\_\_ 2 - LIGHT MANUFACTURING  
 EXIST USE \_\_\_\_\_ SURFACE PARKING LOTS  
 ASSESSED VALUE \_\_\_\_\_ \$11,000 (NON EXEMPT)



PLANNING DIVISION SITE INVENTORY  
 EXISTING CONDITIONS  
 SITE 1 CBD

DO NOT SCALE  
 8/17/77 ALYNIE SHT 1





**VIEWS**

- 1 - REAR OF BLDG'S CLUTTERED WITH SIGNS, EYE TROUGHS, FLY ESCAPES WIDES AND GARBAGE CONTAINERS. PAINT AND BRICK FAIR TO POOR. ALLEY LIKE ATMOSPHERE.
- 2 - PAINT POOR, BRICK NEEDS WORK, REAR AREA CLUTTERED AS IN #1
- 3-4 - SOME WORK DONE TO IMPROVE BLDGS. ADDITIONAL WORK NEEDED

**GEN. VIEW**

LIMITED TO BLDGS. MOST IN FAIR-GOOD CONDITION. NO NATURAL FEATURES WORTH DESIGN SENSITIVITY.

PLANNING DIVISION SITE INVENTORY  
 EXISTING CONDITIONS  
 SITE 1 CBD

NORTH  
 DO NOT SCALE  
 2/17/77 ALWANTE SH 2

DOWNTOWN KALAMAZOO - 1999

June 26, 1978

PLANNING REPORT #6

The Northeast Corner (Carney/armory/Eleanor/Water  
Street Development)

In Planning Report #5 we briefly discussed the northeast downtown area which will be revealed in its full visual potential by demolition of the armory. Included with that report were two planning department maps that also gave a brief summary of the area characteristics along with its configuration. Referring to those maps, it can be seen that the northeast site offers exciting possibilities for a major land parcel development (refer to Planning Report #4). The site is about six acres and is bounded and traversed by several primary and secondary thoroughfares. These are critical streets since they constitute an integral part of the long range thoroughfare planning considerations for downtown traffic.

For instance, the Eleanor Street/Kalamazoo Street one way pairing which, if implemented, would give the opportunity for a manageable routing of traffic off Water and allow the southern and central sectors of the northeast site to be combined into one parcel. Development of the northeast corner could unlock the next stage of improvements in the thoroughfare pattern.

There are other thoroughfare plans under consideration that are equally interesting. Suppose Kalamazoo were made a two way boulevarded thoroughfare, it could be that both Eleanor and Water could become an integral part of the total northeast site. With major through traffic shifted to the north on Kalamazoo or Kalamazoo and Eleanor, future traffic and beautification planning for Michigan Avenue could proceed with confidence. It might be that limited two way traffic patterns could be restored to Michigan and that it could become truly a thoroughfare that would be designed to bring traffic to downtown, not through downtown. This would also provide safer traffic patterns on Michigan Avenue that could allow people to sally forth from their automobiles in a secure, pleasant and desirable manner. Presently to stop at Michigan and attempt to leave a car or get into a car is a major and somewhat dangerous contest between those out of cars and those in cars.

**Downtown Kalamazoo - 1999  
Planning Report #6  
Page two**

**RALPH J. STEPHENSON, P.E.  
CONSULTING ENGINEER**

**Initiation of development thinking for the northeast block also would tend to generate additional enthusiasm for the rail consolidation program under consideration.**

**Rail consolidation in the downtown area has been a longstanding and greatly sought after event which is now being gradually brought to implementation. The city's administration, its engineering staff, its planning department, all are vitally interested in rail consolidation and a major implementation study is being put into work immediately. This should lead to results within the next one to three years that could have enormous positive impacts upon downtown traffic patterns. Now is the time to begin the development considerations for Kalamazoo 1999.**

**In our next planning report we will briefly review the process of rail consolidation and how it is being approached by the city and the railroads.**

**Ralph J. Stephenson, P.E.**

**RJS  
m**

July 3, 1978

DOWNTOWN KALAMAZOO - 1999

PLANNING REPORT #7

Rail Consolidation for the City of Kalamazoo

Consolidation of railroad trackage, rights-of-way and facilities has become increasingly important to urban planning efforts over the past few years and is now under serious study in Kalamazoo. Several factors have contributed to the need for consolidation. These include:

- Changing demand for rail traffic
- Critical geography of urban rail rights-of-way which usually are under utilized
- Disruptive nature of traffic at grade crossings
- Enormous construction expense of grade separations and other improvements
- Continuing increase in automobile traffic volumes
- Need for increased rail operation effectiveness
- Increased awareness of safety considerations
- Increase in technology which allows operation of consolidated facilities to be effectively handled
- Sizable and continuing changes in the urban land use and traffic patterns
- Increases in the value of urban property, particularly downtown

There are many other reasons, of course, but these are a few that serve to indicate that the time for rail consolidation in Kalamazoo is here.

**Kalamazoo is served by several lines -**

- **Conrail (Main Line) east to Jackson - Detroit. Ends at the spur serving the State Hospital. Its continuation westward is now an Amtrak line.**
- **Conrail (Kalamazoo Branch) south to Elkhart - Chicago. Extends north thru the city to Parchment and to Plainwell.**
- **Conrail (CK&S) north to Parchment and south to a GTW connection with trackage rights to the GM Fisher Body plant.**
- **Conrail (GR&I), the former PRR lines, north to Grand Rapids. Also extends south to Vicksburg but no longer continues to Fort Wayne.**
- **Grand Trunk Western south to connection with main line at Pavillion Jct.**
- **Conrail (South Haven Branch) - no longer exists except as an industrial spur serving a few customers in the north-west section of the city.**

**Two marshalling yards are currently maintained by Conrail - the Botsford yard just east of the Kalamazoo River and the Mosel trailer van yard north of Mosel Avenue along the Grand Rapids and Indiana branch.**

**Statistical studies on rail traffic are available from the Department of Public Works and are worthy of ongoing study by those interested in the details of rail movements.**

**Presently many alternatives can be followed for rail consolidation design. Several formal studies have identified at least two well documented schemes and private groups and individuals have put forth others. Of course, another alternative is to do nothing, although this appears to be a highly undesirable course of action. There is enormous enthusiasm among all parties involved, including the railroads, to actually make a thrust now for consolidation.**

**A consultant has been retained by the city to prepare a detailed plan for rail consolidation that accomplishes the desired improvements in rail and vehicular traffic. Within two months after the start of the study there will be preliminary presentations that will allow those interested to ask**

**questions and provide assistance in the ongoing study. At this time it would be desirable for the DKA to take an active role and support efforts toward intelligent and well designed rail consolidation.**

**Within a year of the start of the study, it is expected the report will be completed and released for implementation. This will signal the start of actual negotiations and will require acquisition of financing needed to pay for the entire physical consolidation program.**

**It would be wise for those interested - and I suggest that everybody concerned with downtown is included - to closely follow progress of the rail consolidation program. City officials intend to keep all parties posted on progress.**

**We shall bring additional information about this very important project to you as it evolves.**

**Ralph J. Stephenson, P.E.**

**RJS  
m**